

Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage

"In August 1914, polar explorer Ernest Shackleton boarded the *Endurance* and set sail for Antarctica, where he planned to cross the last uncharted continent on foot. In January 1915, after battling its way through a thousand miles of packed ice and only a day's sail short of its destination, the *Endurance* became locked in an island of ice. Thus began the legendary ordeal of Shackleton and his crew of twenty-seven men. For ten months, the ice-moored *Endurance* drifted northwest before it was finally crushed between two ice floes. With no options left, Shackleton and a skeleton crew attempted a near-impossible journey over 850 miles of the South Atlantic's heaviest seas to the closest outpost of civilization. Their survival, and the survival of the men they left behind, depended on their small lifeboat successfully finding the island of South Georgia- a tiny dot of land in a vast and hostile ocean. In *Endurance* the definitive account of Ernest Shackleton's fateful trip, Alfred Lansing narrates the harrowing and miraculous voyage that has defined heroism for the modern age"

-Author, Alfred Lansing

SUMMARY:

Prior to 1914, Sir Ernest Shackleton had invested much energy to prepare for this journey. In December 1914, the expedition entered the Weddell Sea, and by January 1915 reached 60 nautical miles from their intended landfall. Being caught in the floes, the *Endurance* floated over 500 nautical miles to the northeast. Resilient to this fact, the men passed their time smoking tobacco and playing games, dressing up, singing and playing instruments. They reminisced of their homes, and made goals for the rest of their journey. When eventually *Endurance* succumbed to the intense pressure of the ice, the men abandoned their ship on October 27, 1915. During their evacuation, the men retrieved as much food, equipment, clothing and tools as possible stock piled on the floe. They established their new home on a drifting ice floe named Ocean Camp. Soon enough, the crew had to relocate to Patience Camp- a much larger ice floe. The men attempted to create a sledge and travel over the ice pack, but slushy conditions prevented this from happening. Over the next year, the men lived on the ice floe in the polar darkness. They faced several challenges including cold and illness, decreasing food supplies, and failing equipment. When low on food, the men made a return to their half-sunken ship to retrieve any remaining provisions from their flooded supplies, and hunted all seals and penguins that came into their sight. As a result of the weather conditions worsened and provisions decreased, the men had to kill many of their dogs.

Finally, on April, 1916 as the pack ice broke up, Shackleton ordered the men to board the three small boats they had with them to head for the nearest land. Though they initially headed for Elephant Island, the men had to change their directions several times due to wind and weather. They finally reached the shore off Elephant Island, where they constructed tiny shelters, from their boats. Shackleton and five other men headed out in the single boat, and eventually reached South Georgia Island, with civilization. From there, Shackleton organized multiple rescue trips, which failed due to deteriorating ice conditions as well as unpredictable weather and ice patterns. Four months and six days after he departs Elephant Island, Shackleton returns for his team about the Yelcho from the Chilean government. At 2:10 on August 30, 1916, Shackleton and the remainder of the crew finally set on their final voyage to home.

Authors Aims and Perspectives:

- Retell the true story of Shackleton and his crew aboard *Endurance* into the Antarctic
- Retold based on based on the accounts of journalist and surgeon, Dr. Macklin.



CONTENTS

- 1-
Summary & Authors Aims/
Perspectives
- 2-
Trait & Personality Approach,
Motives
- 3-
Skills, situational, Adaptive,
Approaches
- 4-
Role of Emotional Intelligence
- 5-
Team Leadership
- 6-
Role of Gender, Vocabulary
and Memorable Quotes.
- 7-
Discussion Recommended
Reading

LINKS TO LEADERSHIP

The Trait Approach

Some researchers believe that certain people are born with special traits that make them great leaders. According to this approach, as described by Northouse (2016), there are many traits, which Shackleton portrayed, which contributed to his abilities as the leader of *Endurance*. Some of these major leadership traits include:

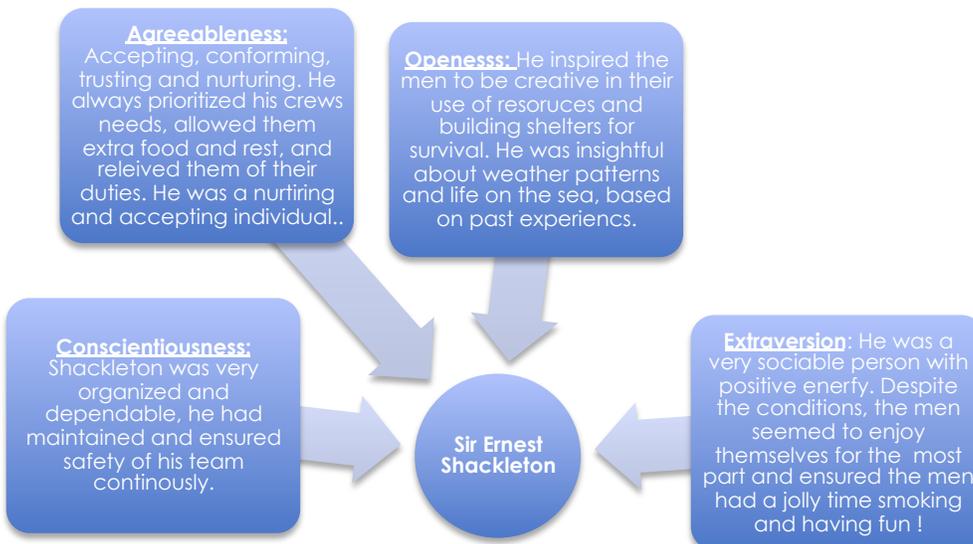


UNDERSTANDING SHACKLETONS MOTIVES:

The motives behind Shackleton's expedition are reflective of his personality and traits. Shackleton himself suggested, "far from the sentimental point of view, it is the last great Polar expedition". Shackleton's aspiration to accomplish what no one had accomplished yet. Lansing describes Shackleton as an explorer – self-reliant and romantic and purposeful. This demonstrates his self-confidence as well as determination.

- ❖ **Intelligence:** Shackleton had a very strong verbal ability, which made it possible for him to communicate orders to his team. It also allowed him to effectively prepare and plan for the journey, as well as organize a speedy rescue mission. His perception and reasoning allowed him to make several decisions about rationing food, selecting ice floes to camp on, sailing and survival tactics and techniques. He was a highly educated and respectable individual.
- ❖ **Integrity:** Shackleton had demonstrated loyalty to his team. He did not differentiate himself from the rest of the group, and did not pick favorites and have special treatment for everyone. He was not deceptive to his team, and made only reasonable promises. He was not deceptive, and his team knew they could count on Shackleton. Whenever he ordered the team to get ready for nightly boat-watches, he always took the first shift and stepped in for men who were not feeling well.
- ❖ **Self Confidence** - Shackleton was definitely a very confident individual, and as quoted by his expedition mate, had a 'monstrous ego'. He had previously been knighted as Sir, after his contributions to the previous Antarctic expedition. He had a very high level of self-esteem and was confident that the trip would run smoothly. He felt that he could conquer anything, and wanted to be the one of a kind in his achievements. Shackleton always urged his team to continue, because he did not want to feel the sense of being defeated. Upon the sinking of *Endurance*, Macklin quote that no one suffered by this as much as did Shackleton.
- ❖ **Sociability**- This characteristic played one of the most important roles in Shackleton's abilities as a leader. As an individual, he was very friendly and outgoing, and took this into consideration when selecting his team. Throughout the journey, he maintained sensitivity to his team member's needs, regardless of the hardships they faced. He allowed his team to sleep and take turns from work; he allotted extra provisions, and allowed them to bring meaningful personal belongings to make the trip bearable such as instruments and their pets. Shackleton co-operated with his team, and little conflict developed on the trip. He prioritized the well-being (physical and mental), of his team, above all else.
- ❖ **Determination:** Shackleton's adventurous spirit went hand in hand with his strong initiative, persistence, dominance and drive. Shackleton initiated the idea of this journey, though no one had done it before. Shackleton demonstrated persistence and drives to survive and to maintain efforts to keep the team alive. Where necessary, Shackleton stepped up to direct his team members to safety.
- ❖ **Other traits that Shackleton exhibited include:** Problem Solving, Motivation, Tolerance, alertness, and responsibility.

