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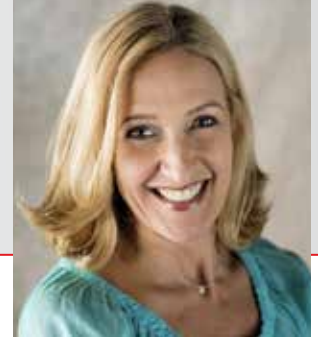
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Being an Engaging Leader Through Changing Times

By Jen Shirkani, Author of "Choose Resilience" and "Ego vs EQ"



Jen Shirkani

You've made it to the top. Now, how do you survive there and thrive? Today's workplace requires leadership adaptability as you navigate ambiguity and challenge, all the while keeping your best employees engaged.

It is critical that CEOs and business leaders stay grounded and in touch with the realities of their effectiveness. Unfortunately, many develop blind spots that can cause them to miss opportunities to change direction or adapt to new information in a timely fashion. This can create unintentional consequences that could ultimately cost them. These blind spots could also be called "ego traps," and the road map for steering clear of these traps is driven by emotional intelligence, or EQ.

EQ refers to a skill set that includes an ability to **recognize** one's own impulses and moods (self-awareness), the ability to **read** situations accurately (empathy), and the capacity to **respond** appropriately depending on the situation (self-control). That skillset includes a wide range of learnable skills but focuses on three that can be effectively practiced on a daily basis: self-awareness; empathy; and, self-control is all you may need.

The risks for CEOs and business owners are real. Two in five CEOs fail in their first 18 months on the job, according to a study published by the *Harvard Business Review*. The majority of start-up businesses fail within five years, according to the

Small Business Administration; two-thirds will disappear just a decade after founding. Those failures will be situational, operational or—as is too often the case—they will be personality or ego based. Research has shown that, even for people who have a highly developed EQ, the farther up the ladder a person climbs, the weaker their EQ becomes. The good news is that—unlike IQ—EQ can be improved. It's possible to enhance or regain emotional intelligence skills that can elevate your leadership success.

EQ is the solution that provides the ability to:

- Creatively seek and accept feedback;
- Effectively communicate priorities for the company good—while eliminating abrupt, ego-driven, hot-cold shifts through increased self-control;
- Raise empathy for the front lines of the workforce—thereby building higher employee engagement;
- Boost self-awareness of management style and behaviors by discovering and eliminating blind spots;

EQ skills are essential for leaders who want to sustain management success. In the upper echelons of organizations, where differences in technical competence narrow and leadership capabilities become all-important, the research demonstrates that EQ is, by far, the greater indicator of sustained success than technical skills or IQ. In other words, business leaders especially need EQ when they reach the top. The problem is,



Jen Shirkani speaks to UT students and members from the business community at the 2019 Leadership Summit.

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Being an Engaging Leader Through Changing Times

EQ tends to wane while the ego tends to expand as a person acquires power. Worse, plenty of leaders think they have high EQ when that couldn't be further from the truth.

When ego trumps EQ, it can translate into business failures and costly corporate missteps. In large companies, leaders often find out too late when they've landed in an ego trap, as they've unwittingly sabotaged a new program or a financial scandal goes public. How can the leaders of these successful organizations—well intentioned as they often are—be so out of touch with the realities of the workplace? Their disconnect is such that major problems go unnoticed and unattended—turnover, falling division sales, failed strategic execution—and end up stunting business growth. More often than not, a lack of emotional intelligence is at the heart of the issue; leaders don't even realize the traps they've fallen into. Setting blame aside, being aware of the delicate balance between ego and EQ provides positive solutions. Cultivating and practicing EQ offers the most effective path to staying in touch and in tune, creating a path to sustainable leadership success. As hard as it can be, the most successful leaders are willing to take a hard look in the mirror and seek tangible data about their own leadership competence.

So what are some of these common ego traps?

