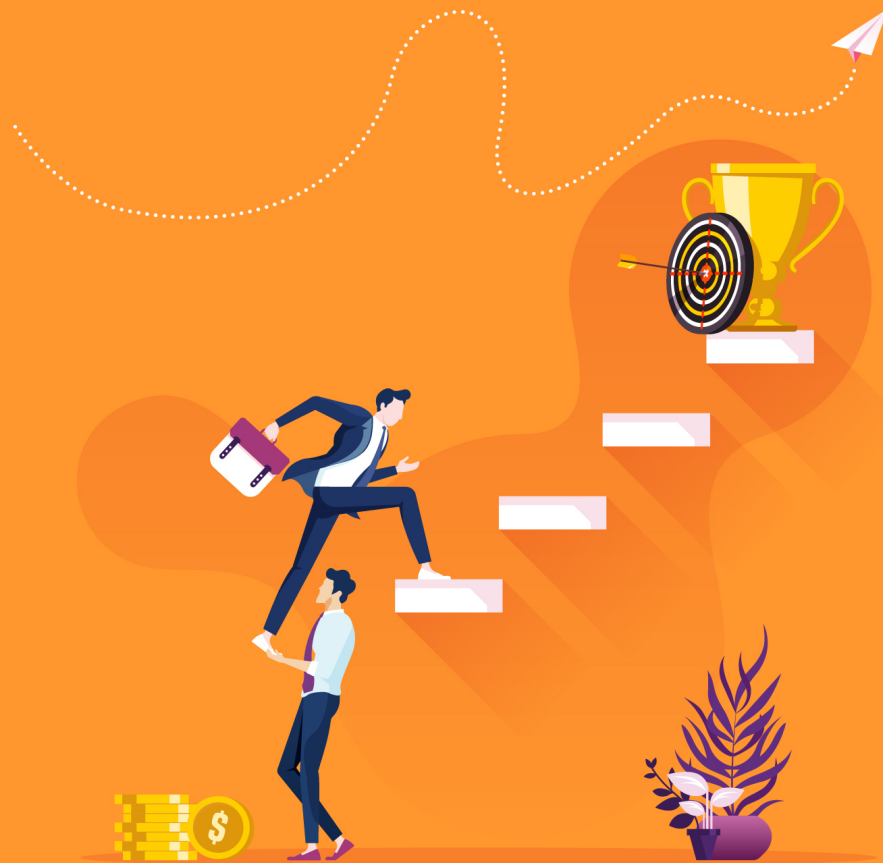


SUMMARY

TRILLION DOLLAR COACH

ERIC SCHMIDT, JONATHAN ROSENBERG, AND ALAN EAGLE



Summary of “Trillion Dollar Coach” by Eric Schmidt, Jonathan Rosenberg, and Alan Eagle

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How a football coach shaped Silicon Valley.

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Introduction

What do you think of when “tech guru” comes to mind? Do you think about Steve Jobs? Or maybe that nerdy guy you went to high-school with who wound up becoming a millionaire? No matter what you think of, the tech world usually aligns pretty closely with our vision of sleek, cutting-edge technology and nerds. But it doesn’t usually include football players. Maybe that’s because we contrast athletes who play contact sports as being rough, assertive, and aggressive. We might even have a preconception that they’re not too mind. (Does the phrase “dumb jock” come to mind?) So, if you don’t think a football player would be a great fit in Silicon Valley, it’s an understandable assumption. It would be even more forgivable if the man in mind was a football coach.

But that’s just who Bill Campbell was: a man who was at ease on the football field and in the boardroom. A man who was as happy coaching college football as he was rubbing shoulders with Steve Jobs. In fact, not only was he friends with tech icons like Jobs, he was also one of the minds behind Apple, Google, and many other household names! So, how did this unlikely partnership come about? Through the course of this summary-- and over 80 interviews with the tech gurus he mentored-- we’ll unpack his story.

