

# Southwest airlines and a great leader

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Herb Kelleher is the CEO of Southwest Airlines and a great leader. He has the following qualities that are found in a good leader. He has a vision, charisma (makes you feel significant), positive, can-do attitude, listens to others, will sacrifice for others, looks to the good of the community, demonstrates strong moral values, inclusive in attitude, open-minded, thinks clearly and critically, knowledgeable of practical methods to achieve goals and strong-willed. His leadership qualities are recognized in the business world and according to Fortune magazine, he is the best CEO in America.

Under Kelleher leadership, Southwest has become the most consistently profitable, productive, and cost-efficient carrier in the industry. It has also earned the Triple Crown award for best on-time performance, baggage handling, and customer satisfaction for four years. This can be attributed to the working environment. Kelleher believes that if you create an environment where the people truly participate, you don't need control. They know what needs to be done and they will do it.

One of Kelleher's leadership attributes is to keep things simple and establish a clear direction of communication. Their fares are simple, generally just two prices (peak and off peak) and they have an uncomplicated back-and-forth schedule that keeps their planes in the air nearly 12 hours a day, far above the industry average. Southwest's formal systems are backed up by a highly supportive informal culture that is aligned with the formal system. The company has developed an underdog spirit and maintains a culture of martyrdom fed by the belief that they are upstarts persecuted by the bullies of the industry. They never lose sight that the passenger is paramount.

Another attribute is to remain calm in the midst of crisis. Herb Kelleher is a master at turning crisis into a cause. Everything about Southwest's struggle to get off the ground challenged his beliefs about what America stood for but he remained dedicated to the cause. After 911, Southwest was the only airline that reported a profit. A third attribute is to be courteous, respectful, and friendly while striving for organization efficiency. He leads by example; he treats everybody with the same level of respect regardless of whom he's talking to. Herb Kelleher doesn't have a patronizing bone in his body and this is the way he runs Southwest. He makes sure everybody counts and everybody knows they count.

Lastly, he practice dignity, respect, appreciation, fairness, trust to all employees and customers. Employees know they are number- one in the organization. He believes the way you treat your employees is the way they will treat your customers. Always practice the Golden Rule, internally and externally. Yes, Herb Kelleher is a strategic thinker. Charming the passengers was a part of his strategic plan to make southwest Airlines different from their competitors. Southwest has credited its success as a result of Herb's developing strategic principles and putting them into action. For instance, as Southwest Airlines began to grow quickly, it might have been tempted to mimic its rival's unsuccessful strategies if it had not had its own strategic principle to follow. He had a vision and communicated it to all his employees.

The main strategy that made Southwest competitive was the strategy to meet customers' short-haul travel needs at fares competitive with the cost of

automobile travel. Southwest Airlines has used The Boeing Company's 737 and only that plan to become the world's largest and most successful low-fare carrier. Kelleher future strategy is to do what meets customers' needs and offer things that customers are willing to pay for and remain the low-cost producer. Herb Kelleher has proven over time that he is a great leader and a strategic thinker.