

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

15 February 2012

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph M. Rizzuto is a U.S. Air Force command pilot assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He graduated from the United States Air Force Academy with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1992, from University of Alaska Anchorage with a Master of Science Degree in Engineering Management in 2001, and from Air University with a Master of Science Degree in Military Studies in 2005. He earned his pilot wings in October 1993 and has nearly 2800 hours in A-10 and C-130 aircraft, and nearly 700 hours operating MQ-1 and MQ-9 remotely piloted aircraft. He is a graduated squadron commander, colonel select, and will take command of the 306th Flying Training Group at the United States Air Force Academy in the summer of 2012.

Abstract

There were five wing commanders fired during the first year of General Schwartz as the CSAF. General Schwartz categorized fired commanders into two groups, those that have problem after problem and those that break the rules.¹ New senior leaders transitioning from the operational level of leadership need to focus on Right Thing, Right Way leadership as a way to keep from falling into one of the General Schwartz's two categories.

Since organizations excel at the *things* a leader finds important, a new senior leader needs to focus on the *right things*. Right Thing leadership includes the development of followers and mission execution. At the senior level the leader needs to develop followers' leadership skills and not technical skills. Using mentoring and experience based training programs a senior can develop a culture of leadership. For mission execution a new senior leader needs to transition to the more empowering transformation leadership style and away from a positional and authority based transactional style.

Doing the *right things* will only keep a new senior leader from having problem after problem; it will not keep them from breaking the rules. To keep from breaking the rules the senior leader needs to do the *right things* the *right way*. Right Way leadership relies on the AF core values to guide the new senior leader. First, to maintain his integrity, the new senior leader needs to match his words to his actions. Second, to transition to excellence in leadership from technical excellence, he needs to develop the concept of 360 degree leadership and learn to lead more than subordinates. Finally, a senior leader needs to view leadership as serving his organization and embody service before self in a servant leader attitude.

¹ Harman, Nov 2009

Introduction

“Air Force Colonel Fired” read the headline. Sighting leadership failures as the formal reason for dismissal; the article marked the end of a 24 year career. The colonel had been caught in activities any new lieutenant would know was wrong. Such incidents happened five times within a year of General Schwartz taking over as the CSAF. In an interview with AF Times General Schwartz stated that fired commanders fall into two categories – “those that have problem after problem and those who break the rules.”²

This paper will develop the concept of Right Thing, Right Way leadership as a way for new senior leaders to avoid falling into one of these two categories. It will provide the new senior leader areas to contemplate to transition successfully. It will also provide case studies for consideration. The intent of the case studies is to learn from others’ mistakes. It is not to disparage, degrade, or belittle.

The first leadership failure category defined by General Schwartz is those who have problem after problem, caused by leaders who fail to focus on the *right things*. The failure can further be broken down into people and mission problems. For people, senior leaders need to focus on creating future leaders and for the mission they need to focus on the vision and transitioning to a more empowering transformational leadership style.

The second leadership failure category defined by General Schwartz is the leader who breaks the rules. These failures can be defined as leaders who fail to do *things the right way*. The *right way* is defined by the AF core values. The paper will highlight some important difference of core values at the institutional leadership level.

² Harman, Nov 2009

Senior Leader Transition

Why do some senior AF leaders fail? The CSAF's categories don't explain how a leader with a successful track record, vetted through a complex selection system, would have problem after problem or break the rules. To attempt to understand how a previously successful leader can fail, the transition to senior level leadership needs to be examined.

