

Leadership Lessons from the Cape Buffalo

by Steve Fredlund, The Safari Dude



On your safari, one peep drives the jeep. The rest of the peeps in your jeeps are passengers. Who is the leader? Is it the driver? A passenger? Which of the peeps in your jeeps are the real safari leaders? Peeps you choose to lead – or peeps who choose themselves to lead – and may have been leading your safari for years – *whether you knew it or not!*

Who leads Cape buffalo herds in Tanzania?
Who determines their focus and direction?
How do they communicate it to the herd?

The answers to these questions may surprise you – and may help you recognize, identify and honor your real safari leaders – the peeps actually leading the peeps in your jeeps. Now, I did not say those answers may help you *choose* the leaders of your safari, I said they may help you *recognize, identify* and *honor* them.

Fact is, you likely did not actually choose your real safari leaders – certainly not all of them. You may have run a “peeps wanted” ad, hired someone who seemed to fill the bill, and gave that peep the keys to safari jeep. However, though you may have assigned this particular peep to drive the jeep, other peeps in that jeep may actually be leading your safari. Often these peeps are the quiet ones. Perhaps older, perhaps more experienced, maybe wiser, more focused, they likely have been quietly guiding your safari for years...

...just as do the “pathfinders” in the Cape buffalo herds on the Tanzanian plains.

These “pathfinders” – members of the herd who strongly influence the direction of the herd – are not typically traditional alpha leaders. They may have no inherent position or power – or any inclination to jostle for such. They can be any herd member who has a strong sense of direction and purpose. They are usually older, experienced buffalo moms focused on survival and success of the herd which protects their calves – and they know where to find food, water and safety.

When the time comes for the herd to move forward to new feeding grounds, these pathfinders know it. They stand up, stretch, move about a bit, then lie back down ... but they don't lie down any ol' way. They lie down facing a specific direction in a specific way, maintaining a specific focus – *and others in the herd notice.*

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What are they doing? They've been living in the Serengeti for years. They know when it's time to move. They are focused on where they will find their next source of food and water – and where the danger is along the way. Soon others start looking where the pathfinders are looking and adjust their own position accordingly. Before long, most of the herd, *including the alpha leaders*, are aligned with the direction and intention of these unassuming pathfinders. Soon the entire herd will get to their feet and move off in the direction the pathfinders are focused on.

The herd survives and succeeds because these pathfinders, mostly older experienced moms with babies, without title or authority, communicate their wisdom simply by focusing on, and aligning with what is important to themselves, their young, and the herd. While not generally recognized as herd leaders, they are leaders, nevertheless. The instincts, experience, clarity of focus of these unassuming, but dedicated, pathfinders move the herd in the right direction.

Working in human resources analytics, as a professional actuary, I discovered that leaders of truly successful organizations get peeps in their safari jeeps with more than just skill, knowledge, and ability [traditionally called “SKAs”]. They seek out and hire *pathfinders* – and create cultures where they are recognized, appreciated, honored.

How about you? Do you know who your pathfinders are? Who are the peeps in your jeeps who may not have any official title of leadership (and may not even aspire to such), but are keenly focused on your vision and mission and are dedicated to the success of your safari? Do you and your leadership team respect and appreciate their wisdom, experience, expertise, values?

Perhaps quiet and unassuming, your pathfinders' constant focus on your goals, mission and vision, and their *personal* devotion and dedication to helping your teams actually achieve such, is vital to the success of your safari. Do you seek them out? Make a point of engaging them in decision making and strategy development? Encourage them to speak up and make their perspective known? If you really listened to them – what do you think they would say?

Having the right peeps in your jeeps is mission critical. “The right peeps” includes your pathfinders who have the experience and insight that keep you on mission – on purpose.

Safari Dude out.



The Safari Dude and the Positive Peeps in his Jeep

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About the Author



Steve Fredlund is The Safari Dude. As a professional actuary in human resources analytics, he uncovered surprising factors that enhance employee engagement, *and work enjoyment*; key elements for effectiveness, enhanced retention, productivity, and organizational success.

Minnesota to Rwanda, nonprofit to corporate, start-ups to Fortune 500 companies he brings to your event thirty years of leadership success. Steve's personal safari mission is to help great leaders and their teams enjoy an epic safari *by getting the right peeps in their jeeps and in the right seats.*

Call USA 01 651.587.5435 and invite Steve to deliver his keynote, ***"Happiness is: The Right Peeps in Our Jeeps"*** at your next event. Discover leadership lessons from the savanna and build leadership teams who transform your workplace from tired to inspired. Your peeps in your jeeps will enjoy an exciting safari experience and return to work reenergized, refocused and rededicated. No longer just employees, they will be your *pathfinders!*

Amazing message! Held the attention of all 300 employees. (Bill Eshleman, Costco) • Steve masterfully combines the analytical, practical and humorous. (Greta Nelson, ECFE) • Steve knows how to deliver! (Mark Coughlin, Our Response) • Navigates complex topics with ease. Imparts groundbreaking ideas with charm and subtlety. "Cold rooms" become charged with purpose. Changed my life! (Shaun Johnson, The Big Band Experience & Tonic Sol-fa) • Steve is a charismatic visionary. I strongly recommend him to any organization that needs transformation, and innovation (Laura Smith, HR Consultant) • Connected at a deep level, leaving us with a feeling of fulfillment and possibilities (Dan Larson, Lake Fellowship)



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