The Heights of Inspiration

Dynamic, effective leaders have the keen ability to inspire others with a vision of where they are going and how to get there. They are able to articulate and communicate their visions through vivid metaphors with the power to draw out the best in people and bring them together to work for common goals. Among the most inspirational of all such metaphors are those based on the evocative symbolism of mountains. People from cultures throughout the world look up to the heights of soaring peaks as sources of inspiration, renewal, wisdom, power, identity, and life, as well as symbols of ultimate challenges. As expressions of humanity's highest and deepest values and aspirations, mountains have inspired some of the greatest achievements of sages, poets, artists, climbers, and leaders - from Moses on Mount Sinai to Sir Edmund Hillary on Mount Everest. The following chapter uses mountains of particular importance and renown to millions of people around the world as paradigmatic metaphors for inspiring us to develop the full range of our capacities for reaching the heights of leadership and teamwork.

- Edwin Bernbaum, Berkeley, December 7, 2006

Lessons from the Top:
Mount Fuji, Mount Sinai and Other Peak Paradigms
By Edwin Bernbaum

Chapter 7 of *Upward Bound:*
Nine Original Accounts of How Business Leaders Reached Their Summits
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"As CEO, I'm going to quarterback this team to victory – we're going to crush the competition!" "This division is going to bring home the gold for the shareholders in the fourth quarter." We've all heard these rousing statements before -- there's nothing like a crisp, vivid metaphor to put a common goal into perspective, especially in business. The prevailing source of these metaphors, thanks to television, is competitive sports such as football and baseball. For me, though, summiting a mountain peak is the clearest, most powerful and accurate symbol I know for attaining a goal or objective. A touchdown, a game-winning three-pointer, or a bases-clearing home run cheered by tens of thousands is nothing compared to standing on top of the world. Indeed, the mountain climbing metaphor has a number of advantages over many other sports metaphors used in business:

• Baseball, basketball, football — they all play on until someone loses, in overtimes or extra innings. On the mountain, however, everyone can win: all members of the expedition can reach the summit together. The mountain climbing metaphor has greater flexibility to model cooperative business ventures and win-win scenarios in which nobody has to lose. Mountain climbers can and often do compete with each other or the mountain — human nature gets exaggerated in extreme conditions, after all — but the best climbers also know that they don't have to compete and, in fact, often succeed most easily when they don't.

• Mountaineering expeditions emphasize team efforts even as they allow for individual initiative and leadership. No matter how close the group, ultimately, one or two members will have to go out in front to establish the route for others to follow, but they're doing it — or should be doing it — so everyone who is able has a chance to get to the top. As Ida San, the Japanese leader of a Mount Fuji society, puts it, "The most important thing in climbing is the inner strength to help each other, so that not just the strongest but all the members of the group reach the goal."

• Climbing takes place not on a neatly controlled playing surface but out in nature, an unpredictable setting where potentially fatal changes can sweep in out of nowhere. We've all been hit by unforeseen storms and avalanches in life: a sudden death in the family, a fatally flawed product, a court decision against our company that seemed to come out of the blue. Geologically exposed to the extremes of weather patterns, mountains prepare us for the unexpected – in business and life.

• And, of course, mountains are deeply inspiring in and of themselves. As the highest and most dramatic features of the landscape, mountains inevitably come to represent humankind's highest

and most central values and aspirations. Mount Sinai occupies a special place in the Bible as the imposing site where Moses received the Ten Commandments, the basis of law and ethics in Western civilization. The remote Himalayan peak of Mount Kailas, rising aloof above the Tibetan Plateau, directs the minds of millions of Hindus and Buddhists toward the utmost attainments of spiritual liberation. Expeditions to Mount Everest stand out in Western culture as inspiring models of the initiative and determination needed to overcome seemingly impossible obstacles.

Over the past five years, Mike Useem and I have been leading mountain seminars for graduates of the Wharton MBA Program for Executives and other Wharton programs. Our search for peak paradigms — metaphors that evoke a whole way of looking at some critical aspect of leadership and teamwork — led us to the Himalayas and other mountains. These spectacular natural settings are some of the best environments for teaching effective lessons about leading successful organizations in today's challenging world of diversity and change.

Every mountain has definable characteristics that distinguish it from other mountains, both physically and culturally: Mount Everest is singled out as the highest peak in the world, Mount Kailas is revered as the center of the universe – and so on. Each of the following peak paradigms that we use in our programs exemplifies a different aspect of leadership and teamwork that we need to cultivate to lead successfully.