The Role of Personality



“ This indomitable self-confidence of Shackleton's took the form of optimism. And it worked in two ways: it set men's souls on fire, as Macklin said, just to be in his presence was an experience. It was what made Shackleton a great leader” (pg. 129)

Figure 1. Representation of Ernest Shackleton's Personality factors which contribute to his leadership abilities. Goldberg designed this approach in 1990-, (Northouse, 2016)

The Skill Approach

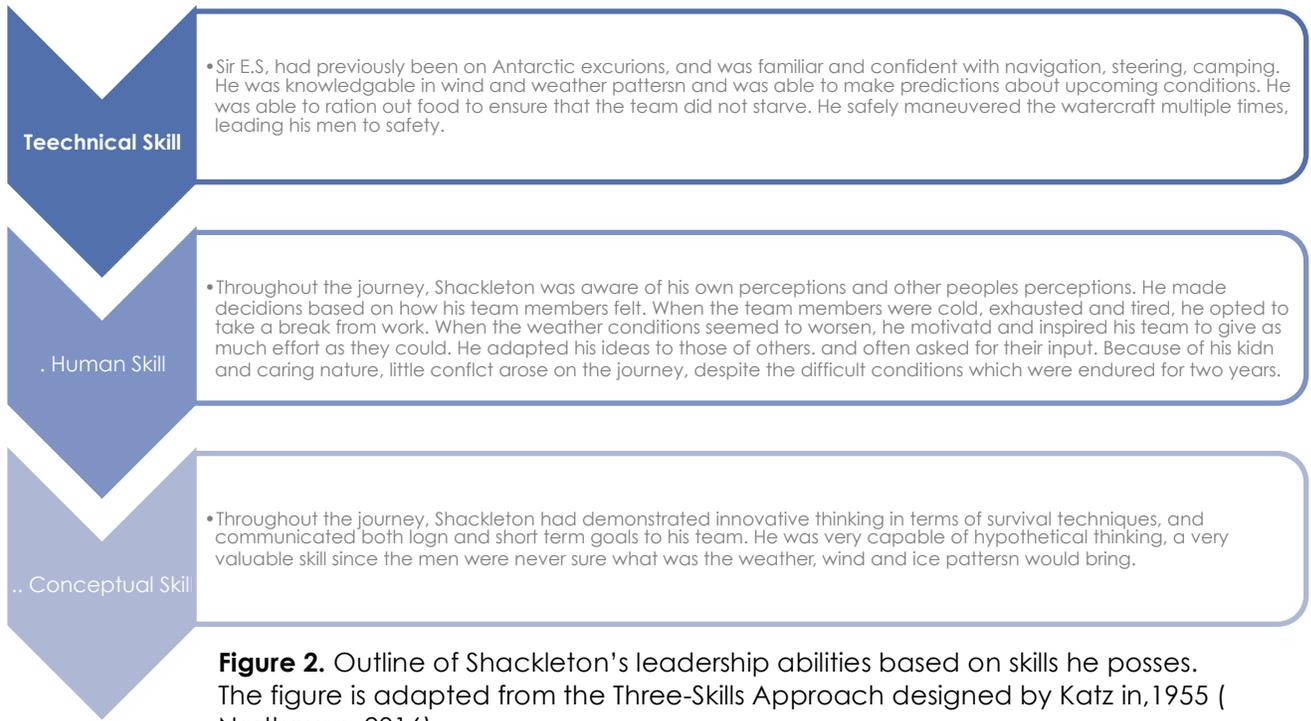


Figure 2. Outline of Shackleton's leadership abilities based on skills he possesses. The figure is adapted from the Three-Skills Approach designed by Katz in, 1955 (Northouse, 2016).

