

The Eagle's Nest

By Philip J. Lawson, J.D.



You Can't Send a Duck to Eagle School Even Eagles Need a Push

In several recent articles, I have referred to a company called Simple Truths® whose contact information is www.simpletruths.com or (800) 900-3427.

Mac Anderson is the founder of Simple Truths and Successories. In his recent book, [You Can't Send a Duck to Eagle School](#), Anderson shares 30 years of "lessons learned" as a successful entrepreneur. This great little book has 28 chapters, and listed below is just a sampling:

- **The road to success is not always a road.**
- **Attitude isn't everything, but it's pretty darn close.**
- **If you chase two rabbits, both will escape.**
- **Burn brightly without burning out.**
- **Make your brand stand for something.**
- **You only get one chance to make a good first impression.**
- **Leadership would be easy if it wasn't for people.**

Chuck Bokar of Principle, Design Resource Center stated that "This book should be required reading for every manager or aspiring manager. There is more wisdom per "square inch" than anything I've ever read." Doug Westmoreland, vice president, Walk the Talk, Inc. relates that Mac Anderson's writing style is "so simple, yet so unbelievably engaging. I love his books!"

When I first saw the title, [You Can't Send a](#)

[Duck to Eagle School](#), I knew I had to order the book. For a number of years, I have given talks on Eagles and Turkeys and have shared with listeners a concept that we are born eagles, but over a period of time we can become turkeys for three reasons:

1. Some of us are raised by turkeys.
2. Some of us have run with turkeys. (So choose your friends carefully.)
3. Some individuals don't know how to handle failure. (A person is not a failure; you simply go through a number of failure events.)

So, I ordered the book and was pleased with what I read.

Anderson relates a talk he had during lunch with a top executive from a company known for their excellent services. Anderson stated, "With the service you people give... you must have a training manual two inches thick." The executive responded, "Mac, we don't have a training manual. What we do is find the best people we can find and we empower them to do what it takes to satisfy the customer." He continued, "We learned a long time ago that **You can't send a duck to eagle school.**" He continued, "You can't teach someone to smile, you can't teach someone to want to serve, you can't teach personality. What we can do, however, is hire people who have those qualities, and we can teach them about our products and teach them our culture."

Anderson stated that after that conversation he asked himself with every hiring decision, "**Am I hiring a duck thinking they will become an eagle?**"

In reading this book, I was reminded of one of the most unusual employee interview sessions I ever conducted. We met the young attorney in our offices and I, along with two other partners, took the

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interviewee to Club LeConte for a nice luncheon and discussion. After some discussions and questions and answers about the firm, the young attorney stated that before beginning practice, he and his wife wanted to take several weeks off and just relax. My response was that we would certainly take that into consideration. Rather abruptly, the interviewee stated... "I don't think you understand what I'm saying. If it's not possible for us to take two weeks off, then perhaps we can't do business!" I looked at my partners who were looking at me. One of the partners suggested that he and the other partner needed to get some exercise so they thought they would walk back to our office in the Bank of America building. They then dismissed themselves, leaving me the responsibility of driving the young attorney back to our offices. I looked down for a moment, thinking about the young man's comment. Before looking up, I visualized a tombstone with the young man's name on it. I also imagined fresh dirt over the grave and flowers.

During my career, I always took great satisfaction in hiring individuals who wanted to learn and grow. I guess I concluded that this interviewee was a duck, not an eagle!

One of my very favorite authors is Dr. John C. Maxwell whose book, Developing the Leader Within You was quite possibly one of the best leadership books in recent years. John maintained that the most important lesson of leadership was "staff development."

John noted the "Top 20" personal requirements to look for in interviewing individuals for potential positions on his staff: (John wanted to hire eagles not ducks.)

1. **Positive Attitude** – the ability to see people and situations in a positive way.
2. **High Energy Level** – strength and stamina to work hard and not wear down.
3. **Personal Warmth** – a manner that draws people to them.
4. **Integrity** – trustworthy, good solid character, words and walk are consistent.
5. **Responsible** – always "comes through," no excuses, job delegated – job done.
6. **Good Self-image** – feels good about self, others, and life.

7. **Mental Horsepower **** – ability to keep learning as the job expands.
8. **Leadership Ability** – has high influence over others.
9. **Followership Ability** – willingness to submit, play team ball, and follow the leader.
10. **Absence of Personal Problems **** – personal, family, and business life are in order.
11. **People Skills** – the ability to draw people and develop them.
12. **Sense of Humor** – enjoys life, fails to take self too seriously.
13. **Resilience **** – able to "bounce back" when problems arise.
14. **Track Record **** – has experience and success, hopefully in two or more situations.
15. **Great Desire** – hungers for growth and personal development.
16. **Self-discipline** – willing to "pay the price" and handle success.
17. **Creative** – ability to see solutions and fix problems.
18. **Flexibility** – not afraid of change; fluid; flows as the organization grows.
19. **Sees "Big Picture"** – able to look beyond personal interest and see the total picture.
20. **Intuitive **** – able to discern and sense a situation without tangible data.

** These things probably cannot be taught. The others can be taught with a proper mentor, environment, and willingness by the staff member. Most of the qualities in the above list can be evaluated with a couple of interviews and tests.

Once the new eagle staff member is on board, you must then teach them the most important element of being an eagle – learning how to SOAR!

“Even Eagles Need a Push!”

The eagle gently coaxed her offspring toward the edge of the nest. Her heart quivered with conflicting emotions as she felt their resistance to her persistent nudging. **“Why does the thrill of soaring**

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have to begin with the fear of falling?” she thought. This ageless question still remained unanswered for her.

As in the tradition of the species, her nest was located high upon the shelf of a sheer rock face. Below there was nothing but air to support the wings of each child. ***“Is it possible that this time it will not work?”*** she thought. Despite her fears, the eagle knew it was time. Her parental mission was all but complete. There remained one final task – **the push.**

The eagle drew courage from an innate wisdom. Until her children discovered their wings, there was no purpose for their lives. Until they learned how to soar, they would fail to understand the privilege of having been born an eagle. ***The push was the greatest gift she had to offer.*** It was her supreme act of love. And so, one by one, she pushed them and they flew.

Many thanks to Mac Anderson for letting me share just two articles from this wonderful book. I highly recommend this book to those of you who want to SOAR like an EAGLE!

I want to dedicate this column to Debbie Hinton, an eagle who is determined to SOAR, regardless of the circumstances.

My sincere best wishes to the members and officers of The Smoky Mountain Paralegal Association. It has been an honor to share growth and leadership principles with this great organization.

Think on these things.

Sincerely,

Philip J. Lawson

Philip J. Lawson, J.D. was the founder of the Knoxville law firm of Wimberly & Lawson and retired from active practice on December 31, 2004. Phil has lectured and taught widely on a variety of aspects of labor, employment law, leadership and personal growth.

