



**Monday Morning Musings**  
**Volume XII, Number 27**  
**July 7, 2014**

***The Cost of Leadership***

In nature one simple rule of thumb is that the biggest, strongest, fastest, and smartest dominate the smaller, weaker, slower, and less cunning. Thus, in each society, herd, and tribe the biggest, strongest, fastest, smartest, and handsomest (brightest-plumed) tend to have their pick of mate and territory, among other things. For eons it's been Mother Nature's way of ensuring that the best genes are protected and passed along.

One can observe this rule in action within our own communities, too. That's why the best-looking, or most athletic, or most successful among us (be it in terms of money, accomplishment, fame, etc.) seem to be so appealing to members of the opposite sex. It's also why in our highly hierarchical society that those at the peak of the pyramid receive the biggest offices, drive the fanciest cars, have the largest homes in the nicest neighborhoods, and get the largest compensation packages.

Those of us who reside farther down the totem pole may be envious or even resentful of all these privileges of rank. Yet we also accept them and even honor them as the way things are meant to be – probably because we also dream of the day when we will have the opportunity to occupy that corner office and make the big bucks.

There are, of course, some notable exceptions to the RHIP (Rank Has Its Privileges) Rule. For instance, there is the executive who accepts a salary of \$1 per year to lead a company in trouble. There's also the GM who parks at a remote point in the company parking lot rather than next to the building in a prime reserved space. In practice, there are quite a few leaders who eschew one or more of the customary trappings of their position. Some even carry it a few steps farther. Those special individuals choose to put the interests of others before their own; and, in doing so, those leaders set a very special tone for their organization.

In point of fact, every individual with positional authority sets the tone for their organization. So compare and contrast the cases of those leaders who place others' interests ahead of their own with those leaders who freely embrace the RHIP tradition and put themselves and their interests first. Wherever and whenever that occurs, it's only natural that their people do the same. So the self-sacrificing leaders foster a climate of others first while the "me-first" leaders inevitably raise up organizations where the majority of the staff put themselves rather than the mission, vision, organization, or the customer/client first.

I bring this subject up because not long ago I was privileged to hear Simon Senek of Ted-talk fame and author of *"Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action"* and his newest offering, *"Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't."* In his key note presentation he asserted that the true cost of leadership is self-interest. Put another way, the best leaders are those individuals who willingly subordinate their personal interests to the interests of others. As one example he cited the U.S. military's model where enlisted personnel are the first to eat while the higher ranking officers only eat after their men and women have been fed.

The immediate benefit of the “leader eats last” philosophy is an army (staff or team in the case of other organizations) that quickly learn to mirror the commitment and self-sacrificing spirit of their leader(s). And for any who don’t or won’t buy into that ideal, they either self-select out or are otherwise encouraged to leave, as it becomes obvious their personal values don’t square with those of the leader or the organization.

Skeptics will read today’s essay and say that what Senek and I are suggesting is that the self-sacrificing leader is in no way reflective of the real world. Furthermore, in the case of the military, such sacrificial behavior is practiced only in a small way and only in a very intentional, even manipulative fashion so as to achieve certain ends. However, as Senek is quick to point out, one need look no further than the routine behavior of parents to find a host of individuals who willing make regular sacrifices (including their own safety and well-being) for the benefit of their children to know that self-sacrificing behavior comes naturally to many of us.

So here is the hard question for today: what sort of leader will you and I be? Will we place the interests of others ahead of our own? Or will we place our own interests first? It is a choice each of us gets to make although I think the evidence is clear. If we want followers who are truly dedicated to doing whatever it takes for our organization to be supremely successful, then personal actions that reveal a servant’s heart will be returned many times over, especially when it matters most. And isn’t that a small price to pay in order to leave behind a legacy of success others will point to with genuine admiration and want to copy?

*Soli Deo Gloria*

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*      *Matthew 11:28-30*

Grow in wisdom, grace, humility, courage and understanding.

Warmest personal regards,

Keith Hughey, Senior Consultant  
John M. Floyd & Associates, Inc. | [www.jmfa.com](http://www.jmfa.com)  
Mobile: (210)260-0955 | E-mail: [keith.hughey@jmfa.com](mailto:keith.hughey@jmfa.com)

Personal E-mail: [keith@jkeithhughey.com](mailto:keith@jkeithhughey.com)  
Personal Web site: [www.jkeithhughey.com](http://www.jkeithhughey.com)

### ***Transforming Potential into Unmatched Performance***

Copyright 2014 by J. Keith Hughey. All rights reserved. Permission is hereby granted for reproduction and redistribution of this essay as provided under the copyright laws of the United States of America. The entire library of *Monday Morning Musings* issues may be found at [www.jkeithhughey.com](http://www.jkeithhughey.com). Your comments are welcome and encouraged. If you would care to visit about a particular need or issue, please feel free to call me at 210-260-0955 or write to me at [keith.hughey@jmfa.com](mailto:keith.hughey@jmfa.com) or [keith@jkeithhughey.com](mailto:keith@jkeithhughey.com).