

TEN PROPOSITIONS REGARDING LEADERSHIP

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by

Maj Keith A. Caver
Maj Peter H. Henson
LCDR John C. Jenista
LCDR Michael D. McClure

Maj Craig A. Franklin
Maj Susan E. Hirst
Maj Seth M. Junkins Jr.
Maj Innocent S. Phatshwane

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Abstract

The constantly changing world situation continues to place high demands upon leaders. Leaders at all levels must take their responsibilities to heart and keep leadership at the forefront of military thinking. In response, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force requested an Air Command and Staff College student research project on the development of key propositions regarding leadership. This research paper answers that tasking and forms the basis for a pocket sized booklet that parallels the recently published “Ten Propositions Regarding Airpower.”

The research project contains ten proposition statements, an accompanying paper supporting each proposition, and a historic case study illustrating the value of each proposition. The authors contend that these propositions are timeless in nature—they were applicable in the past and will continue to apply in the future. Webster’s dictionary defines a proposition as “something offered for consideration or acceptance.” As such, the ten propositions are meant to stimulate thought and discussion on leadership. This compilation of propositions is not, by any means, all inclusive.

Research methodology consisted of a literature search, personal interviews, and letters to current and past military leaders asking them to share their views on leadership. Responses to the interviews and letters generated ideas and confirmed, refined, and supported the propositions presented in this paper.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Finally, a definitive treatise on the key to leadership. A complete “how-to” book and a step-by-step written prescription that guarantees to provide all you would ever need to know about becoming a successful leader. NOT! In fact, this paper serves more as a blank canvas to help every leader, new or experienced, young or old, to “paint their own self-portrait” as a leader. The “Ten Propositions Regarding Leadership” project is thought provoking. It is designed that way at the request of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Ronald Fogleman. His desire is for leaders at all levels to reflect on their leadership style and the art of leadership itself. What better way to understand the “art” than by “painting a self-portrait.” Just like the artist though, one must study the subject first. So, first read, then consider, discuss, reflect and even disagree with these ten propositions. Many will argue that there are other, more important aspects of leadership not included. If this occurs, the authors can claim success—they’ve met their goal by stimulating some tough thinking (and even disagreement) on the subject of leadership. Hopefully, your reflection will result in your personal growth as a leader and ultimately benefit the nation you serve.

Research methodology for the project consisted of a literature search, personal interviews, and letters to current and past military leaders. The interviews with and

letters to military leaders sought their broad views on leadership—specifically how did they define leadership, did they have any timeless propositions or philosophies on leadership, did they have any personal experiences (or stories) that emphasized the value of their specific philosophies, and finally, was there a leader somewhere during their career who they looked up to and emulated (and if so, why)? Responses to the interviews and letters generated ideas and also provided a living context for the propositions.

The target audience for these propositions is the junior non-commissioned officer to four star general (and their civilian equivalents). The goal is to keep leadership “on the front-burner” of every military members’ thoughts and actions. The products from this project include this research paper, a multi-media ToolBook and a future pocket-sized booklet. These propositions could be useful throughout the Department of Defense (DOD) in a variety of settings. Any DOD organization could develop a year long leadership training program based on these propositions. For example, an Air Force wing could base its leadership training on one of the ten propositions per month and then use the last two months as a review of the propositions in total. Additionally, appropriate levels of professional military education can incorporate these propositions as part of their leadership curriculum. The authors hope that this project can serve as one of many tools in achieving the goal of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Fogleman—to keep leadership at the forefront of our thinking!

Chapter 2

Leaders that Chart a Vision Prepare Themselves and Their Organization for the Challenges of Tomorrow

Picture yourself in the early American west. You are the intrepid wild west scout trusted with guiding a wagon train, filled with helpless pilgrims and tenderfeet, across uncharted territory to the promised land of California. To make matters worse, this is your first job out of scout school. You have a rudimentary map in your hand but it is of little use—heading west is new to you. The only thing you have that makes you the leader is the scout school graduation certificate and the unshakable urge and desire to head west, to follow the setting sun, no matter what. What will get the leader and the people under his care to California? The leader’s vision will bring them through. Nothing will stand between the scout and successfully reaching California because that vision of getting there is firmly in mind. According to Warren Bennis, in *On Becoming A Leader*, the “compelling goal” of the leader and the “guiding purpose” the leader has for the organization are absolutely critical to successful leadership.¹ A closer examination of both personal and organizational vision, as well as the leader’s need to consistently evaluate them, explains how charting a vision prepares leaders and their organizations for tomorrow’s challenges.

A personal vision can create or define leaders. Leaders are often those who see what needs to be done and dash forward to do it. Are they bolder than most or do they just have an ability to “see” through minutia and discern the very important matters? Whatever the answer, this ability to “see” clearly helps the leader develop their vision of themselves in the future. In a way, the leader’s personal vision supplies the power and energy to fuel their actions when moving toward that future self-portrait. This puts a spin on the old saying, “what comes first, the chicken or the egg,” because it asks “what comes first, the leader or the vision”? Bennis states that the leader’s personal vision actually is the *raison d’etre* for leadership because “vision is the way leaders invent themselves.”² Vision provides the leader a mental picture of themselves in the future—as a person and leader.

A leader’s personal vision is an important element in the recipe for successful leadership. This ingredient, the “guiding vision,” is likened to adding yeast to bread dough. Yeast causes dough to rise and results in edible bread; without it, bread remains flat and unpalatable. In a similar way, the leader’s vision causes a “rising” effect. Adding vision helps the leader provide well-developed and “palatable” leadership. As a result, leadership focuses beyond the immediate and is more future directed. The leader uses vision as a compass for guidance along their personal leadership journey. Bennis states that, “The leader has a clear idea of what he wants to do—professionally and personally—and the strength to persist in the face of setbacks, even failures. Unless you know where you’re going, and why, you cannot possibly get there.”³ This constancy of vision empowers the leader to act boldly under any circumstance with presence of mind and confidence.

There are many factors critical to the art of leadership. Bennis studied many leaders having similar leadership characteristics, but *all* had *one* factor in common: the capability to “manage the dream.”⁴ This ability to nurture and to “make real” their personal vision is characteristic of successful leaders. A leader with a personal vision is more than just goal-oriented. Personal vision provides the force and drive behind the leader’s actions and becomes the primary factor in leading successfully across unfamiliar or new territory. Vision gives life to the leader’s dream and helps make it a reality. As the German psychoanalyst Carl Jung stated, “A dream that is not understood remains a mere occurrence. Understood, it becomes a living experience.”⁵

An organization is made up of people and they need the leader to translate personal vision into organizational vision—to chart the course ahead for all to see. Proverbs 29:18 states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”⁶ Thus, vision serves as a guidepost towards the future and defines the organization’s overarching purpose. Organizational vision leads people towards a common dream and shared goals. It is important to successful leadership because it keeps the leader’s team, large or small, focused on success and on the future. Vision also provides a unifying team goal and protects against stagnation by guarding against the possibility for people to rest on past successes. Organizational vision points out and guides everyone towards the desired end-state—the leader’s conception and visualization of success. Don Ritchey, a CEO of a major US corporation, states, “A real essential for effective leadership is that you can’t force people to do very much. They have to want to, and most times I think they want to if they respect the individual who is out front, if they have confidence that the person has some sort of vision for the company.”⁷

Organizational vision can also challenge people to stretch beyond current capabilities and often beyond limitations. Burt Nanus, in his book *Visionary Leadership*, reveals that, “There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.”⁸ This vision must be alive in every level of the organization for it to bear fruit. Bennis states that, “Corporate vision operates on three levels: strategic, which is the organization’s overriding philosophy; tactical, which is that philosophy in action; and personal, which is that philosophy made manifest in the behavior of each employee.”⁹ The leader’s responsibilities include disseminating vision to all three levels. The vision needs to permeate the entire organization; failure to do so has serious consequences. A well-deployed organizational vision helps leaders provide a focus for the future while simultaneously challenging people in the present to make the most out of what they do now.

Finally, leaders must evaluate vision—before the vision fails or is inadequate to handle new challenges. Vision needs constant attention in light of the dynamic environment we live and work in. Perry Smith, in his book, *Taking Charge*, illustrates the need to monitor vision:

Leaders who are not planners are simply caretakers and gatekeepers. Though they may run efficient and effective organizations, they do not really serve the long-term interests of the institution unless they plan, set goals, and provide strategic vision. Leaders who care about their missions and about their people normally want to leave their organizations in better shape and with a clearer strategic direction than when they took over.¹⁰

The key lies in General Smith’s point that leaders “normally want to leave their organizations in better shape and with clearer strategic direction.” This implies leaders

have a responsibility to assess the current vision and then modify the vision when necessary. Scott, Jaffe, and Tobe in their book *Organizational Vision, Values, and Mission*, indicate that it is not unusual if enthusiasm for an established vision diminishes.¹¹ Leaders should consider the “visioning process” as an opportunity to re-energize and re-capture organizational vitality. This “visioning process” allows the organization to closely examine itself in light of its mission and purpose, or even the leader’s personal vision. The authors conclude that, “Visioning revisits the values and mission and engages the organization in seeing new possibilities.”¹² It becomes refreshing for leaders to take periodic looks at both personal and organizational vision. A modified or more applicable vision may evolve from this process of evaluation and serve to work better for the leader and the organization. A vision needs to be broad enough to incorporate the actions and products of the entire organization. According to General Ronald Yates, former Commander of the Air Force Materiel Command, a vision which only speaks to a small percentage of unit personnel is too narrow.¹³ Leaders may modify vision when needed, but care must be taken in doing so. The leader’s organizational vision should be clear, realistic yet inspiring—one that energizes and appeals to all members of the team. Ultimately, it is the leader, and not a committee, that creates the vision.

The strength and clarity of personal vision prepares leaders for greater things. Vision motivates and is a catalyst for action. A leader’s vision is the compelling goal and guiding purpose that drives them forward and provides the basic ingredient for successful leadership. The leader also provides a map to guide the organization towards the future. This map, or organizational vision, charts the course ahead and focuses everyone’s

attention on mission success in light of future challenges. Organizational vision serves to move people beyond their limitations and stretch individual capabilities for the good of all. Visions are dynamic and must be continuously evaluated by the leader. The goal is to ensure a renewed vision exists—one that prepares leaders and their organizations to take advantage of future challenges rather than falling prey to them.

Case Study: Edmund G. “Pat” Brown

Edmund G. “Pat” Brown was governor of California from 1958 through 1966. This period was characterized by fast growing population and even faster economic growth.¹⁴ California was a quickly developing, very dynamic, and huge state that clearly needed a leader with an eye towards the future—a leader with a vision grand enough for California’s potential. Governor Brown’s vision would be just that. He would put in place a foundation for California’s future growth based on three pillars: improved transportation, education, and water systems.¹⁵

Governor Brown’s vision provided the insight he used to visualize and understand what his state’s future transportation needs would be. His thoughtful and all-encompassing vision provided an accurate picture of just how important an efficient and modern transportation system would be to the continued growth and economic development of his state. His administration financed and built over 1,000 miles of modern freeways that would not only immediately smooth out intra-state transportation in the late 1950’s and through the 1960’s, but also be grand enough in planning and scope to avoid the future phenomena of transportation gridlock we experience sometimes today.¹⁶

The governor's vision also was large enough to recognize the role education would play in the future preeminence of his state. His commitment to education was not limited to the eight years of his tenure, rather, he focused much further ahead towards the future of state education in California. He viewed higher education as an investment in people—and the payoff in future growth, intellectually and economically, for California. Governor Brown's efforts would open nearly a dozen campuses of the University of California and the state college system. This was "the most accessible and inexpensive higher education system in the world"¹⁷ and Brown's vision was for it to benefit all Californians.

Finally, Governor Brown's visionary leadership illuminated and solved a potential statewide problem: future water availability. He recognized that water was a scarce resource for California yet there did not exist any formal way to address allocation issues. He understood the potential problem the issue of water rights could cause California between the water rich north on one side and the faster growing, but arid, south, on the other. Brown wisely saw the importance of this issue and dealt with it before it ever could become an insurmountable problem. His administration's efforts resulted in legislation that created the present day California water system. His efforts in the California Senate resulted in the authorization to build a 444 mile aqueduct to furnish the south with almost two billion gallons of water each day. David Broder states that, "it was a battle that only a visionary would have waged, but Brown was a man who believed—in a way few politicians do now—that government has enormous capacity to improve life for people."¹⁸

Governor Brown was a true visionary leader. He left a legacy to future Californians that reflected his commitment to them—even *before they were born*. His attention to vision, and his ability to envision the future, helped him put in place three key cornerstones that benefited many Californians: an improved transportation, education, and water system. As Broder states, “The things he was interested in gave California its future. The whole state is his monument.”¹⁹

Notes

¹ Warren Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1989), 6.

² *Ibid.*, 42.

³ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁶ King James Version, *The Holy Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984)

⁷ Bennis, 158.

⁸ Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992), 3.

⁹ Bennis, 186.

¹⁰ Perry M. Smith, *Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders*, (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), 9.

¹¹ Cynthia D. Scott, Ph.D. et al, *Organizational Vision, Values, and Mission* (Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications, 1993), 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹³ General (ret) Ronald Yates, telephone interview with ACSC Research Team 96-079, 26 February 1996.

¹⁴ David Broder, “California’s ‘Pat’ Brown Had No Mean Streak,” *The Montgomery Advertiser*, 21 February 1996, 14A.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

Character is the Cornerstone of Leadership—It Fosters Trust and Increases the Leader’s Effectiveness

Character defines the leader. It is not a facade or a tool—something the leader can pretend or pickup and take to work if needed that day. A leader’s character is their heart and soul and significantly impacts their leadership effectiveness. There are at least three pillars of character essential to leadership—the leader’s personal commitment to integrity, their selfless nature, and their enduring passion for the assigned mission. Collectively, these elements make up the leader’s character and serve as the cornerstone for enhancing effectiveness and for building trust in the leader’s ability.

Personal integrity, the first pillar of character essential to leadership, is reflected in the leader’s honorable behavior, honesty, and humility. Honorable behavior is much more than being morally and ethically correct. It means being worthy of respect and gaining the trust of superiors, peers, and subordinates by maintaining the highest standards of personal conduct. Leaders have a responsibility to uphold and reinforce expected societal and organizational norms—and people expect ethical and moral conduct from leaders. Leaders who fulfill these expectations, garner and maintain the respect necessary for effective leadership. According to John Dalton, Secretary of the

Navy, this commitment to honorable behavior is crucial to gaining the trust necessary for leadership. Dalton says:

It is a readiness issue, because without ethical leadership . . . there can be no trust by subordinates in the orders of their superiors. There can be none of the special esprit or bonding that we consider essential to the teamwork required . . . I view the ethics of moral behavior as one of the cornerstones of military leadership. Trust required for effective leadership requires a standard of behavior and the development of personal character that are in some aspects unique, but ultimately in keeping with the highest moral code of society; not the average, not the common denominator, but the highest.¹

In addition to honorable behavior, a leader's honesty plays an equally important role in enhancing their leadership effectiveness and fostering trust. Honesty means leaders must be truthful, frank when necessary, and always keep their word. Leaders say what they mean and do what they say! In doing so, they establish themselves as credible sources for information, advice, and feedback. Conversely, leaders who are dishonest quickly get a reputation for being unreliable and untrustworthy. Honesty is a way of life for the effective leader—it becomes second nature, habitual. In the *Journal of Leadership Studies*, Frank Toney emphasizes, "Honesty is essential to leadership. Effective leaders are credible, with excellent reputations, and high levels of integrity. . . . Honest leaders may be able to overcome a lack of expertise in other areas."² Toney implies that honesty in leadership carries as much, if not more, weight than professional competency. There is little hope for establishing trust in leadership without personal integrity built on honest communications and actions.

