



Are you a 21st century leader? This month we explore how to improve decision making in your organization in this age of increasing complexity and volatility.

Bob

Hands On, Hands Off

I often self describe as a "BBQ" guy: "born in Brooklyn, raised in Queens, schooled in the Bronx" and my growing up experience with wild animals consisted primarily of squirrels, pigeons and the occasional mugger. So when I moved to rural Stow, MA., I was woefully unprepared for the deer, coyote and other wildlife with which I came into contact.

Now, the source of most of my pain was our local groundhog, Henry. To be honest, I couldn't tell you whether Henry was a groundhog or any other type of rodent (owing to his inability to predict the coming of spring) but in either case Henry spent most of his time lounging on and under my deck and eating most of my flowers and vegetables.

After viewing [CaddyShack](#) for some "educational" tips, I decided instead to set a trap for Henry; borrowing a mesh cage from my neighbor, I set the cage outside and put out some **crudités for the coup de grace**. Unfortunately, I wound up catching Pepe, the local skunk instead, who was also apparently living under our deck. How I managed to "free Pepe" is a story for another day but needless to say Henry was still on the loose.



The following year, I tried a more sophisticated approach; I purchased a "sonic mole-

chaser" or "thumper" as I call it, which when put in the ground beeps and vibrates every 20 seconds and which, according to the directions on the box, was guaranteed to send Henry off to greener pastures. The first couple of days things seemed to go well; no sign of Henry (or any moles for that matter). But on the third day, there he was again, literally standing right next to the "thumper", **grooving to the beat**. Damn!

If you're still reading this, "Thanks!" but you're probably wondering why I'm telling these stories? Well, I recently read "[Team of Teams](#)" by General Stanley McChrystal; based upon his experience, a new leadership approach is needed to build an adaptable and flexible organization to address increasingly complex 21st century problems.

Rather than thinking of management as a chess master moving pieces around the board, General McChrystal believes this old world, "silo-ed" thinking must give way to **viewing leadership as would a gardener, nurturing and empowering an organization rather than merely directing it**.

General McChrystal goes on to say that "a gardening approach to leadership is anything but passive. The leader acts as an **"Eyes-On, Hands-Off"** enabler who creates and maintains an ecosystem in which the organization operates."

The best way to develop a leadership team that can respond quickly and effectively to an ever increasing complex and unpredictable world, according to McChrystal is by ensuring:

- 1) The **mission is well understood**
- 2) Information and technology **resources are shared liberally**, as in a network
- 3) Teams have the **capacity and capability to make decisions on the ground as they see fit**.

Having commanded our troops in Afghanistan, I'm crystal clear the General knows a lot about leadership. However, I think his observations about management come equally as much from being born in Kansas, where they know much about how to grow things. Inspirationally, I also adopted a "hands off" approach to dealing with Henry. I didn't have long to wait.

While working from home, I heard a loud commotion outside in the yard. My neighbor's terrier was barking and engaged in its own cage match with Henry. They danced around a bit testing each other's capabilities but then in a lightning strike, the dog grabbed Henry, shook him a few times and then "re-accommodated" him from my yard and down the street.

As we now say in our house, **"Hooah. Mission Accomplished"**.

Fast **FACTS**

“ I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow.

Abraham Lincoln



Acknowledging the hard work and dedication of the 2017 Winter [Entrepreneurship for All](#) Accelerator class, the final awards ceremony on March 15 celebrated the 11 companies completing the intensive program. Former CEO of Constant Contact, Gail Goodman, shared her journey and advice for the audience. [New mentors and coaches](#) for the 2017 Summer program gratefully welcomed!



If you enjoy military-themed management books, read ["Turn the Ship Around!"](#) by L. David Marguet. The author, a senior Navy officer and newly appointed captain of the submarine SS Santa Fe, explains how he achieved best-in-class performance by substituting the U.S. Navy's traditional leader-follower discipline for one ceding more control to his officers and crew.

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