

MOVE FORWARD WITH IMAGINABLE GOALS: INTERVIEW WITH EVAN HARRISON, CEO OF KISS THE GROUND



I recently went one-on-one with Evan Harrison, CEO of Kiss the Ground.

Evan: During the early decades of my career, I worked in the music industry and was actively involved in the transition to digital media. It was thrilling. For musicians and audiences alike, the world looks much different today than it did in the early 1990s when I first started. But not every promising technology gained widespread acceptance. Global shifts are also times of upheaval and disruption. And sometimes, the constant minutiae and churn can keep you from seeing the big picture. That's why my work now with the Kiss The Ground and Surfrider Foundation is so important and fulfilling. We're taking a global view. We're seeing things from a generational perspective. Experiencing the rapid, full-tilt transformation of modern music makes me thankful for having a clear mission and purpose. Soil health is human health. Period. It keeps me grounded in the very highest of aspirations.

Adam: What are the best leadership lessons you have learned from leading a nonprofit organization?

Evan: I'm still getting to know the dynamics of running a mission-driven nonprofit organization, but I definitely see that no two organizations are the same. If you're focused on achieving a mission, your organizational structure and methodologies will vary. Still, I do think success stems from building a core team, making sure the mission is crystal clear and easy for everyone to say, and then moving forward with tangible goals and measurable outcomes. These are the tips I've given to leaders of all kinds and adhere to myself.

Adam: What are your best tips for fellow leaders of nonprofit organizations?

Evan: Know the mission and rise to the level of excellence organizationally to get the job done. Progress in the real world counts

leadership skills to the next level?

Evan: For anyone on any team, the biggest motivators are being heard, trusted, and valued. Leaders are always listening and learning. What are you hearing? How are you building trust? Are you communicating in specific ways that you value the contributions people are making? These are just some of the defining characteristics of effective leadership that I've learned from mentors along the way.

Adam: What are your three best tips applicable to entrepreneurs, executives, and civic leaders?

Evan: First, build the core team – I'm looking for hardworking people dedicated to the mission. I'm not looking for a random grab bag of self-absorbed all-stars. I want team committed, capable players who are trustworthy and lift each other up.

Second, make overarching goals conversational – what's the simple story that explains what you're doing and why? Everyone can say it in their own words, but having a clearly articulated, unified narrative pulls people together and forms solid bonds.

Third, move forward with measurable goals – data keeps you grounded and drives progress. Bring in data early and often, along with outside perspectives.

Adam: What is your best advice on building, leading, and managing teams?

Evan: Always celebrate success! As you're picking up speed towards achieving the mission, keep the energy flowing by savoring the wins to rise above occasional losses. Fresh energy is a renewable resource; you just have to tap into it every chance you get. Inspire new thinking — old

Adam: What is the single best piece of advice you have ever received?

Evan: People will remember how their leaders make them feel. The biggest motivators of all are being heard, trusted, and valued.

Adam: What can anyone do to pay it forward?

Evan: The premise for paying anything forward is creating positive change in the first place. There actually has to be something of value to pass along. If your work relates in any way to personal and planetary health—and anything worth doing does, plus there are so many ways to take action on these mutually reinforcing goals—then you're off to an amazing start! And in this kind of work, leaders at all levels are urgently needed. So when you take that on, you're also taking on the responsibility to look after people—lifting up, supporting 100%, learning together, sharing the journey. That might sound like a lot, but in truth, anyone can do it. And right there, everyone has an opportunity to create positivity in the world, starting 1-on-1 and from there extending from the one to the many in an ever-widening ripple effect. You're paying it forward in ways that welcome and include everyone.

Adam Mendler is an entrepreneur, writer, speaker, educator, and nationally recognized authority on leadership. Adam is the creator and host of the business and leadership podcast Thirty Minute Mentors, where he goes one on one with America's most successful people - Fortune 500 CEOs, founders of household name companies, Hall of Fame and Olympic gold medal-winning athletes, political and military leaders - for intimate half-hour conversations each week. A top leadership speaker, Adam draws upon his insights building and leading businesses and interviewing hundreds of America's top leaders as a top



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