

### December 2013 Wisdom of Geese

The holiday season is upon us and it is time for our thoughts to turn to...geese. Yes, geese! Not for the joy they bring to the banquet table...but for what they teach us about effective teams. When it comes to teams, geese have discovered a few lessons we humans could learn. This holiday season, when you see geese migrating, flying along in a "V" formation, you might be interested in knowing what scientists have discovered about why they fly that way:

They have learned that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flapping in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

*Lesson #1: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.*

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly falls back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

*Lesson #2: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed where we want to go. We accept their help and give our help to others.*

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing and another goose flies to the point position. The good of the flock is of primary importance!

*Lesson #3: It pays to take turns doing difficult jobs and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each others' skills, capabilities, and unique arrangements of gifts, talents, or resources. Everyone benefits as a result!*

The geese flying in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

*Lesson #4: Let us be careful what we say when we honk from behind. We need to make sure our honking is encouraging and not discouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, production is greater.*

Finally, when a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese fall out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with their member goose until it is either able to fly or until it dies, and they launch out on their own to catch up with their group or join another formation.

*Lesson #5: If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.*

If we behave more like geese, we would have more effective, productive and contented teams.

*Adapted from the works of Milton Olson and Angeles Arrien*