

*Everything I Learned  
About Leadership...*

*...I Learned from  
Lewis and Clark*

*Jeffrey S. Ton*

*Copyright © 2012 Jeffrey S. Ton  
All Rights Reserved*

*No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without prior permission of the publisher. Requests for permission should be directed to the author at [RiversofThought.Net](http://RiversofThought.Net).*

*Cover Photo:  
Decision Point, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005*

*eBook template courtesy of [EbookTemplateSource.com](http://EbookTemplateSource.com).*

*Some of the material in this book is the author's own impressions of events that took place on the Lewis and Clark Expedition and in the years following. For an historical account the author recommends "Undaunted Courage" by Stephen Ambrose, or "The Definitive Journals of Lewis and Clark, vols. 1 – 13" edited by Dr. Gary Moulton.*

**For my dad,  
the person that *really* taught me everything I know  
about leadership**

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Transparency.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Honesty and Truthfulness .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Accountability .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Patience.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Seeks Input.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Commitment.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Seeks Input (Part Deux) .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Integrity and Character .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Admits Mistakes .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Flexibility.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Takes Risks .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b><i>List of Photographs and Images .....</i></b>	<b>53</b>



Everything I Learned About  
Leadership...

...I Learned from Lewis and Clark

## Introduction

I have a confession. I am a groupie! How many of you remember the 70's and the "Dead Heads", that group of hippies that followed the Grateful Dead all over the country? No, I haven't been following my favorite rock band around, but I *really* am a dead head because I've been following two dead guys around the country. Actually, my wife and I have been following two dead guys around, she's the photographer, but I am the real groupie!



Over the last 10 or 12 years, we have travelled over 35,000 miles by car, by RV, by plane, on foot and even



by canoe following the Lewis and Clark Trail. So you have to be asking yourself, “What exactly does all this have to do with a book about leadership?” You are so right to ask. This book is *not* about our adventures of the last decade (that is an entirely different book...two books actually). This book is about leadership and the lessons about leadership those two men, dead over 200 years, can teach us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century business world.

As I talk with business leaders and potential business leaders across the globe, it is apparent to me that to be a leader today you must value your employees and want each of the individuals within your departments to be leaders, you must want to create and grow an environment in which every employee is empowered to be a leader, to provide input and expertise, and to provide an environment in which information flows freely between all parts of your organization. In other words, leaders must want to work within a culture of candor and transparency.

Before we turn our attention to our heroes (ok *my* heroes) and begin our exploration of leadership, allow me to refresh your memory a bit (if you are like me, its been a *long* time since you studied American History and thought about Lewis and Clark). I will very quickly do the cliff notes version.

Captain Meriwether Lewis was the personal secretary to President Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson asked him to lead an expedition to find a water route to the Pacific, the fabled Northwest Passage. Lewis immediately asked his old Army buddy, William Clark to be his co-captain. Together they formed a corps of almost 60 men, a woman (Sacagawea), her newborn baby, and a dog, to be known as the Corps of Discovery. They travelled by boat down the Ohio River, up the Mississippi river, then up the Missouri River. They followed the Missouri until it was just a trickle emerging from the rocks. They crossed the Continental Divide, crossed the Rocky Mountains on horseback, located the Columbia River watershed, built dugout canoes and canoed to the Pacific Ocean, then returned.

Ok, I just summarized over three years and about 8,000 miles in a single paragraph!

What they accomplished has been compared to the Apollo mission of putting a man on the moon. Without diminishing Neil Armstrong's feat, I'd say the comparison does not do this accomplishment justice. When Lewis and Clark "stepped off the map", they were literally stepping into the unknown. They expected to see woolly mammoths still roaming the land. They thought they might find redheaded Indians, descendants from Leif Ericson's expedition. They

thought the Rockies were a single mountain range, similar to the Alleghenies and the Appalachians.

What makes this expedition even more noteworthy is that the Lewis and Clark Expedition was not the first expedition that set out to “discover” the Northwest Passage. History records at least two other attempts prior to 1803. The first was to be lead by William Clark’s older brother George Rogers Clark. However, it fell apart before it even departed, with politics, pride and arguments dooming it from the outset. Andre Michaux was to lead the second, his expedition got as far as the *wild* Indiana territory before Native Americans turned it back.



