

Leadership traits and principles

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The United States Marine Corps has been one of the most powerful military branches in the world for more than twenty-three decades. The most important things that have kept this organization as prestigious and powerful as it is are the famous leadership traits, leadership principles, corps values and the leaders that uphold those traits. Without these structures, this leadership hierarchy this “gun club” would not have lasted this long. The next thousand or so words will help explain those traits, principles and corps values that we hold so high.

The first leadership principle that will be discussed is one that was first thought to me through Drill Instructors training us for PFT’s and CFT’s or whenever we would feel like giving up. That leadership principle is “know yourself and seek self improvements”. This principle was always an important one; it meant that there is always something you can do to make yourself better. It involves knowing your strength and weakness’ and working on making them better. Knowing ones strength and weakness is the basis of formulating a reliable, bullet proof strategy that will get you in and out of any situation.

For example the recent evens that occurred have made me look deeper into this principle, into my character, into my ability to improve myself more on the maturity domain. The Second principle that is also important is “Set the example” this principle is one of the bases of stability and leadership. Setting the example is a hard thing to do at times, it involves doing the right thing when no ones looking and when everyone’s looking. Setting the example is an important principle to have, because to become a leader you need to

have the respect of your peers, they have to know they can trust you to do the right thing at the right time.

And by my actions I demonstrated a lack of understanding of this principle and it is something I have to work on very hard because now, most of my peers and none of my superiors trust me to do the right thing. The third leadership principle we are going to talk about is “ Make sound and Timely decisions”. Being able to make sound and timely decision may be the difference between life and death for you or the Marines under your leadership or even your peers or superiors. Being able to make those kind of decisions require maturity, the understanding of right and wrong and the ability to weight consequences and the risk.

If I had the maturity level necessary to stop myself from putting those chevrons on in the first place I would not be in this situation. Decision are what defines your character to others, it is what shows them who you are and what kind of thought process you have and ultimately how reliable you are. “ Be technically and tactically proficient” First off it means to know your job. As a Marine you must demonstrate your ability to accomplish what was assigned to you, and the ability to accomplish what was assigned to you, and to do that you must be capable of answering questions and demonstrate competence in your job specialty.

Respect is the reward of the marine who shows competence. Tactical and technical competence can be learned from books and from job training. Seek a well rounded military education by attending service schools; and seeking off duty education. Seek out and associate with capable leaders. Observe

and study their actions. Broaden your knowledge through association with members of other branches of the military. Seek opportunities to apply knowledge through the exercise of command. Good leadership is acquired only through practice.

Prepare yourself for the job of leader at the next high rank. You are not done training for war once you've earned the title Marine, you are just getting started. These are things to keep in mind when trying to be proficient. "Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates" Another way to show your Marines that you are interested in their welfare is to give them the opportunity for professional development. Assigning tasks and delegating the authority to accomplish tasks promotes mutual confidence and respect between the leader and subordinates.

It also encourages the subordinates to exercise initiative and to give wholehearted cooperation in the accomplishment of unit tasks. When you properly delegate authority, you demonstrate faith in your Marines and increase their desire for greater responsibilities. If you fail to delegate authority, you indicate a lack of leadership, and your subordinates may take it to be a lack of trust in their abilities. To develop this principle you should operate through the chain of command. Provide clear, well thought directions. Tell your subordinates what to do, not how to do it.

Hold them responsible for results, although overall responsibility remains yours. Delegate enough authority to them to enable them to accomplish the task. Give your Marines frequent opportunities to perform duties usually performed by the next higher ranks. Be quick to recognize your

subordinates' accomplishments when they demonstrate initiative and resourcefulness. Correct errors in judgment and initiative in a way which will encourage the Marine to try harder. Avoid public criticism or condemnation. Give advice and assistance freely when it is requested by your subordinates.

Let your Marines know that you will accept honest errors without punishment in return. Assign your Marines to positions in accordance with demonstrated or potential ability. Be prompt and fair in backing subordinates. Until convinced otherwise, have faith in each subordinate. " Know your Marines and look out for their welfare. " This is one of the most important of the principles. You should know your Marines and how they react to different situations. This knowledge can save lives. A Marine who is nervous and lacks self confidence should never be put in a situation where an important, instant decision must be made.

Knowledge of your Marines' personalities will enable you, as the leader, to decide how to best handle each Marine and determine when close supervision is needed. To put this principle into practice successfully you should put your Marines' welfare before your own correct grievances and remove discontent. See the members of your unit and let them see you so that every Marine may know you and feel that you know them. Be approachable Get to know and understand the Marines under your command. Let them see that you are determined that they be fully prepared for battle.

Concern yourself with the living conditions of the members of your unit. Help your Marines get needed support from available personal services. Protect

the health of your unit by active supervision of hygiene and sanitation.

Determine what your unit's mental attitude is; keep in touch with their thoughts. Ensure fair and equal distribution of rewards. Encourage individual development. Provide sufficient recreational time and insist on participation. Share the hardships of your Marines so you can better understand their reactions " Keep your Marines informed. " Marines by nature are inquisitive.

