



AN INTERVIEW WITH

WARREN BENNIS

BY JOEL KURTZMAN

During his long and fruitful career, Warren Bennis has been a student, soldier, scholar, university provost, university president, student of leadership and group dynamics and distinguished professor.

Mr. Bennis first came to prominence in the early 1960's, when he taught social sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1964, in the midst of the Cold War, Mr. Bennis and a co-author, Philip Slater, who was also a social scientist, published a seminal article in the Harvard Business Review — "Is Democracy Inevitable?" — in which they argued that democracy was an unstoppable force. Although the article proved to be correct, it was considered radical at the time, given the formidable power of the Soviet Union.

Even more radical — and timely now — is the reasoning upon which the argument

was based. The premise of the piece is that democracy is a system of values superior and more functional than the values of other systems. Values, in the view of Mr. Bennis, are not simply a collection of a group's mores and attitudes. Rather, they determine which things get done by a group, and how well they are done. As such, they are vital to a group's chances of reaching its goals.

The logic of Mr. Bennis's thinking as it pertained to government carried through to his later work. As he turned to the study of business, he once again raised the issue of values. Great leaders are able to accomplish great feats and prod their followers into doing the same, he wrote, because they are able to articulate, focus and even embody the values of the groups they lead. Not only do different types of groups demand different types of

leaders, it is often very difficult to determine whether the leader shapes the group or the group offers up the leader.

Some groups are better than others, Mr. Bennis observed, and occasionally, in business and elsewhere, they rise to the level of what he terms "Great Groups." How do Great Groups differ from the ordinary kind? They are able to achieve tremendous successes, often with very limited resources, he notes in his new book, "Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration" (Addison-Wesley), which he wrote with Patricia Ward Biederman. In short, they are high-commitment, high-performance, high-output organizations.

In some instances, as with the scientists who developed the atomic bomb in the Manhattan Project or the engineers who came together in Lockheed's celebrated Skunk Works,

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a handful of men and women and their leaders have opened up new technological territories, with outcomes that have reshaped the world. In others, as with the Great Group that makes up Disney's feature animation studio, small cadres of people have changed the face of the arts and entertainment.

To succeed, a Great Group usually requires two sharply different leadership roles to be filled. One role — that of the visionary — is necessary if a Great Group is to set a goal and chart a course to it. The other — that of the protector of the vision, often an unsung hero — is needed to keep the harsh realities of the world at bay. Early on at Disney, Walt was the visionary, while brother Roy served as the protector. In the Manhattan Project, J. Robert Oppenheimer, a temperamental but visionary physicist, charted the course while Gen. Leslie R. Groves, a tough military man, ran interference. Occasionally, but not often, these two qualities can be found in the same person.

What follows are excerpts from a recent conversation with Mr. Bennis at his home in Santa Monica, Calif.

S&B: *Every company and manager is scrambling these days to figure out how to create a Great Group. But it is clearly a very difficult thing to do. I have been in countless meetings where the question being considered was blunt: "What would it take to get our group to be better, to do a bet-*

ter job?" And most people say, "Get rid of the guy who's heading our department." Is that the key? How much does the leader inhibit or help? How much is it up to the group itself?

WARREN BENNIS: Without a terrific leader, you're not going to have a Great Group. But it is also true that you're not going to have a great leader without a Great Group.

S&B: *The leader makes the group and the group makes the leader?*



WARREN BENNIS: Yes. I realized this close to home, when I was a young man in World War II.

I was what was called a "replacement officer." It's a macabre name — I was sort of anesthetized to the full

meaning of it. It was right after the Battle of the Bulge — in December 1944 — and I was a green platoon leader in the infantry. The first few days, the captain of the company said, "Just do everything I do. Just mimic me."

But when I got back to my platoon, the men were laughing at me. It turned out that the captain had been in combat a little too long and he was getting deaf. That meant he wasn't diving for cover until just nanoseconds before the bombs hit. And that was not so funny for me.

So these platoon guys — all were experienced veterans, most were 25 or older and some were even college graduates — helped train me, a 19-year-old second lieutenant just out of Fort Benning, to become their leader. They taught me everything from how to hit the ground and dig a foxhole to how to make a decent meal out of C rations and direct my scouts. They taught me all the ropes.

They wanted me to lead them and they made it possible for me to do that. I was obviously scared to death at what I was thrust into and they were able to make me into something beyond my dreams. That was a Great Group.

