



(U.S. Army photo by Thomas Alvarez taken Jan. 9, 2020) U.S. Army Sgt. Daniel Chabot, an Advanced Leadership Course student, writes a list of traits that make a good leader during a class exercise at 204th Regional Training Institute, Boise, Idaho, Jan. 9, 2020.

What Makes a Good Leader?

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“A good leader does not ‘choose’ the best or most opportune time in which to lead. A good leader takes the challenge whenever and wherever it presents itself and does the best he or she can.”

— Sgt. Maj. of the Army (Retired) Richard A. Kidd

When I read this quote, I thought nothing could be truer; too many times leaders feel as though they are entitled to things because of their position and forget the real reason they exist. Identifying leadership qualities, elaborating on effective leadership, and how effective leadership is accomplished will be the ultimate focus of this paper. Conversely, I will also describe what leadership is not.

So what is leadership? The answer to this question can be partly found in a number of different definitions; the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines leadership as a position as a leader of a group, organization, and the time when a person holds the position of leader, and the power or ability to lead other people, while the Army defines leadership as the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while

operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.

Regardless of what definition you choose to agree with, one truth remains the same, your subordinates do not work for you, instead you work for them. You should believe that and find what drives them. In return they will be loyal to you and nothing is more precious than the loyalty of those placed in your charge.

In order to understand leadership you must know what makes or constitutes a good leader and there are many qualities that separate individuals when considering this. Here are just a few of those qualities as listed in *Army Doctrine Publication 6-22: Army Leadership* [Now *Army Leadership and the Profession*]; an ideal leader should possess strong intellect, professional competence, high moral character, and serves as a role model. The same manual goes on to state that, these leaders must be willing to make sacrifices, willing to act decisively and carry out the intent of their superiors so as to better their organization.

In an article titled *What is Leadership?* Ken Kruse states, “Although most leadership positions have a title associated with it that does not mean you need a title in order to be a leader.” You can be a leader in many different places such as church, your neighborhood, and even at your home. Whatever the situation, leadership qualities do not develop overnight and in order to be an effective leader you must start by learning how to follow.

How do you achieve being an effective leader? You must be able to adapt your style of leadership; what may motivate one subordinate may not necessarily motivate another. Getting to know the people that work for you is important; this will allow you to gauge your approach with them and simultaneously build on your shared trust and loyalty. Kruse also stated that, “Not all leaders will be the same, in most cases when people think of ‘leaders’ the first few attributes that begin to populate in their mind are; a take charge charismatic person or dominant.” The problem with this statement is that leadership is not an adjective and typically organizations will not need an overly-enthusiastic charismatic person to be a leader.

Be careful not mix or mistake management with leadership as this is a common theme in some organizations. Leadership and management often become intertwined when being discussed and evaluated and although you may think they are one and the same, nothing is further from the truth. Kruse also stated that, “Leadership and management are not synonymous; I am not downplaying management skills as they are needed and extremely important, but managers are needed to plan, monitor, coordinate, and resource.”

Leaders need to lead people and managers need to manage systems and processes. An example when thinking of how to relate the difference in the military would be that of how executive officers and operation sergeants are largely managers, while company commanders and first sergeants are leaders.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed being able to adapt your leadership style in order to get the best out of your subordinates. Unfortunately this sounds easier than it actually is because leadership styles vary. A way to look at the varying types is by dividing them into four categories.

Once a leader feels comfortable in their style it is often difficult to change without making a constant conscious effort to do so. The below figure, from Dr. W. C. Howard’s work titled *Leadership: Four Styles*, helps

describe four general categories or types of leadership and where each one of us might fit.

Type-A (Fact Based)

Expects others to perform at a high level, with emphasis on the bottom line.

- Factual
- Logical
- Technical
- Analytical
- Quantitative
- Mathematical
- Theoretical/Scientific
- Formal
- Conservative
- High Task



The NCO Guide uses the six NCO Common Core Competencies: readiness, leadership, training management, communications, operations, and program management as objectives for the Roles and Responsibilities of the NCO. (Graphic courtesy of NCO Leadership Center of Excellence)

Type-B (Creativity Based)

Provides an open and creative work Environment, which provides opportunity for suggestions and clarification.