How these two men were able to lead their Corps of Discovery to this accomplishment can give us in-sights today into how to

grow leaders, how to create effective teams, and how to create an environment of truth, transparency and candor. Using one of the greatest leadership books every written, the Captains’ own journals, we will explore ten traits of a leader.

## Everything I Learned About Leadership



A Leader:

- is Transparent
- is Honest and Truthful
- is Accountable
- is Patient
- Seeks Input
- is Committed
- has Integrity and Character
- Admits Mistakes
- is Flexible
- Takes Risks

## Everything I Learned About Leadership



### Transparency

Our exploration begins much as theirs did, in the halls of Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home. It is here we find Meriwether Lewis and Jefferson pouring over the recently published book documenting Alexander Mackenzie's cross-continent exploration of the



Canadian wilderness.

Jefferson knew that it was vital to the survival of the young republic to develop trade

routes across the western continent and, if possible, with the Far East. He knew the race was on and to ensure the U.S. won the race, he turned to Lewis. Together they would map out the preliminary logistics and draft a letter to congress to fund a secret military expedition.

It is interesting to note the first action Lewis took. He sat down and wrote a letter to his old Army buddy, William Clark. Many years prior, as a young infantryman, Lewis had been assigned to Lieutenant Clark's brigade. At the time of Lewis' letter, Clark was retired, and in fact, had resigned his commission and





was living in the southern Indiana territory. The letter to Clark offered him a full Captaincy, a co-Captain with Lewis, something unprecedented in military history. Why would he do this? Why would he ask Jefferson's approval? For that matter, why would Jefferson approve?

I believe the answer is in the first trait of a leader: Transparency. I believe Jefferson and Lewis had created an environment of transparency and candor between the two of them.

Of the leadership books available today that discuss transparency, many of them focus on the outward flow of information to the markets. Companies are encouraged to be open and honest with their investors, the marketplace, and other external stakeholders. Some of these books will also encourage a leader to be open and honest with their employees and internal stakeholders. Still fewer books will talk about encouraging those employees and internal stakeholders to be open and honest with management. However, I contend in order to create an environment of transparency and a culture of candor, leaders must first be transparent with themselves. They must look at themselves without any of the guises of self-deception. They must be open and honest with themselves about their strengths and weaknesses.



I believe Lewis was aware of his strengths, but more importantly, he was also aware of his weaknesses. He knew the mission would not be successful without the complementary skills that William Clark would bring to the table. Knowing Lewis through his words at the words of others, I dare say he was *very* much aware of his strengths. I have no doubt Jefferson had created an environment in which they could openly and honestly discuss his strengths and weaknesses. Had Jefferson berated Lewis for his weaknesses or pointed them out in front of his peers at Mitchie Tavern, or had not discussed them in a caring and constructive manner, or had not been open and honest with Lewis about his own strengths and weaknesses, Lewis would have been very reluctant to admit to those weaknesses by suggesting Clark be a co-Captain with him. The lessons Lewis learned would serve him well on the expedition.

Creating an environment of transparency is just as important today in the workplace as it was 200 years ago in the wilderness. If you are in a management position, knowing your own strengths and weaknesses is even more important than knowing the strengths and weaknesses of your team. If you are not in a management role today, one of the biggest steps you can take to further your career and build your leadership qualities is to carefully assess your strengths and weaknesses. Use this knowledge to map out your own personal development plan.

Being an introvert of sorts, two of the hardest things for me to do when I was new to the business world were to network in a group of strangers or near strangers and to speak in front of a group. I knew for me to grow in my career, I was going to have to do both. I intentionally put myself in situations that forced me to network and to do presentations. I joined a business networking group; I presented in my church; and volunteered to make presentations at work. While I will never be able to work a room like my dad, the minister, I do attend dozens of networking gatherings a year. And while I still get nervous when presenting to an audience, I now routinely talk in front of groups of a hundred or more. I caution you, however, not to focus exclusively on your weaknesses, to quote my boss Jim McClelland, look for ways to maximize your strengths and make your weaknesses irrelevant. If you are in a position of building a team, knowing your strengths and weaknesses will help you identify team members that compliment your skills rather than team members that are your clones or clones of each other.

One of the biggest challenges leaders face when trying to create an environment of transparency is that of knowing where to draw the line when it comes to sharing information. What information should be shared? When should it be shared? With whom should it be shared? This conundrum confounds many



managers and executives to the point that they err on the side of holding on to *all* the information. Yes, strategic secrets are necessary, as is protecting the rights and privacy of employees and customers. The information must be examined as well as the consequences of it being shared and the likelihood of it being shared anyway. I have found it is always better to be proactive as opposed to being reactive!

