See how effective leadership is steering, not pushing or pulling. The smooth, even motions of steering help you – the leader – reach your desired goals by avoiding potholes and obstacles. Includes numerous real-world “lessons learned” stories to illustrate points.

Steer the Wheel

STEER THE WHEEL

…to keep your organization rolling smoothly.

ISBN 978-1-60145-652-6

Printed in the United States of America.

Booklocker.com, Inc.
2008

Contents

Chapter One
Defining Leadership

All of us know a great leader when we see one. The signs are unmistakable, the results indisputable, the evidence clear. Do we all recognize the same signs and signals of great leadership? Or do we spend most of our lives debating and arguing with each other about what does or does not constitute good leadership? For example, most Americans think of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington as great Presidents – outstanding leaders for their times who rose to the occasion to make our country strong. Douglas MacArthur, George S. Patton, Erwin Rommel, Robert E. Lee, and many others are widely regarded as extremely capable, effective military leaders of the past. More recently, you can pick a military leader of conflicts in the Middle East or Afghanistan as an example of an effective leader. We all have favorite presidents, senators, or other politicians whom we regard as leaders best suited to guide our country. Those choices often have little to do with the individual's leadership ability. We consider Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Jack Welch, and hundreds more effective, even amazing leaders of business. But if we study the history, Washington and Lincoln had opponents, competitors, and even enemies. In both these cases, other men felt they were more capable and suitable than the men whose names we remember today.

So leadership, its definition, the factors that make it effective, or inspired, or great are not quite as clear as we might believe. Ask 1,000 people what leadership is, get 1,000 answers. Ask those same 1,000 people what *effective* leadership is and you will probably get something less than 1,000 answers, at least initially. Over time, specific themes of effective leadership have been discussed, debated, and written about extensively. In training leaders, I often ask them to think of a great leader they have

known. International leaders, parents, sports team coaches, anyone is allowed because great leaders are everywhere. Without fail, many of the same ideas and concepts surface every time. Words such as courage, fair, good listener, consistent, caring, good communicator, and knowledgeable come to everyone's mind as we consider what makes people good, effective leaders. There are certainly differences between the ideas expressed by various groups of people, but many of the same ideas surface every time. Most of us recognize when our leaders are effective, but seldom do we stop to determine why. Those of us who subsequently accept positions of leadership even less frequently remember all those factors that made our leaders effective and apply them to our own leadership styles. We all remember the bad leaders/bosses we have had and swear we will not act that way when we are in charge, but reality is often quite different.

So just what is leadership? Is it setting the example, caring for people, always making the right decisions? Is it accomplishing goals regardless of how their accomplishment affects followers, making sure we achieve a good bottom line, pleasing the boss? Yes and no. It is all of those things and none of those things. "Leadership," in and of itself, is just getting others to do what we want them to do. Consequently, the term encompasses every kind of leader – from the most effective team builders to the most tyrannical dictators. Granted, when we think of leaders today, we are unlikely to think of tyrants or dictators, but they are leaders. And some totalitarian leaders have been quite effective throughout history. For our purposes, however, we are talking about modern effective leadership.

All right, so we're talking about effective leadership. What does that mean? Again, for purposes of discussion, *effective* leadership is getting others to do what we want, but getting them to do so productively, willingly, and relatively happily. "Happily?" Wait

just a minute! Do I really mean that people need to be *happy* in accomplishing organizational goals and objectives? Well, no, they don't have to be happy. But they are sure more likely to accomplish what you want them to do if they are happy about it and committed to doing it. Quite simply, happy people – or at least people who are relatively pleased about what they are doing – will perform at a higher level.

We could argue that even the definition of effective leadership is unclear. Effective according to whom? Most people, even leaders, report to other leaders. Our leaders can see us as effective in their eyes, while our followers see us simultaneously with great contempt. So is *effective leadership* just getting the job done or does it include the willing, happy productivity we discussed in the preceding paragraph? Yes. Both. Neither. Obviously, we can debate the definition of effective leadership as long as we want, without ever coming to complete agreement. For the purposes of this work, *effective leadership* means both getting organizational goals accomplished in an effective, timely manner and keeping followers happy, involved, and willingly productive.

