

Management

What I Learned about Management and Culture from Growing Uber's Asia Business from Zero to Billions

When **Mike Brown** moved to Singapore in 2013 to start his new job overseeing **Uber's** business in Asia, he knew the next few years would be wild and unprecedented in his career. But he couldn't have anticipated what came next. In the space of just four years, he went from **managing 7 people to overseeing 1,500 full-time employees** plus hundreds of contractors — and working with hundreds of thousands of drivers each week. Annual regional revenue jumped from near zero to billions. And his purview expanded from 2 to 15 countries with their own languages and regulatory regimes. It was an unpredictable, demanding ride — very analogous to that experienced by consumer-facing startups during growth.

Reflecting on this experience, he's taken the step to write down the **most impactful lessons he learned during his time at Uber** — something that leaders like Brown seldom do. We're excited to publish these insights here for the benefit of all founders who want to understand the actions and tactics it takes to build a high-growth business in tough markets.

The following knowledge comes from Brown's first-person perspective. Because there's so much specific advice packed into this one story, we've decided to divide it into multiple installments. Today, we're publishing the first, covering **Management, Organizational Effectiveness and Culture** — three areas that made all the difference for Uber's success in the region.

MANAGEMENT

Great managers stay involved in key decisions.

Good management is about more than setting clear goals and holding people accountable. Truly great managers get deeply and personally involved in key decisions and help shape the outcomes. I don't like it when an employee says, "My manager is great. She leaves me alone to do whatever I want and doesn't micro-manage." I understand the sentiment here, but **to succeed, managers must identify the key decisions or problems that are material to the business and they must to be personally drive results.**

This means getting into the weeds on the things that really matter. Senior managers need to review the data themselves, speak directly to affected customers, and be active at meetings with stakeholders. Great management is not "set it and forget it." The best managers know how to 'porpoise' — know what's going on with everything at a surface level, but go deep on select initiatives.

So which decisions do you go deep on and which do you delegate? On a quarterly or semi-annual basis, I would go deep on the couple of projects that I thought were going to have the biggest impact on our region achieving its KPIs. **I would go deep on one project tied to a people/culture KPI, one project tied to a top-line growth KPI, one project tied to cost reduction/efficiency KPI and one project most likely to improve customer experience.**

Occasionally a problem or opportunity will arise that either poses an existential threat to your business or that could have a transformative positive impact. I was always hands-on in those circumstances. For example, when the Philippines government shut down our business for a month last year, I camped out in Manila and worked side by side with the team on the ground to figure out how to get cars back on the road and repair our then-strained relationship with the transport regulator.

Know when the stakes are too high to delegate, and don't hesitate to involve yourself in the full stack of that work.

Keep close watch on yourself.

Pay close attention to your own behavior, words and body language at all times — but especially during tough times. Whether it feels like it or not, people are looking to you for strength, comfort and confidence. Whatever fear or anxiety or frustration you feel during trying times, as the leader you need to squirrel it away and project positivity and confidence because that's what your people need most.

They will notice and be deflated by the smallest things. As the leader, you *are* the company and your words and actions define the culture and the mood of the company at all times. If you're not feeling like you can project the right energy and will to win, take a break from the office and focus on rallying.

Your energy and attitude are self-fulfilling in terms of the fate of the company and the vibe and spirit of the team.

Leverage stories wherever possible.

Storytelling is bar none *the* most powerful way to share company history and to reinforce shared values. **It's particularly helpful to share stories from the past with all employees often so they feel connected to the company's core and its arc of development.** Everyone loves a compelling company origin story, or stories about the early original team — how bought in they were, how hard they were working, bonding in the trenches, the crazy or unorthodox ways they culled together resources, etc. I often talked about putting down my own credit card to rent cars in Singapore at the start of uberX. The first rental companies wouldn't accept cash from local Singaporean drivers and many drivers didn't have their own credit cards — our scrappy approach at that moment inspired scrappy behavior long afterward.

All-hands meetings are a great time to tell these stories and to empower your early team to do the same. Veteran employees will feel recognized and appreciated, and new people will get a sense of what's valued and expected within your culture.

