

A Tale of 2 Leaders

(excerpt from 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership)

"In 1911, two groups of explorers set off on an incredible mission. Though they used different strategies and routes, the leaders of the teams had the same goal: to be the first in history to reach the South Pole. Their stories are life-and-death illustrations of the Law of Navigation.

One group was lead by Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. Ironically, Amundsen had not originally intended to go to Antarctica. His desire was to be the first man to reach the North Pole. But when he discovered that Robert Peary had beaten him there, Amundsen changed his goal and headed toward the other end of the earth. North or south - he knew his planning would pay off.



Amundsen Carefully Charted His Course

Before his team ever set off, Amundsen had painstakingly planned his trip. He studied the methods of the Eskimos and other experienced Arctic travelers and determined that their best course of action would be to transport all the equipment and supplies by dogsled. When he assembled his team, he chose expert skiers and dog handlers. His strategy was simple. The dogs would do most of the work as the group travelled fifteen to twenty miles in the six-hour period each day. That would afford both the dogs and the men plenty of time for daily rest prior to the following day's travel.

Amundsen's forethought and attention to detail is incredible. He located and stocked supply depots all along the intended route. That way they would not have to carry every bit of their supplies with them the whole trip. He also equipped his people with the best gear possible. Amundsen had carefully considered every possible aspect of the journey, thought it through, and planned accordingly. And it paid off. The worst problem they experienced on their trip was an infected tooth that one man had to have extracted.



Scott Violated the Law of Navigation

The other team of people was led by Robert Falcon Scott, a British naval officer who had previously done some exploring in the Antarctic area. Scott's expedition was the antithesis of Amundsen's. Instead of using dogsleds, Scott decided to use motorized sledges and ponies. Their problems began when the motors on the sledges stopped working only five days into the trip. The ponies didn't fare well either in those frigid temperatures. When they reached the foot of the Transantarctic Mountains, all of the poor animals had to be killed. As a result, the members themselves ended up hauling the two-hundred-pound sledges. It was arduous work.

Scott hadn't given enough attention to the team's other equipment either. Their clothes were so poorly designed that all of the men developed frostbite. One team member required an hour every morning just to get his boots onto his swollen, gangrenous feet. Everyone became snowblind because of the inadequate goggles Scott had supplied. On top of everything else, the team was always low on food and water. That was due to Scott's poor planning. The depots of supplies Scott established were inadequately stocked, too far apart, and often poorly marked, which made them very difficult to find. Because they were continually low on fuel to melt snow, everyone became dehydrated. Making things even worse was Scott's last minute decision to take along a fifth man, even though they had only prepared enough supplies for four.

After covering the gruelling eight hundred miles in ten weeks, Scott's exhausted group finally arrived at the South Pole on January 17, 1912. There they found the Norwegian flag flapping in the wind and a letter from Amundsen. The other well-led team had beaten them to their goal by more than a month!"

We know the rest of the story, no one from Scott's team survived.

Anyone can steer a ship, but it takes a leader to chart the course.

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