

Mastering the art of Dynamic Leadership

NCO Journal Staff

"Soldiers learn to be good leaders from good leaders."¹

—Retired ninth Sgt. Maj. of the Army Richard A. Kidd

From the Chief of Staff of the Army down to the newest Soldier, leadership is the mainstay of Army life. It is codified in doctrine, taught at leadership schools, demonstrated every day, and is the focus of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's NCO 2020 Strategy.² NCOs are effective leaders who rely on their experience to adopt the most effective leadership style to accomplish the mission.

Leader Development, Army Style

The Army develops its leaders using a tiered training approach with doctrine and leadership courses or academies. Academies and courses provide future leaders with recognized methods of leadership training, an advantage their civilian contemporaries do not necessarily have. Field Manual 6-22, *Leader Development*, states the overarching tenets of Army leader development are:

- Strong commitment by the Army, superiors, and individuals to leader development.
- Clear purpose for what, when, and how to develop leadership.
- Supportive relationships and culture of learning.
- Three mutually supportive domains (institutional, operational, and self-development) that enable education, training, and experience.
- Providing, accepting, and acting upon candid assessment and feedback.³



These principles reflect the leader attributes laid out in Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership*, stating leaders need to have character, presence, and intellect. Demonstrating these attributes gives Army leaders a chance of successfully leading their Soldiers and accomplishing the mission.⁴

TRADOC's *NCO 2020 Strategy* further defines the NCO as a leader who "will understand the strategic environment, be able to think critically and creatively, visualize solutions, and describe and communicate crucial information to achieve shared understanding, collaborate, and build teams."⁵

and, as they master those skills, rise through the ranks and various leadership roles. To become experts in any task requires more than a working knowledge of the craft; it requires NCOs to strengthen their leadership skills and understand the different leadership styles available.

The Army Leadership Requirements Model

The Army Leadership Requirements Model is the roadmap of the attributes and competencies expected of U.S. Army leaders. Attributes provide leaders a path to follow, and competencies describe what leaders need to master to become successful. After reviewing

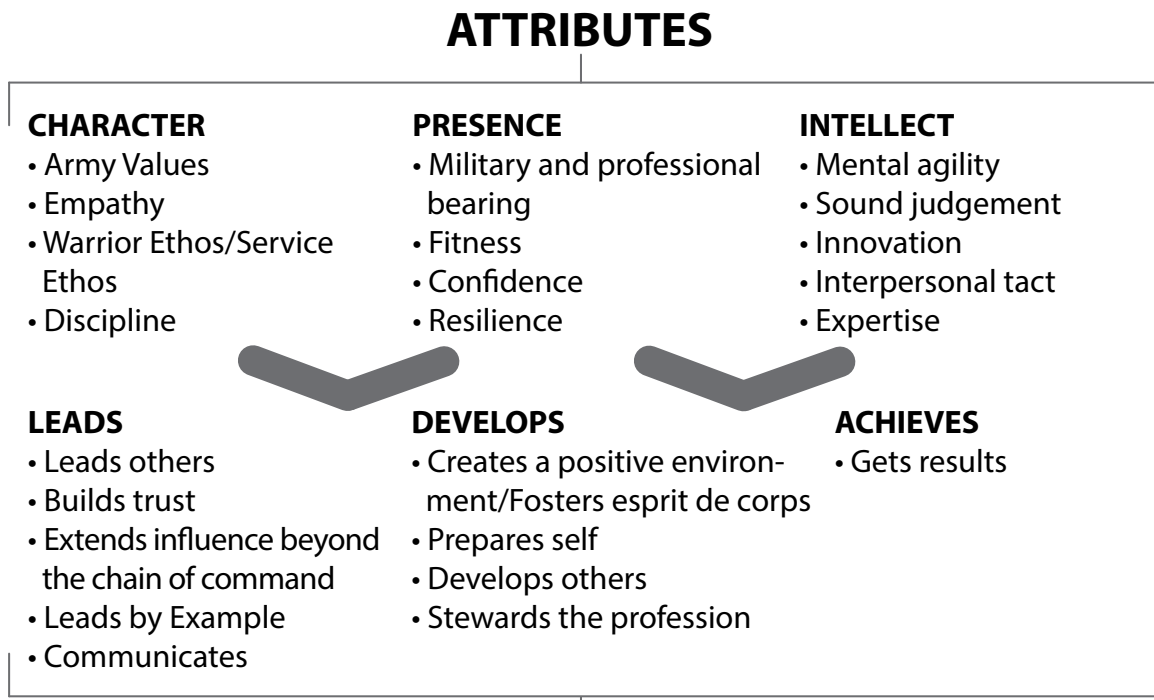


Figure from Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership*.