Leaderboards are crazy effective.

Ranked lists are a surprisingly effective way to get people on your team focused on moving a metric. If a leaderboard is public, e.g. shared monthly over email or at an all hands or on a staff call, it gets everyone's competitive juices flowing and motivates them to take action (especially if they're currently at the bottom of the board).

I remember many times when a global leaderboard would be circulated over email and our region was at the lower third relative to others. It was an incredibly motivating force for both me and my team to rally and focus on a particular initiative to get the APAC region moving up and ahead — and to show everyone else at Uber that Asia was a well-managed force to be reckoned with. It taps into people's pride in their own work and their work as a team. Harness that energy.

One-on-ones need to be a two-way street.

Managers need to come armed with questions about the business to their 1:1s based on data they've reviewed in advance — both qualitative and quantitative. If you don't do this, you're only getting the part of the story that your direct report thinks is important. That may or may not be where the real issues and opportunities lie. You're optimizing within a single frame of reference (the perspective of your direct report) and that's not good.

If you're a manager, you need to look at your report's sphere of influence, and come prepared to push on various aspects of their work and what they touch — particularly any shortcomings you see in the data or learn via other people.

Having this kind of visibility requires accessing the right metrics reporting so you can examine the data yourself and develop your own questions and perspective. If you don't have this kind of trackable data, you won't add as much value during these meetings.

If you rely exclusively on your report's version of how things are going, you're sure to miss other important factors. You should constantly be collecting data about their experience and performance from skip-level meetings, customer interviews, and the business metrics your reports impact to get a greater sense of the story and ask them the right questions during your precious and rare time 1:1.

Skip-level 1-on-1 meetings are a critical tool.

If you manage managers, it's very powerful to set up a recurring catch up with their direct reports. These are commonly referred to as "skip-level" meetings, and they're the only way to get an accurate sense of how your direct reports are leading — and how people on their teams are feeling about the business and the strategy you've set. It's also an efficient way to uncover the obstacles that are preventing teams from executing so that you, as the skip-level manager, can work to unblock them in ways their direct manager can't. **When teams are running hard, these meetings often get deprioritized or forgotten. They're too important for that. Make them a priority.**

Make most meetings about decisions.

If you want people to show up to a meeting, make sure an important decision will be made. Communicate that this is what the meeting is about in advance and be specific about what you want to decide before everyone leaves the room. People are less likely to forego their decision rights. **If no decision is being made, why have the meeting?**

One of the first things I like to do in a meeting is get clarity on what decision is being made and who has the decision rights. If the answer to either is vague or unclear, you should cancel the meeting and reconvene when you have clarity on these two points. If there's ambiguity as to who has decision making rights for a particular topic, it may speak to a broader lack of clarity on decision making and ownership that needs to be addressed.

Make managers accountable (for the good and the bad).

When bad things happen in the office, the team looks to you as the senior manager to take action that's consistent with the company's values. Your actions to handle an employee relations matter (let's say a case of bullying or sexual harassment) speak volumes about what kind of culture you want to set and what kind of company you aim to build. **My advice: communicate and train people in what good behavior means and then hold a zero tolerance policy toward behaviors that violate the cultural values you've set as a leader. All of your managers should follow suit.**

How do you set the right tone for the behavior you expect from people? Define it clearly and communicate it often.

When someone crosses the line, they should be held accountable — and so should their manager.

If a manager's employee is exited from the company for acting inappropriately, the manager must suffer some negative consequences for his or her employee's actions. Yes, that's right. Even if the manager was not the instigator or even physically present for the bad act by the employee, the manager must be held accountable with a financial penalty, demotion, or possibly termination if the situation is severe enough.

I used to think that it was unfair to penalize a manager for an employee's action. After all, how can the manager "control" what the employee does? But over time I realized, it's a core management responsibility to be clear and forceful enough about what's acceptable and unacceptable so that all employees know and understand. If you're not doing this well, you're not doing your job well.