AFDD 1-1 defines senior level leadership as institutional leadership. It states effective strategic leadership skills include: competence on force structure, management of complex systems, and interpersonal skills emphasizing consensus building and influencing peers.³ AF doctrine acknowledges the seeds of leadership planted at the tactical level and matured at the operational level, should bear fruit at the strategic level.⁴ However, strategic leaders responsible for large organizations, thousands of people, and vast resources cannot completely rely on lower-level leadership skills for success.⁵

Solely relying on lower level leadership skills is one reason why a senior leader fails at the next level, even though they may be competent in some aspects of leadership.⁶ Another reason they fail may be because they are unyielding and stiff, and won't accept inputs from subordinates or peers.⁷ Finally, some senior leaders may just not care about the needs of the organization.⁸

Leaders that break the rules can be thought of as unethical leaders. In general, unethical leaders have a flaw that does not show at lower leadership levels. The AF does a good job of

³ AFDD 1-1, pg10 See Appendix 1 for graphical indication of AF leadership levels

⁴ AFDD 1-1, pg17-18

⁵ Taylor, pg233

⁶ Kellerman, pg40

⁷ Kellerman, pg41

⁸ Kellerman, pg43

vetting senior leaders, but even the best and brightest aren't precluded from being seduced by power.⁹ Unethical leaders may be motivated by power or greed or may lack the self-control needed to act wisely.¹⁰ Some unethical leaders place the health and welfare of their position ahead of the whole.¹¹

Successful junior leaders fail to become successful senior leaders because they fail to transition leadership skills and traits for the next level. The military generally promotes and selects for command those who succeeded at lower levels of leadership. The implicit assumption is that those successful at lower levels will acquire the required skills for strategic leadership as they rise.¹² When a leader gets "called up" to the next level of leadership, the quality of his or her game must rise quickly. Each new level requires a higher degree of leadership skill.¹³ To meet those requirements leaders must ensure professional development remains a constant activity.¹⁴ Professional leadership development should focus on two areas. The first area is doing the *right things* to succeed. The second area is the *way* the leader does those *things*. The leadership philosophy presented in this paper is call Right Thing, Right Way leadership, and will guide the transition of a new senior leader as they learn the skills required to be effective and avoid the seductions of power at the institutional level.

Right Thing Leadership

⁹ Kellerman, pg31

¹⁰ Kellerman, pg44

¹¹ Kellerman, pg45

¹² Taylor, 236

¹³ Maxwell, 360 Degree Leader, pg275

¹⁴ Taylor, pg81

The first part of the philosophy is the idea of the *right thing*. Organizations take on the personality and focus of their leadership.¹⁵ Organizations tend to do well only those *things* the boss checks on.¹⁶ Therefore, a successful senior needs to check on the *right things*. He needs to determine what the *right things* are and pursue them with vigor.¹⁷

There are two fundamental elements to Right Thing leadership, the mission and the people who accomplish it.¹⁸ If a leader allows his people to do *things* that don't contribute to the mission or to personal/professional development, the leader is wasting his followers' effort, losing their innovative ideas, creating disillusionment, and will fail.¹⁹ Therefore, Right Thing leadership is about balancing people needs with mission accomplishment.

Take for example the case study of a wing commander fired for having problem after problem. According to Oct 2009 AF Times story the wing experienced two major vehicle accidents while moving critical weapons components, a dereliction of duty case in which the CSAF discharged three officers from the Air Force, a major security violation putting classified weapons material at risk, and two marginal compliance inspections. After the last incident, the second vehicle accident, the wing commander was fired due to "lost confidence in ability to command."²⁰ The article does not give details as to what steps the fired wing commander took to prevent problem after problem.

How can this example highlight Right Thing leadership? It is clear the mission details inside this wing were falling through the cracks. Multiple accidents, security violations, and

¹⁵ AU-24, Fogleman, pg36

¹⁶ Varljen, pg73 (emphasis added)

¹⁷ AU-24, Piotrowski, pg513

¹⁸ AFDD 1-1, pg1

¹⁹ Fullerton, pg95

²⁰ Hoffman, Oct 26, 2009

marginal inspections are all indicators of a lack of attention to detail. Instead of focusing on what this wing commander did or did not do, read the sections below and consider how developing a leadership team and focusing on empowering leadership could have made a difference in an organization like this. While this is easier said than done, focused attention through Right Thing leadership could help guide a senior leader caught in this scenario.

