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THE MAGAZINE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

JUNE 2010

**Fearless
Leaders
Superstar
Talent**

**Women's Vision
What Women Notice**

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Leadership Consultant



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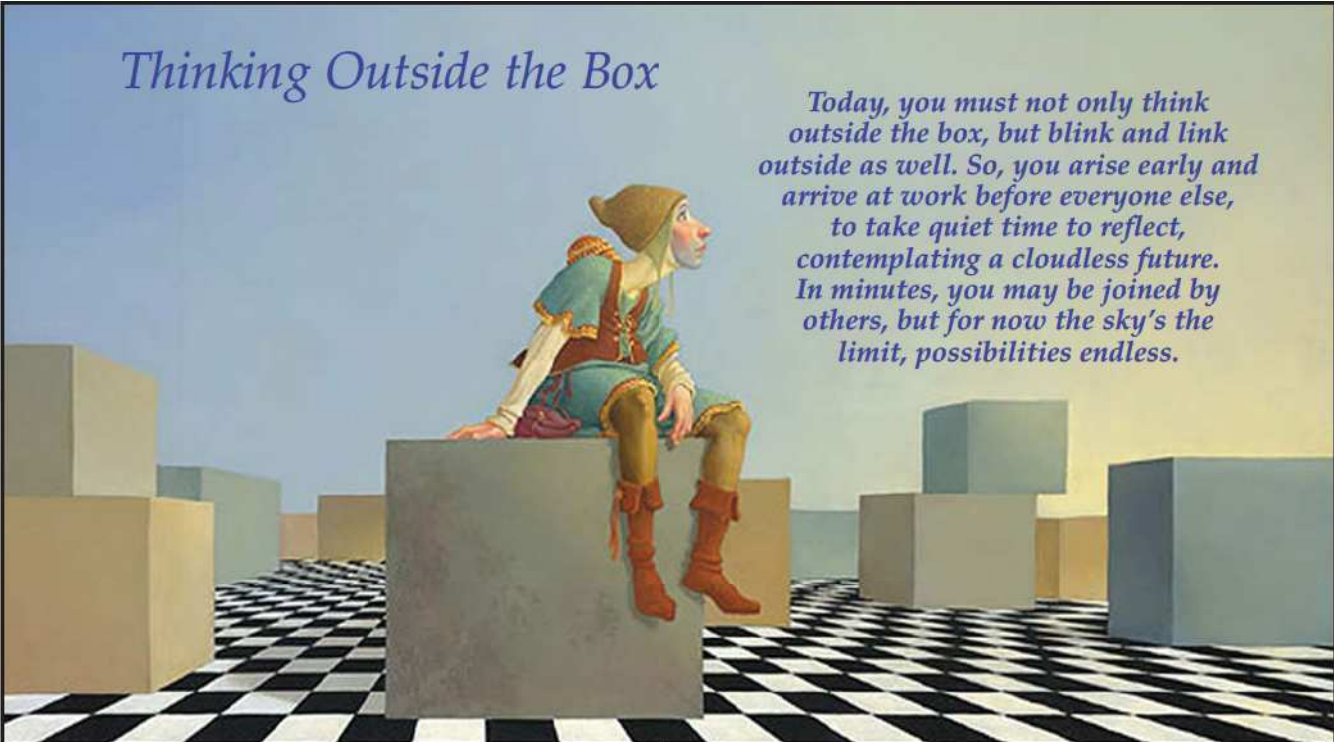
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Thinking Outside the Box

Today, you must not only think outside the box, but blink and link outside as well. So, you arise early and arrive at work before everyone else, to take quiet time to reflect, contemplating a cloudless future. In minutes, you may be joined by others, but for now the sky's the limit, possibilities endless.



