



Lions & Lambs Series

Published April 2012



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The Lion & Lambs Series

This was a fun series from the point of defining the different types of hunters to profiles and vignettes that told stories of Lions and Lambs. There was something for everyone to identify with or remember a similar circumstance or person.

Each sales organization must have a variety of hunters to cover the basis. Limiting to one style only, a company will go hungry and the hunt will often yield minimal results especially as key hunting areas are exhausted.

In the vignettes, we portrayed strength and winning, perseverance and focus as well as challenges that can be brought as the result of relationships.

The Lion & Lambs Series	2
Lions & Lambs	4
The Hunters	5
I Am Hungry Now – Therefore I Shall Hunt.	5
I Love the Thrill of the Hunt.	5
I Like to Hunt as a Social Sport.	5
I’m an Herbivore; My Hunt is Primarily to Graze.	6
The Hunter Leader	6
The Seekers	7
The Farmers	8
The Gatherers	10
The Carrion Hunters	12
The Chiefs	14
Alfred	16
Henry & Henrietta	18
Grit Resilience and Fight	20
Abraham, Martin & John	21
Bobbi Jo	23
Leo	25
The Author and the Company	27

Lions & Lambs

This month we will be profiling business leaders and the traits that might classify them as either a Lion or a Lamb. But what are the traits and how are they ascribed?

When we think of lions, do we see the lion belting out a loud roar or the lion happy to peacefully bathe in the sun? Is it the hunter or the huntress, we visualize? Do we see the pride as a group and the roles of the individual lions within the pride? How about the caged and kept lion in our zoos and protected habitats?



The lamb does not stay a lamb very long, before it grows to be called a sheep. Yet, when we think of lambs, we often think of a gentle, placid creature with all of its baby-like cuteness. In reality, they are rambunctious and mischievous much like any other young mammal. As they grow up, we tend to think more of domesticated sheep who gently graze in shepherded flocks, the nurturing ewes with the newest lambs. Rarely do we think of the majestic rams, some with great horns that can lock in battle.

These creatures will lend a lot of imagery as the vignettes tell stories of battles for turf, hunts that take both the weak and the strong. Survival and family instincts that often drive actions and decisions will provide rationale as well as the pursuit of power. There will be greener pastures to be explored and stronger animals lured to join the pride or herd. Our stories will also tell of the battles for position and roles that shape the groups.

The business stories using these animals, their traits, habitats, needs and hierarchy, will include ideas and lessons that can be applied or leveraged to just about any business. We hope you enjoy the series.

The Hunters

All of us are hunters in one way or another. To eat, no matter what we seek, we must hunt or find a hunter that will take care of us. Let's not get this confused with a term that is often tied together – "Hunter/Seeker" that is used when categorizing sales people and sometimes business leaders.



The hunters, in general, seek to feed themselves first. If the hunt and feeding also means a benefit for others – their companies for example, all is good. There are really several kinds of hunters. All are motivated first by survival instincts. How they meet the need is where the difference is in the types of hunters. Each group can smell a lead, but what they do with it may make the difference in your bottom line. Look at these types of hunters in terms of the producers in your company.

I Am Hungry Now – Therefore I Shall Hunt.

This hunter really has little motivation, although they may consider it to be conservation of effort. They are generally very happy to feed at convenience if another hunter has landed the prey and allowed sharing, and happier still if someone brings them something to eat. Since they do not plan their hunts, little is optimized and they often come back empty handed and hungry. They do, however, like to pontificate and try to encourage young hunters that theirs is the easier way. At least they have hunting skills, but do not expect them to be much of a contributor to your company. They eat your leads if motivated but otherwise may keep them for later, rather than share or give back. In most cases anything that they do not eat immediately is left to rot.

I Love the Thrill of the Hunt.

This hunter is all about the game – individually or as a part of a group. Yes, they like winning...especially if there is a prize. They are always the first to go out on a hunt and ready in every sense of the word. They are diligent about using any information gathered by scouts and seek efficiencies. They are seldom hungry, not because of their own success but because they are a part of almost every hunt. They love telling stories of their prowess and showing off their tools and knowledge. Give them a dare and you can be assured they will try. Great to have on your team but sometimes are tough to manage. They will take every lead whether or not they have the time or expertise to work it. Look for meat in their discard pile.

I Like to Hunt as a Social Sport.

These hunters are the nicest in the group and very easy to love. They want to be a part of everything but can scare off the prey with their social chatter or not see it for the distraction. They are playful but not necessarily in the game. They feast as a part of the group, no matter how or who was responsible for the kill. These individual are rarely star performers and their leadership skills are primarily in rounding up the group. The social needs often overtake everything else in importance, so leads are seldom a priority unless it gives them a social opportunity to share. Most leads are found by another hunter before they get to them.

I'm an Herbivore; My Hunt is Primarily to Graze.