The final element of integrity, as it contributes to leadership effectiveness, is humility. Humility in leadership implies a deference to other's opinions, ideas, and contributions—leaders put themselves and others in the correct perspective. This is

critical to leadership for two reasons. First, humility provides a broader knowledge base for decision making. Few leaders do everything well or know every facet about an issue or situation. Leaders who recognize and accept their personal limitations open themselves up to a wealth of information, experience, and support from others. Second, humility reaffirms trust by giving credit where credit is due. By recognizing other's capabilities and contributions, leaders build a firm foundation of trust.³ Lieutenant General Patrick Caruana, Vice Commander of Air Force Space Command states, "I have over time developed a clear understanding of my strengths and weaknesses. Where I have a weakness I will get an expert or someone I can bounce my ideas off to ensure that the decisions I make are the best possible. . . . Do not hesitate to use the advice of people in all grades. . . . Once they realize that you trust them, they will do their utmost to provide you with the very best judgment if you will ask."⁴ Humility, the second aspect of integrity, enhances leadership by providing a broader foundation for decision making strengthened by trust.

Integrity is at the forefront of character. Integrity, exemplified through honorable behavior, honesty, and humility, enhances leadership effectiveness and builds trust. Warren Bennis, author of *On Becoming A Leader*, amply sums up this point saying, "Integrity is the basis of *trust*, which is not as much an ingredient of leadership as it is a product. It is the one quality that cannot be acquired, but must be earned. It is given by co-workers and followers, and without it, the leader can't function."⁵

The second pillar of character in leadership is a selfless nature—the willingness to subordinate self-interests in favor of a greater cause. Selflessness enhances leadership effectiveness and builds trust. Leaders demonstrate their selflessness through their

exercise of moral and physical courage. General John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, defines moral courage as a “. . . willingness to stand up for what we believe is right even if that stand is unpopular or contrary to conventional wisdom.”⁶ Leaders exercise moral courage when they choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong. General Matthew B. Ridgway, recalls an instance during World War II when he opposed plans for military action that could have put his 82nd Airborne Division unnecessarily in “harm’s way.” He recalls: “When the time comes that I must meet my Maker, the source of most humble pride to me will not be accomplishments in battle, but the fact that I was guided to make the decision to oppose this plan, at the risk of my career, right up to the Theater Commander.”⁷ General Ridgway epitomized selflessness by exercising the moral courage to speak up and protect his troops. A selfless nature, exhibited through moral courage, enhances leadership effectiveness by strengthening trust. Superiors, peers, and subordinates recognize the leader’s commitment to “doing the right thing.”

Another aspect of selflessness is physical courage. According to General Charles C. Krulak, Commandant of the Marine Corps, moral courage is “inextricably linked” with physical courage.⁸ Physical courage is a willingness to incur danger when necessary. Leaders must possess physical courage for two distinct reasons. First, leaders need to gain a fuller perspective of the problem, situation or battle at hand by leading from the “tip of the spear,” not from the rear. Leaders with physical courage make this a habit, not the exception, and lead more effectively with greater knowledge.⁹ Second, physical courage empowers leaders with a willingness to face greater danger than subordinates. This fosters trust—subordinates know you set the example and won’t ask them to take a

risk you wouldn't take yourself. This is equally important in peacetime as it is in the battlefield.¹⁰ Together, the increased knowledge and trust gained from exercising physical courage enhances leadership.

General "Chuck" Horner sums up the value of a selfless character to leadership. The General advises, "You must be selfless. . . . Once they (your people) trust your motivation and know you have their interests and the mission first and foremost in your mind, they will give endlessly of their initiative and talents."¹¹ The potential benefits of exercising moral and physical courage far outweigh any personal risk and reflect a selflessness of character essential to effective leadership.

Passion is the third and final pillar of character and contributes to both enhancing leadership and solidifying trust. Passion in leadership embodies two principles—enthusiasm and commitment. Enthusiasm can be defined as a zealousness or fervor for the task at hand, and is at the heart of any successful endeavor. Emory Folmar, the Mayor of Montgomery, Alabama, once said, "No good thing ever happens without enthusiasm. Every follower takes their lead from the level of intensity of their leaders . . . and leaders need to approach every decision as the cheerleader spurring their followers on to success."¹² Enthusiasm is contagious! When subordinates see the boss's excitement, they develop an enthusiastic, winning, and optimistic attitude.¹³ The leader with passion maintains an optimistic and positive outlook on the situation, inspiring hope where it appears none exists.¹⁴ When hope springs eternal, the leader's job is easier—subordinates are motivated!

Commitment, the second aspect of passion, is a wholehearted dedication to achieving objectives. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf contends, ". . . you are almost serving a

cause. It almost becomes a crusade. . . . Leadership is not a profession. Leadership is not an occupation. Leadership is a calling and requires a special kind of dedication, a special kind of belief.”¹⁵ Since the beginning of time, what has set effective leaders apart from the rest of the pack has been their unique perspective—their commitment to achieving difficult goals or to sticking with tasks long after they become mundane or boring to others. This dedication enhances leadership by reaffirming trust. Leaders demonstrate their commitment to something greater than themselves—their people and their responsibilities. Passionate leadership, reflected in the enthusiastic and dedicated efforts of leaders, often means the difference between success and failure.

Character is the cornerstone for leadership. Integrity—the leader’s honorable behavior, honesty, and humility; selflessness—exercised through moral and physical courage; and passion—realized in enthusiasm and commitment to a cause, are three pillars of character that define leaders, build trust, and improve their leadership effectiveness. General Shalikashvili captures the importance of character to leadership by saying, “Someone once said that men of genius are admired, men of wealth are envied, men of power are feared, but only men of character are trusted. Without trust, you cannot lead.”¹⁶

Case Study: The Batangan Peninsula

The location was South Vietnam, the Batangan Peninsula, in early 1970. Lieutenant Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf had recently assumed command of First Battalion, Sixth Infantry. Schwarzkopf had just increased the size of his patrol units from the standard 6-8 troops to 15-20 troops in order to tackle a lack of fighting spirit stemming

from morale problems (due to the previous lack of battalion leadership). His intent was to bolster the fighting confidence and spirit in a unit suffering from a “. . . shortage of capable junior officers and NCOs, and our draftees’ reluctance to fight.”¹⁷ Shortly thereafter, the brigade commander, Colonel Joe Clemons, a decorated Korean War and Vietnam veteran, and the Assistant Division Commander, an unnamed general, paid a visit to Schwarzkopf’s unit. The general, concerned about the low Viet Cong (VC) “body counts” from the 6th, was intent on devising a means to increase it. Schwarzkopf’s unit had been meticulously honest in reporting an actual number of VC killed instead of inflating the reports. The general demanded that Schwarzkopf increase VC body counts with more frequent enemy contact or engagements by splitting his forces into two- and three-man groups. Schwarzkopf recounts:

I explained that I’d just found it necessary to *increase* the size of our patrols. “Sir if you send these men out in two- or three-man groups, they’ll be scared to death and won’t fight. On top of that, very few know how to read a map. They won’t be able to tell us where they are, and we won’t be able to fire our artillery without endangering our own men.”

This made the general furious: “Well, that just sounds like a leadership problem to me! Obviously you need to exercise firmer control over the men in this battalion.”

Stung, I was on the brink of saying, “General, I’m sorry, but I cannot obey your order.” Luckily, Joe Clemons stepped in and said, “Sir, Schwarzkopf’s analysis is absolutely correct. What you’re suggesting would not be a wise course of action.” The general stormed out of the bunker, too angry to speak.

If Clemons hadn’t interposed himself, my career might have ended on the spot. The general was just vindictive enough to say, “That’s insubordination. Since you refuse to follow my orders, you are relieved of your command.” Instead, Clemons took the heat. It was the right thing to do - a commander sticks up for his subordinates when they’re right - yet it required tremendous moral courage.

The general moved to a different assignment the following week, but because of that incident and others where Clemons had stood up to him, he wrote an efficiency report that he had to know would effectively ruin Clemons' career.¹⁸

Colonel Clemons was not promoted to brigadier general and retired. This situation demonstrates several aspects of character and leadership, good and bad. The general, was a leader who couldn't take advice or honest feedback from subordinates. This lack of humility could have fostered an environment where subordinate leaders, "looking out for their own hides" and careers, would blindly execute irresponsible orders possibly leading to unnecessary loss of human life, violating their responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the their people. Contrast this environment with the one General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, from 1939 to 1945 created. Marshall *actively sought* the dissenting opinions of his subordinates, *demanding* honest opinions and feedback. "He did not want yes men."¹⁹ General Marshall showed humility through deference to other's opinions, ideas, and contributions. He put himself and others in the correct perspective and was willing to accept criticism and ideas from others, especially subordinates.

Lieutenant Colonel Schwarzkopf was a selfless, honest leader who balanced mission effectiveness with the welfare and lives of his men. In addition to his meticulous honesty in reporting accurate VC body-counts, he also had the moral courage to oppose a much senior officer whose order would have endangered his troops. Colonel Clemons also was a selfless leader concerned with the lives of the troops and the future of his own subordinate battalion commander. He intervened and "stood up for what was right" while keenly sensing the death knell about to fall on his distinguished Army career.

Despite this career ending setback, Colonel Joe Clemons could unquestionably look at himself in the mirror, content with his actions. His character revealed two pillars of character—integrity and selflessness.²⁰ In doing so, he was faithful to his subordinates, saved lives, and preserved the career of the man who would lead our forces to victory in Desert Storm. As one reflects on Colonel Clemons, a national hero who won the Distinguished Service Cross in the Korean War's Battle of Pork Chop Hill, one can see his greatest contribution to the Army may have been his example he set for future leaders through his character.

Notes

¹ John H. Dalton, "Ethics and Character are Readiness Issues," *Navy Times*, 14 February 1994, 31.

² Frank Toney, "CEOs: Actions and Traits That Result in Profitable Companies," *The Journal of Leadership Studies* 1, no. 4 (1994): 76.

³ Lieutenant General William G. Pagonis, USA, Retired, suggests, "regularly scheduled self-examinations are a must for building and sustaining leadership." He suggests using your strengths and avoiding your weaknesses. William G Pagonis, "The Work of a Leader," *Harvard Business Review*, November-December 1992, 122.

⁴ Lieutenant General Patrick A. Caruana, to ACSC Research Team 96-079, letter, subject: Leadership, 8 March 1996.

⁵ Warren Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1989), 41.

⁶ Joint Pub 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States, 10 January 1995, II-2.

⁷ General Matthew B. Ridgway, "Leadership," in Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, eds., *Military Leadership* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1992), 48.

⁸ General Charles C. Krulak, Commandant, United States Marine Corps, address to the Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Al., 16 January 1996.

⁹ Colonel (ret) Jack Broughton, in his book, *Thud Ridge*, highlighted the need for leaders to lead from the "tip of the spear," not from the rear, during his tour as a Vice Wing Commander in Vietnam saying, "It is important that you know the people you fly with and that you know what they are doing. This does not come from sitting in an air-conditioned office and clucking sternly over unimportant details....There is no way to shake out people and procedures except by being a part of them. You only learn part of the game when you fly the easy ones; you have to take at least your share of the tough ones. The troops watched that schedule pretty closely. They knew who was leading for

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effect and who was for real and they responded accordingly.” Colonel (ret) Jack C. Broughton, *Thud Ridge*, (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1969), 18.

¹⁰ Physical courage also fosters bravery in others. When the Japanese first attacked Corregidor in WWII, General Douglas MacArthur fearlessly stood in the open and counted enemy planes while other soldiers took cover. After the attack, Philippine President Manuel Quizon berated him for his action. The general replied, “Of course I understand what you mean and I have no right to gamble with my life. But it is absolutely necessary that at the right time a commander take chances because of the effect all down the line, for when they see the man at the top risking his life, the man at the bottom says, ‘I guess if that old man can take it, I can too.’” Harry J. Maihaferer, *Brave Decisions: Moral Courage from the Revolutionary War to Desert Storm* (Washington, DC: Brassey’s Incorporated, 1995), 149.

¹¹ General (ret) Charles A. Horner to ACSC Research Team 96-079, letter, subject: Leadership, 10 February 1996.

¹² Emory M. Folmar, Mayor of Montgomery, AL, interview with ACSC Research Team 96-079, City Hall, Montgomery Al., 14 February 1996.

¹³ In his book, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, General Schwarzkopf recalls his experience of as a Lieutenant Colonel taking over a combat infantry battalion on his second tour in Vietnam. The unit had just failed an in-theater readiness inspection. Driven to get the unit combat ready he says, “Gradually, the battalion came around. The thirty days passed and the hard work of cleaning weapons, squaring away equipment, and rebuilding our perimeters paid off when we passed the readiness inspection we’d failed so miserably in early December. In itself, that wasn’t such a big deal, but for the first time the men started realizing, ‘Hey, we can do it right. We can be a success. We’re not the ‘worst of the Sixth anymore’.” General (ret) H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 162.

¹⁴ Kenneth Thompson discusses the value of a leader who conveys hope using President Reagan as a positive example and President Carter (his malaise speech) as a negative example. However, Thompson suggests leaders exercise care about a “Pollyanish depiction of reality when that reality has a major element of tragedy about it.” Kenneth Thompson, *Essays on Leadership: Comparative Insights* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1985), 8. Obviously the leader must use mature judgment and balance optimism with the honest reality of the situation. Sometimes, a leader may need to convey a sense of gravity about the situation. This can capture the attention of subordinates who may be complacent and need a swift “kick in the pants.”

¹⁵ General (ret) H. Norman Schwarzkopf, interview, *The Journal of Leadership Studies*, June 1994, 4-5.

¹⁶ General John M. Shalikashvili, “The Three Pillars of Leadership,” *Defense Issues* 10, no. 42, 3.

¹⁷ Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero*, 166.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

¹⁹ Paul G. Munch, “General George C. Marshall and the Army Staff,” *Military Review*, August 1994, 16.

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²⁰ The New Testament book of James, Chapter 1 versus 23-24, describes the person that puts their beliefs/convictions into action: “Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.” *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, (Grand Rapids MI, Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1973), 1110. The point is that the person who knows the correct thing to do, but then does not do it, really does not know what he or she stands for. FMFM 1-0, has a similar discussion on knowledge of right and wrong and acting upon it: “Ethical choices often involve a moral dilemma: the necessity to choose between competing obligations in circumstances that prevent one from doing both. But there is more to it than this. *Action* is at the heart of ethical behavior. An academic understanding of what is right and wrong is irrelevant unless it is coupled to appropriate action.” USMC FMFM 1-0, Leading Marines, 3 January 1995, 39.

Chapter 4

Resiliency in Leadership Alleviates the Impact of Adversity, Combats Chaos, and Fosters Flexibility

Successful leaders don't fall apart in the face of adversity, falter when disruptions arise, or fail to adapt when change is necessary. Instead, these are the times that true leaders take the "reins" and show their worth. It is during these critical moments their followers need their direction the most. The leader who is aware and prepared to face a continuously challenging, ever-changing, and often uncertain environment, has developed a resilient attitude—one that enables them to withstand the trials and tribulations that befall those in authority. Resiliency in leadership, serves at least three purposes. It enables leaders to withstand adversity, keep focused during chaotic situations, and provides the flexibility needed to handle change. Thus armed, leaders possess a valuable tool for use in their efforts to remain responsive and decisive, even during the most difficult situations.

Facing adversity is all too common a challenge in leadership. Resiliency contributes to the leader's ability to handle adversity in at least two ways—by providing the stamina to endure tough times and the durability to be persistent. First, leaders become resilient by developing and depending on stamina that will help them endure life's troubles without faltering. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the melancholy Dane contemplated suicide

instead of facing the challenges of life and questioned, “Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them?”¹ Like this classical hero, successful leaders choose the second, more “nobler” option and develop a determined and focused constitution that enables them to see even the most difficult tasks through to fruition. In his book, *On Leadership*, John Gardner lists physical vitality and stamina as primary attributes of leadership.² Gardner asserts that in addition to his extraordinary gifts as a strategist and tactician, Julius Caesar’s energy and endurance were equally remarkable and major contributors to his success.³ Stamina provides leaders with the resiliency to go the extra mile and be knocked down without being knocked out. Resiliency provides stability in leadership during adversity and results from leaders strengthening themselves in advance of anticipated trials.

