

NS2 LEADERSHIP

Chapter 3. Leadership Skills

Name: _____ **Platoon:** _____ **Date:** _____

People behave in ways that will best satisfy their needs. Survival—the need for food, air, and water—is the most basic human need. Higher needs, such as the need for friends, job, and respect, are felt only after the most basic physical and safety needs are satisfied.

Food and safety, however, seldom bring happiness and a sense of accomplishment. The satisfaction of higher needs brings a sense of well-being and pride. These are necessary for an intelligent, mature human being. While survival needs are quite similar for all people, higher needs vary greatly among individuals mainly because of the environment in which the individual has grown up.

This chapter will talk about things that influence the behavior of people. Some knowledge of human nature and what makes people behave as they do is important for a leader.

Satisfying Needs

It is not necessary to talk about the basic needs for food, water, and shelter. Everyone understands these things. A hungry person will seldom work well, for his or her mind is on an empty stomach and visions of a good meal. Once that need is satisfied, however, the person's job and desire for approval, recognition, and achievement will take over quickly. These higher needs may never be completely satisfied. But that is probably a good thing, for that might stop new ideas and limit initiative.

One of the foremost writers on the topic of people's needs as motivators is Abraham Maslow. According to Maslow, needs are arranged from the lowest, such as food and shelter (the physiological), to the highest (self-fulfillment) in an order called the **hierarchy of needs**. In this theory, individuals will try to satisfy all or nearly all of the needs at lower levels before they are ready or motivated to go after those at higher levels. For example, if someone suffers from hunger, most of his or her energy will be spent in finding food, not in seeking a sense of belonging or knowledge, until the need for food is satisfied; and so on.

A leader, therefore, must be sure that the basic needs of subordinates are satisfied. He or she must then try to satisfy their higher needs. A leader can do this by ensuring that their work gives them the rewards of belonging, status, and getting ahead. The leader must assign jobs in such a way that each person does his or her part well and all work toward the goal. In this way, not only will individual needs be satisfied, but the group will develop teamwork.

Most people seek growth in their work. People desire to learn new skills and move on to more challenging work. They want job responsibilities that use their technical knowledge and ability. They want to become skilled in their trade because mastery of the job adds to their sense of achievement. Doing a good job, first of all, must be personally rewarding.

But people also desire proper recognition for doing a job well. This increases the drive to succeed. While it is necessary to call attention to mistakes (which everyone makes), recognition of mistakes alone will decrease a person's desire to achieve. It is well to give the deserved compliments first after inspecting a job. Then follow this with constructive criticism, if needed.

Most people want to contribute to the success of their unit and organization, but they generally need a boost or reward (however slight) for doing a good job. This is not selfish; it is human nature and a factor that a leader must consider.

Increasing Motivation

Punishment by the leader is sometimes necessary. This may include putting a subordinate on report, reprimanding him or her, or advising the individual that he or she will not be recommended for advancement unless he or she shows an improvement in attitude and results.

While punishment may make people do what they should, it alone cannot motivate, because motivation is an inner force. The motivated person is **self-starting** and **self-controlled**; he or she does what is necessary to get the job done by him- or herself. What are the things that make people want to do a better job? Many surveys have been done over the years to try to determine these things. In the civilian business world, such matters directly affect production, relationships with unions, public goodwill, and profits. In the Navy, these things directly affect morale, readiness, and reenlistments.

Such surveys have found that there are nine main motivating factors. In order of importance, these are:

1. Feeling that one's work is important
2. Opportunity to do interesting work
3. Opportunity for self-development and improvement
4. Good pay
5. Chance for advancement
6. Respect as an individual
7. Chance to produce work of high quality
8. Knowing what is going on in the organization
9. High degree of freedom on the job

Items most often put at the bottom of any such listing are the threat of disciplinary action, not having to work too hard, and working under close supervision. Note that each of these is negative, whereas the nine above are all positive.

To help motivate workers, therefore, a leader must give each one the chance to develop his or her abilities and talents. He or she must allow them to use their initiative and judgment within the constraints the leader sets up.

Morale

Morale is the state of mind of an individual. Living conditions, food, quarters, discipline, pay, and duties all affect morale. How important a person feels in a group plays a big part in how good or how bad his or her morale is. Everything that makes a person feel well and satisfied builds up morale, and everything that bothers him or her lowers morale.

High morale is the result of effective leadership. No direction of human activity is possible without it, and no failure is final until morale is destroyed. Morale is based on the belief of the leader in the follower, of the follower in the leader, of each in themselves, and of both in the cause.

To have high morale, an individual must first have standards and goals that make daily life meaningful. Second, he or she must know what must be completed or solved in order to reach those goals; there must be satisfying rewards. Third, a person's basic goals must be in line with other members of the group, so that his or her morale can be kept high during periods of stress.

The leader must realize that high morale is present only in groups that are disciplined and efficient. Morale can be measured by inspections of personnel and their equipment. Interviews can help determine if morale is high or low. A key fact to remember about morale: nothing will destroy it so surely as inactivity and boredom. At the same time, relaxation and freedom are essential. The leader must plan a schedule with a proper mix of work and play to keep up morale.