Herbivores are primarily grazers and will graze through the hunt for a greener pasture. They are eating machines who will often lay bare a pasture before moving on. They eat for need. There is no game in the hunt. It is fairly mechanical and only challenged if there is nothing to graze on and then they simply move on. Many can be herded and will follow the lead of the group. This group will work through your leads but need leadership and to have a supply of leads to keep them with you.

The Hunter Leader

The Hunter Leader is a responsible hunter, knowing that for the group to survive they have to have a plan, consistency and organization. They also do not like waste. The Hunter Leader will utilize hunters from all of the groups to make sure that not only are their own survival needs met, but also those of the group. Most groups will fracture if there is more than one Hunter Leader within too small of a group. Egos are a part of the reason, but it is also hard for one group to follow multiple leaders. The Hunter Leader works well when tasked, challenged and given the opportunity to lead. They appreciate leads but are not dependent on being given leads; they are always sniffing out a new opportunity. If you want to make sure your leads are well taken care of make sure that you have Hunter Leaders taking responsibility but with the opportunity to win and have their group win.

Any organization that must drive sales or production needs hunters. Looking at hunters this way, do you have the hunters you need in your company?

The Seekers

In Thursday's post, The Hunters, we stated that the term Hunter/Seeker as a categorization for sales people and business leaders really needed to be separate. Today, we will look at the characteristics of the seeker in relationship to the hunter and how to use their qualities and skills in meeting your company or organizations objectives.



Not all hunters are seekers and certainly not all seekers are hunters. Unlike hunters who are driven by survival first, the natural seeker has special qualities that drive them and are at least equal to survival. The seeker has an intuitive sense that leads them. Almost as if they were catching a scent in the wind or see something that is not visible to most, they seem to know where to go.

A person who is named a seeker without having natural innate qualities will have to work very hard and fast to match the results of a natural seeker. The difference is that the titled seeker must process factual data to know where to look for prey, whereas the natural seeker unconsciously applies probability to data and is able to cast aside misdirection that might be in the data rather than needing to test it.

The natural seeker, without realizing it, has honed all of their senses to apply what becomes instinctive reasoning to data and usually has a very good memory with quick recall. They are also able to recognize patterns and visualize different outcomes which might change the approach and likelihood of success in the hunt. In the animal world, these often are the leaders in any group, because their keen senses are not only valuable in the hunt but also serve to protect the group from harm. In the human world, a person who is a natural seeker listens well, is engaging and it seems that without being asked people tell them everything. They are extremely valuable in determining targets, in the pursuit and in being a part of the security of the groups or companies to which they belong.

Unlike the hunter who is driven first by survival, the seeker is passionate and often a leader, but rarely a loner. They develop deep relationships, loyalty and desire for the group to be strong. They can and do hunt but often allow the hunter to make the final kill while they stand guard.

A natural seeker can be an aid to any team of hunters and will do well as long as the leader of the group has the strength to hold the forces together and keep all focused on common objectives. They are fairly easy to manage and need little motivation.

A natural seeker teamed with an ambitious hunter makes an awesome pair. The two can become not only powerful together, but develop a kind of healthy dependency. Each knows the complement of the other in meeting their objectives. These become highly efficient teams that are relatively easy to manage and motivate.

A natural seeker who is a hunter is often successful but rarely content. They are often a rogue element in an organization and can be as disruptive as they are beneficial because it depends on which of their strengths is on top of the game at a given time. They are perhaps the hardest to manage but have plenty of self-motivation.

Take a look at your sales teams and leadership in terms of hunters and seekers; it may change your management style. Seekers and Hunters are both found among the lions and lambs.

The Farmers

I grew up in a rural community which brings the perspective of farming related to business. For many friends and extended family, farming was a way of life. The revenue is produced from crops, livestock, forestry, products and the investment in the land. Most present day farms are a business, not just a means of taking care of the family. Farming, like any other way of meeting the needs of survival, started with hunters and seekers.



Farmers are the hunters and seekers who have decided to manage the hunt rather than taking the chance of finding prey on each hunt. Probably after an unsuccessful hunt or two or more, someone said something to the effect of “There has to be a better way.” They seek long term benefits in a renewable and sustainable source to sustain themselves and utilize or sell to others.

While all hunters are gamblers, the farmer takes the biggest risks for the greater return on their investment. Most hunters, if they are not successful on a hunt, simply do not eat that day. The farmer must work to nurture, grow and regenerate the prey they farm over a period of time, with an initial period of meager sustenance before the livestock is fattened and crops ready to harvest. Farmers are subject to many factors beyond their control from weather to quality of stock or seed and invaders that seek to take what is not theirs. Everything they have worked for can potentially be wiped out at once, leaving little to nothing for a year or even years.

Like other hunters they have efficiencies and proficiencies that can be applied. However, unlike other hunters, there is the baggage of the farm which will limit options and force some decisions. There are also a lot of dependencies, as the choice to manage and nurture means that the prey expects to be fed and no longer hunts on their own. The success of the farmer does not guarantee the success of the offspring as they lose some of the instinctive ability to hunt and have expectations that the farm will feed them. Without the taste of success in the hunt, they fall into the rhythms of the farm.

