

Lead like a goose, not a buffalo

As newly ordained owner of *The Nation*, Victor Navasky decided he needed some serious coaching in how to rescue his venerable but ailing magazine.

So he went to business school. Harvard Business School. He learned a bunch.

Ultimately, though, Navasky says he went to Harvard believing he was a buffalo and came back hoping he could become a goose.

Before the program, Navasky says he'd assumed that in his new role as his company's leader, his job would be to lead. Then he read a book called *Flight of the Buffalo*, which summed up what he was learning from his more progressive classmates: A good business doesn't function like a herd of buffalo, "with loyal followers doing what the lead buffalo wants them to do, going where the leader wants them to go." That's how American settlers decimated the buffalo herds, he explains. They'd kill the lead buffalo. While the rest of the herd stood around wondering what to do, the settlers killed them, too.

What a business actually needs, the book says and Navasky reports, is a flock of responsible, independent employees—like, say, a flock of geese, who fly in loose formation in the shape of a V. Within the organizational structure of geese, the leader constantly changes, so everybody knows how to lead.