Persistence in the face of adversity is the second benefit of resiliency to leadership. When troubles arise, true leaders remember that success is a continual process and failure isn’t necessarily final. What makes the difference in leadership is resiliency—the persistence to “keep on keeping on.” According to Kenneth Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale, in *The Power of Ethical Management*, nothing is more important than persistence. The authors conclude that above talent, genius and education, “Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”⁴ Facing trials and tribulations will either disable or develop leaders, and will affect their ability to effectively guide those entrusted into their care. The durability achieved through persistence enables leaders to withstand criticism and recover from failure. It also prevents them from withering under pressure as they lead others towards a common objective. In their book, *Military Misfortunes*, Eliot

Cohen and John Gooch conclude that “failure and success often walk side-by-side.”⁵ During the Yom Kippur War, the writers recount, “The same Israeli officers corps that, through its unwarranted self-confidence, paved the way for the surprise of October 6 achieved dazzling operational success only two weeks later.”⁶ Caught completely off-guard by an Arab attack, the international embarrassment resulting from their operational fiasco could have shattered the Israeli military’s confidence. Instead, the strength and resolve of Israel’s leadership enabled them to regroup and recover—ultimately resulting in a victory that far overshadowed the ineptness that led to their earlier failure. Persistence is what separates leaders from the rest of the pack as they resolve to never quit striving to reach their goals or fulfill their missions. Adversity has a way of knocking leaders off track. Resiliency provides the stamina and persistence required to ensure leadership remains steady even under the most strenuous situations.

Not only does resiliency enable leaders to endure adversity, it also prepares them to work through chaotic situations. Chaos presents three challenges for leadership—first, they must anticipate and be prepared for it; second, leaders must remain focused to work through it; third, they must recognize its benefits. Perry Smith, author of *Taking Charge*, states, “No matter how well a leader plans, anticipates problems, and reacts in normal day-to-day activity, crises will occur.”⁷ Resilient leaders heed the philosophy, “If anything can go wrong it will,”⁸ with insightful anticipation instead of pessimistic foreboding of potential problems. They answer the question—are leaders made in battle or are true leaders prepared for battle? One of the earliest military strategists, Carl Von Clausewitz, introduced the concepts of “fog” and “friction” in his book, *On War*, in an attempt to explain the potential uncertainty and confusion that can arise in battle.

Friction, Clausewitz deduces, is the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult. Fog, on the other hand, results from those things that can cloud (either literally or figuratively) the leader's vision or decision making ability on the field of battle.⁹ It's important to realize, however, that any environment in which leaders are called upon to serve can be a "battlefield" for them—with the possibility of chaos ever present. From the tanker aircraft commander, to the doctor in surgery, the maintenance production supervisor, or the orderly room chief, the potential for calamity looms nearby threatening to strike when least expected or desired. Leaders who recognize the inevitability of chaos take the first step in the fight to combat it.

Being aware and prepared for handling chaotic situations is only half the battle. Amid the "fog" of confusion and the "friction" of chaos, resilient leadership (revealed through cool and collective resolve) is the ingredient that ensures followers stay focused, forthright, and calm in the quest to achieve the mission. Donald Phillips, author of *Lincoln on Leadership*, lists one of President Abraham Lincoln's principles: "Take advantage of confusion, desperation, and urgency to exercise strong leadership."¹⁰ Certainly the advice of one of America's greatest leaders has equal merit today. As problems arise, resilient leaders weather the storm and navigate around obstacles requiring alternative courses of action. Most appropriate for these situations, are the words penned by Rudyard Kipling. In his famous poem, "If," Kipling stresses resiliency as something to strive for and advises, "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you. If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you and make allowances for their doubting too . . . you'll be a man, my son."¹¹ The poet concludes that resiliency is essential to reaching maturity. Not only must leaders face

calamity and uncertainty, they may also find themselves at the center of the storm with all eyes on them. How they handle these tumultuous situations (or worse, collapse under the pressure) will affect their leadership effectiveness in the future. Subordinates and superiors alike, will long remember how leaders react to trials. Effective leadership requires that leaders keep their focus—even during the most chaotic situations.

One final aspect of chaos often escapes leaders—the benefits of chaos to leadership. Warren Bennis in, *On Becoming A Leader*, contends chaos can serve a positive purpose for leaders. He states, “Chaos is all around us now, but the leader knows that chaos is the beginning, not the end. Chaos is the source of energy and momentum.”¹² A resilient nature helps leaders remain unflappable during crises. It prepares them for the inevitability of change, the “fog” and “friction” of life, and helps them rise to the challenges inherent in chaos with cool heads and responsive determination. Bennis offers sage advice for those who must lead through adversity and change by affirming, “Leaders learn by leading, and they learn best by leading in the face of obstacles. As weather shapes mountains, so problems make leaders.”¹³ Chaos is never sought or desired, but often serves to refine leadership skills. Leaders need to take advantage of the inevitable. Unexpected calamity and confusion often result in work stoppages and leave people floundering, crying out for guidance. It is during these chaotic times that resilient leaders serve their purpose best by being prepared for the unexpected, staying focused, and seeing the benefits in the most troubling situations.

The key to successful leadership during adversity and chaos is flexibility—the real catalyst in developing resiliency. Flexibility gives resiliency two key properties to aid leaders—the ability to bounce back and recover from troubles and the agility to quickly

shift directions when change is needed. Flexibility in leadership is like an automobile's shock absorbers—it enables leaders to endure the impact of life's disturbances without jarring them off course. Flexibility allows leaders to “bounce back up” after being knocked down by adversity. Patricia Sellers, a writer for *Fortune* magazine, indicates that many leaders from all walks of life have experienced hardships and recovered. In her article “What's So Good About Failure?,” she describes the “masters of resiliency” as those who believe in themselves and concludes, “Resilient people know they cannot control their world. The most successful view failure like puberty: awkward, uncomfortable, but a transforming experience that precedes maturity.”¹⁴ Resiliency in leadership enables leaders to absorb “shock” and maintain their direction.

Flexibility in leadership is also like a coiled snake—it gives leaders the ability to respond to challenges with quick and decisive action. John Gardner highlights the adaptability and flexibility of the greatest military figure in modern Turkish history, Kemal Ataturk, in his book *On Leadership*. Gardner states, “. . . he could shift swiftly and without second thought from a failing tactic to another approach, and if that did not work, to still another. Whether the field of action was war or diplomacy or domestic governance, he rarely clung stubbornly to an approach that was not producing results. His goals were stable but his tactics flexible.”¹⁵ Implicit in this aspect of flexibility, is anticipation of change and the preparation for uncertainty by developing reasonable alternatives. This proactive planning leads to developing alternative courses of action, recalling previous lessons and experiences, and brainstorming potential scenarios for the future. Peter Swartz, in *The Art of the Long View*, suggests that in order for leaders to act with confidence, they must willingly look to the uncertainty of the future. When leaders

fail to look ahead, Swartz concludes, “they create blind spots for themselves.”¹⁶ Left unchecked, these blind spots can be potential sources of avoidable hazards or preventable problems that may cause unnecessary hardships for leaders. Resiliency implies that leaders will remain poised for action through proactive development of alternatives that will see them through adversity. Flexibility is the ingredient in resiliency that enables leaders to “rebound” from hardships and remain poised for action with a variety of alternatives.

Rather than being a mere premise, resiliency in leadership is really a posture; it relies more on leader’s attitudes than their aptitude, and requires as much fortitude as it does foresight. A leader’s resilient nature minimizes the impact of adversity, enables clear thinking during chaotic situations, and provides flexibility to maneuver around obstacles. Resiliency does not make a leader a superhero—“able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.” However, during very difficult times, it gives leaders the ability to bend without breaking or to rise up after falling. Resiliency enables leaders to face challenges with determination and stalwart vitality inspiring followers to levels of performance higher than they ever dreamed.

Case Study: General Ulysses S. Grant in the Civil War

In the annals of great American leaders, one conspicuously stands as a testament to steadfastness and pure determination—Ulysses S. Grant.¹⁷ According to Taylor and Rosenbach in their book *Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence*, many of America’s great military leaders had few outward qualities or physical marks of greatness, and some even may have been overlooked because of failures earlier in life.

Ulysses S. Grant was one of these leaders who, if not for his inner qualities and personal strength, might never have received his due recognition.

Prior to serving in the military, Grant had failed miserably and experienced numerous set backs. Taylor and Rosenbach state, “Had Grant spent time brooding over his own civilian failures, he would have been struck with a disorderly camp and would never have gotten out of Illinois.”¹⁸ Short and stocky in stature, he did not reflect the physical image of a great leader. However, subordinates saw him as a person who led “not less by personal courage than by patient work in their interest.”¹⁹ Grant was seemingly full of human short-comings, from his unimpressive appearance and oratory skills to his lack of a what he termed a “sense of destiny,” a personal propensity for “greatness.”²⁰ In fact, although loved and admired by so many of his subordinates (Sherman, Logan, and Rawlins to name a few), he often mused that neither they nor his peers ever discovered his failure to fully master the study of tactics. On the other hand, he was a simple man, easy to understand, approachable, and (although stubborn) always had a listening ear for subordinates.²¹

Taylor and Rosenbach record that while Grant never adhered obstinately to executing a plan, nothing could make him give up the idea behind it. In his finest moments, “..it was sweat, rather than inspiration, dogged perseverance, rather than the aura of power, that made the hour great.”²² During his first real action at the lesser known battle of Belmont, Grant showed little to reflect his competency as a strategist or tactician. However, at the close of battle, he was the last man to leave the field, risking his life to ensure that none of his men were left behind.²³ This act of bravery and steadfastness soon became synonymous with his name.

Later at Fort Donelson, he arrived at the battle to find his forces on the verge of defeat. Blaming no one for the calamity, and without hesitation, he decided to regain a key field and personally led his men in a charge against the enemy. He not only reestablished control and order purely by his presence, but provided direction for his followers as well.²⁴ While the union soldiers were initially overcome by chaos caused from the “fog” and “friction” of the battle field, Grant’s resiliency, realized in his stability and focused objective, was the key element which enabled them to snatch victory from the hands of defeat. Quick thinking and decisive action facilitated the development of a flexible alternative plan that ultimately provided the victory.

The Union Army was on the verge of defeat at Shiloh, when an injured and hobbling Grant confronted a mob of panic-stricken stragglers as he approached the battlefield. He re-ignited their confidence and led them back to the battlefield—giving orders to all he came in contact with.²⁵ Taking charge of a seemingly hopeless situation, he ultimately converted defeat into a decisive victory proving once again that leadership is best exhibited when most needed. Certainly Grant’s actions at Shiloh exemplify the highest levels of a leader’s self-sacrifice, endurance, and confidence required to spur distracted and self-defeated followers to new heights. Courage and confidence are contagious! Resilient leaders believe not only in themselves, but in the abilities of those they lead with resolute determination.

At Richmond, Grant took time for reflection on the evening following his first serious defeat from the Confederacy led by General Robert E. Lee. After similar defeats, all of his predecessors had decided to retreat to safe distances from the battle front. But on this occasion, the defeated army found the road to retreat blocked by the physically

unimpressive, but always steadfast character of Grant. The single, formidable, impression sent a resounding message to the entire Army—they knew for the first time they had a man they could follow into victory.²⁶ This final illustration on the leadership of Grant best describes his resolve not to be defeated by *defeat*, on or off of the battlefield. Recognizing that one failure wasn't necessarily the last word on the war, Grant eventually led his troops back to Richmond and ultimately to victory.

According to Taylor and Rosenbach, Grant “was the essence of the spirit that moderns call ‘seeing the show through’.”²⁷ What better testament could be made of a leader? Through his leadership, Grant exhibited his ability to think through chaos, initiate flexible responses to changing scenarios, and withstand the most adverse situations. This is the picture of a truly resilient leader—one dedicated to the goals of his country and those he led into battle.

Notes

¹ John Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations: A collection of passages, phrases and proverbs traced to their original sources in ancient and modern literature, 16th Edition* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1992), 196. Hamlet is a play written by William Shakespeare in 1600-1601 about a Danish crown prince who seeks to avenge his father's murder.

² John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 48.

³ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁴ Kenneth Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Ethical Management* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1988), 68

⁵ Eliot A., Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1991), 232.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁷ Perry M. Smith, *Taking Charge* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), 55.

⁸ Bartlett, 783. This anonymously authored saying originated in the early 1950s and is often referred to as “Murphy's Law.”

⁹ Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 202-203. According to Paret, Clausewitz's friction refers to uncertainties, errors, accidents, technical difficulties, the

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unforeseen, and to their effort on decisions, morale, and actions. Fog is more substantive in that it refers to literal fog or smoke from fires or weaponry that can cloud or distort vision or tactics.

¹⁰ Donald T. Phillips, *Lincoln on Leadership* (New York, Warner Books, 1993), 98.

¹¹ Bartlett, 593. This is the first line from Kipling's poem "If" as recorded in his *Rewards and Fairies*.

¹² Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1989), 191. Bennis' book is highly recommended in its entirety. However, Chapter 7 *Moving Through Chaos*, is extremely insightful and is very pertinent to aspiring leaders who want to further sharpen their leadership skills for handling crises and change.

¹³ Bennis, 146.

¹⁴ Patricia Sellers, "What's So Good About Failure," *Fortune*, 1 May 1995, 107.

¹⁵ Gardner, 53.

¹⁶ Peter Swartz, *The Art of the Long View* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1. Swartz introduces the concept of leaders using scenarios to help script potential future states from which leaders can make decisions based on proposed outcomes. While the end result is not perfect, contends Swartz, better decisions about the future can be realized.

¹⁷ Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, *Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992). All information comes from Chapter 3. This book is recommended in its entirety as an excellent resource for military leaders.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²² *Ibid.*, 36.

²³ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

Chapter 5

Leaders Build and Rely on Multifaceted Internal and External Relationships

Relationships provide the context in which leadership occurs. Successful leadership grows from the ability to build and maintain effective relationships with superiors, subordinates, and peers. In addition, leadership benefits by encouraging and emphasizing relationship building as “a way of doing business” within the organization. Emory Folmar, the dynamic Mayor of Montgomery, Alabama, once remarked, “If no one’s following, you’re not leading.”¹ Although humorous, this simple insight provides a resounding message for leaders—leadership never really occurs in a vacuum. People are always involved and effective leaders guide followers towards goals through established relationships. No leader can afford to isolate themselves from those they work for, those who work for them, or other leaders around them.

An effective relationship with one’s superior is essential to successful leadership because the “boss” empowers the leader. The authority to lead, in fact, comes from the superior. Once placed in a leadership role, it is important to build and maintain a strong working relationship with superiors—a relationship built upon a foundation of mutual trust. Leaders develop and maintain their superior’s trust in at least two ways—by being honest with their bosses and by maintaining a reputation for reliability.

Honest communication builds trust. The leader must be candid with superiors—keeping the boss informed regardless of circumstances. Good leaders don't hide problems or concerns from superiors, they elevate them immediately, openly seeking assistance and guidance when necessary. Leaders who are reluctant to bring the boss bad news, fail to take advantage of the superior's experience, wisdom, and counsel. Likewise, leaders need to consistently pass good news up to superiors. This combination of good and bad news keeps the boss informed, enables them to keep their finger on the pulse of the organization, and serves to strengthen the bonds of trust between the leader and the superior.

Consistency in performance establishes reliability. The leader who enthusiastically accomplishes missions and tasks in a timely and accurate manner, substantiates their reliability in the eyes of their superiors. Superiors trust people who consistently prove their worth by coming through in the clutch. However, leaders who prove unreliable risk the potential for micro-managing from above. No unit can serve two masters. Thus, effective leadership is dependent upon the trusting relationship between the leader and superior—one built upon honesty and reliability.

Equally important to successful leadership are the relationships leaders foster with their subordinates. There are three keys to establishing good relationships with subordinates—caring, communication, and consistency. First, leaders care for their people by creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect where everyone is treated with dignity. People are more apt to follow when they believe their welfare is important to the leader. General Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, identifies this caring for people as one of his “three pillars of leadership.” The General

stated, "...hand in hand with character, with this inner strength that the soldiers will want to see, they will also want to know and see that you really care for them, that you will sacrifice for them, that you simply enjoy being with them."² This attitude implies much more than simply caring for the immediate physical needs of the organization. Leaders must have a sincere interest for the concerns, desires, and motivations of subordinates *and* their families. Most people will work at their highest level for a leader they know really cares about them.

The second aspect of building strong relationships with subordinates lies in communication. The Army's manual on leadership, FM 22-100, states, "What and how you communicate either builds or harms the strength of the relationship between you and your soldiers. In a healthy relationship between people, there are bonds of mutual trust, respect, confidence, and understanding."³ Effective leadership involves effective communication—and it's a two-way street. Stephen Covey recommends that the best way for a leader to maximize the communication process is to, "Seek first to understand before being understood. . . ."⁴ This means that leaders who truly want to know what their people believe and think, must simply listen!