<p>STEVEN BERGLAS <i>Superstar Talent</i> Since you can't live without them, learn to live with them..... 3</p>	<p>DAVE ULRICH AND WENDY ULRICH <i>Creating Abundance</i> Leaders must first be meaning makers..... 8</p>	<p>TOM PETERS <i>How Can I Help?</i> Great leaders are first and foremost great helpers12</p>	<p>Learn to leverage rapid cognition.....16</p> <p>GARY HAMEL <i>Who's Now Leading?</i> Take down walls and seek positive deviants17</p>
<p>SALLY HELGESEN <i>Women's Vision</i> Leverage what women notice and value.....4</p>	<p>ROGER CONNORS AND TOM SMITH <i>Think Positive</i> Create a culture of accountability.....9</p>	<p>ALAN VENGEL <i>20-Minute Leadership</i> Be clear, concise, and compelling13</p>	<p>JOHN MCKNIGHT AND PETER BLOCK <i>Limits of Consumption</i> Ultimately satisfaction can't be purchased 18</p>
<p>MARGARET WHEATLEY <i>Fearless Leaders</i> Face the realities of your situation..... 5</p>	<p>JIM COLLINS <i>Enlightened Leaders</i> Tune into four rugged new realities..... 10</p>	<p>STEVE FARBER <i>Extreme Leaders</i> Take a radical LEAP daily.....14</p>	<p>PHIL EASTMAN II <i>Character of Leadership</i> Develop leaders of great character.....19</p>
<p>DAVID PARMENTER <i>Crisis Leadership</i> Apply 10 lessons from Sir Shackleton.....6</p>	<p>MARSHALL GOLDSMITH <i>Build Great Mojo</i> How do you and others perceive you? 11</p>	<p>KEVIN SHERIDAN <i>Employee Pride</i> Communicate the positive attributes..... 15</p> <p>MALCOLM GLADWELL <i>Blink of an Eye</i></p>	<p>BUD TAYLOR <i>Leadership Betrayal</i> Deliver first on what you promise.....20</p>

Such fearlessness can be found in anyone—senior leaders, mid-level leaders, supervisors, or workers.

If you're a leader, you have to be thoughtful about this. Even a senior leader from a major corporation, someone who is very successful and uses high engagement strategies, probably won't be able to convert the whole company. Hence, I've given up on large-scale transformation, but smaller measures can still effect change—for example, helping a few people realize their competence, value, talents, or creativity. But it's hard for leaders to accept this thinking. For once you accept that, you open yourself to accepting other ideas, such as the belief that human beings aren't the masters of the universe; that we can't make our own rules, no matter how powerful our technology is. That's not how the planet works. Or recognizing the ways in which the pursuit of material goods and consumer comforts, even as this pursuit makes people healthier and live longer, can also deaden people in other ways. This destroys the essence of culture, community, and family.

One thing I've felt deeply working with indigenous communities in Africa, Australia, and North America, is that *the lure of acquiring material goods is stronger than any other lure in the world now*, especially to teens. Many of them leave home to support their families and experience a better life. But a society whose practices are based only on economic growth will self-destruct, since materialism, if left unchecked, destroys the best aspects of being human and brings out our baser qualities. It's not a pretty world right now. Inside and outside organizations, things people thought were protected are falling apart. Within organizations, many people are left to their own resources.

To break away from this situation, fearless leadership is called for. I invite you to address these fearless questions: 1. Does my team or organization need me to be fearless now? 2. Why should I choose to be fearless? 3. When have I been fearless? 4. What prompted me to be fearless? 5. Who needs me to be fearless? 6. How can I best be fearless? 7. Where can I make a positive difference by being fearless? These questions are designed to help you develop clarity about your work and the contribution you want to offer. LE

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ACTION: Address the fearless questions.

Crisis Leadership

10 lessons from Sir Shackleton.



by David Parmenter

SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON saved the lives of all *Endurance* crew members who lived for two years in the harshest environment in the world. With low-technology equipment and no support from outside agencies, he managed to make a home on a floating ice shelf, sail all his men to an uninhabited island (Elephant Island), take a team across 800 miles of the roughest water in the world in a life boat, and then cross unclimbed mountains and glaciers in an epic 30-hour traverse.

From him, all leaders can learn 10 lessons in crisis leadership.

1. Manage well the immediate crisis. When Shackleton (the Boss) witnessed the sinking of the *Endurance*, he knew it meant personal bankruptcy. Yet, he didn't let this event affect his optimism of getting his team back to safety. He respected the old dogs (senior team members). On perilous journeys where life and death were in the balance, he had the old dogs in the advance party. He observed that old dogs eat less, complain less, sleep less, and are injured less!