Situational Approach

Throughout his expedition, Shackleton demonstrated several aspects of leadership, which could be understood through the situational approach. Hersey and Blanchard first developed this approach in 1969 (Northouse, 2016). Through this perspective, effective leaders must adapt to the demands of their followers and the environmental conditions. For Shackleton, this meant catering to the needs of twenty men stranded in the chilling Arctic temperatures for over two years. Throughout the journey, Shackleton's level of directive and support depended on the state of his men. At the start of the journey, Shackleton was less directive of a leader, since his entire team was very well prepared and up to date with what was happening, qualified for the trip, and everyone had responsibilities which they were more than eager to carry out. Each man was capable of carrying out their own responsibilities, and the comfortable conditions left them energized. As conditions worsened and men grew tired and ill, and chances of surviving grew slimmer, Shackleton adopted a more directive approach. He was more knowledgeable in the immediate actions that had to be taken to reduce risk of death, and therefore his team complied gratefully. Regardless of his directness, Shackleton always maintained a high level of supportiveness. Shackleton never failed to acknowledge each of his team members for their daily contributions.

"There can be little doubt that Shackleton's, in his day was my was an extraordinary leader of men" (pg. 15)

Adaptive Leadership

In this approach, leaders focus on encouraging people to adapt and to deal with challenges and changes (Northouse, 2016). After *Endurance* had initially become stranded on the ice floes, Shackleton had to convince his group of explorers to remain calm, and accept the fact that their journey will be significantly longer, and with unpredictable conditions. Despite this, Lansing writes that the men remained very cheerful and happy. In a different situation, had to motivate his team to endure the challenges associated with living on a drifting ice floe for an unknown period of time. The men endured multiple challenges including health problems caused by the frigid cold temperatures, poor diet, and lack of sanitation/hygiene, the darkness of the polar climates, and growing abscesses, increasing pains, illnesses caused by the exposure to extreme temperatures and wet conditions. Alternatively, the men had faced many psychological challenges including being away from their families, the uncertainties of their fate, and having to let go of very strong emotional attachments- shooting their own cats and dogs in order to survive. Even then, the men remained cheerful and happy, and hopeful and many of the men dedicated as they were when they first stepped aboard *Endurance*. Through his own positive and lighthearted nature,



THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Shackleton rose **above and beyond** the necessary expectations he was required to fulfill as a team leader on the voyage. Shackleton not only focused on providing his men with the physiological needs required to survive the journey, but also supported the needs required for their mental well being. Based on **Figure 1**, Shackleton meets many needs reflected by Maslow's Hierarchy.

1. Shackleton satisfied the groups physiological needs by calculating how many provisions would be needed. Whenever possible, Shackleton ordered hunting crews to retrieve seals and penguins. He also encouraged men to rest and sleep, and served them warm beverages and food between work shifts. On several instances, Shackleton woke up early to cook milk for the rest of his team and deliver it to them in their tents.
2. Shackleton always prioritized his men's safety, as opposed to the success of the original goals of the adventure. He made decisions that would ensure the safety of all of the men. He himself slept very little compared to the other men, and took responsibility for ensuring their arrival on land.
3. Shackleton built up the self-esteem of all of the men, because he never singled out or treated any of them differently. There was no favoritism,.
4. By joining this expedition, many of the crewmembers left behind their families, and loved ones. To compensate for this lacking sense of family, he allowed the men to bond together by drinking, smoking and playing games. The men were allowed to bring their pet companions have beaks to play football and have dog races, and spent many nights dancing and singing. Since the only thing that the men had was each other, they grew to be a very bonded group . From rescuing each other from sea lions or from falling through the cracks in floes, the fen felt the support of their entire team.
5. Despite the daunting conditions of the Antarctic darkness, the men clai that they had, "In some ways they had come to knew themselves. better" (109). This ultimate test of personal strength and determination allowed each of the men to feel like a heroic explorer.

Emotional Intelligence refers to our emotions (affective domain) and thinking (cognitive domain), and their interplay. It is the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions and to effectively manage emotions with oneself and in relationship with others. (Northouse, 2016).



