

The Military Leader

Grow Yourself... Grow Your Team



(This list was compiled by The Military Leader. [Click here](#) to find many more.)

“Don’t begrudge the time you spend developing, coaching and helping your people to grow so they can carry on when you’re gone. It’s one of the best signs of good leadership.

Leadership in a democratic army means firmness, not harshness; understanding, not weakness; generosity, not selfishness; pride, not egotism.”

—GEN Omar Bradley 1953

“Leadership is intangible, and therefore no weapon ever designed can replace it.”

—GEN Omar Bradley

“The test of a leader lies in the reaction and response of his followers. He should not have to impose authority. Bossiness in itself never made a leader He must make his influence felt by example and the instilling of confidence in his followers. The greatness of a leader is measured by the achievements of the led. This is the ultimate test of his effectiveness.”

—GEN Omar Bradley

“I would caution you always to remember that an essential qualification of a good leader is the ability to recognize, select, and train junior leaders.”

In answer to the question of whether leaders are born or made:

“I would say some are born. A person can be born with certain qualities of leadership: good physique, good mental capacity, curiosity, the desire to know. When you go to pick out the best pup in a litter of bird dogs, you pick out the pup

even though he is only 6 weeks old. He is curious, going around looking into things, and that kind of dog usually turns out to be the best dog. But there are qualities one can improve on. A thorough knowledge of your profession is the first requirement of leadership and this certainly has to be acquired. Observing others is important—trying to determine what makes them stand out. That’s why I think we can learn a lot by studying past leaders. Studying Lee, other Civil War leaders, Jackson, Lincoln. Trying to see what made them great.”

—GEN Omar Bradley

“When things go wrong in your command, start searching for the reason in increasingly larger concentric circles around your own desk.”

—GEN Bruce Clarke

“You must be able to underwrite the honest mistakes of your subordinates if you wish to develop their initiative and experience.”

—GEN Bruce Clarke

“Rank is given you to enable you to better serve those above and below you It is not given for you to practice your idiosyncrasies.”

—GEN Bruce Clarke

“Regardless of age or grade, soldiers should be treated as mature individuals They are men engaged in an honorable profession and deserve to be treated as such.”

—GEN Bruce Clarke

“Trained commanders produce the best results under mission–type orders. These need only three things:

- What is to be accomplished.
- The coordinating factors necessary.
- What help he can expect from you and others and how to get it.”

“It is, indeed, an observable fact that all leaders of men, whether as political figures, prophets, or soldiers, all those who can get the best out of others, have always identified themselves with high ideals.”

—GEN Charles DeGaulle

“Soldiers will not follow any battle leader with confidence unless they know that he will require full performance of duty from every member of the team.”

—GEN Dwight Eisenhower

“I think that there is something to the expression ‘born to lead’. But there are many people who have the potential for leadership, just as there are probably many people born with the potential to be great artists that never have the opportunity or the training for the full development of their talents. I think leadership is a product of native ability plus environment. By environment, I mean training and the opportunity to exercise leadership”

—GEN Dwight Eisenhower

“I would lay down my life for America, but I cannot trifle with my honor.”

—John Paul Jones

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”

—John Kennedy

“Over 2400 years ago, the Greek Historian Herodotus wrote a ‘History of the Persian Wars’ so that ‘men’s actions may not be effaced by time nor the great and wondrous deeds’ of ‘the Greeks be deprived of renown, Since that time countless writers have attempted to capture the essence of the great captains. In virtually every case great leaders have been those who gave extra effort and sought out challenge in all forms. There are no short cuts and sadly no easy ways to selfless leadership. Leadership is to be learned from experience and from study, toil, trial and error. The good things in life are worth striving for and nothing is more rewarding than leading soldiers.”

—GEN Robert Kingston 1985

“I cannot trust a man to control others who cannot control himself. Do your duty in all things. You should never wish to do less.”

—GEN Robert Lee

“You can assign a man to a leadership position, but no one will ever really be a leader until his appointment is ratified in the hearts and minds of his soldiers. The first thing to do in operating as a leader is be honest with The problem is there is much rhetoric in this business. There is not enough honesty with ourselves about

just who we are and whether we are really perceived as a leader by our subordinates. An honest-to-God, soul searching, self-evaluation is in order—and very difficult to do. I think this is the first vital step as one goes about the business of becoming a better leader. Your soldiers will gauge how well you are doing. You can fool bosses, and at times even peers, but you can't fool your subordinates. Look into their eyes—you'll really learn something."

—GEN William Livsey 1985

"The strength of the group is the strength of the leader—I am the first believer Leaders must have the quiet confidence, the certainty, of professional preparation and personal conviction that the task can and will be done. If so, it will."

—Vince Lombardi

"Leadership in the field depends to an important extent on one's legs, and stomach, and nervous system, and on one's ability to withstand hardships, and lack of sleep, and still be disposed energetically and aggressively to command men, to dominate men on the battlefield."

