The Challenge of Leadership

In *Naval Science 2* you were introduced to basic principles of leadership that will help you rise to higher levels of responsibility in your NJROTC unit and in other life activities in which you may be involved. This section will expand on the principles you learned earlier and provide information on more advanced topics you will need as you proceed to higher levels of leadership within your unit and elsewhere. Many of the practices and qualities that are common to successful leaders both in the military and in civilian life will be discussed. In addition, some insight into the evaluation of performance of subordinates will be provided, along with information about effective techniques of how to give instruction, both of which will be very useful to you as you assume greater leadership roles within your unit.

Basis for Effective Leadership

Good leadership stresses the qualities that enable a person to inspire and manage a group of people successfully. Effective leadership, therefore, is based on personal example, good organization and administration, and personal moral responsibility. The second of these, organization and administration, deals with a leader’s personal attention to and supervision of subordinates. Because the Navy is made up of people, naval leaders must learn to understand and value the many individuals with whom they must work.

The naval leader must have a philosophy of leadership based on firmly held moral values and integrity of character. Leaders must understand how to act toward seniors, peers, and juniors. A naval leader will be ineffective if he or she does not understand good leadership and administration and is not able to get the teamwork necessary for the unit to carry out its mission.

Leadership involves human relations—specifically those between a leader and a group. A leader must be able to impose, either through command or persuasion, his or her will upon that group. Also required is a willingness on the part of the leader to sacrifice personal time and material gain to achieve this personal "power." Still, a person who is to become a truly successful leader must first of all have learned the principles of good "followership," as set forth in *Naval Science 1*.

Philosophies of Leadership

Philosophies of leadership differ widely. One extreme view holds that leaders are born, not made. The opposite extreme contends that anyone who can master various leadership principles can

Leadership is an art, gift, or science by which a person can direct the thoughts, plans, and actions of others in order to obtain their obedience, respect, confidence, and loyal cooperation. This NJROTC class is fortunate to receive guidance from two very proficient naval leaders.

(Kenneth Hendrix)
lead effectively. Other viewpoints stress leadership as a managerial process, or as a matter of character and moral development. Still another holds that leadership can best be learned by studying the lives of great men and women. Each of these philosophies has merit, but none, by itself, answers the question of how effective leadership can be developed.

There is no denying that some people are born with physical and mental qualities that make them natural leaders. However, history is full of examples of people who reached great heights of leadership as the result of study, discipline, and hard work, in spite of handicaps such as small size, physical disabilities, or a lowly family background.

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**Obedience**

Obedience is the most important of the qualities that good leaders should strive to instill in their personnel. Obedience is necessarily the first lesson that must be learned by any military person.

The first lessons learned by children from their parents involve obedience: come here, go there, sit down, eat, don't touch, be careful, pick it up, etc. Obedience is necessary to teach the child to do basic activities and to protect him or her from dangers. In adult life, however, obedience is of greater concern in military life than in most civilian environments.

While disobeying the law will result in punishment of one sort or another in either environment, the loss of their jobs is probably the most significant result when civilians disobey their boss. The military "product," however, is defense of our country and our way of life. Military service people, therefore, must be more idealistic than the average civilian, since they are serving, protecting, and defending the United States and its allies—even to the extent of giving up their lives in peace or war. Thus there is a greater need for obedience from service members in uniform.

**Obedience in the Military Services**

In the military, an *order* is a directive to action of some kind, generally given by a senior to a junior. In the oath of service taken by all enlisted personnel upon enlistment, they promise to faithfully obey and carry out the lawful orders of those appointed over them.

Obedience to orders has two forms in the military, each with its own time and place. *Blind obedience* is automatic response to orders such as commands issued during close order drill, or steering commands to a helmsman. There is no time for questioning or determining the reason for this type of order. *Reasoned obedience*, on the other hand, allows for some personal initiative in carrying out an order.

Reasoned obedience is the type most often desired in the Navy and NJROTC. Navy work involves constant learning, and it is known that people work and learn best when allowed to use their own ideas. Most day-to-day routine orders give the receiver some freedom in deciding exactly how to carry them out in a responsible manner.

