



## Leadership... the Way of the Shepherd

By: F. Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA, TRA

How would you describe your leadership style? What characteristics make you an effective leader? Why are people willing to follow you?

Leadership is a term that is frequently used in our society. Yet, it takes on different meanings depending on the context through which the term is used. Below are a few attributes used to describe effective leaders:

- Authentic and self-aware
- Strategic and tactical planner
- Convincing and persuasive communication style
- Conflict manager and gifted negotiator
- Clear and compelling vision
- Inspirational
- Honest with a high level of integrity
- Servanthood mentality
- Decisive
- Effective delegator
- Exceptional listening skills
- Creative and innovative
- Empathetic

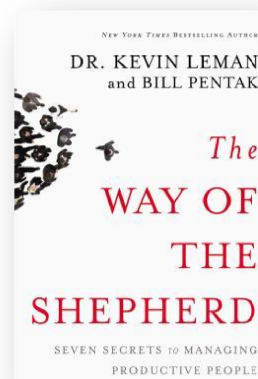
Are great leaders born or made? What do you think? While there is evidence that God-given talents, such as process thinking, assertiveness, and high intelligence, give a leader a natural advantage, a leader must also possess high emotional intelligence -- the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions -- to create followers. Unlike IQ, emotional intelligence can be developed and harnessed to its fullest. The job of leading a person or team of people is

complex. To expect that a person would be born with all the tools needed to effectively lead does not make sense. You may have all the "raw materials"...inborn characteristics that may predispose you to be a leader. However, you will be wise to embark upon a leadership plan that involves self-assessment and self-development. Why? Great leaders must be developed!

### The Way of the Shepherd

While there are numerous wonderful books on leadership, my favorite is *The Way of the Shepherd* by Dr. Kevin Leman and William Pentak. This inspirational and thought-provoking story is centered on a young, inexperienced reporter who meets and lands the interview of a lifetime with the most respected CEO in America. During the interview, the CEO shares the secrets he learned long ago from his mentor - an eccentric, but brilliant, professor who taught him seven proven management principles that, while ancient in origin, are so valuable in today's fast-paced, high-tech world. The principles in this unforgettable book serve as a leadership plan:

1. Know the condition of your flock
2. Discover the shape of your sheep
3. Help the sheep identify with you
4. Make the pasture a safe place
5. The staff of direction
6. The rod of correction
7. The heart of the shepherd



#### Principle #1 -- Know the Condition of Your Flock

You cannot manage what you don't know. Far too many well-intentioned leaders focus on projects and deadlines and not enough on their people. Great leaders have come to learn that it is their people who get the job done. And it is their people who give the firm a competitive advantage. For that reason, the shepherd begins each and every day by checking the condition of his or her flock.

The people who report to you may be part of the same flock, but they desperately want to be treated as individuals. The performance of your team will significantly improve as you take the time to discover each person's goals, passions, and struggles. As a leader, you should know what motivates each member of your flock when he or she walks through the door in the morning.

#### Principle #2 -- Discover the Shape of Your Sheep

The key to this principle surrounds the word "shape." A gifted shepherd knows the SHAPE of his or her sheep so as to make sure that they are in the right fold. Let's learn the meaning of each letter:

**S -- Strengths:** As the leader, you need to make sure that each person has the skills needed to get the job done.

**H -- Heart:** You must confirm that each person's heart is in his or her job. Passion leads to purpose.

**A -- Attitude:** Given a choice between skill and attitude, the gifted leader always takes attitude. Positivity is contagious and creates a team environment.

**P -- Personality:** People are wired differently. Some are introverts while others are extroverts. Place your people in positions that reflect their natural strengths...their unique personalities.

**E -- Experience:** Each team member is a product of his or her life experiences. The best leaders learn about each person's experiences so as to properly situate this person on the team.

