



## Review Article

### Book Review: The Way of The Shepherd

\*<sup>1</sup>Jovencio M. Milan Jr., <sup>2</sup>Mylene C. Milan

#### About Article

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##### About Author

<sup>1</sup> College of Community Health and Allied Medical Sciences, Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-South La Union Campus, Agoo, La Union, Philippines

<sup>2</sup> College of Arts and Sciences, Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-South La Union Campus, Agoo, La Union, Philippines

Contact @ Jovencio M. Milan Jr.  
[jjrmilan@dmmmsu.edu.ph](mailto:jjrmilan@dmmmsu.edu.ph)

#### ABSTRACT

This article employs a reflective analysis to explore the profound significance and relevance of “The Way of the Shepherd” in the context of effective leadership and efficient management. Reflective writing serves as a powerful tool to investigate our experiences, facilitating a comprehensive understanding from multiple viewpoints and theoretical frameworks. By engaging in reflection, individuals can extract enriched lessons from their professional endeavors, thereby enhancing personal and organizational growth. This analysis not only examines the core principles presented in the book but also aligns them with contemporary leadership practices, offering valuable insights for leaders aiming to foster a more effective and empathetic management style. Through reflective practice, this article highlights how the teachings of “The Way of the Shepherd” can be applied to cultivate leadership qualities that inspire, motivate, and guide teams toward achieving their collective goals with a profound sense of purpose and cohesion.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

“The Way of the Shepherd”, authored by Dr. Kevin Leman and William Pentak, these 123 pages of managerial recipe that tethers the ancient with the modern ways of administration through a metaphoric comparison between shepherding and governance. Pentak narrates his interview with Theodore McBride, the reclusive CEO of General Technologies for 17 years and one of America’s most esteemed business leaders. Pentak was more than thrilled to have been given the chance for a face-to-face interview with the business tycoon despite the numerous expert reporters lined up before him for the noble opportunity. Curious as to why he was ‘the chosen’, McBride satiated Pentak’s inquisition by describing him as ‘inexperienced and teachable’ compared to seasoned reporters whom he branded ‘tainted with arrogance’. McBride added that he is ready to reveal seven guiding principles which had been his signposts as to why 17 years of successful management was made possible. McBride turns back time to 45 years when he spent ‘managerial classes’ with his MBA professor, Dr. Jack Neumann, who required them to meet on Saturdays with a twist of environment. Heavily unexpectant and in shock on Dr. Neumann’s pedagogy, McBride details how sheep caregiving shot the greatest impact on his present managing transcendence.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Way of the Shepherd by Dr. Kevin Leman and William Pentak presents a unique perspective on leadership, drawing parallels between shepherding and effective management. The literature on leadership and management theories provides context and depth to the principles outlined in the book. Transformational leadership, first introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and further developed by Bernard Bass, aligns closely with the book’s principles. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers by creating a vision, fostering an environment of intellectual stimulation, and acting as role models. According to Bass (1990), transformational leaders are characterized by four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These components resonate with the shepherding metaphor in the book, emphasizing the importance of caring for and developing team members.

Servant leadership, a theory popularized by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970, emphasizes the leader’s role as a servant first, focusing on the needs of others before their own. This approach to leadership is evident in The Way of the Shepherd, where the leader’s primary responsibility is to serve their team and ensure their well-being. Spears (1995) identifies ten characteristics of servant leaders, including empathy, listening, and stewardship, which align with the shepherd’s role in guiding and nurturing their flock.

Daniel Goleman’s theory of emotional intelligence (EI) highlights the significance of a leader’s ability to understand and manage their own emotions and those of others. Goleman (1998) argues that EI is crucial for effective leadership, as it enhances communication, conflict resolution, and relationship management. The Way of the Shepherd underscores the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership, as it enables

leaders to connect with their team members on a deeper level and foster a supportive and empathetic environment.

The principles outlined in The Way of the Shepherd are closely related to contemporary human resource management (HRM) practices. Effective HRM involves recruiting, training, and developing employees to achieve organizational goals. Storey (1995) describes HRM as a strategic and coherent approach to managing an organization’s most valued assets—its people. The book’s emphasis on knowing the condition of your flock and making your pasture a safe place aligns with HRM’s focus on employee well-being and organizational culture.

