



Leadership as Expedition Mark Haeussler, CEO

One of my delightful endeavors is leading Land Rover expeditions. It involves leadership skill: scouting the trail, managing obstacles, navigating, and making sure others are not left behind. The metaphors for leadership are there: know your commitment, work together, manage, overcome boulders, do not damage the equipment, manage fear, and enjoy the ride.



It is a tricky balance in leading an expedition in sensing how much time to spend looking forward at the obstacles and turns ahead versus how much time to spend looking backward at the rest of the group. I am an expert 4-wheeler, but I came to realize that the time I most frequently made a mistake was when I was overly focused looking backwards. My attention split, a loud scraping sound would ensue as a boulder struck the undercarriage of my truck. Where was my attention! Backward. And that grinding sound does not engender confidence in those following me.

I wondered to myself in terms of paying attention behind me, "How much is enough?". Then it struck me: Perhaps automotive engineers might answer that for me. I scrounged for a tape measure and calculated the surface area of the windshield of my Rover and the area of the three mirrors. Of the total surface area, **the forward-facing windshield accounts for 94% of the surface area**, and the mirrors represent only 6%. I started paying attention to how I led both expeditions and in leading people in any context, then applying that same ratio of attention. 94% forward, 6% backward. It works well.

In your own leadership, how much of your focus is forward, toward possibilities and new horizons, and how much of it is looking in the rear-view mirrors? Certainly, we do not want to lose others, but we also do not want an environment where there is a great deal of attention to the ground already covered. When others in the expedition get overly focused on using their own rear-view mirrors, what more can you do to help them reorient to the large windshield that is looking into the future? What are those few, significant obstacles, where you may really need to stop the caravan, suspend forward motion for a bit, get out of your truck (office), guide the team sufficiently, and then help advance the team forward again? Use those mirrors, even use the door to get out once and a while, but mostly, *look forward*.

Mark has been leading four-wheel expeditions and coaching leadership teams for over 20 years.