

Mike Sullivan: What I've learned

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1. Be intellectually curious. Our industry is desperate for disruptive innovation, and it's unlikely to come from carriers.
2. An absolute fact: The role of technology in our future will dwarf its function in the past. Understand the implications and applications of this issue sooner rather than later.
3. Continually look outside our industry for talent and ideas to expand your capabilities, as well as broaden your firm's outlook and methodology.
4. Rigorously challenging ideas in a respectful manner is as essential to team dynamics as collaboration to achieve breakthrough ideas.
5. Read and absorb non-industry literature to build your perspective about how the pieces fit together. Prospects and clients need these insights to make informed decisions.
6. Whether a prospect or a client, all "buyers" must feel your passion for your company, team and solution. You can't fake it; it's a visceral energy you radiate.
7. The next generation of voluntary products on the drawing board will be more product and less commission—which is a good thing.
8. Make decisions and continually advance your firm, team and solutions along a strategically defined path. You can and should adjust, but the pace of change in our industry requires decisions and forward movement.
9. There is no substitute for following your intuition or gut feeling relating to almost any facet of decision making. Be informed and conduct comprehensive due diligence.
10. Recognize and continually re-evaluate your competitive position. Be realistic. Evaluate it in the context of industry trends and progress. Keep pace or consider the value of aligning with a partner who can provide the resources you need.