

What a CEO Really Does

Gravity Media CEO Yuriy Boykiv says leading people means knowing how to dissect and manage human behavior. In fact, that's the bulk of the job.

Your business card says you're founder and CEO of your business. What it doesn't say is that you're also ceaseless promoter of your business, big-picture visionary, and manager of people and their emotions. For Yuriy Boykiv, CEO of the New York-based global advertising agency Gravity Media, that last task is what's most important. He says the majority of his role is dedicated to making sure his employees are self-motivated, in good mental health, and happy. "When you become CEO, you think most of the time you'll be promoting the company and dealing with big picture stuff. But I realized 50 percent of the time I am a psychologist for the company, for business partners and employees," Boykiv says. "You have to be able to manage people's behavior, problems, and address root causes." Gravity Media, which Boykiv co-founded in 2009 with Artur Melentin, Luba Tolkachyov, and Boris Chernny, landed on the 2013 Inc. 500 list at the #250 slot with a three-year growth rate of 1,724 percent. The company, which closed last year with \$20 million in revenue, has employees in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, and even Crimea. I recently caught up with Boykiv to talk about how he breaks down his time to to lead a fast-growing, global company. Here's the formula:

SUMMARIZE THE
MAIN POINTS OF
THE ARTICLE IN 10
BULLET POINTS.
TYPE YOUR
SUMMARY IN EITHER
WORD OR
POWERPOINT.

50% Psychologist

Half of Boykiv's time he spends with his employees and partners, from the interns to the other executives. He says he fields problems, checks in on them, mentors the young staffers, and listens to work-related and personal concerns. He also has to monitor morale and fix it when it dips. "I believe people need to be self-motivated. When I hear other CEOs say they need to motivate their staff, to me it sounds like they have the wrong team. If people aren't self-motivated at your company, that means they don't believe in what you do," he says. One of Boykiv's biggest breakthroughs was with one of the first hires who came from a big agency. He wanted to do new and innovative work, but wasn't used to working at a startup. Boykiv had a long conversation with the employee after-hours and spoke about his life, what he wants out of it, and where he wants to go. "I also explained to him that every employee at our company is responsible for new business--they are entrepreneurs," he says. The next day, the employee started calling every contact he had and landed Gravity's biggest account at the time, which they still have today. "By talking with him and understanding what he wanted out of this job and life, I was able to motivate him. But it's all about understanding who they are and what they want and what triggered a certain action or inaction."

25% New and Old Business

But as Gravity grows, the job of managing the wellbeing of employees is being passed off to other trusted managers. A quarter of his time, Boykiv deals with new and existing business. "It's about upkeep and promoting our business. I meet with our senior managers and find out where we are with each account, what are the challenges and highlights," he says. "A good portion of this is finding new business. In the ad world, clients come and clients go, so it's important you keep up with new opportunities."

15% Finance, Recruiting, and HR

With 45 employees now, Boykiv's startup is becoming more like a corporate identity. More employees are added each year while more clients sign on too. He makes a habit of meeting monthly with his comptroller to go over the finances and figure out where the company is in relation to its projections. He's also regularly meeting with the head of HR, trying to stay one step ahead of personnel requirements. They discuss new business opportunities and the positions the company will need to fill quickly as a result. "We are constantly recruiting new people and interviewing them," he says.

10% Strategy

Boykiv says the time he's spending on strategy is growing as Gravity becomes a bigger company and will eventually take up more of his focus. "We are now able to move from managing the day-to-day to looking at new ways to move the company forward," he says. "Historically, we focused on organic growth and putting out fires, but as we grow, it's important to meet with our business partners and senior management to figure out where we are going in the next three, five, and 10 years. These are daily discussions to make plans for forward growth."