

12 Principles of Modern Military Leadership: Part 2

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(Graphic by NCO Journal)

In part two of the series, we examine leadership principles five through eight -- teamwork, fitness and energy, aggressiveness and boldness, and caring for Your Soldiers. By adhering to these principles, leaders can lead their troops from the front and create and foster unit cohesion.

Foster Teamwork

"It's amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

-President Harry S. Truman

[Skip to main content \(Press Enter\).](#)

When accomplishing the mission, teamwork is more important than personal recognition, thus the famous quote, "There is no 'I' in team." Today's military often functions in joint operations, which consist of other branches as well as coalition partners. Therefore, an experienced leader cannot favor individuals but must foster cooperation with all team members.

An excellent example of such leadership is General Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme Allied commander, who despite the challenges of making multiple countries' militaries work together during World War II, built a coalition of U.S., British, French, and Canadian forces.

"I could never face a body of officers without emphasizing one word – teamwork," he said.¹

Have Fitness and Energy

"Utterly fearless, full of drive and energy, he was always up front where the battle was fiercest. If his opponent made a mistake, Rommel was on it like a flash."

-Lt. Gen. Sir Brian Horrocks

If leaders follow the principle of leading from the front, then they must be physically fit and energetic to meet the demands of leadership on the battlefield. Leaders who possess such endurance can lead a platoon of hard chargers to fix bayonets and take the high ground.

Former Olympic athlete Gen. George S. Patton advocated for fitness long before it became a standard requirement for the modern day Soldier. Assuming command of the I Armored Corps on January 15, 1942, Patton laid out his expectations.

"As officers, we must give leadership in becoming tough, physically and mentally," he said.

"Every man in this command must be able to run a mile in fifteen minutes with a full military pack."

When an overweight senior officer guffawed, Patton angrily resumed, "I mean every man. Every officer and enlisted man, staff and command, every man will run a mile! We will start in exactly thirty minutes! I will lead!"²

Be Aggressive and Bold

"An army of deer led by a lion is more to be feared than an army of lions led by a deer."

-Phillip of Macedonia

A leader must be bold and aggressive, many of history's most triumphant generals, such as Frederick the Great and Adm. Horatio Nelson, to name a few, embodied these qualities.

Frederick the Great

Frederick the Great built his army into the one of the most formidable in history. He was a bold general and used his infantry's swift maneuvering to confound and crush his enemies. This was

the case at three of his most significant victories: the Battle of Hohenfriedberg in 1745 and the battles of Rossbach and Leuthen in 1757.

The Battle of Prague (1757), in which Frederick invaded Bohemia during the Third Silesian War (Seven Years' War) is a prime example of his audacity.³ With England as his only ally, he faced Austrian, French, Russian, Saxon, and Swedish forces, and though he came close to defeat many times, he finally won the war.⁴

Adm. Horatio Nelson

Considered one of the most historically audacious naval leaders, Nelson faced the "Armed Neutrality," made up of the Russian, Prussian, Danish, and Swedish fleets, at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801.⁵

The battle started badly for the British and the fleet commander, Adm. Sir Hyde Parker, ordered Nelson to withdraw. Nelson was informed of the signal by one of his officers and angrily responded, "I told you to look out on the Danish Commodore and let me know when he surrendered. Keep your eyes fixed on him." He then turned to his flag captain, and said, "You know, Foley, I have only one eye. I have a right to be blind sometimes." He raised the telescope to his blind eye and said, "I really do not see the signal."⁶

In the end, the British fleet won, thus making the Battle of Copenhagen one of Nelson's greatest victories.⁷

Take Care of Your Soldiers

"The badge of rank that an officer wears on his coat is really a symbol of servitude to his men."

-Maj. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor

A competent leader preserves combat power by putting his Soldiers first and doing the most to improve their situation. You will gain Soldiers' trust by making sure they are well equipped, fed, and rested. Beyond meeting their basic needs, it is also essential to be an advocate and ensure they receive proper recognition for their achievements. The U.S. Army prioritizes this as "the mission, the men, and me."

One of Alexander the Great's leadership qualities was the ability to place his men first:

After covering more than 400 miles in 11 days, Alexander and his soldiers were nearly dead from thirst. Some Macedonians had brought back a few bags of water from a distant river, and they offered Alexander a helmet-full. Although his mouth was so dry that he was nearly choking, he gave back the helmet with his thanks and explained that there was not enough for everyone, and if he drank, then the others would faint. When his men saw this, they spurred their horses forward and shouted for him to lead them. With such a king, they said, they would

very any hardships.

Conclusion

Training and caring for your Soldiers ultimately leads to unit success. It is crucial to remember there is no "I" in team and even the most well-known leaders, such as Eisenhower, needed to foster teamwork and unit cohesion to accomplish goals that would have been impossible to achieve otherwise. However, as we will discuss in the concluding article, to create unity, leaders must have the determination and decisiveness to overcome challenges they and their units experience.

Upcoming Article: 12 Principles of Modern Military Leadership: Part 3

Notes

1. James A. Hewes Jr, *Special Studies from Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Center of Military History, 1975).
2. Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius For War* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 405.
3. "The Seven Years' War," History website, accessed 23 January 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/seven-years-war> (<http://www.history.com/topics/seven-years-war>).
4. "The Seven Years' War."
5. J. Rickard, "Expedition Planned and Aims" section of the "Battle of Copenhagen, 2 April 1801," History of War website, 05 February 2006, accessed 23 January 2018, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_copenhagen.html (http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_copenhagen.html); and "The Battle of Copenhagen in 1801," San Jose University website, accessed 23 January 2018, <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/copenhagenbattle.htm> (<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/copenhagenbattle.htm>).
6. Christopher Hibbert, *Nelson, A Personal History* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 261.
7. Donald Sommerville, "Battle of Copenhagen," Britannica website, accessed 03 April 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Copenhagen-1801> (<https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Copenhagen-1801>).
8. Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. 7 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 349-351, <https://archive.org/details/liveswithenglish00plutuoft> (<https://archive.org/details/liveswithenglish00plutuoft>).