Mount Everest: Setting and Attaining Motivational Goals

It's no wonder that business corporations commonly hire Everest climbers to give motivational speeches to their employees. As the world's highest peak, Everest places a premium on the leadership tasks of setting and attaining goals and building a team that makes full use of its skills and resources. Just as Everest stretches people to do more than they thought they could, so companies want to stretch their employees to help the organization reach the loftiest goals — to be number one in the field, to provide the best product or service in the industry group.

Two kinds of expeditions to Everest mirror two management models commonly used in business. The siege-style expedition moves large amounts of material slowly up the mountain, establishing and stocking many camps in a pyramid of dwindling supplies that fosters the summit attempts of a few climbers. This style emphasizes logistics, organizational teamwork, and a military command-and-control style of leadership. Ross Perot has run both Electronic Data Systems and Perot Systems along these siege-style lines, complete with military terminology, an abundance of retired military personnel, and a corporate structure in which the CEO is viewed as a general commanding his troops.

In the other kind of high-altitude mountaineering expedition, the alpine style, a small party of climbers goes quickly up the mountain in one push, using a minimal number of camps and traveling as lightly as possible. This style emphasizes speed, flexibility, and individual initiative, combined with a diffuse leadership spread over each member of the team. It corresponds in the business world to a small innovative company or a skunk-works operation within a larger organization. A classic example is the team that Steve Jobs set up apart from the rest of Apple to experiment with ideas and develop the new Macintosh computer.

A siege expedition allows climbers to weather storms and setbacks and have a surer, safer chance of reaching the summit. For this reason, the Royal Geographical Society at the last minute chose John Hunt, a military colonel, to lead the British expedition that made the first ascent of Everest in 1953. There's a price, though, for ratcheting down risk. Siege climbers lack the speed and flexibility to take advantage of short bursts of good weather and other fortuitous opportunities — important windows in the always changeable climate at the highest altitudes. The siege style suits a more mature corporation with a well-established product line that requires good logistics to sustain its operations.

Alpine climbers are good to go at almost any moment. The disadvantage of this lighter, more flexible style is that if the weather turns bad, the climbers will not have the resources to wait out a storm and reach the summit — and may not be able to get back down the mountain safely. The alpine style of mountain climbing works well as a model for entrepreneurial leadership in starting a company, especially one that that needs the quick response and flexibility needed to develop new products, but it doesn't work well over the long term.

The first time I went to Mount Everest, I climbed a neighbouring ridge for a view of the highest mountain on earth. From my perch at 18,000 feet, I could see, in the last golden light of the day, the West and Southeast ridges converging on the summit with its characteristic plume of snow veering off in the jet stream. The first American ascent of Everest in 1963 climbed both ridges, using an assault strategy that combined the siege and alpine styles in one expedition. While the major, siege-style effort focused on making sure an American would get up the already-climbed Southeast Ridge, a smaller party was given minimal resources to attempt the unclimbed West Ridge in alpine style. Because the leader, Norman Dyrenfurth, was successful in reconciling the divergent objectives and needs of the two teams, his expedition not only got the first American to the summit of Everest but also accomplished something of greater value to mountaineers — the first ascent of a new route.

One of the members of our first Wharton trek to Everest asked me to apply this combined model for a new corporate division he was heading up. He had been given a team and charged with finding a new approach for his applications hosting company, but his employees were encountering resistance from the company's larger division, which feared that any new approach would draw resources and business away from their established way of delivering software to clients. We used the American expedition to Everest to get his team members to think of themselves as entrepreneurial, alpine-style West Ridgers accessing new customers for the greater good of the company. They could then present themselves as extending, rather than threatening, the market share of the rest of the corporation, which used the standard, seige-style approach. As happens in mountain climbing, one side didn't have to lose for the other to win. Both could ascend to their own peaks by different methods, each contributing to the overall benefit of the company and its bottom line.

Mount Sinai: Calling, Service, and Transformation

Who is the most famous and influential mountain climber in Western history? The answer, I would maintain, is not Sir Edmund Hillary, the conqueror of Everest, as one might expect, but

the Biblical prophet Moses. The revelation and covenant made on Mount Sinai are considered the most important event in traditional Jewish history, while the Ten Commandments Moses brought down from the summit form the basis of law and ethics in Western civilization. Did it actually happen? That's for scholars and faith to decide, but true or metaphorical, the story of Moses's ascent has had an enormous influence on billions of people over the centuries.