Right Thing Leadership - People

The first *right thing* a new senior leader needs to focus on is developing people. Successful operational level leaders understand that developing people while helping them get the job done makes them exceptional leaders.²¹ However, at the operational level the leader is focused on developing followers' technical skills.²² But at the institutional level senior leaders are leading operational level leaders; therefore the focus needs to shift from developing followers' technical skills to creating leaders.²³ The only way for a senior leader to develop widespread leadership is to make developing leaders a part of the organization's culture.²⁴ Transitioning from skill based development to leadership development is the first critical part of Right Thing leadership.

Mentoring is one way to facilitate a leadership culture.²⁵ It takes a leader to raise up a leader,²⁶ so only a senior leader can mentor the next generation of senior leaders. Mentoring is the proactive development of a subordinate through observing, assessing, coaching, teaching,

²¹ Maxwell, 360 Leader, pg229

²² AFDD 1-1, pg9-10

²³ Maxwell, 21 Irrefutable Laws, pg222

²⁴ Maxwell, 21 Irrefutable Laws, pg219

²⁵ Dalacourt, pg38

²⁶ Maxwell, 21 Irrefutable Laws, 134

counseling, and evaluating.²⁷ Every effective leadership mentor makes the development of leaders one of his highest priorities.²⁸ However mentoring everyone is not possible because of the time involved.²⁹ Therefore, a new senior leader needs to focus his mentoring on the leaders who will command the military in the near future and not followers two, three, or four levels down.³⁰

Mentoring is not enough to develop leaders. Learning leadership is not easy; it requires experience-based training.³¹ While mentoring allows followers to learn from the experience of others,³² followers need to gain their own experience. The benefits of experience based learning are evident in superior performance.³³ To create a culture of leadership, it is essential that the senior leader also utilize an experience based leadership training program.³⁴ Through both mentoring and experience based training the senior leader will establish a culture of leadership and develop leaders.

What impact would a culture of leadership have had on the above scenario? A senior leader cannot be in all places at one time. To eliminate the problem of missed details, execution errors, and safety violations, a senior leader in a scenario described above must have a leadership team capable of carrying out his vision. He would need to ask himself, “How well do I mentor my leaders? Have I transitioned my focus from developing followers’ technical skills to developing their leadership skills?” A culture of leadership would have been helpful in this scenario.

²⁷ Dalacourt, pg35

²⁸ Maxwell, 21 Irrefutable Laws, pg139

²⁹ Dalacourt, pg36

³⁰ Dalacourt, pg36

³¹ Varljen, pg75

³² Dalacourt, pg35

³³ Valjen, pg76

³⁴ Varljen, pg80

Right Thing Leadership - Mission

The second *thing* a leader needs to focus on is mission accomplishment. While developing people is critical, the first responsibility of a leader is the task at hand, the unit's mission success.³⁵ A leader that is successful in other areas but falls short in the mission will fail overall.³⁶

To successfully accomplish the mission, the leader must provide his or her vision for the organization. The foundation of effective leadership is thinking through the organization's mission, defining it, and establishing it clearly and visibly.³⁷ The vision may come from a parent organization, making championing the vision more difficult.³⁸ Whether created from within or adapted from above, the leader must champion the organization's vision.³⁹

Creating a vision is the first step in mission accomplishment, but it is not enough. How to lead the accomplishment of the vision is also critical. At a certain point in their careers, an officer must cease to be the "doer" (doing the work themselves) and must become the leader of doers.⁴⁰ The transition to senior leadership requires the officer to go a step further. At the institutional level the leader must cease to lead the doers and lead leaders. Effective senior leaders create shared visions then develop and empower other leaders to accomplish the vision.⁴¹ Senior leaders that fail to make the transition to leading leaders fail.⁴² Transitioning leadership styles is the second critical part of Right Thing leadership.