Let's face it: the great majority of us have to work to support our families and ourselves. The American people accepted that long ago. America may be the land of milk and honey where dreams come true, but the milk and honey are not free. In fact, sometimes the dreams aren't even free. No, the average American has accepted the plight of having to work to achieve his or her goals and dreams. (I maintain that even those who do not have to work will engage in productive activities similar to work – volunteering with a charity, pursuing a productive hobby, or some other equivalent undertaking but that is beyond the scope of this discussion.) We don't mind having to work to reach our goals, but we do want respect and appreciation along the way. This gets us to

what an effective leader provides an organization. The three main functions a leader provides are:

1. The vision and guidance to chart a course for the organization,
2. The tools and resources to get the job done, and
3. The environment to keep people happy.

Of course, these functions involve many separate attitudes and actions. Merely stating that they are important does not make us good leaders. However, keeping them in mind will help us stay focused as leaders, especially when organizational business has a tendency to overwhelm us. Let's talk about each of these three functions separately.

Vision

Leaders at all levels of organizations often get caught up in the moment and get so overwhelmed with the multitude and magnitude of everyday actions that they forget to lead. They think leading is handling everything and making all decisions. This is micromanaging, not leading. Of course, these leaders do need to be aware of what is going on in the organization, be flexible enough to travel to different parts of the organization and see situations for themselves, and understand when to step in and personally control specific situations. On a daily basis, however, subordinate leaders or other workers need to make many decisions. Allowing these people the freedom to make appropriate decisions not only frees the leader to focus on other issues, but also helps develop them as leaders, as well. A shared vision helps these subordinates know where their actions and decisions need to take the organization. Truly effective leaders share a clear vision with subordinates, allow them to make appropriate decisions (including a few bad ones), and inspire them to want to reach that vision.

Including others in the development of the vision helps in getting their support in reaching that vision. Leaders are

responsible for the vision, but can seldom reach that vision alone. Inspiring others and getting them excited in reaching a vision are invaluable in gaining willing, enthusiastic followers. One way to get them excited is to involve them in the development of the vision.

Tools and Resources

Merely to state that subordinates need the tools to do what we need them to do is much too simple. "Must provide own tools" usually does not apply in organizations. Leaders must ensure that workers have what they need to succeed and to achieve organizational goals. Expecting them to do what we want them to do without providing tools and resources is expecting too much.

So what do they need? That certainly depends on the job they are being asked to do. *Tools* may include many items, including hammers, impact wrenches, computers, or whatever. As a leader, you need to know what these tools are and listen to subordinates who request items they need but do not have. Every job, every organization uses different tools.

More importantly, employees need *resources*. Many leaders make their mistakes in this area. Raw materials are obviously critical in production facilities. Policies and procedures, integral parts of the model described in the next chapter, let the employee know what to do and how to do it. Standardized work instructions ensure quality. All of these are resources. Quite often, the most forgotten resource that employees need is *information.* People want to know how they are performing – good and bad. They want to know what is going on and where the organization is heading. They want feedback on performance and input into upcoming changes in the organization. They want leaders to respect them as people, with the acknowledgment that there is life beyond the workplace. Finally, they want to be respected for what they do, what they know and what they contribute. Failure of a leader to

meet these needs is just as devastating as failing to provide tools and raw materials.

Happiness

Must people really be happy at work or in an organization? Well, no. We can conduct the business of the organization regardless of the happiness of the people in it. Workers – people – who know where they are going, feel that what they are doing is worthwhile, and who truly believe in what they are doing and are happy about it will work hard to achieve the desired results. Simply put, *happy* people come to work more reliably, stay in the workplace longer, and work more productively while they are there. On the other end of the spectrum, unhappy people call in sick more frequently, bounce from job to job, and perform at minimum or mediocre levels.