To promote efficiency and morale, a leader should inform the Marines in his unit of all happenings and give reasons why things are to be done. This, of course, is done when time and security permit. Informing your Marines of the situation makes them feel that they are a part of the team and not just a cog in a wheel. Informed Marines perform better and, if knowledgeable of the situation, can carry on without your personal supervision. The key to giving out information is to be sure that the Marines have enough information to do their job intelligently and to inspire their initiative, enthusiasm, loyalty, and convictions.

Techniques in applying this principle are to whenever possible; explain why tasks must be done and how you intend to do them. Assure yourself, by frequent inspections that immediate subordinates are passing on necessary information. Be alert to detect the spread of rumors. Stop rumors by replacing them with the truth. Build morale and esprit de corps by publicizing information concerning successes of your unit. Keep your unit informed about current legislation and Regulations affecting their pay, promotion, privileges, and other benefits. Ensure the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished. " This principle is necessary in the exercise of command.

Before you can expect your Marines to perform, they must know first what is expected of them. You must communicate your instructions in a clear, concise manner. Talk at a level that your Marines are sure to understand, but not at a level so low that would insult their intelligence. Before your Marines start a task, allow them a chance to ask questions or seek advice.

Supervision is essential. Without supervision you cannot know if the assigned task is being properly accomplished.

Over supervision is viewed by subordinates as harassment and effectively stops their initiative. Allow subordinates to use their own techniques, and then periodically check their progress. The most important part of this principle is the accomplishment of the mission. All the leadership, supervision, and guidance in the world are wasted if the end result is not the successful accomplishment of the mission. In order to develop this principle you should ensure that the need for an order exists before issuing the order. Use the established chain of command.

Through study and practice, issue clear, concise, and positive orders.

Encourage subordinates to ask questions concerning any point in your orders or directives they do not understand. Question your Marines to determine if there is any doubt or misunderstanding in regard to the task to be accomplished. Supervise the execution of your orders. Make sure your Marines have the resources needed to accomplish the mission. Vary your supervisory routine and the points which you emphasize during inspections.

" Train your Marines as a team. Every waking hour Marines should be trained and schooled, challenged and tested, corrected and encouraged with

perfection and teamwork as a goal. When not at war, Marines are judged in 15-26 peacetime roles: perfection in drill, dress, bearing and demeanor; shooting; self-improvement; and most importantly, performance. No excuse can be made for the failure of leaders to train their Marines to the highest state of physical condition and to instruct them to be the very best in the profession of arms. Train with a purpose and emphasize the essential element of teamwork.

The sharing of hardships, dangers, and hard work strengthens a unit and reduces problems, it develops teamwork, improves morale and esprit and molds a feeling of unbounded loyalty and this is the basis for what makes men fight in combat; it is the foundation for bravery, for advancing under fire. Troops don't complain of tough training; they seek it and brag about it. Teamwork is the key to successful operations. Teamwork is essential from the smallest unit to the entire Marine Corps. As a Marine officer, you must insist on teamwork from your Marines. Train, play, and operate as a team.

Be sure that each Marine knows his/her position and responsibilities within the team framework. When team spirit is in evidence, the most difficult tasks become much easier to accomplish. Teamwork is a two-way street. Individual Marines give their best, and in return the team provides the Marine with security, recognition, and a sense of accomplishment. " Employ your command in accordance with its capabilities. " Successful completion of a task depends upon how well you know your unit's capabilities. If the task assigned is one that your unit has not been trained to do, failure is very likely to result.

Failures lower your unit's morale and self esteem. You wouldn't send a cook section to "PM" a vehicle nor would you send three Marines to do the job of ten. Seek out challenging tasks for your unit, but be sure that your unit is prepared for and has the ability to successfully complete the mission. " Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions. " For professional development, you must actively seek out challenging assignments. You must use initiative and sound judgment when trying to accomplish jobs that are not required by your grade.

Seeking responsibilities also means that you take responsibility for your actions. You are responsible for all your unit does or fails to do. Regardless of the actions of your subordinates, the responsibility for decisions and their application falls on you. You must issue all orders in your name. Stick by your convictions and do what you think is right, but accept justified and constructive criticism. Never remove or demote a subordinate for a failure that is the result of your own mistake. The leadership principles are proven guidelines, which if followed, will substantially enhance your ability to be an effective leader.

Keep in mind that your ability to implement these principles will influence your opportunity to accomplish the mission, to earn the respect of your fellow Marines, juniors and seniors, and to make you an effective leader. Make these principles work for you. There are fourteen leadership traits that a Marine must have. They are Bearing, courage, decisiveness, dependability, endurance, enthusiasm, initiative, integrity, judgment, justice, knowledge,

loyalty, tact and unselfishness. Bearing is the ability to create a favorable impression in carriage, appearance, and personal conduct at all times.

