

the golden 10

Sam Walton, the Founder of Wal-Mart, was an ordinary man who accomplished the truly extraordinary by following 10 simple rules. Michael Bergdahl shares the secret.

"Sam Walton admitted he was just an ordinary man who accomplished the truly extraordinary by working hard, maintaining the focus on his dream, and by getting the people around him excited about helping him!"

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Sam Walton, the founder of Wal-Mart Stores Incorporated, in Bentonville, Arkansas, USA. Everyone at Wal-Mart referred to him as "Sam" out of sincere respect and so do I! Sam was a truly unique individual who is arguably the most successful entrepreneur in the history of the world. His company eclipsed 400 billion dollars (USD) in annual sales in 2008 and it continues to grow at a frenetic pace. With almost 8000 stores around the world and more than 2 million employees, Wal-Mart is a global force to be reckoned with. Interestingly, Sam Walton's goal for Wal-Mart was never to be the biggest company on the planet earth; his goal was to be the best!

As a result of my firsthand experience working at Wal-Mart with Sam Walton I am often scheduled to make keynote presentations at association meetings and corporate functions in the USA and in other countries. The prevailing question I am always asked is, "What makes Wal-Mart . . . Wal-Mart?" In other words, what is it about the giant retailer that sets it apart from everyone else? What is it

about this company that so many other retailers fear in a world of other great retail competitors? In answer to these questions I always respond with the same answer, "It is Sam Walton". The fact is if you truly want to understand the world's largest company you have to understand the leadership philosophies of its founder, Sam Walton, because it is his beliefs and standards that are threaded through and through the company's cultural DNA. Sam Walton's influence on the success of Wal-Mart is so strong that the company's executives, when faced

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with a leadership challenge, still find themselves asking, "What would Sam Do?"

There is no doubt Sam Walton achieved nothing short of monumental success in business. How did a backwoods retailer accomplish such extraordinary things? What did he discover that others overlooked along the way? How did he come up with so many best practice strategies? What was his roadmap for success? In response to these kinds of questions, Sam Walton developed a list of what he considered the most important rules for success in business and in life. As far as he was concerned there were 10 Key Result Areas which he considered pivotal to his own success throughout his career. These are the business rules by which he ran his company and by which he lived his life. Walton was quick to point out that his rules for success are for the most part, just good old fashioned commonsense. His rules can be categorized as one part strategy, one part people, one part risk taking and one part tactical execution. For the sake of simplicity, he described his ten rules for success using the words: COMMIT, SHARE, MOTIVATE, COMMUNICATE, APPRECIATE, CELEBRATE, LISTEN, EXCEED EXPECTATIONS, CONTROL EXPENSES and SWIM UPSTREAM. Here are the 10 Rules of *Sam Walton*:

Rule # 1 COMMIT to achieving success and always be passionate



Rule #2 SHARE your success with those who have helped you

Rule #3 MOTIVATE yourself and others to achieve your dreams

Rule #4 COMMUNICATE with people and show you care

Rule #5 APPRECIATE and recognize people for their effort and results

Rule #6 CELEBRATE your own and other's accomplishments

Rule #7 LISTEN to others and learn from their ideas

Rule #8 EXCEED EXPECTATIONS of customers and others

Rule #9 CONTROL EXPENSES and save your way to prosperity

Rule #10 SWIM UPSTREAM, be different, and challenge the status quo

Walton followed his own rules with passion, rarely deviating from them throughout his life. Each of his 10 Rules are easily understandable by others and can be duplicated by others in their own lives. They do require a high degree of commitment and discipline to successfully implement. Oftentimes it is the breakdown in the execution of personal success strategies like Sam Walton's, not the strategies themselves, which lead to failures. In this book, I take each of Sam's 10 Rules and as a former Wal-Mart insider, with insights like those of an embedded reporter; I have written the detailed story behind each of them so that you too, can walk in the shoes of Sam Walton! Here is a brief synopsis of each of his rules:

1. COMMIT to achieving success and always be passionate.

Sam Walton was a passionate and

committed individual who inspired a similar level of passion and commitment in others. He expected everyone at Wal-Mart to be on the "team" and commit to the goals of the company with passion and zeal.

2. SHARE SUCCESS with those who have helped you.

Sam's belief in these words wasn't just an empty saying; he "walked the talk" by allowing hourly paid employees and front line managers to participate in profit sharing and Wal-Mart's stock purchase plan.