The final aspect to establishing a good relationship with subordinates is consistency. From a subordinate's perspective, consistency means that the leader is predictable. From the leader's point of view, it implies being yourself. General "Chuck" Horner, former Commander, US Space Command, captures this sentiment:

My advice to young commanders was always be yourself. . . . If your style is to be a nice person, be a nice person. . . . If you are a grump, be a grump, people don't mind. The thing subordinates can't handle is a boss who is Mr. Nice Guy one day and Mr. Tough Guy the next. They need consistency in their leader, they will accommodate to his personality and

act accordingly unless they have to guess who they will be dealing with on any given day.⁵

Leaders who are consistent in their behavior and actions provide subordinates a stable and predictable atmosphere in which to work. By simply being themselves, leaders allow their subordinates the opportunity to really get to know them and become comfortable with their leadership style. Leaders lead people. Therefore, the leader must develop effective relationships with people to get the job done. Effective leadership, then, hinges on relationships that are built upon care for subordinates, clear communication, and consistency in behavior and actions. These three things maximize the relationship between the leader and subordinate.

Additionally, leaders foster personal relationships outside their immediate circle of influence to broaden horizons, gain support, or share expertise and experience. This peer-to-peer interchange serves at least two purposes. First, it provides a support group readily accessible to the leader. According to Bennis, “Groups, gatherings of friends or associates, sometimes simply sustain and encourage their members, as with old school friends, army buddies, and business pals.”⁶ The second benefit realized by establishing these outside contacts, is that they provide a resourceful forum for exchanging ideas, brainstorming, and for getting assistance when needed—networking.

The benefits of networking should not only be restricted to the boss. Leaders should encourage their people to seek out and establish similar contacts with their peers as well. This strengthens the entire organization with a multiplicity of insight, support, and potential availability of resources—tapped into by the joint efforts of all. The result is a

dynamic organization with multifaceted relationships at all levels within, and external to, the unit.

Inherent in all relations, should be the desire for leaders to create symbiotic and synergistic relationships. That is, creating mutually beneficial ties where combined efforts result in a greater outcome than singular contributions—the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.⁷ In *Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders*, Perry Smith summarizes the importance of leaders fostering relationships at all levels. According to Smith, it is important for leaders:

. . . not only to know their people and their missions well, to plan carefully and to manage the solution of problems within the organization, but also to reach out to other organizations, to higher headquarters, to sister units, to the outside community and to institutions which have important interactions with the organization. A leader should spend a considerable amount of time building bridges.⁸

Wise leaders not only embrace this guidance on a personal level, but multiply the potential dividends by encouraging their people to do the same.

Case Study: General George C. Marshall

When people think of great military leaders, names like Lee, Grant, Pershing, and Patton come to mind easily—great captains of war who led men to victory on the battlefield. Puryear, in his book *Nineteen Stars*, states that General George C. Marshall never held a combat command, yet his abilities and leadership as the Chief of Staff of the US Army during World War II caused President Harry S. Truman to say, “Millions of Americans gave their country outstanding service. General of the Army George C. Marshall gave it victory.”⁹ Marshall’s greatness was not on the battlefield, rather, his greatest victories would be behind the scenes, at the tables where great campaigns were

conceived. How did he get to that point? What allowed him to maximize the talents of those around him in the staff environment? Marshall's genius lay in his ability to *relate to* people—those who worked for him and those he worked for—and to inspire those around him. His lifetime of “altruism, patience, and dedication”¹⁰ served as the foundation for the outstanding skills in relationship building he developed and employed to attain unparalleled success as a staff officer. Marshall believed “that leadership in conference...is as important as on the battlefield.”¹¹ General Marshall understood how important effective relationships were to leading a staff to success. His career had leadership experiences that pointed him to the key pillars of effective relationships: trust, honest communication, and, treating others with dignity.

In 1933, then Colonel Marshall reported to the Illinois National Guard for duty.¹² He was sent there by the War Department because the Guard's commander had asked for the “top colonel in the Army”¹³ to help bring up the unit's dreary level of proficiency. The commander, Major General Roy D. Keehn was a lawyer and felt unprepared for the task at hand. Marshall arrived on the scene, quickly assessed the problems—poor attendance, inadequate training, incompetent officers, and general indifference—and received “*carte blanche*” authority to improve the training” by General Keehn.¹⁴ Keehn had implicit *trust* in Marshall's ability and allowed him the freedom of movement needed to take the required action to bring the unit's training on line. Success was at hand in just a few months. Marshall's handling of the touchy situation was well received among Guard circles and points to the importance he placed on *relating* to those whom he disciplined. Puryear states that the guard members viewed Marshall as, “. . . patient and even-tempered regardless of provocations, he was always available for counsel with any person

who had a problem. His professional knowledge of everything pertaining to soldiering won for him the confidence and respect of all officers and men.”¹⁵ Marshall’s leadership was successful because he earned both the commander’s and the men’s trust. This mutual trust facilitated the acceptance of the sweeping, though needed, changes in the unit’s training programs.

In 1936, then Brigadier General Marshall gained command of the 5th Infantry Brigade at Vancouver, Washington. An incident occurred that illustrates his commitment to *honest communication* as a key to affective relationships and leadership. His duties there included being the District Commander of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps for the northwest United States. There was racial unrest within the camps and General Marshall was approached by a group of black men, who had rebelled against their officers, and asked him to hear their complaints. Marshall delivers to them an honest rebuke, but also a sincere and truthful message of respect, honor, and justice:

You are deeply concerned, even wrought up to violence, because you feel you have been discriminated against on account of your color. As your district commander, let me tell you how very wrong you were to take matters into your own hands. I will have none of this type of action. As I stand before you here, I do not see the pigmentation of your flesh. I try to see the men and their hearts underneath the flesh. It matters not to me if you are white, black, red, yellow, or even blue. You have the right and privilege of appealing to me when you are disturbed and feel you cannot carry on in a normal, disciplined manner. You will be dealt with as men, not as members of any particular race. My decision on your appeal will rest only on the merits of your case—not otherwise, I can assure you.¹⁶

This is 1936, in segregated America, and General Marshall’s honesty in relating to an angry group of black men, brings them to their feet to cheer his enlightened leadership.¹⁷

Finally, General Marshall’s skill in building relationships grew and facilitated his leadership because he consistently *treated others with dignity*, no matter what the

situation. Colonel Marshall was the Division Chief of Staff for the World War I Battle of Cantigny.¹⁸ This battle was a strain on every unit's capability and some were ordered back to battle before their required rest time ended. As a consequence, Marshall was approached by a very angry Captain whose unit was just re-ordered to the frontlines. This officer belligerently demanded to see the commanding officer. Marshall, politely and quietly, took the enraged young captain aside and told him, "that his company had been especially selected because of the vital importance of holding Cantigny, that he was sure his officers and men were equal to the task, and that action was being taken to re-equip his company immediately."¹⁹ The actual officer, Captain Ransom, declares, "From a staff officer of a different type, a young captain might have received a curt and abrupt dismissal and left with a feeling of resentment. I left with a feeling of added pride in my outfit, which I transmitted to my company when I returned. The morale of the officers and men was restored and we went into fighting that night a better unit than we had ever been before."²⁰ Marshall was always concerned with maintaining the dignity of subordinates. When he observed another officer severely "dressing down" a subordinate in public for a breach of discipline, he pulled the officer aside and privately told him, "... you were perfectly right in reprimanding that man; but you weakened your position by losing your temper. You must also remember that the man is an American citizen just the same as you are."²¹

Marshall's legacy as a great military leader is not as the combat leader. He did not win battles, rather, his genius at the planning table would lead to winning the war itself. His is a legacy of outstanding leadership in the staff environment built upon a lifetime's experience of developing strong, respectful, and working relationships with others.

Marshall's lesson for us is that effective leadership depends on forging relationships using three important ingredients: trust, honest communication, and treating others with dignity.

Notes

¹ Emory M. Folmar, Mayor of Montgomery, AL, interview with ACSC Research Team 96-079, City Hall, Montgomery Al., 14 February 1996.

² General John M. Shalikashvili, "Three Pillars of Leadership." *Defense Issues* 10, no. 42, 3.

³ FM 22-100, Leadership, October 1983, 46.

⁴ Stephen R. Covey, *Principle Centered Leadership* (New York, NY: Summit Books, 1990), 272-273.

⁵ General (ret) Charles A. Horner to ACSC Research Project 96-079, letter, subject: Leadership, 10 February 1996.

⁶ Warren Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1989), 94.

⁷ Steven R. Covey, *Seven Habits Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 220-23. Covey refers to this as a "win-win" situation.

⁸ Perry M. Smith, *Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), 79.

⁹ Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., *Nineteen Stars: A Study in Military Character and Leadership* (Orange, VA.: Green Publishers, 1971), 44.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

Chapter 6

Leadership Demands Accountability to Superiors, Peers and Subordinates Alike

Certainly, a leader's accountability implies responsibility—a responsibility to take decisive action when necessary, to know “what's going on” and discover shortfalls before they become problems, to develop creative solutions for challenges, and to complete assigned tasks and missions within the time allotted while still meeting established standards for performance. Most people view leadership accountability with a focus only on the impacts of “meeting” or “not meeting” these clear-cut responsibilities. While these responsibilities are an important and integral part of a leader's accountability, they are only one part of a larger outlook. A leader's accountability is broader and deeper—it demands accountability not only to superiors, but also to peers and subordinates.

A leader's accountability to superiors may sound like familiar territory. Every leader understands that superiors are the ones that “pat you on the back” when you're accountable and they're often the source of wrath when you're not accountable. This certainly implies that leaders should always provide an accurate, complete assessment to superiors regarding their organization's status, capability, and potential to support the mission of the greater organization. Beyond this common view, accountability to superiors also includes being honest with them—telling them what they need to know

instead of only telling them what they want to hear. Leaders must provide superiors with honest feedback, especially unsolicited feedback. Superiors are human and liable to error or miscalculation. They often need and seek feedback in the form of constructive criticism. For example, while leaders are accountable for completing assigned responsibilities, adequate support from superiors frequently means the difference between success or failure. If a superior isn't supporting you with the resources or the guidance necessary for mission success, you must be frank and tell them so. Through honest interaction with their superiors, leaders highlight shortfalls in their superior's support "from above" long before problems develop. A deep sense of accountability to superiors is a key part of leadership; however, it's just the beginning.

A leader's accountability to peers is equally important to leadership. As a leader, you frequently rely on the decisions and commitments of your peers. Likewise, your peers rely on the decisions and commitments you make. When you tell peer leaders that you are going to do something that contributes to their operation, they will expect you to complete that action. Hence, you become accountable to peers. A good example involves a Navy carrier air wing. During combat operations, the nine commanding officers of the respective fighter, attack, command and control, anti-submarine, electronic jamming squadrons often plan for combined strike operations against well defended overland targets. Each squadron depends upon the success of the other squadrons for the effectiveness of these strikes and for mutual support in defense against the threat weapon systems. If one squadron fails to accomplish their specific mission, the entire operation is at risk. The commanding officers are accountable to each other for the combat readiness and training of their people and equipment.

When you fulfill your accountability to peer leaders, you gain their trust.¹ They believe you when you say you will do something and will commit to helping you in return—quite possibly going out of their way to help you out when you really need it.² A leader's accountability to peers strengthens the foundation of any peer network. This network gives a leader a wealth of potential support.

While a leader's accountability to peer leaders is important, perhaps the most challenging aspect of a leader's accountability is with subordinates. Leadership accountability down the chain of command, to subordinates, focuses on at least three areas: holding them responsible for their actions, assessing and correcting their performance, and protecting their morale and welfare. First, leaders must hold subordinates accountable for infractions of organizational rules, values, guidelines or regulations. It is difficult for a leader to maintain this accountability when a top performer with an excellent record makes a mistake. However, leaders are also accountable to their subordinates by being fair and consistent with punishment. General W.L. Creech stated,

Leaders . . . above all, do not countenance selective enforcement of rules and standards. I know of no more ruinous path for commanders than selective enforcement of rules and standards. . . . Excellent leaders have very high standards and they enforce them without fear or favors.³

Leaders are responsible for setting and communicating high standards that are also achievable and realistic—more importantly, leaders consistently enforce them.⁴ The first area of a leader's accountability to subordinates, holding them accountable, goes hand in hand with the second area—the leader's honesty about subordinate performance.

The second aspect of a leader's accountability to subordinates is an obligation to honestly assess and, when necessary, correct subordinate performance. Leaders do this by giving subordinates a timely and accurate assessment of their performance, verbally during regular performance feedback sessions, and in writing through formal performance documentation.⁵ When a leader provides honest feedback with corresponding suggestions for improvement, subordinates start a climb back to the path to success. However, if subordinates continually ignore this feedback, the leader needs the moral courage to take harsher measures. Often more than a formal disciplinary action, a leader's responsibility may involve moving a subordinate from their area of responsibility and putting the right person in the job. While embarrassing to the individual, the leader knows that entire unit will continue to suffer if this sub-standard performer is left in that particular position. The leader protects the performance of other subordinates and the greater organization by relieving the sub-standard performer.

The third and last focus for a leader's accountability to subordinates is the protection of subordinates' morale and welfare. Leaders take great care in how deeply they commit their people and assets. Over-commitment can result in reduced productivity, low morale, stressful family relationships, and increased accidents due to subordinates' inattention on the job. Leaders must continuously monitor the operational tempo and be alert to possible negative effects. A delicate balance exists between mission accomplishment and the welfare of subordinates. The leader is the key person who influences the degree of commitment. A leader's accountability to subordinates demands that the leader put subordinate welfare, both in the short- and long-term, before their own personal welfare or career.

Accountability is critical to successful leadership. Leaders have the obligation to be accountable to superiors, peers, and subordinates. Leadership demands accountability to superiors through honest feedback; to peers through keeping commitments; and to subordinates by holding them accountable for their actions through fair and consistent discipline, by giving them honest and accurate feedback on performance, and finally by protecting their welfare through a reasonable operations tempo.

Case Study: General Dallager and 52nd Fighter Wing

A dilemma unfolded in 1994 at the 52nd Fighter Wing (FW) at Spangdahlem Air Base near Bitburg, Germany.⁶ The problem began in 1990 shortly before the Persian Gulf War. At that time, United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) had nearly 60,000 active duty personnel and the equivalent of eight fighter wings located at 27 different bases. Over the next three years, force reductions lowered these numbers significantly to just over 32,000 active duty personnel, and just over two to three fighter wings at six major bases. During the same period, the demands on USAFE increased significantly. From 1990 to 1994, USAFE units participated heavily in Operations PROVIDE COMFORT, SOUTHERN WATCH, PROVIDE PROMISE, DENY FLIGHT, and RESTORE HOPE. These responsibilities put a severe strain on the active duty personnel and their families stationed in Europe.

Brigadier General John R. Dallager, Commander of the 52nd Fighter Wing, noticed a significant increase in the number of problems plaguing wing personnel. During 1994, he noted instances of child abuse increased 20 percent, spouse abuse reports increased 9 percent, and alcohol abuse was up 11 percent. General Dallager attributed the increase in

family problems to stress caused by long and repeated separations. He noted that the active duty personnel from Spangdahlem were deployed on average between 150 to 180 days a year. The wing goal was to limit deployment related separations to no more than 120 days a year. There was also evidence that personnel were leaving the service due to family separations. Spouses indicated they felt like single parents as a result of the long deployments. General Dallager concluded that without immediate intervention, the hectic schedule would ultimately impact unit readiness.

General Dallager in coordination with the new USAFE Commander, General James Jamerson, decided to take bold action in October of 1994 by personally briefing Defense Secretary William L. Perry on the situation. In a rare and unusual move, he publicly revealed these problems (in the presence of an Associated Press reporter) in a briefing to Secretary Perry during his visit to USAFE. He also specifically named individuals within his unit that were experiencing problems, and provided statistical evidence showing increases of spouse abuse, alcohol abuse, and child abuse as described above. General Dallager's sense of accountability compelled him to openly admit a problem that officials usually would prefer to keep quiet. Secretary Perry agreed with General Dallager's conclusions and resolved to shift the burden across more units, including the Guard and Reserve.