## Everything I Learned About Leadership

**12**

## Honesty and Truthfulness



As we continue our journey, we find Lewis and Clark rendezvousing across the river from Louisville, in what is today,

Clarksville, Indiana. Yes, Indiana! Who knew the Lewis and Clark Expedition actually started in Indiana? Sorry St. Louis, we need to take that arch and move it to Clarksville!

Upon Lewis' arrival in the Indiana Territory, he and Clark began the task of recruiting men for the expedition. The men they recruited from the area became known to history as the Nine Young Men from Kentucky, even though several were Hoosiers (well, they lived in the Indiana Territory at any rate). As they travelled down the



Ohio River and up the Mississippi to their first winter encampment, they continued the recruiting process.

Relying on their own self-transparency and their knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, they developed a very specific list of requirements for the job, similar to a job posting on Monster today, I am sure. They needed hunters, boatmen, blacksmiths, cooks, fighters, interpreters and guides. The men must be under 35 and single (so as not to have strong ties back home). They must be strong and willing to work hard. However, just as leaders and managers in today's business world, they also knew when to make allowances, placing the right person, in the right seat on the bus (or canoe, as the case may be) despite the fact that they might not meet all of the specific criteria. At least one of the men was over 40 and one or two were married.

Now, as they were building this team, they could have painted a rosy picture of a trip of adventure and romance; of fame and fortune; of a two- or three-year river cruise across the continent. Instead, they laid down the foundation of honesty and truth from day one. As they recruited the men, they spoke of the untold dangers, the unknown, and the hard, hard work it would take to make the journey. They spoke of the risk of attack, starvation, and becoming lost. They described the mission and goals of the trip and what it would take

to accomplish them. The message was consistent to each and every man. Rather than telling the men what they might want to hear, they laid out the facts. As we will see, because the captains were men of their word, the men learned they could speak truth to the captains without fear of recrimination.

Think back over your own career. Have you ever been asked to join a project or perhaps even hired into a company (of course, not the one where you currently work) and once you got on board it was not quite what you were lead to believe you would experience? How did it make you feel? Did you vent your frustration with those around you? Overall, how was the team morale?

Early in my career with a consulting company, I had an interview with a prospective client. My firm's account manager assigned to this client described the hiring manager as a "great guy", someone that was very good to work with and for, someone that treated his employees and consultants fairly and professionally. He described the team as hard working, outstanding consultants and believers in strong team dynamics. During the interview, the picture continued to be painted in this way.

After about 10 minutes on the job I learned the real truth. The client actually ran the department like an ogre, the entire team was scared to death of him, part of



the team got high on their lunch hours and the rest of the team bickered about even the smallest issues. How did I learn these things so quickly? Everyone made it a point to tell me all the dirty laundry. In fact, it was all they really talked about. Needless to say I was not happy with my employer or where I was assigned.

We as leaders today can learn from the example set by the captains as we are called upon to hire staff, build teams and create an environment of truth and transparency. As those on your team see you exhibit these traits, they too, will begin to exhibit them.

### Accountability

This brings us to the third trait or skill of a leader, and, frankly, one of the most difficult: Accountability; but, not just accountability, accountability with consequences. As leaders, we must learn the art of holding our teams accountable for their commitments and what we require of them. It begins with clear and consistent instructions, specific deliverables, and specific dates; confirming that each of those are understood and acknowledged. However, it goes beyond that, so that if the deliverables do not meet expectations or commitments are not met there are immediate and consistent consequences. Now, this does not mean berating the individual in public, or in private for that matter.

Let's look at how our Captains Clark and Lewis handled accountability. While I don't recommend this approach, I do believe there are some lessons to be gained.



During the winter of 1803/1804, the Corps was camped across the river from St.

Louis near what is today Alton, Illinois. They called it Camp Du Bois or Camp Wood. Now picture, a long cold winter, with an encampment of 50 – 60 young, virile, adventurous men, many of whom had never been in military service. Throw in a regiment of drills, discipline, and hard physical labor. Add a dash or two of whiskey. What do you get? Discipline Problems! Fights!

