

Whether You're Elon Musk or a Municipal Authority Leader, This Is Your Third Most Important Job

I know that comparison sounds as odd as his goofy superhero jumpsuit. After all, you're not moderating the planet's online conversations any more than he's seeking state funding for a new membrane filtration system. But as the senior leader in your respective organizations, there are three responsibilities you have that supersede all others.

Job number one, of course, is to ensure that your organization doesn't run out of money. That means balancing revenue with expenses and external financing to ensure growth and stability.

Job number two is to provide a quality product/service. That means deploying capital across physical and human resources to provide your customers the value they expect.

So far so good, right? But while Elon and his board are certainly looking after number three, chances are you and yours aren't giving this obligation much thought.

Your number three job is to find your replacement.

If your plans involve stepping out of your role in around three years, you owe it to your Authority to be preparing your exit with your board. After all, your joint responsibility is to ensure the organization's continuity. That means you both need to ensure that the senior leader transition be as seamless as possible, which means making your successor as day-one ready as you possibly can.

Your time frame is longer? Great, but don't think that leaves you off the hook.

It's more than a concern that you are one day hit by the proverbial bus. You have longer-term issues and opportunities that you know you need to grapple with, but the current day's plate is just too full. The only way any leader gets to those issues is by growing at least one member of the team into someone who can function as your right arm – the person who doesn't need to be told twice (if at all) what matters, or how to get after it. When that person can clear even part of your plate, you can get after those bigger, future-state issues that ensure your Authority's ongoing success.

The best such right arms are those who, given time, development, and training, could become your replacement. They are the best people to help you do your best work.

Challenge people to help them grow, with the goal of developing one person so good that they could step into your shoes, come greener pastures, retirement, or even that proverbial bus. You may not achieve it, but it's what you should be working toward. That's the key to every leader's real success, including yours. No goofy jumpsuit required.