



*American Civil War Roundtable of Australia*  
*- NSW Chapter*



# Lincoln on Leadership

Meeting 10 September 2007

# Lincoln on Leadership

- *Lincoln on Leadership – Executive Strategies for Tough Times*
  - by Donald T. Phillips
  - 1992 Warner Books publication
  - At least 23 reprints
  - Has been translated into seven other languages
  - “Clinton’s private bible about how to govern – TIME”
  - Author claims there were no books on Lincoln’s leadership or management philosophy



# Testimonials

- “Lucid.....compelling ....a book not to be missed by anyone who manages people and problems”

James M. McPherson author of *Battle Cry of Freedom* and *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*.

- “A wonderfully refreshing and interesting way to get across several critical – and timeless – leadership messages”

John Scully, Chairman and CEO, Apple Computer Inc.

- “This expert, detailed record of [Lincoln’s] leadership qualities not only illustrates the past, it might also help light the way to the future”

Mario M. Cuomo, Governor of New York and co-author of *Lincoln on Democracy*.



# Lincoln

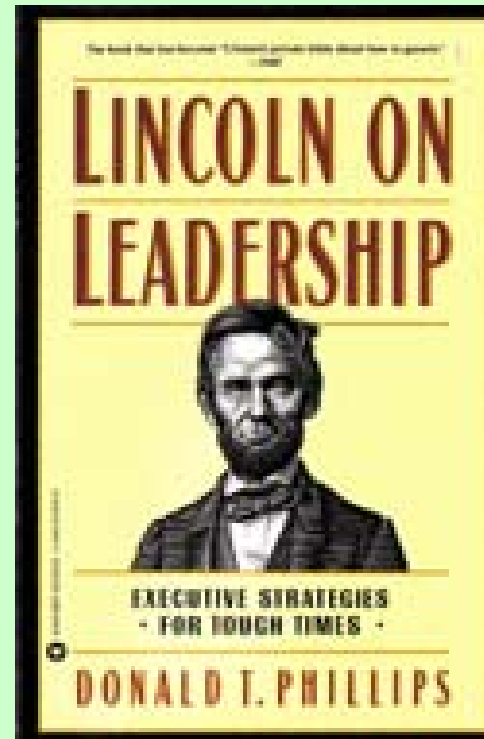
- Only ten days before Lincoln took the oath of office the Confederate States seceded.
- On taking office, Lincoln was viewed by his **own** advisors as nothing more than a gawky, second-rate country lawyer with no leadership experience
- “Lincoln went on to become the honored and revered president in history”

# Leadership

- “Leader” – a primary shoot of a plant through which the organism lives and thrives
- “Leader’s ability to embody and communicate the company’s vision”
- Aspirations, values/motivations of both leader and followers
- People can relate to concrete illustrations
  - Lincoln gives tangible examples

# Four parts

- I. People
- II. Character
- III. Endeavour
- IV. Communication



# People & Character

## **I. People**

- Get out of the office and circulate among the troops
- Build strong alliances
- Persuade rather than coerce

## **II. Character**

- Honesty and integrity are the best policies
- Never act out of vengeance or spite
- Have the courage to handle unjust criticism
- Be a master of paradox

# Endeavour & Communication

## **III. Endeavour**

- Exercise a strong hand – Be decisive
- Lead by being led
- Set goals and be results-oriented
- Keep searching until you find your “Grant”
- Encourage innovation

## **IV. Communication**

- Master the art of public speaking
- Influence people through conversation and storytelling
- Preach vision and continually reaffirm it