Ignoring Feedback You Don't Like

It can be hard to hear honest feedback—especially when the feedback is not what we think or want to believe about ourselves. But the consequences of ignoring that feedback can be even more damaging (including a 629% risk of derailment) than facing down some potentially unpleasant realizations about your work style. Practicing the three primary EQ skills—self-awareness, empathy, and self-control—can open the door to free-flowing communication and ensure you receive the timely feedback you need to lead effectively.

Surrounding Yourself with More of You

When it comes to the challenges of building an executive team, leaders who shortcut a thorough

interview and hire someone they “click with” because they share their same strengths, values, and ways of thinking—end up with exactly the people least likely to challenge their decisions. That's a risky game to play in a competitive marketplace. When you surround yourself with more of “you,” you set up blind spots that can prevent you from seeing oncoming challenges because your team sees the world much like you do rather than being able to challenge, question, or offer a different perspective.

Not Letting Go of Control

At the heart of micromanagement is an ego-based *failure to let go of control*. Ironically, in some cases, micromanaging leaders may see themselves as low-ego, ultimate “servant leaders.” They may think: “Look at me, I am rolling up my sleeves and working side-by-side with the troops.” In reality, what may look like helping, though, isn't helping at all since the group doesn't often need another operator. They need a leader. In most cases the leader's need to be involved often slows down the work of the group, as other things sit and wait for him to review or approve them. The principles of emotional intelligence say it's not an executive or founder's job to stay in the weeds and micromanage every challenge the company faces in each and every department but instead to lead people in the strategic direction they envision.

Being Blind to Your Downstream Impact

It's easy for leaders across organizations to have a blind spot regarding their downstream impact. They may not have any advisors to give them feedback, and their direct reports may silently defer to them. Chances are they will never let on, at least directly, to the disruptive effects of decisions, initiatives, requests and behavior. For the manager who regularly communicates the belief that “my needs take priority over everyone else's” problems may occur. Employees can start to feel disrespected and become disgruntled. The leader may become the butt of a few jokes around the office or, worse, set himself up to be undermined by others as they disengage and fail to alert the leader to possible trouble or even set the leader up for failure. No one wants to work for a dictator, even a benevolent one.

Losing Touch with the Front Line Experience

As a senior executive, it is all too easy to become disconnected from the troops. The contrast between the frontline environment and the physical surroundings of the average executive—mahogany offices, dining room sized conference tables, and private gyms or corporate jets—is one reason. Then consider the contrast in the nature, complexity, and seriousness of the work, and, if you are part of a publicly traded company, shareholder meetings and appointments with analysts—and it makes it easy to forget what's going on below. The demands on a senior executive to be focused on investors, analysts, the Board, or quarterly profits makes it easy to take their eyes off the organizational culture and lose empathy for those who have to execute their plans.

As a leader, you are always subject to factors that you can't control, whether it's the supply of your raw materials, competitive moves, regulatory requirements, or any number of other unwelcome surprises. What you can control is how you interact with your team—whether you lead from an unconscious place driven by ego or instead lead with EQ at the fore, consciously exercising your self-awareness, empathy, and self-control. It takes some effort to be an emotionally intelligent leader, but it doesn't have to be all-consuming. What's more, you don't have to change who you are. The goal really is to retain your strengths while being aware of the few areas where ego may tend to trip you up. Once you have heightened this awareness, you can shift your sail ever so slightly when needed—doing the small things when they matter—and then watch as the individuals around you begin to respond more positively and the organization shifts into a powerfully new direction. By opening your eyes to some of your blind spots and being courageous enough to make a few small—but incredibly powerful—changes, simple course corrections can put you and your organization on even stronger footing as it faces turbulent times.

Southern African Rhino Horn Conservation: Not Just Black and White

By Deirdre Dixon, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Management, Associate Director, TECO Energy Center for Leadership and Tracy McPhail, Ph.D., Manager, Assessment and Organizational Development, TECO Services Inc.



Deirdre Dixon, Ph.D.



