Question & Answer

Stewart D. Friedman, professor, University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business

By Jane M. Von Bergen Inquirer Staff Writer

Right behind a heavy hand on the horn and nimble reflexes, a successful New York cabbie needs to develop the ability to listen.

"Everybody has a different journey, but I guess that's a hackneyed thing to say," recalled management professor and former cabbie Stewart D. Friedman — not realizing he had made a truly clever pun.

These days, the journey can be full of potholes, as more people lose their jobs and those who remain fear the road ahead.

Friedman, who directs the Wharton Work/Life Integration Project at the University of Pennsylvania, has been doing some listening and thinking about how front-line managers can lead their staffs through today's rough ride.

To help, he is drawing upon the principles in his book, Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life, published by Harvard Business Press last June.

The book suggests that the best leaders act with authenticity by looking inside to clarify what's important. Then, they act with integrity by respecting the whole person — themselves, their families, and the people who work with and for them.

See FRIEDMAN on C4

Stewart D. Friedman

Age: 56.

Jobs: On the management faculty at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

Books: "Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life."

Hometown: Merion.

Grew up: Brooklyn, N.Y.

Family: Wife, Hallie Boorstin Friedman, psychologist; children, Gabriel, 21; Harry, 16; and Lydia, 15.

Bad habit: Correcting, unasked, other people's grammatical errors.

Saturday morning ritual: Make coffee, get newspapers, read them while on elliptical machine.


Why: A compelling story that sheds new light on a critically important social issue: mental illness.

Proud of: His father, Victor Friedman, 78, a hairdresser at the Waldorf-Astoria whose first photography book, "Figs," is being published by Penguin in the fall.

Lesson learned: It pays to persist in pursuing your passion.
Management professor says the key is to listen

FRIEDMAN from C1
The path to that is understanding expectations of colleagues, family, friends, and self, and then crafting creative personal “change” experiments to build a richer life.

Question: Imagine this: On Friday, your laid-off people are packed up and marched out by security, as you, their direct supervisor, shake their hands and wish them luck. On Monday, you must face the demoralized staffers who survived. What next?
Answer: What I think is most useful is to somehow give people a clear picture of reality. In other words, don’t bullshit about what might have been or what might be, but be as transparent or honest as you can about what you know.

Q: And then?
A: You can never reiterate your common purpose enough. If you had nothing else to say, it would be: “What do we stand for together? What is it we are trying to achieve? What’s our collective purpose?”

Q: Tell a story about how, you know, you knew Pat all these years. And what great experiences you had working together. And why you admired her. And how painful this is. But this is our reality, and we have to move forward. You have to have some expression of empathy.
A: For an Inquirer series and a blog on the job scene, go to: http://go.philly.com/jobbing

Q: What is the worst thing you could do on that Monday morning?
A: The worst thing you could do is heighten the fear. You could deny the painful reality, and basically say, “Suck it up” and pour on the work. What you have to do instead is dial down the stress.

Q: Is there an opportunity in all this?
A: The current moment in our social and economic history — while devastating and tragic for so many people — has also created an opening for a reimagining, it seems to me, of where work fits in the context of life.