In the Biblical account, Moses climbs Mount Sinai in response to a call in order to receive something of benefit for others – the first five books of the Bible and the Ten Commandments. Upon hearing the directives of God on the heights of the mountains, Moses comes down, his face transfigured with light, to transform his people into "a nation of priests."

When I climbed Mount Sinai, I was struck by the brilliant, crystalline light shining on the sun-scoured rocks of the desert summit. In that hauntingly translucent setting, I could easily see how the experience of the mountain might alter a person's perceptions of reality, revealing a higher clarity and meaning that one would then feel compelled to share with others. Only a rare few of us in history are summoned to anything approaching Moses' calling, but Mount Sinai still shows us how a leader can transform people and organizations by fostering a sense of vocation and a commitment to service.

Roy Vagelos, the CEO of Merck, was faced with what might have seemed a crippling dilemma to someone with less of a commitment to service. By serendipity, one of his research teams had developed a new drug, Mectizan, that could cure the scourge of river blindness for millions of Africans. The problem was that those who would benefit from the drug were among the world's poorest people, utterly incapable of paying for the medication. Vagelos agreed with his director of clinical research that supplying Metzican to the Africans was a matter of professional calling. Although this leadership decision cost the corporation in the short term, it gave Merck priceless publicity and attracted the best scientists in the field to come work for a company whose values they respected. This influx of highly motivated talent transformed the research department and led to the development of new products that more than made up for the loss of revenue incurred by giving Mectizan away for free.

Appealing to a sense of vocation gives meaning to work and helps to draw out the best in individuals and organizations. When people dedicate themselves to something deeper and more meaningful than the bottom line, they come out of the experience enriched with fuller and deeper lives. They also discover resources and skills they didn't know they had. The dedication of companies such as Ben and Jerry's and Tom's of Maine to quality and service has transformed them into leaders of their industries.

As participants on our Wharton treks are quick to point out, CEOs of publicly owned companies have a primary responsibility to their shareholders. Appealing to higher values at the expense of the bottom line requires extraordinary leadership, but such courage can often produce even greater rewards. Moses, after all, didn't do a bad job for the people he was called to lead.

Hua Shan: Finding Inclusive Solutions, Empowering Others

With sheer walls of polished granite meeting in sharp ridges and delicate peaks, Hua Shan is one of the most spectacular sacred mountains in China. The shaded and sunlit sides of this dramatic mountain are intimately tied to a concept that underlies almost all systems of Chinese thought — the idea of complementary opposites, such as dark and light, cold and hot, female and male. Indeed, Yin-yang, the Chinese term for these opposites, originally referred to the shaded and sunlit slopes of a mountain, which depends on both sides for its existence. Take away either one and the mountain ceases to be.

On our treks, we use Hua Shan to illustrate a powerful way to resolve or manage conflicts: Look for a fuller, more inclusive picture that transforms conflicting views into complementary opposites — different sides of a greater whole. A story told me by a doctor working on a Navajo reservation demonstrates how to put this principle into practice. An elderly woman who was going into a medical clinic overnight for a routine checkup wanted her traditional medicine man with her. She insisted that without him she would die. The doctor and her husband refused, saying it was superstitious and unnecessary. She didn't need the medicine man; Western medicine was better. The woman died the next morning. "Since then," the doctor said, "I've always let the medicine men come and work with me." Instead of insisting that modern scientific medicine was the only way to treat people, he learned through painful experience to view traditional Navajo medicine as another side of a fuller treatment focused on the greater good of what was best for his Native American patients.

Hua Shan was once a favorite haunt of Taoist hermits, who would meditate in caves carved into the vertical faces of the mountain and in temples perched on the crests of narrow ridges. They sought to follow the teachings of Lao Tse, the 6th century B.C. sage and founder of Taoism, one of the three principal religious and philosophical traditions of China, along with Buddhism and Confucianism. The *Tao te Ching* or "Way of Life" — the principal text of Taoism, composed by Lao Tse — is basically a leadership manual for wise rulers. It includes a powerful lesson on the value of drawing attention away from yourself and empowering others so that when the goal you have set is accomplished, they will feel they have done it themselves.

Asian cultures tend to value this style of leadership – empowering others while minimizing one's own profile – more than Western countries, where the cult of the CEO has become so prominent. But on our treks we find time and again that American executives, exposed to examples of quiet empowerment, come away deeply impressed by its ability to accomplish complicated goals. Everest trekkers, for example, routinely single out Ang Jangbu, the leader of our large Sherpa staff, for his low-key, invisible style of leadership in which, as one person put it, "You never see him doing anything, but everything gets done."