Tracy McPhail, Ph.D.

A group of students, faculty and Center for Leadership board members traveled for almost three weeks to South Africa and Swaziland (new name is eSwatini) this past summer for a research class on leadership in Southern Africa and rhino horn conservation. No one in the group, with the exception of the instructors, had ever traveled to Africa. The group learned about leadership, rhino horn conservation, options for the rhino and qualitative research in general.

Tracy McPhail, one of the board members who attended the trip stated that “As an advisory board member it was amazing to see the students grow in their leadership and perceptions about Africa right before my eyes. This program was a benefit for us all. They not only learned from the academic portion, but also from living and breathing leadership and how things are done in Africa.” The students were also amazed. Ali Campbell, a graduate student, explained that “Both eye-opening and life-changing, our adventure through South Africa and eSwatini exceeded all my expectations. We were immersed in the culture—we met with leaders and played with children, locked eyes with animals most people only see in photos, and learned about conservation efforts first-hand at the places we visited. A trip to Africa was something I looked forward to for so long. It is now an experience I will never forget.” Another student, Ajay Mirani stated that “Before going on the trip I believed I was well-informed about African leadership due to the fact that I was

born and raised on the African continent; however, the trip definitely changed my perceptions on African leadership. Also, I will forever cherish the information I received on some of the pressing issues such as rhino poaching.” Rhino horn conservation was the theme for the class, and we examined how leadership can have an impact on the outcome.

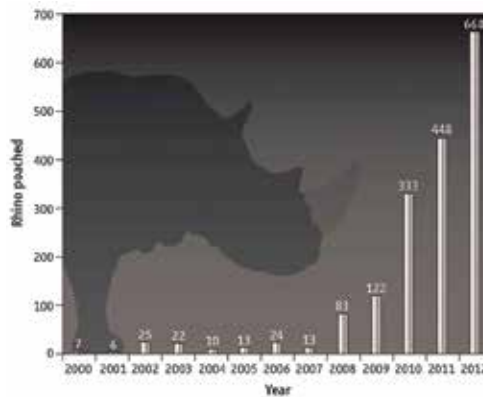
Rhinoceroses are iconic animals. One of the top three largest land mammals, they symbolize the wildness of Africa. In eSwatini and South Africa, the two countries we visited, there are actually two types of rhinos, the black and the white rhino. Both are endangered and very rare to see, especially in the wild. According to experts in eSwatini, there are less than 25,000 rhino left in the world. Both black and white rhino are actually grey in color, and the major difference is in what they eat, reflected most obviously in the different shapes of their mouths. White rhinos graze on

the grass, and their mouths are flat with wide lips; black rhinos have more pointed lips and they graze on fruit and leaves from branches in trees. It is believed they received the names black and white because of a misunderstanding of the word “weid” (which is wide in Afrikaans) because of the shape of the lip of the white rhinoceros. “Weid” was translated to “white,” which was not the actual meaning.

So why are rhinos endangered? Even though the horn trade is illegal for international trade, horns are valuable to people in the Far East, where the demand far outstrips the black market supply. China has used horn products in potions for over 2,000 years, and the Vietnam population has had more recent interest. Some Chinese and Vietnamese cultures believe that Rhino horn can cure such things as lime disease, fever, gout and even cancer, and, as anything of high value, some individuals collect the horns just for status. The price for rhino horn on the black market is higher than gold, with the black market price of \$50,000 per pound.

The students studied leadership and rhino horn conservation through qualitative research. In our visits and interviews with experts in the field, we learned that conservation is a tricky word that can mean different things to different individuals. For most of us, coming from the U.S., conservation is about protecting something, management of a natural resource, with the bottom line

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Rhinos in a park with their horns cut off.

