



PETRA PEOPLE

4 LEADERSHIP LESSONS I LEARNED FROM
CLIMBING MOUNT KILIMANJARO



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LIFE LESSONS for BUSINESS OWNERS

In January, my wife and I completed a successful summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania along the trail known as the "Roof of Africa," which reaches a height of 19,340 feet at its peak. Kilimanjaro, as you may know, is the tallest mountain in Africa and the highest free-standing mountain in the world.

Climbing that mountain was the most challenging adventure of my life, physically and mentally, and I learned a lot on that trip. As a business coach, I am a firm believer that every experience provides an opportunity to grow, and sometimes you can apply the things you learn from an experience to other areas of your life.

Here are four business lessons I took away from my Kilimanjaro experience:

1. IT'S A TEAM EFFORT

Climbing Kilimanjaro is a team effort. No one is allowed to climb the mountain without the assistance of an experienced guide. Our group consisted of six trekkers and a support team of 18, which included experienced guides and many "heavy lifters" who managed our camp and prepared our meals. The team moved our group from campsite to campsite over seven days with amazing coordination, logistics, and stamina.

During our trip we would break camp each morning and begin the trek to the next stopping point. Within an hour the "heavy lifters" would pass us, carrying everything in heavy packs on their heads. By the time we arrived at our next destination, the camp would be set up and dinner was on the way.

Takeaway: A great business leader finds the best team, gives them a clear vision of the goal and expectations, and lets them perform. No great achievement is possible without the support of a qualified team. If you are going to take your business to great heights, you have to surround yourself with the right people who have the skills and experience to reach the team's goals. It also means making sure you have the right people in the right positions so the work is done well. The leader assembles and oversees the team and holds them accountable, but he or she also allows them the freedom to perform their duties.

2. GREAT LEADERS PUT THE TEAM FIRST

Early into our climb I realized that Nick, the support team leader, was already at work and assessing each trekker's experience, conditioning, goals, and expectations. He made it a point to get to know each of us. During the first few days of the journey he had casual conversations with each climber and watched us perform.

He never let on that he was evaluating us. He was always very positive and expressed 100% confidence we would all achieve our goal of reaching the summit. He used the knowledge he gained to manage each day for the group, so we would be set up for success when we reached the top of the mountain.

Takeaway: A great leader takes a sincere interest in their team and helps them achieve their goals.

Nick's servant leadership was in full view during our trip as he focused on understanding our group's levels and abilities. By doing so, Nick improved the chances of achieving his ultimate goal, which was a successful summit by our group of trekkers.

3. GREAT LEADERS UNITE TEAMS

Our group of trekkers consisted of me and my wife (both in our fifties and from Kentucky), a 70-year old father and his thirtysomething daughter from Manchester, England, and a young couple in their twenties from Australia. All of us had varied life experiences and were in good physical condition, but we had very little in common.

That's the magic of a trip like this. We were able to come together as a team. We united behind a compelling goal that drove each of us to achieve more than we could on our own and more than most of us thought we were capable.

Takeaway: A compelling, audacious goal can unleash potential that is often unrealized. Anything is possible when you and your team believe in what you want to achieve. As a business coach and entrepreneur, I've learned that great companies must have shared sense of purpose and 100% buy-in from their team so they will work together to fulfill company goals.

4. EFFECTIVE LEADERS PREPARE THEIR TEAMS

We scheduled our trip during a season when the weather was expected to be mostly dry and sunny. We were cautioned, however, to prepare for anything, because once you were on the mountain you wouldn't be able to buy extra gear.

As fate would have it, on day two of our "dry-season" trek the weather turned for the worst, and for the rest of our trip, it rained and snowed every day. Everything stayed wet and cold, unless you had packed the right gear. Thankfully, we had heeded the advice of our trip company and prepared for inclement weather. Without advance preparation a successful summit would have been in doubt.

Takeaway: Great business leaders consider all the possible outcomes and help the team prepare in advance for the worst-case scenario. If you prepare for the worst, often the result is not as bad or as impossible as you thought it would be. It's a sound business practice—determine worst case, accept the possibility, and plan in advance how to manage through it.

Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro was a trip of a lifetime, and it will have a positive influence on me for the rest of my life. Whenever you can, use your own special journeys to make improvements every day—learn from your experiences and take time to enjoy the present.

Go climb your mountains!

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THE PETRA EXPERIENCE

The Petra Experience is like a Mental Marathon of focused effort to create a specific set of priorities and a planned process to achieve them... as a team.

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The daily grind of growing a business is tough... it doesn't have to be that way. We work from our own business experiences while focusing on your business – as coach and an accountability partner. We implement the Petra Process in a way that ensures it “sticks” then we stay engaged to keep you on your path to success and less frustration. We don't want this to be just another thing you start – then it gets ignored and finally dies... let's stop that cycle in your business. The Petra Program 'clarifies' what is most important to be done – by whom, by when – **AND** creates an accountability structure to ensure **IT GETS DONE.**

*David Pierce is an entrepreneur coach with business coaching firm Petra.
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