Orders may be given in various ways. Polite phrases such as "please" or "would you" and other common courtesies may be used by a senior when giving orders, but even if the order has the sound of a request, it is still an order. When time permits, the leader may explain the reasons for an order. The juniors may be encouraged to ask reasonable questions, or even suggest possible alternatives, but this does not imply that subordinates may decide whether or not they will obey. Often, however, a more specific form of order called a *command* may be appropriate.

A command calls for immediate blind obedience. Courteous terms normally are not used in commands. There is usually no time for hesitation or questions regarding such orders. Examples might be commands to commence fire on an enemy, or to abort a dangerous landing approach to an aircraft carrier.

People obey the orders of lawful authorities because of either the hope of reward or the fear of punishment. Reasoned obedience to an order often involves hope of some kind of reward. This may take the form of a simple verbal compliment (such as "Well done"), public recognition and praise, the privilege of greater responsibility, or improvement of status in the organization. Blind obedience to a command seldom lends itself to particular reward at the moment, and is more often associated with the threat of punishment should it be disobeyed.

The good leader should strive to have the respect, confidence, and loyal cooperation of subordinates, but it is impossible for him or her to lead without first obtaining their obedience.

**The Military Leader: A Legal and Moral Obligation**

Civilian executives hold their positions by virtue of superior knowledge and experience and strong character or personality. The executive probably is not legally responsible for the persons employed, and any concern for the well-being of subordinates is primarily a moral one.

Military leaders, on the other hand, have both a legal and a moral obligation to do all in their power to lead their subordinates effectively and to be concerned about their welfare. The president, as representative of the people of the United States, has granted each military leader extensive authority to do so based on a legal contract.

The military leader must depend upon subordinates to accomplish assigned missions. Consequently, leaders must be aware of their subordinates' capabilities and their limitations. The leader must personally be concerned with subordinates' health, welfare, and any problems that may affect their peace of mind and effi-
These NJROTC cadets are learning firsthand that it takes everyone pulling together with all their individual strengths and weaknesses to accomplish a mission. (Annapolis HS NJROTC)

iciency on the job, such as family illness, debts, and other difficulties. The leader must gain the confidence of his or her personnel so that they will feel free to consult the leader about any problems.

The Challenge of Leadership

The leader has an especially difficult task in trying to motivate disinterested persons or troublemakers who always seem to be present in most groups of people. Ideally, the leader will be able to guide and assist most such individuals to gain a sense of moral responsibility so they too can become assets to the organization. After all, everyone must live by rules and regulations, whether in the Navy or in civilian life. These rules, if followed, make life more pleasant and easier for all.

Personnel must be taught that the more they discipline themselves, the less they will have to be disciplined by others. They must be fully aware of their importance to the team. Their shipmates must be able to depend on them in day-to-day routine matters, as well as in battle. All should be led to understand that learning, advancing in rate, and assuming more responsibilities are duties of every Sailor and citizen, not just the choice of a select few.

In the Navy, as in the other military services, officers and petty officers have the responsibilities of leadership. Although each leadership position may be different, the challenge of leadership remains the same: to get people to do the job.

Leadership and discipline are vital in any military organization. The same qualities that make a good leader in the military services are equally helpful to the civilian leader.

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. What is the challenge of leadership?
2. Upon what is effective leadership based?
3. What are the two extremes in philosophy of leadership?
4. What is the first lesson that military personnel must learn?
5. Why must military personnel have a more idealistic outlook on the importance of obedience?
6. A. What are the two forms of military obedience?
   B. Why is there a need for each?
7. What is the difference between a senior's request or order and a command?
8. What makes the military leader different from the civilian executive?

CRITICAL THINKING

1. In which ways is it harder to be a leader in the military than in civilian life? In which ways is it easier?
2. What are some ways of getting the cooperation of a disinterested or uncommitted subordinate?

VOCABULARY

moral responsibility
reasoned obedience
blind obedience

order
command