

## Growing Up Shockproof



“We have a very disruptive technology at Memjet,” Len Lauer, CEO shares. “We hold 3000 approved patents and are a well-invested start-up with all the right things in place to grow to a billion and be in excellent shape for an IPO.” But Lauer also knew that despite the power of this a next generation printer technology he and his leadership team would be the key to driving the business to successful execution of a very clear strategy.

**“Good leaders know how to integrate external drivers against internal capabilities. I value this and expect my leaders to do the same. I coach them and give them feedback if they get off track. I set very clear expectations.”**

Lauer believes in knowing himself and his strengths and weaknesses and expects the same of those on his team. Lauer also stressed the value of having an executive coach who helped him become more mindful of his leader behaviors and the value of being experienced as vulnerable and human. He explains, “top leaders have had much experience being told that they have brought about good business results, and they are generally very bright. This is a dangerous combination because such a leader usually gets things very quickly and can seem arrogant, impatient and unapproachable.” His solution is to **“humanize oneself, so others will see you as a real person. Talk about mistakes you have made from time to time when with others. Share how you learned from those mistakes.”**

He also was open about the value of asking questions and listening patiently to people all through the organization about what they do outside of their business related roles and who they are as people. He learned through his own process with self-reflection and feedback that others sometimes experienced him as invulnerable—this made it tougher for people to both relate to him and to get behind him. “People were looking for me to make a mistake.”

Real leaders are leading and getting things done long before they have any kind of positional power on an organization chart. They know themselves and they become the best they can be. They (men and women) focus on becoming a “good guy”—far from perfect, but the best they can be. The idea is to know your strengths and keep getting better at those. Surround yourself with people who can make up for the rest. Better to fess up on both strengths and weaknesses and start leading.