The Army outlines seven principles for developing future leaders in ADP 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders*:

1. Lead by example.
2. Develop subordinate leaders.
3. Create a learning environment for subordinate leaders.
4. Train leaders in the art and science of mission command.
5. Train to develop adaptive leaders.
6. Train leaders to think critically and creatively.
7. Train leaders to know their subordinates and their families.⁶

As their careers progress, Soldiers acquire knowledge and experience in their military occupational specialties

the LRM's five leadership styles, transactional, transformational, servant, autocratic, and followership, it is possible to see how civilian leadership theories tie into LRM competencies.⁷

Styles of Leadership

Transactional

Transactional leadership, known as the "telling" style of leadership, focuses on structure, results, rewards, and penalties. Leaders provide subordinates with goals, establish project checks, provide performance reports and motivate them with rewards based on a recognized system.

Transactional leaders include Gen. Norman H. Schwarzkopf, former commander of U.S. Central Command, and Vince Lombardi, coach of the Green Bay Packers.⁸

Transactional leadership works for the Army because it focuses on leadership, organization, and performance. Additionally, it is suitable for situations where the immediate reaction to orders is required and instructional scenarios where information flows from leaders to followers. It does not work with free thinkers who regularly exercise personal initiative because it limits their creativity.⁹

Transformational

Transformational leadership is leadership by example, an Army tradition. This leadership style works well in a changing environment, where ideas flow freely, and subordinates are encouraged to provide solutions. It does not work in an ad hoc or initial development decision-making period where there is little to no structure to support the team.

Thus, transformational leaders are usually technical experts in their fields, want to improve their environment and understand their Soldiers' roles.¹⁰ They inspire their subordinates through rapport, inspiration, and empathy and work well in an environment where they can create change by working with their subordinates.¹¹

Leaders known for this leadership style include the late Gen. Omar Bradley, first chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the last of the nation's five-star generals, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt.¹²

Servant

Effective NCOs are servant leaders. They develop their Soldiers by meeting the needs of their squads or teams.

According to retired 1st Sgt. Cameron Wesson, a former platoon sergeant with the 101st Airborne Division, servant leadership begins with the Soldier's Creed, and as Soldiers become NCOs, place the needs of others before their own.

Servant leadership requires a significant level of trust between leaders and subordinates, thus building relationships and rapport. However, it is not a style that can be used all the time and requires time to develop enough trust to work well.¹³

Examples of servant leaders are retired Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, 19th Chief of Staff of the Army, and Dr. Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.¹⁴

Autocratic

Army leaders are expected to be the decision makers and issue clear directions, mission statements, and goals to their subordinates, thus the Army's structure lends itself to autocratic leadership. This leadership style type works well in environments involving life or death decisions or when the decision-making process becomes stale.¹⁵

Autocratic leaders are the decision makers and request little to no input from their subordinates. However, successful autocratic leaders respect their subordinates, communicate effectively, and listen to opinions. They have a clear idea of the mission and communicate their vision of mission success. Because of their leadership style, they are expected to have a high success rate and make correct decisions.

Gen. George S. Patton, former commander of the Third Army during WWII, and Bill Belichick, coach of the New England Patriots are autocratic leaders.¹⁶

Followership

While followership does not sound like a leadership style, it is symbiotic to leadership; it shares the same values, requires the same effort, and depends on the same dedication. Competent NCOs can influence outcomes by following the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Followers assist their leaders by adhering to best practices, completing the mission, and advocating for process improvements. Effective followers are not afraid to approach their leaders with problems and will often provide solutions to issues.

Followership is effectual when followers understand they must go beyond "simply following instructions." Good followers will anticipate a leader's needs, provide advice on procedures, and exhibit courage when delivering unwelcome or unpleasant news.¹⁷

Learning beyond the Model

According to Wesson, who faced his leadership challenges after suffering injuries to his knees and back, NCOs, especially those who work to develop their leadership abilities, have potential challenges up their sleeves.

"One of the challenges facing today's NCOs, are Soldiers who are incredibly smart, catch onto concepts sooner, and who will challenge their NCOs to improve their leadership skills," Wesson said. "Unless NCOs are willing to learn about leadership theories, they won't achieve self-development."

Wesson believes today's Soldiers are life-long learners and help shape the force by changing biases towards education and self-development.¹⁸

Conclusion

Army leadership training continues to define the NCO corps and develops future leaders. Successful NCOs must master leadership techniques that best suit their needs and go beyond provided instructional materials. To understand the Leadership Requirements Model, NCOs should consider its purpose and its contributions to Army leadership training. Understanding these theories and correctly aligning their practice to specific situations are the hallmarks of professional Soldiers. ■



Notes

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17. Johannsen, "125 Transformational Leaders."
18. Retired 1st Sgt. Cameron Wesson, interview by author, March 2018.
19. Graphic created from a U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. John Hall, 173rd Airborne Brigade. VIRIN: 170926-A-VI272-928.



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