

Talent Acquisition and Employee Engagement Programs



Joe Mechlinski - CEO

About entreQuest

entreQuest (eQ) inspires the world to grow regardless. Starting with our passion for people and growth, we strive to make a dynamic impact on our team, clients, and communities.

Our story, methodologies, and strategies are not produced from textbooks or from ivory tower theories. Rather, they were forged in the beautiful struggle of growing 400 companies. Our expertise is authentic, so our clients know that we are partners in their growth, their wins, and their challenges.

From our humble beginnings as a Baltimore-based two-man shop to the specialized team we are today and the partnerships we've formed throughout the country, it's clear we've experienced growth in the physical sense. Yet, our true growth is measured by our understanding that every venture has an unforeseen value.

eQ's programming is designed around our philosophy that every company has extraordinary potential to better the lives of its people, the experience of its clients, and the condition of its community. It is this philosophy that enables us to give our clients the tools and guidance necessary to grow in new, unexpected ways that will ultimately change their outlooks and their outcomes for good.

In everything we do, we hold true to our values: *To inspire the world to Grow Regardless through performance, scalability, passion and impact.*

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Mechlinski, what is the vision and concept at entreQuest?

Mr. Mechlinski: Our mission or vision is to help companies grow regardless of their size, industry or the economy. We do that in two ways, one through helping companies with their talent, so in terms of attracting, selecting, screening, hiring, on boarding, managing, training, mentoring growing and succeeding. We have a talent acquisition for access and consultancy. On the other side, we believe that in order to grow in this kind of economy whether your company is big or small, that culture really rules the day. That culture is the leading indicator for businesses. They are who their company is and how it organizes its behaviors and aligns with its vision and values is the essence of a company's perception and brand. When you look at great companies like Zappos, Google or Southwest, it is commonly known as either some of the best customers service practices or standards or examples. They also come with great culture employee experience and employee engagement. We help companies do those two things.

CEOCFO: What makes great culture? Is a good culture a good culture across the board regardless of the type of company or product or are there particular types of companies where there is a more appropriate corporate culture?

Mr. Mechlinski: I do not think the question is really relevant. This is about an assembly of a group of organisms, of people, feelings, actions, beliefs, routines, and habits that finds itself organically operating with pretense or agenda. I will say what makes great culture is honesty, authenticity, organic; not saccharine, not fake. When you look at the research, whether behavioral, social science, history, philosophy, social psychology, what you will see is it is the hardest thing we as human beings struggle with emotionally, which is just being honest. How do we feel? How do I think you are doing? How are you do? When you look at that dynamic, the more honest and real people can be, the better chance a culture has to do what it was intended to do within given companies. Whether you sell straws, coffee, services, rocket science or blood work, it is of that culture.

CEOCFO: Do most employees intuitively know when it is fake?

Mr. Mechlinski: I think my four year old daughter can look at me and tell whether when she asks for ice cream at the end of dinner, she knows when I look at her without saying a word whether she is going to get it or not. I in short feel that most

human beings have a BS meter that they were born with. Certainly some or more honed than others but we can all look at each other in the eye and know whether we really mean it or we just mean it a little bit.

CEOCFO: *How do you work with a company on their culture? When might a company come to you and what would they specifically ask you to do?*

Mr. Mechlinski: It would start in probably one of three different ways. First we are having trouble connecting with our customers more so that we can sell more. We are having trouble attracting more customers to a new product or service offering, but there is something related to customers and thereby revenue. When that is an issue, we do what we normally do, which is we have a bias towards going to where the fire is, to where the relationships starts and getting out in the field, surveying customers, interviewing people, getting out in the shoulders being shoulder to shoulder with the people that are making it happen. The second quick scenario is I am looking for talent. It can be I cannot find the right people. I am having a hard time filling open positions, keeping the right people. We are not sure how to grow people that do not seem to be with it. We have many high performers but they are low potential. It is some equation around talent equation. The third is totally different than the first two, which is there is a trigger event. There is a conference coming up and they need an awesome keynote to elevate the thinking to raise the conversations up in their company. There is a retreat to a strategic planning event, they just raise money and they want to go do something. There is a trigger event that event that evokes a different trajectory of the company's energy, planning, thinking and they would like us to play a part in it. The first two or general such as help fix my sales, help me hire or fix my talent equation. The third is there is this discreet upcoming that we know we are going to need help with, so can you help us with it?

