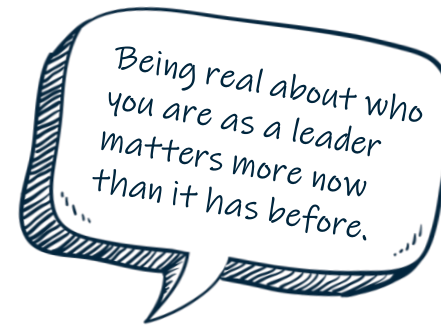


To Lead Well, Become a Beacon

Six months ago things were very different. In six months time they'll be different again. Whether that goes well or badly is something that as a leader you're going to have a say in within your organisation.

- Notice your reaction to the word 'leader'. Is it one you're comfortable with or shrink away from? Be honest about that response, and consider it some more.
- Is your degree of comfort habitual? And how appropriate is it given the changes being experienced on a global scale at this point?
- Is your hesitation familiar? How much is based on reasonable fear given your experience to date, and how much is anxiety about the unknown?



To Lead Well, Become a Beacon

Being real about who you are as a leader matters more now than it has before. Getting perspective on it is important. It's likely your sense of yourself as a leader includes elements of overconfidence and uncertainty. Good – it makes a dynamic, and the energy that creates is what can move us forward...and if necessary, back again if we need to take a different route.

- What's been your best experience of being a leader to date? How did you know you were a good leader? How much of that came from preparation? To what extent were you responding to the moment?
- What's been your worst leadership experience to date? When did you realise something was going wrong? Where did your resourcefulness go, and what consequences did that have for you, for others, for your organisation?
- Who impresses you as a leader? They can be historical or fictional. What do they do that you can emulate? Is there an outlook underpinning their leadership choices? What in your life provides an equivalent foundation?

Ernest Shackleton

Read this account of the explorer, and consider the questions that follow:

In 1922, the Endurance set off to allow its crew to make the first land crossing of the Antarctic, but the ship got frozen. Eventually water started leaking into the vessel, and Shackleton ordered his men to walk on the ice. As well as freezing temperatures there was the risk of being eaten by a killer whale.

The team spend six months on the ice, looking at the land they planned to walk on. Shackleton kept his men in good spirits however difficult their situation, improvising games of football and hockey. In the end, they returned to the Endurance for its smaller boats, which they travel in during days dark for 17 hours at a time, snow lashing down. Their goal was Elephant Island – the first solid land they'd been on in 500 days, and they danced for joy.

Shackleton realised they don't have enough food to last on Elephant Island, and picked a team of five to accompany him to the tiny island of South Georgia. A small error in navigation could see them lost helplessly. 16 days of hellish conditions follow, with storms, water making its way into everything, the crew dehydrated. As always, Shackleton took the lead, tackling mountains to get to the people who provided the help required. It took months, and several trips, but a ship from South Georgia reached the men on Elephant Island - all 22 were alive.

Endurance captain Frank Arthur Worsley said of the man he called The Boss: "Shackleton's spirits were wonderfully irrepressible considering the heartbreaking reverses he has had to put up with and the frustration of all his hopes for this year at least. One would think he had never a care on his mind; he is the life and soul of half the skylarking and fooling in the ship."



Ernest Shackleton

- ➔ What needed to be true for Shackleton and his crew to achieve what they did?
- ➔ Where can you see evidence of those qualities around you or within you?
- ➔ How can you amplify those qualities in yourself and others?
- ➔ If you're fearful, remember that Shackleton was too. Fear is not the issue. It's how we respond to it that counts.

“I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.”

Frank Herbert, *Dune*.

You can take in the quote and the thoughts and feelings it provokes for yourself. And you could be brave, discuss them with people you trust and respect for the qualities they've shown as leaders, whether or not they think of themselves as such. If you can include people who've dealt with situations you know you'd feel fear in, even better. Some pointers for conversation:

- ➔ What does fear mean to you?
- ➔ How often does fear prevent action? Are there times you wish you'd acted instead?
- ➔ Does fear motivate action for you? Are there times you feel that was a bad idea?
- ➔ How do you know you're experiencing fear? Is it something physical? A timid inner voice or voices? A reminder of a time when things went bad?