³⁵ Taylor, pg. xiv

³⁶ Taylor, pg. xiv

³⁷ AU-24, Drucker, pg509

³⁸ Maxwell, 360 Leader, pg64

³⁹ Tucker, pg105

⁴⁰ AU-24, Lombardo, pg160

⁴¹ Ahn, pg113

⁴² AU-24, Lombardo, pg160

Transitioning leadership styles is critical because leadership styles effective at lower levels of leadership will be ineffective at the institutional level. Lower level AF leaders often lead through a transactional leadership style. Transactional leadership is a process of social exchange between followers and leaders that involve a number of rewards based transactions. The transactional leader clarifies performance expectations, goals, and a path that will link the achievement of the goals to reward.⁴³ He then uses the power and authority in the system to provide the reward for success or withhold the reward for failure.⁴⁴ The transactional leadership style leaves little room for inputs from subordinates and there is no room for countervailing views.⁴⁵ This style of leadership works well when leading doers.

However, transactional leadership does not work well when leading leaders. A senior leader using this style to lead another leader can be seen as meddling. And when senior leaders meddle, they are not meddling with low-level subordinates but with other leaders.⁴⁶ A transactional leadership style may produce short-term mission success, but at the institutional level it is destructive to the organization.⁴⁷ Therefore, to ensure long term mission success, the new senior leader needs to transition from the transactional leadership style to the transformational leadership style.⁴⁸

Transformational leadership occurs when a leader inspires followers to share a vision, empowering them to achieve the vision, and provides necessary resources.⁴⁹ Transformational leaders lead by pulling rather than pushing, by inspiring rather than ordering, and by enabling

⁴³ Smith, pg80

⁴⁴ Tucker, pg103

⁴⁵ AU-24, Lombardo, pg160

⁴⁶ AU-24, Lombardo, pg160

⁴⁷ Reed, pg114

⁴⁸ Taylor, pg3

⁴⁹ Smith, pg80

people rather than constraining them.⁵⁰ Leadership studies have shown that transformational leaders are more effective; their followers have greater job satisfaction and work with higher levels of effort.⁵¹ Transformational leaders see beyond their organizations.⁵² They are more likely to be successful when high affective conflict exists and when organization members have different goals and interests, such as the different groups in a wing or divisions on a staff.⁵³ They represent the exemplary leaders who likely will do best in the more challenging situations of institutional leadership.⁵⁴ How could transformational leadership have helped the senior leader in the case study? Why wouldn't a senior leader transition to a transformational style?

One reason some senior leaders do not make the transition to this type of leadership is out of fear. It takes a secure leader to let other leaders be full participants in the leadership process.⁵⁵ However, an effective leader knows he is ultimately responsible and is not afraid of strong associates and subordinates. He wants strong associates; he encourages them and pushes them.⁵⁶ Transformational leadership allows him to provide central direction while coexisting with unit level autonomy, flexibility, and freedom of action.⁵⁷ Success comes when he empowers his subordinate leaders to do great things with him.⁵⁸ The effective transformational leader sees the triumphs of his associates and subordinate leaders as his triumphs.⁵⁹

An empowered culture of leaders would be critical to any senior leader caught in the situation in the case study above. Setting the vision to guide his wing out of failure and marginal

⁵⁰ Tucker, pg109

⁵¹ Jaussi, pg23

⁵² Tucker, pg107

⁵³ Zaccaro, George Mason University Study, pg8

⁵⁴ Avolio, 2001, pg57

⁵⁵ Maxwell, 360 Leader, pg303

⁵⁶ AU-24 Drucker, pg509

⁵⁷ Ahn, pg114

⁵⁸ Maxwell, 21 Laws, pg221

⁵⁹ AU-24, Drucker, pg510

performance would not be enough. To be successful in that scenario the senior leader would need to develop his leadership team and empower them to meet his vision. He would need to embrace Right Thing leadership.