### **Principle #3 -- Help Your Sheep Identify with You**

Your flock needs to understand and appreciate the authentic you. For this reason, great leaders expose their vulnerable side. You will build trust and a loyal following by letting your guard down so your team may see qualities such as empathy, compassion, and your sense of meaning to life. If you have purpose and passion for a cause, let your people know about it. Relentlessly communicate your values and sense of mission. Set high standards of performance. Great leaders come to learn that leadership is not just professional...it's also personal.

### **Principle #4 -- Make Your Pasture a Safe Place**

Even when sheep are grazing in the pasture, they know when they are at risk. When the shepherd's flock is uncertain or fearful, he or she must create a sense of calm. The same goes for the business setting. As a leader, you have the responsibility to make your pasture a safe place. In *The Way of the Shepherd*, authors Leman and Pentak offer the following strategies:

- Keep your people well-informed
- Infuse every position with importance
- Cull chronic instigators from the flock
- Regularly rotate your sheep to fresh pastures
- Reassure your sheep by being visible and present
- Don't give problems time to fester

### **Principle #5 -- The Staff of Direction**

In *The Way of the Shepherd*, the CEO pulls out a stick that was over five feet long and had a large curve on one side that resembled a question mark. "Do you know what this is?" asked the CEO to the youthful reporter. "It looks like a walking stick," responded the reporter. "No, this is an old shepherd's staff," stated the CEO. The staff and rod -- a shorter stick -- are most important for the shepherd. The staff is the most essential tool that the shepherd has to lead the sheep. A shepherd's first duty of the day is to lead his or her flock out of the fold to find fresh pasture.

In the business setting, a team puts their heads down to do their work and does not look up again until the day is over. For that reason, you must keep your eye on the horizon to see where

the grass is greener. As a gifted leader, it is imperative that you know where you are going, get out in front, and keep your flock on the move. As you provide direction, use persuasion rather than coercion. Offer suggestions and ideas. Do not dictate or demand. Rather, advocate and recommend. Establish boundaries. Let your flock know where the fence line is, and do not micromanage. Freedom of movement is so important. Occasionally, a member of your team will wander outside the boundaries...straying from the flock. It is your responsibility to use your staff of direction to rescue this person...bringing them back to the flock safe and sound. Lastly, constantly encourage your flock to move to greener pastures.

### **Principle #6 -- The Rod of Correction**

In addition to the staff, the shepherd carries a shorter stick -- a rod. While the staff represents your responsibility to direct people, the rod represents your responsibility to correct them. Of interest, this is the part of leadership where leaders, particularly new ones, most commonly stumble. The shepherd effectively uses the rod in three ways:

1. Protection from predators like coyotes, wild dogs, wolves, and mountain lions.
2. Correction. It is the shepherd's responsibility to use discipline as a teaching opportunity. Like sheep, people can be stubborn and rebellious. For that reason, heavy doses of persuasion may be required. In the business setting, approach discipline as an instructional exercise instead of punishment. By the way, if you have protected your people, they will be much more inclined to listen to you when you correct them.
3. Inspect regularly. Inquire about the progress of your flock. And remember that it is your responsibility to develop them.

### **Principle #7 -- The Heart of the Shepherd**

What makes a great shepherd isn't the staff or the rod, it is the heart. What distinguishes a gifted leader from a mediocre one is that the great leader has the heart for his or her people. Your ultimate test of leadership isn't setting direction for your flock. Rather, it is getting your flock where you want it to go. If you want your people to go above and beyond, they must see your passion...your heart. If it is greatness that you want, it's greatness that you must give.

Leadership...the way of the shepherd!

#### About the Author

Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA, TRA is the CEO of Beyond Insurance and is recognized as an industry leader having been named a Philadelphia finalist for *Inc. Magazine's* "Entrepreneur of the Year" award as well as one of the "25 Most Innovative Agents in America." Beyond Insurance is a consulting firm that offers leadership training, cultural transformation, and talent and tactical development for enlightened professionals who are looking to take their practice to the next level. Since 2007, the proven and repeatable processes of Beyond Insurance have transformed individuals and organizations as measured by enhanced organic growth, productivity, profitability, and value in the marketplace.