Holding managers accountable for the actions of their employees is the only way to create the right incentives for them to set and enforce the appropriate tone. That doesn't mean work shouldn't be fun or people shouldn't have a great time together. But, it does mean managers are on the hook for how their employees behave and making sure that they're good ambassadors for the company, its brand and broader culture at all times.

Let long-term perception shape present decisions.

Decisions have a long reputation shelf life, and the more successful your company is, the longer their shelf life will be.

Decisions that seem okay or like not a big deal early on may not look so good when you're a bigger company. **You have to think, act and plan for success and longer-term reputation.** If you're successful, the decisions you make today will reflect on you and your reputation for years to come. I've found this to be true in terms of defining and living company culture as well as in the business and strategy decisions and tactics I pursued.

At Uber in Asia, we developed a habit when making important decisions to ask ourselves: **"How is this going to look on the cover of the newspaper in two years' time?"** We found this to be a helpful framing to make sure we'd be proud of whatever decisions we were making at the time.

Evaluate managers with upward feedback and culture surveys.

Managers must be evaluated both on what they get done and how they get it done. The "how" is often overlooked and undervalued. In terms of the "how," determine whether the person works well cross-functionally, represents the company's values in both word and deed, receives strong upward feedback, and whether their team of reports has a high level of satisfaction working at the company.

To measure these attributes, it's very helpful to **run a twice-yearly upward feedback survey and a twice-yearly culture survey (in alternating quarters).** Both of these allow you to take the pulse of how people are feeling about the company and their place in it.

Upward feedback surveys should ask people:

Does your manager inspire you? How? (Sometimes he answer is no.)

Does your manager represent company values?

Does your manager set clearly-defined goals?

Does your manager provide useful, action-oriented feedback?

Does your manager provide professional development or coaching?

At Uber, I would review the upward feedback that employees gave to each manager on my team, and my manager would review the feedback provided by my direct reports about how I was doing. We would collect and review the upward feedback twice per year. The results of a single reporting period were super interesting and the trajectory of a manager's upward feedback over time was very valuable to track improvement or regression.

Ultimately, each manager is responsible for creating a great (fun, inclusive, safe) working environment and enabling each employee to grow and succeed. Each manager is responsible for the happiness and success of his/her direct reports *and* the happiness and success of all of their reports down the chain. If a manager on my team has people that feel they aren't creating an inclusive or safe culture, I'm accountable because I'm the leader of the whole team and I need to do a better job training and coaching them to create a great environment.

Culture feedback surveys should ask people:

To what extent is your experience at work consistent with what's stated in company-wide cultural values?

Do you perceive that your peers and managers conduct themselves in accordance with these values?

Are there any cultural values that you think are missing or should be added?

Do you see any behavior that's inconsistent with stated values? If so, can you share examples?

We started running culture surveys in the quarters that we didn't run upward feedback surveys — also twice per year. These surveys were not specific to individual manager performance but rather sought to evaluate whether our company was living the values we espoused. In other words, did we “walk the talk.” In cases where employees felt we were missing the mark, we could dig in and address negative situations very specifically.

Be there in the tough, dig-deep times.

As a manager, you better be there in person for the fire drills, the emergencies, the weekend envelope stuffing sessions, and all the times the team has to go above and beyond.

When we got shut down in the Philippines, I cancelled my planned vacation and got on a plane to Manila to be there with the team. It was important to show the people on the ground that they weren't facing the biggest crisis of their existence at Uber alone, and it was important to demonstrate to local government officials that the leader of the region cared enough about the Philippines to show up and deal with them personally to make things right.

I was the leader, so people looked to me as the voice and presence of the company. Even if I didn't have unique expertise to bring to bear on a problem, or I could delegate to someone well positioned to solve the problem themselves, I made a habit of being there in person for the tough times. Not to necessarily take control, but to show support. So show up and don't shirk the busy or grunt work. Make your presence felt and don't act too senior to pitch in and help with anything.

Make a “management view” or “operational view” of the P&L accessible to all managers.