The two leadership functions discussed above: vision and guidance, and providing tools and resources, are essential in ensuring happy workers. Providing a leadership climate in which people can be themselves, make honest mistakes, and develop professionally and personally completes the happiness equation. People want their leaders to recognize that they are more than just workers. They want leaders who acknowledge there is life beyond the workplace, that they have families and other interests, and that they may occasionally make mistakes. Finally, people want to feel that what they are doing is worthwhile, that it matters. This is a key ingredient to building and maintaining self-esteem. Happy people with good solid self-esteem are just more valuable to your organization. While quite simplistic, this statement is the essence of helping people stay happy at work, whether in a paid workplace or volunteer situation.

People also want to be involved in deciding where they and the organization are going. When challenged to help map out a strategy, vision, or new direction for an organization, people will

work amazingly hard and will display incredible creativity. Even if they do not individually agree with the final decision, having input into the process helps people embrace new ideas and directions and go there happily. Of course, if none of their ideas are ever seriously considered, that happiness and willingness can rapidly fade. If properly challenged and inspired, they will develop amazingly creative ideas. Remember that these people make the organization work. They are the ones who deal with customers, manufacture products, and get all the work done. They're pretty smart at it, too.

A few years ago, I was consulting with a local plant of a major corporation in developing a strategic plan for their facility. In preparing for the actual planning sessions, I asked one of the major local leaders if they received a strategic plan from corporate headquarters. Of course, he replied that they did. The remainder of the conversation went something like this:

"Where is it?" I asked.

"Over there in the safe," he replied.

"How do your folks on the production floor know what it says?" I asked.

"Oh, we can't tell them that!" he said, with great animation.

"Why not? Who does the work? Who accomplishes the goals and objectives in that plan?" I asked further. This was getting very interesting.

Silence for a few moments.

"Jeff, the sheep don't have to know that the shepherd is taking them to greener pastures. They just have to trust the shepherd." Jack (the leader) was enjoying himself now.

"Yes, but what if the sheep knew where those pastures were and could go there by themselves because they had helped pick the pastures in the first place? Aren't there other things the shepherd could be doing in the mean time?" Two can enjoy this game.

Another short silence.

"Damn it, Jeff. I hate it when you're right," he finally conceded. I had achieved my goal for that round.

By the way, I got the consulting contract and the plant's strategic planning team, including union members, developed a great plan that helped them make wonderful progress over the next few years. (Jack was also opposed to including union members on the team.) Keeping people at all levels of the organization involved in the planning made them happier about achieving the goals and objectives contained in the plan. Having fellow workers involved on the planning team also let others in the plant know that this wasn't the latest "flavor of the week" from the management group, thus getting everyone committed to achieving the goals and objectives desired. Without getting into specifics, let me say that company is now the fourth largest of its kind *in the world*. They didn't get there by accident. They got there through effective leadership.

Application

As a leader, you are responsible for what happens in your organization, department, section, or division. Keep in mind that leaders at all levels are still leaders. Don't blame others for what happens in your world – you are the responsible party. Too often, we tend to blame our bosses or outside influences, instead of accepting the responsibility for our own leadership. To get the mission accomplished, the goal achieved, and the work done, you need to use all the resources available.

First, establish a vision and guidance for your organization. Share that vision with your followers and yes, even get their input on where the organization should go. Inspire them to strive to reach the vision. Your inspiration will generally take the form of excitement and enthusiasm for where you are going and what you are doing. If you don't believe in it, why should anyone else?

Give people the tools and resources they need to accomplish the tasks you want them to do. Include information as a resource. People want to know what is going on and how they fit into the overall plan. Along the way, get everyone's input into how you are progressing. Ask people frequently what they need and what they think. You need to be able to see the situation from perspectives other than your own and asking is the only way to gain those other perspectives.

