



OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD!

ExecuCoach360 Newsletter

“Finding Your Direction is Only the Beginning”

“Leadership Lessons from Jonathan Livingston Seagull and Friends.”

Liliane M. Agee-Finke

In my teenage years I had a book that I carried around for months and would flip through. Later, it became a movie and had a fabulous soundtrack by Neil Diamond. The book was called *“Jonathan Livingston Seagull”*, written by Richard Bach. Looking back I can honestly say that I really did not grasp the true meaning of this book. I thought it was just a book about a seagull named Jonathan Livingston who was learning how to fly.

I read it over and over, trying to search for something meaningful but I still was missing the obvious, I knew that there was a strong message hidden in there somewhere. It wasn't until years later when a good friend of mine found the book in a yard sale and gave it to me. After thirty years of not rereading this book, it now only took me a few minutes for its powerful message to make total sense. The lessons in the book were about self discovery and reflection, symbolizing the struggles and constant challenges we face as we learn and grow and offer valuable leadership and team building lessons.

While I am on the subject of birds; Angeles Arrien an anthropologist, educator, award-winning author, and consultant gave a speech at the 1991 Organizational Development Network Conference comparing geese to valuable lessons learned in leadership.

Fact 1

As each goose flaps its wings; it creates “uplift” for the birds that follow. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock has 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson Learned

People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier, because they are traveling on the thrust of each other.

Fact 2

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back

into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Lesson Learned

If we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

Fact 3

When the lead bird tires, it rotates back into the formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Lesson Learned

It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each others' skills, capabilities, and unique arrangement of gifts, talents, or resources.

Fact 4

The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson Learned

We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and to encourage the heart and core values of others) is the quality of honking we seek.

Fact 5

When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation to catch up with the flock.

Lesson Learned

If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we're strong. Next time you see a flock of seagulls or geese heading south for the winter, I hope you will think about how **you** will fly with the feathers of leadership.

Thought Provoking Question:

Does living as though you can control your own destiny lead to a more powerful life?

Quote of the Month

“Faith is knowing one of two things will happen. There will be something to stand on, or you will be taught to fly.” Richard Bach

Did you know?

That this newsletter has 707 words and should take 5 minutes or less to read? A small price for knowledge! Email execucoach360@aol.com