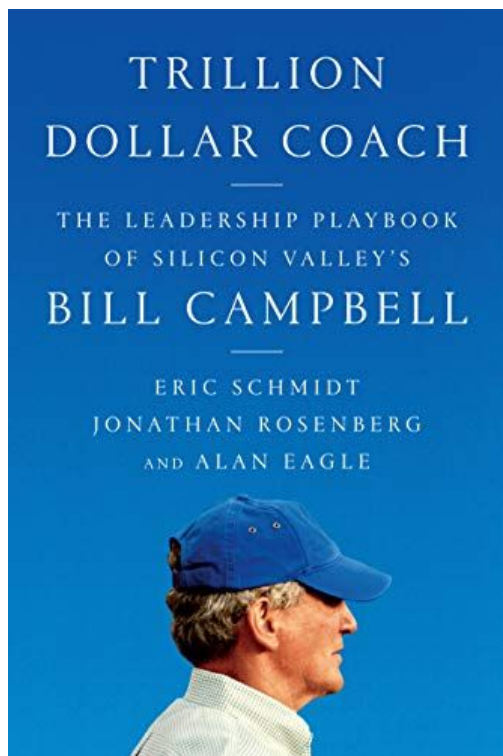


Favorite Quote:

"I look at all the people who've worked for me, or who I've helped in some way, and I count up how many are great leaders now. That's how I measure success." —Bill Campbell



Summary: *Trillion Dollar Coach* is about the rewarding life of Bill Campbell, Silicon Valley's most preeminent and beloved executive coach. When he died in 2016, Bill left an estate of over \$300 million, but it was never about the money.

At his funeral, many of the Silicon Valley elite were in tears. They mourned the loss of their coach, their friend, and told stories about his infamous bear hugs and jovial obscenity.

What made Bill Campbell unique?

By all accounts, Bill was the Michael Jordan of **building relationships**, and **managing teams**— *the ultimate coach*. He listened intently, felt deeply, and was ruthlessly honest:

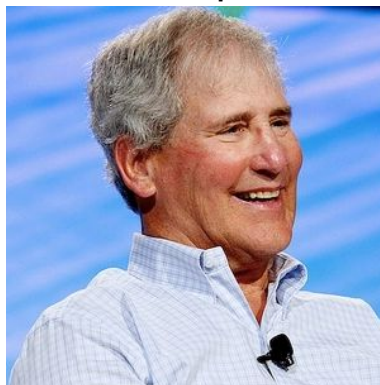
"Bill's natural state is to be oppositional and challenge you," said Jesse Rogers. "The great thing about Bill is that he is aggressive and tenacious in giving negative feedback."

Top leadership—Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Uber, Twitter, Yahoo, eBay, Intuit—all praise this unique man.

This book is a poignant reminder that seemingly cliché truths have a depth that distracted minds often miss. It's not a puddle, but a well.

"Bill was always transparent; there was no hidden agenda. There was no gap between his statements and fact. They were always the same." —Ram Shriram (Google board member, former Amazon executive)

Bill Campbell



Coach

Eric Schmidt



Co-Author
Former Google CEO

Jonathan Rosenberg



Co-Author
Former Google SVP Prod

Alan Eagle



Co-Author
Google Director Comm

"You don't want to channel Bill, because no one can be him. But I learned from him how to get better: a higher level of honesty, a better understanding of people and management." —Ben Horowitz

DBT VENTURES

Overview: Bill Campbell went from college football coach to senior executive at a Fortune 500 company in less than five years. [He was a superb business executive.](#) And he did it through practicing:

- operational excellence
- putting people first
- “work the team, not the problem”
- being decisive
- communicating well
- knowing how to get the most out of even the most challenging people
- focusing on product excellence, and
- treating people well when they are let go

What Bill likes

Some of Bill’s favorite things, according to this [wonderful article written by one of his children](#), Kate Bocci:



“Billy-Bill” also loved people. One of his favorite spots to spend time with people was “The Old Pro,” a bar he owned in Palo Alto. Ask a Stanford friend about “The Old Pro” and you’ll likely get a gleeful, reminiscent smile.



Bill’s early career started, quite literally, as a coach. Football was the game, and he began to develop his skills in wrangling people to accomplish something. He was an assistant coach at Boston College, and later coached his

alma mater's football team at Columbia University. Bill knew the field well having played football for Columbia for 3 years, earning All-Ivy his senior year.



Bill started his business career at **Kodak** where he rose quickly and by 1983 he was working in London as the company's head of consumer products for Europe. During his initial job search in 1979, one of his Columbia football buddies had connected Bill with **John Sculley**, who was then a senior executive at PepsiCo. Bill didn't take the job that John offered at Pepsi, but in 1983 Sculley decamped to Silicon Valley to become CEO of Apple, and shortly thereafter he gave Bill a call. **This was an important phone call.**

Bill takes the job at Apple. Within nine months of joining Apple, Bill was promoted to VP of sales and marketing and given the task of overseeing the launch of the highly anticipated Macintosh, Apple's new computer that would replace the Apple II as the company's flagship product. He became lifelong friends with Steve Jobs.



