

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Marine Corps University
Corporals Noncommissioned Officers Program

CPL 0203
Jan 99

STUDENT HANDOUT

Leadership Principles

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- a. TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE : With the aid of the references, identify the Marine Corps' Leadership fundamentals, per the references. (CPL 23.4)
- b. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVE (CE): Without the aid of but per the references, identify leadership principles. (CPL 23.4e)

OUTLINE

1. LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES:

a. Be Technically and Tactically Proficient: Before you can lead, you must be able to do the job; the first principle is to know your job. As a Marine NCO, you must demonstrate ability to accomplish the mission; to do this you must be able to answer questions and demonstrate competence in your MOS. Respect is the reward of the Marine NCO who shows competence. 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:

- * Seek a well-rounded military education by attending service schools; by doing independent reading and research; by taking correspondence courses from MCI, colleges, or correspondence schools; and by 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 U.S. armed services.
- * 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 higher rank.

b. 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. Work to improve your weaknesses and use your strengths. With a knowledge of yourself, and your experience and knowledge of group behavior, you can determine the best way to deal with any given situation. With some Marines and in

certain situations, the firm, hard stand may be most effective; however, in other situations the "big brother" approach may work better. You can improve yourself in many ways. Self-improvement can be achieved by reading and observing. Ask your friends and seniors for an honest evaluation of your leadership. This will help you to find your weaknesses and strengths. To develop the techniques of this principle you should:

- * Make an honest evaluation of yourself to determine your strong and weak qualities. Strive to overcome the weak ones and further strengthen those in which you are strong.
- * Seek the honest opinions of your friends or superiors to show you how to improve your leadership ability.
- * Learn by studying the causes for the success or the failure of other leaders.
- * Develop a genuine interest in people; acquire the human touch.
- * Master the art of effective writing and speech.
- * Have a definite goal and a definite plan to attain it.

c. 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 Marine's personalities will enable you, as the NCO, to decide how to best handle each Marine and determine when close supervision is needed. All Marines deserve the same treatment when it comes to certain matters of welfare. A "problem" Marine has the same right to go to sickbay as a hard-charging Marine. Although it might be his fault that he is a "problem" Marine, it is not his fault that he is sick. If you show him the same concern that you show to your better Marines, you will earn his loyalty and respect. To put this principle into practice successfully, you should:

- * Put your Marines' welfare before your own.
- * See the members of your unit and let them see you; be approachable.
- * Get to know and understand the Marines under your command.
- * 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.
- * 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.
- * Whenever possible, praise your Marines in public, but critique them in private.

d. Keep Your Marines Informed: Marines by nature are inquisitive. To promote efficiency and morale, as a Marine NCO you should inform the Marines in your 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, they 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.

e. Set the Example: As a Marine progresses through the ranks by promotion, all too often he or she takes on the attitude of "do as I say, not as I do." They see a promotion for its increased privileges and not for the increased responsibilities. They have their Marines do certain things because, "I did it when I was a lance coolie and if it was good enough for me, then its good enough for them." Nothing turns Marines off to an NCO faster! As a Marine NCO, your duty is to set the standards for your Marines. Your appearance, attitude, physical fitness, and personal example are all watched by the Marines in your unit. If your personal standards are high, then you can rightfully demand the same of your Marines. If your personal standards are not high you are setting a double standard for your Marines and you will rapidly lose their respect and confidence. Remember your Marines reflect your image! In order to develop this principle you should:

- * Show your Marines that you are willing to do the same things you ask them to do.
- * Be physically fit, well groomed, and correctly dressed.
- * Maintain an optimistic outlook. Develop the will to win by capitalizing on your unit's abilities. The more difficult the situation is, the better your chance is to display an attitude of calmness and confidence.
- * Conduct yourself so that your personal habits are not open to criticism.
- * Exercise initiative and promote the spirit of initiative in your willingness to assume your share of the difficulties.
- * By your performance, develop the thought within your Marines that you are the best NCO for the position you hold.
- * Delegate authority and avoid over-supervision in order to develop leadership among subordinates.

f. Insure 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. Many NCO's tend to over-supervise. 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:

- * Insure that the need for an order exists before issuing the order.
- * Use the established chain of command. In other words, let your subordinate leaders "exercise" their own leadership abilities.
- * 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.
- * Exercise care and thought in supervision. Over-supervision hurts initiative and creates resentment; under-supervision will not get the job done.
- * Exercise "trust tactics." Because you know the abilities of each of your subordinates, you know how much you have to supervise each one of them.

g. Train Your Marines as a Team: Teamwork is the key to successful operations. Teamwork is essential from the smallest unit up to the entire Marine Corps. As a Marine NCO, you must insist on teamwork from your Marines. Train, play, and operate as a team. Be sure that each Marine knows his or 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. To develop the techniques of this principle you should:

- * Encourage unit participation in recreational and military events.
- * Never publicly blame an individual for the team's failure nor praise one individual for the team's success.
- * Provide the best available facilities for unit training and make maximum use of teamwork.
- * Insure that all training is meaningful and that its purpose is clear to all members of the command.
- * Acquaint each Marine of your unit with the capabilities and limitations of all other units, thereby developing mutual trust and understanding.
- * Ensure that each junior leader understands the mechanics of tactical control for the unit.
- * Base team training on realistic current and probable conditions.
- * Insist that each leader knows the functions of the other members of the team.
- * Seek opportunities to train with other units.

h. Make Sound and Timely Decisions: As an NCO, you 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. Once you make a decision and discover it is the wrong one, don't hesitate to revise your decision. Marines respect an NCO who corrects mistakes immediately instead of trying to bluff through a poor decision. 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 whenever possible before making decisions.
- * Announcing decisions in time to allow subordinates to make necessary plans.
- * Encouraging subordinates to estimate and make plans at the same time you do.
- * Making sure your Marines are familiar with your policies and plans.
- * Considering the effects of your decisions on all members of your unit.

i. 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 NCO 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.
- * 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 not discourage 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.

- * Accept responsibility willingly and insist that your subordinates live by the same standard.

j. 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. Techniques for development of this principle are to:

- * Not volunteer your unit for impossible tasks. Not only will the unit fail, but your Marines will think you are seeking personal glory.
- * Keep yourself informed as to the operational effectiveness of your command.
- * Be sure that tasks assigned to subordinates are reasonable. But do not hesitate to demand their utmost in an emergency.
- * Analyze all assigned tasks. If the means at your disposal are inadequate, inform your immediate supervisor and request the necessary support.
- * Assign tasks equally among your Marines.
- * Use the full capabilities of your unit before requesting assistance.

k. 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 the 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 decision and its 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. 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 different leadership positions that will give you experience in accepting responsibility in different fields.
- * Take every opportunity that offers increased responsibility.
- * Perform every act, large or small, to the best of your ability. Your reward will be increased opportunity to perform bigger and more important tasks.
- * Stand up for what you think is right; have the courage of your convictions.
- * Carefully evaluate a subordinate's failure before taking action. Make sure the apparent shortcomings are not due to an error on your part. Consider the Marines that are available, salvage a Marine if possible, and replace a Marine when necessary.
- * In the absence of orders, take the initiative to perform the actions you believe your senior would direct you to perform if the leader were present.

REFERENCE: Marine Corps Values and Leadership User's Guide for Discussion Leaders
FMFM 1-0, Leading Marines