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including saving the animal from extinction. Others saw it that way, including some of the game park managers and wildlife experts that we interviewed. Still others we interviewed, however, saw conservation as not helpful for the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. Their points of view included that one can't put animals before people. In other words, when individuals can't feed their families, they must have the right to hunt and eat without exception. The students also discovered that leadership can play a role in conservation. The issue of rhino horn conservation is not as black and white as it may seem.

The rhinos are poached and killed for their horns, even though the horns are like our nails and can grow back. As the price of the horn has increased, the poaching has dramatically increased.

What the students learned in interviews with many individuals over our trip is that there are two frames of thought. One is to keep the international trade illegal, and poaching is the only way to obtain the horns, or legalize the trade and work



Rhino with a baby in the wild.

to stem the demand. Protecting against poaching has become more and more difficult. As the price of the horn has increased, poachers are willing to risk more to kill the rhinos. Legalizing the trade seems like a viable option, then the rhinos could be farmed and the horns could be cut off for trade. The money could be used to protect the animals in the wild. Opponents of this think the rhino would be wiped out before the rhino farms could be established. The gestation period for rhinos is 16 months; it would take too much time.

This issue of rhino horn conservation has been around for many years. Our students learned from interviewing experts and interested individuals how complicated this subject really is. The students also learned from the divergent viewpoints from faculty and other students at the South African Wildlife College. Students at the college had very diverse



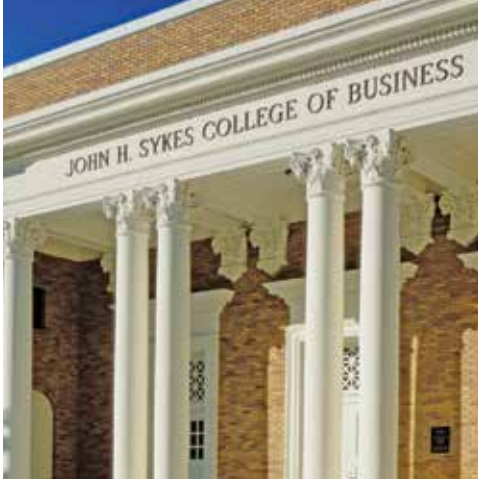
opinions on how they intended to contribute to the future of rhino conservation. The UT students learned how to interview, transcribe, and use a program to help code the interviews. Students interviewed key leaders in the country including the U.S. ambassador to eSwatini and one of the top conservationists in Southern Africa. Shelby Turner, a '19 graduate stated that "My study abroad experience in Swaziland/eSwatini will remain one of the most influential parts of my time in college. I got to see for myself how much leadership varies between cultures. I enjoyed getting to know the Swazi people and understanding their immense pride for their country despite any hardships they themselves or the country as a whole were facing. I don't think there is any research opportunity like this one and I am so grateful I got to be a part of it!"

The scenery throughout the trip was breathtaking, and the wild animals we were able to see close to our vehicles made it a once in a lifetime experience. To learn about the animals and see them in their natural habitats were sights to behold. All in all it was a successful trip, and we were immersed in the culture of Southern Africa. Our main take away from the trip is that rhino horn conservation (along with any other controversial topic) is not as black and white as it may seem.



SAVE THE DATE

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The Rogue CEO

By Steve Allen, CEO and Founder, DocuPhase

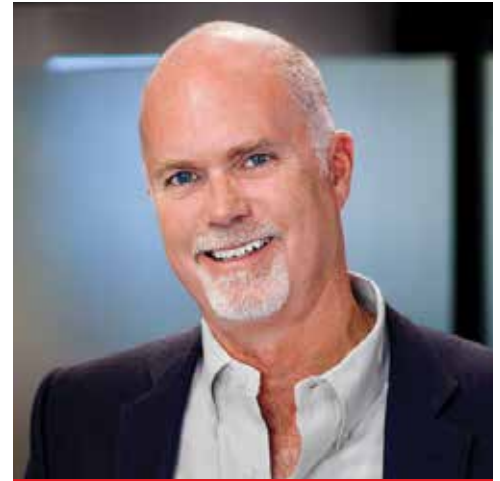
Do you want to be a CEO? An entrepreneur? A part of something big? Do you have a vision and the desire to change the world by building a company? It's a unique set of qualities and attributes that empowers a CEO to take an idea from inception to world-wide enterprise. It takes a rogue CEO.