Campbell's Origin Story

We all know the stories of men like Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. These are the revolutionaries who dared to think outside the box, who were too unique to fit into the mold of traditional higher education. These are the inventors who drop out of college so they can change the world. And indeed, both went on to become wildly successful before they were even thirty. As a result, it's easy to form a certain stereotype of what a "typical" Silicon Valley pioneer looks like. But Bill Campbell broke that mold in more ways than one.

In addition to being much older than your traditional techie-- (Bill was in his forties by the time he hit the Silicon Valley scene)-- he also wasn't born with access to any significant resources. He would never have received startup capital from his father-- a Phys Ed. teacher who also worked in a local factory to make ends meet-- and he didn't have powerful family connections. If Bill was going to make something of himself, it would never have been through nepotism or family money. So, he threw himself into his schoolwork, even taking on extracurriculars like writing for his school newspaper. His opinion pieces exhorted his classmates to do their best in their studies, avoid procrastination, and go after what they wanted in life. But surprisingly, neither academics nor journalism defined young Bill Campbell's future goals. For him, these were important, but not the direction of his future career.

No, what he really wanted was a career in football. And that's exactly what he worked towards. After earning a scholarship to study economics at Columbia University, Campbell left his hometown of Homestead, Pennsylvania in 1958. That's where he joined Columbia's football team, the Lions. Although he was significantly shorter and slimmer than their average football player-- at only 165 pounds and 5'10-- he brought a spirit of fight and fire to the team. Inspiring his teammates with his willingness to tackle challenges head on-- even when those challenges were represented by a hulking opponent-- he soon earned the nickname "Ballsy Bill." And

thanks to the example he set for the team, the Lions won the Ivy League title 1961. It's worth noting that, after Bill graduated and left the team, they've never won the award since.

After his illustrious term on the school football team, Bill pursued his dream of a career in football and it looked like his dreams were coming true! Upon graduation, he was instantly offered a position as an assistant football coach at Boston College. He accepted as a heartbeat and moved to Boston in 1964. He then used the next ten years to hone his skill and reputation as a valuable coach and it wasn't long before additional offers from universities came pouring in. Only this time, with ten years of success under his belt, they weren't inviting him to be an assistant. This time, he would be responsible for leading an entire college team. Bill spent a lot of time mulling over the various offers, weighing all the pros and cons to determine the best choice for his future, and he was especially torn by an offer from Penn State. This university was the old stomping grounds of America's star football coach, Joe Paterno; it would be an honor to follow in his footsteps.

But then another offer came in and Bill's choice was instantly simplified. He rejected the offer from Penn State at once and packed his bags because Columbia had just offered him a job. Unfortunately, however, this decision was made on the principles of loyalty and sentimentality; because the offer came from his alma mater, Bill wasn't quite as objective as he had been about the other offers that arrived. And indeed, this decision was ultimately not the best choice for his future. Although Bill was thrilled to return to his second home and delighted at the opportunity to coach the team he had once played for, he couldn't change the team's lack of funding, poor sportsmanship, or rundown facilities. The football team had gone downhill fast in the last ten years and it showed. So, after leading the team to victory in only 12 games that season and ultimately losing 69-0 in a major game, Bill reluctantly admitted that staying in this job was not the right call. He resigned in 1979.

From The Football Field to the Boardroom

Having resigned as the Lions' coach, Bill decided his career in football was over. He felt that he chased his dream as long as he could; there had been great times and bad times, but ultimately, it didn't work out. So he decided to call it and find a new vocation. Although 39 isn't the typical age for someone to start looking for their first job, Bill put himself out there again, determined to find something in a new industry. Business appealed to him, so he took a shot at a position with the J. Walter Thompson ad agency and got it! Now starting over in a brand new world, Bill realized that even if he wasn't on the football field, he could still be a team player and give it his best and that's exactly what he did.

As a result, clients and colleagues alike loved him. In fact, Kodak-- one of his major clients-- love him so much that they offered him a new job as their new head of consumer products! So, after only a short time with J. Walter Thompson Ads, Bill left for Kodak. And though each of these stories could be classified as major successes on their own, Bill's success story doesn't end there. In fact, it's only just starting! That's because Bill's real big break-- the one that would really change his life--occurred when a college pal from Columbia called to tell him about a new job offer. Bill's old friend John Sculley had resigned from a prominent position at Pepsi to take a new job as the Chief Executive Officer for a little tech start-up called Apple. He wanted Bill to go with him.

