

# **Shackleton's Way: Leadership Lessons from the Great Antarctic Explorer By Margot Morrell and Stephanie Capparell**

## **1 – The Path to Leadership**

- In every job help boost the morale of the crew.
- Read broadly to find wisdom and guidance for all life's journeys.
- Be bold in planning, but cautious in execution, paying close attention to details.
- Learn from past mistakes. Experience taught him the kind of leader he didn't want to be.
- Cultivate a sense of compassion and responsibility for others.
- Once you make a career decision, commit to sticking through the tough learning period.
- Do your part to create an upbeat environment at work. A positive and cheerful workplace is important to productivity.
- In a rapidly changing world, be willing to venture in new directions to seize new opportunities and learn new skills.
- Find a way to turn setbacks and failures to your advantage. This would be a good time to step forward on your own.
- Never insist on reaching a goal at any cost. It must be achieved at a reasonable expense, without undue hardship for your staff.
- Don't be drawn into public disputes with rivals. Rather, engage in respectful competition.

## **2 – Hiring an Outstanding Crew**

- Select people who share your vision and enthusiasm for the task at hand.
- Conduct unconventional interviews to find unique talent.
- Surround yourself with cheerful, optimistic people. They will reward you with the loyalty and camaraderie vital for success.
- Make sure every person hired knows exactly what is expected of them.
- Your No. 2 is your most important hire. Pick one who complements your management style, and shows loyalty without being a yes-man.
- To weed out potential slackers, choose workers who show a willingness to tackle any job, and will take turns at the unpopular tasks.

- Hire those with the talents and expertise you lack. Don't feel threatened by them. They will help you stay on the cutting edge and bring distinction to your organization.
- To help your staff do top-notch work, give them the best equipment you can afford.

### **3 – Creating a United and Loyal Team**

- Establish order and routine in your organization to foster an atmosphere of security and productivity.
- Break down traditional hierarchies by having everyone pitch in to do all the work.
- Rotate work assignments so that over time, each man can work alongside all the others, building trust, respect and even friendship.
- Encourage an attitude where everyone does not have equal status, but each is valued equally and treated with equal respect.
- Lead by example. Never ask anyone to do work you wouldn't do yourself.
- Relaxation and entertainment are critical. Schedule them into your organization's routine.
- Take the time to observe before acting, especially if you are new to the scene. Don't make changes just for the sake of leaving your mark.
- Always keep your door open to your staff and be generous with information that affects them. Well-informed employees are more eager and better prepared to participate.
- Have regular gatherings to build esprit de corps where employees can relate to each other as people rather than only as colleagues.

### **4 – Getting the Best from Each Individual**

- Create a working environment comfortable enough to entice professionals to spend most of their waking hours there. Allow for some personal preferences.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle of exercise and eating as physical and mental acumen are closely linked.
- Make sure each employee has challenging and important work. Even the lowest ranking employee must feel they are making a valuable and appreciated contribution to the company.

- Match personality types with work responsibilities. Be observant of the types of people who are working for you and what jobs might best suit their personalities as well as their experience.
- Provide constant feedback. Praise their efforts and correct their mistakes.
- Hold small celebrations that recognize both the individual and the group.
- Be tolerant of people's quirks and foibles. Know each employee's strengths and weaknesses, and set reasonable expectations.

## **5 – Leading Effectively in a Crisis**

- When crisis strikes, immediately address your staff. Take charge of the situation, offer a plan of action, ask for support, and show absolute confidence in a positive outcome.
- Plan several options in detail. Get a grasp on the possible consequences of each, always keeping your eye on the big picture.
- Keep the malcontents close to you to contain their effect and to try to win them over.
- Defuse tension. In high stress situations use humor to put people at ease, and keep your staff busy.
- Let go of the past. Don't waste time or energy regretting past mistakes or fretting over what you can't change.
- Ask for advice and information from a variety of sources, but ultimately make decisions based on your own best judgment.
- Let all people involved in the crisis participate in the solution.
- Be patient. Sometimes the best course of action is to do nothing but watch and wait.
- Give your staff plenty of time to get used to the idea of an unpopular decision by leaking early details.

## **6 – Forming Teams for Tough Assignments**

- Make sure you have some cracker-jack groups that can handle the toughest challenges.
- Give the tedious assignments to the workhorses who don't complain. Let them know you are aware that you are giving them an outsized task and that you count on their goodwill and exceptional fortitude to get it done.

- Empower the team leaders so they have the authority to handle their own group, but keep an eye on the details.
- Be self-sacrificing. Give whatever perks it is in your power to dispense.
- Give a show of confidence in those acting in your stead. It's important that your support staff maintain in your absence the same level of competency you set.
- Never point out the weaknesses of individuals in front of others. Often, it's better to let everyone share in a remedy aimed at a few.

## **7 – Overcoming Obstacles to Reach a Goal**

- Go-for-broke risks become more acceptable as options narrow. Sometimes the potential rewards at the end of a daring venture justify the risk of suffering a spectacular failure.
- Seek inspiration from enduring wisdom that has comforted or motivated you or others in times of crisis. It will help you through the most physically and emotionally draining times and help you to keep your perspective.
- Congratulate yourself and others on a job well done. A pat on the back or a sincere handshake is an expression of gratitude that has never gone out of fashion.
- Make sure the whole job is done. Your staff may be able to call it quits after the heavy lifting is over, but you are responsible for seeing the work through to its successful completion.

## **8 – Shackleton's Thoughts on Leadership**

- "There are lots of good things in this world, but I'm not sure that comradeship is not the best of them all – to know that you can do something big for another chap."
- "Optimism is true moral courage."
- "The loyalty of your men is a sacred trust you carry. It is something which must never be betrayed, something you must live up to."
- "I have often marveled at the thin line which separates success from failure."
- "You often have to hide from them not only the truth, but your feelings about the truth. You may know the facts are dead against you, but you mustn't say so."
- If you're a leader, a fellow that other fellows look to, you've got to keep going."