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Lessons from Geese

Fact 1

As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an “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

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

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

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

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

If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we're strong.

Note: *Lessons from Geese* was transcribed from a speech given by Angeles Arien at the 1991 Organizational Development Network. It was based on the work of Milton Olson. It circulated to Outward Bound staff throughout the United States.

Leadership i2i ♦ 2437 North Beech Lane, Greensboro, NC 27455-1275
336.545.7141 ♦ walt.gavin@LEADERSHIPi2i.com
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