

# This economic climate may be harsh, but how would your leadership hold up in Antarctica's ruthless climate?

by Kelly Watkins

In the harsh climate of Antarctica, leadership skills equal survival. In our current harsh economic climate, **your** leadership skills will determine **your company's or your organization's** survival. Are you prepared with the appropriate leadership mindset?

In the early 1900's, three explorers were competing to be the first to the heart of Antarctica - the South Pole. The successes, and failures, of their journeys were determined by their ability to lead.

## **Amundsen**

One of these explorers was Roald Amundsen from Norway. His original goal was the North Pole. He studied, prepared, and trained for years. He conducted research by spending time with Natives in northern climates to learn about survival in the cold. Just as Amundsen was ready to set out on his journey, he received the news that Robert Peary had beaten him to the North Pole.

Did Amundsen whine like many of us as company executives and association directors do? Did he complain because a competitor received more business? Did he quit because a colleague with less experience got the big promotion? No. He simply turned his ship around (literally 180°) and headed south. He took all his knowledge and training and found a way to use it. He made a new goal. He would be the first person to the South Pole.

## **Ask yourself –**

How do you react when you don't achieve an objective? Do you whine, complain, and focus on the negative? Or, do you react like a leader?

## **Scott**

The second explorer was Robert Scott. He had the throne's favor, and mighty England paid for his expedition. Scott had a few inventive ideas, but he didn't see the need to test them. He felt that since they were his great innovations, they would work!

Scott admired fresh ideas, but only his own. He didn't like to listen to suggestions from people who were different (in this case - people who weren't British). So, he embarked on his journey unprepared.

**Ask yourself –**

Do you send your staff out without the proper training or tools? Do you refuse to listen to others – customers or staff? Or, do you prepare like a leader?

**Shackleton**

The third explorer was Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton. He was also British but was unable to obtain financial backing from the throne, since Scott's expedition was already funded.

Did he give up? Did he complain as many of us do? "It's not fair. With all this financial crisis, the banks are tightening their requirements. I can't obtain any money to expand my business"? Did he say, "I could be successful in this company, if they wouldn't keep reducing my department's budget"? Did he cry, "My association won't be successful, if I can't receive corporate sponsorship"? No. He kept working until he raised the money, and he set sail.

After enduring an incredible journey, Shackleton came within 97 miles of the South Pole when he made a terrible discovery. Because of unforeseen problems, there wasn't enough food. He had two agonizing options. He could continue on and achieve his life-long dream, knowing some of his crew would die of starvation. Or, he could turn around and bring his team home safely. What do you think he did?

He chose to go back. All of his crew survived.

**Ask yourself –**

As a leader, are you willing to put aside your personal agendas and personal goals? Are you will to make sacrifices for the good of your team and the good of your company?

**Here's what happened . . .**

Scott reached the South Pole on January 17, 1912. Upon arrival, he found a note from Amundsen.

Yes, Roald Amundsen was the first person to reach the South Pole. He had beaten Scott by a mere four weeks. Scott and his crew began their return journey. They were within eleven miles of their base camp, when they encountered a ferocious storm. It was just another of the many problems that had plagued the unprepared expedition. Sadly, Scott and his entire crew perished. One object that did survive was his journal.

### **My perspective . . .**

I have visited Antarctica and gained a personal respect for the land – both its splendor and its ruthlessness.

Antarctica is beautiful – from the adorable penguins waddling past to the majestic snow petrels soaring overhead . . . from the icebergs in incredible shapes, so huge they tower over our ship to a kayak ride, amidst the solitude that permeates the continent.

Antarctica is also harsh – from the jagged mountain tops to the deep gouging crevices . . . from the leopard seals with razor-sharp teeth that peel the skins from penguins to the killer whales that hunt in pods, creating waves to tip unsuspecting penguins from small ice floes.

I left for Antarctica expecting to take a relaxing trip. I returned from the journey having written a new motivational speech on leadership and having gained a new appreciation for the challenges and glory of leadership.

### **How about you?**

If it were the year 1912 and you were selected to go on an Antarctic expedition, which of these three explorers would you want as a leader? Now, ask the most important question – Are you that type of leader?

### **Are you acting like the type of leader you want to follow?**

If the answer is yes – then, with you as the leader, your company or organization is on the right path to surviving this current harsh economic climate.

By Kelly Watkins, Thought Leader on Women's Global Leadership – Sharing experiences from all 7 continents to improve employee effectiveness. Do you have Executive Professionalism™? Find out:

[www.ExecutiveProfessionalism.com](http://www.ExecutiveProfessionalism.com)

To return to Leadership Global Women, click here: [https://www.leadershipglobalwomen.com/?page\\_id=62](https://www.leadershipglobalwomen.com/?page_id=62)