

# Heroes need not apply

## Author tracks new trend in corporate leadership

By SUSAN SHULTZ  
Hour Staff Writer

**NORWALK** — As the author of "Creating We", Norwalk resident Judith Glaser examines and encourages what she says is a new trend in corporate leadership.

"The days of the "hero" leader, who's success is determined by how many followers he has, a type of wartime mentality, are fading," she said. Instead, Glaser said today's successful leader is one who inspires "fellowship" instead of "followership."

Glaser will be signing copies of her book on May 26th at Greg & Tony-Ouidad Salon, at 231 Post Road West in Westport from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The working environment in which competition and territorialism is a product of the ego-centric leader, according to Glaser's theory. She proposes that while our brains have evolved greatly from our earliest stages of development, human brains still carry a remainder of our "reptilian" brain.

"This is the part of the brain that has the instincts that cause us to protect our area, our territory, and has the eat or be eaten mentality," said Glaser. When our leader undermines our insecurity, these instincts come out.



Hour photo/MATTHEW VINCI

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Author Judith Glaser does a phone interview at her home in Norwalk.

# Author says smart leaders put 'we' over 'me'

From C5

"Rather than encourage divisional competition within the group, there are healthier ways for leaders to encourage productive competition," said Glaser. Some ways of doing this are setting a goal for the team together to beat previous sales records. "There is something very exciting about meeting a goal, and rising to the next level," she said.

An observation that Glaser has also made raises an interesting point about stereotypical and anecdotal influence on the difference between men and women.

"I've had many businesses come to me saying that a woman is too aggressive or competitive when the fact is that if a man was behaving the same way, it would be acceptable," she said. The stereotypical outlook that women by nature are more passive, and the concept of disagreements between them are simply "catfights," makes it harder for women to aggressively pursue success in the same method as their male counterparts.

Perhaps some of Glaser's insight into effective socialization within a community and how to create successful communication has to do with her background in anthropology and archeology. In college, Glaser and her fellow students were given the rare opportunity to participate in a Neolithic dig discovering the remains of Nomads from 6,000 years ago in

Czechoslovakia. Although the dig had been taking place for 25 years, and the American students only had a small plot to work with, she and her colleagues made a discovery that transformed the definition of the dig. "We found a potbelly stove, which shed a new light on the Neolithic level of innovation," she said.

Glaser often uses archeological references in her consultations with businesses, which she has been doing for 25 years. She is especially conscious of these ties when counseling leaders who take over an existing business.

"Sometimes leaders in a new position want to prove themselves quickly — they 'land on the ground running,' as they call it," she said. In their haste, Glaser said many new leaders will clean house to revitalize or make their mark on an organization rather than work with existing employees. This is especially true of long time employees.

"These leaders just don't want to make the effort, and don't realize these people carry the culture of the organization, and the stories of its origins," Glaser said. Leaders should mine the treasures carried in these long term employees, who she calls "water carriers" of an organization. She said that storyteller comes from these "water carriers," which carries the past, and shapes the present culture.

"Today's leaders want to develop their 'brand,' their 'cul-

ture,' and they are learning how to leverage that in the marketplace," said Glaser.

Another important phrase Glaser uses with leaders is the "power 'with' vs. power 'over.'" By knowing where the talent in their organization lies and understanding the challenges they face, they will be stronger leaders.

"If a leader comes in and fires at will, they destroy the culture and instill fear in the remaining staff — I've seen this happen — the productivity and morale goes down," she said.

Another tie-in to her anthropological background helped her determine that companies who hold regular "rituals" create very successful environments.

"A publishing company in New York holds regular Monday meetings, starting with the top leaders in the organization, examining current status and discussing future goals — after this meeting, each leader breaks off and meets with their own staff, and the cycle continues down to every level of staff," she said. In addition to the strength of the ritual concept, keeping every level of employee is key to reinforcing their confidence in themselves and their leaders.

"I've heard so many times that employees just want to know what's going on, even if things are status quo," said Glaser.

Glaser is optimistic that the corporate world is evolving into a "we-centric" environment.

Her clients have seen dramatic results just by changing their vocabulary when talking to their employees. Bringing personal lives and feelings into the workplace creates better relationships.

"I tell leaders to ask their employees how they feel about a change or concept, which is totally new to them," she said.

Admittance of this personal approach is only natural for better relationships because, as Glaser points out, we are, in fact, real people. Also, pointing out that this is a team effort makes a world of difference.

"When they say "we" need to achieve a certain goal, it triggers different more positive reactions mentally," said Glaser. It instills confidence and positive feelings, as opposed to just "telling" an employee what to do, which can inspire competition and territorialism.

However, Glaser is not saying that the "we" approach should completely overtake the workplace, but instead hopes for a balance.

"There is not just one side that wins, for the right balance, the "I" and "we" can exist together, and hopefully each can strengthen the other, and help each other grow," said Glaser.

*Greg & Tony-Ouidad Salon is (203) 226-6839; RSVP suggested. For more information on Judith Glaser, go to [www.benchmarkcommunicationsinc.com](http://www.benchmarkcommunicationsinc.com).*