

LEADERSHIP

Leadership Skills for the New Millennium

BY STEVEN B. WILEY



I firmly believe that leaders are made, not born. In fact, they are *always* self-made.

As we move into the new millennium, our workforce is far more diverse than ever before.

Ethnic and cultural diversity has brought new ideas and approaches to traditional thinking. The generational wheel continues to turn as Baby Boomers begin to approach retirement, Generation X continues to move into new leadership roles, and Generation Y enters the workforce.

These developments make it a good time to reassess some enduring principles of leadership that transcend these changes.

I often describe these principles in terms of creating “followship” among the people around you. The techniques for creating followship are simple, and

they recognize a few fundamental truths about what motivates people to follow:

- **Define Reality.** By this I mean let the members of your team know what is possible and what is out of the question.
- **Involve Your Group in Developing the Strategy.** One of the reasons that General Norman Schwarzkopf was such a strong leader in the Gulf War in 1991 was that he insisted that all his key subordinates be involved in developing the strategy for war. Everyone knew the game plan; everyone was motivated to accomplish the mission of the military conflict.
- **Allow Your Group to Understand Their Destiny.** All group members should not only understand their destiny, but also their role in fulfilling that destiny. Let them know the consequences of both success and failure, and make sure they understand how those consequences will affect them and the entire team.
- **Don't Forget to Say “Thank You.”** Expressing simple appreciation goes a long way toward motivating others to cooperate when you take the lead again.

Creating buy-in among team members is critical. In a herd of buffalo, the animal at the front of the herd is the only one that knows where the herd is going. The herd follows blindly. If the lead buffalo goes over a cliff, the others will follow. Geese, on the other hand, all know where they are headed. (“We’re all going to Fort Lauderdale for the winter.”) If the lead goose doesn’t show up or gets sick, the others simply tighten the formation and fly south. Surround yourself with geese, not buffalo.

Remembering and consistently practicing these leadership principles will help ensure optimal success in all your workplace situations. ○

Steven B. Wiley is a proven entrepreneur and highly acclaimed speaker who has trained and entertained tens of thousands of top executives from around the world.