Ali Schultz: I think a really important or interesting piece to jump off into is, is just the basic, what is the job of the CEO? And I think I call it basic because it seems basic, it seems so simple.

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ali Schultz: And I remember the first boot camp over seven years ago, the moment you had this slide up everyone pulled out their journal and their pen and they just were heads down.

Jerry Colonna: Right.

Ali Schultz: Which made me really feel like there was something in this, or in this basic understanding that really felt like it rang true for everyone in that room.

Jerry Colonna: What you're referring to is my take on something Fred Wilson wrote on his blog, I think way back in 2009, 2010. Which he got from somebody else. So it's always nice to credit lineage here.

Ali Schultz: Yeah, always.

Jerry Colonna: It is a useful framework, but as you point out, it's, it's actually quite deep and, and complicated. And so basically it goes like this. A CEO's job is to do three things. Hold and promulgate the vision. Second, build and maintain a great team. And third, give that team what it needs to succeed.

Jerry Colonna: So hold and promulgate the vision. It is more than just stating the vision of a company and promulgation means a kind of active expression of it. And so what I like to point out is everything that you do, should and can be an expression of say your values.

Jerry Colonna: So, how you handle lunch within the company can be an expression of values and vision. How you hire people, how you fire people, how you, uh, handle feedback within an organization. All of that is set, uh, by the senior leadership, the most senior leadership. It sets that this, that most senior leader sets the culture and it's under the rubric of hold the vision that I put all of that work. It's how we treat each other, what things we focus on, how we, what are we prioritized on?

Jerry Colonna: The second piece, build and maintain a great team. The build part everybody gets, the maintain part is the part that people have the most difficulty with. And so building means identifying and recruiting, right? But if you just identify and recruit and then leave people on their own, they're gonna fail. No matter how talented they are. So the maintenance of the team becomes exquisitely important. It is understanding for example, that every single person that you're

responsible for managing is different, which means how you relate to them is different.

Jerry Colonna: You know, you and I separately have had conversations about the favorite article of mine, we can always post this on adaptive leadership. It comes from the DoD, the Department of Defense. Understand that one of the mistakes that, that leaders make is they work really hard to define their leadership style and then expect great people to adapt themselves to the leader. And won't work, or let's put it this way, it will work if you build a non-diverse homogenous team.

Jerry Colonna: But if you're really striving to build diversity, and I just don't mean, I don't mean just racial diversity. I mean true diversity of experiences of life, uh, experiences-

Ali Schultz: Humanity.

Jerry Colonna: ... humanity. If you're trying to build a team that actually is representative of the full gamut of humanity, then adaptive leadership is really key. And so that maintenance right, giving and receiving feedback, um, being open that second part is incredibly important.

Ali Schultz: There's a lot buried in there.

Jerry Colonna: (laughs) We'll circle back to, 'cause I want to finish the point, about the third.

Ali Schultz: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: So the third piece is, I reframed it from resources, which people, especially in early stage startups think, it's just getting the cash, getting financing. And that is critically important. But giving people what they need to succeed, notice that for a moment, what it does is it puts the onus of success, not merely on the employee, but on the leader themselves.

Jerry Colonna: So my job is to give people what they uniquely need. Some people are gonna need autonomy, and some people are gonna need tight guardrails to tell them what to do and what not to do. Some people are gonna need lots of repetition of vision. And some people are gonna need to be left alone and just do it. Some people are gonna need, you know, lots of flexibility in the way they approach their job. But here's the thing that I think everybody needs clarity. Clarity and prioritization.

Jerry Colonna: Go way back to number one, where talking about vision and prioritization is absolutely essential. Jerry, I got it. Our job is to take the hill, okay, that's it go take the hill. But if I leave it there and don't say, hey, Jane, you should drive the truck to take the hill, while Jill should ride a bicycle to take the hill. And make sure that they have the best truck possible, and the best bicycle possible. Then I'm setting my team up to fail.

Jerry Colonna: So that third piece really works well with the first two.

Ali Schultz: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Colonna: But you want it to dive back into that, to, to the team question.

Ali Schultz: I just think to peer into it a little closer, to meet each individual where they are, I feel like, um, there's a lot of human skills involved.

Jerry Colonna: Oh, say more. 'Cause I, I, I'm in violent agreement, I suspect. (laughing)

Ali Schultz: How is your presence? How can you regulate yourself when somebody else's unregulated?

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ali Schultz: How are you good at asking open honest questions?

Jerry Colonna: Can you actually listen to the responses?

Ali Schultz: Yeah.

Jerry Colonna: (laughs)

Ali Schultz: How are your listening skills?

Jerry Colonna: Right.

Ali Schultz: Just that alone without venturing into, you know,how are you with handling possibly high conflict personalities and other-

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ali Schultz: Personality types on the various ranges of the neurodiverse spectrum-

Jerry Colonna: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ali Schultz: Which maybe, under your wing as an employer and that that's a huge-

Jerry Colonna: Right.

Ali Schultz: ... that alone is just a huge thing.

Jerry Colonna: I could not agree with you more. You know, our favorite phrase, which is that better humans make better leaders, right? Really what we're talking about in

every aspect of those three areas of responsibility, better humans make better leaders. The better, the ability to express what we're going for and equally important, why we're going there is an experience of a better human, a more mature.

Jerry Colonna: But the emotional attunement to really understand what the team, what each individual team member is needing and, and what they're looking for. And the ability to be curious about that person and, and, and to say, okay, well, why, why might this person be taking this job as I'm recruiting this person? What goal do they have for themselves, or to tap into my old, uh, nonviolent communications training...What need might they be trying to meet by taking this job? And can I stay in rapport with them as they're trying to meet the need, right?

Jerry Colonna: The, you, you said it well, these are very, very, uh, important human skills that w-so when we say that better humans make better leaders, this is what we're talking about. You know, even the last one about getting the resources that people need. One of the ways that the leader needs to self-soothe and get their own shit together is to not be so freaked out about, say the lack of cash, resources as to lose sight of the most important element that they have, which is their team.

Jerry Colonna: And it kind of goes like this I'll deal with the needs of my team after we have enough money in the bank, because if we don't have enough money in the bank, then I want to have a team. Now as true as it is that you need money to pay a team, you need that team in order to raise the money. And if that team is not in alignment and in sync with you, a good investor will spot that a mile away, and you won't raise money.