S&B: *And what did you give to them?*

WARREN BENNIS: I knew some things they didn't know. I had just gotten through four months of the best kind

of advanced military training, and I was able to impart some things about strategy. With that knowledge, I was able to give them some sense of perspective about where we were and where the war was going — a glimpse of the big picture — and that gave them an idea of when we were going to be relieved, which was very important.

And I gave them a sense of confidence, which in a way is paradoxical, given the fact that I joined the platoon without any real experience. Yet, somehow or other, they gave me the confidence and then later I gave them the confidence. I think we both realized that we were playing for mortal stakes and that in a morbid sense, our fates were correlated.

S&B: *How do we take your extraordinary battlefield experience and apply it to the everyday office setting and factory floor? Just what is needed to make a group succeed?*

WARREN BENNIS: I don't feel altogether comfortable in saying, "Here are the steps to Great Groups." In fact, one of the questions that has perplexed me is how do you take the experiences and lessons of the extraordinary groups described in my book and apply them to regular, ordinary organizations?

Great Groups are vivid Utopias. They are a picture of the way organizations ought to look — sort of like a set of aspirations and a graphic illustration of what's possible. So how do we, in our mundane, quotidian organizations, create these things? I think there are a number of factors that we can look at.

Perhaps the key factor, and it's almost a banal thing to say, is finding a *meaning* in what you do. That is, how do you make people feel that what they're doing is somewhat equivalent to a search for the Holy Grail?

This is more than just having a vision. You can see the difference in the often-cited way in which Steve Jobs brought in John Sculley to take over Apple. At the time, Sculley was destined to be the head of Pepsico. The clincher came when Jobs asked him, "How many more years of your life do you want to spend making colored water when you can have an opportunity to come here and change the world?"

So, the vision must have meaning, a deep meaning. It has to have some connection with changing the world, with a mission from God.

S&B: *In your book, you also say that serendipity is involved. A Great Group must have not only a meaningful vision but also the ability to seize opportunities to fulfill that vision. How it pulls that off is something of a mystery. The groups that you describe as great are, in a sense, closed entities, yet they are somehow in touch with the market.*

WARREN BENNIS: That's right. I'm not sure it amounts to a paradox but it certainly is really strange. On the one hand, these groups are self-contained island communities. On the other, they have antennae that extend to the outside.

For example, J. Robert Oppenheimer, the creative force behind the Manhattan Project, knew where to go to find the best young physicists to de-

velop the atomic bomb. So, although he was in Los Alamos, and God knows that was a woebegone place, he was able to go around the country to recruit all of the best minds that were available. He had a Rolodex in his head long before the actual device was invented.

Put another way, the groups are enclosed and protected, yet also have the networks to know what's going on in the "real" world.

S&B: *But how do they do that? After all, many of the great things that emerge from these groups are very radical departures. And, yet, they fit somehow in the context of a market, whether it's the marketplace of ideas or the market for movies or computers.*

WARREN BENNIS: That's where another aspect of serendipity comes in, because you could have a group that is isolated, that is doing what it thinks may be a remarkable paradigmatic breakthrough, and, in fact, it has no resonance with the market, has no connection with what the needs or interests of people are. This is where there's a lot of luck involved. It is also where leadership counts.

S&B: *Where does the leader fit into the picture?*

WARREN BENNIS: To begin with, a leader is needed to protect the group from disruptive outside forces yet possess a sort of proverbial Rolodex in the sky to know what's going on. Leaders like Bob Taylor and John Seely Brown at the Palo Alto Research Center (PARC), Peter Schneider and Jeffrey Katzenberg at Disney and Kel-

ly Johnson at Lockheed were all able to recruit their troops and protect them from the “suits,” or what they used to call “toner heads” at Xerox, and also have a strong connection with the outside world. In that sense, the leaders are truly protectors. Kelly Johnson, for example, got himself on

kind of split in the case of Oppenheimer and Gen. Leslie R. Groves, the military’s man in charge of the Manhattan Project.

In a Great Group, you always have to have some patrician in the background, whether it’s Kelly Johnson or Bob Taylor, who can talk to the suits.

seizes me.” He had a great smell for an idea, like a good editor.

The quality of leadership I’m describing comes through in a story I heard about the difference between having dinner with Prime Minister Gladstone and with Prime Minister Disraeli. When you had dinner with Gladstone, you were left feeling that he was the wittiest, the most brilliant, the most charming person you had ever met. But after dinner with Disraeli, you felt that *you* were the wittiest, the most intelligent, the most charming person.