Now, chances are, we all probably have that one college buddy who always falls for pyramid schemes, who always thinks they've discovered the next big craze and always invites us to join in. Most of the time, we don't listen to them. More often, we just think they're crazy. But Bill thought John was onto something and so, after only one phone conversation, he was sold! He quit his job at Kodak and made the switch almost immediately. Why? Although it might sound reckless, the truth was that Bill had actually done a lot of critical thinking. He liked his job, but he was aware that he didn't want to stay there forever. At some point, he knew he would want to move

up the corporate ladder, but he also knew that he didn't have the right background for it. When it came to more prominent positions, employers would want someone with a background in business, someone who knew the ins and outs of the trade. He was never going to get those jobs.

But if he moved to California, he reasoned that he could forge a new life for himself in Silicon Valley. He had started over twice now and he could do it again. If anything, it was likely to be easier in California, where everyone was more relaxed and talent and passion counted more than your experience. And this time, there was no question that he'd made the right call. Within a scant nine months, he had gone from a low-ranking position to Vice President of Sales! And just like that, he was responsible for the launch of Apple's very first signature product: the Macintosh computer.

Bill Becomes a Business Mentor

Bill loved working at Apple and he loved the opportunities his role as VP of Sales gave him. He especially loved working with his team and giving them the right direction to help them succeed. But he wasn't just a leader for his team. Because his position necessitated working closely with Steve Jobs, the two got to know each other well over the years. And after awhile, they established not only a close friendship but a pattern as well: every time Jobs wanted advice about something or needed a sounding board to help with creative problem-solving, he called Bill. And that's how Bill realized his ultimate calling: he was great at mentoring and business coaching,

He soon left Apple to establish his own coaching business and-- with word of mouth promotion from someone like Steve Jobs-- it wasn't long before Bill was the talk of the town. That's what prompted a young man named Eric Schmidt to reach out. In 2001, Schmidt was in much the same position that John Sculley had been in just a few years ago. He had suddenly been elected the CEO of a little tech start-up named Google and he figured he could use all the help he could get. However, Schmidt was also pretty confident in his own tech savvy and intelligence and he was skeptical about the teachings of a former football coach who had no "real" tech or business experience. But he asked Bill for a consultation just the same.

That first meeting marked the start of a partnership that would last for more than 15 years. After 15 years of meeting with Bill every week, Eric was not only sharper and more successful, he was the head of a multi-billion dollar company. To this day, he credits an overwhelming portion of his success to Bill's mentorship. So, over the course of these remaining chapters, we're going to dig deeper and take a peek at Bill's advice.

Chapter Four: The Management Style You Really Need

Bill's advice came in handy during one of the biggest management crises in Google's career. Like many new start-ups, Google was learning through trial and error, and that included experimenting with its management style. So,

in an effort to keep things creative and breezy, Google's co-founder Larry Page was trying out a new model of organized chaos in which he got rid of managers. Operating on the assumption that managers inhibited creativity, Page was hoping to free his team from restrictions and give them the opportunity to do their best work.

Bill disagreed with this model, however, and-- unsurprisingly-- that resulted in him butting heads with Larry. Bill argued that this might be a good idea for a short period of time, but that it would ultimately collapse. That's why he argued that they needed to bring managers back in. Larry disagreed and the two might have remained in a headlock forever until Bill suggested asking the people who were most affected: the workers who no longer had a leader. A quick poll of Google's employees resulted in a unanimous response: everybody wanted managers back. Larry was dumbfounded until the employees explained why. They wanted managers to help with conflict disputes because the new system of equality meant that no one prioritized solving someone else's problem ahead of their own.