Figure 3. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

“...Yet the men complained very little”
pg. 187



SURVIVAL AS A RESULT OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

Setting out to Antarctica, Shackleton was aware that he had to select a good group of men to accompany him to Antarctica. Though he has ridiculous methods of selecting individuals, his team was in the end- very compatible. Organizational teams are always comprised of individuals with an array of different tasks. On board *Endurance*, Shackleton ensured he had not only seamen, but also surgeons, physicists and biologists, photographer, motor expert as well as navigators and engineers. In selecting the individuals, Shackleton foresaw what skills would be necessary on the journey, and selected individuals accordingly. Out of thousands of application he was able to select only 27 men. Shackleton team based- expedition proved to be highly effective, as the men endured and accomplished far more than they had originally set out to do. In order for his team to be successful, Shackleton allowed all individuals to contribute to the decisions that were made. For example, when they were hacking away at ice, Shackleton asked them to stop, but seeing their determination, he let them continue until their own discretion. This frequent Power allowed for individuals to feel part of the team. Many times, Shackleton asked individuals for their advice and support. For example, he often talked to W-man for help.

In this journey, the team used both shared and distributed leadership processes. For example, all men were expected to clean the ship regularly and maintain a clean urine canteen. However certain tasks were prescribed. For example, the writing dude always wrote. Shared leadership in this instance resulted in very little conflict on the journey, simply because all men contributed equally (given their physical state). Very interesting, the men were to be offered very little compensation, and it was more interested in monetary gain that drove them to participate on

“ Shackleton called all hands together “ pg. 113

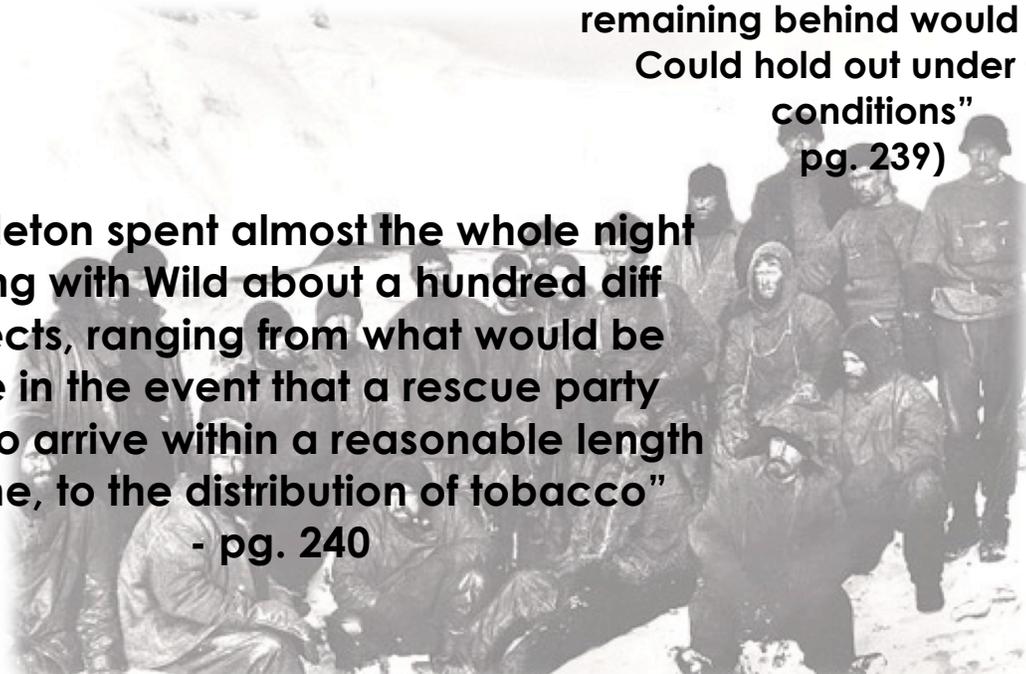
Shackleton spent almost the whole night talking with Wild about a hundred diff subjects, ranging from what would be done in the event that a rescue party failed to arrive within a reasonable length of time, to the distribution of tobacco” - pg. 240

“None of them could have felt their defeat so intensely as Shackleton, to whom the thought of quitting was abhorrent” (pg. 119)

Outcomes of Shackleton Team

- ✓ Greater Productivity- moving all the crap, killing all the animals, cooking
- ✓ Effective use of resources
- ✓ Better problem solving – ex. Shackleton would consult with W dude.
- ✓ Greater innovation and creativity- for example building a small shelter with the upside down boats.