If General Dallager had not been accountable to his subordinates, the stress on personnel could have manifested itself on the job, ultimately impacting his wing's safety and readiness. Low morale and low wing readiness could have led to loss of life and material resources from accidents and inattention. Clearly, General Dallager demonstrated accountability to both superiors and subordinates alike by publicly

revealing unsettling facts. He was brutally honest with his superiors and held himself accountable for the problems of his wing while risking his own career for the welfare of the wing. In addition, General Dallager demonstrated accountability to peer leaders. Other units depended on the 52 FW capabilities during deployments. They integrated their capabilities with General Dallager's wing to create a synergetic, composite operation during deployments. Other wings expected the 52 FW to be proficient and safe and General Dallager realized he could not guarantee that level of proficiency and safety unless "he put his foot down."

General Dallager demonstrated the full depth and breadth of accountability—to superiors, subordinates, and peer leaders alike. He recognized that he had to highlight the problem and actively got help in working towards a solution. He was the key individual who could take action.

Notes

¹ Major Patrick J. Sweeney, "Trust: A Critical Factor in Leadership," *Field Artillery* (June 1994), 20-21. Major Sweeney highlights the importance of developing trust with peer leaders stating that "... it affects lateral cooperation and teamwork. A trusting relationship among peers provides each leader additional resources to turn to for advice and new ideas about how to accomplish missions."

² Colonel Lon E. Maggart, "A Leap of Faith," *Armor* (January-February, 1992), 30-32. Colonel Maggart amply highlights the importance of leaders being able to rely on each other by citing his experiences in the battle for "Objective Norfolk" in the Desert Storm ground war. Mutual trust between the various commanders, in part based on the quality of preparation and training each leader and unit had accomplished, was one of the key factors for success. Maggart also implies that the bold actions of the Army commanders in this complex Desert Storm battle were "... a leap of faith based on the common knowledge that everyone present would die before they let the team down." He parallels the impact of this trust with that between Generals Grant and Sherman in the Civil War. He cites the text of a letter that Grant wrote to Sherman after the war as, "Throughout the war, you were always on my mind. I knew that if I were in trouble and you were still alive, you would come to my assistance."

³ General W. L. Creech, in *Leadership, Quotations from the Military Tradition*, ed. Robert Fitton (Boulder, CO: Westview Press Inc., 1994)

Notes

⁴ General John Michael Loh, “What it Takes to Be A Commander,” *Air Force Times* (17 October, 1994), 41. In this article, General Loh, the former Commander of the Air Combat Command, reinforces General Creech’s point on fair and consistent discipline saying, “When one member of a unit flaunts discipline and directives to the detriment of safety and mission accomplishment, the commander’s obligation and loyalty must be to the rest of the members of the unit—those who are dedicated and working hard to deliver and support the unit’s mission every day. . . . Protecting the few at the expense of undermining the many is to misplace loyalty and is a serious breach of the responsibility of command. Our people deserve commanders who understand the difference.”

⁵ General Billy Boles, Commander of Air Education and Training Command, recently provided written guidance in a 28 February 1996 letter to subordinate commanders on accountability. In his letter, General Boles emphasizes that commanders must maintain a solid awareness of subordinate performance and they must accurately evaluate subordinate performance, they must give accurate performance feedback, and finally they must promote the right people--those who meet the standards vice those who fall short.

⁶ General Dallager’s story and the facts surrounding this situation, were taken from Julie Bird’s *Air Force Times* article: "A Time For Bold Tactics" in the 17 October 1994 issue, page 4.

Chapter 7

The Law of Sowing and Reaping: Learning and Mentoring Yield a Harvest of Personal Growth and Organizational Development

Inherent in the art of leadership is growth, both personal and organizational. It requires moving forward, improving, changing, adjusting, and just plain leading others towards getting better at what they do. Farmers understand growth. They know the principle of sowing and reaping and what that means to their crops. They start by planting good seed in fertile soil and then begin a process of nurturing that involves providing water and nutrients. They know that before long, an abundant harvest of growth will occur. A similar relationship exists between the leader and follower. The difference is the “seeds” the leader sows are the processes of learning and mentoring. The leader also must plant those seeds in fertile soil and nurture them continually. The harvest, personal and organizational growth, is reaped at a later time. The leader, like the farmer, cannot afford to let his fields lie untended or fallow. That results in either a small harvest or none at all.

Why is learning so necessary to the art of leadership? Part of leadership involves supplying direction to the organization, no matter how big or small it is, through goal setting. Leadership art requires a commitment to learning because it is essential the leader make decisions based on current information and updated knowledge, especially

when planning to reach future goals. In short, the leader must be “up to speed” professionally and have “real-time” knowledge so as to *accurately* assess current organizational performance relative to desired future performance. The fruits of the leader’s commitment to learning, both professional competency and fund of knowledge, provides the basis for formulating realistic goals, providing focused direction, and realizing desired organizational goals.

John W. Gardner, in *On Leadership*, states, “the notion that all the attributes of a leader are innate is demonstrably false. . . . Most of the capabilities that enable an outstanding leader to lead are learned.”¹ This is liberating to all who lead today, in whatever position or rank, who feel inhibited or intimidated by the term “born leader” and continually wonder if they have “the right stuff.” The art of leadership needs and demands learning leaders who continually strive to know more about themselves and who want to increase their personal breadth of knowledge and experience. Can a leader ever afford to stop learning? Gardner points out that, “Douglas MacArthur’s strategic and tactical brilliance in World War II was the product of a lifetime of study and action.”² There are three key points here: First, leaders realize the importance of a personal commitment to learning in effective leadership. Second, leaders actively put what they learn into action. Finally, leaders gain insight and growth from the lessons they learn as a result of that action. The key is: *learning facilitates growth in the art of leadership*. Air Force doctrine recognizes this. AFM 1-1, Volume II, Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force, states that the “development of capabilities as an Air Force professional (*Note: not officer or non-commissioned officer, but “professional”*) is largely a matter of continuing personal application and highly motivated self-

development. Every member should have a personal commitment to make the fullest use of training, education, and experience opportunities.”³ A leader’s personal study program focuses on reading about what others think through books, journals, and periodicals. This is a key to developing intellectual fitness and expanding ones horizons.

World War II British Field Marshall Montgomery, in *The Path to Leadership*, stated that learning is a key to effective leadership at all levels. He felt the successful leader must have “a thorough knowledge of his job, of his profession, as an absolute prerequisite; and then a never-ending study to keep himself up to date. Not only must he be a master of his trade; he must also be always learning.”⁴ The art of leadership hinges on a commitment to learning. Leaders translate this commitment into a pervasive attitude of learning, of gleaning new information, of staying mentally active, and of increasing their experiential base.

How then does the leader apply this attitude of learning, this commitment to excellence as an individual, to the organization as a whole? The answer is through the process of mentoring. Mentoring is a leadership attitude and a tool that all leaders at every level of the organization can use. It serves to institutionalize excellence within an organization because it helps *all* subordinates maximize their *individual* potential. Mentoring is not cronyism nor is it “protege-ism.” It helps facilitate the process of “regeneration” that is essential for the continuing development and improvement of an organization and its people. Gardner, in his book *On Leadership*, reflects how mentoring facilitates organizational development by stating that, “to the extent that leaders enable followers to develop their own initiative, they are creating something that can survive their own departure. . . . Leaders who strengthen their people may create a legacy that will

last for a very long time.”⁵ Mentoring institutionalizes the commitment to excellence because it charges all who are in supervisory or leadership positions with the responsibility to “plant good seeds and nurture their growth.”

The leader’s commitment to mentoring reflects the desire to help each subordinate recognize their abilities and reach their full potential. Mentoring then moves from the historic meaning of “this is my favorite worker, they can do no wrong, and I will monitor their advancement” to the Air Force’s Air Education and Training Command’s (AETC) more utilitarian definition of mentoring.⁶ AETC’s goal for mentoring is for each supervisor to take responsibility in developing the inherent abilities of their subordinates, within their capabilities, at every level of the organization. Leaders conduct effective mentoring because of their commitment to their own learning. They develop the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary for mentoring through personal dedication to study and growth.

Mentoring will result in organizational growth when conducted from a firm foundation based on four principles.⁷ First, leadership throughout the organization accepts responsibility for the professional development of subordinates. The goal is to identify top performers and challenge them accordingly, while also identifying “less stellar” performers and challenging them to their maximum potential.⁸ Second, leadership accepts responsibility for the accurate and honest evaluation of performance and potential. Documented performance feedback is the key; it must be accurate, timely, and realistic.⁹ Third, leadership takes an active role in counseling and advising subordinates on their professional development. Leaders are aware of the training and education needs of their subordinates and track their progress.¹⁰ Finally, leadership

models the behavior desired of subordinates and shows the way ahead with a visible, demonstrated commitment to excellence.¹¹ Mentoring is the way to institutionalize that commitment and assure organizational growth. As General Ronald Fogleman, Air Force Chief of Staff, states, “We all bear the responsibility to develop our subordinates and to help groom the next generation of Air Force leaders. Mentoring can help refine the capabilities of tomorrow’s Air Force leaders. It can open up communications within our service, break down barriers and create cultural change.”¹² In short, mentoring allows for continued organizational growth and is fundamental to the art of leadership.

A commitment to learning is the method by which we improve ourselves as practitioners of the art of leadership. As General Curtis LeMay stated, “I’m firmly convinced that leaders are not born; they’re educated, trained, and made as in every other profession.”¹³ The leadership art involves a continual process of learning with the focus on self-improvement, developing and feeding of a hunger for the newest and latest information, and striving towards reaching a higher level of expertise. Leadership requires maximizing learning and being committed to the growth learning brings. Mentoring becomes the responsibility of each learning leader, putting those newly acquired skills, knowledge, and experience to use by taking an active role in the development of each subordinate’s ability. In this process, leadership provides for a continuum of learning and mentoring while insuring the “harvest of growth” passes on to the future members and leaders of the organization.

Case Study: Generals Marshall, Eisenhower, Patton, and MacArthur

Generals George C. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, George S. Patton, and Douglas MacArthur are famous names to Americans today due to their outstanding leadership during World War II. How was it that they were so ready to assume their leadership roles during such a difficult period of history? Edgar F. Puryear, Jr., in his book *Nineteen Stars: A Study in Military Character and Leadership*, recounts a story about a writer on World War II commenting that, “One miracle I could not explain is how the United States, an unwarlike and unprepared country if ever there was one, was suddenly able to produce so large and so brilliant a group of military leaders. . . . Where did they come from, and what had they been doing all those twenty years?”¹⁴ The answer, according to Puryear: they were working and preparing for leadership.¹⁵

As cadets at the US Military Academy, Marshall, Eisenhower, and Patton received average grades. As they matured, however, they excelled at the Army’s service schools and consistently graduated with top honors.¹⁶ MacArthur was really an exceptional case. Puryear states that MacArthur “was so brilliant, he did not attend any service schools as a student—he was assigned as an instructor, even though he had never been through the course.”¹⁷ What was each General’s attitude towards learning?

General Marshall was noted for his voracious appetite for reading and his passion for knowledge.¹⁸ He developed this desire as a youth and it carried on throughout his career. He would couple his literary study of military history with visits to the actual battlefields whenever the opportunity to do so arose.¹⁹ Puryear states that, “In his duties as an officer, Marshall always tried to learn everything possible about the subject at hand. He had a wealth of general knowledge and was knowledgeable on specifics. He never spoke

on any subject unless he felt he knew all there was to know about it. . . . He found time to attend every school offered by the military which was pertinent to his career.”²⁰ Marshall was a practitioner of the leadership arts who was thoroughly committed to a lifetime of learning, improving, and growing in his professional career.

General Eisenhower never characterized himself as a good student during his cadet years at West Point.²¹ He credits his mentor, General Fox Conner, with inspiring a methodology of preparation for leadership.²² Part of General Conner’s mentoring of the young Eisenhower involved teaching the value and importance of learning to the art of leadership. Eisenhower gained an appreciation for the study and critical analysis of military history, learned the value of war gaming, by using maps and studying strategies, and absorbed much practical leadership experience by writing field orders, letters, and handling other administrative functions.²³ Once the young Eisenhower committed himself to his military career, he became a firm believer and advocate of the benefits of learning as the way to insure fitness for leadership and command.²⁴

General Patton devoted his life to becoming a great general.²⁵ He owned a huge library of military history and once told his son that, “To be a successful soldier, you must know history.”²⁶ Puryear notes that Patton was once accused of making “snap decisions” during World War II. Patton’s response attests to his lifelong commitment to learning and illustrates how that commitment is a hallmark of leadership: “I’ve been studying the subject of war for forty-odd years. When a surgeon decides in the course of an operation to change its objective, to splice that artery or cut deeper and remove another organ which he finds infected, he is not making a snap decision but one based on knowledge, experience, and training. So am I.”²⁷ Patton’s studies taught him that, “. . . battles are

won by men; and, therefore, one aspiring to high command should study the men fighting the battles.”²⁸ Patton dedicated himself to learning as much as possible from every experience he had in the army.²⁹ This storehouse of knowledge, built by a desire to learn, would serve him well when it came time for him to lead thousands of troops in battle.

General MacArthur’s life seemed to be one continuous time of preparation for leadership and command.³⁰ As noted earlier, MacArthur received no formal service school instruction: his knowledge out-shadowed the curriculum.³¹ He, too, was dedicated to the study of military history and built a library of over 7000 books.³² A bachelor until over forty years old, he spent countless hours in study and preparation for the leadership calling he felt to be on his life.³³ MacArthur began his study under the tutelage of his father, continued it into adulthood, and remained devoted to learning throughout his illustrious career.³⁴

Puryear concludes by stating that, “All of these generals were men who worked at their profession. They never stopped learning; they continued to grow throughout their careers. . . . They started as young officers to work hard, study, and give every job that extra-lick.”³⁵ These examples clearly illustrate the relationship between a lifetime commitment to learning and the art of leadership. These four leaders developed a thirst for learning early in their lives and retained it throughout their careers. There may be other factors that determine such an ascent to the heights of military leadership but clearly, a commitment to learning is fundamental.

Notes

¹ John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 157.

² *Ibid.*, 157.

Notes

³ AFM 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force, Vol II. (March, 1992), 246.

⁴ Viscount Bernard Law Montgomery of Alamein, *The Path to Leadership*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961),16.

⁵ Gardner, 36.

⁶ Information on mentoring is from an Air Education and Training Command briefing on Gen Billy Boles' AETC Mentoring Initiative provided to ACSC research group 96-079, November 1995.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² General Ronald R. Fogleman, Air Force Chief of Staff, address to the Air Force Cadet Officer Mentoring Action Program Annual Banquet, Bolling AFB, DC, 21 October 1995.

¹³ Major David E. Rennekamp, *Every Supervisors Mission: Build Tomorrow's Leaders* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, April, 1986), 10.

¹⁴ Edgar F. Puryear, Jr. *Nineteen Stars: A Study in Military Character and Leadership* (Orange, VA: Green Publishers, 1971), 377.

¹⁵ Ibid., 377.

¹⁶ Ibid., 378.

¹⁷ Ibid., 378.

¹⁸ Ibid., 379.

¹⁹ Ibid., 380.

²⁰ Ibid., 380.

²¹ Ibid., 380.

²² Ibid., 381.

²³ Ibid., 381.

²⁴ Ibid., 381.

²⁵ Ibid., 382.

²⁶ Ibid., 382.

²⁷ Ibid., 382.

²⁸ Ibid., 382.

²⁹ Ibid., 384.

³⁰ Ibid., 384-385.

³¹ Ibid., 378.

³² Ibid., 382.

³³ Ibid., 385.

³⁴ Ibid., 385.

³⁵ Ibid., 385.

Chapter 8

Thinking Critically and Creatively is a Key to Problem Solving, Hence, Thinking is a Hallmark of Leadership

Leadership involves the “art” of problem solving. This “art” was equally crucial to Wellington’s leadership at Waterloo as it was to the successful leadership of Eisenhower at Normandy, MacArthur at Inchon, and Schwarzkopf in the Gulf War. Leadership at any level entails problem solving; and problem solving involves thinking, both critically and creatively, to master the many and varied obstacles barring the attainment of goals. This dynamic and purposeful thinking is not just a characteristic of the battlefield. It occurs daily within the duty sections, offices, and organizations that make up the very fabric of the military, the matrix in which leaders of all types and ranks exercise the art of leadership today, *right now*.