“Fuck it! Let's run it.”

{bill defying the Apple board and running the [controversial 1984 Super Bowl ad](#)}

“The first time we met, we talked about business and strategy. But when we talked again, we got off of strategy and talked instead about leadership and people. The other people I had interviewed had a cookie-cutter approach to developing people. You can have any color you want as long as it's black. But Bill, he was a **technicolor rainbow**. He appreciated that each person had a different story and background. He was so nuanced and different in how he approached growth challenges and leadership challenges. I was looking for a way to grow our people in a way I couldn't. Bill was great at that.”



Scott Cook
Former Intuit CEO



John Doerr
Kleiner Perkins

Why not have an executive in residence, someone who was seasoned in operations and strategy, to help the firm's startups through the ups and downs of growth (or lack thereof)?

Bill agreed and settled into life on Sand Hill Road at Kleiner Perkins as the “executive in residence.”

How Bill approached 1:1 meetings

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>PERFORMANCE ON JOB REQUIREMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be sales figures • Could be product delivery or product milestones • Could be customer feedback or product quality • Could be budget numbers | <p>RELATIONSHIP WITH PEER GROUPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is critical for company integration and cohesiveness • Product and Engineering • Marketing and Product • Sales and Engineering |
| <p>MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you guiding/coaching your people? • Are you weeding out the bad ones? • Are you working hard at hiring? • Are you able to get your people to do heroic things? | <p>INNOVATION (BEST PRACTICES)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you constantly moving ahead . . . thinking about how to continually get better? • Are you constantly evaluating new technologies, new products, new practices? • Do you measure yourself against the best in the industry/world? |

On decisiveness: Failure to make a decision can be as damaging as a wrong decision. There's indecision in business all the time, because there's no perfect answer. Do something, even if it's wrong, Bill counseled. Having a well-run process to get to a decision is just as important as the decision itself, because it gives the team confidence and keeps everyone moving.



On the importance of Product & Engineering teams:

Bill was a business guy, but he believed that nothing was more important than an empowered engineer. His constant point: product teams are the heart of the company. They are the ones who create new features and new products.

Bill was known to say: "Why is marketing losing its clout? Because it forgot its first name: product."

Ron Sugar, an Apple board member and former CEO of Northrop Grumman, says, "Bill helped me understand that in a company like Apple, the degree of independence of creative thinking, of being not so conformist, is a strength. You need to embrace that nonconformist streak." When Bill was CEO of Intuit, he met with all the engineering directors for lunch every Friday, where they'd spend a couple of hours over pizza talking about what they were doing and what was slowing them down. For a non-techie, Bill did a good job getting into details with the geeks; the execs need to be able to talk to the engineers, even if they aren't engineering execs. And the geeks knew they had the CEO's attention every week. This is how he ensured that they had stature.



Ron Sugar

*Former CEO Northrop Grumman
Director of Chevron, Apple, Uber*

On supporting CEOs: Often, when people ask for advice, all they are really asking for is approval. “CEOs always feel like they need to know the answer,” Ben Horowitz says. “So when they ask me for advice, I’m always getting a prepared question. I never answer those.” **Instead, like Bill, he asks more questions, trying to understand the multiple facets of a situation. This helps him get past the prepared question (and answer) and discover the heart of an issue.**



Ronnie Lott

“Great coaches lie awake at night thinking about how to make you better. They relish creating an environment where you get more out of yourself. Coaches are like great artists getting the stroke exactly right on a painting. They are painting relationships. Most people don’t spend a lot of time thinking about how they are going to make someone else better. But that’s what coaches do. It’s what Bill Campbell did, he just did it on a different field.”

Leaders who take the time to ask questions and listen: A 2003 study from Lund University in Sweden finds that “mundane, almost trivial” things like listening and chatting with employees are important aspects of successful leadership, because “people feel more respected, visible and less anonymous, and included in teamwork.” And a 2016 paper finds that this form of “respectful inquiry,” **where the leader asks open questions and listens attentively to the response**, is effective because it heightens the “follower’s” feelings of **competence** (feeling challenged and experiencing mastery), **relatedness** (feeling of belonging), and **autonomy** (feeling in control and having options).

Work the team, not the problem

His first instinct was always to work the team, not the problem. In other words, he focused on the team’s dynamics, not on trying to solve the team’s particular challenges. That was their job. His job was team building, assessing people’s talents, and finding the doers. *Get the team right and you’ll get the issue right.*

As managers, we tend to focus on the problem at hand. What is the situation? What are the issues? What are the options? And so on. These are valid questions, but the coach’s instinct is to lead with a more fundamental one. *Who was working on the problem? Was the right team in place? Did they have what they needed to succeed?*

This isn’t always easy in a large company, but Bill would look for those same characteristics he looked for in candidates: smarts, hard work, integrity, grit. And then he would figure out ways to formally or informally bring those people together to talk and make stuff happen, around a particular project or problem.