Captain Clark laid down some very specific rules of the camp, along with the consequences of breaking the rules. These consequences ranged from extra labor, latrine duty, loss of hunting privileges, and loss of whiskey privileges, to running the gauntlet and finally court martial. These consequences were handed down evenly and fairly and without hesitation. Their journals relate two instances that first winter and one the next spring that required the guilty to run the gauntlet of switches. Later there was one case that required court martial as the one and only man to desert was captured.

Obviously these consequences are not techniques we use today (I hope). I think it is interesting to point out, however, that in the three and half year expedition, after that first spring, there were no other incidents that required the gauntlet or court martial. The men of the expedition knew the expectations, they knew there would be accountability, and they knew there would be consequences. We will see that the foundation of

teamwork and unity laid down in those early months were manifested throughout the journey.

Think how the lack of accountability and consequences impacts team morale in business today. How much water-cooler gossip is spent talking about Suzie who comes in late every day, or Joe who consistently fails to meet his targets, yet they always seem to “get away with it”?

As managers we must communicate our expectations clearly. And, manage those who don’t meet their expectations fairly and swiftly.

Admittedly, holding your peers accountable can be even more difficult. Remember the proverbial “team project” back in your school days? There always seemed to be that one guy that didn’t hold up his or her portion of the work.

Within our department, we developed a list of “Team Norms” and everyone in the department signed them. Everyone was given a laminated copy of the signed norms. The list of norms includes:

- Be direct and honest in a constructive way
- Be open to compromise and commitment
- Be responsive in communications
- Be professional in communications



The list goes on. There are 20 in all. Each team member is responsible for holding the other team members accountable. Of course, they are always able to come and speak with their manager. Their manager can provide guidance in how to handle the situation.

If you define clear objectives, clear expectations, and clear and fair consequences this trait can be a versatile tool in your tool belt.

## Patience

Despite, what would be described today as, harsh consequences; the captains also exhibited the fourth trait of a leader, that of Patience. Enter Private George



Shannon. Shannon was the youngest member of the expedition, barely 18 years old, and one of the Nine Young Men of Kentucky. Despite his youth, Shannon proved himself during the first winter to be a hard working member of the Corps. During the

expedition, however, Shannon had a propensity for getting lost. Once, lost for nearly two weeks and nearly starved to death he rejoined the Corps on September 11, 1804. Out of bullets, he had survived by shooting a stick out of his rifle and killing a rabbit. He was to get lost again the following summer for a day or two. Yet, the



captains saw something in this man and nurtured and trained him, to the point that, without reservation, they sent him off on his own to explore the Wisdom River. Clark even immortalized Shannon by naming a creek feeding into the Yellowstone River “Shannon’s Creek”. After the expedition and Lewis’ untimely death, Clark would rely on Shannon to help Nicholas Biddle finish the publication of the Journals. Shannon, the youngest member of the corps with the propensity for getting lost, later studied and practiced law in Lexington.

Today, leaders are called upon to show patience when others might stumble or “get lost” along the way. We teach, we train, and we mentor. We do not adjust our expectations, or the consequences of accountability. We all know members of our teams that show promise but need coaching to help them succeed. When circumstances provide roadblocks and hurdles, we again exhibit patience and do not overreact.

I have no doubt many of you exhibit this trait multiple times a day, if not with your teams and peers, then with your customers. Being patient with someone who may not be exhibiting this trait in return can be especially difficult. It helps to try to put yourself in their shoes. The service and support technicians at Goodwill receive a wide variety of calls a day. The phone rings and it’s a retail clerk unable to process credit card transactions. He or she is faced with a growing line of customers

trying to check out. The next call could be from the line supervisor of the packaging line in our warehouse reporting that the scan guns are not working and they have a backlog of orders that need to get out the door for a customer. Or a teacher may be calling because they are unable to print the day's assignment for a room full of students. Can you imagine the stress and frustration *they* are feeling? If you can empathize and show patience you will go a long way in satisfying your customer and creating a fan of that customer.

Thinking back to the consulting assignment I mentioned earlier, I can remember countless meetings with the client when I thought he was going to have a coronary right there on the spot. One of us would go in and provide a project update and his face would get beet red, veins would pop out on his forehead and four letter words would spew forth. It was always "shoot the messenger". He once had me release a fellow consultant because he walked too slowly across the parking lot. "If he walks that slow, he must code slow." I am not kidding! No one wanted to ever be the one to draw the short straw and have to go tell him bad news.