It all starts with your desire to be an entrepreneur, CEO, or company leader. We have heard the expression "he/she is a born leader," and there are some truths to that expression. While you do not have to be born with it, since many of these characteristics can be learned, some people have evolved into having a burning passion and desire to change the world. They have an idea that drives their passion. No one can dissuade them from their path no matter how absurd the idea might be. In actuality, most people that hear their idea will try very hard to convince them that their idea is impossible, too difficult, takes too much money, or is simply CRAZY! Despite this, the rogue CEO has a vision and will do anything to make that vision a reality!

Why use the word "rogue" to describe a type of CEO?

Typically, rogue is used to define someone who is a dishonest or unprincipled person. This is NOT a characteristic of a rogue CEO or how it is defined here. The word rogue has evolved, and—depending on the context—is used to express some very positive ideas and characteristics. We will use it to define an extraordinary fusion of talent and attributes. To define an entrepreneur that founds a company with a unique vision and executes a plan as the CEO to make their vision a reality. An entrepreneur and CEO that builds a company capable of benefiting the world.

We can see examples of positive uses of the word "rogue" just about everywhere. For all of us Marvel fans, when we think of rogue we may picture a female super hero with extraordinary powers. Much like Marvel's Rogue, the rogue CEO appears to have super powers and is capable of doing what the mere mortals cannot. They



Steve Allen

have the power to do the impossible! The Nissan Rogue has been marketed as a vehicle that lets you go forward with confidence, choosing your own unexplored path. Similarly, rogue CEOs have a clear vision of their path into the unknown and see the road to success. They bring the entire team with them on their journey. Their company and idea is the vehicle used to take others along. They don't travel alone; they have room for others to join their adventure.

When thinking of a rogue CEO, we can also consider the rogue elephant standing apart from the herd. One of the most important characteristics of rogue CEOs is their ability to be able to stand strong alone in their beliefs. They are confident people who do not need or require validation from others, and are comfortable in knowing that they know what the masses DON'T. They stand strong against criticism, ridicule, and setbacks.

Rogue CEOs create their own rules. Arnold Schwarzenegger once said, "Break the rules, not the law." and this is often the motto of the rogue CEO and any visionary. All too often, we are told what is and is not possible by others: our educators, our community, our society, and "common sense". Visionaries question these limits and beliefs. They look at the possibilities that others can't even consider. That is why they face so much resistance and initial failure. They are trying to do what others won't and often face rules that must be broken.

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The Rogue CEO

With this understanding, let's explore some different types of CEOs.

Jack Welch was considered one of the greatest CEOs of the 20th century. He took General Electric from \$12 billion to \$410 billion during his tenure as CEO. Welch took the classic route to CEO, the route promoted by classic education and traditional values. He went to school, was an outstanding student, went to a college to earn a B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in chemical engineering. His first job out of college was with a great company, GE, starting at \$10,500 per year. He would work his way up through the organization over the next 20 years. The journey was not without its setbacks. After being given his first significant management role over an entire division of GE, one of his plants had a major explosion with loss of life. After surviving this and continuing forward, Welch was able to leverage his 20 years of experience to become GE's CEO. During his 20 years at the helm of GE as CEO, Welch expanded the company with more than 600 acquisitions and put in place an informal environment that encouraged employees to take ownership as a small business within a large corporation. His gift was management, and he was a master at it. His reward for the traditional route was a \$417 million severance package when he retired. Welch was a traditional, "grown and nurtured" CEO with deep education, experience and management skills.

