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## 8 Important Lessons For Leaders to Practice in 2021

BY JEFF STEEN, CONTENT MARKETER AND AUTHOR @JEFFOPHILUS



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We made it. December 2020. And now, instead of the joy we usually mark the close of a year, we're spending far too much time reflecting on what went wrong.

Speaking from experience, this type of reflection is seldom beneficial. Instead, we should look forward to what 2021 can be. In fact, looking ahead is what we need most of the times, so turn your attention away from negative retrospection to

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of next year— for yourself and your business.

Here are some good places to start:

## 1. Recognize the role of mental health in work p give employees adequate support.

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Though we still struggle to make mental health part of conversati  
2020 has given us all a sense of what mental health challenges loo  
grappled with depression and anxiety while others experienced gr  
brushing it all under the carpet, artificially separating personal an  
opportunity to acknowledge these challenges in 2021 and give our  
resources to heal.

Start with your own company and open the door to conversations  
business events can impact one's state of mind, emotional health,  
well. Acknowledge your own struggles, if you are comfortable doi  
teams to share their own struggles and secure support. Additional  
with the tools and resources to address these issues.

## 2. Focus on the community.

Covid-19 brought many issues to light, but it certainly made clear the importance of community collaboration in ensuring our collective wellbeing. Don't shy away from the pandemic; recognize the unique impact your company can make and don't be afraid to devote time and resources to lifting it up. [Here are some ideas](#) to get started.

### **3. Spend more time with your employees.**

Whether you recognize it or not, your employees look to you for guidance and behavioral cues. Don't shy away from that— leverage their experiences and inspire them by following in your footsteps and live out your company's mission every single day.

How? Small group discussion sessions about company initiatives; regular communication with team and business-wide status updates; personal check-ins on milestones and achievements; and training on best practices for key areas, both internal ones and external ones, like philanthropic events.

### **4. Seriously consider how remote work options can benefit your employees.**

While remote work has been a necessity in 2020, many companies are realizing it's a viable future for their business. Not only can employees perform as well as they do in the office (and sometimes better), but they're afforded flexibility previously unavailable. What's more, companies can now ditch the sprawling offices – or at least downsize them.

It's worth exploring the options: How might you and your teams look to work in 2021?

### **5. Spend more time in your marketing telling authentic stories.**

Crisis – especially widespread crisis – reveals vulnerabilities previously hidden. We've all seen this play out during the pandemic. And in this space, we have seen support go out to individuals struggling with mental health issues, financial hardships, and other difficulties.

Leading the charge are those businesses who care more about being authentic than making a good impression— the same ones who publicly admitted their struggles and advocated for kindness and patience in the wake of crisis. Their vulnerability inspired the rest of us to open up about our own lives and, in that

mutual support, we found comfort.

With this awakening, people have come to appreciate the value in – and their stories are resonating more than ever.

## **6. Serve as a role model of safety, kindness, and c**

I've said this before, but it's worth saying again. The change you w company starts with you. Don't wait for HR campaigns or grassroc change you want to see – and I strongly encourage you to lean on kindness, and optimism. These are the sparks that ignite inspiratic

## **7. If you haven't already, spend a few days a mon of Simon Sinek and Brené Brown.**

It's always worth exploring the thinking and ideas of others; it bro and stokes innovation. But as we rethink the culture of business ir (or revisit) the work of [Simon Sinek](#) and [Brené Brown](#). These two sense of humanity in the world of business and will motivate you habits that feed healthier relationships.

## **8. Put a reminder on your desk to pause each m reflection.**

It only needs to say three things: People first. You can do this. Ton

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*The opinions expressed here by Inc.com columnists are their own, not those of Inc.com.*

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INC. 5000

## The Rules of Startup Success, According to Daymond John

BY LINDSAY BLAKELY, MANAGING EDITOR, INC.COM @LINDSAYBLAKELY



Daymond John.

Despite his success investing in hundreds of startups as an investor, his experience building FUBU into a clothing brand that has grossed over \$1 billion, Daymond John is very honest about his limitations. "I can't help you if you were the case, FUBU would be Nike," John told the virtual audience at Inc. 5000 Conference Wednesday.

Knowing your own limitations is nearly as important as knowing when you're successful, John said during an interview with Inc. editor-in-chief Lindsay Blakely. He went on to offer several thoughtful takeaways that apply to founders building and running their companies.

### Never stop learning.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, John has been stuck at home as m

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has he spent his time? Taking as many digital courses as he can.

"I need to know better the cost of customer acquisition these days informed decisions" as an investor, he admitted. So he's delving in on internet marketing, digital conversion tactics, and more. "Never what true entrepreneurs do," he said. "They learn slowly and they haul."

### **Always take care of current customers before trying to get new ones.**

John said he learned this tip from spending time with billionaires and their wealth over time. When he advises companies, he always favors on a scale versus those that are trying to move into new markets. He likes the tactic of super-sizing a customer's fries.

"It's very hard to acquire new customers rather than upsetting the current. To look for new customers, take care of your customer complaints. Thank them and saying, 'I need more love.' Take care of them and they'll be yours."

### **Investigate the root of your failures.**

John admitted that at this point in his life, he still finds himself re-made over his career. This honest self-reflection has helped him realize what typically happened for one of three different reasons. In the beginning, lack of intelligence was mostly to blame. But then once he remedied that, he lost his money at too many businesses without really peeling back the layers of them.

Finally, ego got in the way. There were times when he thought, "but John *obviously* I can help because you stamped my name on [on a product]." Daymond John has to get up and get his ass to work like everyone else. Being honest with himself has meant he's very careful about how many failures he can take.

### **Understand what makes you most successful.**

The most fruitful experiences John has had, both as a founder and as an investor, have a common theme: passion. "If I don't truly love [an idea], I don't spend the homework to understand it and I can't understand who's the best person to say. So, "I don't invest in people I don't have a strong passion for."