



# Lessons in Extreme Leadership

MAY 2023 ISSUE NO. 14

PERSOLKELLY Consulting Group hosted an interactive workshop led by Boris Groysberg, professor of business administration in the Organisational Behavior unit at the Harvard Business School.

On Friday, May 19, 2023, PERSOLKELLY Consulting Group held a virtual workshop titled "Lessons in Extreme Leadership." The workshop was led by Professor Boris Groysberg from Harvard Business School and attended by over 20 PERSOLKELLY ALPS Diamond business leaders across the Asia Pacific region. This session provided valuable insights, and for those unable to join, we have summarised the key takeaways here. We hope this summary is useful to both those who were able to participate and those who missed out.

# Background of the Workshop

During 2023, business leaders worldwide face unparalleled challenges. These challenges include economic uncertainties, the risk of global recession, geopolitical tensions, disruptions in supply chains, post-COVID workforce challenges, regulatory hurdles, and technological disruption. Leaders have a critical responsibility to steer their organisations through these challenges and emerge stronger.

The workshop aimed to help PERSOLKELLY ALPS Diamond business leaders understand how leaders can succeed in even the most extremely challenging circumstances. Valuable lessons were illustrated by reviewing the different approaches taken by two leaders racing to be the first to reach the South Pole in 1911.

# Introduction of the Speaker



The interactive workshop was led by Boris Groysberg, Richard P. Chapman Professor of Business School at Harvard Business School. Professor Groysberg teaches courses on talent management and leadership in the school's MBA and Executive Education programs. He has won numerous awards for his research, which focuses on the challenge of managing human capital at small and large organisations worldwide. His work focuses on how firms can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage by engaging employees in the implementation of business strategy.



# Key Takeaways:

The 1911 race to the South Pole between Robert Falcon Scott and Roald Amundsen is a fascinating historical event that offers valuable lessons for business leaders. Scott and Amundsen illustrate classic examples of how different approaches to planning and execution can lead to very different results. Scott's team was well-funded and well-equipped but made several critical mistakes that ultimately cost them their lives. On the other hand, Amundsen's team was smaller and less well-funded, but they were much better prepared and executed their plans more effectively.

Here are some of the most important lessons that can be derived from their experiences:

## **Preparation and planning are crucial:**

Amundsen meticulously prepared for the expedition, studying the terrain, and climate, and gathering insights from local indigenous people. He planned his journey meticulously, including using sledge dogs to navigate the icy terrain. Business leaders should emphasise the importance of thorough preparation and strategic planning before embarking on any endeavor.

## **Focus on expertise and innovation:**

Amundsen recognised the importance of leveraging expert knowledge and adopting innovative strategies. He utilised sledge dogs instead of relying solely on humans, which proved more efficient in navigating the Antarctic terrain. Similarly, in business, leaders should embrace expertise, encourage innovation, and stay updated with the latest trends and technologies relevant to their industry.

## **Adaptability and flexibility:**

Both Scott and Amundsen faced unexpected challenges during their expeditions. However, Amundsen demonstrated greater adaptability by adjusting his plans and leveraging his resources accordingly. In contrast, Scott adhered rigidly to his initial plans, leading to disastrous consequences. Business leaders should cultivate adaptability and flexibility to respond effectively to changing market conditions and unexpected challenges.



### **Team dynamics and leadership:**

The success of Amundsen's team was attributed to his strong leadership, clear communication, and effective team dynamics. He ensured that each team member had defined roles and responsibilities, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration. Business leaders should focus on building cohesive teams, providing clear guidance, and fostering a positive work culture that encourages teamwork, trust, and effective communication.



### **Focus on efficiency and resource management:**

Amundsen's expedition prioritised efficiency and resource management. He emphasised conserving energy, optimising supplies, and establishing depots along the route to ensure a steady supply of provisions. Business leaders should similarly emphasise efficient resource allocation, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability to maximise productivity and long-term success.



### **Continuous learning and improvement:**

Amundsen embraced a learning mindset, continuously adapting and improving his strategies based on feedback and experiences. He learned from the expertise of others and sought to refine his techniques throughout the expedition. Business leaders should encourage a culture of continuous learning and improvement within their organisations, promoting innovation, and fostering an environment that values feedback and growth.



### **Risk assessment and decision-making:**

Amundsen conducted a thorough risk assessment, recognising the dangers and challenges involved in the Antarctic expedition. He made calculated decisions based on the available information and prioritised the safety and success of his team. Business leaders should similarly evaluate risks, make informed decisions, and strike a balance between calculated risks and potential rewards.

# About Us

PERSOLKELLY Consulting is a leading global human resource consulting and professional services company which proudly spans across the Asia-Pacific region. We are a subsidiary formed by the joint venture of PERSOL Group and Kelly Services Inc., now one of the largest recruitment companies in APAC. Formerly branded as BTI Consultants in Asia and Intelligence SMC in Hong Kong, PERSOLKELLY Consulting is built upon a rich legacy of expert talent development, HR management advisory, organisational effectiveness, and insights-driven HR solutions. With our single focus on fulfilling our clients' needs, we use innovative practices to empower both individuals and enterprises to achieve their full potential. At PERSOLKELLY Consulting, we believe in shaping a future workforce that is able to "Work and Smile".

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