

# Teddy's Tips on Leadership

***“Character is far more important than intellect in making a man a good citizen or successful at his calling – meaning by character not only such qualities as honesty and truthfulness, but courage, perseverance, and self-reliance.”***

## Theodore Roosevelt

In March of 1886, at the age of 27, Theodore Roosevelt was living in the Badlands in the Dakota Territories (today part of North Dakota). He was trying his hand as a Rancher and Cowboy.

Roosevelt kept a small boat at his ranch to cross the Little Missouri River. Early on the morning of March 24, he went out and found that the rope securing the boat to a tree had been cut with a knife, and someone had dropped a red woolen mitten. His boat had been stolen!

He was ready to thunder off in pursuit of the thieves. But realized that a horse could never keep pace with the boat going downstream in the gorge. There was only one thing to do – build a makeshift scow and follow them. It was not the value of the boat, but rather his moral code of bringing to justice any lawbreakers that drove him. He was also Chairman of the local Stockman's Association and a deputy sheriff of Billings County. He had a responsibility to see justice served.

He had a suspicion of who the thieves were – “Redhead” Finnegan, a longhaired gunman of vicious reputation and his two associates. They lived in a shack about 20 miles up river. They were about to be lynched by the cattlemen on charges of horse stealing. Roosevelt suspected they stole his boat to get away.

It took three days to gather the materials and build the makeshift scow. A furious blizzard delayed TR's departure for another three days, giving the thieves a good head start. TR and his trusted ranch-hands, Bill Sewell and Will Dow, set off to chase down the boat thieves. He took along his camera as he was thinking of what a good illustrated article the capture would make. *Even at the young age of 27, TR was aware of how PR can affect future outcomes. He was one of the first Presidents to fully take advantage of what he called the “Bully Pulpit.”*

Facing arctic conditions, with ice jostling their boat, they pursued in earnest. While Dow and Sewell steered the boat, Roosevelt began to write a biography of Thomas Hart Benton, and began reading Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. *TR read an average of one book a day throughout his adult lifetime. He also authored thirty-eight books. You can imagine that there weren't many people in the Badlands reading the classics in the 1880's.*

On the third day out they spotted smoke from a campfire. At rifle-point, Roosevelt surprised the thieves. After divesting his prisoners of an alarming array of rifles, revolvers, and knives, Roosevelt found himself in a quandary. He could not tie them up, for their hands and feet would freeze off.

***David Markovitz Brings Teddy Roosevelt Back to Life for You***

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The first big town downriver was 150 miles away. With six people to feed, and game virtually non-existent, he was fast running out of provisions. They couldn't return to Elkhorn, as navigating the river upstream was impossible.

After 8 more days on the river, navigating and keeping watch over the prisoners, they finally reached a cow camp. He borrowed a bronco and rode 15 miles to a ranch where he hired a covered wagon and two horses.

Roosevelt put the three prisoners in the wagon, driven by the rancher who owned the wagon, while he walked behind with his Winchester rifle, making sure that the prisoners wouldn't run off. Dow and Sewell continued down river with the boat. It took two days for the wagon to reach the town of Dickinson, a distance of 45 miles. He did not dare sleep during the trip, as he had to keep watch over the prisoners. Once in Dickinson, he turned the prisoners over to the sheriff.

Roosevelt received his fees as deputy sheriff for making the arrests, and also mileage for the three hundred miles gone over – a total of fifty dollars.

He sought out the town's only doctor, and told him, "My feet are blistered so badly that I can hardly walk. I want you to fix me up."

Fifteen years later, he became the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States when William McKinley was assassinated.

*How many people would persevere as TR?*

*How many people would have succumbed to the obstacles TR encountered along the way?*

This story certainly speaks to the character of Theodore Roosevelt. Throughout his life and career, those unfamiliar with this tale would often underestimate the man they were encountering.

Congress debated whether to build the Panama Canal, and while the debate went on, TR built the Canal.

*"Instead debating the building of the canal for 50 years, I thought it better to build the canal, and debate me for 50 years." - TR*

*"I took the [Panama] canal zone and let Congress debate, and while the debate goes on the canal does also." - TR*

**Do you have the drive, the courage, the perseverance, and the self-reliance to pursue your personal objectives?**

*David Markovitz Brings Teddy Roosevelt Back to Life for You. David conducts keynote presentations as Teddy and conducts breakout workshops as David. Learn more about his programs at [www.TeddyLeads.com](http://www.TeddyLeads.com).*

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