

## Leaders – Buffalo or Geese

Maybe you've heard about the leadership style of the buffalo...

Buffalo are extremely loyal followers of one leader. They do what the leader directs them to do, follow where the leader goes, and stand around waiting for the leader to show up when he isn't around. Back in the frontier days, the early settlers learned this quickly. If they could kill the lead buffalo, the whole herd would stand around, easily slaughtered because they didn't know what to do when their leader was gone. For many years, leaders were taught to be like those buffalo leaders. Everyone assumed that the leader's job was to plan, command, coordinate, control and give directions. The best leaders were thought to be those with the most brilliant plans and the most loyal followers. These leaders had power, prominence, and control. They also worked long hours surrounded by noncreative followers who compliantly did what they were told, no less but certainly no more. Some of those old buffalo-type leaders got pretty stodgy. They didn't change much and when they reached retirement age they had a hard time letting go. They didn't want to give up the power and they didn't have anyone trained and trusted enough to replace them. Even worse, if the leader got sick or finally toddled out the door and retired, the organizations struggled to find someone who was qualified to take over. Sadly, if no one was found internally to take over the reigns of the company, they had to go outside to find a leader. These leaders are extremely difficult to coach, if they agree to coaching at all.

Another style of leadership is known as the 'Geese-style'...

These people have a very different style of leadership. They understand the value of developing the potential of their employees and appropriately sharing the responsibility of leading the organization with them. They believe that their philosophy is not only good for the individual employee, but the organization as well. They understand how to share leadership responsibility, when to share it, and with whom to share it. They also understand what geese have figured out: The reason why geese fly in 'V' formation is because as each bird flaps its wings it creates uplift for the one that follows it. This way the whole flock achieves an extra 71% flying range. 71%! When the lead goose tires it drifts back into the formation and another moves to the lead position so that they all benefit from the extra lift. It seems that with geese, leaders have the perfect model. Its sad, but these birds seem to work better together than most organizational teams we have had the pleasure to work with, and they have brains the size of olives. So why can geese do it and not us? Many leaders seem to feel that the best way to succeed at things is simply to work hard at them. You know..."*when the going gets tough...the tough get going.*" However, geese seem to understand that there are ways of using their energy to give great results that requires very little effort. In their "V" formation, for example they put in 29% effort, and get 100% out. If they fly alone, they put in 100% effort to get 100% out. They seem to have figured-out the truth that *there is little relationship between effort and effectiveness*. By the way...they are perfectly designed to perform their job, and they seem to love to fly. It's their destiny, and we can learn something from them when it comes to leading...

Geese-style leaders have figured-out something important about people: *If you help an employee discover what he or she is best at, and do what you can to develop their potential, the 80/20 rule applies: you will get 80% productivity from 20% of their efforts. If you create a culture that encourages people to discover and operate out of their natural talents, and reward effectiveness and not just effort, you will have created an organization of people who are not only productive, but fulfilled as well. Morale is improved, unwanted competition is reduced, and cooperation is*

increased, because a 'geese-style- culture is one where everybody wins. Each employee has his or her own purpose-or mission-to fulfill, and a vision for being successful in the accomplishment of it. Not only that, but in this type of organization, the natural leaders rise to the top, making succession planning much easier. These types of leaders are fun to coach because they don't just want coaching for themselves, but also for their team. These Leaders aren't afraid of change or creativity, or concerned about power or control. They're more into teaching responsibility, competence, character development, and ownership. When the appointed lead goose in that organization goes on vacation or retires, many others are prepared with the ability and energy to take over. Modern leadership is geese-style leadership. And it takes a lead goose to coach another goose to lead.

Oh by the way, if you are still in the "buffalo" leadership mode...watch out for the competition. They love to locate the leader of the herd...

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