Leaders of Great Groups are more like Disraeli than Gladstone. My God, they have to be. I mean, Oppenheimer never won the Nobel Prize, but think of the numbers of people in the Manhattan Project who did.

What I’m getting at is that leaders are almost like midwives of ideas. They really understand what is going on. You know when you come to them with an idea, they aren’t going to just say, “Well, that’s nice, and maybe we can use that.”

S&B: *So is it the leader’s function to find the link to the market? Is the leader the person who makes it all practical and says, “This is a wonderful idea, but if somehow you put it into a spreadsheet, we can sell a million of these”?*

WARREN BENNIS: Yes, exactly. He is the guy who goes to the outside world, who can bring to an audience of executives the work of the true creative genius in the group. He is the salesman. But salesman is a trivializing word. He is the translator, facilitator, the articulating point between the group’s ge-

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the Lockheed board so he could keep the bureaucrats away from the creativity going on.

S&B: *Can you go into that role a little bit? A Great Group has a creative leader, but it also has a protector?*

WARREN BENNIS: Well, those roles seem to be split in many cases. Let’s take the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. There, it was Jerry Wiesner, M.I.T.’s president, who was the protector, who was able to actually get the money to get the building, and protect that money from the other departments and deans, who would’ve liked it to have gone into their particular fiefdoms. But it was people like Nick Negroponte and others who were the creative animators of the place. So, you have that split role. It was that same

The creator-protector roles don’t have to be split, but they often are.

S&B: *A leader could embody both roles, even though they represent different states of mind and different ways of operating?*

WARREN BENNIS: Yes, they can be embodied in the same person, and for a very interesting reason: the leader, whether filling one of these roles or both, is rarely the brightest person in the group. Rather, they have extraordinary taste, which makes them more curators than creators. They are appreciators of talent and nurturers of talent and they have the ability to recognize valuable ideas. I think it was Ben Rich, who succeeded Kelly Johnson at Lockheed, who said to me, “I always know a good idea when I hear it, because of the feeling of terror that

“ THE LEADER IS A COMPLETER, the person who fills the gap that others may not be filling at a particular time.”

nius, who is doing great things, producing big and innovative ideas, and the public, the market. It is being able to sell the dream to the people who aren't close to it.

S&B: *Let's back up a bit to when the group is first coming together. One of the leader's primary responsibilities is recruitment. These are very tightknit teams. How do you find the right people? And how do you keep out those who might break up the team?*

WARREN BENNIS: It starts with a need for people who can play together in the sandbox, in the words of Peter Schneider, president of Disney's feature animation studio. That means a sense of compatibility and a willingness to take the work very seriously. It also means that the team ought to have the right to say who's going to join and who isn't, which sometimes means subjecting the recruit to something akin to a grueling, hazing experience.

There is also a great deal to be said about self-nomination. People smell out the group that they may want to join. When a certain field gets hot — and right now it is neuroscience — bright young people are drawn almost like iron filings to a magnet.

Still, you'll make mistakes, because it's a very chancy game and you can't always predict well, even with the wisdom of a good group.

S&B: *I recall a study about AT&T which found that the people who did best were those who could fill the gaps. They could run around, they had networks, they could create new networks and they could fill the holes in their own knowledge. And they just had a sense of how to do it. Now, on a bigger level, is that how a team should be managed?*

WARREN BENNIS: I think so. One theory I have about these Great Groups is that the leader is a completer, the person who fills the gap that others may not be filling at a particular time. That means having the protean quality of being able to move into different kinds of roles — and having the capacity to abandon his or her ego to the talents of others, which is such a critical thing.

That is one of the reasons why I'm rather concerned now about Disney's Michael Eisner. With all of Mike Ovitz's problems, I wish that Eisner would have been able to create a space and a role for the best utilization of his talents. I know that the world is down on Ovitz, but my concern is over how Eisner was unable to fully utilize and work Ovitz into the team at Disney. I think that's a primary function of a Great Group. And, frankly, Disney does not have a Great Group at the top at this moment.

S&B: *Let's stay with Disney for a mo-*

ment, and talk about the role of Roy E. Disney as the guardian of the company's values in the mid-80's. The son of Roy O., who was the co-founder of the company and the protector of its values in his day, Roy E. was sometimes cruelly called “the idiot nephew” by Walt Disney. Yet, in 1984, he thwarted a takeover attempt and started to put together the great team of Michael Eisner and Frank Wells. In some way, he was able to take responsibility to recreate the mix at a time when the company had lost its way. How did he do that?

