

THIS MONTH'S LEADER OF LEADERS INTERVIEW

PETER BIRTLES CEO SUPER RETAIL GROUP



PETER BIRTLES IS THE GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF SUPER RETAIL GROUP LIMITED. SUPER RETAIL GROUP IS ONE OF AUSTRALASIA'S TOP 10 RETAILERS, AND REPRESENTS SUCH BRANDS AS AMART SPORTS, BCF BOATING CAMPING FISHING, RAY'S OUTDOORS, REBEL, SUPERCHEAP AUTO AND WORKOUT WORLD. IT HAS ANNUAL SALES OF \$2.2 BILLION AND EMPLOYS AROUND 12,000 TEAM MEMBERS IN ITS OPERATIONS IN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND CHINA.

IF ANYONE UNDERSTANDS THE DEMANDS OF THE CEO ROLE, IT'S PETER. WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INTERVIEW PETER TO DISCOVER SOME OF HIS SPECIAL LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES AND EXPERIENCES.

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1. WHAT DO YOU LOVE BEST ABOUT BEING A CEO?

What I most enjoy is having the opportunity to lead the company in what I see to be the right direction, and to have an influence on its development. Great companies are always evolving and as CEO I am able to plan for that, and to work with the whole team to achieve our vision and purpose.

2. WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE - YOUR WHY?

My personal purpose is to build the kind of company culture and environment that brings out the best in my team.

3. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE?

This is a tough question, but as CEO I need to be constantly aware of my leadership style because it can have a huge impact on the way our team works. I would describe my style as determined, clear, open and collaborative.

4. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES - ANY COME TO MIND?

There are some successes that I am really proud of.

I have worked to increase engagement levels within the company and I've succeeded in the lifting of retention rates in the team from 53% to 76%.

Our brands are now regarded more favourably not only because of our positive growth, but because customers are being served by people who love what they do.

We have increased the size and share price of the company through both the acquisition of other brands and the expansion of the company brands, with new stores opening and more private label lines being introduced.

5. WHO HAS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR CAREER?

I have been very lucky to have had various leaders take a personal interest in my career and help me to grow and succeed. Having access to a great mentor is really important.

Another thing which has made a difference in my career is that I've had the opportunity to work with some amazing teams, striving collectively to reach our goals. Working with a cooperative and focused team is a great grounding for any potential leader or CEO.

6. WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AND UNIQUE TALENTS?

I don't really like to talk about myself as I think that everything we achieve is through the combined strengths and talents of the team. Since you are pressing me, I would suggest that one of my strengths lies in making my team feel that their ideas and input are important and that I value their contributions to the organisation.

I believe that I am a pretty good strategic thinker. I like to look ahead and think about what are the challenges and opportunities that the company will encounter in the future and to build plans to tackle these.

I try to be open and approachable to all of our team members and if requested provide my advice and ideas. I'm a strong listener which is important in any CEO.

I also think that I am both intuitive and reflective, which gives me the ability to gather information and then process it in a quiet and constructive way.

7. WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR YOU?

I would love to lead the company ideally to the goal of becoming one of the top 5 retail companies across Australia and New Zealand, with more growth of our existing business and with more acquisitions.

8. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO LEADERS WHO WANT TO MOVE UP THE LADDER TO CEO?

Take the opportunity to move into different areas and parts of an organisation. Don't just look up. Take the sideways moves, too. Build up your range of skills and experience across the whole organisation. Success comes from performing in the role, not just securing the role.

9. KEY LEARNING IN YOUR CAREER

Never stop learning. Recognize that you will never know everything. Keep learning and surround yourself with people who have their own special strengths – different to yours. Learn from them and learn to work with them.

It's clear that to Peter, being CEO isn't just about his own skills. It's about enabling his team to use their skills and abilities to achieve something worthwhile – team and company success.