Some farmers augment their farming by continuing to participate in hunts with traditional hunters and seekers. They keep their hunting skills keen while building their longer term enterprise in the farm. These rarely go hungry and are often a critical component in their group or community. Those that maintain and build both skill sets are often leaders and worthy of followership. These are reasonable to manage but need to have the taste of a win to stay with the game.

There are two sub groups within the farmers, primarily separated by vision. One farms to meet their needs and their vision is limited by what is immediately in front of them. They take few risks and experience limited rewards from their investment. They are highly loyal and committed to the family, lifestyle and are content to leave the bar in place. If these farmers have had the fortune to have a farm that is not subject to outside forces – weather or economic climate, healthy stock and seed and little to no threat from invaders, life is good and satisfying as long as they can work the farm. Since the farm is usually too small to be divided, at best it can only be passed to one heir. These are very easy to manage.

The second subset is not content with the good but simple life. They want more and take larger risks to accomplish their vision. They are legacy builders who want more than a living, but something that survives them. The best are not simply interested in mass but will pick and choose their invested effort. They develop specialized skills and now seek, hunt and capture opportunities with a specialized ability to smell the prey. They often hunt for sport and to build the skills of the younger hunters. These farmer hunters feed on challenges and do not suffer fools kindly. They are not necessarily ruthless but highly focused clearing obstacles in their path. They are not easy to manage as their ambition usually outgrows any keeper. If this type is in your group, understand that they will most likely leave you to achieve their own success. While they are with you enjoy and benefit from the experience while building the relationship that will allow you to be allies in the future. If not, you may become their prey.

Every company has a wide variety of people – hunters, seekers, farmers, gatherers and yes, carrion hunters. Understanding the types and how to work with each creates a strong company.

The Gatherers

A company that includes talented gatherers will weather the storm of any economic cycle.

The gatherers are different than The Hunters, The Seekers or The Farmers. They are hunters but their approach is planned and based on accumulated knowledge and experience. The gatherers are driven by survival, but for the community first and for themselves as a part of the community. They do participate in hunts, are usually very helpful

in seeking and give advice to farmers. Their hunts gather and store that which is important now for survival but also can be stored and used in the future in lean times or to advance the needs of the community.

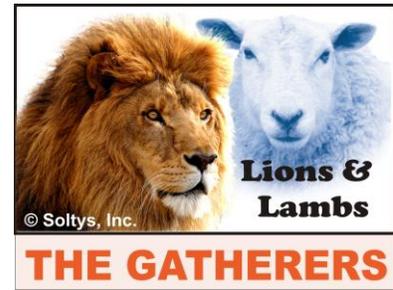
In ancient times, the gatherers were often the medicine people of their community, considered wise and knowing. The gatherers learned ways to use everything from herbs to totems to cure and make life for the community better, heal those in need and to build knowledge that can be passed on to others.

They are often the trainers and the teachers in the community, using their knowledge, experience and observance of best practices to help others excel. While they have an ego, their strength and reward comes primarily through the success of others they teach. Their ego does need attention and, if ignored, unappreciated or not respected, they will find another community. They will participate in almost everything and it is important to them as this is a part of how they build knowledge and experience.

In current day companies, the gatherers are data miners. The gatherers learn, experience, catalog and consider uses for information from the seemingly unimportant to major discoveries that can be put to immediate use. They spot trends quicker, see patterns and are tuned into the “buzz” of what is going on in, around and outside of the company. Their intuition is nearly instinctive and a part of what makes them “tick”. Most importantly, the best gatherers have the skill to recognize how to put that information and intuition to work. The worst do not share and have no idea of how to use the information. They are often “in the way”, filled with meaningless self-importance.

The leadership in order to gain the most from its gatherers will schedule regular communications to hear what the gatherer knows. The gatherer will be pleased that there is a pattern, specific timing and regularity to the communications. The leader’s role in these communications is to listen and ask questions – especially those that begin with “What if?” The questions are a better way of sharing information and giving perspective than statements of fact that the gatherer may feel ends the communications or basically denies their contribution or validity.

Gatherers are highly social but do not need to be the center of attention. When they provide value, acknowledgement and appreciation go a long way. Making sure that they know the end result adds to their learning and fuels their desire to be a valuable contributor.



The hunters and seekers are valuable and help meet immediate needs. The farmer works to meet immediate and long term needs. The gatherer is important to the viability of all impacting current and future efforts. Companies utilizing diverse groups within their companies are the healthiest and best suited to weather all storms.

The Carrion Hunters

Over the past week, this blog series has looked at different kinds of hunters that can be found in any group or company. Hunters, Seekers, Farmers and Gatherers are all ones that come to mind especially when we convert the talk to different kinds of sales people, producers and leaders in companies. One group that is always talked about in undercurrents is the Carrion Hunters.



The carrion hunters in the animal kingdom are scavengers who let other hunters and nature do their jobs first and then come in at their convenience to take care of what remains. Whether they are vultures or insects, they have a job to do. Unfortunately, because of the nature of their work, they are not thought of in celebrated terms.