The optimistic problem solver

One way Bill was able to accomplish this trick was by staying **relentlessly positive**. Negative situations can be infectious, people get cynical, optimism fades. “In those early years we had some tough times,” Eddy says, “but Bill was by far the most positive board member we had.” It would be easy to dismiss this attitude as mere cheerleading, except that **he was also relentless in identifying and addressing problems**, which cheerleaders don’t do.

Treating failure as a teacher

It's great and fun to talk about winning, but what about losing? Bill knew something about losing. His teams at Columbia lost a lot, and the startup he joined, GO, failed, losing a lot of investor money in the process. Failure is a good teacher, and Bill learned from these experiences that loyalty and commitment are easy when you are winning and much harder when you are losing. But that's when **loyalty**, **commitment**, and **integrity** are even more important. When things are going badly, teams need even more of those characteristics from their leaders.

Bill created community through traditions, e.g. annual trips

For example, Bill went to the Super Bowl every year (!). There was also the annual baseball trip, which always included a Pirates game in Pittsburgh, a visit to Homestead, and a couple of other games in the Eastern time zone. There was the “yips and salsa” golf trip to Cabo San Lucas. There was the journey to the annual College Football Hall of Fame induction ceremony. There was the annual fishing trip to Butte, Montana, where Bill helped spearhead an annual charity event. **All of these trips were endowed by Bill when he passed away so his friends could keep going even in his absence.** How remarkable.

The common thread with all these trips? Community. Bill built community instinctively. He knew that a place was much stronger when people were connected.

Bill recommends keeping Jeff Bezos as CEO. Good call.



Bill started traveling back and forth to the Pacific Northwest, going to the Amazon offices a couple of days per week, sitting in on management meetings and observing the company's operations and culture. After a few weeks, he reported back to the board that Jeff Bezos needed to stay as CEO. In his book about Amazon, *The Everything Store*, Brad Stone writes that “*Campbell concluded Galli was unnaturally focused on issues of compensation and on perks like private planes, and he saw that employees were loyal to Bezos.*”

Bill's recommendation came as a surprise to some board members, but his assessment carried the day and Jeff stayed as CEO, obviously with great success.

Founder first mentality

“Today you are the CEO and they are the founders,” Bill said, “but someday you will be the ex-CEO and they'll still be the founders. It's not you versus them; it's you and them. You are here to help them.”

Love in the workplace

Bill made it okay to bring love to the workplace. He created a culture of what people who study these things call “companionate” love: feelings of affection, compassion, caring, and tenderness for others. He did this by genuinely caring about people and their lives outside of work, by being an enthusiastic cheerleader, by building communities, by doing favors and helping people whenever he could, and by keeping a special place in his heart for founders and entrepreneurs.

Life advice from a man who lived it

BE CREATIVE. Your post-fifty years should be your most creative time. You have wisdom of experience and freedom to apply it where you want. Avoid metaphors such as you are on the “back nine.” This denigrates the impact you can have.

DON'T BE A DILETTANTE. Don't just do a portfolio of things. Whatever you get involved with, have accountability and consequence. Drive it. [I had to look up *dilettante*: “a person who cultivates an area of interest, such as the arts, without real commitment or knowledge.”]

FIND PEOPLE WHO HAVE VITALITY. Surround yourself with them; engage with them. Often they will be younger.

APPLY YOUR GIFTS. Figure out what you are uniquely good at, what sets you apart. And understand the things inside you that give you a *sense of purpose*. Then apply them.

DON'T WASTE TIME WORRYING ABOUT THE FUTURE. Allow serendipity to play a role. Most of the turning points in life cannot be predicted or controlled.

And most importantly: IT'S THE PEOPLE

People are the foundation of any company's success. The primary job of each manager is to help people be more effective in their job and to grow and develop. We have great people who want to do well, are capable of doing great things, and come to work fired up to do them. Great people flourish in an environment that liberates and amplifies that energy. Managers create this environment through support, respect, and trust.

Support means giving people the tools, information, training, and coaching they need to succeed. It means continuous effort to develop people's skills. Great managers help people excel and grow.

Respect means understanding people's unique career goals and being sensitive to their life choices. It means helping people achieve these career goals in a way that's consistent with the needs of the company.

Trust means freeing people to do their jobs and to make decisions. It means knowing people want to do well and believing that they will.

Don't fuck it up!

Rest in peace, Bill.
You've left a legacy of friendship, generosity, candor and love.
You are the one and only.
A true original.