

## RP 0103 - Principles of Marine Corps Leadership

### TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. In a military environment, identify the leadership traits and principles of the Marine Corps, per the reference. (RP0103)

### ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Without the aid of references, given a description or title, **identify the leadership trait**, per the student handout. (RP0103a)
2. Without the aid of references, given a description or title, **identify the leadership principle**, per the student handout. (RP0103)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

“Leadership is intangible, hard to measure, and difficult to describe. It’s quality would seem to stem from many factors. But certainly they must include a measure of inherent ability to control and direct, self-confidence based on expert knowledge, initiative, loyalty, pride and sense of responsibility. Inherent ability cannot be instilled, but that which is latent or dormant can be developed. Other ingredients can be acquired. They are not easily learned. But leaders can be and are made.”

General C. B. Cates,

19th Commandant of the Marine Corps



**Lt. Gen. Lewis “Chesty” Puller**

Lt. Gen. Puller steadily worked his way up the ranks proving his outstanding leadership qualities. He received a direct commission and began collecting awards for valor. By the time he retired from the Marine Corps in 1951 he had earned more awards than any Marine in history; five Navy Crosses, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit with "V" device, the Bronze star with "V" device, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal and the Purple Heart.

The traits and principles of leadership are the basic fundamentals that Marines use to develop their own leadership abilities and that of their subordinates. There are 14 leadership traits and 11 leadership principles listed in this lesson.

## 2. 14 Leadership Traits

The fourteen leadership traits can be remembered with the acronym **JJ-DIDTIEBUCKLE**:

- **J**ustice
- **J**udgment
- **D**ependability
- **I**nitiative
- **D**ecisiveness
- **T**act
- **I**ntegrity
- **E**nthusiasm
- **B**earing
- **U**nselfishness
- **C**ourage
- **K**nowledge
- **L**oyalty
- **E**ndurance

### **Justice**

*Definition* - Giving reward and punishment according to the merits of the case in question. The ability to administer a system of rewards and punishments impartially and consistently.

*Significance* - The quality of displaying fairness and impartiality is critical in order to gain the trust and respect of subordinates and maintains discipline and unit cohesion, particularly in the exercise of responsibility.

*Example* - Fair apportionment of tasks by a squad leader during field day.

### **Judgment**

*Definition* - The ability to weigh facts and possible courses of action in order to make sound decisions.

*Significance* - Sound judgment allows a leader to make appropriate decisions in the guidance and training of his/her Marines and the employment of his/her unit. A Marine who exercises good judgment weighs pros and cons accordingly when making appropriate decisions.

Example - A Marine properly apportions his/her liberty time in order to relax as well as to study.

### **Dependability**

Definition - The certainty of proper performance of duty.

Significance - The quality that permits a senior to assign a task to a junior with the understanding that it will be accomplished with minimum supervision.

Example - The squad leader ensures that his/her squad falls out in the proper uniform without having been told to by the platoon sergeant.

### **Initiative**

Definition - Taking action in the absence of orders.

Significance - Since an NCO often works without close supervision; emphasis is placed on being a self-starter. Initiative is a founding principle of Marine Corps Warfighting philosophy.

Example - In the unexplained absence of the platoon sergeant, an NCO takes charge of the platoon and carries out the training schedule.

### **Decisiveness**

Definition - Ability to make decisions promptly and to announce them in a clear, forceful manner.

Significance - The quality of character which guides a person to accumulate all available facts in a circumstance, weigh the facts, and choose and announce an alternative which seems best. It is often better that a decision be made promptly than a potentially better one be made at the expense of more time.

Example - A leader, who sees a potentially dangerous situation developing, immediately takes action to prevent injury from occurring.

### **Tact**

Definition - The ability to deal with others in a manner that will maintain good relations and avoid offense. More simply stated, tact is the ability to say and do the right thing at the right time.

Significance - The quality of consistently treating peers, seniors, and subordinates with respect and courtesy is a sign of maturity. Tact allows commands, guidance, and opinions to be expressed in a constructive and beneficial manner. This deference must be extended under all conditions regardless of true feelings.

Example - A Marine discreetly points out a mistake in drill to an NCO by waiting until after the unit has been dismissed and privately asking which of the two methods are correct.

### **Integrity**

Definition - Uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles. The quality of truthfulness and honesty.

Significance - A Marine's word is his/her bond. Nothing less than complete honesty in all of your dealings with subordinates, peers, and superiors is acceptable.

Example - A Marine who uses the correct technique on the obstacle course, even when he/she cannot be seen by the evaluator.

## **Enthusiasm**

*Definition* - The display of sincere interest and exuberance in the performance of duty.