Often, your profit and loss sheet won't show you what you actually need to know. **A standard P&L doesn't provide a ton of insight into how the work of individual people or teams impacts profits and losses.** Also, a P&L doesn't always make it clear what specific activities are the most or least efficient — or where there's opportunity to cut costs and do more with less. You need to create a different type of P&L view that gives you more leverage.

For example, expenses to send SMS messages to riders and drivers got lumped into the marketing line item on our P&L. When we broke out telecomm fees separately, we realized we were paying especially high per-message fees in certain countries. Only by seeing this, were we able to bring those fees under control. Creating a new **manager view** of our P&L (sometimes referred to as an activity-based P&L) gave the entire management team a powerful tool to openly discuss and change what was being spent and why. This also changed my managers' mindset — they felt more responsibility to be efficient within the context of the entire regional business.

Align around communication between teams.

If your company has a matrix structure — i.e. people report to both project leaders and department leaders — communication can get thorny fast, especially when you have multiple offices, like at Uber. You want to make sure that stakeholders are informed of important decisions at all times, that your entire team is aligned on what to share with whom, and that you're not selectively sharing with some stakeholders but not others.

Communication channels and who gets brought into what decisions should be part of your decision rights framework. **Sit down with your senior team or peer group and be explicit about who needs to make what decisions and who needs to be notified when decisions are made.**

I used to make decisions about Operations related matters, but I didn't proactively share certain key decisions with my peers in other functions. That created big problems for them and for me. **I wasn't trying to be political; I just didn't understand how the decisions I was making were going to affect other orgs.**

We ultimately adopted the "RACI" framework to define who is **responsible** for the decision, who is **accountable**, who is **consulted** and who needs to be **informed**. By applying a clear decision rights framework, we created a governance structure that people could buy into. It ensured that the right people received the right information to do their jobs or to support the work of others that impacted their jobs.

Don't lose touch with HQ — and if you're in HQ, get out to the field.

If you're a manager working in a remote office, get back to HQ in person at least once per quarter. It's extremely important to learn what's going on and invest in-person in the relationships that you're dependent upon to get stuff done. This is especially important if you need central product or engineering support for your regional priorities.

In person, I was able to make a much stronger case for our region's priorities and gain a better understanding of the pressures that others in HQ were under, including the competing priorities they were juggling. I was able to take what I learned at HQ and share that information with my teammates in Asia. When you work in a remote office, HQ can feel far away, and employees struggle for connection to the company and its management. They need to feel it, and you can help with that as a conduit.

The flip side of this advice is that senior managers from HQ must visit employees in satellite offices often. It's a really powerful boost for remote office team morale and team culture, and an important way to show appreciation for the work people are doing for the company outside of HQ.

Fortify your cross-functional communication to anticipate major problems.

I recall one particular crisis that popped up in our region — a vehicle recall. We kicked off a discussion thread about how to solve the problem, but a smaller subset of people (including me) ended up developing an action plan by phone. We didn't do a good job of then circling back with the other cross-functional leaders to clearly articulate the final decision and action plan. Later, it turned out that some of them felt marginalized or excluded, and others thought we had really mishandled the situation because they didn't have any context. **That was my fault for not bringing people along for the ride together.**

If cross-functional leaders don't have full-visibility into every big decision or plan, you'll create big problems that are hard to reverse.

In the case of the vehicle recall, I remember receiving a phone call from my boss at HQ because he'd heard about the issue through his peer who had heard about it from someone else entirely. This type of phone tag is both too common and extremely costly. It risks creating thrash when messages get distorted or change. I had to spend considerable time unwinding false narratives and setting the record straight because I didn't include the right group of leaders in my region from the outset. It's much more efficient to assemble all the leaders, walk them through the situation, and plan for remediation.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Every meeting must have a clear goal. Every decision must have a clear owner.

Enough said.

Big changes and launches require cross-functional awareness.