“I believe in the potential of human beings. None of us are done on this journey of being completely fulfilled, utilized and being as good as we can be. Every day you get a chance to make today the best day of your professional career and I am not sure that everyone views it that way.” - Joe Mechlinski

CEOCFO: *How would a company find entreQuest? How would they know to look for you?*

Mr. Mechlinski: There are forty five thousand medicine consultants in the US. Of the forty-five thousand, there are thirty companies with more than a thousand employees. Of those thirty companies, most of which work with the companies that are in the mid to large market, companies that are more than 250 million and above. The majority of the management consultants are actually working inside of companies that are under that. People will find us no different than other service based industries, first and foremost through reputation. Just like the old school main street way of doing business was if you like eating the biscuit or doughnut at the local bakery, you would tell people. That is the way we get most of your business. The second is if you have read any of our published material, most notably, we published a book a year and a half ago called Grow Regardless, which was a New York Times best seller along with most of the other lists. We are published, we have been in the media. We speak in our reputation.

CEOCFO: *“Grow Regardless” - is that just because everyone has room for improvement? Why are you so sure that every company can do better?*

Mr. Mechlinski: I believe in the potential of human beings. None of us are done on this journey of being completely fulfilled, utilized and being as good as we can be. Every day you get a chance to make today the best day of your professional career and I am not sure that everyone views it that way. If you go into it with that mindset and you can assemble a group of a thousand people inside an organization to believe that tomorrow, for example Sept. 23rd, you are going to make that day the most important and best performing day possible, then can you do it on the 24th? I think that motivation is incredibly important not as a worker but as a human being. We are not promised tomorrow and regardless of your spiritual or religious beliefs, it is widely accepted that we just do not know what is going to happen. I believe that regardless is without excuse with a huge amount of self directedness, personal responsibility and the idea that we are out of excuses. I am not going to be eaten by a lion today. I am probably not going to die of some really easy to cure disease. I have running water. I am walking in shoes. We live above the hierarchy of needs, at that first level, so the question is, “What we are going to do with that life?” That is why Grow Regardless exists.

CEOCFO: *How do you work with a company to instill that concept at every level?*

Mr. Mechlinski: No different from when a doctor comes in to diagnose a patient. Then instead of really studying the patient, and listening and asking questions, comes to quick judgment. He pulls a book off the shelf, does not look the patient in the eye, does not take the time to truly understand why this experience is distinctly unique from the seventy five thousand patients they have before, back to the BS factor, people pick up on it. The number one things that we try to do is ask really good questions, listen and get to the frontline and trenches, survey, interview and watch it happen. We help companies look at defining what is good and seeing based on where we are, the old adage of Peter Block; where are we, where do we want to go and how do we want to close the gap? We use that philosophy of we initiate a study of an organization in phase one and then in phase two we help to think about what the components are that company needs to

execute against that study. What are the components of training, further consulting for the facilitation of recruiting talent acquisition work. What are the elements around building a great culture and hiring only the best people? We have thirteen years of experience in working with more than 400 companies and what is awesome about our company of Navy Seals as management consultants is we practice what we preach. We view our company as a learning lab. Every single week we are learning and growing and we work Monday through Thursday. Friday is our day to practice, learn, train, bring outside speakers, do acupuncture, go see the homeless, sit quietly and not look at your phone all day, collaborate and create. What are the newest frameworks? What is the newest research say? What is really driving human behavior and corporate settings? What really does build great cultures? Imagine if you worked in an environment that was that intense, then practiced it every day. That is how we have become as good as we are and we are not done. We are not perfect, we have a lot to learn and grow from but you have to make time for it and I think we do.

CEOCFO: *Are you able to convince many of your clients that is a good step, to make time for the growth, development and reflection?*

Mr. Mechlinski: I think we are. I think like anything, we all have our beliefs about perception of where we spend our time as good as it gets. To a degree we can all be a little more observant and aware that there is room to grow in anything that we are taking on, but the only way normally it to actually put the work in and invest. In other words, it would almost be like walking around saying I would love a six pack abs, but only talking about going to the gym or only going to the gym once, or only going once a week, or going every day and eating a balanced meal. You actually have to do the work.