So, Bill argued that they ultimately needed a middle ground: a leader who could step back enough to foster creativity and avoid micromanaging but step in to resolve conflicts when needed. That's why he argued that a manager's primary role should not be to control the workers or impose a harsh system of rules, but rather to draw everyone's attention to the company's core values. By helping the team return to their mission, the leader can then facilitate a session of helpful problem-solving that allows everyone to stay on message and succeed.

Don't be Afraid to be a Friend

Bill also recognized that many people in positions of power are afraid to show emotion or be friendly with their colleagues because of the perception that this might undermine their authority. But Bill knew that nothing could be further from the truth and his example proved this to everyone he encountered. Maybe it was because he was such a team player or because he was just a naturally friendly guy, but no matter where he went, Bill couldn't help exuding an attitude of friendship and warmth. He was a hugger. He remembered people's names. He remembered little details about his colleagues' families. And when Steve Jobs was dying of cancer, Bill visited him in the hospital every single day.

These examples illustrate that, yes, kindness might have come easily to Bill, but it was also more than just a personality trait. It was part of a dedicated effort to connect with other human beings and enrich their lives. And it not only made him an effective leader, it enabled him to inspire others. Leading by example, Bill taught men like Steve Jobs and Eric Schmidt that the most powerful leaders are those who aren't afraid to be real. They use their positions of influence to break down barriers, to be inclusive, and to show everyone around them that they care. This was especially evident in Bill's commitment to find the best players for his team and this attitude often lead him to put more women in positions of power.

For example, Deb Biondolillo recalls that she was head of HR for Apple's US headquarters when she encountered Bill. She was one of a very small percentage of women who held senior positions with the company and as a result, she was often intimidated in meetings with the predominantly male boardroom. This meant that she always favored a seat in the back where no one would notice her. But Bill noticed. One day, he simply called out, "Why are you hiding all the way back there?! Get up here!" Deb debated about taking his advice for a while before finally going for it. But when she finally dared to snag a seat at the head of the table, another executive-- Al Eisenstat-- gave her a sharp glance as if to say, "What do you think you're

doing?” Deb softly asserted her right to claim a place at the table, but it was Bill’s nod of assurance that caused Al to take her seriously and back off. That moment of kindness helped Deb integrate into the boardroom and become more assertive. It was also a moment she remembered forever.

But Deb wasn’t the only one who remembered it; Bill’s commitment to inclusivity was one of the hallmarks of his coaching and it rubbed off on everyone who learned from him. He was always quick to remind his mentees that they didn’t have to be extroverted like him. It’s okay if you’re not a people-person by nature or naturally outgoing. You can still use your unique personality to foster a spirit of acceptance and warmth in the workplace. Phil Schiller, an executive at Apple, recalls that Bill instituted a policy which asked people to get out of their chairs and clap for presentations they genuinely liked. And although this took place in the boardroom of one of the world’s leading tech conglomerates, Schiller recalls that Apple executives always felt a sense of almost childlike warmth and pride when people clapped for their work.

Likewise, a colleague named Bill Chizen remembers that practicing Bill’s style of leadership didn’t come easily to him. But by following his friend’s example, he quickly learned to remember names and ask simple questions that showed he cared. And almost overnight, he found that his relationship with his colleagues improved dramatically! This just goes to show that you don’t have to change your personality or mimic someone else’s style in order to be a kind and effective leader. Just remember to be real, show your emotions, and let people show you care.

Final Summary

Bill Campbell-- a working class guy with a background in coaching college football-- isn't who you think of when you envision a typical Silicon Valley icon. But that's the beauty of his story! Because of his passion, team-player spirit, and invaluable advice, Bill revolutionized the lives of everyone who met him. He didn't set out to change the world or even to take Silicon Valley by storm; instead, he simply made the most of each opportunity life handed him and made the world a better place by simply being himself.

After bouncing from a career in college football to marketing to sales, Bill recognized that his true calling lay in helping others become their best selves. So, he simply gave advice to people who needed and transformed fledgling start-ups into titans of industry. He might not have made a name for himself in the football world as he'd hoped, but Bill Campbell was still a trillion dollar coach to a different type of team.



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