



VIEWPOINT

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What is Military Leadership?

by

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Army Field Manual FM 22-100 defines military leadership as the ability to influence others to accomplish the mission in an efficient and timely manner. The revered Chinese general Sun Tzu, who wrote *The Art of War* over 2,000 years ago, said a leader must be resourceful, able and wise.

While these things are indisputably true, leadership is far more than this.

Leadership is the continual pursuit of excellence in oneself, one's subordinates, one's peers and one's unit. Although it is admirable for anyone to strive for excellence, a leader must instill excellence in others.

To accomplish this lofty goal the leader must set the example in all things.

The leader must set the example in job performance. He must be technically and tactically proficient. He must not only be able to perform his job in a superior manner, he must be able to teach others as well. In performance, a leader must be the veritable model of efficiency.

Leadership also means setting the example in duty. A leader must be devoted to duty and selfless in service. His dedication should be inspirational to those around him, resulting in an increased commitment to the unit and the mission.

Leadership further demands that the leader set the example in moral and ethical behavior. Although the mission must remain paramount, it is counterproductive to set aside one's basic morality and humanity in its pursuit. As John Paul Jones once said, "I would lay down my life for America, but I cannot trifle with my honor."

Honor, honesty and integrity are the watchwords of the leader. Otherwise he loses both himself and the respect of those who would follow him.

Leadership is also taking care of soldiers. This is possibly the single most important task of a leader. The leader must see to it that his soldiers are effectively trained and competent in their jobs. He must

ensure that they have the proper tools and equipment to perform their mission. But even more importantly, the leader must see to the individual morale and personal welfare of each of his troops.

So then, a leader must set the example in job proficiency, devotion to duty, and integrity. Furthermore, the leader must assure that his soldiers are cared for. But leadership is more than this, too.

Leadership is selfless service to one's unit and country.

Leadership is putting one's troops ahead of oneself.

Leadership is keeping one's personal affairs in meticulous order.

Leadership is stalwart professionalism in the face of adversity.

Leadership is all these things and a thousand more.

But ultimately, leadership is being eminently capable and the absolute embodiment of the four soldierly values: courage, candor, competence and commitment. Such a leader will so motivate and inspire his subordinates that they will not only follow him into the pits of hell and back ... they will be glad for the opportunity to take the trip!

And *that* is what leadership means.

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