The ability to look, act, and speak like a leader whether or not these manifestations indicate one's true feeling. Courage is a mental quality that recognizes fear of danger or criticism, but enables a Marine to proceed in the face of it with calmness and firmness. It is also Knowing and standing for what is right, even in the face of popular disfavor. Decisiveness is the ability to make decisions promptly and to announce them in a clear, forceful manner. The quality of character which guides a person to accumulate all available facts in a circumstance, weigh the facts, choose and announce an alternative which seems best.

Dependability is the certainty of proper performance of duty. It is a quality which permits a senior to assign a task to a junior with the understanding that it will be accomplished with minimum supervision. Endurance is the mental and physical stamina measured by the ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, and hardship. Enthusiasm the display of sincere interest and exuberance in the performance of duty. Initiative is taking action in the absence of orders, being a self starter. Integrity is the Uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles. The quality of truthfulness and honesty.

A Marine's word is his bond. Judgment is the ability to weigh facts and possible courses of action in order to make sound decisions. Justice is giving reward and punishment according to the merits of the case in question. Knowledge is the Understanding of science or an art. The range of one's

information. Loyalty is the quality of faithfulness to country, the Corps, and unit, and to one's seniors, subordinates, and peers. Tact is the ability to deal with others without creating hostility. Unselfishness is Avoidance of providing for one's own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others.

In September, President Obama awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's most prestigious military award, to Sgt. Dakota Meyer, the marine who saved 36 of his comrades during an ambush in Afghanistan. Meyer was born June 26, 1988 in Columbia, Kentucky where he grew up and attended school. In 2006, after graduation from Green County High School, he enlisted in the Marine Corps at a recruiting station in Louisville, Kentucky and was sent to recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. After completing training to be a United States Marine he deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, in 2007 as a Scout Sniper with 3rd Battalion 3rd Marines.

He gained national attention for his actions in Afghanistan during his second deployment in Kumar province with Embedded Training Team 2-8. On September 8, 2009, near the village of Ganjgal, Meyer learned that three U. S. Marines and a U. S. Navy corpsman were missing after being ambushed by a group of insurgents. He charged into an area known to be inhabited by insurgents and under enemy fire. Meyer eventually found all four dead and stripped of their weapons, body armor, and radios. With the help of some friendly Afghan soldiers, he moved the bodies to a safer area where they could be extracted.

During his search, Meyer " personally evacuated 12 friendly wounded, and provided cover for another 24 Marines and soldiers to escape likely death at

the hands of a numerically superior and determined foe. " On November 6, 2010, the Commandant of the Marine Corps General James Amos told reporters during a visit to Camp Pendleton, California, that a living Marine had been nominated for the Medal of Honor. Two days later, Marine Corps Times, an independent newspaper covering U. S. Marine operations, reported that the unnamed individual was Meyer, citing anonymous sources. CNN confirmed the story independently two days later.

On June 9, 2011, the Marine Corps announced that two other Marines on Meyer's team in Ganjgal would receive the Navy Cross, the second-highest award for valor a Marine can receive. Capt. Ademola D. Fabayo and Staff Sgt. Juan J. Rodriguez-Chavez were recognized for their roles in retrieving the Marines and corpsman. When President Barrack Obama's staff called Meyer to set up a time for the President to inform him that his case for the Medal of Honor had been approved, Meyer was working at his construction job and asked if they could please call him back when he was on his lunch break, which they later did.

Dakota then returned to work. Meyer was awarded the Medal of Honor in a ceremony on September 15, 2011. When a White House staffer contacted Meyer to arrange the ceremony, the former Marine asked if he could have a beer with the President. He then received an invitation to the White House the afternoon before the ceremony. Meyer also requested that when he was honored, simultaneous commemorative services should be held at other associated locations to honor the memory of his colleagues who died or were mortally wounded during the ambush.

Sgt Meyers by his actions demonstrated all fourteen leadership traits, all the leadership principles and gave an excellent demonstration of the corps values. I cannot compare myself to a man like that, he single handedly demonstrated, corps values, leadership principles and traits, and the leadership skills that are required of a Sgt of Marines, all of which I have failed to demonstrate or am still learning. As previously mentioned, the leadership traits and principles are guidelines. Guidelines that have helped the Marine Corps be part of the most powerful military in the world.

Each of these principles, of those traits, corps values are set to help Marines be the best, be part of the best, and do their best in any given situation at any given time. Lack of these guidelines result in Marines making dumb, regrettable and unwise decisions. But it is the ability to learn from mistakes and grow from it. I have made a grave mistake; I have let down my instructors, my peers, and also myself. But I am also learning from my, understanding why something that didn't look that grave, actually be that big, that important.

I am learning that being an NCO is about more than just putting on chevrons on a collar, it is a state of mind, it is the ability to lead, it involves a higher level of maturity, it involves watching and studying your elders it is something you acquire through long years of blood, sweat, tears, dedication and more. I may not fully grasp the meaning, or the feeling of wearing these chevrons, but I believe that someday when I reach this rank through blood and sweat, I'll realize how insulting it must have been to dare put these chevrons on.