The practical application of leadership theories is essential for understanding the real-world implications of The Way of the Shepherd. Studies by Kouzes and Posner (2007) emphasize the importance of leaders modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, and enabling others to act. These practices are reflected in the book’s principles, highlighting the need for leaders to engage with their team, communicate effectively, and lead by example.

The literature on transformational leadership, servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and human resource management provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the principles presented in The Way of the Shepherd. By integrating these theories, leaders can develop a more effective and empathetic management style that inspires, motivates, and guides their teams toward achieving collective goals.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper employs reflective analysis to explore the core message and impact of “The Way of the Shepherd” in the context of effective leadership and management. Reflective writing allows for deeper insights by thoroughly examining experiences and considering various perspectives, enhancing workplace learning (Watton *et al.*, 2001). Gibbs (1998) emphasizes that experience alone does not suffice for learning; reflection on experiences is crucial for generating concepts and tackling new situations effectively. Reflection involves purposeful mental processing applied to complex or unstructured ideas without obvious solutions (Moon, 1999).

Moon (1999) identifies several reasons for reflection: understanding one’s learning process (meta-cognition), critically evaluating behavior, developing theories based on observations, engaging in personal development, making decisions or resolving uncertainties, and empowering oneself within social groups.

Thus, this paper aimed to critically engage with the concepts presented in “The Way of the Shepherd,” connecting observations, experiences, opinions, and established information on leadership and management. By reflecting on the book’s principles, we can better understand and apply effective leadership and management practices in our professional lives.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I believe in the innate goodness of a new leader, his plans for the betterment of his people, his imagination of a harmonious working environment, and self-made promises to be an ideal



administrator manning a happy department. Believing in the actualization of these intangibles, though, is another story that is hindered by the to-see-is-to-believe principle.

Contrary to singling out the seven guiding principles and discussing them under subtitles, my approach to reviewing this literature will be presented in the form of three highlights I personally gleaned from the work which will generally comprise the seven principles and their main cause.

#### **4.1. Successful leadership and management is not learned in school**

For McBride, Dr. Neumann was a legend: undergrad at Stanford, an MBA from Wharton, and a Ph.D. from Harvard. He has office walls which were adorned with parchments, numerous awards, and several certificates of appreciation. These achievements made him one of the top business school professors and consultants in their country. It seems fit to conclude that Dr. Neumann was a man who valued education judging by the degree he earned coupled with the universities he attended. Though understandably particular with his educational attainments, Dr. Neumann revealed that his talent in managing people is accounted most to the farming experiences with his father in Wyoming. Forty-five years later, his protégé, Ted McBride, becomes the most respected business leader in America for 17 years. Dr. Neumann's pedagogy? Field shepherding on Saturdays in his ranch home in the Texas hill country.

Nelson Mandela once stated: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." True enough, people displace enormous amount of resources in education, as it has become the main ingredient to qualify for white collar jobs. In the Philippines, the Department of Budget and Management allocated P3.767 trillion for the education and infrastructure development sector, the biggest share of national budget for 2018.

Ironically, the few years of my career life allowed me to distinguish a good leader from a 'hireling'. The qualifications of the leaders I am surrounded with are unquestionable, but their management drew demarcations and attracted common judgments from not only my own, but also from other's experiences. I have seen and heard of leaders who hold professional degrees but with complaints of poor leadership skills such as starting rumors, distributing heavy work to subordinates while enjoying the minimum stress, and practicing degrading lifestyle outside the professional fence such as excess smoking, drinking, and gambling. Opposed to this is one exemplary leader who earned her position even without a post-graduate degree. She is someone I can relate to the statement of Dr. Neumann regarding a great leader: 'leadership takes place in the home and schoolroom as in the boardroom, due to her unsolicited help during a faculty member's difficult time.

No doubt we are awed by a leader's outstanding achievements. Chapter 2 addresses that a good 'sheep' has a good shape which can be related that a qualified applicant is shaped for the task ahead. Though synonymous, chapter 3 differentiates 'good' from 'great'. When McBride remembers his father as an example of a great man, he did not mention any of his father's educational attainments, but rather praised him for being the

same man in private as he is in public. It is notable that the situations between McBride and how his father continued to nurture him did not happen inside a classroom, but still, Dr. Neumann branded him a great leader.

#### **4.2. Successful leadership and management do not require modernity**

The conversation between Pentak and McBride at the conclusion of their interview is perhaps what most of its readers are satisfied to learn. When inquired about the applicability of the seven ancient principles to the modern society, McBride spilled that *The Way of the Shepherd* still work after thousands of years because the basic needs of people have remained essentially the same.