—GEN George Marshall

"You have to lead men in war by bringing them along to endure and display qualities of fortitude that are beyond the average man's thought of what he should be expected to do. You have to inspire them when they are hungry and exhausted and desperately uncomfortable and in great danger; and only a man of positive characteristics of leadership, with the physical stamina that goes with it, can function under those conditions.

Remember this: the truly great leader overcomes all difficulties, and campaigns and battles are nothing but a long series of difficulties to be overcome The lack of equipment, the lack of food, the lack of this or that are only excuses; the real leader displays his qualities in his triumph over adversity, however great it may be.

Army officers are intelligent. Give them the bare tree, let them supply the leaves."

—GEN George Marshall

“He is what his home, his religion, his schooling, and the moral code and ideals of his society have made him. The Army cannot unmake him. It must reckon with the fact that he comes from a civilization in which aggression connected with the taking of life, is prohibited and unacceptable”

—BG S. L. A. Marshall

“In the midst of war, when all else is in flux, at least one thing stands fast. The methods, the self-discipline, and the personality that will best enable the officer to command efficiently during peace are identical with the requirements that fit him to shape new material most perfectly under the conditions of war.

The power of decision develops only from practice. There is nothing mystic about it. It comes of a clear-eyed willingness to accept life's risks, recognizing that only the enfeebled are comforted by thoughts of an existence devoid of struggle.

It must be accepted that discipline does not break down under the strain of placing a testing demand upon the individual. It is sloth, not activity, that destroys discipline.

There are no bad troops; there are only bad leaders.”

—BG S. L. A. Marshall

“...and through all this welter of change and development your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolate. It is to win our wars. Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication All other public purposes, all other public projects, all other public needs, great or small, will find others for their accomplishments; but you are the ones who are trained to fight.

Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country...”

—GEN Douglas MacArthur

“...every single soldier must know, before he goes into battle, how the little battle he is to fight fits into the larger picture, and how the success of his fighting will influence the battle as a whole.”

—Field Marshall Montgomery

“Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.” “The badge of rank which an officer wears on his coat is really a symbol of servitude to his men.”

—GEN George Patton

“...each, in his appropriate sphere, will lead in person. Any commander who fails to obtain his objective, and who is not dead or severely wounded, has not done his full duty.”

—GEN George Patton

“A competent leader can get efficient service from poor troops; while, on the contrary, an incapable leader can demoralize the best of troops.”

—GEN John Pershing

“ ...the success of a military commander depends largely upon his practical turn of mind, whether it be in planning and directing military operations in the field or managing the business of transportation and supply Military science is based on principles that have been deduced from the application of common sense in the conduct of military affairs...military genius is really only the capacity to understand and apply simple principles founded on experience and sound reasoning.”

—GEN John Pershing

“A good leader can't get too far ahead of his followers.”

—Franklin Roosevelt

“If I were asked to define leadership, I should say it is the projection of personality It is the most intensely personal thing in the world because it is just plain you.

The qualities that distinguish a leader from other men are courage, will power, initiative, and knowledge. If you have not got those qualities you will not make a leader; if you have them, you will.”

—Field Marshal Sir William Slim

“The rare quality of being an effective leader cannot be attributed to any single trait, practice, characteristic or ”Golden Rule“. Effective leadership is a delicate combination of integrity, perseverance, technical knowledge, mission awareness, a sense of fairness and genuine concern for one’s soldiers.”

—SGM Sweeny

“A company commander’s first object should be to gain the love of his men, by treating them with every possible kindness and humanity, enquiring into their complaints, and when well-founded, seeing them redressed He should know every man of his company by name and character”

—Frederick Wilhelm Von Steuben

“The test of character is not ’hanging in’ when you expect light at the end of the tunnel, but performance of duty and persistence of example when you know no light is coming.”

“Leadership under pressure will often entail being a moralist, jurist, teacher, steward and philosopher.”

—ADM James B. Stockdale

“Even with the gifts of human understanding and of professional competence arising from careful training, our military leader will not be complete without character, character which reflects inner strength and justified confidence in oneself.”

—GEN Maxwell Taylor

“It is easy enough to provide soldiers with their basic needs—food and shelter, for example—but it takes skillful, imaginative and dedicated leaders to create an atmosphere where soldiers and their family members share a sense of purpose and belonging.”

“The message is that better soldiers demand more from their leaders. In this sense authority flows from competence, not rank. You will find in the days ahead that your ability to lead will be challenged by young soldiers anxious to succeed. They will not challenge you from the bottom of the ladder but from the top. Your future as a leader will be based upon how well you learn to manage success.”

—GEN Maxwell R. Thurman 1985

“Remember that it is far better to follow well than to lead indifferently.”