*Significance* - Displaying interest in a task and optimism that can be successfully completed greatly enhances the likelihood that the task will be successfully completed.

*Example* - A Marine who leads a chant or offers to help carry a load that is giving someone great difficulty while on a hike despite being physically tired, he encourages his fellow Marines to persevere.

## **Bearing**

*Definition* - Creating a favorable impression in carriage, appearance, and personal conduct at all times.

*Significance* - The ability to look, talk, and act like a leader whether or not these manifestations indicate one's true feelings.

*Example* - Wearing clean uniforms, boots, and collar devices. Avoiding profane and vulgar language. Keeping a trim, fit appearance.

## **Unselfishness**

*Definition* - Avoidance of providing for one's own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others.

*Significance* - The quality of looking out for the needs of your subordinates before your own is the essence of leadership. This quality is not to be confused with putting these matters ahead of the accomplishment of the mission.

*Example* - An NCO ensures all members of his unit have eaten before he does, or if water is scarce, he will share what he has and ensure that others do the same.

## **Courage**

*Definition* - Courage is a mental quality that recognizes fear of danger or criticism, but enables a Marine to proceed in the face of danger with calmness and firmness.

*Significance* - Knowing and standing for what is right, even in the face of popular disfavor. The business of fighting and winning wars is a dangerous one; the importance of courage on the battlefield is obvious.

*Example* - Accepting criticism for making subordinates field day for an extra hour to get the job done correctly.

## **Knowledge**

*Definition* - Understanding of a science or an art. The range of one's information, including professional knowledge and understanding of your Marines.

*Significance* - The gaining and retention of current developments in military and naval science and world affairs is important for your growth and development.

*Example* - The Marine who not only knows how to maintain and operate his assigned weapon, but also knows how to use the other weapons and equipment in the unit.

## **Loyalty**

Definition - The quality of faithfulness to country, Corps, unit, seniors, subordinates and peers.

Significance - The motto of the Marine Corps is *Semper Fidelis*, Always Faithful. You owe unswerving loyalty up and down the chain of command.

Example - A Marine displaying enthusiasm in carrying out an order of a senior, though he may privately disagree with it.

## **Endurance**

Definition - The mental and physical stamina measured by the ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, and hardship.

Significance - The quality of withstanding pain during a conditioning hike in order to improve stamina is crucial in the development of leadership. Leaders are responsible for leading their units in physical endeavors and for motivating them as well.

Example - A Marine keeping up on a 10-mile forced march even though he/she has blisters on both feet.

# **3. 11 Leadership Principles**

## **Know Yourself and Seek Self Improvement**

- This principle of leadership should be developed by the use of leadership traits. Evaluate yourself by using the leadership traits and determine your strengths and weaknesses.
- You can improve yourself in many ways. To develop the techniques of this principle:
  - Make an honest evaluation of yourself to determine your strong and weak personal qualities
  - Seek the honest opinions of your friends or superiors
  - Learn by studying the causes for the success and failures of others
  - Develop a genuine interest in people
  - Master the art of effective writing and speech
  - Have a definite plan to achieve your goal

## **Be Technically And Tactically Proficient**

- A person who knows their job thoroughly and possesses a wide field of knowledge. Before you can lead, you must be able to do the job. Tactical and technical competence can be learned from books and from on the job training. To develop this leadership principle of being technically and tactically proficient, you should:
  - Know what is expected of you then expend time and energy on becoming proficient at those things
  - Form an attitude early on of seeking to learn more than is necessary
  - Observe and study the actions of capable leaders
  - Spend time with those people who are recognized as technically and tactically proficient at those things
  - Prepare yourself for the job of the leader at the next higher rank
  - Seek feedback from superiors, peers and subordinates

### **Know Your People And Look Out For Their Welfare**

- This is one of the most important of the leadership principles. A leader must make a conscientious effort to observe his Marines and how they react to different situations. A Marine who is nervous and lacks self-confidence should never be put in a situation where an important decision must be made. This knowledge will enable you as the leader to determine when close supervision is required.
- To put this principle in to practice successfully you should:
  - Put your Marines welfare before you own
  - Be approachable
  - Encourage individual development
  - Know your unit's mental attitude; keep in touch with their thoughts
  - Ensure fair and equal distribution of rewards
  - Provide sufficient recreational time and insist on participation

### **Keep Your Personnel 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 is accomplished only if time and security permits. 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.
- 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 to apply this principle are:
  - Whenever possible, explain why tasks must be done and the plan to accomplish a task
  - 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