Right Way Leadership

Doing the *right things* is not enough to ensure a senior leader is successful. Senior leaders also get fired for breaking the rules. To make the transition to the institutional level, the transitioning leader needs to do the *right things* the *right way*. Right Way leadership is the second part of Right, Thing Right Way leadership philosophy. However, the concept of accountability to the rules is not new to a senior leader, so why do some senior leaders fail in this area?

There are three reasons why successful leaders might break the rules as senior leaders. First, the leader believes operating procedures and requirements levied from above are absurd. They make value judgments and begin to cut corners or ignore requirements. They know the difference between right and wrong, but over time their actions become easier and habitual. Eventually they can no longer distinguish between important tasks and the absurd. Placing personal values and judgment ahead of the mission seems sensible and rules no longer govern activity.⁶⁰

The second reason senior leaders violate the rules is ambiguity in decisions. The institutional level of leadership is characterized by complex situations that do not have clear right or wrong answers.⁶¹ At this level, decisions will create a tension that is not easy to resolve.

⁶⁰ AF Core Value Pamphlet, pg11

⁶¹ AFDD 1-1, pg10

Simple conformity to the rules is inadequate in every consideration. Instead the leader's character will determine how to resolve the conflict.⁶²

The third reason senior leaders violate rules is a flawed or weak character. The flaws in character are amplified under the pressure of senior leadership.⁶³ At the senior level, leaders will have the authority to fulfill their inner urges, compulsions, and motivations which can undermine success. Some senior leaders will give into these urges, using their authority to satisfy their own personal interests.⁶⁴

Take for example the case of the wing commander fired for favoritism to a subordinate officer. According to the April 2010 AF Times article, the wing commander was fired because he exhibited undue favoritism and failed to provide a complete and candid assessment to his chain of command. The general in charge commented that the wing commander had served his organization well in all other areas, but his actions warranted the dismissal.⁶⁵ While details of the case are limited, it appears to be a case of a single moment destroying a 26 year career.

This wing commander may have thought he did the *right thing* in his attempt to mentor a subordinate officer, so why did he fail? Based on apparently substantiated charges, integrity appears to be the focus of this case. A senior leader in this situation needs to ask himself, "Am I sacrificing my core values? Am I giving away my integrity? Is protecting my subordinate the *right way* to solve this issue?" Keep this case study in mind while reading the Right Way leadership framework presented below.

⁶² Pfaff, pg66-67

⁶³ Roche, Mar 04, pg4

⁶⁴ Simmons, pg12

⁶⁵ Rolfsen, April 19, 2010

Right Way Leadership – Core Values

The Air Force core values of Integrity First, Excellence in All We Do, and Service Before Self, serve as beacons vectoring leaders to the path of professional conduct.⁶⁶ The core values are a living set of principles that helps leaders overcome the challenges of degrading standards, ambiguous problems, and weakness of character.⁶⁷ The AF core values are the basis for Right Way leadership.

The leader of an organization is the key to its moral climate and core values are the source of his self-control.⁶⁸ Core values are the most heavily weighted factor in determining which leaders have merit. A leader that sits in judgment of individual while abandoning his core values makes a mockery of the values themselves. In such an instance the organization will abandon its values, and an organization devoid of core values is primed for failure.⁶⁹

The transition to senior leadership requires a higher level of understanding and application of core values. The need for uncompromising character in senior leaders is quite clear, and inculcating values is critical.⁷⁰ During the transition to the next level of leadership, a senior leader needs to reflect on the AF Core Values. Frequent reflection on the core values helps each leader refocus on the leader they want to be and the example they want to set.⁷¹ The Right Way leadership philosophy guides such reflections.