3. MOTIVATE yourself and others to achieve your dreams.

Sam Walton knew how important it was to have a motivated team of managers and employees, but even more importantly, he also understood money wasn't necessarily the only way to motivate people. His meetings were fun, inspirational and full of surprises, and he found many innovative ways to motivate people.

4. COMMUNICATE with people and show them you care.

Sam felt that the more his employees knew details about the business, the more they would care. He fully shared confidential financial reports with all of his people, even employees. Sam Walton was also famous for remembering names and the smallest details about employee's families; he desired that all Wal-Mart employees and managers have the same caring attitude.

5. APPRECIATE and recognize people for their efforts and results.

Sam Walton liked to showcase examples of his employees who had accomplished something terrific, which he would then communicate to

everyone else in the company as a benchmark or standard. He knew that if one associate could do it, then all could do it. Sam followed through on this rule by often praising the accomplishments of his employees publicly – he believed strongly in "catching people doing things right."

6. CELEBRATE your own and other's accomplishments.

Sam was willing to go a long way to make Wal-Mart different from other retail outlets and to create a fun environment for his employees and his customers. He didn't think company leaders and employees should take themselves too seriously and liked to celebrate milestones, such as a birthday or the birth of a new baby.

7. LISTEN to others and learn from their ideas.

Sam Walton firmly believed that everyone who worked in his company had the potential for good ideas and that it was important to ask them to share their ideas and for company leaders to take the time to listen to them.

8. EXCEED expectations of customers and others.

It was not uncommon at Wal-Mart to give customers returns on items that had obviously been used, because Sam believed that if you treated customers well and gave them what they wanted, they were likely to return again and again to shop at Wal-Mart.

9. CONTROL EXPENSES and save your way to prosperity.

It was well-known that Sam Walton was proud of the tightfisted persona created by Wal-Mart...cheap is chic at

► International Observation

Wal-Mart. Sam believed that frugality was a virtue; and frugality was practiced at all levels of management at Wal-Mart.

10. SWIM UPSTREAM, be different, and challenge the status quo.

Sam Walton purposefully broke many conventional rules for how things were to be done – he believed that by

challenging the tried and true ways of doing things, you could often find the competitive advantage.

Walton's only mistake, in an otherwise stellar career, may be the fact that he never wrote down the detailed story behind his 10 Golden Rules for Success. He listed his rules but he never spelled them out in any

detail. He gave us a quick glimpse into the “big box”, but only a glimpse. I realize he probably did not share with all of us the details on purpose. Just like Colonel Sanders at KFC never shared his original recipe, Walton gave us a taste of his personal recipe for success but not the step by step “how to do it” formula. 😊

THE SAM WALTON WAY

*Sam Walton was an ordinary man
Who started with a simple plan
His only dream to be the best
Not bigger, but better than the rest*

*His wife Helen was the one
Who helped Sam Walton get it done
When funds were tight in '45
Her father's loan kept dreams alive*

*Sam started with a single store
He never really wanted more
But as his idea gathered steam
His goal became a global dream*

*He imported goods from overseas
Manufacturing products for lower fees
He focused hard on lowering cost
His customers won: his competitors lost*

*He asked his customers what to buy
Then charged low prices and stacked it high
Thousands of customers shopped his store
With an insatiable desire to purchase more*

*His greeters smile and say hello
Welcoming customers they're sure to know
His associates help and show the way
Providing great service every day*

*Sam made his customers number one
And shopping his stores was actually fun
Prices and products were guaranteed
And checking out was done with speed*

*He traveled here and traveled there
He flew his own plane everywhere
He visited stores across the land
Talking, serving and shaking hands*

*He believed his team to be the key
He gave credit to others for all to see
He was quick to diminish his own role
Crediting team success for achieving goals*

*His associate partners meant so much
He treated them with a personal touch
He cared for them like trusted friends
And they believed in him until the end*

*“Mr. Sam” is the respectful name
Of this man who sought not wealth or fame
His legacy is the customers served
He'd say he achieved more than he deserved*

*Sam Walton was an extraordinary man
Who had passion along with a simple plan
He proved that dreams can come true
If you're willing to do what you have to do*



About the author: Michael Bergdahl is an international speaker, author and business coach. Michael Bergdahl is a business speaker, who is one part business, one part inspiration, and one part storyteller. He has spoken at association and business conferences across the USA and internationally to retailers, non-retailers, manufacturers and suppliers who are interested in improving their ability to compete successfully in a Wal-Mart World!