Every time there's a strategic change or announcement — a feature launch, a pricing shift, entrance into a new market — you need to assemble your cross-functional leaders far ahead of time to not only give them the heads up, but to let them stress test the thinking behind the plan itself. This will help you avoid sloppy mistakes and last-minute fire drills around issues like taxes, PR and other snafus. **You want to create a checklist to ensure that product launches and operational changes get in front of the right cross-functional audience at the appropriate time.** You want all of them working as one unit to support an overall goal.

There will always be many unknown unknowns when a change or announcement of this magnitude comes up. For example, the introduction of a new product might have tax consequences, require explanation to third-party partners or regulators, the media must be briefed in a particular way, and customer support needs to be lined up to handle new inquiries. The list goes on.

Give the experts on your team who know more about your unknowns the chance to do their jobs and cover your bases.

Cross-functional awareness should never require unanimity in decision making.

Big bold bets require courage. Ideas that make impact can sound outlandish or far-fetched to skeptics at first. If you strive for unanimity, you'll take fewer risks. This is why good decision making frameworks require agreeing on who owns different classes of decisions — giving one person the authority to make the final call. You also want your team to unanimously establish and prioritize a "disagree and commit" culture. This empowers decision makers to make a call and know everyone will back them up and help implement once it's done. If you don't institute this very clearly and have everyone agree to it, mis-alignment on decisions will create confusion, thrash and politics.

Create a decision-making framework and stick to it.

In matrix organizations and at really early-stage companies with nebulous reporting structures, it's really difficult to maintain alignment, set goals, and create a common set of priorities. When bad stuff happens, people run to their boss to cover their own ass, and that can really damage teamwork and collaboration. **At a minimum, you need a clear decision making framework so everyone understands how decisions — especially controversial or contentious ones — are made.** Who gets the final say? How are disputes handled? What decisions require group input across functions versus decisions that can be made within a single team or function? Create ground rules around all of this.

At Uber in Asia, we would divide decisions up into three categories:

Those that need to be made with the involvement of the whole leadership team (or rather, with helpful input from the whole team)

Those that only need a sub-group involved (ideal to go faster)

Those that should be made by an individual leader

Early in any decision-making process, we would make sure to communicate with everyone who might be touched by the result so we could suss out who had an opinion they wanted to contribute. Decisions were never held up by this, but it did give us a chance to make everyone feel heard. Informing people early that a decision is coming makes it more likely they'll happily live with the outcome regardless. They just don't want to be surprised.

Reporting relationships work much better when they're local.

Reporting and decision making across miles and oceans is crappy because so much context is lost and everything slows down — no matter how hard you try. If you can't

avoid long-distance management relationships, make sure the local or on-site manager is sufficiently senior and experienced so that they can handle almost everything locally, and have the trust of people's actual managers to make the right decisions.

Never assume healthy information flow.

Information shared by leadership doesn't always make it all the way to junior employees.

It's safe to assume most information doesn't flow down through the org in the way or with the clarity that you want unless you're really focused on it.

You have to be extremely proactive about sharing company goals, strategy, successes and failures repeatedly and in a way that reaches everyone, without relying on cascading information through tiers of management. Good leaders hold Q&A sessions with different groups within the company — like junior employees specifically, support personnel, etc. Maximize your regular face time with as many people internally as possible.

Choose a single point of contact by function.

It's incredibly helpful if each function or department in the company has a single point of contact for a business owner to interface with — this vastly simplifies coordination and accountability. Also, a single point of contact that's a functional expert can see the big picture and maintain context of the overall situation the business faces.

Alternatively, if the business owner needs to juggle multiple relationships and expertise sets within a functional team, that adds up to a lot more complexity for the business owner, and each "specialist" on the functional team only sees his or her part of the puzzle without full context.

Put every employee on the front line.

In the old days at Uber, the team that ran a given city would process all the customer support tickets themselves. Over time we outsourced a significant amount of this work — but still had it managed by Uber employees who set policies and maintained quality and reliability of support. The benefit was that we could handle support inquiries faster, 24 hours a day in every language that we needed to speak comfortably with our customers. The downside was that our city teams became less connected to the issues raised by our customers — and the great suggestions our customers would provide about product or service improvements.

