

Baltimore smart CEO

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Required Reading for Growing Companies



caskey's corner

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for Smart CEO

What an Animal!

Getting in touch with your inner beast

As a kid, I was fascinated by lions, from the roaring MGM Lion, to the ones I saw on trips to the Brookfield Zoo in Chicago and in tent circuses. Recently, as part of a leadership course I'm taking, I've literally let out lion roars to summon animal power in myself and led others in roaring to summon theirs. This experience has helped me focus on the lion influence in my experience, both CEO and post-CEO.

Like all big cats, the lion is fiercely independent, fights when cornered or threatened, and has the ability to see clearly what it looks at. What distinguishes it is that it lives in families called prides. As protector of the pride, the King of Beasts lets out mighty roars, but actually does very little of the day-to-day work of running the pride. Eventually, the King is dethroned, and leaves the pride.

In my first CEO position, I was given a young, somewhat inexperienced, yet highly talented senior management team, which became my pride and joy to see develop and mature. In some ways, I didn't do a lot, but I was there for them to consult, roared occasional-

ly to assert my power, and was left pretty much alone as "King of the Hill," CEO of the best-performing subsidiary of a FTSE 100 UK conglomerate.

While the subsequent CEO positions weren't as idyllic, each followed a similar pattern and allowed me to stay in my lion role. Then a time came when I sold a business I was leading. With no immediate demand for my services, I was no longer "King of the Hill." It took me a number of years to find a role in this new environment, ultimately "sharing power" as co-leader of a joint venture.

When the joint venture ended, I was out on my own, left to my own resources. To survive and prosper as an aging lion without a pride, I see in retrospect that I had to reconstitute my lion strength appropriately for this new setting. I've transferred the pride I felt as a CEO in the individual accomplishments of my senior management team to my coaching clients. I believe that leading seminars and workshops will effect a similar transfer regarding my pride in group accomplishment. And writ-

ing this column gives me an opportunity for a monthly roar. So, without my being consciously aware of it, my animal power has resurfaced again to see me through this transition.

The persistence and adaptability of this power in my case has led me to ponder the usefulness of identifying animal power, from zoological and symbolic standpoints, to assist CEOs in understanding more about the uniqueness of their own leadership style and how important it is in their lives. I challenge you to review the following types of animal power to see if you can find yours among them, or pick out one not listed here which fits.



IF YOU ARE A TIGER--- The tiger does not travel in family groups. It may feel it has to do everything for itself, and it may have few close friends. It has predator eyes, which are intimidating to many but enable it to see through illusion and deception to the heart of the matter. It is

stealthy, deliberate and graceful, and is often undetectable during nightly covert operations.



IF YOU ARE AN EAGLE--- The eagle is gifted with clear vision. From its soaring height in the skies, it maintains a broad overview of any situation. It has a strong warrior spirit and can wait for an opportune moment to take action. Contrary to popular opinion, it has a weak chirping voice, making difficult the convincing communication of what it sees so clearly.



IF YOU ARE A FOX--- The fox is adaptable, quick and covert. It has keen eyesight and super-sensitive hearing. It also has a highly developed sense of smell, enabling it to sense when "something just doesn't smell right." The fox's tail acts as a portable blanket to keep its nose and feet warm, assuring it of its inner strength. Fitting into any situation to its best advan-

tage is a prime talent. May have a tendency to think it is smarter than it actually is.



IF YOU ARE AN OWL---The owl can see only straight ahead, but can execute 270 degree rotations with its head

for lateral vision. It has exceptional hearing, with ear openings at different levels to get a fix on its prey in quiet night attacks. Its knowledge and wisdom are based on instinct and intuition, not education or experience.



IF YOU ARE A BEAR---The bear studies the situation, gives it deep thought, reaches an informed decision, and then acts.

It is a fierce warrior, capable of surprising speed, and an expert forager. It does appear to be plodding, slow and lumbering, and may often give the message, "I have to think about this, and I'll be in touch later." Bears take long naps and may be daydreamers. They may appear as loners but have a deep sense of family.



IF YOU ARE A DOLPHIN---The dolphin brings a sense of play to the workplace, which may result in a more balanced life. It

also moves with the ebb and flow, taking the path of least resistance in any situation. The dolphin is always aware of the sounds, tones and inflections around it, and is able to control its breath. It is a symbol of a closed mouth and an open mind. It may, however, play so much that it neglects other aspects of life.

We can see that there are strengths and weaknesses that go with each type of animal. Being aware of both in our particular animal type can help, as we progress

in our careers as CEOs, and as we settle into after-career careers. We benefit at both stages because our innate orientation does not change, even when our outward circumstances do. Being on the lookout for appropriate transfers, substitutions and alternatives allows us to continue in our natural expression of power, whether it's lion, tiger, eagle, fox, owl, bear or dolphin, or some other animal. It keeps us vital and on-type, life-long.

Wayne Caskey is a 3-time CEO who is now an executive coach. His web site is www.waynecaskey.com. He recommends the electronic book by Julia White, Animal Walk, which describes animal power in the Native American shamanic tradition.