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Question: Describe happenings and reflections of the experiences for this Horsetales seminar. How do these experiences relate to your organisation and team?

It was the first time I have ever been in a field together with a horse and was very surprised to see that I managed to persuade the horse to actually walk with me! I was particularly surprised to see the horse gain more enthusiasm when I was asked by Ellen to "...focus on a goal and 'appear' to know where you're going". This actually worked!

In many ways we can see similar behaviours within organisations. In particular we see this behaviour with Entrepreneurs and their new business ideas. They typically have a very clear vision and a clear roadmap on how to achieve the goals. They show passion and can talk excitedly about their new venture, generating a lot of enthusiasm for the teams they lead. On reflection we see that more people are inclined to follow a motivated leader who 'appears' to have a clear vision and know where they are going.

It was also very interesting to see, that the horse hesitated to cross over a simple plank on the ground. This was clearly a major obstacle for the horse. It was surprising how much encouragement and reassurance was actually needed to persuade the horse to step over the plank. This situation is very typical of project teams. At difficult and challenging times it really does help when the project manager offers adequate encouragement and support at that critical moment in time. Teams would probably otherwise take the easy route and walk 'around' the problem, without necessarily solving the problem at hand.

It was also evident to me that the horse won't do anything you wanted, merely by shouting instructions at it. The horse demands a degree of respect in the same way people do. The horse would only focus and follow you, if you were with the horse to lead it. We see similar behaviours within large project teams. The whole project team becomes much more efficient and focused when the project manager is actually physically present; compared to a project manager who tries to run projects 'remotely' using Telephone & Netmeeting. By being present with the team, the project manager is able to 'tune' into the situation and be much more pro-active and responsive towards difficult situations and can guide the team with appropriate encouragement and motivation. Perhaps project managers should observe this important point and remember that most people also have some basic needs!

Colin Robert Bacon
Customer Relationship Manager
Hydro IS Partner