Civilization changes with time, but there existing elements which remain perennial through ages: that all humans are born with the same essential instinct—with the need to be loved, taken care of, and be happy. Like McBride's repulsive initial reaction at the prospect of 'wasting' Saturdays with his mentor, many roll their eyes when introduced to tactics that have been applied since, to exaggerate, time immemorial. I cannot deny that I am one of them. It has been the norm to be advised of being dynamic to the fast-changing world if we do not want to be left behind, but the book has taught me that is not the case with human resource management.

There is nothing wrong with filling our cups with modern ways of managing people. An abundant source of leadership how-tos can be found in conferences, books, and research studies. Yet we can be surprised that the comparison between the ancient with modern ways is not too far and will always occupy large spaces when structured in a Venn diagram. The metaphoric relation of Dr. Neumann of a shepherd who lived centuries ago with a manager of the information-digital age is priceless and never obsolete. The concepts of a leader's integrity, compassion, and protectiveness have always been applied from ages hence to the future.

#### **4.3. Successful leadership and management are always—ALWAYS—relative to divine means**

*The Way of the Shepherd* as a title immediately strikes a wide reader that it is a book which reveals concepts religion and divinity. Before turning its pages, I have immediately judged the book to be filled with references from the Bible and lives of the saints. Surprisingly, it contradicted my hypothesis but reading between the lines, it is still conclusive that the seven ancient ways to manage people is gleaned from divine ideas.

Shepherding is a common livelihood way back the time when people are still proliferating the earth. This does not exclude various resounding names from the Bible. The great patriarch Abraham tended flocks during his tenure in the land of Ur, Jacob's sons were given tasks to care for sheep, the mighty warrior-king David was a skilled shepherd as a boy, Solomon's rival to the unnamed Shulamite maiden was a shepherd whom she was loyal to—these are just few of the many proofs that the Bible acknowledges shepherding.

The Bible often portrays God Almighty as a metaphorical Shepherd. Isaiah 40:11 poetically describes God in this role: "Like a shepherd He will tend His flock. In His arms, He will



gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes." David's renowned Psalm 23 begins with the line, "The Lord is my Shepherd," emphasizing this imagery. Furthermore, Jesus Christ's famous Parable of the Lost Sheep illustrates the compassionate nature of His Father. These biblical references highlight the deep, nurturing, and guiding relationship between a shepherd and his flock, underscoring the profound and timeless significance of shepherding as a metaphor for leadership and care.

No doubt, shepherding (literal and figurative) is a very noble task which requires a shepherd to bring out the best of his qualities. No doubt it is the humble 'profession' chosen to demonstrate great leadership and governance.

#### 4.4. Relating "The Way of The Shepherd" to Leadership and Management

The author connects the concepts and principles of "The Way of the Shepherd" to Human Resource Management (HRM) systems, highlighting their significant relationship. These principles are particularly relevant in today's fast-paced work environment, as they offer innovative approaches and methods for managing human resources. For an organization to succeed, a great leader must act as an engaged shepherd, attentive to both the organization's vision and mission and the needs of each individual within the team. Human needs remain consistent over time, echoing those from the age of Moses. Therefore, "The Way of the Shepherd" encourages leaders to reflect on whether they choose to shepherd their team with care and guidance or simply manage them.

##### 4.4.1. Know the Condition of Your Flock/The Staff of Direction

*"You have to really care about your people. You can go through all the right mechanics, but if you don't genuinely care about the people who report to you, you'll never be the kind of leader they'll drop everything to follow."*

- Neumann to McBride, page 27

"Know the condition of your flock" emphasizes the importance of understanding the individuals you manage through active engagement and open communication. Stay aware of the status of your team members and the work they are doing, recognizing that personal issues can affect their performance. Develop familiarity with each individual and the entire team by engaging with them, asking questions, and following through on concerns.

On the other hand, "the staff of direction" focuses on vision. Be clear about your goals and lead from the front. Serve as a protector while establishing clear boundaries. Encourage creativity and allow for mistakes. Most importantly, when directing, use persuasion rather than coercion.