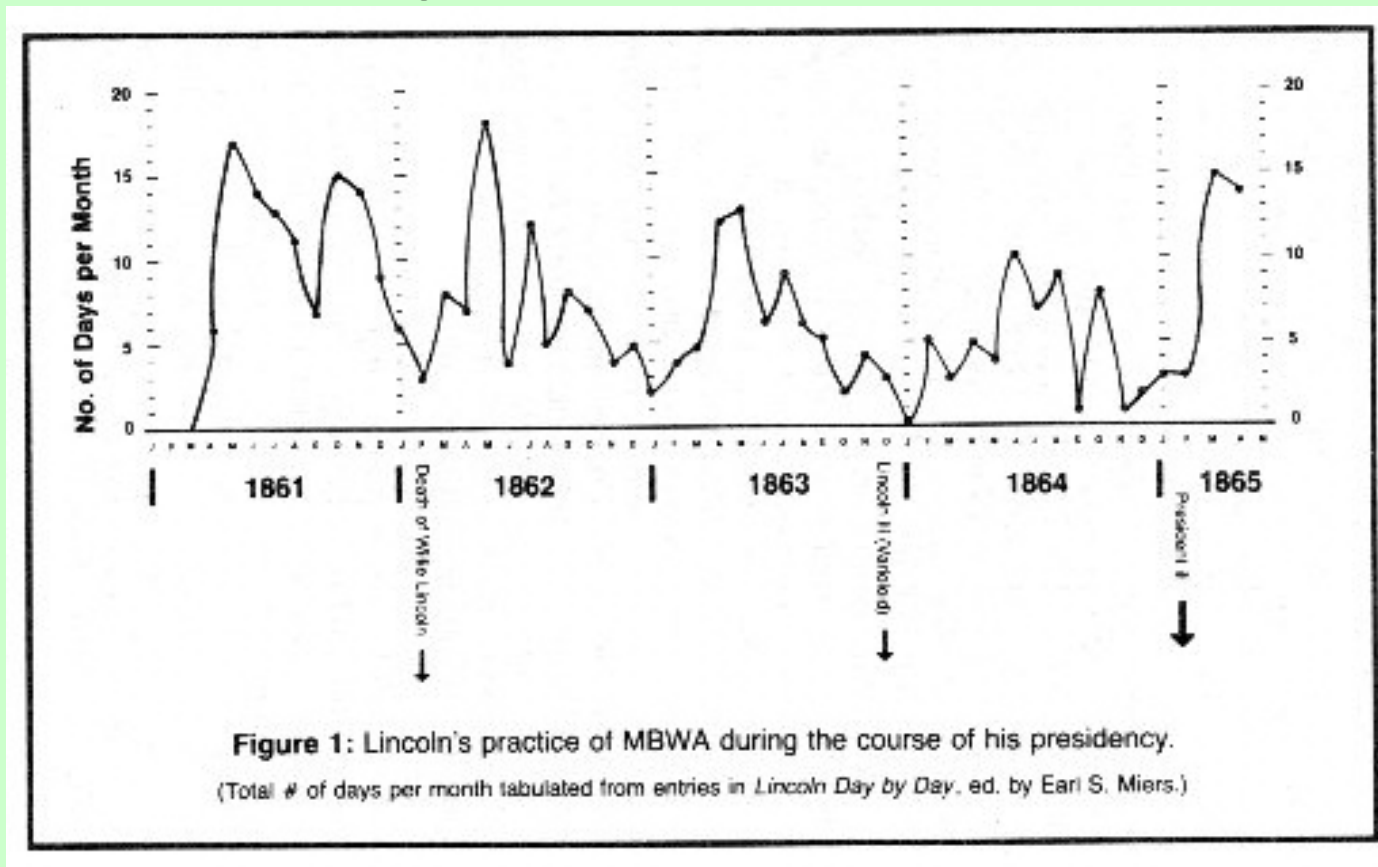
# Get out of the Office and Circulate Among the Troops

Lincoln describing Gen. John C. Fremont (Dept of the West):

- “He is losing the confidence and respect of men near him, whose support any man in his position must have to be successful.
- “His cardinal mistake is that he isolates himself, and allows nobody to see him; and by which he does not know what is going on in the very matter he is dealing with”.
- With this description, says the author, Lincoln revealed the cornerstone of his own personal leadership philosophy, an approach that would become part of a revolution in modern leadership thinking 100 years later when it was dubbed ‘MBWA’ by Peters & Waterman in *‘In Search of Excellence’*.

# Management by Wandering Around

Phillips demonstrates how much Lincoln was in part out of the office with a graph:



# Influence by storytelling

Lincoln used

- Storytelling
- Anecdotes
- Honour
- Word pictures
- Quotations



to get a point across and be adopted by his audience – persuade rather than coerce.

# Be a Master of Paradox

Take the following statements made between March 1861 and July 1862:

- Take *time* and think *well* upon a subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time
  - Delay is ruining us
  - *Time* is everything. Please act in view of this
  - Make haste slowly
- Lincoln's adept handling of paradox was later confirmed by recent leadership studies as an essential skill for all leaders (referring to Tom Peters book *Thriving on Chaos*)

# Be proactive rather than reactive

- Allow time to cool off
- Avoid conflict over insignificant matters
  - “A man has not time to spend half his life in quarrels”
- Write letters and never send them
- Leadership could bring out the worst in us
- By being more proactive than reactive we can better focus on the required outcome



# Lead by being led

Encouraging subordinates to believe they were doing the leading

- Played to Lincoln's need for honesty, integrity and human dignity
- Encouraged innovation and risk-taking
- Lincoln had the enviable quality of being able to listen to people without being threatened himself. He possessed open-mindedness and flexibility.

# Accept responsibility when things go wrong

- He tried to let his generals know when they failed he failed too
  - This also encouraged innovation and risk-taking
- Lincoln accepted responsibility for battle losses
  - McClellan at Second Bull Run
- Let generals know when they were right and he was wrong
- Praise when initiative taken



# Overview

- Dennett: Each generation has created its own Lincoln
- A chameleon?
- The next book in the series: “Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun”







# Discussion

- In your understanding, does the definition of leadership imply agreement of those being lead?
- Do you think of Lincoln as sometimes a paradox? Appearing to agree with different points of view or do you feel he usually stood for clear values?
- Is it your impression from what you know about Lincoln that the author is trying to shoe-horn Lincoln into 1990s management theories?