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# Focus

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Squirrel Wisdom

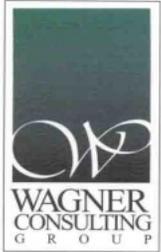
Relaxing on my backyard porch this weekend, I watched the antics of a dozen arboreal rodents. As they scampered among the dense thatch of hardwood trees, I first observed how they followed the paths available, without apparent concern about the relative merits of one branch over another. Their activities looked like play. "But there must be a deeper reason," I mused. Then I recalled what author Ken Blanchard called "The Spirit of the Squirrel" in his book *Gung Ho!*

Squirrels work both collaboratively and independently. They look out for each other, sound an alarm when a predator approaches, and band together to discourage interlopers from encroaching on their territory. Yet each is responsible for burying nuts for the winter. Blanchard's Spirit of the Squirrel is all about worthwhile work. In his model, core values guide all plans, decisions, and actions. That means everyone works toward a common goal. Within this value-driven environment, team members are accountable to each other but are individually responsible for results.

For people, the key is shared understanding that our work is important. Tiny squirrel brains understand how each animal's work is important to the big picture. As a leader of humans, can you aspire to less than that?

Squirrel wisdom, as exhibited in the leafy canopy, is all about straight ahead. Strong core values lead to unambiguous straight lines. Value-driven behaviors sustain the effort during challenging times and ensure that short-term solutions do not violate enduring principles.

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