Anthony Kendall, in his article *The Creative Leader*, writes, “The purpose of the armed forces is not to perform routine tasks but to promptly and adequately respond to crises with maximal efficiency.”¹ Leaders who find themselves thrust into these crisis situations, whether in war or peace, on the battlefield or in the office, must be able to do two things in order to be effective in the art of leadership: analyze problems and develop solutions. The goal initially is to understand the problem, through critical analysis, and

then to utilize creative thinking skills to find a solution. This process of thinking turns a stumbling block to progress into a stepping stone to success.

One of the many contributions General George C. Marshall made to victory in World War II occurred when he was commandant of the US Army Infantry School in the pre-war days.² Marshall realized the army's limitations, both in personnel and resources, and recognized the need to develop a generation of leaders comfortable with new challenges. He knew critical and creative thinking skills would produce mastery of these challenges and work as a force multiplier for the army's limited resources. Marshall built a curriculum that "forced officers to develop innovative solutions to tactical problems, deal with uncertainty, and think on their feet. With scarce resources, he required leaders to develop simple answers to problems full of uncertainty."³ Marshall's legacy testifies to the importance of thinking critically and creatively, as a leadership tool to understand what we do and to do it better, regardless of the circumstance.

The US Army's manual on leadership, FM 22-100, defines thinking skills as "directional skills because the direction or orientation of actions to be done . . . is stated in an established priority."⁴ The leader provides the direction by thinking about the problem and "figuring out" what is important, what needs accomplishing, and in what order. The US Army also recognizes the relationship between pointing troops in the right direction and handling the inevitable problems that arise. FM 22-100 states that the art of leadership involves "teaching your subordinates how to think creatively and solve problems while under stress."⁵ Therefore, the first step in problem solving is critical analysis. The first step towards finding the solution is knowing the what, the why, and the how of a problem.

Clausewitz provides a blueprint a student of military operational art can use to study historic battles. The lessons learned from the study of past wars can help leaders understand the possible causes and conduct of future ones. Clausewitzian critical analysis involves: “the discovery and interpretation of equivocal facts,” the *what*; “the tracing of effects back to their causes,” the *why*; and, “the investigation and evaluation of means employed,” the *how*.⁶ This critical analysis methodology for the study of warfare is equally applicable to the process of problem solving in leadership situations at any place and under any circumstance today. The US Army, in FM 22-100, has broken Clausewitzian critical analysis into five useful and easily applied steps:⁷

1. Recognize and define the problem
2. Gather facts and make assumptions
3. Develop possible solutions
4. Analyze and compare the possible solutions
5. Select the best solution

Critical analysis benefits the art of leadership in three ways. First, analysis allows the logical and objective examination of what and how the organization is doing right now. The purpose is to evaluate present performance to determine if what is being done is productive, good, and on the right track towards the organization’s goals. Second, analysis encourages organizational change and growth because people use it to question established procedures in order to find “a better way.” Critical analysis helps people take “fresh looks” at existing processes to see if there are areas that need improvement. Finally, analysis encourages the examination of existing and possible future problems. People begin to look around them, and to the future, with a more critical eye towards improving their organization’s performance. Critical analysis really becomes an

ingrained organizational habit pattern established by leadership and facilitated by support, encouragement, and policy. It infuses the organization and gives life to it.

Leadership moves into the arena of creative solutions by first breaking the barriers that inhibit fresh, new, and unhindered thinking. AFM 1-1, Volume II, Basic Doctrine of the United States Air Force, states that “Preparing airmen for future rather than past wars involves constant encouragement of open-minded thinking to ensure intellectual growth.”⁸ Leadership’s emphasis on forward and open-minded thinking sets the tone within an office or an organization for “thinking outside the box” or outside established parameters. General Perry Smith, in *Taking Charge*, states that, “The best leaders are the ones whose minds are never closed, who are interested in hearing new points of view, and who are eager to deal with new issues.”⁹ Risk taking is important. Perry also points out that leadership demands sensitivity and application of intuition. He states that leaders should be, “open to new ideas while being sensitive to the turbulence that the implementation of new ideas can often cause in the organization.”¹⁰ There is a fine balance to strike when using the fruits of creative thinking in problem solving situations: change can be unsettling and the art of leadership necessitates an awareness of the effects of impending change on followers.

Kendall believes that successful leadership is characterized by two types of creative thinking:¹¹ “*intuitive creativity*”—short term, tactical creativity characteristically used in solving time sensitive problems or “putting out fires”; and, “*reflective creativity*”—long term, strategic creativity used in planning for the future with the goal being to anticipate detours on the road to goal attainment. Creativity, as defined by Kendall, is “any process by which something new is produced—an idea or an object, including a new

form or arrangement of old elements. And the new creation must contribute to the solution of the problem.”¹² Creative thinking does not necessarily require or mean the invention of the “golden BB” or the “answer to all our problems,” rather, it could be as simple as looking at the “same old thing” from a different perspective or being willing to listen to a subordinate’s new and creative idea about an established or accepted pattern of doing business.

Creative thinking is important to the art of leadership in three ways. First, leadership’s stamp of approval on creative thinking encourages breakthroughs in developing better ways of doing the mission. General Smith asks if the leader “is open to suggestions, ideas, new thoughts, new directions, and new concepts.”¹³ Leadership sets the tone in the workplace and organization. The leader’s attitude towards “things new” determines the acceptance of creative thinking as a standard way of operating in the unit. Second, establishing an attitude of creative thinking encourages an atmosphere where *new* ideas are born, nurtured and acted upon. Creative thinking becomes a permanent part of the culture of the organization and becomes expected. Finally, creative thinking encourages improvisation within the organization. That is, making the most of limited resources by maximizing intellectual and creative capabilities of the individuals within the organization. Kendall sums it up well in stating, “Creative leaders take what less creative men call threats and use them as opportunities and challenges.”¹⁴

The art of leadership involves moving people forward toward a goal and inspiring them to perform and succeed for the greater whole. Moving forward is important: it means growth and improvement. In war, when people do not move when they should, they die. Organizations wither and die when they do not move forward in a spirit of

renewal and growth. Thinking critically and creatively is a hallmark of leadership because it forms the foundation of the process the leader uses to solve problems and move the organization forward. That effort achieves its goal by harnessing analytical skills, to evaluate the what, why, and how of problems, and by employing creative thinking skills, to develop new and creative solutions to problems both now and in the future.¹⁵

Case Study: Lieutenant General William G. (Gus) Pagonis

Lieutenant General William G. Pagonis was the commander of the US Army's Central Support Command in Saudi Arabia during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. He was responsible for the logistic support for the entire ground effort from DESERT SHIELD, throughout the war, and its aftermath.¹⁶ This leadership task was enormous and required demonstrated abilities in critical and creative thinking to solve the myriad of problems facing Central Support Command.

Just how big was the task facing General Pagonis and his command? General Pagonis describes the logistics for the Gulf War as similar to picking up and moving the city of Richmond, VA, to the other side of the world.¹⁷ He notes that in the space of one year, from August 1990 to 1991, his command served more than 122 million meals.¹⁸ He described this feat as similar to feeding all the residents of Wyoming and Vermont three meals a day for forty days. During the same time period, General Pagonis stated his supply units pumped 1.3 billion gallons of fuel.¹⁹ He likened this to seven times the fuel usage of Washington DC, during the same period, or the cumulative 12 month fuel consumption of Washington DC, Montana, and North Dakota together. His supply units

and drivers found it necessary to drive nearly 52 million miles in the theater of operations.²⁰ This distance equates to more than 100 round-trips to the moon.

General Pagonis describes it best in his own words:

These tasks—and a myriad of others—are accomplished by logisticians. Logistics is the careful integration of transportation, supply, warehousing, maintenance, procurement, contracting, and automation into a coherent functional area; in a way that permits and enhances the accomplishment of a given goal, objective, or mission. Logisticians deal with unknowns. They attempt to eliminate unknowns, one by one, until they are confident that they have done away with the possibility of paralyzing surprises. This is what we did in the Gulf.²¹

General Pagonis' description of the leadership task before him illustrates the importance of critical and creative thinking to problem solving and the art of leadership. He had an immense job before him: he had to develop ways to efficiently and quickly analyze problems, and encourage the solutions through creative thinking methodologies. General Pagonis was successful in this leadership challenge because he not only encouraged problem solving among his subordinates, but also developed and implemented strategies to get the most from the critical and creative thinking talent inherent in those he led.²²

How did General Pagonis create the leadership environment that allowed for successful solutions to so many problems? Foremost, he encouraged free thinking among his subordinates and “made a point of personal growth beyond the limits of the job.”²³ In addition to encouraging free thinking, he developed strategies by which the communication of new ideas could occur vertically and laterally within the chain of command. His goal was to establish a “free flow zone” of information and suggestions to facilitate the spawning of new ideas, improvements, and solutions to existing problems.

For example, General Pagonis instituted the daily bulletin and SITREP (situation report) to inform those in his command what the problems were, both present and future.²⁴ He also developed the “stand-up” morning meeting as a forum for discussions.²⁵ Stand-up was open to everyone in the command, regardless of rank, and designed to allow for the free and open exchange of ideas and information. Having everyone stand was Pagonis’ method of encouraging brevity and succinctness in the comments of the attendees. A 30 minute timetable for each meeting minimized quantity while it maximized the quality of each spoken word. An index card system, the 3" × 5", was how the General brought anyone’s information, problem, or solution through the chain of command quickly.²⁶ He reported that about 1,000 cards were generated a day.²⁷ What an outpouring of involvement from the troops he led! This process was a two-way communication link as Pagonis would often send a noteworthy card back to the sender with PSM, or “please see me,” annotated on it.²⁸ This PSM time allowed him to be accessible to subordinates of any rank and served to “close the loop” on the thinking and problem solving process.²⁹ Finally, General Pagonis established a small group of on the spot problem solvers called the Ghostbusters.³⁰ This group was the General’s link to the theater of operations and he told them to circulate among the troops, identify needs and problems, and develop solutions *on-the-spot*. The Ghostbusters allowed General Pagonis to have an immediate means of contact with the real time problems that faced the US ground forces in Saudi Arabia. The General empowered his Ghostbusters to critically analyze problems and implement solutions expeditiously, before they became major obstacles to the war effort.

General Pagonis’s motto during the Gulf War was: “Good logistics is combat power.”³¹ General Pagonis maximized the combat power of the war fighters by taking

definite steps to solve the many problems before him. He created a leadership environment that encouraged the critical and creative thinking skills of his subordinates, and thus assured the success of his logistics command.

Notes

¹ Lieutenant Commander Anthony Kendall, “The Creative Leader,” in *Concepts for Air Force Leadership* (Maxwell AFB, AL.: Air University, 1990), 293.

² Lieutenant Colonel Dean A. Nowowiejski, “A New Leader Development Paradigm,” *Military Review*, July-August 1995, 73.

³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴ FM 22-100, US Army Military Leadership, 1990, 46.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 156.

⁷ FM 22-100, 47.

⁸ AFM 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force, Vol II, March 1992, 243.

⁹ Major General Perry M. Smith, *Taking Charge*, (Washington, DC: National Defense, 1986), 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹¹ Kendall, 293.

¹² *Ibid.*, 294.

¹³ Smith, 102.

¹⁴ Kendall, 294.

¹⁵ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John M. Shalikashvili, addressed the students of the Air War College and the Air Command and Staff College on 29 Jan, 1995. One aspect of his remarks focused on challenging leaders to do more reflective thinking on the future requirements, roles, and missions of the US military. His speech was geared to the challenges our military has ahead in light of shrinking budgets and changing challenges, e.g., MOOTW, limited conflicts. He talked about taking time to “put your feet on the desk” and *really think* about the future for the military.

¹⁶ Russell Mitchell, with Seth Payne, “Half Audie Murphy, Half Jack Welch,” *Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence*, ed. by Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press Inc., 1992), 197.

¹⁷ Lieutenant General William G. Pagonis, with Jeffrey L. Cruikshank, *Moving Mountains* (Boston, MA.: Harvard Business School Press, 1992), 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 183.

²³ *Ibid.*, 183.

Notes

- ²⁴ Ibid., 184.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 185.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 189.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 189.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 191.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 191.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 218.
- ³¹ Mitchell, 200.

Chapter 9

Wisdom Provides a Broad, Balanced Leadership Perspective From Which Sound Decisions Are Made

The definition of wisdom, as it applies to leadership, is sufficiently broad for all leaders to apply to their unique, individual situations. “Common sense in an uncommon degree is what the world calls wisdom.”¹ More than just simple common sense and the intelligent application of learning, wisdom encompasses judgment (the forming of opinions), prudence (cautious foresight), wit (keen perception), and discernment (comparative understanding). It is demonstrated in the combination of knowledge and experience to successfully meet moral or other challenges in daily life.² Wisdom is an attribute of leadership that many people would associate with leaders of great reputation and notable position. Leadership is seasoned by wisdom. This “seasoning” provides leaders the ingredients to add to the decision making process. The more seasoning, the more sound the decision—based not only on professional competence, but also on a broad, more balanced perspective. Wisdom in leadership encompasses three aspects: knowledge, because wisdom can be learned; experience, since wisdom can be taught; and, relationships, because shared wisdom produces wise leaders.

Wise leaders are able to effectively sift through a seemingly infinite amount of available information and target that which is essential. This essential information, or knowledge, aids the leader in making sound decisions.

Wisdom is more than knowledge transfer within an organization; it is making sense of knowledge, just as knowledge makes sense of information. Wise people know what knowledge or know-how is needed in a given situation, how to circulate and renew that knowledge by working with others, and how to use it to solve a problem or achieve a goal.³

Having a given quantity of knowledge is no guarantee of obtaining wisdom. We all know people who have a great deal of knowledge but are not wise and, conversely, we all know people who seem very wise yet are not up to date on the latest empirical findings.⁴ Wise leaders, however, actively seek out the right quality and quantity of knowledge. They also know where and when to obtain additional information for decision making as it pertains to their area of expertise or concern. As leaders increase their knowledge base through learning and understanding, they are better equipped to make consistently wise decisions. “Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. . . .”⁵

Gaining wisdom through personal experience is another facet in the art of leadership. Without experience, leaders can only base their decisions on external sources of information (opinions, facts, case studies, etc.) and almost always will choose the “statistically correct” solution. Therefore, leaders who desire to make wise decisions should seek out opportunities to participate in leadership activities to broaden their experience foundation. Someone once said, “Wisdom is meaningless until our own experience has given it meaning. . . .”⁶ These experiences foster the growth of wisdom. Situations and positions abound in which leaders at all levels can get practical experience.

If job-related responsibilities do not present opportunities to actively participate in or directly observe leadership skills, one can always volunteer for collateral duties or civic activities. Reading about the leadership attributes of others may help refine one's own skills, but there is no substitute for experience. Max DePree, in his book, *Leadership Jazz*, states, "Preparation for leadership does not come from books. Books sometimes give you an insight or an outline, but real preparation consists of hard work and wandering in the desert, of much feedback, much forgiveness, and of the yeast of failure."⁷ Indeed, failure can be a mighty teacher. In the words of William Wordsworth, "Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar."⁸ Wise leaders actively reflect and evaluate their failings or failures and seek to gain further wisdom from the experience. Rather than allowing failure to decimate them, wise leaders use these experiences as instruments of learning—opportunities for growth and development.

If experience is the best teacher, then relationships are the conduit through which knowledge and experiences flow to produce wise leaders. Relationships that exist between leaders and others are multifaceted: vertically to their superiors and subordinates, horizontally to their peers, and diagonally to friends and former associates. They are essential to the learning experience and the wisdom that emanates from them.⁹ Strong relationships are the result of time and energy spent on others, and with others, for mutual nurturing and growth. Wisdom is cultivated and harvested through these strong personal relationships. A leader who shares knowledge and experiences for the purpose of learning and mentoring, is all the wiser for it. As these experiences are accumulated and skills are mastered, leaders enjoy mentoring others and learn as much from the process as the learners themselves.¹⁰

Good participative leaders learn how to ask a lot of questions and then listen—listen closely to gain understanding. Aubrey and Cohen, in their book, *Working Wisdom*, state, “Wisdom is not passed from an authoritative teacher to a supplicant student, but is discovered in a long relationship in which both stand to gain a greater understanding of the workplace and the world.”¹¹ These bonds of personal relationships can only grow, expand, and maintain their strength through proactive and genuine nurturing. Wise is the leader who does not allow these invaluable links to wither or decay.