### **Set The Example**

- A leader who shows professional competence, courage and integrity sets high personal standards for himself before he can rightfully demand it from others. Your appearance, attitude, physical fitness and personal example are all on display daily for the Marines and Sailors in your unit. Remember, your Marines and Sailors reflect your image!
- Techniques for setting the example are to:
  - Show your subordinates that you are willing to do the same things you ask them to do
  - Maintain an optimistic outlook
  - Conduct yourself so that your personal habits are not open to criticism
  - Avoid showing favoritism to any subordinate
  - Delegate authority and avoid over supervision, in order to develop leadership among subordinates

- Leadership is taught by example

### **Ensure That The Task Is Understood, Supervised, and Accomplished**

- Leaders must give clear, concise orders that cannot be misunderstood, and then by close supervision, ensure that these orders are properly executed. Before you can expect your men to perform, they must know what is expected of them.
- The most important part of this principle is the accomplishment of the mission. In order to develop this principle you should:
  - Issue every order as if it were your own
  - Use the established chain of command
  - Encourage subordinates to ask questions concerning any point in your orders or directives they do not understand
  - Question subordinates to determine if there is any doubt or misunderstanding in regard to the task to be accomplished
  - Supervise the execution of your orders
  - Exercise care and thought in supervision; over supervision will hurt initiative and create resentment, while under supervision will not get the job done

### **Train Your Marines And Sailors As A Team**

- Teamwork is the key to successful operations. Teamwork is essential from the smallest unit to the entire Marine Corps. As a leader, 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.
- To develop the techniques of this principle you should:
  - Stay sharp by continuously studying and training
  - Encourage unit participation in recreational and military events
  - Do not publicly blame an individual for the team's failure or praise just an individual for the team's success
  - Ensure that training is meaningful, and that the purpose is clear to all members of the command
  - Train your team based on realistic conditions
  - Insist that every person understands the functions of the other members of the team and the function of the team as part of the unit

### **Make Sound And Timely Decisions**

- The leader must be able to rapidly estimate a situation and make a sound decision based on that estimation. Hesitation or a reluctance to make a decision leads subordinates to lose confidence in your abilities as a leader. Loss of confidence in turn creates confusion and hesitation within the unit.
- Techniques to develop this principle include:
  - Developing a logical and orderly thought process by practicing objective estimates of the situation
  - When time and situation permit planning for every possible event that can reasonably be foreseen
  - Considering the advice and suggestions of your subordinates before making decisions

- Considering the effects of your decisions on all members of your unit

### **Develop A Sense Of Responsibility Among Your Subordinates**

- Another way to show your Marines you are interested in their welfare is to give them the opportunity for professional development. Assigning tasks and delegating authority promotes mutual confidence and respect between leader and subordinates. It also encourages subordinates to exercise initiative and to give wholehearted cooperation in accomplishment of unit tasks. When you properly delegate authority, you demonstrate faith in your Marines and increase authority, and increase their desire for greater responsibilities.
- To develop this principle you should:
  - Operate through the chain of command
  - Provide clear, well thought out directions
  - Give your subordinates frequent opportunities to perform duties normally performed by senior personnel
  - 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 individual to try harder
  - Give advice and assistance freely when your subordinates request it
  - Resist the urge to micro manage
  - Be prompt and fair in backing subordinates
  - Accept responsibility willingly and insist that your subordinates live by the same standard

### **Employ Your Command Within its Capabilities**

- A leader must have a thorough knowledge of the tactical and technical capabilities of the command. 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 occur. Failures lower your unit's morale and self esteem. 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.
- Techniques for development of this principle are to:
  - Avoid volunteering your unit for tasks that are beyond their capabilities
  - Be sure that tasks assigned to subordinates are reasonable
  - Assign tasks equally among your subordinates
  - Use the full capabilities of your unit before requesting assistance

### **Seek Responsibilities And Take Responsibility**

- For professional development, you must actively seek out challenging assignments. You must use initiative and sound judgment when trying to accomplish jobs that are required by your grade. Seeking responsibilities also means that you take responsibility for your actions. Regardless of the actions of your subordinates, the responsibility for decisions and their application falls on you.
- Techniques in developing this principle are to:



- Learn the duties of your immediate senior, and be prepared to accept the responsibilities of these duties
- Seek a variety of leadership positions that will give you experience in accepting responsibility in different fields
- Take every opportunity that offers increased responsibility
- Perform every task, no matter whether it is top secret or seemingly trivial, to the best of your ability
- Stand up for what you think is right. Have courage in your convictions
- Carefully evaluate a subordinate's failure before taking action against that subordinate
- In the absence of orders, take the initiative to perform the actions you believe your senior would direct you to perform if present

## **REFERENCE**

MCRP 6-11B, Marine Corps Values: Appendix A, B

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