

No 4 - Okan Yurtsever, GM Garanti Leasing - If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together



How was it before and during transition? What were the challenges?

During my transition period as a CEO, I encountered two major challenges: First of all I moved from banking to leasing industry. Even though both are financial services, they have different dynamics. Second, instead of managing a part of a company, I started to change my mindset for caring the overall institution. A CEO position requires a generalist approach. This means understating interdepartmental dynamics and assuming reciprocal interactions in an organization. In order to achieve it, I started with increasing my knowledge and technical capacity. Then I focused on communication.

How did you feel?

In the first three to six months, I felt that I was challenged and tested by different parties such as colleagues, partners, clients, collaborators etc. You have to prove yourself as a leader in times of crisis. This makes you stronger and an “accredited” leader in the eyes of different stakeholders. It was a good feeling after succeeding this period. I felt that I was ready for more challenges.

What were the aspects that brought you most satisfactions?

Together with my management team, we implemented a turnaround program in the company. When we finished the first full financial year with positive results, we felt confident about what we were doing. Later on, after repeating positive results for six years in a row and growing the company with much less resources, our satisfaction was really priceless

What were the mistakes you would have avoided looking back?

For the sake of rapidity, I had couple of quick decisions which were not the best options. Luckily enough, the negative outcomes were not vital for the company and I did not suffer much. I remember a politician’s approach: If you are to make an important decision, sleep one night without saying the final word.

What have you learned from this experience, what have been the key insights?

I always communicated well with my management team. I involved them in decision making process which increased their commitment. Additionally, I underlined the importance of trust in a team. I appreciated my colleagues in public and I criticized them in private. These principles helped me very much.

If you would mentor now someone, what would you say to him/her?

I really believe in an African proverb: ***If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.***