Finally, make sure people are happy in what they do. This can be difficult at times, but is critical to long-term success. Keep in mind that happy people show up – they come to work every day and keep doing so, even when they probably should not. If you have severe absentee problems, chances are that people are not happy in the organization. High turnover rates also indicate you may have a happiness problem. The final indicator is looking at people's faces and truly knowing them as individuals. Happy people smile and are generally pleasant.

Of course, some people who join your organization do not belong there. This happens in every organization. You need to be concerned with them, too. Help them to be happy – somewhere else. People who don't fit in the organization won't be happy there. Maybe the work just does not suit their personalities; maybe their personalities just don't mesh with others. Whatever the case is, help them see they are unhappy and would be happier elsewhere. Generally, these people will see the error of their ways in joining the organization in the first place, and will voluntarily leave. This saves you the unpleasant task of forcing them to leave and ensures they will leave the organization feeling they have been treated fairly.

Chapter Seven
Leadership Lessons I've Learned

Never pass up a chance to learn something new about leadership in general or about your leadership style specifically. You will learn many of these lessons the hard way, unfortunately, by making a poor decision or choice, thus resulting in consequences other than those you intend. You will also learn many by making good decisions and choices, hopefully resulting in the intended consequences. In either case, reflecting on your leadership behaviors occasionally helps you distill the myriad actions you take as a leader into clear, definable actions that will serve you well over the years.

This chapter presents some of the lessons I have learned since getting into the leadership business. Some are from life, in general, and some are from more specific leadership situations. In each case, I have included the story of how I learned that particular lesson. If any of them sound familiar – and I suspect some will – rest assured you are developing as a leader in much the same way as everyone has throughout the history of leadership.

You may want to keep a leadership journal to jot down your leadership lessons. It doesn't matter if you are a brand new leader or if you have been in the business 50 years – we never stop learning to be better leaders. Such a journal helps you remember these little gems and makes for very enlightening reading now and then. Looking back over your notes occasionally reminds you of those lessons and helps you to remember to follow them.

Lesson: *It's not what you say, it's how you say it.*

I cannot begin to tell you how incredibly tired I got of hearing my father say this. Mind you, I was a good kid, relatively

speaking. My older brother got in enough trouble for both of us. Yet any time one of us would come off with a little attitude, we heard this line. Dad was not known for his tolerance of teenage attitude.

Now, keep in mind that we cannot see attitude. We see only the behaviors associated with the attitude. Communication is extremely complex. We communicate incredible amounts of information with the slightest of actions – verbal tone and inflection, our choice of specific words, facial expressions, body posture, rolling the eyes, etc. So what my dad was really saying was that he could see through what I was saying and receive my true meaning by the vast majority of my communication behaviors – my attitude.

Others react the same way. Telling someone what we want him or her to do is effective only when it is said in the appropriate manner. People will see through the spoken word and understand when you are putting them down or when you do not believe in the guidance yourself. Make sure your communications are sincere and genuine. Otherwise, you may get results other than those you intend.

Source of the lesson: H. R. "Mickie" Corkran, my dad

Lesson: *People need praise.*

Probably the first lesson I ever learned in my military training came during my sophomore year in high school Junior ROTC, and I have always remembered it. Our Senior Army Instructor (SAI) was teaching the class that day. I remember that he seemed so old to me – then. (He was probably in his mid- to late-40s at the time.) He stated that soldiers need three things: food, to include water; shelter, to include clothing and protection from the elements; and a pat on the back for doing a good job. He

went on to say that this applied to all people, because that's all soldiers are – normal people. That made me think about my own motivation for accomplishing tasks or actions. He was right – I much preferred positive reinforcement to punishment. Of course, I did not understand positive reinforcement theory at the time, but I did understand recognition for something well done.

