

Program Description

Risk, Rewards, and Cannibalism

Modern Lessons of the Donner Party

Keynote, concurrent session, or teambuilding workshop

Themes: leadership, adapting to change, overcoming adversity, managing risk

It takes a gripping story to get people's attention, and the saga of the Donner Party does just that. This fast-paced presentation weaves the true story of the ill-fated wagon train with clear lessons for modern organizations.

A business professional who is a direct descendant of George Donner, Karl Ahlrichs has done significant personal research, including following the path of the actual wagon train and documenting the scenes with his award-winning photography. He has traveled the trail with historians and the descendants of other families in the party, and has a solid grasp of the compelling story.

Key points in this presentation:

- **Choose leaders well.** Egos and personal agendas can interfere with the choice of leader.
- **Pick your fights.** Know the difference between a perceived risk and an actual risk.
- **Stay open-minded.** Early decisions can box you in. Remain open to additional information that might change your actions.
- **Choose your advisors.** Make sure they have your best interests in mind.
- **Be a "Change Master".** Your possessions and old ways of thinking can quickly trap you.
- **Stick together.** Teamwork is vital when things get tough.
- **Be prepared.** Luck and forces outside your control hold the trump cards.
- **Adapt to the present.** Adjust your priorities to the situation.
- **When you succeed, learn from the experience. Mourn the losses, celebrate the wins and move on.**

All of these points are illustrated with true stories and vignettes from the trail. The audience will both relive history and learn practical lessons for modern life. Karl is a storyteller who is very comfortable with his material, and can connect material more than 150 years old with a modern audience of any level, in any business.