—John Vance

“Inseparable from the concept of service is the concept of integrity. The citizens of this great Nation place great trust in their military Services. They will continue to judge us by stricter rules than they apply to themselves And they should do that because, ultimately, their security rests with us and the way we perform our duties. The people of this Nation have entrusted their Armed Forces with the most awesome weapons the world has ever seen, but they have also placed the lives of their sons and daughters who serve and the safety of their own families for now and in the future in the hands of the Armed Forces.

Don't confuse integrity with infallibility. There's a great tendency to do that. As Gary Cooper said in High Noon, you should 'aim to be high-regarded'; but you should remember that you are also human and fallible. Those who will lead you are also human and fallible. The code of the warrior class has room for fallibility. Certainly, the higher up the flagpole you go, the more of your fallible backside will show. There is room for that; but, there is no room for a lack of integrity or for those who place self before duty or self before comrades or self before country. Careerism is the one great sin, and it has no place among you. If you achieve success over the bodies or the careers of your comrades, you have served your nation poorly and you have violated the code of the warrior class.

There won't be any tribunal to judge your actions at the height of battle; there are only the hopes of the citizenry who are relying upon your integrity and skill. They may well criticize you later amid the relative calm of victory or defeat. But, there is a crucial moment in crisis or battle when those you lead and the citizens of the Nation can only trust that you are doing what is right. And you develop that concept through integrity.”

—GEN John Vessey, Jr.

Principles of successful commanders in their relations with their troops:

“He should give praise where praise is due, ungrudgingly by word of mouth or written order. He should show himself as frequently as possible to his troops and as impressively as possible. He should never indulge in sarcasm, which is being clever at someone else’s expense and always offends. He should tell his soldiers the truth, save when absolutely necessary to conceal plans.”

—Lee Knowles lectures, Trinity College, 1939

In answer to the question of whether leaders are born or made:

“No, I don’t agree with that. I think there are some men who have a better chance of developing into leaders. This primarily because of their interest in the activities that lead to leadership. I think most genius is the result of hard work; and any young man, if he has guts and stick-to-itiveness, can make good in life, if given an average body and mind. It’s up to the individual; but there must be a spark, a continuing curiosity.”

—Albert C. Wedemeyer

“Leaders are made by the day-to-day practice and fine tuning of leadership talents, because leading is an art as well, is a science and best developed by application. Leaders are made by the steady acquisition of professional knowledge and by the development of 24-karat character during the course of a career.

The professional knowledge of leaders is essential to sound teaching and to improve the proficiency as well as readiness of units.

Personal and professional excellence...you can’t do one without the other...they are all wrapped up in the word ‘character’.”

—GEN John Wickham, Jr.

“No man is a leader until his appointment is ratified in the minds and hearts of his men.”

—Anonymous

“The kind of leadership available to an organization is a principal factor in its operation. So far as armies are concerned the quality of leadership determines their success. Indeed it often determines their survival.”

—Anonymous

“...I submit to you that leaders will never be more or less than their soldiers’ evaluation of them. This is the true efficiency report. From most of your troops you can expect courage to match your courage, guts to match your guts, endurance to match your endurance, motivation to match your motivation, esprit to match your esprit, a desire for achievement to match your desire for achievement. You can expect a love of God, a love of country and a love of duty and they won’t mind the heat if you sweat with them, and they won’t mind the cold if you shiver with them.

You see, you don’t accept the troops, they were there first. They accept you And when they do, you’ll know. They won’t beat drums, wave flags, or carry you off the drill field on their shoulders, but you’ll know. You see, your orders will appoint you to command. No orders, letters, no insignia of rank can appoint you as a leader. Leadership is an intangible thing. Leadership is developed within yourselves and you’ll get stronger as you go.”

—Author Unknown

“For those who fight for it, life has a special flavor the protected will never know.”

—Author Unknown

“Leadership can be defined in numerous ways, but probably the simplest definition is that leadership in any unit revolves around the ability of the person in charge to move a group of people, as a team, in the direction of a common goal. All of the terminology and concepts that have been used to describe successful leaders and successful leadership are built into this definition. These include, but are not limited to: caring, cohesion, teamwork, good training, good maintenance, esprit de corps, communication, loyalty, mutual confidence and respect, good judgment, decisiveness, and the list goes on. The bottom line is that a leader, in order to be successful by any definition, needs to have the necessary skills to create an environment in which subordinates have confidence in their abilities and their equipment, mutual respect for each other and for the leader and will respond immediately, as a team, then the leader specifies a mission.

Every soldier is a leader regardless of his rank or position. His attitude, opinions, desires and deportment mold the approach to mission taken by those above him and his subordinates. It is the summation of this leadership by 'every soldier' that makes our Army a winner.

NCO's must lead soldiers in execution of the activities of the day. Such leadership is exemplified in understanding the instruction or task at hand before beginning; in giving clear, concise instruction; and in being a demanding, willing teacher and an aggressive role model."

—Author Unknown