In summary, wisdom provides a broader perspective for leadership. A truly effective and wise leader must have respect for the future, regard for the present, and an understanding of the past.¹² This is made possible through increasing one’s knowledge, expanding one’s experience, and building strong relationships. While not meant to be a checklist for attaining wisdom, these foundational qualities increase and focus wisdom for its ultimate purpose: decision making. According to Schultz, in his book, *Unconventional Wisdom*, “Ultimately, decision making is a matter of what we know. What we do is use past knowledge, experience, and values, together with the current situation, our understanding and vision, and apply that to the future.”¹³ Leaders at all levels have the ability to mature and gain competency—but it requires action and determination. Through study one broadens their wisdom, through practice they master it, and through questioning wisdom gains depth.¹⁴

If everyone in your chain-of-command were asked to write down the names of those who they consider to be wise leaders, would your name appear? On this “wise leader” list, how do you evaluate the knowledge level? How broad is the experience base? What

can you do to strengthen your personal relationships with them in order to mutually benefit from that knowledge and experience? Aubrey and Cohen conclude:

A benefactor puts wisdom at our service as a gift, a gift all the more precious because it can never be repaid to its donor. All we can do is pass these gifts on by becoming wise and making our wisdom useful enough to be learned by others.¹⁵

Case Study: General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf faced two daunting tasks: first, create a multinational force to confront Saddam Hussein's Iraqi military offensive into Kuwait in 1990-91, and second, maintain joint force solidarity in the face of crucial cultural differences, primarily in the areas of religion and Arab nationalism.

At a critical juncture in the final planning stages of Operation DESERT STORM, the Syrians seemed to become more ambiguous about their involvement in the coalition. While desiring to support Saudi Arabia, they were uneasy about being aggressors in a struggle against other Arabs. To resolve this problem, Schwarzkopf amended his original plan slightly to allow Syrian concerns to be eased without compromising his battleplan's integrity. Since Prince Khalid, the Saudi Arabian Air Defense Commander, had operational responsibility for the Syrians, Schwarzkopf delegated the duty to him by suggesting:

Here's what your government could propose. You, General Khalid, the commander of the Arab forces, wish to make the Syrians your reserve. You want the Syrians to follow the Egyptians through the breach. This way the Syrians are, in fact, participating in the offensive, yet they won't be called into battle unless the Egyptians get in trouble. They will not need to fight fellow Arabs unless they are coming to the aid of fellow Arabs.¹⁶

Schwarzkopf wisely selected a course of action that did not require confrontation, but rather protected Arab honor.

To the Arab mind, “the most pressing concern was neither the threat from Saddam nor the enormous joint military enterprise on which we were embarked. What loomed largest for them was the cultural crisis triggered by the sudden flood of Americans into their kingdom.”¹⁷ As a means of settling their concerns, Schwarzkopf instituted a series of councils in each geographic area where US servicemen were posted. He directed that the senior officer of the community identify and contact the town’s civilian and military leaders and meet regularly with them to note and diffuse problems at that level. “Once the local councils got established, the number of problems that made it to the level of the palace and Khalid dropped dramatically, despite the continued influx of US troops.”¹⁸ This was a course of action he had previously instituted as a base commander between a stateside local community and military officials. In this case, Schwarzkopf encouraged dialogue between the guest military and the host country.

Schwarzkopf was a man uniquely qualified to provide leadership and direction in the creation of this joint force, the orchestration of their operations, and the implementation of their united objective. As a young boy, he had experienced Arab tradition firsthand while his father served in Tehran as an advisor to the Shah’s National Police Force. A telling event provided his first insight into Arab culture. At a dinner hosted by the chief of the Baluchi tribe (a nomadic people loyal to the Shah), sheep’s eyeballs were a delicacy offered as a show of honor. The elder Schwarzkopf was honored with great ceremony and received the first. Young Norman was selected to be honored but he was shocked and sickened by the idea of eating the delicacy. His father, however, ordered

him to eat it and later explained to his son that to refuse such a tribute would have greatly offended their host and his people. During his stay in Tehran, young Norman and his father traveled extensively throughout the region meeting many dignitaries—an experience the General would find useful later in life.

In 1988, Schwarzkopf had another unique opportunity to garner wisdom from experience, this time in the Middle East as Commander US Central Command (CENTCOM). “Though almost any general would leap at the chance for a four-star assignment, Central Command was not one of the most desirable — it included too many so-called political-military responsibilities.”¹⁹ After attending the Foreign Service Institute’s intensive course on the Middle East, he took over CENTCOM. In less than two weeks, he traveled to the region. Meeting initially with nations who were recipients of US military aid (Egypt and Pakistan), Schwarzkopf also pursued a renewed relationship with Saudi Arabian officials. Despite a chilly reception at first, they warmed when he told them of his desire to improve mutually beneficial relations between the countries.²⁰ Upon meeting the Saudi Deputy Minister of Defense and Aviation, Schwarzkopf recalled his memories of the Middle East and related how their fathers had met in 1946. Schwarzkopf heeded the instruction from the Foreign Service Institute’s Peter Bechtold: “In the Arab world, your position gets you through the door, but your personal relationships get you commitments from the Arabs.”²¹

Schwarzkopf serves as a heralded example of a leader who combined experience, knowledge, and relationships, in decision-making that was characterized by wisdom.

Notes

¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in *I Quote*, ed. Virginia Ely (New York: George W. Stewart, Publisher, Inc., 1947), 362.

² Larry Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corp., 1985), 629.

³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴ Robert Hicks, *In Search of Wisdom* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1995), 17.

⁵ Alfred Tennyson, in *I Quote*, 362.

⁶ Bergen Evans, *Peter's Quotations*, ed. Laurence J. Peter (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1977), 495.

⁷ Max DePree, *Leadership Jazz* (New York, Dell Publishing, 1992) 42-43.

⁸ William Wordsworth, *The Home Book of Quotations*, sel., and arr. Burton Stevenson (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1958), 2166.

⁹ Robert Aubrey and Paul M. Cohen, *Working Wisdom: Timeless Skills and Vanguard Strategies for Learning Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1995), xiv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xi.

¹² DePree, 223.

¹³ Ron Schultz, *Unconventional Wisdom* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1994), 4.

¹⁴ Aubrey and Cohen, 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶ General H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 469.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 386.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 392.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 313.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 319.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 321.

Chapter 10

The Leader is Responsible for Communicating Values

Values form the basis for the guidelines and expectations of leadership. They reflect the leader's character, embody the principles they adhere to, and provide a foundation for reference and guidance when making decisions. But a leader must also realize that individuals in the same organization may have different values. Thus, leaders face a dual challenge in communicating values. They must establish values that provide a common framework for meeting their expectations without crippling individualism. According to John Gardner, author of *On Leadership*, properly aligned and communicated values are crucial to the leader's ability to lead the organization. The author concludes, "If leaders cannot find in their constituencies (followers) any base of shared values, principled leadership becomes nearly impossible."¹ How can a leader communicate values in an organization? The answer lies in the example leaders set, how they educate their subordinates on expected values, and how well they enforce them.

The most effective means communicating values is through the leader's personal example. The leader's example reinforces the values and increases the likelihood of subordinate acceptance in at least three ways—setting the standards, providing a model for behavior, and giving credibility to the values. By exhibiting appropriate values, leaders set the standards and establish acceptable boundaries of behavior. Their example

points the way towards expected performance. Leaders illustrate desired values by modeling behavior for others to emulate. The leader's example provides a solid role model for others. Combined, setting standards and modeling appropriate behaviors gives values credibility. People tend to believe what they see, not only what they hear. Timothy L. Timmons, in his book *Commanding an Air Force Squadron*, relates how a leader communicated values through his personal example:

There is the case where a new unit commander stressed professionalism to his subordinates, all the way down to the way he kept his office. He had noticed that his unit's spaces were continuously untidy, and without saying anything he worked at keeping his office unscrupulously orderly and clean. . . . Slowly, but surely, this rubbed off on the rest of the unit, and the unit building began to look professional also.²

While this may appear to be a simplistic illustration, the message is resounding. The leader, without question, sets the example for all. Leaders who communicate their values by linking their policy with congruent actions increase the likelihood that their values will be adhered to and adopted. Their message rings loud and clear—"watch me, follow me."

In addition to their personal example, leaders must also communicate expected values through education. According to General Merrill McPeak, in his article "Core Values in Quality Air Force":

Transforming leaders put their efforts into proclaiming, exemplifying, and teaching the real meaning of the values of the organization. They are in a sense, leader-missionaries for the organization. They are zealous to the point of tediousness. They take every opportunity, no matter how large or small the audience, to proclaim the organization's enduring values.³

Communicating values through education enables leadership to establish prescribed guidelines, increase awareness of value expectations, and relate the consequences for failure to adhere to established values. Once leaders define values and illustrate them through their example, they must ensure that expected standards are set forth and

communicated to followers. Establishing guidelines facilitates communication of leadership's values by ensuring everyone has the "same sheet of music to sing from." In essence, these prescriptions outline the criteria to follow and define the acceptable parameters within which everyone must operate. Once leaders and subordinates understand expectations, the pattern to follow becomes clear and deviations are readily noticeable.

Communicating values through education also enables leadership to increase the awareness of the behavior desired in subordinates. In this regard, leaders serve as mentors and facilitators who must ensure this education is not only a continual process, but one that takes advantage of every means available. This facet of education can be formal or informal and may be expressed verbally or through written communication. In most cases, a combination of all these methods best serve leaders who seek to achieve total adoption of prescribed values. Leaders who consistently "talk the talk" and "walk the talk," serve as living monuments for expected values.⁴ Like with most learning, repetition is the key to improving understanding and effectiveness. Leaders who take advantage of every opportunity to positively reinforce expected values leave little room for misunderstandings and ignorance. Vehicles such as newsletters, periodic bulletins, and policy letters enable leadership to get their message clearly across in "black and white." When expected values appear in print, they not only reinforce prescribed standards, they provide a source of reference and continuity for all. The senior leadership of the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Army all reinforce core values in numerous publications and documents for each of their respective services. Their goal is to ensure the widest possible dissemination and adoption of their respective service values.

General John Shalikashvili continually champions joint war fighting core values (integrity, competence, physical and morale courage, and teamwork) through Joint Publication-1, “Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States.” In doing so, the General emphasizes the level of importance he places on expected values by reinforcing documented standards with his personal enthusiastic support. Communicating values through educating others not only makes leadership’s expectations clear, it significantly improves the awareness of required behavior.

A third benefit of communicating values through education is that it affords leadership the opportunity to explain the consequences of failing to adhere to prescribed standards. Unfortunately, this aspect of education often is viewed negatively. Instead, clear identification of consequences for operating outside parameters serves to benefit both the leaders and their subordinates. As leadership outlines the consequences of adverse behavior when addressing desired values, they improve the likelihood of acceptance through both positive and negative motivation.⁵ Leaders lead people, not robots, and organizations are full of people who respond to different stimuli. While many may choose to adopt leadership’s prescribed values either because of the intrinsic usefulness perceived or it’s the right thing to do, others may simply adhere to avoid the consequences. In addition to benefiting leadership, identifying consequences for failure to adhere to standards also benefits subordinates. When followers clearly understand the penalty for failing to align their values with leadership’s prescription, they are able to make decisions based on complete information. In short—they know both what’s required (expected) and the consequences for failing to adhere to standards. The decision

is now theirs, and leadership's purpose may still be served—regardless of the motivation, established values will be followed.

Finally, leaders can communicate values through their enforcement. In their book, *The Power of Ethical Management*, Norman Vincent Peale and Kenneth Blanchard contend that enforcing values enhances leadership's credibility and sustains the value system. The authors state, "Without accountability—positive or negative consequences for action or inaction—any policy or program is apt to fail."⁶ Leaders lose their credibility if they fail to hold subordinates consistently accountable for digressing from established values. Likewise, leadership must ensure that enforcement of values is swift, fair, consistent, and impartial if they hope to maintain the effectiveness of their value system. Dr. Douglas McGregor's four-principled "Hot Stove Rule" analogy illustrates how a leader's enforcement of policy (values) provides effective discipline and strengthens leadership's credibility.⁷ First, the stove is swift in its message and relatively intense—gives off heat as a warning and "rewards" the offenders immediately. Second, the stove singles out precisely the errant behavior—offenders are not penalized for anything other than the specific deviations. Third, the stove burns all the time, it is consistent—whether you touch it once, twice, or many times the results are the same. Fourth, and final, the stove is impersonal and does not lose its temper—the stove burns indiscriminately anyone who touches it without getting angry or taking it personally. Like McGregor's analogy, leaders reaffirm their credibility by enforcing their policies (values) and punishing deviations from them immediately, succinctly, consistently, and indiscriminately.

In addition to solidifying leadership's credibility, enforcing values also serves to sustain the prescribed values. Leaders who consistently enforce adherence to standards create an environment where values are preserved and recreate themselves—adherence begets adoption and adoption leads to sustainment of values. In her Harvard Business Review article, *Managing for Organizational Integrity*, Lynn Sharp Paine argues that, “In the end, creating a climate that encourages exemplary conduct may be the best way to discourage damaging misconduct.”⁸ When leaders communicate values by enforcing them, they produce credibility for themselves, their values, and increase the staying power for the overriding value system.

Values provide a starting point for leaders in their decision making efforts. They reflect character and principles that serve to keep leaders and their followers focused, and prescribe desired expectations and guidelines. Leadership is responsible for communicating established values and for setting the standard in adherence. Ross Eastgate simply defines the leader's role by stating, “Leadership is not just about compulsion. It is also about persuasion and example. It is most importantly about communications, explaining to subordinates what you expect of them. . . .”⁹ To facilitate adherence and adoption of values throughout the organization, leaders can't expect subordinates to follow their guidelines just because they are compelled to. Instead, leadership must continually communicate expectations through their personal example, education, and enforcement. Combined, these three avenues provide leaders with the essential ingredients to mold and shape their units for success.

Case Study: Commander Hardesty And The “Vikings”

The “Vikings,” a Navy fighter squadron, had never won any of the various annual excellence awards prior to 1992.¹⁰ Readiness levels were merely satisfactory and their percentage of full mission capable aircraft was continuously the lowest on base. Aircrews and newly designated aviators eligible for fleet fighter squadron assignment avoided orders to this squadron at all costs. This squadron was typically placed last on the “wish lists” by aircrews in training for fleet assignments.

In November 1992 Commander Hardesty took command of the Vikings. On the day following the change of command ceremony he called an all officer meeting to present his “top ten” goals to the squadron. Inherent in every goal, was the theme of achieving very high, measurable standards set by the commander. He stressed that the squadron would always take the “high road” and conduct much tougher training programs, instead of taking an easier route. Following his presentation he gave a copy of these goals to every officer and placed copies of his top ten list on various bulletin boards throughout the squadron.

Commander Hardesty emphasized his goals and personal values in several ways. He routinely kept paperwork from leaving the squadron until drafts met “Viking” standard. He gave in-depth feedback, frequently embarrassing, to aircrews regarding their aerial or flight briefing performance. He often referred to these performances as “below Viking standard.” Officer instructors preparing unit training underwent a “murder board” or “no holds barred” critique on the quality, content and presentation of the subject material to ensure it met “Viking” standards set by the training department. Even when the unit fell behind in its training schedule, Commander Hardesty would not yield until unit standards

were met. Initially, junior officers joked about the commanding officer's phrase of "not up to Viking standards," and used it sarcastically to one another when observing poor performance.

The squadron previously had a reputation for inappropriate behavior, due in part to the failure of leadership to appropriately discipline an individual who had been investigated by the Judge Advocate General for conduct unbecoming of an officer. Four months after Hardesty assumed command, he administratively discharged this same officer because of a civilian alcohol related traffic violation and continued poor aerial performance.

