



## Lead Unconventionally and Beat the Competition!

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Leaders inspire people to do remarkable things; the type of things that their followers would not do on their own. With leadership, a vision and competitive advantage becomes reality. The more change an organization is facing, the greater the need for leaders. The more flexible a firm must be to survive in its environment, the greater the need for leaders. Given that today's environment is characterized by frequent change, leadership is more important than ever before.

**Unconventional leaders** go a step further. They lead their companies to repeatedly create things that people love, but no one expected, especially their competition. Unconventional leaders focus on providing the best products and services, rather than profit, yet they tend to lead the most profitable firms in their industries.

Unconventional leaders are constantly searching for new ideas, no matter how strange they might seem to others or where they originated. They create environments in their organizations that match their personality and their followers. They define the norms, establish the values, and lead by example, all in an effort to construct a culture that results in unconventional follower behavior.

Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg are prime examples of unconventional leaders. They do (did) not look like typical business leaders and their leadership style is anything but conventional. In fact, their backgrounds are both contrary to what most people would expect of such successful corporate leaders. They both dropped out of college and have no formal management training.

Despite this, or maybe because of this, they have (had) unconventional leadership styles that have led to the creation of unconventional firms. In fact, the people with the most education and experience are often the most conventional thinkers. Jobs and Zuckerberg demonstrate how unconventional leaders build their own leadership styles based on their context and the many lessons they learn from diverse areas.

Conventional leaders are busy engaging in predictable activities, which might be effective and efficient, but aren't game-changing actions. They don't set the tone for an industry or economy, usually only unconventional leaders do that. Unconventional leaders beat the competition on a regular basis. They innovate and take on the biggest risks, and when they do it well, they reap the biggest rewards. Richard Branson of the Virgin Group is a good example. He said, "I've

had great fun turning quite a lot of different industries on their head and making sure those industries will never be the same again, because Virgin went in and took them on.”

Unconventional leadership is essential in creating an unconventional (progressive) firm that has long lasting competitive advantage. These are the types of firms you read about in the popular press (*Zappos*, *Virgin Group*, *Southwest Airlines*, *Cirque du Soleil*, etc.). Through their companies, unconventional leaders often lead other firms in terms of technology, customer service, business models, etc. They create organizations that redefine their industries and sometimes the way people live. Unconventional companies beat the competition on a regular basis.

Unconventional leadership is the key to business successes because it leads to creativity, *flexibility* and *risk-taking*. These three components are essential to securing long-term competitive advantages and winning in today’s global and hyper-competitive environment. Below are steps you can take to lead and build an unconventional organization that beats the competition.

- Become an unconventional thinker and leader by learning, teaching and communicating new ideas and trying things that are significantly different
- Develop a strategy that builds unique competitive advantages that no other company can copy
- Craft an unconventional culture that others would describe as weird
- Hire unconventional thinkers who can motivate themselves
- Create an environment that supports creativity and allows staff to take risks necessary to innovate
- Use humor and unedited honest communication to enhance performance
- Embrace change and turn it into a competitive advantage, create change on your terms

If you want to survive, secure competitive advantage and win, you need to think and lead unconventionally. While changing is not easy, becoming an unconventional leader has the potential to help you create significant competitive advantage based on innovation, flexibility and risk-taking which results in beating the competition.

Eric J. Romero, PhD is an expert in Unconventional Leadership, Culture, Strategy & Innovation. He helps managers become **unconventional leaders** who innovate and beat the competition. Eric partners with them to create competitive advantage based on **creativity, flexibility and risk-taking**. Eric has written over [35 articles](#) and presented his ideas around the world for over 15 years. He is the author of [Compete Outside the Box: The Unconventional Way to Beat the Competition](#). Originally from New York City, his presentations are

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