- Artistic
- Flexible
- Imaginative
- Synthesizing
- Spontaneous
- Holistic

Type-C (Feelings Based)

Makes decisions based upon how he/she feels about the issue.

- Emotional
- Talker (without reservation)
- Emphatic
- Intuitive
- Interpersonal
- Flexible

Type-D (Control/Power Based)

Provides specific and detailed instructions and does not tolerate deviation from assigned sequence.

- Controlled
- Detailed
- Planned
- Sequential
- Conservative
- Organized
- Dominant
- Highly Structured
- High Task
- Formal

I believe that I am generally aligned with Type-B and Type-D, however my subordinates may view my type of leadership differently and their view is more important than that of my own. A leader could easily use the above chart as a means to lead a discussion with their subordinates in order to receive their feedback and gain better insight and self-awareness so that they might adjust their leadership style accordingly.

All great leaders lead from the front and would never ask another Soldier to perform a task that they would not be willing to do themselves or possibly already accomplished them self. In an article titled *The Essence of Leadership*, August Turak stated, “Unfortunately all too often so called leaders tend to expect others to be determined, focused, reliable, accountable, responsible, and have integrity.” These qualities that leaders expect should be traits and attributes that they already possess themselves and great leaders will not lead by coercion or persuasion, instead they lead by example.

Leaders should continually strive to earn the respect, trust, and loyalty of their subordinates; this will come in

time and not overnight. Respect should never come from fear instead it should come from the example that is set from that leader’s actions.

If the respect you are obtaining comes from the fear you have instilled in your subordinates, this will only backfire in a matter of time. Your subordinates will not feel as though they can think, act, or even succeed without your approval. They will ultimately feel as though they are walking on eggshells and you will quite possibly never earn their loyalty.

Earning the loyalty of your subordinates is something special and every leader should strive for this; how you accomplish this gift will only come by treating your subordinates fairly, coaching, teaching, and mentoring them well, and showing them that you are deserving of this gift through your deeds and not your words.

No matter the profession, leadership is critical to any organization and an essential element necessary to develop its organizational members and teams. Leadership is arguably more vital in the military than in any other field. Similar to the military, strong leadership is crucial to other organizations such as those charged with physical security (private and public) as they will either excel or fail, with or without leadership. In his work *Leadership Culture of Paramount Importance to Security Sector*, author B. Whitmore stated, “Like the military, physical security leaders tend to be hard working, highly trained men and women who are employed to serve as first responders throughout the U.S., they possess traits and skills that require strong leaders.”

Our leadership doctrine states that there are three categories of core leader competencies: lead, develop, and achieve. The Army views these as the roles and functions of leaders, these competencies serve a significant role in providing a vivid and a consistent way to facilitate the expectations for leaders. A good leader will want to know where they stand in order to be an effective leader who is successful in their position and this is why the core competencies are important.



(U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Jessica Scott taken March 9, 2020) A U.S. Army team leader with the 21st Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division leads his team during a movement to contact exercise at Kahuku Training Area, Oahu, Hawaii, March 9, 2020.

An important part of an effective leader is ensuring to empower your people; how do you do this without feeling that you may have lost control? Many have heard the old adage that leadership is not about maintaining control; it is really about giving up control and empowering your subordinates.

A competent leader knows exactly how to foster and create an organizational climate that is positive and empowering. There is a method when empowering your subordinates. First, provide them with a task, ensure to delegate some authority, let them solve the issue and also provide some expectation management so they have some sort of idea of what you are looking for. Although you may empower them this does not exclude conducting checks and making the necessary corrections, assessing and providing feedback throughout is essential to their ultimate success.

In conclusion, there are many books, articles, journals, studies etc. explaining what leadership is and what

defines an effective leader, however in my opinion, our Army leadership doctrine does a great job of explaining the essential elements necessary in all Army leaders.

There is no substitution for experience and all leaders will have growing pains, it is what we do after we go through these pains that will define the leader you will become. Leaders should never be satisfied with their craft; the status quo should never be “good enough”. Leaders should always seek new ways to improve themselves, their Soldiers and their organization.

I would like to close this paper with a quote from Gen. George S. Patton, “It is absurd to believe that Soldiers who cannot be made to wear the proper uniform can be induced to move forward in battle. Officers who fail to perform their duty by correcting small violations and in enforcing proper conduct are incapable of leading.” ■



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