

FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF ROBERTJTERRY26@OUTLOOK.COM

From the Washington Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/washington/blog/2016/01/6-leadership-lessons-from-glenn-frey-the-hard.html>

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:

Forget Sun Tzu. Take these 6 leadership lessons from the Eagles' Glenn Frey.



Glenn Frey of the Eagles, right, died Monday at the age of 67.

STEVE ALEXANDER



By [Robert J. Terry](#) – Senior Staff Reporter, Washington Business Journal
Jan 19, 2016 **Updated** Jan 20, 2016 10:40pm EST

It's by now a well-worn business cliché that current and aspiring CEOs should read Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" for valuable insights on how to run a business and fend off competition. I would instead recommend "[History of the Eagles.](#)"

That's because Glenn Frey, [who died Monday at the age of 67](#), emerges in the three-hour-plus documentary as the unquestioned CEO of [the most successful American rock band ever](#), a visionary, funny, at times ruthless leader with much to teach any chief executive in any line of work.

As you'll learn watching the film, Frey possessed all the hallmarks of an insanely successful 1970s rocker. He also had many of the traits key to any successful chief executive – and, frankly, some rather off-putting ones (he was, after all, caught by a live mic threatening his guitar player with bodily harm *during a sold-out performance*, which Bill Simmons recounts [here](#) in an exhaustive analysis of the film).

Here are six of the good traits:

1. Have an ability to explain things, clearly and succinctly: By now you've no doubt heard the anecdote [about Jackson Browne's inability to complete the tune that would become "Take It Easy"](#) – how to cap off the lyric, "I was standing on a corner in Winslow, Arizona, such a fine sight to see"? Frey immediately came up with, "It's a girl, my Lord, in a flatbed Ford slowin' down to take a look at me." Especially when it comes to communicating, any leader trying to convey an organization's mission needs to do it clearly and succinctly. With Frey, that talent was evident in the way he'd take everyday exchanges and turn them into key lyrical phrases that anchor some of the Eagles' best-known songs. Frey, for example, threw out the phrase "lyin' eyes" in a barroom conversation with a friend. That became the basis for another Eagles hit.

2. Have an eye for talent: Frey was instrumental in tapping Irving Azoff to be the band's manager, and Azoff would go on to become [one of the most powerful moguls in the entertainment business](#). Frey also recruited Joe Walsh to replace Bernie Leadon as the Eagles' lead guitarist, trading for a guy with undeniable rock street cred. And he also convinced Azoff and the band to pluck Timothy B. Schmit from obscurity (he was in a mildly popular band called Poco) and a possible self-destructive valley to replace Randy Meisner on bass and vocals. The best leaders are always looking to surround themselves with talent, to upgrade when necessary, and take a chance on a diamond in the rough.

3. Have a sense of humor: Frey has many of the best laugh lines in "History of the Eagles," not just while serving as the dominant narrative guide but also in the archival footage. Frey could unquestionably be difficult and demanding (critics had less kind descriptions; more on that in a bit), but he also came off as someone playing the role with a bit of a wink. Of all the Eagles, he seems like the one I'd most enjoy a beer with, him or Joe Walsh. Don Felder would probably complain the whole time, and the mind reels at grabbing a drink with the very serious Don Henley, though maybe he'd surprise me. More evidence of Frey's sense of humor? He would occasionally dedicate "Lyin' Eyes" in concerts to "my first wife, Plaintiff" (c'mon, that's a little funny). Who wants to work for a humorless CEO? The best ones can laugh at themselves and, more importantly, get others to laugh with them.

4. Hold people to high standards: There's a scene recounting a dust-up between Frey and Meisner over Meisner not wanting to perform [his live star turn, "Take It to the Limit"](#) (one of only three top 40 songs by the Eagles not sung by Henley), because he feared he wouldn't be able to hit the high note at the end. Frey persisted that Meisner needed to perform; people bought tickets for the express purpose of seeing him sing that song. And, Frey added, he didn't necessarily want to sing "Take It Easy" and "Peaceful Easy Feeling" every night but he did anyway, for the same reason – and he, perhaps a bit inelegantly (a fight apparently

ensued), demonstrated how important it is to lead by example. Meisner would soon quit the band, replaced by Schmit.

5. Have an ego, but know when to keep it in check: Frey unquestionably had ego to spare; what leader doesn't? But watch the documentary closely and see all the times he's playing a secondary role – strumming an acoustic guitar and singing background harmony, [playing the soulful electric piano part](#) on Schmit's "I Can't Tell You Why," playing the straight man to Walsh's slightly unhinged comic foil onstage. Frey sang lead on only one song on the landmark "Hotel California" album. As he says in the film, he was OK with that, because "we had Don Henley." Henley's talent was all too obvious; like a good leader, Frey would focus on whatever else needed doing for the good of the song.

6. Work hard: Probably my favorite part of the documentary comes pretty early on, when Frey is telling a story about living in an apartment above Jackson Browne's shortly after arriving in California from his native Detroit:

"Around nine in the morning, I'd hear Jackson Browne's teapot going off with this whistle in the distance, and then I'd hear him playing piano. I didn't really know how to write songs. I knew I wanted to write songs, but I didn't know exactly – did you just wait around for inspiration, you know, what was the deal? I learned through Jackson's ceiling and my floor exactly how to write songs, 'cause Jackson would get up, and he'd play the first verse and first course, and he'd play it 20 times, until he had it just the way he wanted it. And then there'd be silence, and then I'd hear the teapot going off again, and it would be quiet for 20 minutes, and then I'd hear him start to play again And I'm up there going, so that's how you do it. Elbow grease. Time. Thought. Persistence."

Part of the reason I like it is because Frey's a great storyteller. The takeaway, however, is also a good reminder that behind any peaceful easy feeling lies a lot of persistence and hard work. Frey could be unforgiving and arrogant, which he didn't deny. Music critics [could be unmerciful](#); the band was [a running joke](#) in "The Big Lebowski." But in the end, the film portrays Frey as someone who, sex

and drugs and rock and roll aside, loved his craft. And that's a good example for any leader to set.