Like all other hunters, the carrion hunters are driven first by survival, but that usually means hunting for a provider or place where the supply is readily available. They are not really an ambitious group and are very hard to motivate. Leftovers and low hanging fruit are good enough for them. In fact they will cackle and howl over their finds as if they are treasure. They are highly social in their own group, perhaps because they are not welcome inside most groups and are kept outside or, at best, on the fringe.

There are two groups of Carrion Hunters – the loud and the quiet.

The loud ones seem to have an ongoing party, often noisy, always a display of bravado and each one taking the best first and often leaving anything they are not interested in at the moment to rot. They engage in minor turf wars over delectable finds, but even these are more show than substance, and let everyone else know that they are there and watching for the next tidbit.

The quiet ones clean up whatever is left behind efficiently, without any noise. It is just a task and their programming doesn't require them to do anything but take care of their business. They are risk adverse and will not seek attention or do anything more than they have to, as there is no need or desire for growth or change. They are so quiet you hardly know that they are there.

Both of these groups are important in the ecosystem of business. Your hunting parties are often so focused on the hunt that they miss what is right in front of them or dismiss it as not worthy of their skills since there is little challenge. Their risk – reward system is a strong component. Your seekers with their keenly honed senses are on a trail and are not tuned in to anything that does not require a hunt. Your farmers are not interested as there is no long term benefit of additional product to be made. Your gatherers have already catalogued all of the low hanging fruit and leftovers and moved on to other fields. So this is the cleanup crew.

The good news is that there is no new investment in harvesting low hanging fruit or what can be scavenged. Your job is to now manage the scavengers so that you reap a benefit.

The noisy group is quick to swoop in once they think something is there. They also cost a lot with their inefficiencies, lack of quality in their job and the fact that, unless they are hungry or interested, nothing will really happen.

The quiet ones are slow in their work, often frustrating because they will only do what they are pre-programmed to do and nothing more. They are not necessarily there when you need them and there is no guarantee that what you need to clean up is on their agenda.

Understanding the value and the challenges of the carrion hunters helps in understanding that these groups exist in most companies. It also makes us realize that there is a lot of “meat on the bone” if we figure out a way to harvest it. It has been a long standing dilemma. Young hunters trained on what can be scavenged may never learn to hunt and waiting for the scavengers to do the job brings little return on investment.

The Chiefs

Within every group, whether they are lions or lambs, and every subset including the hunters, seekers, gatherers, farmers and even the carrion hunters, there are chiefs. This is true whether in a group or in a company.

Chiefs by title, role or heredity, as well as those who stake a claim, bully or have great imaginations of position and power, have a very narrow window of opportunity to prove themselves. The proof that must be established is leadership. Leadership that is worthy of followership. A leader without followers is simply a rogue beast.



Being a chief does not mean that someone can lead. Conversely, there are many levels and opportunities to lead but that does not mean that a leader is necessarily a chief.

Almost every group requires a hierarchical organization. Each of these organizations has a pinnacle or top where the final decisions are made for the well-being of the group and the individuals in the group. The hierarchy brings order to what would otherwise dissolve into competitive or fractured chaos in which the group would splinter and most likely lose individuals.

By nature we seek that organizational hierarchy and find more comfort in order than we do in chaos. The best hierarchies have a top level that is not only the recognized chief but also a leader worthy of followership. The strength of the leader/chief will be tested frequently and challenged for role, position and the benefits it may bring. The strongest leader/chiefs understand how to optimize talent and actively seek to empower leadership at multiple levels.

This brings multiple benefits to the group. It seeks and develops individual talent specialties and grooms others for future leadership roles, ultimately including the role of Leader/Chief. Not only does this strengthen the group through the talents and skills that are recognized and developed but also provides recognition. Recognition and empowerment are the strongest tools that the leader/chief has available to develop a strong and mission focused followership. These tools also separate the false leaders from the true leaders.

Being a leader/chief at the pinnacle of a well-organized hierarchical organization is a position to aspire to through hard work, constant challenge and the opportunity to elevate others. It is also critical to the longevity of the organization as it becomes a self-perpetuating organization.

Consider the roles and responsibilities in your organization or company. Who are the chiefs and who are the leaders, what are their characteristics? How can they be developed to lead, meet challenges and create the succession of leader/chiefs that will ensure the viability for the long term? Almost everything we do in business initiates in our relationships and how these are developed in any group or culture.

One of the “Patisms” that we used in a post titled Freedom, “applies.

“You can buy the title of owner, be assigned the title of boss but you must earn the title of leader. It is the leader who makes a difference.”

Alfred

Alfred is the owner of a company that looks to be quite successful. It has grown nicely in business contracts and staff and appears to have a great future. Alfred deserves a lot of credit for his accomplishments but will also be the reason his company will hit a ceiling on growth.



