

SUMMARY:

Have you ever been inspired by a leader whose life embodies a bold vision and a genuine love for people? Angela Ahrendts, Senior Vice President of Retail at Apple, exudes a contagious joy and personal warmth that sets her leadership apart. In this wide-ranging interview, she discusses how she unexpectedly became a CEO, the importance of work-life balance, how to get the most out of people and the difference between “hard strategies” and “heart strategies.” This interview was recorded in a small, private setting in front of a live audience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **The Path to CEO**
 - I never planned to be a CEO. I always just tried to do my life’s greatest work.
 - No matter what I’m doing, I’m in the people business. You do not become a CEO on your own.
 - If you unite amazing people and achieve amazing results, eventually those above you will want to know the leader who enabled those results.
- **Investing in People**
 - Investing in people involves both a financial and developmental approach.
 - **Financial:** When I came to Apple, the corporate employees had benefits that the retail employees did not. Equal benefits show our people that they are part of a greater whole. Now all employees get stock options and fair wages.
 - **Development programs:** Apple invests in tuition reimbursement and other programs to identify and develop talent.
 - When leaders invest holistically in people, that investment sends the message that “my leader cares.”
- **Work/Life Balance**
 - I have three jobs: I have a husband; I have children and I have a career. I’m going to retire from the career one day. And the kids are going to have their own lives. I’ve always hoped that I can live happily ever after with my best friend.
 - Life is about choices. I keep the end goal in mind and choose to live a life of balance.
- **The “Bigger Boss”**
 - When I’m making decisions, I filter everything through my belief in a “bigger boss.”
 - I remind myself that I have a bigger boss that I’m accountable to every minute of my life.
- **Visionary Leadership**
 - The bigger the vision you have, the more challenging execution will be.
 - The best strategies are not 52 things. They are a handful of simple things that can permeate your culture through repetition and consistent, clear communication.
 - If you want to accomplish your dream, the dream must stay consistent. You can’t go after a different dream every day.
- **“Hard Strategies” and “Heart Strategies”**
 - Every company has “hard strategies” (metrics, goals, budgets) and “heart strategies” (higher purpose).
 - I ask the question, “How many people can we touch and transform by the power of our people and the platforms we create?”
 - The only reason I left Burberry to go to Apple was because of the opportunity to do good on an incredible platform. It’s a calling, not a job.
 - My job as a leader is to inspire people to do their life’s best work.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. Angela discussed several key topics in this interview. Which topic was the most interesting to you?

- How to become a CEO
- How to invest in people



- How to approach work/life balance
 - How to think about God as your “bigger boss”
 - How to execute a vision
 - How to integrate “hard strategies” with “heart strategies”
2. Think about your own leadership. In what specific way could you take a next step to implement one of her ideas into your work life over the next week?

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

[GLS 2018](#)

[Burberry](#)

[Apple Retail](#)

[Apple Corporate](#)

[Oscar Party](#)

[Rose-Colored Glasses](#)

[JFK: Man on the Moon](#)

[Apple Hits \\$1 Trillion Market Value](#)

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