

Effective Leadership

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"Every Marine is a Leader." These were the words of the thirty-first Commandant of the United States Marine Corps, General Charles C. Krulak. This statement is not entirely true. Leadership is a very important quality and Marines are frequently forced into leadership positions, but not everyone is a "natural born leader" or knows how to lead. But the fact that leadership is not a natural attribute does not mean that it cannot be developed through maturity and experience as well as with the practice of leadership traits and principles inherent to this fine organization. Additionally, effective leaders can learn from others to develop a leadership style by filtering the good techniques from the bad.

Leadership abilities are honed through valuable experiences and maturity that are gained as Marines rise through the ranks in the Corps. Maturity and experience are the ability to control anger and settle differences without violence or destruction. A good leader can react maturely to daily crisis and use past experiences to persevere a challenge. A mature leader can control a stressful situation in spite of heavy opposition, prioritize each given task, and complete a pressing project. Maturity and experience can also be defined as humility. Humility is being big enough to say, "I was wrong" and not gaining satisfaction from saying "I told you so." The

immature leader spends their time exploring endless possibilities and then doing nothing. The mature and experienced leader explores, performs, delegates, and completes any assignment without hesitation or complaint. Two other characteristics of a mature, experienced leader are caring and approachability. A good leader can maintain a sincere connection with their subordinates by being patient, listening, interacting and taking time to know each personality. Demonstrating a caring attitude will carry a lot of weight and will help a leader gain genuine respect and support from subordinates. John C. Maxwell, author of "The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader" writes, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. You cannot be a truly effective leader, the kind that people want to follow, unless you love people." With caring comes approachability. A leader cannot expect to be effective if they are unapproachable. A secure, confident, mature leader will never make subordinates feel intimidated. On the contrary, a leader with an approachable attitude will definitely create a comfortable atmosphere in the workplace.

Marines are introduced to a "guidebook" from day one of basic training also known as boot camp. This book is filled with the basics of being a Marine. Chapter five emphasizes leadership, what will be expected, and how every Marine has the

potential to be a leader. It defines fourteen leadership traits and eleven leadership principles.

Traits such as:

- Integrity
- Knowledge
- Courage
- Decisiveness
- Dependability
- Initiative
- Tact
- Justice
- Enthusiasm
- Bearing
- Endurance
- Unselfishness
- Loyalty
- Judgment

Principles such as:

- Take responsibility for your actions and the actions of your Marines.
- Know yourself and seek self-improvement
- Set the example
- Develop your subordinates
- Ensure that a job is understood, supervise it and carry it through to completion
- Know your Marines and look after their welfare
- Everyone should be kept informed
- Set goals you can reach
- Make sound and timely decisions
- Know your job
- Teamwork.

Leaders need to understand and remember that these traits and principles are very significant, are taught for a reason, and when put to practice, they can have a lasting effect on subordinates. Not only should leaders put these traits and

principles to practice, they should also continually educate and train their Marines.

A simple form of educating Marines on leadership is encouragement to attend Professional Military Schools. These schools establish curriculums that include reemphasizing the value of a good leader and enhance leadership capacities. Another form of educating and training would be one of the principles itself, "set the example." A young Marine will require proper training and guidance and what a better way to do so, than by "setting the example". Sometimes leaders fail to realize that eyes of subordinates as well as superiors are on them and although "setting the example" may not be a formal training tool, it is essentially very beneficial. A fresh mind will follow the example of a good leader.

The Marine Corps has two objectives: mission accomplishment and troop welfare. A good leader has to find the right balance between these two objectives. Therefore, a leader should identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop their own style of leadership. Al Kaltman, author of "Cigars, Whiskey and Winning; Leadership Lessons from General Ulysses S. Grant", writes, "There is no single perfect management style that suits all. The best management style for you is the one you feel most comfortable with. Your real focus should be on effectiveness." Learning from others can be a valuable tool for creating a

leadership style. A wise leader can learn from others to distinguish the difference between the good leadership techniques or styles with the bad. Once a leader establishes his/her own style, they may need to make slight adjustments in order to get a task completed. For example, if there is a pressing issue that requires immediate attention, a leader who is normally persuasive can adjust to an authoritarian style if the need arises.

There are many characteristics in becoming the type of leader that others will want to follow. If leaders can utilize their experience, sustain maturity, implement traits and principles, and possess a fitting leadership style, the difference in the workplace and that leader's team will be highly noticeable. Additionally, an effective leader that cares, is approachable and constantly sets a good example to follow will have phenomenal results!

Works Cited

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