## Everything I Learned About Leadership

**24**

### Seeks Input

During the summer of 1805, the Corps reached a pivotal point in the journey. After leaving one of the most scenic areas of the Missouri River, the White Cliffs, they came to a fork in the road. Well, actually it was a fork in the river. Throughout the winter, they had spent countless hours talking with the Mandan Indians about their journey ahead. The Mandan had told them about the White Cliffs, the Mandan had told them about the dry and arid plains, the Mandan had told them about the great waterfall on the Missouri. What the Mandan had *not* told them about was a fork in the river, ok technically since they were going upstream, it was not a fork; it was confluence of two rivers. The channels were of similar size and flow, one was muddy and one was a little clearer, one headed west, the other headed south. It was mid June, and the Rockies were still distant mirages on the horizon, but already snow covered. Selecting the wrong channel would lead to serious delays, if not complete failure of the mission.

The Captains were convinced that the south channel was the proper channel, while every one of the men thought the west channel was the true Missouri. Rather than making a gut-instinct decision, the captains halted, at what today is called Decision Point.



They spent several days exploring both channels, discussing with the men, and exploring again. They reviewed every piece of evidence brought forth by the men. In the end, they were still convinced that the southern channel was the right choice. They informed the others, and without dissent, they proceeded on. Several days later they “discovered” the Great Falls of the Missouri, confirming that they were indeed on the right course.

Whether the captains knew it or not, what they instilled in their team by taking the time to ask the right questions, not assuming they already had the right answer, and listening to the opinions of those around them, was the confidence, the freedom, and the empowerment to speak the truth to authority. The foundation of truth and honesty the Captains established early in the expedition was manifested here as the men felt free to disagree.

How many of us today, know managers that make decisions without gathering all the facts available to them or asking for input from those involved? It can be devastating to morale and team energy, in the best case. In the worst case it can have catastrophic consequences. Informed decision-making involves not only asking the right questions and gathering all the pertinent facts, it also means knowing when to stop analyzing (no analysis paralysis) and make a decision. It is also important to explain the decision. *Why* can be just as important as *what*. The Corps may not have agreed with the Captains, but they at least understood why rather than “because I said so”.

Back to the red-faced, vein-popping client, his method of decision-making was definitely top down, and *rarely* without the facts! We were in the midst of one of those “projects from hell”, already a year late, and zillions of dollars over budget. We kept bringing on more and more contractors to get the project completed yet we kept getting further and further behind. Not once were any of us asked what we should do, or what we would change, we were just given more modules to code. Perhaps *someone* had a design or a plan.

At some point, management had enough and put a different manager in charge of the group. He relates what happened next this way:

*The project was in disarray. The project team was dysfunctional. I went to the cubicle of one of our long time contract programmers and tapped him on the shoulder. Barely looking away from his monitor he mumbled, “Hi” and started typing again.*

*“I’d like to ask you some questions”, I said.*

*Again, barely turning around, “OK” came the reply.*

*“I want to ask you what’s wrong with the project and what we need to do to fix it”.*

*“You don’t want to know”, he responded.*

*“Yes, I do want to know.”*

*“The design is all wrong. It will never work.”*

*“Assuming that’s true, what do we do?”*

*“Start over.”*

*“Start over?”, I asked.*

*“Yep, start over. We will be done in six months.”*

*Curious, I drug him kicking and screaming into my office for a white board session. Two hours later we had a new design and a new approach. We presented it to the team and asked their thoughts.*

*Six months later, we had a live system.*

I can tell you, as a member of that team, the attitude completely changed. It wasn't necessarily the new design. It was that we were *asked* our opinion. *That* is what mattered most to us. We would have done anything to get the project done in those six months.

## Everything I Learned About Leadership

30



I Learned from Lewis and Clark

## Commitment

The two captains and the Corps proceeded on past Decision Point, past the Great Falls of the Missouri, past the Gates of the Mountains, past Three Forks, Beaverhead Rock and Clark's Lookout (where, thank GOD, I was there to help point them in the right direction!), finally, arriving at the source of the mighty Missouri River. Yes, that little trickle of water springing from those rocks is the Missouri River. About a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile up from there, and I do mean *up*, from there they came to the Continental



Divide. After over two years of planning, sailing, poling, pulling, walking, crawling, after narrowly avoiding being turned back by the Teton Sioux, after several escapes from death by falling, drowning, or losing their way, after surviving temperatures of 58 below zero and 110 degrees above, they were about to fulfill their primary objective and



reach the Columbia River watershed. They would build canoes and float down to the Pacific Ocean. There they would meet a ship and return by water, or, failing that, they would spend an easy winter, and return by the route they had just followed. Throughout these two years, the Captains had exhibited commitment to the mission and the goal, always, as they would say, proceeding on.

