



# THE CORNERSTONE EAGLE

November 2017 Edition



CORNERSTONE  
INTERNATIONAL  
GROUP

You would think, with almost \$80 billion dollars spent each year on improving business leadership, that we would be overloaded with amazing leaders. That they would be easily found in every sector of every economy, that each and every company worldwide would have dozens of strong, effective people taking the reins and guiding businesses to powerful and predictable successes.

But that doesn't really seem to be the case, does it?

Is it that something vital is missing in our leadership creation processes?

This November issue of Eagle we shall explore ONE QUALITY a Great Leader should have – FORGIVENESS; and why does forgiveness fit into that quality trait of a great leader.



Cornerstone International Group's MISSION is to be the best executive recruiting group worldwide, but our VISION is to be a true mentor and coach, one-on-one, with our clients, candidates and partners locally.

We believe the way to do it is to promote TEAMWORK, CARING, LEARNING and THANKSGIVING. We summarize our VALUES as 3 C of Community, Credibility, and Continuity as Achieving 'Healthier Business and Life' is what we strive for everyday.

The Cornerstone Eagle is not a sales letter to promote activities of our 60+ offices globally, but a 3C tool to inspire you to maximize your personal and professional potential to be a Better Leader and a Better Person both at home and at business. We shall be your Faithful Companion / Coach / Mentor on your life.

Best Wishes,

**Simon Wan**

Chief Executive

**Cornerstone International Group**

Phone No.: +86 21 6474 7064 | Email: [simon-wan@cornerstone-group.com](mailto:simon-wan@cornerstone-group.com)

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## Forgiveness and Leadership

### Permission to fail

Forgiveness fits quite well for a modern leader in our current culture. And not only because forgiveness is a generally laudable human quality, but it is also vital for truly dimensional leadership.

**Our evolution as a world culture has brought us to a place where our businesses must be nimble, adaptable, and constantly innovative. And one thing you have to give to people striving to innovate is permission to fail.**

A nimble organization requires an environment where suggesting something new — even if it is not fully tested, even if it is just an idea — is not only “somewhat allowed,” but is actively praised and rewarded. You need a workforce that is empowered to bring forward innovative urges, to explore what can be achieved in new approaches to old problems.

### Not forgiving ...

A famous business leader who, perhaps, would have been even more successful with a dose of forgiveness in his style, is Steve Jobs. He is famous for his iron-fistedness on creativity and quality control, so much so that there are scenes in popular movies showing him dismissing people in front of entire departments for not meeting his standards.



**And, yes, perhaps he was pruning those who were underperforming, or unwilling to go along with his vision. But it's also just as likely that he lacked a well-developed ability to forgive. And without that ability, he often took the path of least forgiveness.**

This, in the full dimensionality view of a leader, may have cost him far more than it needed to. **Every act of non-forgiveness has the clear potential to create fear in the remaining employees. Does this “motivate” them to do better, work harder, make sure they're on their game? Or does it create a climate of fear, of only doing what you know will be approved, and never, ever**

**sticking your neck out to suggest different ideas?**

It does both, which means that the non-forgiving boss is always partially creating an environment that suppresses innovation. Meanwhile, the boss who accurately and wisely knows when to forgive avoids the problem of scaring off innovative employees.

## What Forgiveness Is, and Is Not

**The act of forgiveness is a potent tool to bring honourable closure to painful past events.**



### Forgiveness is not ...

Forgiveness is not amnesty for others or a declaration that what occurred was okay. It is not a get-out-of-jail-free card or a pronouncement that “what happened doesn’t matter”. It is not an absolution of accountability or avoidance of consequences. Forgiving is not an invitation for the individual(s) to remain in, or return to, your life.

### Forgiveness is ...

Forgiveness is something we do for ourselves. It is a self-proclamation that says “I am willing to let go of the idea the past should have been different.” It is a self-gift to liberate the

negative thoughts and feelings that obstruct positive forward movement in life. Forgiveness heals negative thoughts and lights the path to reaching your full potential.

## Great Leaders Know When to Forgive

Leaders must be firm and foster accountability, but they also must know when to forgive past wrongs in the service of building a brighter future. One of the most courageous acts of leadership is to forgo the temptation to take revenge on those on the other side of an issue or those who opposed the leader’s rise to power.

Instead of settling scores, great leaders make gestures of reconciliation that heal wounds and get on with business. This is essential for turnarounds or to prevent mergers from turning into rebellions against acquirers who act like conquering armies.

**Nelson Mandela** famously forgave his oppressors. After the end of apartheid, which had fostered racial separation and kept blacks impoverished, Mandela became South Africa’s first democratically elected President. Some in his political party clamored for revenge against members of the previous regime or perhaps even all privileged white people. Instead, to avoid violence, stabilize and unite the nation, and attract investment in the economy, Mandela appointed a racially integrated cabinet, visited the widow of one of the top apartheid leaders, and created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that would clear the air and permit moving forward.



**Shinhan Bank of South Korea**, a fairly new entrepreneurial bank, was set to acquire Chohung Bank, a larger, much older establishment-oriented bank that had hit hard times, when Chohung employees staged an embarrassing action. To protest the takeover, 3,500 men shaved their heads and piled the hair in front of Shinhan’s headquarters in downtown Seoul. Shinhan signed an agreement with Chohung’s union that astonished some observers. Far from taking revenge for the protest (or walking away from the deal), Shinhan agreed to raise wages, promise no layoffs, have equal representation of both banks on key committees, and wait three years for full integration.

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These and other investments in the future generated a significant payoff. Within a year, shareholder value had increased (it decreases in a majority of mergers) and employees from both banks were informally integrating, with the union neutralized. Within three years, Shinhan Financial Group was outperforming not only the industry but the entire South Korean stock market. (Excerpts from Rajeev Peshawaria, CEO of the Iclif Leadership and Governance Centre, Malaysia, and Rosabeth Moss Kanter, professor at Harvard Business School.)

## Quotes on Forgiveness

### Martin Luther

Forgiveness is God's command.

### Saint Francis of Assisi

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.

### Pope Alexander

To err is human, to forgive is divine.

## The Bible

### Matthew 6:12

And forgive us our sins,  
as we have also forgiven those who have sinned against us.

### Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

*Our Editor, Nancy Chu at [nancy-chu@cornerstone-group.com](mailto:nancy-chu@cornerstone-group.com) would love to hear from you if you have special thoughts to share.*

## About Cornerstone International Group

**Cornerstone International Group** is ranked by Forbes as one of the Top Ten Best Management Consulting Firms in Executive Search. Our mission is to accelerate the success of our clients by providing top-quality consulting services in the field of talent recruitment and leadership development. Our clients partner with us because we deliver **better results faster**. With 25 plus years of track record across the globe and over 60 offices worldwide, we know how to attract top leaders you need for your business and we take the time to know your business. Visit us at [www.cornerstone-group.com](http://www.cornerstone-group.com) and see how we can help you to have a **'Healthier Business and Life'**