In his high school yearbook, Alfred, like many others who were not jocks, might have been classified as a nerd or a geek. He had the looks, complete with the often broken pair of glasses. The notation in the yearbook predicted a safe and predictable life as an accountant which in fact was his primary course of study. He was not listed in any of the popular clubs. That did not mean that he was not social. According to my son, the difference between a nerd and a geek is that a geek has social skills. Alfred did have social skills but they had not yet matured. In some ways he was socially needy.

If given the choice between being described as a lion or a lamb, Alfred would always be characterized as a lamb because, while purpose driven, he was never confrontational and often in the background.

His first experiences in the business world were shaped working for others in task oriented positions. No one knew that within, he harbored dreams in which he was “the man.” He knew that the day would come when he would lead his own company, bearing his name in the banner, stating his success to the world. He envisioned celebrity status due to his success in business social circles. He knew he would have the wits, connections and money to able to make deals happen. All of this would be accomplished in alignment with a deep moral compass sharing the success with those loyal to him.

Loyalty was a huge part of his personal and business life. He was loyal to a fault, often carrying weaker performers or excusing the challenges brought by those who did not want to follow the guidelines. His loyalty also made the circle that he created around himself very tight. He had great difficulty bringing others into the circle. Newer and often talented employees were allowed on the margins, but rarely became insiders. The tightness of the circle became a comfort zone and restrictive in a kind of possessiveness.

Alfred did have a number of qualities that might be attributed to a lion. When there was something he wanted to pursue, the hunt was on, sometimes irrelevant of the risk or cost. This side battled with the accountant trained risk adverse side. To work with both the lion and the lamb in his persona, he found that the area of compromise was in the definition of the target being pursued. In business deals, the inner circle often weighed in as a part of the balance, but when it came to hiring new key people the pursuit was his alone.

New people had to meet the normal skills and talent criteria, but for Alfred, perhaps driven by his social neediness, it was also about who they knew or the influence they could bring. They also had to meet the criteria for being able to touch the margins of the inner circle which often boiled down to perceptions of loyalty. There were great candidates that came along who could have been instrumental in the growth of the business but it often boiled down to who they knew, not how good they were.

He also could not consider releasing a person who was a limited performer or who was unwilling to change to meet the needs of the business if they were loyal and a part of the inner circle. Why wouldn't they be loyal if loyalty is more important and rewarding than their business contribution?

Growth in acquiring talent and performance from outside the company became a source of angst and concern in more ways than growth. Because Alfred was also unable to trust in the competence of others he created undue burden on those he trusted, micromanaged and often chose to take on key roles and responsibilities in the company himself rather than delegate, trust or expand the talent pool.

Today, the company is at a point where key people are maxed out and in danger of burn out. The inner circle is closed and Alfred, even though he can logically see the need for hiring key people, will not even consider talking to someone that he does not know. The company will not be able to grow to the next level and even though Alfred talks about an exit strategy, it is unlikely because he cannot trust and he needs the circle of loyalty around him.

Henry & Henrietta

In most companies, relationships play a strong role, in some cases adding strength and in others sometimes creating a weakness. Each company and most groups have a multi-dimensional matrix of relationships working at any given time with puzzles as challenging as a Rubik's cube.



Henry owned a company that had always been a leader in the area. He was kind of an iconic figure in the community, fathering many community and business initiatives which in turn helped to develop many careers. He was known as a man who could see opportunity clearly, create a path and lead people to successful results. His company started modestly, a dream for Henry and his wife, Harriett to seize control of their future and build wealth.

Henry was always the front man and Harriett was often behind the scenes. As the company grew, more people were hired, new roles created and along the way many new business and non-business relationships found fertile ground. One day, Henrietta was hired to the administrative team. She was a smart and savvy woman with great aspirations.

Over time her roles in the company became more significant and reached into almost every area of the company. Harriett preferred the background and had hopes that she would one day be able to stay home and take care of the family. That day came and she nearly disappeared from the company, attending only functions that demanded her presence. Henrietta became the person that more often than not was the person next to Henry at functions. It made a lot of sense as her work in the company also necessitated her presence.

Henrietta became nearly irreplaceable in Henry's eyes as she was as close to a peer as he had in the company. Together they wrote the business plans, managed the people, considered opportunities and ran the company. Henry thought it was great that not only was Henrietta a business person, but it also gave Harriett the freedom to stay away from the business. The closeness of their work became a complication in the company. People were unsure as to whether they were a couple as well as people who worked together. Sometimes it was even difficult to tell who the boss was as Henrietta took over more responsibilities. The closeness caused difficulties in their families as well with the respective spouses being out of the day to day picture.

When her kids were in their late teens, Henrietta divorced. Without kids or a husband to take care of, she dove even harder into the work of the company. The working relationship with Henry became deeper as it also came at the time of the economic downturn and what had worked in the past did not produce the same results any longer. Making the changes necessary for the company to survive meant that both Henry and Henrietta were working together more than ever. Between the monetary pressures brought on by the economic downturn, the fact that Henry was never home and his kids were now on their own, his marriage also dissolved.