As a manager, if I didn't make a concerted effort to get in front of customers, I could easily lose touch.

I learned how important it is to expose every employee, regardless of their function or title, to front-line service delivery, interfacing directly with users or customers. This meant processing support tickets, shipping products, handling calls, and gathering feedback via 1:1 customer conversations or focus groups. This generated customer empathy in everyone, not just those who were on the front-lines of product and service delivery as their full-time jobs. I used to think about the famous example of senior executives at McDonald's working in a restaurant making french fries or working the cashier, and I gained new appreciation for how smart that was.

It's critically important to be able to represent the voice of the customer in all decision-making, and there's no better way to do that than to personally work with customers and to listen their experiences. Nobody is too senior or too busy to get in front of customers regularly, and at Uber in Asia **we designed new employee onboarding processes to ensure that as many employees as possible experienced the front lines of customer service delivery.** I also made a point to personally visit our customer support centers and physical retail centers (we called them Greenlight Hubs) regularly to interact with customers myself and channel that back to my employees.

Get your management team together quarterly.

This is extremely important and can't be casually skipped because people are short on time. The goal is to create alignment, but also to have fun and renew relationships.

In the heat of battle, if there isn't excellent trust and genuine respect among cross-functional leaders, you've got a real problem.

This is as true at every level of your org. You need to put gas in the relationship tank for the team (especially cross-functional teams where people are dependent on each other but not necessarily accountable to each other) on a regular basis — at least quarterly. Offsites are a good opportunity to have facilitator-led discussions and foster fierce feedback discussions where people can feel safe being candid.

If offsites happen at all, they typically focus on goal-setting and strategy, but they often miss the interpersonal dynamics element that's so important to forming and maintaining an awesome team. Investing in these dynamics requires collecting data on how people are truly feeling about working with others on the team and setting the right environment and ground rules for sharing that data in a non-threatening and productive manner.

All feedback sharing needs to be coupled with trust building, or it's just going to create divisiveness.

At Uber in Asia, we hired a consultant who interviewed each member of my leadership team to truly understand what each person's views were on how the team was working together, where there was friction, and where there were **opportunities for improvement.** This consultant also held focus groups with an assortment of employees to discuss how well the leadership team was functioning and where there was room for improvement. And finally, they moderated a two-day offsite for us leaders so we could review the data collected on employee culture and

upward feedback. We got a sense of their overall work satisfaction, happiness with management, clarity on goals for our region, and more.

As part of the offsite, we each roleplayed another member on our leadership team and explained to the group what challenges we were facing and how the other members of the group could best support us. Walking in another leader's shoes fostered empathy and gave us greater insight into the unique pressures we were each under and why we made certain decisions or had certain reactions.

CULTURE

Know and respect your team's sacred spaces.

Ask each member of your team to share what their sacred space is in life — what's something that gives their life meaning outside of work that they feel comfortable telling people about? Make sure they have the time to pursue that outside activity consistently. Actually tell them to block out this time and stick to it.

For me, it was leaving the office every day at 6 p.m. to spend 6:30 to 7:30 at home with my kids. I would help with dinner and bedtime. I wouldn't take calls during this hour, but I would start work back up again around 7:30 or 8. This was my sacred space.

I found that by defining and talking openly and often about my sacred space, others scheduled around it—and felt better about having their own.

Each team member should define and communicate his or her sacred space at the beginning of a new project or at the beginning of a new manager-report relationship.

As a manager, a core part of your job is to know and support the sacred space of those around you.

Make vacation a cultural norm.

Force everyone to take vacation. Leaders need to set a good example. It's important for longevity, to avoid burnout and for people to feel comfortable going away and coming back with more creativity and joy for their work. So much of culture is about parroting the behaviors and words of senior management. As one of these senior managers, you want your people to find a degree of work-life balance so that everyone can work hard in a sustainable way.

We used to say at Uber that we're sprinters but we're running a marathon. To carry on at high intensity for long periods of time requires regular breaks and vacations. Make it not only okay, but encouraged to take vacations in your organization by setting the right example and telling other leaders to do the same.

