



# turning managers into leaders

## Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – July 2008

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*Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at [www.mergespeaks.com](http://www.mergespeaks.com) or 403-605-4756*

## Why grouper fish and moray eels work together

Consider the interesting symbiotic relationship that exists between ocean grouper fish and moray eels. Biologically, these two species differ in their habitat and hunting patterns. Groupers are predatory fish that seek out their food in open water during daylight hours. Moray eels, on the other hand, are nocturnal hunters that steal through reef crevices in their attempt to corner and ambush prey. Yet, both species have realized that it is to their advantage to work together. Natural grouper behaviour drives reef fish into crevices and natural eel behaviour drives the same fish into open water. By working together, both the groupers and the moray eels have greater hunting success than if they hunted alone. This documented phenomenon doesn't just occur by itself though. Research has shown that groupers actively visit eel crevices and entice the eel to leave its cranny during daylight hours. It takes effort (and some courage) for the groupers to go into a crevice to get the eel out, and it takes courage (and some effort) for the eel to leave the safety of its fissure. Yet, once both parties expend the energy, the overall outcome is improved.

As leaders in organizations, we can learn from this ocean phenomenon. In the day-to-day rush of getting things done, sometimes it's just easier to go it alone. If you've got a problem with a job process, or an issue with how work was completed, it's often easier to just fix the problem yourself than go to others for a solution. "It takes too long to explain it" and "It's more work to train somebody else, it's faster if I just get it done" are commonly-heard refrains. True, bringing another external person into an issue or problem takes more effort and occasionally more courage, but just like grouper fish and moray eels, the outcome of this increased effort and courage is an improved result. Like grouper fish and moray eels, these external people bring different skills and strengths to the table. You too can achieve improved results – better decisions, products and services – by recognizing the symbiosis that comes from working together, and by consciously and courageously seeking to create these opportunities.