The Way of the Shepherd
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The Big Idea

*The Way of the Shepherd* presents the story of a young, inexperienced reporter who meets and interviews the most respected CEO in America, and walks away with the lessons of a lifetime - the keys to exceptional leadership. In the course of the interview the CEO shares with the reporter seven proven management principles that are ancient in origin but which are nevertheless very applicable in today’s fast-paced world.

Why You Need This Book

This excellent book teaches leaders how to lead those around them so that they get to view their work as a calling instead of a mere job. It shows leaders how to infuse work with meaning and how to energize and engage the workforce. The book illustrates an approach to management that is at once timeless (proven across millennia), challenging (it calls for those applying its principles to give their best in order to get the best), and uncommon (it presents unique principles that will inevitably set users apart from other leaders).

The book is divided into seven chapters, namely:

1. Know the Condition of Your Flock
2. Discover the Shape of Your Sheep
3. Help Your Sheep Identify with You
4. Make Your Pasture a Safe Place
5. The Staff of Direction
6. The Rod of Correction
7. The Heart of the Shepherd

1. Know the Condition of Your Flock

Follow the status of your people as well as the status of the work.

Many managers focus too much on the project at hand and not enough on the people they also have to manage.
They may be physically present with their flock - but they are more preoccupied with the work rather than with their people.
One’s people must never be neglected - people are always one’s greatest competitive advantage.

Get to know your flock, one sheep at a time.

People are individuals, and that is how they should be treated.
People must never be treated like numbers!
One must take a *personal interest* in each of the people who report directly to one. Know what things impact them at the moment.

- Discover their skills and interests.
- Know what their goals and dreams are.
- Find out what motivates them and what discourages them.
- Determine their career ambitions and frustrations.
Engage your people on a regular basis.

- Go out and get among your people regularly.

Keep your eyes and ears open, ask lots of questions, and follow through.

- Be sensitive to employees’ sentiments.
- Keep up with what’s going on in the lives of your people as best you can.
- Really care about your people. If you don’t really care about the people who report to you, you’ll never be the sort of leader they’ll drop everything to follow; they’ll never do their best and they won’t stay with you for long.
- People don’t care about how much you know until they know how much you care.

2. Discover the Shape of Your Sheep

Your choice of sheep can make flock management easier or harder. Start with healthy sheep, or you’ll just inherit someone else’s problems.

Know the SHAPE of your sheep to make sure they’re in the right fold.

1. **Strengths.** Make sure each person has the skill set needed to do the job.

   Sometimes it can be learned on the job, sometimes it’s needed immediately - it depends on the vacancy.
   Understand the strengths of the people on the team and those who are about to join it.

2. **Heart.** Strengths reflect abilities; heart reflects passion.

   It doesn’t matter how strong you are if you’re not motivated to exercise that strength.
   Know what your people are passionate about and place them in areas which reflect their passions.

3. **Attitude.** You want positive, can-do people. Given a choice between talent and attitude, pick attitude any time.

   People with good attitude are usually team players; they usually have a teachable spirit.
   People with bad attitudes generally can’t be taught a thing.
   Even if the person with a bad attitude happens to be your star performer, get rid of them. Even if they’re star performers, they’ll have a negative effect on your team. They’re poor examples for others and their attitudes are contagious.

4. **Personality.** Put each person in a position that reflects his or her personality.

   Some people are introverts, others extroverts.
   Some people love repetition; others need variety.
   Some people thrive on structure; others need change.

5. **Experiences.** Each person is a product of their life experiences. Often the key to understanding a person and knowing where to place him or her in a team is to learn something about their life experiences.

3. Help Your Sheep Identity With You
Build trust with your followers by modeling authenticity, integrity, and compassion.

People have a tremendous need to belong; great leaders understand this instinct and tap into it. Great leaders instill a sense of meaning and belonging in their followers by putting a personal imprint of who they are and what they stand for on their people. A leader’s personal mark becomes the common denominator of the organization.

