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I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to conduct two separate interviews for this project. They were different in structure, yet similar in some content. The first was a casual interview with my uncle at his home, on September 23. Bruce is a manager of Fat Cats, and a student in BYU’s MBA program, as he is studying to be a CEO himself. My other interviewee, Jeff, had an atmosphere of high profession at the high offices in Costa Vida on September 27. In each interview, I managed to stay in charge, though I often let the interviewee do most of the talking. Both interviews had a professional tone, one more so than the other, and time was thrown out the window as fascinating conversations were born in the time we spent talking. Now, these interviews have been and will continue to be of incredible value, as I can better: build a plan of education, learn time management between a life and the work needed to support it, and overall be a successful and respected leader in/as my career.

There isn’t a single successful person in the world, especially those who achieved success on their own, that will tell you education isn’t important. The beginning to each of my interviews was focused on the need, plans, and benefits of education. Bruce is a student still, and helped develop a plan in education. To maximize what I learn in courses, Bruce said to force myself to reflect on what was covered. Moreover, I have fantastic advice regarding education as it plays a great role in my life. School is important and should be done first if possible, but it is also possible to balance a life with work and a family. Jeff gave me similar advice. He was able to handle 12-16 credits each semester while working full time; you just have to learn to stay in the moment and focus.

Not only does learning this balance create excellent time management and compartmentalization skills, but it provides experience and strengthens the ability to remain motivated and persevere through mountains of challenges. The trek to become a CEO will be long and hard, but Jeff gave me sound advice to set me on the right foot. Each level of management has an increasing tantamount to competency. Just remember that there is no end to education, and always excel, and I can make it. Bruce is also making this trek, and another important word he gave to me was to pivot. Always have a foot in the door, but at the same time it’s ok to keep a foot out looking for new opportunities. The hard work in progression will pay off.

Of course, progression to a CEO doesn’t mean the end of the journey. A CEO may be the top of the line, but there’s always a new level of success to be achieved. Bruce gave wonderful ideas on being a great CEO. A CEO has a lot under their control, but most importantly they must first learn to control themselves. Thoughts are simply guests, emotions the same. It comes back to staying in the moment, take a deep breath, and confidence prevails. Another valuable asset to a CEO is their networks, which build all lifelong. The best way to build networks is to first be selfless. To be the man that says “How can I help you?” This is how the best networks are built.

Bruce is certainly correct in giving this advice, as he has been business partners and friends with Jeff for 19 years. Jeff had similar advice as well as new tidbits because of his experience in the field as a CEO. As great as it is to be at the top, you still have to watch the growth and development of the company as well as your own career. Now you’re not alone in handling such monumental tasks. The board of directors is there with you, the fellow employees, and fellow investors and companies alike will help where they can. The key, Jeff mentioned, to guaranteeing these successful relations and meeting goals is communication. Jeff also said even though the CEO is the “manager”, there needs to be balance between manager and leader. There cannot be 100% of one or the other at any time. Don’t lose faith though. Even though a CEO requires so much of someone, it’s a thrilling challenge with a great reward.

Being a CEO does require more out of someone than many positions do. That doesn’t make it “better” by any means; it just requires a greater work ethic. However, it doesn’t consume all thought and embodiment of the CEO. Bruce, to motivate himself, keeps a photo of his family in his book and work, and feels energy from them to continue working toward his goal. Jeff has two very successful daughters and a loving wife, he and Bruce have remained good friends for 19 years, and he never truly feels isolated in work. I asked Jeff what the greatest piece of advice he could give me was, and he said Excel. Referring to Mia Hamm, he told me to look up the quote of a champion and take it to heart. It goes “The vision of a champion, is someone bent over, drenched in sweat, at the point of exhaustion, when no one is looking”.

The path to becoming a CEO, or becoming successful, no matter who you are, requires sacrifice. I chose to attend Itineris, and sacrifice countless hours and choral possibilities; because I believed it would lead me to success. I gave up being DeHaan’s star singer to invest in my future. I have been West Jordan High School’s lead hurdler for a while, and made varsity in the past year. I’m afraid this is something else I may lose. However, I can comfort myself knowing that the reward is worth it. My future family motivates me to be successful, my aspirations drive me to do what I must, and the words of Bruce and Jeff will propel me even closer to my goal.

I am pleased to say that these two wonderful gentlemen will ever be part of my network. Bruce has been a great example to me, and Jeff is a welcome new friend. I see Bruce weekly, and talk when I can. Jeff has emailed me in response to my thank you letter, and tells me there’s always a job open for me when I choose to accept it. I’m closer to a more defined plan, I’ve seen firsthand the skills needed, and I’m equipped with advice that can make me the great CEO I see myself becoming. This is no longer a project, this is an achievement. This has become another step forward; to the great future I know lies ahead of me.