



## Who's following?

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

Recently, I had a discussion with our wonderful new employee, M.J Clark, about the subject of leadership. I was explaining to her how a good coach brings out the leadership qualities in a client. As we were talking, I told her that leadership had nothing to do with who was following. She stopped and said, "What"? It brought about a great discussion between us that I would like to share with you.

I explained to her that every one of us has the ability to lead, and it has nothing to do with who is following. In my opinion there are two ways to live one's life, we can chase our dreams, or we can avoid what makes us uncomfortable. If we chase our dreams we lead, if we avoid what makes us uncomfortable we eventually become victims of exactly what we are trying to avoid.

This topic reminds me of a scene in *Gladiator* when Caesar is confronting the gladiator and he asks him if he thinks he is scared of dying. The gladiator chuckles and says, "I think you have been afraid all of your life." With that Caesar says, "And you are not scared?" The gladiator then says, "A wise man once told me that we all must face death. All we can do is smile at it."

That's really the bottom line about leadership, in my opinion, do we have the courage to face that which scares us in order to pursue that which we are most passionate about? It is often true that those who chase their dreams are initially derided for their apparent foolishness.

For example, last weekend I saw the new movie, *Invincible*, about Joe Papale, a walk-on who made the Philadelphia Eagles roster. In 1976 Joe Papale was a part time bar tender and substitute teacher. He had never played football in college. He was 30 years old. He probably had no business playing on a professional football team. But, he was given an opportunity to try out because the Eagles new coach, Dick Vermeil, saw so little talent on his new team that he decided to open up tryouts to the whole city of Philadelphia. One person out of the thousands who showed up was invited to camp, Joe Papale.

When Joe arrived in camp all of the players made fun of him. It was a great act of courage for Joe to chase his dreams against such incredible odds. But in the end, Joe not only made the team, but played for the Eagles for three years. He became a leader and an inspiration, not only to those who had challenged him in the beginning, but for thousands of fans everywhere. Stephen Covey says that a leader's main job is to give hope. Joe Papale certainly did that for anyone who has come in contact with his story.

I urge you to ask yourself if there are any areas of your life where you are avoiding discomfort and placing your dreams on hold. I ask you not to wait a minute longer to begin to lead by making your dreams come true. You will not regret it. In the words of Russell Crowe's character in *Gladiator*, "What we do, here, echoes in eternity."