

# Reckless abandon

Pit-bull management approach is bad;  
holistic methodology is good

BY DEBORAH PENTA

**H**ave you ever encountered a reckless leader? Have you ever met a leader who doesn't know any other way of leading than to act like an aggressive pit bull? This particular leader may believe that in order to gain results, she has to only think of herself, her own company or organization and what she wants. Reckless leaders conduct their daily business, engage in meetings, create opportunities and at the end of the day they only do what is right for themselves and will often disregard everyone else in their path, unless, of course, they have a use for the person, entity or organization and feel that they'll get something from them. I believe that this methodology is reckless.

Ineffective leaders may seem effective at first if they garner support and reach milestones in the beginning. People believe that they are strong and pass off their behavior as assertive, focused or driven. As time goes on, however, people begin to wonder why the leader continues to behave in a more and more aggressive style and begins to see everyone and everything in the world around them as obstacles to their success or competition for their results.

In a more holistic form of leadership style, those of us who believe we cannot do it alone and that along the way the way it's important to not only think of your own organization but how you can truly help others, know first-hand that good results come. The leader is happier and achieves more with less effort, people want to help the leader and the leader is always seeking ways to bring things together instead of tearing things or people apart.

**OVER THE PAST** several months, I've shared many stories and beliefs about leadership qualities that I believe are effective and the names of individuals I have encountered who prove themselves to be wonderfully effective leaders in business but who also treasure the balance of trying to be good community and corporate citizens.

In my work with FLIC and over the course of my career in marketing, I have met many wonderful leaders who I have had the privilege of working with regularly. In a recent exercise, I asked several who I have great respect for, who share with me a belief in engaged and holistic leadership, to provide me with the name of one famous leader they would most want to meet. I asked CEOs, attorneys, executive directors of nonprofit organizations and a newspaper publisher. I was not surprised that they took the time to respond, and to thoughtfully answer my questions, or that their answers had two things in common. 1) the individual they selected was/is a great leader or paved the road for a better future in the field and 2) the

individual was/is known for also being a community citizen.

"Steve" praised Abraham Lincoln for his intelligence, leadership and political instinct; the thing he said about Lincoln that stood out most was, "He surrounded himself with excellent thinkers—Steward, Chase, Stanton, all members of his cabinet—who were once his competitors and adversaries, but he 'managed' to extract the best they had to offer for the benefit of the nation."

How many of us, on a daily basis, put our personal differences aside and do what is right for our company's organizations or our communities?

**"DAVE" RESPONDED** that he would love to meet Colin Powell because "he had the courage to stand up for what he believed in even in the face of tremendous political pressure."

How many of us, on a daily basis, have the courage to stand up for what we believe in despite how unpopular our beliefs may be—even if they would create a better community or world?

"Jill" picked Oprah Winfrey because "I am impressed with her life path, the adversity she has overcome, the successful career she has built and how her philosophy of paying it forward can be spread to engage others."

As we all think back to various points in our lives and even at moments now, haven't we all overcome some adversity? How many of us have remembered that and have been and continue to express gratitude by helping others and helping them on their paths, whether it be employees, business associates, organizations or the community? We all have unique opportunities to give back in some way. How many of us actually do?

Jonathan said that he would love to meet Paul McCartney because "he was the leader of the Beatles and he's a genius and a good guy."

How many people would think of you for both your leadership in your field and for being a genuinely good person?

Reckless leadership, while it exists, doesn't belong in our world any longer. We have come too far as a community to allow this type of leadership behavior to succeed. I imagine if we all did business and supported leaders who were both good at what they do and fostered goodwill in our community, that reckless leaders would see how fast they would become extinct and either change their ways or practice leadership in a different civilization.

We'd like to know your thoughts. Please email me at [dpenta@femaleleaders.org](mailto:dpenta@femaleleaders.org).

*Deborah Penta is the founder and chair of the board of FLIC (Female Leadership Interest Council); she is also CEO of PENTA Communications Inc.*



Deborah Penta