Punishment certainly has its place. We cannot ignore poor performance, nor should we. Our first tactic, however, should be to encourage excellent performance through appropriate development and recognition. I believe that people want to do what is right and perform well, and that providing frequent appropriate pats on the back is the way to get them to perform to the high standards we set.

Source of the lesson: LTC (Ret.) M. M. DePass, Senior Army Instructor, Dothan High School

My first assignment in the Army was in 1st Battalion, 32nd Armor, within the 3rd Armored Division, first as a platoon leader in Company A, then as the Executive Officer of Headquarters Company. This assignment was the source of many of my best-learned leadership lessons. A little like learning to ride a bicycle, learning to lead often involves falling down a lot by making the wrong choices or decisions. Hopefully, those wrong choices do not cause serious problems, but sometimes they do. The next few lessons are ones I learned while in that assignment.

Lesson: *Excuses don't work – even when you are right.*

As a young lieutenant, "additional duties" often comprised as much of my workload as my primary duties. As the Supply Officer for my company, I spent a great deal of time and effort in the supply room, often trying to figure things out as much as doing

anything proactive. When the division instituted a new supply and maintenance inspection program, the Supply Sergeant and I spent many hours to ensure all the supplies and equipment, as well as their accompanying paperwork, was ready for our turn in the inspection cycle.

As expected, we finally got the call that we would be inspected. We failed miserably, in both the first and second inspections. As much as we tried, we could not reach the standard required to pass the inspection. Our Supply Room was in good shape – as good as anyone's and better than most – but we just could not seem to reach the standard, which I thought was unrealistic. I explained my concern regarding the standard to my commander, Captain Ed Dyer, who is the source of this lesson.

Captain Dyer agreed with me that the standards were unrealistically high, requiring virtual perfection. He further stated that complaining about the standards would be perceived by the command as an excuse for failure, something none of us wanted. He explained to me that we had to pass the inspection first, and then voice our concerns that the standards were too high, requiring far more time and effort than the situation warranted.

As I recall, we never "passed" the inspection, though CPT Dyer and the entire company were recognized later as having achieved the highest score in the division. We spent a great deal of time and effort to achieve the level we did and it had little to do with our ability to perform our primary mission, but we achieved it nonetheless. I do not remember if the standards were made more realistic, but I do know that I learned a lesson from it.

Source of the lesson: Captain Edward L. Dyer, Commander, Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Armor. (Incidentally, CPT Dyer later retired as a Brigadier General, and remains one of the leaders I have met whom I most admire.)

Lesson: *Set high standards and see them through.*

My unit in Germany was scheduled to conduct a road march (convoy) of 150 – 200 miles on January 1, 1979. The day before, we got a bad ice storm that made all the roads in the area extremely treacherous. A road march of that length, at that point in time, was dangerous enough under good conditions. Driving 100 or more military vehicles so far usually meant breakdowns and possibly an accident. Considering safety, we knew the road march would be postponed, allowing us to spend New Year's Day with our families. We were wrong. Nothing was canceled, nothing was postponed. The road march went as scheduled, with added emphasis on the safety aspects.

The Battalion Commander's point was that the enemy would not necessarily attack in good weather, and we needed to be prepared to go to war at any time, in any weather. (Remember, this was during the Cold War – no pun intended.) During our final briefings, he stressed how careful we had to be and how treacherous the road conditions were. For the road march, I was serving as a "stick leader," guiding 10 – 12 jeeps and trucks.

The trip took what seemed to be an intolerable time, during which I had to relieve my driver for a few hours because he was getting sleepy. The drivers of the vehicles following me, almost all without radios or other communication, followed faithfully but at safe distances. The trip took almost 12 hours, but we all made it – tired but safe, with no accidents or mishaps. In fact, the entire battalion's wheeled vehicles made it with no accidents that I remember.

Through the experience, we all learned that we could make such a move in virtually any weather and without any real problems. It was hard, but we accomplished the mission.

Source of the lesson: Lieutenant Colonel Larry Beale, who was then Commander, 1st Battalion 32nd Armor.

