

Sandhill Cranes

Sandhill cranes are big birds, with long legs and necks, long pointed beaks and wing spans that can be more than six feet. Adults are gray with red crowns. Juveniles are gray, washed with brown.

Migratory cranes travel long distances, using routes learned from adults. During the migration, they congregate at major stopover spots. One of these is an island in the Tennessee River near Cleveland, and they always draw throngs of people for viewing.

Sandhill cranes have three remarkable qualities:

1. They rotate leadership. No one bird stays out in front all the time.
2. They choose leaders who can handle turbulence.
3. All during the time one bird is leading, the rest are honking their affirmation.

That works for the cranes. And it's not a bad model for a company.

Certainly, we need leaders who can handle turbulence and who are aware that leadership ought to be shared.

But very important, too: We should have an organization in which we are all honking encouragement.

--Beecher Hunter