Next, let's review a different type of CEO: former CEO of Apple, John Scully. Scully was working as the president of Pepsi-Cola when Steve Jobs asked him to be CEO of Apple in 1983. At Pepsi, he was a master of marketing and created the Pepsi Challenge. During his 10 years at Apple, revenue grew from \$800 million to \$8 billion. He was especially talented at marketing and used his skills to bring Apple into a world audience. He did not invent any of the products at Apple, but was responsible for helping Apple grow. John was a "hired gun" CEO focused on scaling operations, marketing, growth, and profits.



Steve Allen speaks to UT students, faculty and members of the community at the fall 2018 Leadership Speaker Series.

Finally, we'll examine the career of a completely different type of CEO, that of Elon Musk. Musk co-founded his first web development company, Zip2, after spending just two days of attendance at Stanford University. His desire for innovation was so significant that he wanted no delay in getting started. After four years, Zip2 was sold to Compaq for \$340 million. He then co-founded a company that went on to become PayPal. At the start of PayPal, they actually avoided discussions with attorneys for fear that they would find a reason that they could not provide internet payments because of existing banking laws. Instead, they proceeded into new territory and established their own rules. Then, Musk went on to found Tesla and SpaceX from his passion and his desire to change the world. He went against the many recommendations he was given that those industries were "not good businesses to get into." Musk financed many of his failures with his own money, learning more with each setback. Today, Musk is worth an estimated \$22 billion.

Musk is a great example of a rogue CEO, relying on his clear vision of what others often do not see. He passionately pursues that vision, building a team of like-minded people who share the vision, and are willing to invest in bringing it to market.

A rogue CEO is a very rare person.

Entrepreneurship today is a sexy term, and a very popular dream or desire for many. The reality is that not everyone is an entrepreneur or rogue CEO. But, if you have the vision, passion, and work ethic to carry you through the inevitable obstacles, setbacks, and failures, now is the time to start!

Rogue CEOs understand that they are ultimate problem solvers, and they will be the people that others come to for answers and decisions. They don't ask for permission or wait for the right time. Now is always the right time, and now is when they start. They ignore the critics, because they know something that others do not. They have the confidence to stand with their decisions and face the fear of the unknown, because they will make it happen. They are not dependent on market conditions, or other perceived impediments to success. They know the solution to FEAR is ACTION, and every day they take action to move forward, executing the plans they have made. They build a culture based on values that drive them, with a shared desire to change the world.

Finally, rogue CEOs know how to sell. They sell their vision to the world, their products to customers, the concepts to the innovators, the

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The Rogue CEO

plan to the team, the business case to investors, and the dream to their family. They make believers out of the skeptics, while selling themselves on an unwavering belief that they can do it. To be a rogue CEO, you must scaffold your passion with the skills needed to be able to realize your dreams. You never stop learning.

There are many characteristics that define a CEO, and a different set of characteristics that define an entrepreneur; then, there are the people that

do an incredible job of supporting these people in their efforts. Figuring out the differences and understanding your role can add clarity and confidence to your life. All of these roles within a company are important to the company's success, and it is the team—not the individual—that will produce the greatest results. Understanding the dynamics of the team and the role of the rogue CEO can produce the outcomes you want—even the elusive unicorn (growing your company to a billion-dollar valuation).

So now that you know what a rogue CEO is, where do you see yourself? In a spectrum of CEOs

and other roles, it is important to be honest with yourself in evaluating what you want to do. Are you the CEO? What kind of CEO? An entrepreneur? Or, are you someone who helps support the vision of a rogue CEO? The world needs ALL kinds of people and it's up to you to figure out the best path for yourself. Whether leading the vision or helping along the way, you can make an impact on the world and enjoy the clarity of knowing you are in the right role.

If you seek the role of the rogue CEO, is it not taught, it is something you teach yourself!



Getting to know you and what you care most about — planning for college, taking care of an elder family member, passing a legacy to future generations, buying a second home — is so important. Once we understand your priorities, together, we can help you pursue the goals you've set for yourself and your family. Call to learn more today.



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