WARREN BENNIS: Roy is one of the easiest people to underestimate. But he's really an extraordinary man, totally under-acknowledged by the world but fully acknowledged within Disney. He is a keen, deep listener, and he just had that faith, that conviction, about what it was going to take to re-make Disney.

S&B: *Can you write the specs of a Roy, of someone who could do the same job for other groups?*

WARREN BENNIS: He doesn't get in the hair of others, he doesn't hover. Totally supportive. Protector of a dream, guardian of the group's meaning.

That would be the main thing. At Disney right now, the one feature animation film each year brings in roughly 40 percent of the profits. Not the revenue, but the profits. It is entirely

understandable why Eisner would want to make two or even three a year. But I doubt if they can do that with the same level of creativity.

Roy Disney is simply a beautiful example of a protector, the translator, the presence on the board, and his relationship with Peter Schneider, the head of feature animation, is extremely close. There's got to be a partnership between the two. Kelly Johnson and the people at Lockheed's Skunk Works also had that.

S&B: *But, as you have said, being a protector is not enough. Look at what is happening at Apple Computer. After Apple lost its creative force, it brought in Gilbert Amelio to fill the General Groves role. Now Amelio is bringing back the creative force by rehiring Steve Jobs. Is this the makings of a new Great Group?*

WARREN BENNIS: That was the smartest thing Amelio has done. Jobs is a great salesman and he can also use talent. And much like it was with Walt Disney, people desperately want to please him.

Indeed, the variation of these leaders is an interesting thing, because whereas Bob Taylor at PARC would nurture and treasure and cherish, people like Walt Disney and Steve Jobs were also given to moments, almost like a bipolar personality, in which they could be quite mean, humiliating people in public. Katzenberg, too, can be very, very difficult. Still, people want desperately to please them.

S&B: *Why do people respond that way?*

WARREN BENNIS: These leaders are the incarnation of the dream, of a

form of excellence. Jobs and Disney are incarnations of what it was that would make that group great. And you want to live up to that, you want to achieve that.

When I think about the leaders that I've written about, they have certain things in common: they provide direction and meaning, they generate and sustain trust, they are purveyors of hope, they are people who get results.

But their personalities vary enormously, and a Walt Disney and a Steve Jobs are not your textbook, Warren Bennis-type leaders whom we've enshrined in the management literature. They've got this incredible sense of spotting talent. Though they have pre-Copernican egos, they are able to get people who can do things that they can't. That means they are able to abandon those huge egos to the talents of others.

S&B: *Personalities aside, how do leaders know how far they have led? You certainly know, if you're Disney, whether "Pocahontas" is a success or a flop. And, of course, you know the Manhattan Project got the result it sought. But as for the rest, is it important for a leader to have a sense of measures and milestones?*

WARREN BENNIS: Absolutely. Not only must there be a deadline, but also some clear metrics — you've got to keep that in front of the group. And, with monotonous regularity, the leader must keep reminding people of what's important. If the group doesn't produce by a date certain, then "the Germans are going to get it first" or

"some other competitor is going to do this new PC before us." There's always got to be that kind of haunting sense of a deadline.

These are fiercely competitive groups, and the only way they can be fiercely competitive is knowing there's a date, there are metrics and there's a product. Great Groups have to really ship.

S&B: *By definition, these groups are going into uncharted territory. How do you know what the metrics should be?*

WARREN BENNIS: Sometimes, you don't. That sense that you could do something that no one else has done is almost unwarranted optimism. How in the hell did they know they could really make an atomic bomb? Until the morning they exploded the first one, they really weren't sure. They had to have an innocence about them — they did not know it couldn't be done. That's why youth is very interesting here, because they don't know what they don't know.

So how do you get a metric? You get it through a product and a deadline. I don't think you can quite get the metrics from the usual sense, a priori.

S&B: *Putting all this together, it seems clear that these Great Groups are very special creatures indeed. Which means that you can't run a whole company as a Great Group.*

WARREN BENNIS: No, I don't think you can. It would be very difficult to imagine a large organization filled at every moment in time with Great Groups. But it's imperative that line officers and, certainly, HR people and

C.E.O.'s be aware of the conditions that can create electrifying groups that make a real difference — and that they strive to provide a home for them.

But how do you make every other group in the organization give that group, and the people in that group, a sense that what they are doing really has meaning to them? The problem is that lots of people in organizations may have vision, but there's absolutely zero meaning to what they're doing. They've actually forgotten why they are there, which is why bureaucracies become stodgy and obsolete and filled with inertia.

