



PRAISE IN LONDON'S **FINANCIAL TIMES**:

*Larry Leight, legendary founder of Oliver Peoples eyewear is asked, "Which book has proved the most valuable for business?"*

*His answer:* Fashion books for inspiration.

**The Invisible Spotlight** by Craig Wasserman and Doug Katz provided good management lessons from real-life experience. →

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## Business Life

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### 20 questions



### *'I'm still hoping for a private jet'*

**Larry Leight**

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Larry Leight, a passionate surfer, trained to become an optician gaining experience in design, sales and marketing. In 1986, he bought a few thousand handmade frames that had been put in storage for about 30 years by a mysterious "Oliver Peoples". This led him to launch Oliver Peoples eyewear with his brother, Dennis.

The preppy intellectual styles became the must-wear items of yuppies, namechecked by Patrick Bateman in Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*. In 2006, the company was acquired by Oakley.

<p><b>Describe your management style within ten words.</b> Mentoring, open-door policy, communication of vision and exuding passion.</p> <p><b>Which historical/fictional character do you most identify with?</b> Andy Warhol. Creative, crazy and wanting to be different.</p> <p><b>Describe your ideal deputy?</b> Passionate and with the drive to be the best they can.</p> <p><b>MBA or real-life experience?</b> Real-life. I worked on the sales floor in our first store – speaking to customers gave me great insight.</p> <p><b>Have you ever cried at work?</b> No, but there's still time.</p> <p><b>Which characteristic do you most deplore in yourself?</b> My OCD can make life very difficult if things are out of place. I'm easily distracted so things need to be in order.</p> <p><b>And in others?</b> Not being organised or prepared. It's important to think ahead so time is not wasted.</p> <p><b>What advice would you give your 18-year-old self?</b> Surround yourself with people who complement your skills and try to find a balance in your life.</p> <p><b>What one thing would improve your life?</b> Balance. If I achieve it, I'm happier and more creative.</p> <p><b>Which book has proved the most invaluable for business?</b> Fashion books for inspiration. <i>The Invisible Spotlight</i> by</p>	<p>Craig Wasserman and Doug Katz provided good management lessons from real-life experience.</p> <p><b>iPhone or BlackBerry?</b> iPhone for personal, BlackBerry for e-mail. Like the answer from Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin's character on television programme <i>30 Rock</i>) to the question "Who is number one on [your] speed dial?" He said "BlackBerry; Warren Buffett. iPhone: Jimmy Buffett."</p> <p><b>Who do you most admire?</b> My wife – incredibly balanced and supportive.</p> <p><b>What is the worst thing anyone has ever said about you?</b> I don't listen and I'm impatient. It might be true but sometimes I just need to get my point across.</p> <p><b>Do you deserve your pay?</b> Yes. And more.</p> <p><b>How much do you travel?</b> Always too much. It's harder to travel now because of airport security. It's not like the old days when flight attendants wearing nice hats helped you to your seat.</p> <p><b>Business-class, first-class or private jet?</b> It used to be economy, then business, now first. I'm still hoping for a private jet.</p> <p><b>Best aspect of working with your brother?</b> He wastes no time – when something's a problem he can be direct and hard.</p> <p><b>Worst?</b> He kills you first, then drives home the point.</p> <p><b>What is the best aspect of being acquired?</b> Leverage and resources – both financially and in terms of experience.</p> <p><b>And the worst?</b> I'm still here, which is a sign that nothing is too bad.</p> <p><b>How would you like to be remembered?</b> As a Designer who changed the course of eyewear in the 1980s.</p>
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Emma Jacobs

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**My OCD can make life very difficult**  
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