This kind of leadership also lies behind the famous Hewlett-Packard style of "management by wandering around," in which managers give their subordinates free rein and wander around unobtrusively to provide encouragement and keep tabs on what is happening. In fact, on our first leadership trek to Everest, we had an executive from Hewlett-Packard who was assigned the task of running back and forth along the trail to make sure everyone was keeping together to accomplish a particular group task. At the end of the day, he commented that it felt exactly like managing by wandering around at his corporate office back home.

Mount Kailas: Establishing Core Values, Ideas, and Competencies

Nearly a billion Asians from different cultures and religions revere the remote Tibetan peak of Mount Kailas as the center of the universe. Buddhist and Hindu pilgrims come thousands of miles not to climb the mountain, but to pay respect by walking around it. For them and for many others in Asia, the peak functions as a cosmic axis that unifies the world and gives it meaning and order. From its location at a high point of the Tibetan Plateau, four rivers — among them the Ganges — flow out to the four directions of the compass, providing hundreds of millions of people with the water that sustains their lives and economies.

Mount Kailas illustrates the need for a leader to establish and promote a central value, idea, or competency that can hold an organization together and make sense of what it does. Walt Disney Productions organizes all its operations at Disneyland around a drama metaphor. Out-front workers are called "cast members." Those who work directly with the public are "on stage." The personnel department is referred to as "casting." The metaphor helps everyone see how the different divisions of Walt Disney relate to each other and the overall mission of "putting on a show." It also promotes the company's central value of providing service by having employees treat customers as "guests."

The management at Sony realized that the company's core competency lay not in manufacturing transistorized pocket radios, its first product, but in miniaturization. They were then able to identify and develop many different, innovative products that could make use of their basic skill in making miniature components. In effect, Sony was also using the Kailas model: With the center in place, new products and services could flow like the rivers issuing from the sides of the mountain. Recognizing and making use of its core competency enabled Sony to branch out into related areas, rather than continue with one successful product, and played a key role in helping the company to survive and expand over the long term.

In 1991 I took the long journey across the Tibetan Plateau and followed the traditional pilgrimage route around Mount Kailas. As we circled the peak in the company of Tibetan and Indian pilgrims, it gradually revealed its different sides, each with its own distinctive character. From the south, where we started, Kailas took the form of a white dome of polished snow set on a pedestal of rock, eliciting a smooth sense of tranquility. From the north, halfway through the circuit, it shot up in a fierce, austere face of ice-streaked rock, soaring 6,000 feet above its wind-swept base. The high point of the route, the Drolma la or "Pass of the Savioress," looked out on a vast landscape of peaks and ridges that evoked a sense of mystery and openness. At the end of the three-day pilgrimage, I felt that I had come to know the mountain and its surroundings in a much fuller and deeper way than if I had simply climbed straight to the top.

Thus it is with any organization. The more we view its central competencies and values from all sides, the more we can unlock the different possibilities inherent in each of them. Some companies institutionalize this process by setting aside regular times for employees of widely varying competencies, responsibilities, and knowledge to brainstorm ideas for new products and services.

Mount Fuji: Building Teamwork, Identity and Stability

No mountain is more closely identified with a nation and the spirit of its people than Mount Fuji, the highest peak in Japan. The elegant volcano is both a symbol of the quest for beauty and simplicity that lies at the heart of Japanese culture and a rallying point for national pride. Among major corporations, only perhaps Prudential gets to claim such a deep association with a mountain of its own — the company's long-time Rock of Gibraltar logo. Other companies, though, can and should profit from the lessons of Mount Fuji.

An evocative corporate symbol, name, or slogan can bring people together and make them feel part of a team with a clearly defined mission and a shared set of values. It also can provide the public with a memorable image of what an organization stands for. Symbols of corporate identity and the associations they evoke are especially useful for positioning a company and selling its products and services.

Participants in the Wharton treks get a direct experience of how symbols can build teamwork and establish corporate identity. A hiking exercise divides them into small teams with rotating leadership. The first leader of each team works with his members to come up with a group theme, the second a name that expresses that theme, the third a motto or slogan, and the fourth a logo. One team decided they wanted to walk slowly so they named themselves the Funeral Procession and came up with the memorable slogan, "Arrive alive!"