People long to follow a leader who is a person of authenticity, integrity and compassion. That person will have the loyalty and trust of his people.

Set high standards of performance.

Relentlessly communicate your values and sense of mission.

Define the cause for your people and tell them where they fit in.

Remember that great leadership isn’t just professional; it’s personal.

4. Make Your Pasture a Safe Place

Keep your people well informed. Eliminate uncertainty that could lead to fear and insecurity.

If there’s bad news let them hear from you first to eliminate their trust in a rumor mill. Make sure to constantly inform people about their performance.

Infuse every position with importance. Do this to counter rivalry within and between departments.

People will be less apt to vie for position if they feel that their current positions are significant. Let everyone know from Day One that they are important to the team! Make them feel like you couldn’t do it without them!

Cull chronic instigators from the flock. Some people in life aren’t happy unless they’re unhappy; it can take just one such person to destroy the collaborative atmosphere of an entire department.

Regularly rotate the sheep to fresh pastures. Rotate opportunities among the different members of the flock; that way they won’t feel they have to fight for them.

Reassure the sheep by staying visible. You can’t create a safe place for your workers if they can’t sense your presence.

Create a safe place where they can work in an undistracted atmosphere and they’ll amaze you. People can handle the uncertainty of tomorrow if they can see a leader they are certain they can trust today.

Don’t give problems time to fester. Act soon enough and deal with individual problems before they become flock problems.

5. The Staff of Direction

Know where you’re going, get out in front, and keep your flock on the move. People tend to put their heads down to do their work and don’t look up again until the day is over. The leader needs to keep an eye out for them.
When directing, use persuasion rather than coercion. Let your people follow you out of trust instead of fear.

Instead of making pronouncements, make requests. Offer suggestions and ideas. Don’t dictate and demand; advocate and recommend. Point a way out by getting in front of people and showing them the way. When people mess up, use the incident as a teaching opportunity.

Give your people freedom of movement, but make sure they know where the fence line is. Don’t confuse boundaries with bridles! Establishing boundaries is a matter of practicality and safety, not ego.

You can’t protect someone who’s strayed beyond your reach. This doesn’t mean you have to micromanage your staff; make sure your people don’t get too far ahead of you, while at the same time avoiding making them feel like they’ve been incarcerated.

When your people get in trouble, go and get them out. They’re your staff; be responsible for their well-being and safety.

Remind your people that failure isn’t fatal. Good leaders don’t forget to encourage their people now and then, especially when they make mistakes. Let them know that failure isn’t fatal and that they can learn from their mistakes.

6. The Rod of Correction

Protect. Stand in the gap and fight for your sheep. Fight for them against external enemies - people outside your own division, or even outside the company.

Correct. Approach discipline as a teaching opportunity. Some people can be stubborn and very rebellious and can require quite a bit more persuasion than some others.

Approach discipline as an instructive exercise instead of a punishment. If you’ve protected people, they’ll be more inclined to listen and respect you when you correct them.

Inspect. Regularly inquire about your people’s progress. You and you alone are responsible for developing them.

Call your people in periodically and ask how they’re doing. Chances are the member/s of your team who need help the most will be the least likely to ask for it. If a person never indicates they need help when you inquire about their progress, you haven’t been trusted enough for them to be honest with you, or you haven’t challenged them to grow.

7. The Heart of the Shepherd

This approach to leadership carries a high price tag for the leader. It takes a leader’s time, commitment, personal energy and involvement - in other words himself.

Leaders who refuse to pay the price, who do so because the value they put on their people is too low, are hirelings - leaders who attend to their people only because they get paid to do so, whose hearts aren’t in it.

What distinguishes a great leader from a mediocre one is that a great leader has a heart for his people. He can focus on both his people and the job in the long run, and will never leave them to fend for themselves. If it’s greatness you want, it’s greatness you must give.