Proactively address your blind spots.

I knew my experience working in the organization as a senior white male was very different from someone else's experience in the org who might have been more junior than me or from a different background. Never assume that your experience of company culture and point of view in the org is the same as someone else's.

Figure out what your blind spots are by conducting skip-level (or skip-multiple-level) meetings regularly and listening sessions with people who are likely to have a very different perspective on what it's like to work there. Make sure you have a prior relationship with this individual in order to elicit candid and critical feedback about their experience working in the organization. Ask about:

Morale in the office from their point of view.

How they are feeling about his or her team.

What their manager is doing well and not well.

What obstacles they're facing in their job. (If you are their skip-level manager, take steps to unblock these obstacles — it will mean a lot to the person that you took action.)

Do you understand the company's goals? Your team's goals?

Do you feel like you can do things you believe are right for the business?

Do you think leadership acts consistently with your values?

What would make work better for you?

When was the last time you took a vacation?

What is your sacred space? Do you feel like you have time for it?

This is how you'll overcome your blind spots. You have to work to not lose touch with how others are perceiving and experiencing the organization. **I made a regular habit of holding monthly sessions with all of the women in my region to listen to their viewpoints, as well as monthly sessions with the junior members of the Operations organization to answer questions and take feedback.** These sessions were invaluable to me in order to see my cultural blind spots. Regular "walk and talk" sessions with people around the office you don't work with closely are another valuable way to unlock blind spots and learn new perspectives.

Transparency and consistency build trust.

Consistency starts with clear goals and a clear strategy. If you don't know your organization's short-term or longer-term goals and strategy, the organization will likely

be paralyzed because it will lack a common framework from which to make decisions. But having clear goals and strategy is just the beginning.

You need to communicate your goals and strategy frequently and in a broad variety of forums. And importantly, they shouldn't change much.

As one of Uber's respected former execs used to say, "Repetition never spoils the prayer."

Transparency and consistency mean the most to people when you're addressing difficult or sensitive topics. For example, explaining how and why someone left the organization when they did (the rumor mill becomes a big distraction when departures are not addressed). The same goes for responses to big competitor announcements. People want to know how leadership is going to react to external shocks or changes in the landscape. **Proactively address social issues that arise in the industry around topics like fair pay, gender discrimination, and diversity and inclusion.** Be candid about how the company is performing in these areas. If you don't share diversity stats internally, people will assume you're hiding something.

Appreciate functions that are often overlooked.

Certain functions rarely get the appreciation they deserve. When things go bad, they get mud thrown at them. When things go well, nobody says anything. This is especially true for Legal, Customer Support and Finance. To be a great business leader, proactively and regularly thank and recognize the accomplishments of the traditionally unsung heroes of the organization.

I learned this lesson when one of the functional leaders on my team let me know I was always recognizing great efforts in our organization, but I often overlooked his function and that members of his team had felt slighted. I immediately began to include often overlooked teammates into my regular recognition efforts. Don't wait to be given this feedback.

Make it an operational discipline to do more with less.

This needs to be an ongoing effort by all team members.

It should be a continuous and top-of mind priority for everyone to pull cost out of the business while maintaining — and hopefully improving — service delivery.

Managers must be relentless about maintaining focus on operational efficiency. It's either part of your culture or it's not. **Make it part of your culture by rewarding it whenever it happens, even on a small scale.**

One way to promote operational discipline is to force managers to segment and prioritize spend requests during headcount planning and budgeting cycles. Segmentation of spending priorities brings clarity that's really helpful for getting managers to do more with less by cutting out all (or many) of the expenditures of lower priority initiatives or hires.

Evaluating our expenditures as a percentage of bookings or revenue, and comparing the percentages to industry benchmarks or competitive benchmarks was another helpful analysis to determine where we were spending more efficiently than industry norms, where we were choosing to over-invest, and where we were simply being inefficient.

This is the first of multiple installments of advice from Mike Brown gleaned during his time running Uber's business in Asia. Stay tuned for more on Thursday covering recruiting, performance management and more.

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