

The Leaders Journey

Sir Ernest Shackleton, the great Antarctic explorer, resonates with executives in today's business world. His people-centered approach to leadership can be a guide for anyone in a position of authority. Some of today's leaders are successfully applying Shackleton's methods to their own work situations.

"If you're a leader, a fellow that other fellows look to, you've got to keep going." - Shackleton

"Shackleton's Way: Leadership Lessons from the Great Antarctic Explorer"

In 1914, Sir Ernest Shackleton led twenty-seven men, for almost two years, through a harrowing fight for their lives after the wreck of their Antarctic vessel, *Endurance*, left them stranded on an ice floe twelve hundred miles from civilization. However, every man survived and every man ascribed it to Shackleton's superb leadership. His efforts to keep alive, maintain spirits and ultimately save his 27 men against all odds has brought him the accolade "the greatest leader ever - bar none". His hazardous and terrifying open boat journey of 800 miles in the 22 foot, "James Caird", is called the greatest of all time.

"Shackleton's Way" is a fascinating and practical case study researched, developed, presented and facilitated by Corporate Consultant Richard Coles. It is about leader who triumphed by putting people first and striving for the seemingly impossible. Twenty-eight ordinary-turned-extraordinary men, led by Shackleton's example, survived nearly two years of unimaginable hardship at the end of the Earth. It is an inspirational tale about unleashing strengths in individuals that they never knew they had in order to achieve goals. This story of exploration and leadership provides insight into the extraordinary leadership skills of Sir Ernest Shackleton. It incorporates exercises, group and class discussions plus case studies on: Leadership, Team Building, Communication, Decision Making, Conflict resolution, and Motivational Techniques.

It is a fascinating story of a leader who triumphed by putting people first and striving for the seemingly impossible. It is an inspirational look at how to achieve goals by unleashing strengths in individuals that they never knew they had.

***"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader"* - John Quincy Adams**

Leadership, writes James Autry in his book 'World Class Leaders': *'is about creating an environment that fosters a sense of community that helps people to love their work instead of doing their job, which when done honestly creates trust and enhances creativity.'*

Today, *'the enemies'* of business leaders take on many guises. The technological adversary, who like a chimera, changes shape and direction, rapidly forcing constant change; the never-ending stream of competitors who all claim to do things faster, better and cheaper; the manpower supply enemy that fiercely competes for the best and ablest brains; the customer who constantly demands improved products and services and time which competes for the energy and resources of every successful firm.

While the adversaries may have changed their forms, the ways to overcome the many challenges to businesses today, have developed in sophistication with the adoption of modern management techniques. Business leaders today need to be visionary, charismatic, pragmatic and realistic in order to match changing times and circumstances. Their skills have had to be honed in order to envision, energize, and empower their staff to achieve more in shorter time spans, embrace total quality management, and love what they are doing. Thus the major tasks of today's business leaders are centered on creating and maintain high levels of motivation and job satisfaction in their workforces. There is a challenge to make the work meaningful to employees at all levels.

The Shackleton seminar follows these stages to create the *Leaders Journey*.

Stages of the ship “Endurance” Journey

- **The Path to Leadership**
- **Developing Leadership Skills**
- **Hiring an outstanding crew**

Being a leader means developing yourself. You need to be strong and resourceful in order to make the journey, as the destination is never actually reached. As you become a leader, you find resources in yourself you did not know you had. You work your way into the forefront of a new field. You become more yourself, because a leader's influence comes from who you are, what you do, and the examples you set.

- **Creating a Spirit of camaraderie**
- **Getting the best from each individual**
- **Leading effectively in a crisis / crisis management**

A leader inspires others, many diverse groups, in order to lead effectively in good and bad times. Building *esprit de corps* and leading by example in order to get the most from each individual and developing them at the same time. Leadership also develops oneself in areas of communication, understanding others, appreciating differences and gaining from them, developing rapport with your people and influencing others. Sir Ernest Shackleton led by example and used informal one-on-one talks to build a bond with his man. He inspired optimism, and at same time worked to keep spirits high in the team, especially in times of crisis.

- **Forming team for tough assignments**
- **Overcoming obstacles to reach a goal**
- **Leaving a legacy**

Shackleton balanced talent and expertise in each team. He ensured all the groups were keeping pace. He was visible and vigilant. He kept sight of the big picture, and leaders need to look towards the destinations as well as paying attention to where they have been and where they are, to ensure all the group is keeping pace. He got the teams to help each other and built up the weakest links. Leaders must understand the system they are part of, to see beyond the obvious, the immediate situation and then sense how events connect to deeper patterns. Ultimately your leadership should have a lifelong impact of the people you work with.

Some further lessons we can learn from Shackleton are meaningful communication, power of optimism, leading by example and keeping up morale.

One thing is for sure; leadership is a complex issue when exercised by the individual. It is a combination of organising and motivating, setting goals and controlling through effective communication, while giving people confidence in what they are doing. The confidence given by the manager to his team develops through giving value to their jobs, them as an individual, and to them as a team.

The success of managers as leaders depends, primarily, on their ability to communicate to all the people for whom they are responsible. They need to convey what they need and the importance of doing it. It involves the acceptance of change, the commitment to customer services (internally and externally), the achievement of more with less, and eventually the harnessing of experience, personal skill and training to generate development.

Truly listening and taking in and acting on the information received are imperative to get people to listen to you. The value of one-to-one conversations in understanding and communicating with people is as relevant in the workplace as it is at home.

Being optimistic in adverse circumstances is the best way to deal with life's problems. Look at the half full glass. These are all lessons from Shackleton that can be applied to our daily interactions to make us more effective, efficient and ultimately better human beings.

“I have often marvelled at the thin line which separates success from failure.”- Shackleton

Note: This 2-day multi-media, highly interactive and appealing training course is an endorsed program to Richard Coles since 2001 from the authors of a best selling book on the subject. Permission has been obtained for historic film and pictures to be shown along with appropriate clips of a recent motion picture on the story. A video-taped interview with the book's author is another feature. It has been run for business luncheon groups, teams, hotels, airlines, sales conferences, motivational events, management teams, CEO's and Managers, and even MBA classes, etc. It provides a solid learning experience that will result in the application of real leadership skills in the work place.

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