

The "Relevant" Leader

"The unexamined life is not worth living," Socrates.

Leaders are busy people! But, to be truly effective, leaders must often take a step back and make time for self-reflection. Good leaders ask themselves, "What gives me the right to lead?" and "Am I a leader worth following?" Stoic philosophers of the past often argued that one's reputation is outside of one's control. I disagree; in fact, it is absolutely in a leader's best interest to safeguard and protect their own reputation. They must intentionally take steps towards maximizing their leadership potential, or run the risk of falling flat, becoming stagnant, or even toxic.

Key leadership components:

- **Trust, Reputation, and Respect**. Your reputation is the start (or end) of the trust building process. The trust you garner is a reflection of who you are as a person, both in and out of uniform. People you lead will likely show appropriate respect, but do they really trust you? Trust is both a byproduct and an enabler of leadership. You cannot effectively lead without trust.
- **Confidence**. What you say and what you do should be congruent. Your actions, the decisions you make, and how you interact with others will determine the amount of confidence given to you by your followers. It will also build confidence in yourself!
- **Commitment**. If you have a positive impact in the lives of your people (built trust), they will commit to your vision. You will have buy-in and you will find that your followers will work tirelessly to help achieve it. They believe in it!
- **Character**. Qualities of moral excellence that drives the leader to do the right thing, despite internal or external pressures to the contrary. Character, to a large extent, is determined by the decisions, choices, and actions of the leader. Maintaining strong character requires work, commitment, and oftentimes sacrifice.
- **Personality**. Often referred to as the leader's delivery system. Personality is the filter through which you express emotions, attitudes, opinions and behaviors. Personality matters, because leadership requires relationship management.

Taking a self-evaluation of all of these components is critical for the leader to reach the pinnacle, most important, level of leadership – **Relevance**. Being relevant in the lives of the people you lead is your responsibility as the leader. To be relevant you must take the necessary time to really get to know your people and impact their lives in positive ways; both work and personal lives. To be relevant, you must care for, encourage, coach, guide, develop, and mentor.

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