So, the lessons from Great Groups are important for every organization because they encourage us to aspire to be something more than we are. You're never going to quite make it, but you better be damn aware of what can happen when you can create, or be a part of, the kind of group that's going to make a difference, rather than the kind of humdrum, boring, drifting kind of organization we see too often.

So, yes, it's hard for me to imagine one organization, especially a large one, with hundreds of hives of Great Groups. But the lessons here — about leadership, meaning, recruiting and what bureaucracies have to do to protect, basically, their human capital and their intellectual capital — these lessons are just terribly important for people to be aware of.

S&B: *Now, every once in a while, you hear of a Great Group arising spontaneously, so to speak. Within an organization that has lots of excellent people — you might take a pharmaceutical*

company like Merck — suddenly the neuroscience or the cardio group seems to be just blooming, flourishing beyond what anyone had expected. How does this sort of spontaneous greatness happen? Is this driven by a leader? Is it a matter of the right chemistry, no pun intended?

WARREN BENNIS: That's a combination of all of those things. Part of it may be serendipitous and plain luck, that they hit upon a vein, almost like drilling. You notice in the interviews that you do — and I've done a lot — that you sort of drift around and you throw out probes. Especially when interviewing famous people, because they have a script and they've told their famous stories dozens of times. But every once in a while, you can ask a question and, boy, you just hit, like a vein opens up. So, that's part of it. It could be an area, in taking Merck, where they suddenly realize, "Gee, this drug can cure river blindness," and then it has a resonance with the market and there are a lot of byproducts that come out of it. And somehow there are a number of very bright people in that venue who are around.

I'm not sure you can create such a group, but you can permit it when you spot it, and then say, O.K., you've got that strike and now you have to manage it to bring it in. You can't predict the strike all the time, but you have to be very aware of those marvelous, propitious moments — and to not let them off the hook.

S&B: *There's a certain intensity in these groups. You can recognize it when you*

walk into a particular part of the company, whether it's happening there or not. In the absence of a Great Group, can a bureaucratic, humdrum company learn to produce great products, albeit slower and more methodically?

WARREN BENNIS: Yes. Let's imagine that a company brings me in to talk about the application of Great Groups to its business — it doesn't matter what company or what business. I would tell them: "Look, you've all been, one time in your life, at least, in a terrific group, one in which you've never felt more creative and that you really enjoyed. It could have been a political campaign, it could have been a play you were in. Write down some characteristics of that group."

Let's say there are 15 or 20 people in the audience, so you then put them at a blackboard or easel. "O.K., now let's take the most significant of these characteristics — which are the ones that most of you said? We'll just say there are six or seven of these dimensions."

Now, some of this may be tough to talk about, because the thing they're going to say is that the leader was of a certain kind, that he had this charisma or this sense of letting go, or had the taste to bring in a lot of good people. And then you can start saying, "Well, how do you think you can get to this, and can you sustain it?"

So, the real question that is implied in many of your questions is, can these groups not only be created within your normal Fortune 1000 company, but can they also be sustained? We can go a long way toward actually saying, "O.K., what the hell are we doing here

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together? What are we really trying to produce? What is it that has meaning for us, that’s going to keep us motivated? Let’s take a look at our leadership. Let’s take a look at our compatibility. Let’s take a look at whether we have any moments of honoring or celebrating our achievements. Let’s take a look at our metrics.”

In a lot of ways, you can get groups to be reflective about their shortcomings and the things they could do to make themselves, if not great in the sense of the Manhattan Project, a hell of a lot better than they now are. That would be very useful.

S&B: *When you were talking earlier about your experience in the war, you stressed the importance of sharing some of your knowledge with the troops, of giving them a sense of the big picture. Whether I’m leading a Great Group or just a humdrum one, how much knowledge should I reveal, how much should I hold back?*

WARREN BENNIS: You should reveal as much as possible, but without scaring people. What I learned as a university president was that you can’t always talk about your own insecurities. You can’t talk about all the perceived difficulties that you might see, by virtue of your position, and that the others can’t see. You don’t want to share things that will diminish the en-

thusiasm. People may not believe that their leaders are omniscient, but they have a certain stake in thinking that a leader has enough of a sense of security to guide them through treacherous waters. One of the characteristics of leaders of Great Groups is perspective, providing a sense of destiny and awareness of the conditions they are up against.