Now that both Henry and Henrietta were both single the rumor mill flourished especially since they often dined together, went to business functions together and were working so closely together at the company. The rumor mill is always a painful grind where truth is merged with innuendo and suggestion fueled with fault finding. Neither Henry nor Henrietta realized the battle they were in or the forces that would be at work. Since business times were tough, people had more time for speculation. Each time they were asked, they denied romantic involvement.

The strange byproduct of their constant work together and frequent companionship is that they no longer thought differently and most roles were now tandem. They saw their efforts as one and as a result lost perspective that mitigates risk. Their language and reasoning aligned to where the fault for the problems was economic, competitive or something else beyond their control. It could not be them because they were working hard and doing the best that they could. The company did not grow and was challenged in new ways. It was now fighting the battle with one resource rather than as two separate people with defined roles, a loss of 50% of their power. The lion and the lamb had merged into one creature and confused everyone. The strengths of the company were no longer identifiable.

Whether love is blind or not, I am not sure but in this case they will not find their individual strengths, stop the rumors or see the solutions to their puzzle until their roles are defined and they once again have perspective. The issues that Henry and Henrietta face are not unusual in companies where business and social relationships are so heavily merged. Solving the issues the puzzle makes is similar to solving the Rubik's cube, you have to be able to stand back and see it clearly before moving individual components. Each is linked and will cause change.

Grit Resilience and Fight

Yesterday, I played in a charity tournament that I have played annually for years. It was the APDA Driving Parkinson's Away golf tournament. My husband and I started to play this tournament to support a friend who has had Parkinson's since long before we met him.

Yesterday, since our group was short, a young gentleman was added to play with us. He was there as a part of his personal fight against the disease.



As we got to know the man a bit, we saw his pride when he spoke of his family. We learned that he could not work at his profession due to treatments. The treatments that he hopes will restore at least part of what the disease has taken. He had not been out to play golf in seven or eight years, but he was there in spite of it being a cold and windy day. It was a statement that the disease was not going to win.

We saw him commanding his body to hold the club correctly, swing and follow through. Sometimes it involved multiple attempts and repositioning, as he knew what to do and how to do it but the nerves and muscles just did not obey. He had the skill, the experience and the knowledge.

There were shots when everything worked for him and he would exclaim with joy, "That is how it used to be", with high fives all around. As we were coming up on the last few holes we were all tired, but we knew that he was especially tired. He stated that he had used muscles that had not been used in a long time and would certainly face punishing challenges in the days afterward. No matter how tired he was or how much he hurt, you could also see the pride in his accomplishment, finishing the 18 holes. No matter what the score was, he won this battle.

Not only did yesterday make any challenges and complaints I may have pale in comparison, but it also brought to mind many other people I have met in business who fought battles with the ravages of accidents, time and health. Carl, Vinnie, Jim, Gail, Bob, Helen, Bill and so many more with ailments and challenges that most of us will never face. All are lions with a passionate roar, as they made sure that they were not victims but the aggressors. They also have the patience and gentility that we often think of characteristic to lambs. None are victims, casting blame or looking for sympathy. They are never complacent and all thirst for change. They prove themselves victorious in their battles large and small. Their battles are unrelenting; they have to win on a daily basis.

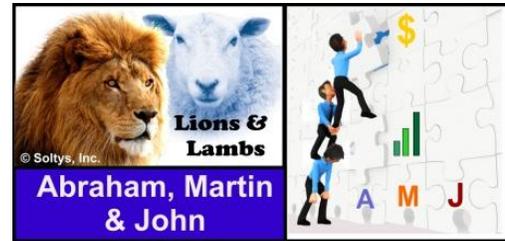
None had planned for the cards life dealt them but each decided to use their strengths to pursue their passion, viability and triumph. They took the cards dealt and used every finesse possible. Their grit shows in a "never give up" tenacity, their resilience in learning new ways to overcome challenges and their fight is passionate with winning being the only option.

We were glad to make a new acquaintance, contribute to the fight in a small way and see a large group with many of our friends sharing their support. I think of all of the teams, we were perhaps the real winners seeing the triumph of the gentleman added to our team.

The question that keeps coming to mind is what would happen in each of our businesses if it did not take a life circumstance to bring out our best? I can only imagine the answer.

Abraham, Martin & John

Abraham, Martin and John own a services company in an upper end suburban town, part of a major metro area. There is enough business in the town in terms of both volume and dollars to support several good sized competitors, especially if the areas around the town are included. Martin and John grew up in their area and the family name is on an assortment of businesses in the town. Abraham married into a fairly prominent family in the town. All three are good men and, in their own ways, are pillars of the community.



Originally, the business that provided the services they now provide was the family business of Martin and John's family. The elder brothers who had started the business wanted it to be continued as the small main street business it had always been. When it came time for the elders to pass the business on, there was a division between the elder brothers, Martin, John and their cousins in terms of what the business and the business model should be. Life circumstances made the decision when Martin and John's father passed and the cousin bought his share of the business. With their inheritance, Martin and John started up a similar business with a different model and very different ambitions.