When trek members gather at the end of the day to discuss their experiences, they inevitably turn to the business world for comparisons. Pondering Mount Fuji and all it stands for, one participant noted that Hewlett Packard spent $1 million to come up with an evocative name for its new spin-off company, Agilent, with its implied associations of agility in developing innovative products. Prudential's long and extremely effective use of its logo to elicit brand recognition and convey a sense of dependability is invariably mentioned, too. Everyone knows you can trust in the "Rock."

Often, in fact, we'll use the Rock of Gibraltar to launch us into another aspect of the Fuji paradigm. Perhaps the most famous work of Japanese art outside the country, the block print "Great Wave off Kanagawa" by Hokusai, shows Fuji as the still point in the midst of swirling waves about to overwhelm a boatload of frightened people. To help their organizations survive the turbulence of the marketplace, leaders need to seek equivalent points of stability. Symbols and ideas of corporate identity that reflect enduring values and competencies can help hold corporations together over the long term and provide a solid base for managing change and innovation. A wise leader also knows that he or she needs to look beyond immediate objectives and use their attainment to build enduring, committed teams that will ensure future success.

Once on my way back from a trek in the Himalayas, I stopped in Japan to see Fuji. It was hidden in clouds, as usual, and yet even in the mist, I could feel the mountain's presence, looming invisibly over the Japanese landscape. As I stood there, I was reminded of a Haiku by Basho, one of Japan's most famous poets:

> *Delightful, in a way,*

to miss seeing Mount Fuji
In the misty rain.

The central role of Mount Fuji as a symbol of Japanese culture makes it a tangible reality, whether we see it or not. A leader who knows how to build and use a well-established identity for his or her organization makes it a continual presence, even when not noticed, bringing people together and giving them a sure sense of purpose and direction.

The Mountain Journey: Dealing with Down Times, Leading for the Long Term

Although each mountain has its own lessons to impart, the trek itself is a valuable teacher – after all, its peaks and valleys mirror those in the business world. Halfway through the Wharton Everest trek, we reach our high point — the summit of an 18,000-foot peak beneath Mount Everest. Mike and I always remark, as we all stand transfixed by the sight, that we can't stay long because the most dangerous part of the climb lies ahead: the descent. Tired and no longer focused on a goal, in a hurry to get down, we are most apt to slip and fall. We also note that we still have half the journey ahead of us — a succession of ridges and valleys to cross with many challenges and experiences along the way. Until we're safely down, we won't know whether the trek has succeeded or not.

Mike and I use the descent to focus attention on the critical period following a major business success. Too many leaders succumb to over-confidence, certain they can stand on their summits of achievement forever. As they begin to come down — pulled by the gravity of business cycles, market changes, and simple fluctuating luck — depression and fatigue often replace feelings of euphoria. No longer driven by the vision of a goal ahead of them, many leaders tend to lose focus and make mistakes. The fall of Enron after its rapid successes in the energy market is a spectacular example of the consequences of pride and carelessness. The leadership overextended the company and failed to plan for the slowdowns and setbacks that were sure to follow. Enron's spectacular success made them feel they could get away with questionable —even illegal — business practices. In the end, everyone suffered, from CEO to data clerks and shareholders.

Whether you choose an alpine or siege-style approach, the most rigorous mountain climbing involves dreary days of building supply lines and maddening waits for the weather to break, punctuated by brief but glorious moments when everything is in place and the terrain just seems to glide by. So it is in the lives of individuals and corporations. The critical test of leadership is how one deals with the long, down times between the high moments of achievement. Can we recognize what those times have to offer and use them to build more robust, enduring organizations? Aaron Feuerstein, the CEO of Maiden Mills Industries, faced just such a long, dark time when his main factory for producing the popular Polartec fleece burned down. Rather than lay off employees while he struggled to rebuild the company, Feurstein kept his workers on the job and rebuilt the company around them. This decision won him both national acclaim and the loyalty of a dedicated team whose support helped Maiden Mills survive a subsequent period of bankruptcy.

The metaphor of trekking through the Himalayas adds a horizontal dimension to our consideration of organizational growth. How do our goals and the values we develop fit together as high points of a longer, fuller journey? Do we have a vision of where we are going that can guide and sustain us as we traverse the peaks and valleys that lie ahead? A key ingredient for negotiating the long-term journey will be the flexibility to change and grow. In our group discussion on the trail, one participant realized that the out-front, hands-on style of leadership that he had used to start his company no longer worked: With the growth and maturation of his corporation, he needed to move back and delegate more responsibility — a difficult transition for him to make and one that has stymied the growth and long-term prospects of many organizations. Finally realizing that he could no longer immerse himself in day-to-day details, he learned to let others take over tasks he had thought only he could do and focus instead on his new role of directing the overall course and operations of the company.