Think of the excitement in Lewis' mind as he approached the divide. Think of the pounding of his heart as he climbed the summit. Think of the



devastation he felt when he had, as my wife and I call it, his “Oh Shit” moment and looked out across, not a single range of mountains, but mountain range after mountain range. The fate of the mission hung in the balance, the fate of their lives hung in the balance. Winter was already beginning to set in. They had to find the Shoshone Indians and obtain horses. Keep in mind; they had not seen another human being since

leaving Fort Mandan almost six months prior. They could have turned back. They had already accomplished so much. In fact, they had the answer. There was no water route to the Pacific. However, the Captains knew Jefferson would not be satisfied. The CAPTAINS would not be satisfied.

The commitment they had exhibited on countless occasions to proceed on had instilled in each and every one of the men (and woman) the same level of commitment. The CORPS would not be satisfied. So, without a dissenting voice, they again proceeded on.

Now, I grant you, rarely in business today are we faced with life or death tests of our commitment. However, we face tests and challenges every day. Our response to them as leaders will have a dramatic impact on our co-workers and our teams. If we explode in anger or frustration, if we give up completely, whenever we are faced with challenges, our teams will lose confidence in us as leaders and they too will give up when faced with challenges.

## Everything I Learned About Leadership



## Seeks Input (Part Deux)

We are going to fast-forward a bit in the excursion. Rest assured, they did find the Shoshones and did obtain horses, and a guide whom they named Old Toby. They crossed the Rockies and located the rivers of the Columbia watershed, and eventually the Columbia itself.



Now, this was not without its challenges. Old Toby got them lost; they nearly starved to death crossing the mountains in winter; and nearly drowned running the rapids on the Columbia River, but they did, at last, reach the Pacific Ocean.



As they scouted the shore both north of the Columbia and south along the Pacific Coast, they were faced with the decision of where to set up camp for the winter. Each area had advantages and disadvantages. One seemed to be more protected from the elements. One seemed to have better hunting. One was closer to a tribe of friendly Native Americans. One was rockier and more difficult to reach the sea. Again, as at Decision Point,



the Captains spent several days scouting, examining the information, and asking the thoughts of the men. Rather than making the decision, they did something that was highly unusual, especially for a military expedition. They put it to vote. It is interesting to note that Sacagawea, a woman, voted as did York, Clark's African American Slave. They tallied the votes in their journals and the majority ruled.

The Captains do not tell us why they treated this decision differently than the one at Decision Point. My opinion is that as leaders they knew that different decisions need different approaches. It is not always possible to manage or lead by consensus. There are times, like at Decision Point, as leaders we are called upon to make the tough decisions. That does not mean we make them in a vacuum, without asking the right questions, without evaluating all of the facts available, and without considering the consequences. We do all of those things, and, the most important, we explain our decision to our teams, and so, while they may not agree with the decision, they at least understand and appreciate the decision.

A couple years ago, we rolled out a new organizational structure within my department. Now, I could have played the VP Card, created a PowerPoint slide with all the boxes, lines and names, and presented that to my staff. Eventually, they would have accepted the new



structure and adopted the new processes. However, I wanted their input and I wanted them to understand *why* we needed a new organizational structure in the first place.

So, we started by examining the model of the entire business. We talked about the processes we use to support the business model. We discussed how the model and the processes impact the department's organization. We defined the roles needed to add value to the business. When it came time to draw the organizational chart, the names almost fell into the boxes. The resulting roll out of the organization was one of the smoothest I had ever experienced.

## Integrity and Character

### Admits Mistakes

Before you think that our captains were perfect, I want to relate one incident, which I found to be one of the most disturbing to my vision of the captains, or at least Captain Lewis. After spending the winter on the west coast, in conditions that further wore down the Corps, it was time to return east to “those United States”. It had rained almost every day since their arrival four months prior. Their clothes were literally rotting off of them.



Their trade goods were exhausted. Desperate to begin their return voyage they needed two more canoes. After barely being able to afford to barter for one and in need of one more, Lewis ordered

four of the men to go and steal one. I would like to point out; nowhere in the captains’ journals is this story recounted. It was only retold by one of the Sergeants in his journal.