Martin and John wanted more than a small Main Street business, they wanted a dominant business that the family and town would be proud of. This meant expanded services, more people working for the business and a brand name that would set it apart. Their dreams required money, which is where Abraham comes in. The family he married into was highly involved in the community with a name well recognized as a founding family and there was money.

Each brought to the company different areas of interest and expertise and all were willing to work hard to reach their goals, including taking key roles in generating revenue for the company. None of them had an interest in titles and roles beyond what was necessary. They believed that the strength of their partnership would be cemented if they were all involved in key initiatives, meetings and decisions. There were few singular conversations if it involved the company.

Abraham, being the most social of the three, took on the primary responsibility for company relationships other than vendors. Martin being a numbers and detail person took on financial, accounting and vendors. John was the most interested in technology, systems and tools so he took on infrastructure. It made for a company that could grow and ran fairly smoothly, giving each the opportunity to generate revenue and build not only company but also personal wealth. Their original investment was returned and life was good.

Challenges arose when the economy tightened and business dynamics changed. There was more pressure on their revenue generation as well as stronger requirements in managing the company. When momentum was taken away, their machine needed a lot of work. When times are good, it is not unusual for the cracks and necessary maintenance to be overlooked. When times are lean, these problems demand attention.

More than the economy had changed. When they started the company, they were each young men without families. Now they had reached middle age, with the many milestones and challenges that life events present. They had become accustomed to lives built around a generous income stream and had the toys to show for it. Now re-investment and cash infusion was needed in the company. Their partnership agreements had created a small reserve but the practice had been that most of the profits were disbursed to the three partners. At first, it was not a problem. Then as the downturn lengthened and other requirements for cash were needed in the company, the partnership hit its rockiest point.

Where there had never been questions on each partner's contribution in time, effort and money before, there was now scrutiny in how decisions were made for expenditure and how the company was run. Growth and recruiting had been primarily the product of the big getting bigger and attracting talent rather than specific effort and strategic planning. Now the lack of infrastructure to recruiting and growth systems showed a gaping void.

Add to the challenges that Abraham and Martin had envisioned a retirement plan even though it had not been formally shared. John did not want to own or run the company on his own. No exit strategies had been planned and there was no funding for internal buyouts. They always thought that they would simply sell the company when the time came. Now there were no buyers and the company had a lot of infrastructure baggage that made it less attractive to the few buyers available. Since the three partners were so heavily involved in revenue production, the company without them as producers had a greatly diminished value. In a sense, they were indentured servants until the economy turned around or they were able to change the operations to a much leaner model. Perhaps the greatest challenge was how to build revenue production that was saleable.

The good news is that reason among Abraham, Martin and John prevailed. They realized that they could not individually meet their goals unless they worked together and put plans in place. Roles and responsibilities were re-examined, plans were put in place and the metrics developed to track progress on driving revenue through other producers. They downsized bricks and sticks, cut what was unnecessary and could be replaced by technology. There are buy/sell agreements in place and funding has been set up to create survivability of the company beyond the partnership.

The lions roared when they understood their challenges and the lambs were herded to be the future of the flock.

Bobbi Jo

Bobbi Jo and her husband own a midsize company with about 70 employees in a niche business. Bobbi Jo is the effervescent and outgoing one and her husband is not the most approachable person, at least until you get to know him. They have built their company from an idea and now have established a premium position with about a 15% market share in a good but limited national market.



Effervescent might be a reserved characterization for Bobbi Jo. Warm, engaging and exuding positive energy she is also a person that is quite difficult to say “no” to and she knows it. When you first meet Bobbi Jo, you would not necessarily perceive the depth behind the woman. With her short blond hair cut in a style that accents her petite features well and suggests “cute” in spite of the conservative, well-tailored clothes she prefers. She is a natural beauty using little more than lipstick and mascara as enhancements.

Bobbi Jo has an optimism that can be applied to nearly every situation or challenge and impossible is not a part of her vocabulary. Within groups, she takes on several roles; cheerleader, promoter and ombudsman. She is highly task oriented and keeps the groups focused on the objective at hand. She’s a quiet leader to the degree that most people do not know they are being led until they are fully engaged in Bobbi Jo’s current mission. She also likes juggling many of these groups simultaneously, bringing balance and interaction as needed.

Her husband may be at the top of the organization chart but she is involved in every aspect of the business right from concept, marketing and human resources to hiring and strategic planning. Bobbi Jo’s work in the company is important and for most would be all consuming, especially since there are children under 18 at home. Yet, somehow she finds the time to lend her talents and energy to community organizations.

One community organization desperately needed help growing the number of people who used their products and services. Over the years there had been growth and decline that came in waves, usually related to leadership, economic climate or environmental climate that had a huge impact since a lot of the use was weather dependent. Bobbi Jo saw the problem and decided to turn it around.