Building Morale

The following are some general rules for building high morale in a unit. A leader should

- Make people confident in his or her ability.
- Stay in touch with individuals' problems and wishes.
- Be consistent and fair in assigning duties and in giving rewards and punishments.
- Show people that he or she respects them and is proud to be with them.
- Keep well informed of attitudes.
- Be accessible.
- Participate in planning and carrying out unit activities.
- Actively supervise lower-ranking leaders to be sure that they do their jobs with the unit's welfare in mind.
- See that people have plenty of opportunity for further education.
- Always be friendly, courteous, and tactful.
- Know each individual by name.

Conversation and Leadership

It is "good business" for a leader to stay in touch with each of his or her subordinates. Personal contact with his or her people is one of a leader's most effective ways of letting them know they are important. This will result in higher morale and will greatly contribute to the efficiency of the command. A leader must believe that each person has something of value to say, that the person may know something the leader doesn't know. Both will benefit from the friendly exchange.

Starting a Conversation. A leader should begin a conversation with a subject of interest to the subordinate. Unit activities, school athletics, clubs, or other programs can be good subjects for "breaking the ice." One does not walk up to subordinates or casual acquaintances and suddenly ask about their health, financial status, details about the family, or hobbies.

A leader should remember three things when starting a conversation. First, no one wants their private affairs pried into. Second, many people like to talk about themselves to someone they can trust, who will

listen and understand. And third, the key to getting acquainted is a sincere and unselfish interest in the people being approached. Probably the best opening subject is their work. This is not only of interest to the person but also of genuine interest to the leader.

The following are some conversation starters that may be helpful.

- A question about what they are doing or planning to do
- A comment on their skill or speed in doing the work
- A suggestion for improvement, if this seems needed
- An explanation of the importance of the work
- A question about how the activity can be improved
- A remark regarding similar activities
- A question about their earlier experience with similar work

Any of these starting points can lead into other topics, if the leader is sincerely interested in getting acquainted and will listen well.

Listening. Listening is a skill the effective leader must have. Few things make a person feel so important or so good about themselves as really being listened to by someone they admire or respect. It takes willpower and practice to forget about personal problems, or other concerns, when trying to listen to someone. It simply is not possible to listen to a person while thinking about something else. Thinking about other things is bound to show through even if you try to follow the person's story with smiles, frowns, and other signs.

- Everyone can become a good listener. These are some hints that should help.
- Stop working when someone is talking to you; not to do so can be considered insulting and is a sure way of ruining a conversation.
- Accept the speaker as a fellow human being with an interesting personality. While the courtesies of rank should be observed, the speaker must be respected as an individual who has something to contribute.
- Do not interrupt continually with insignificant corrections or arguments.
- Do not belittle the speaker's experiences, plans, accomplishments, or possessions with greater ones of your own.
- Probably one of the worst things a listener can do is to tell other people what they mean, or to anticipate the point of their story when they have scarcely begun. This is not only discourteous, but it can also keep one from getting the vital facts. Give the speaker a chance, even if you know what he or she is driving at.

Ending a Conversation. Ending a conversation is almost as important as starting or keeping one going. The leader should not abruptly end a conversation that he or she has started. Ending a conversation without damaging the pride or feelings of the other fellow is an art every leader should develop. Consideration and good listening are the keys to this art.

Once a leader becomes known for being willing to listen, having an open mind, a good memory, and the ability to grasp the point and settle problems, the person who may be inclined to talk too much will shorten his or her chatter. Others, grateful for the attention they know they will get, will respect the leader's time, make their pitch, and depart.

Attentive, patient, open-minded listening is one of the biggest skills in leadership.

Conclusions about Leadership

To be a leader, then, one must do many things. Among these, the leader must

- Understand, guide, and teach
- Manage, administer, and supervise
- Have a dedication and sense of responsibility that inspire others
- Set a good example at all times
- Know people's needs and understand how these needs affect human behavior
- Know how to deal with people and how best to use resources
- Listen effectively and give counsel wisely
- Plan ahead

This sounds like a monumental task for anyone. But leadership, like any other skill, is learned with patient study and practice. The NJROTC cadet leader must keep in mind that promotion depends a lot upon the effort and preparation he or she puts into each task assigned.

Critical Thinking

1. Which of the leadership styles described in this chapter would work best in your NJROTC unit? Why?
2. What are some of the most important skills necessary for effective communication by cadet leaders in your NJROTC unit? Why do you think these are important?
3. High morale and good motivation often go hand-in-hand for good students. What are some things that could be done in your high school to increase student morale and improve student performance?

Study Guide Questions

1. After the basic human needs are satisfied, what higher needs will influence human behavior?
2. What should the leader try to give subordinates?
3. What is a good “rule of thumb” when making an inspection of a job?
4. What must the leader do to motivate followers?
5. A. What is morale?
B. What three things are essential to high morale in an individual?
6. What things are sure to destroy good morale?
7. Why are frequent contacts with personnel important to building morale?
8. What are three helpful rules to consider when starting a conversation?
9. Why is listening an essential skill for an effective leader?

Vocabulary

constructive criticism

motivation

hierarchy of needs

reprimand