This may not sound like much, one old dugout canoe, what could it matter? I am sure Lewis rationalized and



justified the behavior in his mind. The success of his mission depended upon that canoe. What was one canoe against the *glorious* mission of the Corps of Discovery? Looking at it from the perspective of the Clatsop Indian family that lost its canoe, it was probably devastating. The canoe would have been hand carved and very ornate. It would have been blessed both as they felled the tree and as they finished carving the canoe. Later it would have served as a casket for the owner upon his death. Imagine how you would feel if someone stole your car...and you probably aren't planning on being buried in it. I've got to believe that Captain Lewis fell several notches in the hearts of his men. Not only did he steal a canoe, but also he ordered four of his men to do the dirty work. They most certainly lost some respect for him. I know I did.

There are at least a couple of lessons in this incident for us. First, as leaders, we cannot sacrifice our ethics and our morals for the success of our mission and goals. The ends do not justify the means. This applies not only in our work life, but in our personal lives as well. Failure to live to our ethical and moral standards in our personal lives can have a profound impact on the way our teams perceive us and eventually it can even impact how we perceive ourselves. To be leaders we must exhibit integrity and strong character. The news is filled with leaders who got themselves into a personal issue. When you hear such a story don't you think less of the

person, even if it has nothing to do with their profession? Several years ago, I read a story about the owner of a local company that had been caught in an affair. I had never met the man, nor ever dealt with his company, but every time I see their ads in the local business paper, that is the first thing that comes to my mind. To be leaders we must exhibit integrity and strong character. In this age of Facebook and Twitter, it is difficult, if not impossible to keep your personal life from creeping into your business life. Those pictures from your night on the town might have seemed like a good idea at the time, but...

The other lesson to learn from the stolen canoe incident is something Lewis didn't do. Leaders admit their mistakes. We have no record of Lewis ever showing remorse for the transgression, nor do we see him even admit to himself it was wrong. We are not perfect. As leaders, we will make mistakes in judgment. We will make wrong decisions. We must own up to our mistakes, acknowledge our mistakes and learn from our mistakes. I believe Lewis paid a price for not admitting his mistake. Reading between the lines of the journal (and trust me, I *have* read all the one million words in 13 volumes), his relationship with the other members of the Corps, including Clark was never quite the same. Even after the return home, he did not have the same relationship with the men that Clark enjoyed.

It doesn't matter if you are leading an expedition across the continent, managing a team of professionals, or are an integral member of a team, if you can't admit your mistakes, or admit you don't know something it will impact the way others work with you. We all know teammates or bosses that refuse to admit when they've been wrong. How do we feel about them? It is not a sign of weakness to admit you don't know something or that you made a mistake, in fact, how one reacts when one makes a mistake is a true test of leadership.

### Flexibility

Speaking of the return home, let's explore the return trip for the final two examples of leadership traits. The Corps travelled east for the first time in three years. Heading up the Columbia, the Snake, and the Clearwater Rivers, they arrived at the western trailhead of the pass across the mountains in late April. Despite the warnings of the Nez Perce chiefs that it was too early to attempt the crossing the Corps proceeded on. They soon realized that the chiefs might have been right. They found the snow to be "deeper than the trees were tall". The trail was indeed impassable. For the first time the Corps retreated. They returned to the Nez Perce village and re-evaluated their plans and decided they would adjust them. Although very anxious to return home, they were not willing to risk their lives to cross the mountains in such conditions. They would wait for almost two months.



This showed flexibility. Rather than stubbornly pushing forward in the face of insurmountable odds, the Captains were flexible and adjusted their expectations.

They didn't do it "willy-nilly" and change course every time the going got tough, they did it when it counted. They knew when to stay the course and when to be flexible. Businesses today are confronted with many obstacles that get in the way of reaching their goals. Strong leaders know when to "proceed on" and when to retreat, regroup, re-evaluate, and adjust the strategy.

## Takes Risks

The final trait on our expedition of discovery is “Takes Risks”. To be successful, leaders must be able to take risks, to break from the playbook, to adlib. Jefferson’s instructions to the Captains were pretty simple and straightforward. Follow the Missouri to its source, cross the mountains, locate the Columbia, and follow it to the ocean and return. However, over the course of the



journey the Captains had learned some facts that Jefferson could not have known. Armed with this new information they had a choice. They could wait, return to civilization, provide the information to Jefferson, and ask him what to do, and then carry out his instructions. Or, they could take a risk. Based on their knowledge of Jefferson, their knowledge of the new facts, and an

understanding of the goals of the mission, they decided to split into four groups.

