

7 speedy business tips from nascar driver dale earnhardt jr.

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When Dale Earnhardt Jr. isn't tearing down the racetrack, he tweets storms, , snacks on and owns several businesses, too.

The 41-year-old bearded speed demon says he doesn't just slap his name on them and sit back. He gets his hands dirty.

" I like to get involved in the day-to-day management aspects, putting the right individuals in the right places where they need to be to help my businesses grow," Earnhardt told *Entrepreneur* .

You might know Earnhardt best as NASCAR's driver, but he's also the president of . He co-owns the Mooresville, N. C.-based pro race team and management company with his sister, Kelley, and American NASCAR team owner Rick Hendrick. He also owns , a video production company, and , a bar and nightclub in Charlotte.

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Sure, with more than 40 NASCAR race wins under his belt, the " Pied Piper of Daytona" is undeniably a legend on the track. But he also knows more than a thing or two about steering small businesses to success.

We chatted with Earnhardt on the phone recently about his other life in the fast lane -- as an entrepreneur. His funnyman role as 's " Water Cooler Dale," " Boss Man" and, who could forget, " Animal Whisperer Dale," also came up. (He spearheaded the auto insurance company's campaign, in which small-business owners entered to win ad space on his No. 88 Chevy SS racecar.)

Here are the businessleadershiptips Dale Earnhardt Jr. brought to the finish line for us, in his own words. Note that his comments were lightly edited for clarity and length.

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1. Get to know your employees and build trust.

“ Make great friendships. Just like the sponsors I work with, the people who work for me are more than a contract and a sheet of paper. I make it convenient and easy and enjoyable to build relationships with them that will last well beyond working together. I don’t know about you, but I can’t feel like I have trust in someone unless I have a very, very close relationship with them.”

2. Show you care.

“ A good leader knows what the people he works with care about and isn’t afraid to show it. When you do that, it gets people excited to work with you and want to help you. When you don’t create those types of close working relationships, it’s really difficult to get people to work together, to band together and to win together.”

— Dale Earnhardt Jr. (@DaleJr)

3. Stay humble.

“ I was very apprehensive to take leadership roles at first. I’ve sort of always looked at myself as on the same level as every guy on my team, in racing and in business. I think that you have to stay grounded and humble.”

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4. Put employees on the track to success.

“ It’s always a fun challenge to groom people for higher positions. It’s important to provide them with the opportunities that they seek and that they excel in, and to also prepare them for advancement. Help employees grow their responsibilities at every level and they’ll do great work for you.”

5. Be proud when your best employees move on and up.

“ The most fun and rewarding part of running a business is watching your people succeed. When you take someone and grow them at the ground level and they climb the ladder through your company, it’s a good feeling when that person graduates to the next level, even if they leave your company

and take their care to the next level. You tell them, ‘ Good job’ and you mean it when you do.”

Gotta get that buffalo chicken wedge before lift off.

— Dale Earnhardt Jr. (@DaleJr)

6. Hire the right person for the right job.

“ If you put someone in a position that they’re not qualified for, it makes the job miserable for everybody around them. Avoid that from that start. Better to really know who you’re hiring and what they’re capable of up front than finding out later and things not working out.”

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