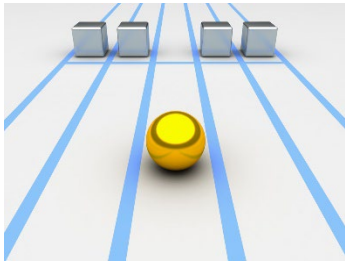


Leadership Barometer 200 Go First Robert T. Whipple, MBA CPTD



There is an interesting analysis about whether leaders should go first or go last. In the end, it depends on the kind of things they are doing that makes the difference. Both points of view are logical and totally understandable.

Let's take a look at the case for each one.

The Perspective of Stephen M.R. Covey

In Covey's first book, *The Speed of Trust* (2006), he advocates that leaders need to extend trust first. By "going first," Covey means being proactive in extending trust to others. Leaders assume positive intent and take the lead in building trust.

He argues that this approach can create a positive cycle where trust begets trust. This practice leads to increased productivity, collaboration, and effectiveness within teams and organizations.

Expanding the concept

In his most recent book, *Trust and Inspire* (2022), Covey broadens the concept. He expands the idea of "going first" from just building trust to also include other behaviors or outcomes. Those outcomes include respect, transparency, empathy, authenticity, etc.

In each of these respects, "leaders go first. Someone needs to go first: leaders go first." They demonstrate by their actions the kind of culture they are trying to build.

Looking at the flip side

When leaders are giving credit for progress in improving the culture, they move to the back of the line. In *Leaders Eat Last* (2014), Simon Sinek makes a different point. Sinek emphasizes that great leaders prioritize the well-being and success of their team members above their own interests.

Sinek introduces the concept of the Circle of Safety. It represents the feeling of belonging and security within a group or organization. The book explores the biological and chemical factors that influence human behavior and teamwork. Sinek describes the role of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin and oxytocin. These chemicals create a sense of fulfillment and loyalty within a team.

Leaders Eat Last emphasizes the importance of selfless leadership. Leaders prioritize the well-being and success of their team members. By creating a culture of trust, collaboration, and support, leaders inspire their teams. That practice achieves higher levels of performance and fulfillment.

Room for both views

I believe both points of view are valid. When defining the future culture, leaders need to go first. They show by example the kind of culture they are trying to build.

When giving credit for the excellent work being done, leaders step back and let the teams shine.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, and *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.