

Leadership or one of the flock?

People would argue that sheep are neither intelligent nor clever. However, just like domestic animals, sheep do have their own type of intelligence... unlike some humans.

In Iceland, the sheep are native, North European and Short Tailed, brought by the Vikings in the years 1100-1200. Without them, Icelanders would not have survived throughout centuries of hardship on an isolated island just south of the Arctic Circle. Grazing in winter had to be utilised to the utmost. Somehow, a unique, small population of sheep developed, displaying outstanding abilities to help farmers and shepherds to manage the flock on pastures. These sheep are namely called Leadersheep.

Most of the Leadersheep are coloured and horned. They have a slender body conformation, long legs and bones, yet of lighter weight than other sheep in the flock because they have been selected for intelligence, not for their meat traits.

Leadersheep are graceful and prominent in the flock, with alertness in the eyes, normally going first out of the sheep-house, looking around in all directions, watching if there are any dangers insight and then walking in front of the flock when driven to or from pasture. There are many stories on record about their ability to sense or forecast changes in the weather, even refusing to leave the sheep-house before a major snowstorm. One wonders how better use could be made of such genes in the future. Can we pass these genes on to small business owners?

Your business practices need to lead from the front. If your business is static, if your website is old and hasn't been updated since its launch in 2007,

its time to get into 2010 and be a Leadersheep. Act like a leader, not just in your business or brand offering, but also in your actions. Be the first in something that your competition haven't thought of yet. Small business needs to get out of its comfort zone when it comes to what they do and communicating what they do. It doesn't mean big spend, it just means taking some time to think about it. This applies to any business; accountants, architects or pet detectives!! With almost 2 million small businesses in Australia, people need to be innovative. Don't whinge that things aren't going well if you're doing the same thing over and over again.

Ansell have done it great with Australia's Thinnest Condom, namely called, Zero. Yes, they're not small business, but the same rules apply. Their billboards have been plastered around the place in the past month, tis the season I suppose. Now that's taking a Leadersheep role. It doesn't cannibalise the rest of their range, it just adds to their role as leaders in the contraceptive market. Flavoured, thin, long, short, they have you covered. Each has its own brand name, each can be marketed individually without any confusion. They are the leaders. Being first and being innovative generates talk, generates PR, getting others to talk about your small business is much more valuable than you telling everyone how good you are.

Small businesses have the opportunity to be first in something they do. They may have plenty of competition across the city, but what about across their suburb. No doubt there's plenty of hair salons in one suburb. Do any of them do anything differently or can they be first in something? New hair treatment technology, hair care, new ways to straighten it, men only, women only, kids only??

All of these are first or show specialisation, something that generates talk through the community.

Leadersheep are great at predicting the future. We need to steal their genes. As business owners, we need to be looking at what people will be attracted to and what will generate attention. There is no cost for people talking about your new brand or business. Some of the biggest brands have been built on no spend whatsoever due to their uniqueness and talkability (that's PR public relations - for the cool people reading this article).

Be a leader, be unique and learn to read the play. Just like the Leadersheep, know when to go out of the sheep-house and when to stay in. You'll need more than Ansell's help to keep you protected from the harsh conditions of business.

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a quick one on... leadership

- As consumers, we always feel comfortable and reassured when dealing with a leading brand.
- Whether it's a low or high price, brands are still leading within their category.
- Chartered Accountants positioning over the past couple of years is proudly promoting their leadership. Number 1 in numbers.
- Act like a leader in your service and the way your business behaves.
- Be a leader in business rather than a follower.
- Make it extremely difficult for competition to enter your market category.
- Stay number 1.

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