After a few months hard work and "re-work" under Hardesty's diligent leadership, the squadron began to change. A winning attitude appeared in the officer corps. In fact, the officers began to hold each other accountable to the new squadron standards. The much maligned "not up to Viking standard" phrase soon became a very sobering "you have let us all down" sentiment. The commander no longer needed to provide the "painful" feedback on training lectures or flight briefs. Other officers were now holding each other accountable to meet the new squadron standards. In 1993 the squadron went through a major administrative inspection and passed with an "outstanding" rating in every category. The functional wing commander later advised other commanding officers on the base to use Hardesty's squadron as an example when preparing for their future inspections.

Before Commander Hardesty's arrival, the problems facing the Vikings were found in the organization's values. Some officers had no real set of useful values while others possessed values which were inconsistent with mission success and professional

behavior. The lack of substantive unit values was reflected in the lackadaisical manner in which offenders were dealt with, and even permeated the overall squadron attitude. In essence squadron personnel didn't believe they were on the same level with their peers and had developed a defeatist attitude—"why bother to try, when we know we don't measure up." Squadron performance and readiness levels remained low.

Commander Hardesty was aware of these problems before he came to the squadron. As the "new sheriff in town," he set about to establish a set of values to put the Vikings back on the road to success. Commander Hardesty valued high standards and made this known from his first day in the squadron. He expected high standards from his subordinates in everything they did. He removed "bad actors" that did not reflect appropriate the unit's values, and personally lead the way by adhering to these high standards—even at the expense of a delayed training schedule. Through his personal example, the squadron learned to value high standards as well. They eventually accepted these values as something important to the success of the organization. The process took time, but eventually led to changes that corrected major deficiencies. Hardesty illustrates how leaders can forge new unit values for the good of the organization which provides a common work ethic for their people. The result—a resurrected unit!

Notes

¹ John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 113.

² Timothy L. Timmons, *Commanding an Air Force Squadron* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1993), 12.

³ Alexander Roberts, "Core Values in a Quality Air Force," *Air Power Journal*, Summer 1994, 46.

⁴ Ross W. Eastgate, "The Seven Deadly Sins of Leadership," *The Australian Defense Force Journal* (November-December, 1994) 30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

Notes

⁶ Norman Vincent Peale and Kenneth Blanchard, *The Power of Ethical Management* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1988), 115-116.

⁷ Colonel (ret.) Larry R. Donnithorne, *The West Point Way of Leadership* (New York: Currency Doubleday, 1993), 106. McGregor's Hot Stove principle is a well established and much used analogy. In this reading, the author relates how Gen Douglas MacArthur repeatedly used this illustration to teach effective disciplining techniques.

⁸ Lynn Sharp-Paine, "Managing for Organizational Integrity," *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, 1994, 117.

⁹ Eastgate, 30.

¹⁰ Commander J.L. Hardesty, interview with ACSC Research Team 96-07, Air University, AL, 13 December 1995. The case study events are true and factual. To protect the privacy of the individuals involved and the unit, the names and unit identification are fictitious.

Chapter 11

Leadership is Responsible for Shaping the Culture—Assessing and Transforming It When Needed

Culture embodies the norms and attitudes that define us as group or individuals. Greg Bounds, in *Beyond Total Quality Management*, defines culture as “. . . behaviors, values, beliefs and assumptions that a group (or an individual) develops as it learns to cope with internal and external problems. . . .”¹ Culture influences how individuals or groups will respond or react to situations. Leadership serves as the watchdog for culture—ensuring responses and actions are in tune with goals. For this reason, it is imperative leaders recognize three things about culture: their role in creating it, assessing it, and, in leading cultural changes.

First, leaders need to recognize the important role they play in creating the cultural environment. According to John Kotter and James Heskett, in *Corporate Culture and Performance*, “Cultures can have powerful consequences, especially when they are strong. They can enable a group to take rapid and coordinated action . . . they can also lead intelligent people to walk, in concert, off of a cliff.”² Leaders play an invaluable role in shaping an organization’s culture, endeavoring to align it with the overall mission objectives or vision. However, if left alone, a group will create acceptable standards and adapt patterns of behavior for themselves over time. Unfortunately, these may not always

be in line with those envisioned by the leader. Allowing a culture to emanate of its own volition is like driving a car with no hands—the car may stay on the road, but then again it may not.

In the same way parents can influence the personality of their children, leaders can influence culture—the personality prevalent in their organizations. Parents help determine the principles their children adopt and adhere to. They encourage them to hang tough during difficult times without abandoning family values. To their children's dismay, parents consistently stress the importance of education in hopes the wisdom gained will see the children through life's challenges. But most of all, parents encourage children to dream impossible dreams and to see possibilities the future holds for them. The parent's purpose in all of these activities is to prepare their children for independent action, much in the same way leaders seek to guide those entrusted into their care.

Warren Bennis, author of *On Becoming a Leader*, says, “. . . a leader imposes (in the most positive sense of the word) his philosophy on the organization, creating or recreating its culture. The organization then acts on the philosophy, carries out the mission, and the culture takes on a life of its own becoming more cause than effect.”³ Additionally, John Gardner describes culture's power as providing, “both constraints and opportunities with respect to the ways in which leadership can be exercised.”⁴ As children may be rebellious to parent's guidance, thereby limiting parental influence, a culture can be resistant to leadership's guidance. In these cases, leaders (similar to parents) must tread carefully, but cannot afford to neglect the importance of their influence on the organization's culture.

Leaders who understand the importance of culture's influence on performance and the ultimate success of their organizations are well ahead of the game. However, this recognition is "just the tip of the iceberg." For leadership to be effective, leaders must get beneath the surface, consistently "checking the health" of the culture through assessment to ensure it remains aligned with changes in the mission or external environment. Leadership must constantly give attention to culture in light of advances in technology and rapid changes in our multi-polar world. Assessing culture takes an investment of both time and effort and requires leaders to determine objectives, ascertain vulnerability, and recognize risk.

Determining goals is the first step for leadership in assessing culture. Leaders must have an idea of the culture they envision and know how they want to influence the current culture. Kotter and Heskett, in their book *Corporate Culture and Performance*, suggest that an "outsider" perspective might be beneficial in determining the desired culture. The authors state that those who bring a fresh look from the outside provide, ". . . that broader view and greater emotional detachment that is so uncharacteristic of people that have been thoroughly acculturated in an organization."⁵ However, leaders don't normally have the benefit of being an "outsider." Instead, leaders who want to accurately assess culture must "step-out" of the current context and strive to gain a clear, unprejudiced view in their evaluation. Leaders must look, not only at the internal environment, but must also scan the external environment ensuring the organization is "on track" relative to change. Determining goals for the culture is the most critical step for leadership in the assessment process.

Once leaders establish goals, they must determine the organization's vulnerability to change and proceed with caution. In determining vulnerability, leadership needs to be aware of potential resistance to cultural changes. This resistance can be described as, "... opposition to the possible social and/or organizational consequences associated with change."⁶ Leaders must be aware that they are major factors in determining the vulnerability to a culture change. The leaders objectives, methodology, and disposition are equally important to the organization's susceptibility to change. Philip Crosby, author of *Quality Without Tears*, says, "Changing a culture is not a matter of teaching people a bunch of new techniques or replacing their behavior patterns with new ones. It is a matter of exchanging values and providing role models."⁷ Leaders must understand the organization's vulnerability to a culture change and their impact on the process if they hope to be successful in reaching objectives.

The final concern for leadership in assessing culture is recognizing the risk inherent in initiating cultural changes. When leaders take an honest look at their organizations, they may determine that a "culture shift" is indeed required. A "culture shift," defined as "a major shift in attitudes, norms, sentiments, beliefs, values, operating principles and behaviors of an organization,"⁸ can be very risky and present major challenges to leaders. If they decide to proceed, leaders may need to tighten their seatbelts and get ready for a rough ride. However, deciding not to tackle the challenge may have more devastating consequences. The risk inherent with *action* may be less costly than the risk associated with *inaction*. According to Philip Crosby, only when leadership, "becomes educated and sets out on its mission of changing the culture of the company can it hope to reach the rewards such a change produces."⁹ Ultimately, leaders need to assess risk in light of

potential rewards. They must be aware, however, that the greater the change desired, the greater the resistance expected. Setting objectives, measuring vulnerability, and ascertaining the risks associated with implementing changes to culture are all vitally important to leadership during the assessment process.

Given the need and acceptable risk in shifting a culture, leaders must understand their responsibility for spearheading the change. This responsibility takes on two facets—setting the standards in personal behavior and convincing others to commit to the new culture. According to Kotter and Heskett, “The single most visible factor that distinguishes major cultural changes that succeed from those that fail is competent leadership at the top.”¹⁰ A leader’s actions may do much more to shape the climate than his words when implementing a cultural shift. William Pasmore, in his book, *Creating Strategic Change*, highlights the importance of the leader’s example. He advises leaders to, “Walk the talk. . . . Live what you say and model the behavior you want to see to in others.”¹¹ Once leader’s determine the “payoff” is worth the “risk,” they become guiding lights for a cultural shift where their example serves as the greatest instrument for promoting change.

Leaders who embrace their responsibility for leading cultural changes also appreciate the value of “buy-in.” The more people commit to the culture, the faster its qualities will spread. Leaders must “sell” their ideas (verbally and by example) if they expect them to be accepted and adopted. The leader’s role in determining, shaping, and leading any culture shift can not be denied. Leadership is responsible for enthusiastically encouraging others to follow their lead—there will be few changes without the leader’s vision and personal commitment to leading by example.

Leaders who recognize the power of culture’s influence on people, performance, and progress can harness its energy and use it to push their organizations through difficult times or propel it to new heights. A healthy culture can serve to sustain momentum when “in sync” with goals or can generate new ideas and direction when faced with change. Leaders need to understand the important role they play in creating the cultural environment. Recognizing this, leaders then commit to assessing the current culture by determining goals, measuring vulnerabilities, and recognizing the risks inherent in making needed changes. Finally, leaders must take the lead in shifting culture to desired expectations by setting the best possible example and convincing others to emulate their behaviors and attitudes.

Case Study: Culture Changes in the Department of Defense

Today’s Department of Defense (DOD) is the product of evolution reflecting a series of cultural changes. These changes span many areas and include demographics, joint warfare, and leadership. Change occurred when DOD leadership assessed the “external environment,” the national and world cultural and political scene, and adjusted its own culture as necessary. The result always enhanced DOD performance.

As recently as WWII, the US Armed Forces were segregated and leadership positions were occupied exclusively by white males. President Harry S. Truman changed that by Executive Order prior to the Korean War. Today’s military is not only a demographic reflection of our society, but has led the way in breaking down other barriers as well. In the military, merit has become the standard. Regardless of race, sex, religion, or national origin, the best performers ideally have the opportunity to rise to the highest levels of

leadership. How close is DOD to making the “ideal” a complete a cultural reality? Not all cultural barriers have been broken down. However, the military remains at the forefront of these issues, most recently by removing the barriers to women serving in combat positions. This DOD culture shift in demographics didn’t just happen, but was championed by high level leaders who provided the “horsepower” to make necessary changes in the face of much resistance. The message from leadership was clear and concise, “The DOD is going this way, you’d best be a genuine team player and get on-board.”

Another DOD culture change emphasizes joint warfare. The military has long recognized the need for combined service solutions to problems requiring use of military power.¹² However, the services’ consistent failure to adequately meld their capabilities led to the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. This legislation forced a “culture shift” on the Armed Forces. Doctrine now dictates that services will no longer fight as separate entities striving to preserve their individuality—parochialism takes a back seat to joint warfighting efforts. The services, led by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), contribute their combined expertise when and where needed to complement and enhance joint military actions. Instead of services providing purely additive effects to the solution, they now strive for synergistic and complimentary effects that emphasize use of the best capability (or combinations of capability) available. War fighting, from system development and acquisition to “bombs on target,” now bears the marks of a joint perspective—a joint culture.

Not only has the DOD experienced culture shifts in demographics and joint warfare, it has also seen a dramatic shift in leadership’s attitude regarding change. Military

editorialist, David Hackworth, argues that the US military used to foster the idea of growth through failure:

Back in the old brown-shoe Army, it was no big-deal if a young leader failed. . . . It was called ‘freedom to fail,’ and it was the best way to learn. . . . Freedom to fail produced a bunch of great leaders stretching from the Civil War right up past the Korean War. Grant, Pershing, Patton, Halsey, LeMay and Abrams struck out more than a time or two before they commanded great armies.¹³

Hackworth argues that after the Korean War, this philosophy changed with the DOD becoming less tolerant of failure. He argues that, “By the time the Vietnam War exploded, the corporate managers were in charge.”¹⁴ Hackworth implies that only the results were now important—not the learning that often accompanied failure. He also contends this philosophy is still prevalent:

In the military of 1996, there’s no room for making an error or being second best. Failure means a bad mark on the efficiency report. And in today’s military, the personnel managers are looking for the slightest flaw, the smallest defect to meet their downsizing quotas. . . . As a result, all the young warriors are walking a very fine line. No one wants to take chance. No one wants to make a wave or even a ripple. No one can afford to fail.¹⁵

Does this describe the current leadership culture of the DOD? One might agree that in many cases it does. However, the DOD is fighting to change this cultural perception. Initiatives to implement Quality in the DOD emphasize a shift from Hackworth’s premise—that mistakes are not tolerated. Quality initiatives were alive and well in the corporate world and the DOD saw the positive results gained by empowering subordinates at the lowest levels to do the job the best they know how. This meant taking general direction from the leader on what to do, but not being told how to do it. This poses somewhat of a risk for DOD leadership. Subordinates could possibly go further than the leader intended or, worse, far enough to get the leader “in trouble.”

However, the benefits of this leadership approach can far outweigh the risk. Lieutenant General Lloyd Newton, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, cites a success story for quality initiatives and leaders who are willing to take the risk. When he took over as the Air Division Commander at Holloman Air Force Base in 1991, the resident F-15 fighter wing was experiencing significant problems with engine maintenance. Historical practices were not meeting the needs—airplanes were on the ramp without engines and the engine shop was “backlogged” with problems. Did the wing leadership jump in, micro-manage, and “fix” the problem? Quite the contrary, the Wing Commander, Colonel “Ted” Campbell, simply recognized the problem and asked the workers at the lowest level to come up with solutions. He empowered those most familiar with the problems with the authority to creatively fix them. Moving on from the historical way of doing things, the “troops” provided creative solutions, getting the wing back on its feet.

The “quality culture” became a reality in this wing, but only after the leadership led the charge! Taking a risk, Colonel Campbell provided guidance on the “what” and trusted his people to provide the “how.”¹⁶ DOD quality initiatives address Hackworth’s concerns. Risk taking to facilitate growth and improvement is alive and well in the military. One of the goals of the DOD Quality program is to encourage a culture shift that will make wise risk taking by leaders and followers a way of life.

The examples above illustrate how “external” forces often started the move towards “culture shifts” in the DOD. In all cases, leadership led the way and “opened the door” for acceptance of these changes. Changing a culture is impossible without the reinforcement of leaders.

Notes

¹ Greg Bounds et al., *Beyond Total Quality Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1994), 101.

² John P. Kotter and James L. Heskett, *Corporate Culture and Performance* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 8.

³ Warren Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1989), 145.

⁴ John W. Gardner, *On Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 135.

⁵ Kotter and Heskett, 89.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷ Philip B. Crosby, *Quality Without Tears* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), 98.

⁸ Susan Holmes, *The Quality Approach* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, September 1994), 85.

⁹ Crosby, 100.

¹⁰ Kotter and Heskett, 84.

¹¹ William A. Pasmore, *Creating Strategic Change* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994), 216.

¹² General Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co, Inc., 1948), 210. General Eisenhower states:

Our Mediterranean experiences had reaffirmed the truth that unity, co-ordination [sic], and co-operation [sic] are the keys to successful operations. War is waged in three elements but there is no separate land, air, or naval war. Unless all assets in all elements are efficiently combined and co-ordinated [sic] against a properly selected, common objective, their maximum potential power cannot be realized.

¹³ David H. Hackworth, "Greenhorns Used to Learn from Failure," *Daily Press*, Hampton VA, 18 February 1996, H3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Lieutenant General Lloyd W. Newton, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, USAF, telephone interview with ACSC Research Team 96-079, 11 March 1996.

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