He was flexible, always thinking ahead. He reversed some decisions as conditions changed and dictated what could be done on the next leg of the return journey. When it was time to leave the breaking ice floe, the Boss had to assess the safest option bearing in mind the conditions of the men, the sea, and life boats. Although unable to predict accurately the weather or future, he made provision for worst-case scenarios and accurately assessed the best options to take. Moreover, he maintained a sense of humor, even when all looked lost. He was the life and soul of the group, constantly looking for ways to maintain morale. As Tom Peters says about bad times: "This is when it gets fun for talented and imaginative leaders."

2. Recruit your team with care. The Boss chose his people carefully; he was looking for character, competence and multi skills. His interview questions de-

termined if candidates had a positive attitude and a light-hearted nature. His recruitment strategy was this: Loyalty comes easier to a cheerful person than one with a heavy countenance. He set difficult tasks for the candidates to see how keen they were to join. He used trials to test if applicants were up to difficult tasks. He picked his second in command with great care, as his inner core had to be loyal. Frank Wild was dedicated to acting on behalf of the "Boss" in his absence. He followed him on all his adventures. He started off as a seaman and became a great explorer. Wild left the planning to the Boss and focused on maintaining a happy, friendly nature; thus, the Boss cultivated leadership within the team.

3. Show an abundance of positive energy. As Jack Welch says, it's vital that a leader has positive energy—the capacity to go-go-go with *healthy vigor* and an *upbeat attitude*. Shackleton had an abundance of positive energy. He worked the hardest, slept the least, and lead from the front. He was fitter than all others on the team. The Boss never gave up: he believed that "there's always another move, you just have to



find it." He was always a purveyor of hope and optimism. When setbacks occurred, he had to remain outwardly optimistic, despite his own feelings, to prevent despair among his men. He knew that such despair could, in the face of adversity, lead to dissension, mutiny, or giving up. He kept the men so busy

that they had little time to brood over their predicament. When he sensed that the mood was darkening, he'd use a holiday observance or some other pretense to justify extra rations of food to boost morale. He rose to his best and inspired confidence when things were blackest. He loved a party, toasted loved ones, and celebrated birthdays. Once near starvation, he saved a small pudding with a piece of holly to share on Christmas. He was *young at heart*, always looking for ways to amuse his team.

4. Communicate effectively. The Boss avoided public fights. He said only positive words about crew members when expressing an opinion in public, knowing that he needed their support. He engaged in informal, one-to-one, personalized communication. Before making a major change, he'd mention it in passing individually so when he announced the change it was no surprise. Bad news was never unexpected.

The Boss always canvassed the men when the options were unpleasant. Each evening, he did a walkabout. No matter how cold it was, the Boss would visit each tent for a pep talk. He'd wake in the early morning to accompany the man on watch (he rarely got more than four hours of sleep). He found time to cheer up members who felt depressed.

5. Let psychology be your friend. The Boss read widely, and his understanding of psychology played a big part in saving the lives of this team. For example, on the hike over the mountains of South Georgia, his two team members wanted a small sleep. The Boss knew that would be the end of them and his crew if they slept long, so he let them sleep for five minutes and then woke them up saying they had slept for 30 minutes. On the famous boat trip, he took two members who would be of no use but could not be left behind to poison the minds of others. His selection of crews on the escape from the sinking ice floe took account of the dynamics of the friendships, seamanship, and the state of the boats. He noted that the moodiness of the expedition's photographer was improved by flattery and inclusion. He'd sow a hint if he thought a change might be inevitable, but *he never shared any doubts*. The Boss was the master of conflict resolution: he avoided emotional outbursts. He would gently point out the reason why it should be done a different way. He would only tell staff off in private. Where team members failed him, he managed his anger and frustration. He engaged dissidents, and avoided needless power struggles.