S&B: *In the interest of openness, should you talk about threats to the group’s budget?*

WARREN BENNIS: It would depend. If you ever make an enemy of the bureaucrats, you can, and that would create a lot more cohesiveness within the group. Every Great Group invents or creates an enemy to preserve that kind of cohesiveness and sense of élan of “we can do it.”

If you have a budget shortage, and you’re not getting the kind of help you need, you may want to indicate, “Well, we’re going to have to do the best we can, given the budgets we’re getting from headquarters,” and just go with it that way.

I’d always rather err on the side of openness. But there’s a difference between optimum and maximum openness, and fixing that boundary is a judgment call. The art of leadership is knowing how much information you’re going to pass on — to keep peo-

ple motivated and to be as honest, as upfront, as you can. But, boy, there really are limits to that.

S&B: *We have been focusing on the Great Groups as models for success. What about groups that fail? Does that happen because the troops lose faith in the leader? Is the chemistry all wrong?*

WARREN BENNIS: Certainly, there is a loss of confidence in the leader and the leader’s ability to be coached back to the right track.

We need look no further than Bob Dole’s recent presidential campaign to see some of the common faces of failure. Three or four people from his campaign were speaking with different voices, people were quitting in droves before the campaign was over, there was a reduction in the number of sources for getting information. And real dissent wasn’t openly addressed.

S&B: *Can you explain what you mean regarding dissent?*

WARREN BENNIS: The best example I can think of is a political one, from Lyndon Johnson’s White House during the difficult days of Vietnam. George Ball would tell the President and his advisers, “Well, we’ve got to pull out.” And they would all dutifully listen and relieve their guilt that they weren’t listening to us, but it made no difference. They didn’t really want to hear dissent,

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and they would make a feeble show of it, by bringing in the one guy who was saying something different. Pretty soon, though, Ball was no longer invited to the meetings. So, you're hearing only one voice.

All of these factors happen in consequential failures. You circle the wagons, you stop listening to as many sources as you can, you get dissent which is public and not internal, because you domesticate it.

And the beauty of Great Groups is that they encourage dissent. They are the most verbal, argumentative entities. It is sort of like playing Frisbee with ideas, tossing ideas all over the place. If there is one word to characterize these groups it is logorrhea — these are people who can't shut up.

Disney has a summit meeting once a year in Aspen, and I've been to a couple of those. My God, the wise-cracks and the motor mouths. The culture of these groups is noisy. Their people feel free, they're outrageous.

S&B: *What about groups that fail?*

WARREN BENNIS: They are just the opposite. They cover up. They don't encourage different ideas, they don't reward them.

S&B: *Now, Eisner says he wants to cre-*

ate an organization in which failure is tolerated. If everyone is spouting off, if everyone has this high intensity, trying out new ideas, some are going to bite the dust. So does a Great Group have to tolerate either a wrong turn or an out-and-out failure?

WARREN BENNIS: By and large, yes. Obviously, you can't fail forever.

But that doesn't mean you go into anything thinking it will fail. There's a producer/director for whom I have the greatest respect, Sydney Pollack. He can get just about anyone to work for him because they know they will be in a terrific movie, one that hums and sings. He has the capacity to create these Great Groups every time he goes out, because he really does say, quoting Susan B. Anthony, "Failure is impossible."

One marvelous story that he told me was about the filming of "The Way We Were," with Barbra Streisand and Robert Redford. Barbra claimed that she couldn't cry, and would need amonia to get the tears flowing. But Pollack wanted tears without a prop. He knew that anyone capable of singing with her emotion could cry. So at the moment she was supposed to cry, he told his assistant director not to shoot until after he hugged her. When he did, the tears just burst forth, buckets of

them. It was a "blessed impulse," as he called it, that did the trick.

Well, when you work with Pollack, one thing you know is that you're in the hands of a very competent person. And that makes you — and the rest of the group — do more, perhaps, than you thought you could. It is the same kind of give and take that I experienced when I was the novice platoon leader, first getting confidence from the troops and then giving them confidence in return.

S&B: *Are there examples of very direct, top-down, hierarchical Great Groups? Or is there always this give and take?*

WARREN BENNIS: Always. I don't think you can have it without an incredible amount of rejoicing and celebrating and the freedom to express different ideas, crazy ideas, without being cut down. I'm not saying there always has to be a wise, sweet, touchy-feely leader. But there must always be a sense that a good idea really pays off. Even if you're facing the quintessential, most highly acclaimed C.E.O. in America right now, Jack Welch, you know that as tough as he is, if you really produce a terrific idea, the light bulbs will go off in his head. 

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