Lewis would take the first group and take a short cut they had learned about from the Nez Perce back to the Great Falls. Remember that “other river”, the one at Decision Point? Because the Louisiana Territory was described as “all the lands drained by the Missouri River”, Lewis wanted to explore that other river and learn if it headed north into what was Canadian wilderness and possibly lay claim to those additional lands. Clark would take the other three groups back the way they had come. He would send one group with the gear they had left on the east side of the Rockies down the Missouri. A second group would take the horses and follow the Missouri overland. He would take the final group and explore the Yellowstone River to its confluence with the Missouri. They were to meet back up at that confluence. Almost six weeks later, without any cell phones, email, or text messages these four teams met up in the specified location within just a couple of days of each other.

Pretty significant risk, wouldn't you say? Dividing what was already a small Corps into four smaller teams and heading out into the still unknown? Call it taking risks; call it taking initiative. To be a leader, we have to know when to take these types of educated risks.

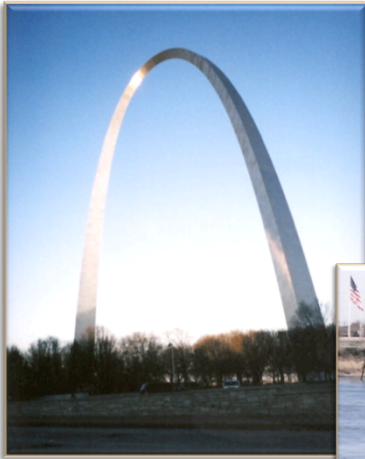
History does not tell us what Jefferson's reaction to this risk was, nor do we know the "what ifs". The decision could have lead to untold catastrophes. How would Jefferson have reacted if some of them had been killed, or if they had lost some of the precious discoveries, or if their journals had been destroyed? As leaders, not only do we have to be willing to take risks, but also we have to provide an environment and a culture for our employees, leaders and future leaders, to be able to take risks, to be able to fail, and to be able to succeed. If our teams are afraid of harsh consequences or an explosive boss, they will not be willing to take risks and we may be leaving significant "discoveries" on the table.



## Everything I Learned About Leadership



## Conclusion



Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery did return home. Their arrival in St. Louis was celebrated all across the young nation. The knowledge of our

country, the native peoples, the plants and animals was expanded dramatically almost overnight. Not only were these sciences advanced, but, as I hope you have seen, so to was our knowledge of the traits leadership, team building and creating an environment of truth, transparency and candor:





- Transparency
- Honesty/Truth
- Accountability
- Patience
- Seek Input
- Commitment
- Integrity and Character
- Admit Mistakes
- Flexibility
- Take Risks

# Everything I Learned About Leadership



# Everything I Learned About Leadership



## ***List of Photographs and Images***

- Cover: Lewis and Clark River, Astoria Tower, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Image of geodetic markers placed along the trail taken by Lewis and Clark, Copyright NOAA
- Portrait of William Clark, Charles Willson Peale, Independence National Historic Park
- Portrait of Meriwether Lewis, Charles Willson Peale, Independence National Historic Park
- Monticello, National Signature Event, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2003
- Clark's Cabin, National Signature Event, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2003
- Fort Massac, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2006
- Camp Dubois, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2004
- George Shannon, ShannonTrail.com
- George Shannon, ShannonTrail.com
- Decision Point, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Great Falls of the Missouri, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Gates of the Mountains, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Three Forks, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Three Forks, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Clark's Lookout, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Beaverhead Rock, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Sacagawea Spring, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005

- Continental Divide, Lemhi Pass, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Lemhi Pass, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Columbia River, Stevenson Washington, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Multnomah Falls, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Columbia River, Beacon Rock, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Pacific Ocean, Haystack Rock, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Lewis and Clark River, Astoria Tower, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2005
- Chinook Canoe, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2006
- Lolo Trail, Montana Outdoors, Montucky @WordPress.com
- Map of Lewis and Clark Track, William Clark, 1807
- Gateway Arch, National Signature Event, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2006
- The Corps Return to St. Louis, National Signature Event, Carmen S. Ton, Copyright © 2006