6. See and own the future. The Boss could visualize things ahead and plan accordingly. The extent of his planning included: different gear to avoid the problems he had experienced in past expeditions; provisioning food and equipment that saved their lives many times; packing cases made of ply wood that could be reconstituted into building material for a hut. The Boss was bold in planning but careful in execution. While the vision must be bold, every risk was minimized to ensure a safe outcome. He was over-provisioned. His original plans were to be away for just over a year, but he wisely provisioned for two years based on 4,000 calories a day. In providing for the team, only the best equipment was good enough. And where necessary, new equipment was designed. The food on board was fit for a king. Treats that could be stored for years were taken. In bleak moments, the Boss used a treat to say to his men,

"There is more of this when we get home."

7. Develop, engage and trust. The Boss removed barriers of rank to build cohesion. Tasks were assigned based on a person's skills. All members, including him, did dishes and cleaned floors. When it came to rationing the fur-lined sleeping bags, straws were drawn, the three leaders drawing a blank in a rigged draw to benefit the younger men. The Boss insisted on *courtesy* and *mutual respect* among members of the team. The team was prepared to take on any task the Boss wanted, as they knew he would be in the line with them. Being focused on the fitness and health of his team, he devised many activities on the ice floe to keep them in good health. He communicated the *critical success factors* clearly to keep the team aligned. He ensured that the team planned their daily duties with their *critical success factors* in mind. The Boss cross-trained the team and broke down any barriers that might inhibit cohesion, matching tasks to individual capabilities and personalities. He knew his staff inside out and spent time with each member to learn what made them tick, how he could best lead them, and how he could serve them.

8. Reinvent yourself and constantly innovate. The Boss always learned from experiences. He designed special clothing, the equivalent of a Gor-Tex breakthrough. He also designed a tent that quickly could be erected in a blizzard. These innovations no doubt saved the lives of his men. The *James Caird* life boat that made the crossing to South Georgia was modified, and these modifications saved them all when a 40-foot-plus rogue wave swamped the boat. He had deep experience in the enterprise he was running, thus having what John Gardner calls "the capacity to win and hold trust." The Boss trained himself to become an exceptional leader. He learned from prior mistakes, he was a student of other explorers' experience, and he too had as a hero the great Norwegian Roald Amundsen. He admired and sought to emulate the skill, preparation, and attention to detail displayed by Amundsen in the 1911 race to be the first to the South Pole. He thus was well prepared for his role. He valued results, but he valued life and people more. No goal or target was worth the loss of life. He took no unnecessary risks. He never attempted a goal if the return journey

was not guaranteed. He could have been the first to the Pole, but he knew that they would have died. Ultimately, *success meant coming back alive*.

9. Embody the values. The Boss was a religious man. He took the Bible with him, knew many of the scriptures (love thy neighbour as thyself), and had a profound love of the common man. He respected his colleagues, their life and time. While the Boss loved the limelight, enjoyed the public adoration and the attention from the fairer sex, he was humble when communicating to his team, knowing that through humility greatness can be achieved. In his public relations, he only laid claim to what was rightly his achievements. He treated his crew as equals. Jan Gunnarsson calls this leadership trait *hostmanship*—the art of making people feel welcome. He knew that *helping* was his most important task, and thus welcomed interruptions! Time and again, Shackleton gave up personal comforts for his men. He gave up the fur-lined sleeping bags, his bed for a sick member, his gloves at a point where he risked severe frost bit. He shared the provisions faultlessly to all



no matter what their contribution. The Boss set high values, and when these were compromised he was unforgiving. The four staff members who had jeopardized the safety of his men were later punished on their return by the withholding of the Polar medal.

10. Be a serving leader. The Boss looked after the comforts of the team. He was a mother hen. He genuinely cared for his team members as if they were his own flesh and blood. He saw a leader as one who served rather than one who was served. He dutifully took his turn performing the most menial of chores and expected his leadership team to do the same. He was "a Viking with a mother's heart." As Ken Blanchard writes in *The Secret*, a leader exists to serve others rather than be one who is served. The boss would be the first to nurse an ailing member, the first to make a cup of brew if he knew his staff were at the end of their tether. He saw such service as a clear strength, not a weakness, in his leadership. LE

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ACTION: Read Shackleton's *Way*.