David Ulrich's Model (1997) aligns with these principles as it emphasizes the significance of people—including employees, managers, board members, and others—and their roles within the organization in relation to structured human resources functions. Ulrich's HR conceptual framework for developing organizational effectiveness is based on two main dimensions. The first dimension represents the competing demands of future/strategic focus and day-to-day/operational focus. The second dimension reflects the demands created by HR activities,

concentrating on both people and processes. This alignment underscores the importance of balancing strategic planning with operational efficiency and ensuring that HR activities support both individual development and organizational goals. Furthermore, a people-oriented management style prioritizes workplace relationships. The manager focuses on interpersonal relations rather than tasks, showing a strong concern for employee welfare and fostering a friendly and trusting environment. Conversely, a task-oriented manager emphasizes the technical or task aspects of the job, ensuring that employees understand their responsibilities and have the necessary tools to perform their duties (open.lib.umn.edu).

##### 4.4.2. Help Your Sheep Identify with You / The Staff of Direction

*"Great leaders leave their mark by constantly communicating their values and sense of mission"*

- Neumann to McBride, page 49

Building strong relationships within your team is paramount, as emphasized in "Help your sheep identify with you." As a leader, you must demonstrate trust, integrity, and authenticity. Clearly communicating your mission inspires others to find their own purpose, blending professional and personal engagement in leadership. It's crucial to guide your team with a clear vision, reminding them that failure is not the end but a learning opportunity.

David Ulrich's Human Resources Model complements these leadership principles by providing a clear framework for HR departments. This model acts as a blueprint, enabling organizations to operate effectively and efficiently toward achieving their vision, mission, goals, and objectives. Setting appropriate goals and objectives is a key leadership skill, and HR departments play a vital role in training managers and leaders to align their targets with the organization's vision.

The Ulrich Model (1997) is renowned for its comprehensive approach. It addresses the roles and responsibilities of HR within the organization and emphasizes accountability within HR functions. It highlights key HR functions such as Compensation and Benefits, and Training and Development, which are crucial for employee morale and satisfaction. The model outlines essential HR processes, necessary job roles, principles for establishing the HR Organizational Structure, job profiles and descriptions for essential HR roles, and principles for HR Process Management, Measurement, and Analytics.

By ensuring that all HR activities and targets support the overarching goals of the organization, Ulrich's model aligns perfectly with the leadership principles of building strong relationships, inspiring purpose, and maintaining a clear vision. Together, they create a cohesive framework for effective and engaged leadership.

##### 4.4.3. Help Your Sheep Identify with You / Discover the Shape of Your Sheep

*"As a shepherd, your choice of sheep can make flock management easier or harder. If you don't buy right, you'll inherit someone else's problems."*

- Neumann to McBride, page 32

Building harmonious relationships and establishing a conducive working environment through open and effective communication is crucial, as emphasized in "Help your sheep



identify with you.” This principle highlights the importance of trust and clear communication in fostering a productive and motivated team. In contrast, “Discover the shape of your sheep” focuses on efficient decision-making in selecting and managing your workforce to ensure a competent and productive team.

John Storey (1989) defines Human Resource Management (HRM) as a strategic approach to managing employment relations, aiming to achieve a competitive advantage through a highly committed and capable workforce. HRM employs an integrated array of cultural, structural, and personal techniques to ensure the availability of a competent and motivated workforce.

Historically, HRM was often considered secondary, focused primarily on people-oriented plans and not a major part of strategic planning. However, with the growing recognition of the critical importance of people in organizations, HRM has become a key player in strategic planning. Managers across all units now recognize the importance of recruiting, selecting, training, developing, rewarding, compensating, and motivating the workforce (Ivancevich, 2003).

Every organization relies on its people. Acquiring their services, developing their skills, motivating them to achieve high levels of performance, and ensuring their commitment to the organization are essential for achieving organizational objectives (Decenzo & Robbins, 2008). HRM focuses on managing people at work and their relationships within the enterprise, encompassing practices that manage the workforce throughout the employment cycle: pre-selection, selection, and post-selection (Kleiman, 2005).

In summary, effective HRM integrates the principles of open communication and efficient workforce management, ensuring that organizations can strategically leverage their human resources to achieve their goals.