CEOCFO: *Do many of your clients engage with you on both the talent acquisition and training levels or does it tend to be either or?*

Mr. Mechlinski: It tends to be on both. When companies need help finding really good people, we will change the conversation to really talking about the culture because the culture should act as a magnet to attract only the people they want to attract and it should repel only the people they do not want to work with. We quite often find ourselves helping consult and devise companies to build great strategies to help them execute building one of the best places to work. Secondly, we help them not necessarily in this order, but help them find really great people. If you can change in the nature of the conversation with the marketplace that is flooded with more job openings now before 2007, in an environment where talent is scarce, training professional people to do the work you need them to do is going to be the strategic imperative of every growth organization for the next five years. You can find a way to up the ante and winning an award to be the best places to work or some other kind of thing. It is not that everyone is wise to giving your people healthcare, so what are you going to do to raise the game of becoming that magnet for great talent? Why would people choose you? They can choose you, Google, the other really cook company down the street. We look for ways to distinguish our clients from the pack with not cute kitschy packets, but with authentic stories about who you are, why you exist, about your customers and your employees, and about why that is important to you.

CEOCFO: *Would you give us an example of how that plays out when you are actually working with a company? What are some steps you might advise?*

Mr. Mechlinski: One of our clients is in the manufacturing sector and they sell a vibration alignment tool. It is really technical, niche, and it is barely known in their industry what this product does. I could bore you about why it is different, talk to you about why it is different than our competitors, or after working with us and talking to their employees and customers, coming up with a growth plan, we help this company sell as we talk about grow regardless, telling a story about the company. It is not some origin story; it is about where your company is going. Instead of saying, "Hi my name is Joe, I work at VibrAlign," it is, "Hi my name is Joe, I work at VibrAlign - we do not just sell vibration equipment, we are on a mission to help realign American manufacturing. We believe that manufacturing is the backbone of this country and what we do matters in the manufacturing space. If we are able to help the manufacturers in this country become more efficient, effective and profitable, we are going to put more people back to work just by the nature of doing what we do, which is help align the processes, the assembly line and help align the equipment in your business."

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as the company has grown and developed?*

Mr. Mechlinski: As we become better at what we do, it only gets harder. There is this notion that Michael Jordan, Peyton Manning or Serena Williams gets to a point in their career and it gets easier. I think we have all been conditioned to think of this concept of retirement, working really long and then stopping, sort of rooted in the industrial revolution culture of working with your hands and feet and not with your head. What I find interesting is that every time I become complacent or tired, or needing rest or looking for it to become easier, it only gets harder if we want to keep growing. It is not easy if you want to continuously improve and grow.

CEOCFO: *Put it together for our readers, why choose entreQuest?*

Mr. Mechlinski: It comes down to two or three reasons. First is that you want to do something meaningful to the people you serve, meaning your employees clients and the community. You are not here just to make money. You believe that you can make money, profit and then consider our planet as we are doing it. If you philosophically have that worldview and then you want to work with the Tom's shoes version of a management and talent consultant, you should pick us. The

second reason you should pick us is not just because we want to change the world and impact lives, you should want to work with us because we get it done, where others love to talk and come up with great theories, right books. We have done those too but where our heart really lies is in doing the work, getting it done and investing and spending the time, helping a company execute. Ideas are a dime a dozen, execution is everything. We pride ourselves as that being a super skill that our company has.

BIO: Joe Mechlinski is a *New York Times* best-selling author, sought-after speaker, entrepreneur, and community advocate. He has spent his entire life beating the odds, looking for new and better ways to achieve success. Joe has helped more than 400 companies (including his own) prosper through some of the worst economic times in history. He believes that finding and growing talent are the new competitive advantages in business. He is passionate about inspiring and instructing business leaders to think strategically about how they attract, hire, and grow the best talent to grow regardless of their size, their industry, and the economy. He will hit you between the eyes with truth, grit, and leadership. He will also challenge you to do more, give more, and be more!

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