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Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to Redesign a Business Plan

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Conley explains his own interpretation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, learned in the context of the hospitality industry. As an entrepreneur, he realized that just as people strive to "be all they can be", so too can companies. Conley suggests that there are three steps toward elevating to a transformative "self-actualization". Conley believes these needs can be found in employees, customers, and investors. Joie de Vivre Hotels redesigned their business model, keeping in mind the "higher" needs of these three key constituencies.



Transcript

So what was interesting to Abraham Maslow is that prior to the 1940s and 50s when he actually started talking about an alternative model for the human condition, the definition of psychology was really based upon Floyd and Skinner and in some ways it was a model based upon worst practices as opposed to best practices. And what I mean by that is generally the psychology and psychiatry community had actually studied human condition based upon people who are coming to psychologists and psychiatrists that were troubled. Yeah, they're in a place in their life where something was wrong. And so, Floyd's model is based upon that. But what Maslow said in the 1940s is what if we were to study a thousand fulfilled people or self-actualized people, what would we learn from that? And that's how he came up with his Hierarchy of Needs which is what he's famous for. The idea that people have basic needs in life and if they don't get those basic needs met, it's hard to move up this pyramid. The basic need being water, food, sleep, and once you get about 70% what Maslow said, once you get about 70% of that need met, you move up to the next need which is safety and then social belonging needs, esteem needs, and the top of the pyramid, the self-actualization. Now, the best definition I have for self-actualization is one that the US Army came up with in their ad campaign for 12 years which was "Be all you can be" which is very strange that the US Army studied Maslow, that a whole division within the US Army actually studied Maslow which is sort of odd to believe. But when I started reading Maslow apparently for my own sake but what became really clear to me is that Maslow was relevant in the work place or relevant for any business. Because if you believe that humans have the ability to get to that self-actualizer for full state so do companies because companies are just collections of individuals.

So what we started to do is look at the fact that each, there's five levels here, and there's really three themes and the three themes are survival, here at the base of the pyramid; succeed, in the middle, levels three and four; and then transform, at the top of the pyramid. And so, what we ask ourselves was what are the survival needs for our employees? What are the succeed needs for our employees? What are the transformation needs for our employees? And similarly, what are those needs for our customers and for our investors also? Because those are the three largest constituencies of groups we have that we work with in our company. And so, we created in 2001, at a time when we are about to go bankrupt, we evolved our business model using Maslow and created a whole new approach to how we thought of our relationships with these three key constituencies because generally speaking what happens is most companies get very focused on just survival needs, and they don't focus on the higher needs of their key people or the key constituencies.