#### **4.4.4. Make Your Pasture a Safe Place / The Rod of Correction / The Heart of the Shepherd / Help Your Sheep Identify with You / Discover the Shape of Your Sheep**

*“Great leaders leave their mark by constantly communicating their values and sense of mission”*

- Neumann to McBride, page 49

*“Teach your people that each person has a vital role to play.”*

- Neumann to McBride, page 60

*“Great leadership comes at a price that too few are willing to pay.”*

- McBride to Pentak, page 111

*“To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart”*

- Eleanor Roosevelt

“Make your pasture a safe place” focuses on creating a secure environment for your workers. This involves keeping the team well-informed, making them and their positions feel valued, removing sources of gossip or rumors, and being available and visible as a leader. The “rod of correction” plays a key role in protecting, correcting, and inspecting your people, ensuring their continuous growth and development. The “heart of the shepherd” emphasizes putting your heart fully into leadership and taking full responsibility for your people’s well-being, resulting in a loyal and dedicated team.

These principles are essential in today’s evolving business landscape, requiring Human Resources (HR) to align its

processes, practices, and strategies with business objectives. Integrating the principles of “The Way of the Shepherd” effectively manages an organization’s talent and the entire Human Capital Management (HCM) lifecycle. This integrated talent management framework provides a holistic view of talent, recognizing that the most valuable assets of an organization are its people, who individually and collectively contribute to achieving its objectives (Armstrong, 2006; Mathis & Jackson, 2008; Snell & Bohlander, 2011).

Talent management’s primary purpose is to support the organization’s overall objectives. It involves hiring, managing, training, and compensating top talent, with strategic planning to align HR needs with the organization’s goals and vision, ensuring that top performers are recruited, developed, and retained (Kokemuller, n.d.). Employees’ talents encompass a combination of skills, knowledge, abilities, and cognitive potentials, providing the potential to create significant value using available resources (Goffee & Jones, 2007).

In conclusion, effective leadership involves creating a safe and supportive environment, ensuring growth, and leading with heart. Integrating these principles with strategic HR practices aligns with business goals and fosters a dedicated workforce. Talent management is crucial for sustainable success, requiring a comprehensive approach to developing and retaining top talent.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Elation, excitement, pride, and happiness — only a few of the overpowering emotions that ripple over one who has been perched on top of a managerial strata. It is impossible to beat high self-regard especially if the promotion was a brainchild of extreme determination and willpower. One might look behind humble beginnings, of tabula rasa, and long, sleepless nights and think to himself it was all worth it. He might see the awe on his subordinates’ eyes, looking up to him for inspiration, and idolizing him for the reward well-fought. He looks down on them in return, a face full of dignified promise to nourish the people he is entrusted with, to care for them as if they were his own self, and cultivate their talents so one day, they can share the similar sensation—or, can he?

Humans, by nature, are dominating. Genesis 1:26-28 proves that God has given authority for man to rule over animals, to name them, and later in Genesis 9:2-3, to slaughter them for provisions as meat or clothing. It was never, though, encouraged for humans to dominate over each other: an act which history has defied through monarchical lineages.

Although human-over-human domination has been practiced since time immemorial, it has also proven to be an ideal way to organize functions and talents. This system is observable even in society’s smallest unit, the family, where the father is deemed as ‘head’ over the household and more widespread in the workplace. At present, a company’s organizational structure is composed of persons qualified by educational degrees, length of term, and exceptional work-related skills.

These qualifications, though, do not parallel managerial finesse. Reports of the effects of poor human resource managing still circulate all around the world. For example, 526,000 British workers were struck by work-related stress, depression, and



anxiety in 2016-2017, which caused 12.5 million working days lost during those years. The National Health and Safety Commission in Australia reported that mental work-related stress is costing Australian businesses over \$10 million dollars. In 2017, executives of a French telecommunications company were accused of "moral harassment" which led 19 employees to kill themselves (Waters, 2017). In Britain, a dedicated Walford (2018), Malcolm Anderson, 48, took his own life at work after his increasing workload meant he was "often unable to spend time with his family". A Chinese factory worker, Li Ming, 31, jumped to his death from a building in Zhengzhou. China Labor Watch (CLW) reported that he committed suicide after defaming online the company he worked for, Apple iPhone producer, Foxconn.

These few of the many disturbing events prove that management does not follow any standard rule due to individual diversity and uniqueness. One managerial technique which is effective in a certain department may not be applicable to another and vice versa. It takes a considerable amount of time for leaders to fathom their personal ways of managing through conferences, research studies, and stacks of leadership publications. The Way of the Shepherd can be a to-be or present leader's supplementary guide to successful managing.

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