Lesson: *Integrity is non-negotiable.*

One beautiful weekend – a relatively rare event in central Europe – I was on call for the company if an officer was needed. As such, I was to stay at home close to the phone. In a moment of nothing less than stupidity, I allowed myself to be talked into going for a "short" drive in the country. We were gone only a couple hours and I had never known an officer to be called on the weekend. This weekend was different.

During the time I was away from the phone, a fight broke out in the barracks and a soldier was badly hurt. Because I was not where I should have been, the NCO in charge of the barracks for the day could not reach me. Obviously, my commander wanted to know why I had been out of contact. I had no excuse, of course. I had let my integrity fail and done something other than what I should have been doing.

My commander was as forgiving as commanders can be in such situations, though he did have to take some minor actions against me. I survived that incident and never let my integrity falter in that way again.

Source of the lesson: My commander in HHC, 1-32 Armor. Sorry, I have forgotten his name, but not the incident.

Lesson: *Sometimes you have to take responsibility for something you did not do.*

Within our local training area, we had a facility called the Mini Tank Range. It was a relatively small facility where we could practice tank gunnery techniques using frangible 7.62 mm

ammunition in our tanks' coaxial machine guns. (Don't worry if you do not understand the terms here – they are irrelevant to the lesson.)

One day, my platoon was on the Mini Tank Range conducting gunnery training. As the Officer-in-Charge/Safety Officer, I was responsible for ensuring the safety of everyone on the range. The 7.62 mm rounds were frangible, meaning they would disintegrate upon hitting the concrete and steel back of the range, but they were still deadly to people. Consequently, one of my duties was to clear each weapon before anyone went downrange to change targets or conduct maintenance. Prior to moving down range, I cleared all machine guns on the firing line. To this day, I am absolutely sure I physically inspected each gun. Nonetheless, while we were down range, one gun went off, sending a bullet into our area. Fortunately, no one was hurt, but it should not have happened.

When discussing this with me, the Battalion Commander honestly believed that I had cleared the gun. The incident was, however, a serious safety violation that I could not explain and for which he had to take negative action – a letter of reprimand. Consequently, I accepted the responsibility for what had happened. It was the right thing to do. In further training on the range, however, I took additional steps to prevent such an incident recurring.

Source of the lesson: Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Griffith, Commander, 1st Battalion 32nd Armor. (LTC Griffith was later GEN Ronald Griffith, Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Army.)

Lesson: *People who never make mistakes never do anything at all.*

During an extended training exercise, my platoon was "out in the boonies." In those situations, soldiers really appreciate a hot

meal after eating "C" rations for a few days. (Now they eat Meals, Ready to Eat – MREs. This was during the late 1970s.) One evening, the battalion had scheduled a hot meal for supper. As was usually the case, an NCO would deliver the meal to our location. In this case, that NCO was not from my company, but was someone assigned from headquarters to deliver the meal.

Our soldiers had been subsisting on C rations for a few days, so they were enthusiastic about receiving the hot "chow." Supper time came and went and no food arrived. Each radio call to headquarters assured me it was on its way. Supper finally arrived – at 3:00 a.m. Naturally, I was a bit upset with the NCO delivering the meal. He very calmly listened to what I had to say, apologized profusely for the delay, and explained he had gotten "temporarily misoriented" – Army-speak for lost. After a few more choice words from me, he smiled genuinely and said, "Lieutenant, you show me a man who never makes a mistake, and I'll show you someone who doesn't do a damn thing." I could not stop myself from chuckling and thanking him for his persistence in getting to us.

In spite of the hour, the soldiers enjoyed the food that was no longer very hot. Over the next few days, this NCO made sure to get our hot meals to us on time, often putting us first for delivery. Each time he came to our site, I thanked him for being prompt and we had a chuckle about the first time.

Source of the lesson: Unfortunately, I no longer remember this sergeant's name, but I have never forgotten the lesson.