Beyond the Summit: Bringing Home the Lessons of Success and Failure

John Muir, the American environmentalist who founded the Sierra Club and played a major role in establishing Yosemite National Park, once wrote:

> *Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.*

The late Supreme Court Justice and outdoorsman William O. Douglas saw mountains as a source of inspiration for developing national character:

> *A people who climb the ridges and sleep under the stars in high mountain meadows, who enter the forest and scale peaks, who explore glaciers and walk ridges buried deep in snow -- these people will give their country some of the indomitable spirit of the mountains.*

We all need those good tidings, a renewal within ourselves of that indomitable spirit. One participant in our Wharton treks, the CEO of a software firm, sat alongside an Everest trail and told us that when he has a problem he can't solve at work, he goes off into the mountains. It's there, he said, among the peaks and rock faces and whistling winds, that the solution comes to him, almost as if it had been waiting for him to arrive.

Leaders who want to enhance the productivity of their staffs need to give them the opportunity to clear their minds so they can come up with fresh approaches to seemingly intractable problems. Perhaps the answer is as simple as encouraging a few minutes of meditation. Perhaps it's a team meeting at some coastal retreat. Winston Churchill famously relaxed from the pressures of governing by taking his paints and easel and finding a quiet spot in the countryside. Mountains aren't the only place to find the peace of mind that can recharge our batteries and renew our determination and vision. But mountains, I believe, are almost unique in the lessons they have to teach.

We know from mountains that we cannot remain long on the summits of success and that the elation we feel there soon dissipates. Mount Everest is not only the world's tallest peak; it may be the world's best leveler of hubris. What can we bring back from those brief high points of achievement? Some of our other peak paradigms offer valuable pointers here. Mount Kailas shows us that in reaching the summit of a mountain we also reach its center – and the sense of centeredness we experience there, unlike momentary feelings of elation, is something we can bring down to the rest of our work and personal lives. Like the still point of Mount Fuji in the print by Hokusai, a leader who is centered has the inner stability needed to weather the conflicting demands of the workplace and respond to people and situations more objectively. Grounded in this way, he or she can more effectively apply the models of Hua Shan and Mount Sinai to resolving conflicts and empowering subordinates, as well as motivating others with a sense of calling and service to a higher, more meaningful purpose.

One way to develop centeredness and stability in the midst of work is to focus on the work itself — the process of climbing the mountain. One Wharton trekker realized, after many days of hiking, that his reluctance to take on leadership roles — a reluctance that was holding him back in his career — stemmed from his fear of making a wrong decision that could lead to failure. When he stopped worrying so much about the negative consequences of his actions and concentrated more on what he was doing at the moment, he found himself steadier and freer to make even tough calls. Back in the United States, he undertook a major career change, accepting a challenging leadership position at a riskier, more entrepreneurial company.

In fact, taking a positive attitude toward failure and seeing what we can learn from it encourages us to take the risks that we need to take to become dynamic, effective leaders. A leader who doesn't fail or make mistakes from time to time is not out front, leading the way toward innovative solutions. Effective leaders realize that they need to encourage their subordinates to take risks — and support them when they fail. As a 3COM executive puts it, "We tell our folks to make at least ten mistakes a day. If you're not making ten mistakes a day, you're not trying hard enough."

Failure itself can be a valuable source of insight and growth, as I learned when an enormous ice avalanche in the Himalayas swept me down a thousand feet and buried me in rock-hard snow. Although convinced I was going to die, I somehow managed to free myself and helped a companion get out. At the time the expedition seemed a total failure — I had lost everything and we had to turn back — but later reflection prompted me to think more deeply about why I was climbing mountains in the first place. Why do we do what we do in our lives? I concluded that at that stage I was seeking unusual experiences, and surviving the avalanche was certainly more unusual than reaching the summit! With that realization, I was able to view my apparent failure in a positive light and learn valuable lessons from it.

One of those lessons I recall most vividly didn't take long to arrive. In the middle of the night after the avalanche, I woke up, and for the first time on the expedition I felt like climbing the mountain for the sheer joy of it. We had to go down the next day, but over the years I have come to realize that when I have done things simply for the delight of doing them, I have done them best, have felt most fulfilled, and have had the most positive influence on others. A leader who

inspires others to take this kind of joy in their work frees them to fulfill themselves even as they fulfill their goals.