She created a committee so that she could build a team to help her. She invited people who were workers who could and would contribute time, energy, ideas and resources. Each person was engaged in a part of the project, making a commitment to Bobbi Jo to execute their part as needed. This was probably one of the defining differences in her success and really showed her strengths. Everyone before her tackled the project by themselves or simply asked others to do what they could. She brought organization, her “can do” approach and a razor sharp focus on the objective with reporting and high accountability.

The committee has taken on a life of its own, growing each time a need arises and talent is found to work on a requirement. Some are formally a part of the committee and others are resources tapped as needed. In the history of the organization, there has never been so many people working on this core project together and by plan. The most interesting part is that there are very few dollars expended. A part of those on the committee who are employees are focused on expanding usage within the areas that they are responsible for within their jobs. They are learning, stretching and focused. Most of the committee is made up of volunteers who are, in most cases, also customers and people who use the products and services of this community resource. Each contributes their time, talent and effort and with her gentility, Bobbi Jo holds them accountable. These volunteers are influential leaders in the community and many are also owners or a part of leadership in their own companies.

It is interesting to see an initiative that started out at a meeting with one person standing up and saying, "I will take on that challenge" to seeing a virtual business being built, organized and run like the kind of machine companies should be. Bobbi Jo may seem like a lamb when you first meet her but it does not take long before you realize that she is a lion in her attack, using every type of hunting skill to meet the goals she has set. She may be sweet and southern in her approach, but don't be fooled, you will find she is a force.

Leo

Leo is the king of the salespeople in his company. Like all male lions he has a mighty roar and loves the attention he receives when he brings in the sale. But in reality, he is a cowardly lion; his hunting is really limited to friendly grounds and leads given to him by the company. He does not like confrontation and will usually back down when the client asks for anything even if it means that he claims the hunt while there is nothing for the company. He prefers to graze with the lambs and be led by the shepherd.



So why is he considered to be King of the salespeople? Yes, he does bring in the most business, whether or not it has any bottom line impact after costs which include his commission, and he has the longest tenure with the company. It all actually boils down to the fact that he is a "F.O.T.O." – Friend of the Owner. FOTO's have a huge impact on companies and often keep the companies from realizing their potential.

On the surface it looks like the perfect situation, a sales person who can produce has great loyalty to the owner and, through that relationship, to the company. He knows how to talk to the owner, often has mutual interests and friends, and knows what the owner wants to hear. FOTO's also have many photos which bear proof of the ties and the relationships as well as, sometimes, less than optimum or business appropriate situations.

Dig a little deeper and the issues related to Leo and his FOTO status begin to arise. The accountability systems in the company are usually run by the head of the department. In this case, Leo is the lead in sales and since he is not a fan of accountability, there is little accountability for the sales people under him. Additionally, most new sales people have Leo as a mentor since he is the lead. It is not surprising that none of the sales people are passionate hunters.

Even when the number two person in the company was tasked with heading up sales, Leo and the sales team were not held accountable. There were several reasons but the greatest was that since management of FOTO's was never fully given, attempts at accountability often resulted in ownership intervention. Ownership was fearful of losing Leo and he made sure that his position was well known.

Perhaps the greatest impact is the most hidden. Because Leo has a privileged relationship and communications with little accountability, the company has little visibility into lost opportunities. Leo does not like to use company systems and is often given a pass. Since he is the sales leader (and a FOTO) and does not want to use the systems, there is no tracking of opportunities, actions and initiatives. He is not accountable for anything other than what he chooses to report and there is no visibility to what he does.

The company, like all companies, would like to increase sales and certainly could if the sales team was held to objectives, reporting and accountability. Leads generated by the company, if triaged and tracked, would bring a better return on investment, but that is not Leo's concern. His concern is in looking good and keeping his relationship with the owner which drives his income and future. In previous companies where Leo was not a FOTO, he had been a hunter, finding new accounts and developing the business from those to grow the company. Without accountability the only measurements are business volume. Source is not a topic of conversation and if it comes up, Leo is quick to change the direction.

Leo is a product of the environment and culture. The owner's preference for FOTO relationships has created many hiding places. In this company, the owner's insecurities of working with new people not previously known and gentle heart toward FOTOS is handicapping the growth. There is no comparative because a great salesperson previously unknown to the company will not be hired. In fact, they may not even get an interview. By default, it is a closed shop.

Leo, while perceiving great benefit from this arrangement, is also marginalized. He no longer feels or is driven by the thrill of the hunt and will never reach his potential. It is the owner's comfort zone that has taken Leo from being a hunter to grazing with the lambs.

The Author and the Company

The author of the Lions & Lambs series is Pat Soltys.



Pat Soltys has a long business and consulting history helping companies not only through tough times but more frequently in achieving their objectives. She understands the mechanics and structure of business as well as the challenges. Her writing aligns with a philosophy of content, communications and commerce. For more information see Pat's bio on our web site. <http://www.soltys-inc.com/psoltys.htm>. You may contact Pat directly at psoltys@soltys-inc.com

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