There are many more lessons I learned while in that assignment, but I will save them for later.

Lesson: *We cannot always achieve the desired goal.*

Nearly all organizations – military or civilian, business or non-profit, government or private sector – strive for perfection. We set high standards and expect people to reach them. Setting high standards is good and necessary, providing they can be reached.

From 1986 to 1990, I was assigned as the Chief of the Armor and Infantry Team at Readiness Group Knox, part of the 2nd U.S. Army. Our mission was to provide training and technical assistance to units of the U. S. Army Reserve and the Kentucky National Guard. Filled with extremely dedicated and committed individuals, these units frequently called on the team for help. In nearly every case, the results were excellent and these units and personnel were just one step closer to being prepared to go to war should the need arise. In some cases, however, our efforts seemed to have little to no effect.

In one of these situations, I became very frustrated when our training and assistance just did not seem to be sinking in. My very professional and understanding team of expert NCOs worked hard to help a particular unit improve, without ever reaching the standard. Certainly they improved, but failed to meet the rather high standard set by the Army. Venting my frustration to my commander one day, he told me, "Jeff, sometimes good enough is good enough. Has the unit improved?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Then you have accomplished something. Why are you so frustrated?" the Colonel asked.

"The unit can meet the standard, sir. I'm sure of it," I said, "A few individuals, including their commander, are getting in the way of reaching the goal."

After hearing me out, Colonel Keivit patted my back and assured me I was doing alright. He then counseled me to keep at it and understand that it would take longer than initially expected.

Source of the lesson: COL Bob Keivit, Commander, Readiness Group Knox

Lesson: *As leaders, we never stop learning.*

After retiring from the Army, I went to work as a trainer and training consultant with the Center for Quality Training at Elizabethtown Community College in Kentucky. My boss, Beth, was relatively new in her job as Director of the center, though she had worked as the Continuing Education Coordinator for several years. Now she was faced with having to lead the department, primarily consisting of people with whom she had worked for several years in a different capacity. Two of us, however, were a little out of the ordinary for the office: Lindon, a woman who had owned several of her own businesses, and me, a retired Army officer. As you might expect, we were both a little headstrong and sure we could make all necessary decisions.

Early in my tenure with the college, Lindon, Beth and I butted heads numerous times, creating considerable tension. Through the next few years, the rift between Beth and Lindon became wider and Lindon left the organization. I, however, was determined to work through the problems and differences and stay. Beth and I spoke several times about the situation and agreed to try hard to work together to reach a better level of understanding. She said she knew that neither of us was perfect but that she would really appreciate my help in leading the organization to new levels.

For the remainder of the 10 years we worked together, Beth and I got along very well, weathering the occasional disagreement well. She changed dramatically, continually learning and challenging herself to improve her own skills, while encouraging the rest of us to do the same. The result was a solid team, capable of handling any crisis or challenge presented to us with skill, humor, and style. When the Community College and the Technical

College merged, we were the first office to co-locate and become one, all of which we accomplished with no major problems, thanks primarily to Beth's leadership and her support of the people in the organization.

Source of the lesson: Ms. Beth Nickell, Director, Community and Economic Development Center, Elizabethtown Community and Technical College.

Having spent over 30 years in various capacities within the leadership business, I have certainly learned many more lessons – some concerning things I have done right and others concerning actions I took that had abysmal results. You, too, will experience success and failure along your leadership journey. The key, of course, is to learn from each experience, whether good or bad.

As you lead others, just remember to see the road from their perspective. Make sure they know where you want them to go. Take the time and make the effort to ensure they have everything they need to accomplish goals and try to help them enjoy the journey as much as you do. Steering the wheel will help you do these things smoothly and effectively.

See how effective leadership is steering, not pushing or pulling. The smooth, even motions of steering help you – the leader – reach your desired goals by avoiding potholes and obstacles. Includes numerous real-world “lessons learned” stories to illustrate points.

Steer the Wheel