Shackleton met secretly with Macklin to ask how long he thought the men who were remaining behind would survive. Could hold out under such conditions” (pg. 239)





Vocabulary Corner

Floe- A floating sheet of ice.

Gale - a strong air current.

Swashbuckling-

Knoll- a small hill or mound

Eddie – a current of air or water moving in a direction that is different from that of the main current.

Jib- a triangular sail extending from the head of the foremast to the bowsprit.

Mainmast- the second mast from forward in any ship having two or more masts.

Lugsail- an asymmetrical four-sided sail that is hoisted on a steeply inclined yard.

Mizzen- the mast aft of a ship's mainmast.

Gender and the Expedition

Interestingly enough, the entire team of individuals that travelled to Antarctica was all males. It has been documented that of the five thousand applicants, which Shackleton had received, three had been women, but none were selected. Though no further commentary is made on why the female candidates were not suitable for the expedition, several speculations can be made. At the time of the expedition (1914-1915), a majority of women had adopted stereotypical female domestic and child raising roles. Few women had an education or careers. Surely, domestic responsibilities as well as the lack of highly skilled training likely contributed to the low turn in female applications (human capital). During this time of exploration, the most notable explorers mainly consisted of men as women were not seen as being fit or having the predisposition to face such challenges and circumstances. Shackleton may have feared the susceptibility of women to the hard, cold conditions of the Antarctic voyage.

Memorable Quotes

"It was at this moment Shackleton...showed one of his sparks of real greatness. He did not...show...the slightest sign of disappointment. He told us simply and calmly that we would have to spend the winter in the pack."

-Dr. Macklin

"Shackleton instructed all of the men to turn in, saying that they would stand one-man watches over Caird. He agreed to take the first"

pg. 326

"I feel that another expedition is useless, unless it crosses the continent"
-Shackleton

"It is a battle against a tireless enemy in which man never actually wins; the most that he can hope for is not to be defeated"

pg. 278

"He [Shackleton] felt that he had gotten them into their situation, and it was his responsibility to get them out" - pg. 91

'fortitudine vincimus'

Discussion Questions

1. Identify any leadership challenges, which Shackleton may have faced? How did he approach them? Did he make good or bad decisions, what were the outcomes of his decisions?
2. Identify situations where members of the expedition served as leaders.
3. What aspects of Shackleton's leadership were the most effective?
4. In hindsight, how could the expedition have better prepared for their journey to the Antarctic?
5. What were some of the most difficult decisions that Shackleton had to make? What strategies did he use to weight options and determine solutions?
6. What aspects of his leadership approach could Shackleton have done differently?
7. What takeaway leadership messages can you take from this book?



Recommendations for Future Readings:

- ❖ **Adrift: Seventy-Six Days Lost at Sea** by Steven Callahan
- ❖ **The Climb: Tragic Ambitions on Everest** – Anatoli Boukreev, G Weston DeWalt
 - ❖ **Astoria**- Peter Stark
 - ❖ **Into Thin Air** – John Krakauer
 - ❖ **Into the Wild**- John Krakauer

Critical Evaluation



Overall, Lansing does a stellar work of art in describing the flow of the events that led up to and preceded the departure of Shackleton and his team to Antarctica. The book is written in an easily understandable language. His depictions and use of quotations, allows readers to visualize the conditions to which the men have been subjected to the use of photograph helps to vision the ship and the environmental conditions, which were endured. Shackleton maintains reader suspense, and never fails to have the adrenaline kick in to the readers. A glossary of ocean/ship specific vocabulary would make an excellent addition to this book.

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