Right Way Leadership - Integrity

⁶⁶ AF Core Values Pamphlet, pg11

⁶⁷ Harrell, pg172

⁶⁸ AF Core Values Pamphlet, pg12 and Hornburg, pg2

⁶⁹ Schmitt, pg2

⁷⁰ Roche, Feb 03, pg2

⁷¹ AU-24, Ryan, pg53

The most critical core value to Right Way leadership is integrity. Time after time US leadership surveys have ranked honesty first in followers' expectations of leaders.⁷² Integrity has more to do with the effectiveness of a leader than any other factor.⁷³ According to former a CSAF, "Integrity and leadership are inextricably linked. *Without integrity, leadership cannot flourish and our mission will suffer.*"⁷⁴

However, despite AF core values, some senior leaders still violate their integrity. Most are not bad people but people who on occasion make poor choices.⁷⁵ They sacrifice their integrity out of fear of failure, embarrassment, arrogance, or just plain laziness.⁷⁶ It is often an insidious slip that starts when the metrics package is designed to make the operation look good, or when subordinates are blamed for failure, or when the boss is told what he wants to hear instead of the truth.⁷⁷ In other cases some senior leaders embrace the idea that right and wrong are not absolute values, but can be decided by them from one situation to the next. This form of moral relativism undermines the core value of integrity.⁷⁸

There are two main differences to integrity at the institutional level that a new senior leader must keep in mind. The first difference is; someone is always watching. Senior leaders are the standard that young airmen, noncommissioned officers, and junior officers use to determine if they measure up.⁷⁹ Any breaches of integrity will be noticed. The second difference is; the stakes are higher at the senior level. Trust is the foundation of leadership and

⁷² Taylor, pg118

⁷³ AU-24, Herres, pg311

⁷⁴ AU-24 Fogleman, pg36 (emphasis in the original)

⁷⁵ Hornburg, pg2

⁷⁶ AU-24, Fogleman, pg36

⁷⁷ Schmitt, pg2

⁷⁸ Roche, Feb 03, pg5

⁷⁹ Roche, Feb 03, pg3

integrity makes trust possible.⁸⁰ Once trust is violated the leader becomes ineffective.⁸¹

Followers will tolerate mistakes, but if a senior leader violates their trust, they will find it very difficult to ever regain the followers' confidence.⁸²

Integrity can be defined as a conviction that the leader means what he says. And more often than not when a leader violates his integrity it is because his actions and professed beliefs do not match.⁸³ Integrity embodies a consistency and predictability built over time when a leader says, "I will do exactly what I say I will do."⁸⁴ Thomas Jefferson described integrity as the daily exercise to match words, actions, and decisions.⁸⁵

Therefore, the key transition for integrity first senior leadership is to make sure actions match words. The effective senior leader is sincere, his actions match his words and his behavior is consistent. He performs all his tasks with maximum effort, striving for excellence, no matter the relative importance. His integrity becomes the cement that binds the organization together, the cornerstone of mission accomplishment.⁸⁶

There are two integrity lessons to be learned from the case study above. First, rules must be applied equitably across the board. A senior leader in a scenario like this that does not apply the rules across the board is not matching his actions to his words. While each situation is unique and specific, a senior leader that applies standards differently sacrifices his integrity. However, in this case the more severe integrity issue is withholding of pertinent information from superiors. By failing to provide a complete assessment of the situation, the wing

⁸⁰ Maxwell, 21 Irrefutable Laws, pg58

⁸¹ Reed, pg68

⁸² Maxwell, 21 Irrefutable Laws, pg58

⁸³ Au-24, Drucker, pg510

⁸⁴ AU-24, Lombardo, pg161

⁸⁵ AU-24, Wynne, pg93

⁸⁶ AU-24, Fogleman, pg35

commander allowed loyalty to a subordinate to win out over integrity. A new senior leader needs to anticipate the new challenges to his core values the new position will bring. Right Way leadership can keep him focused and help him avoid failure.

Right Way Leadership - Excellence

The second AF core value guiding Right Way leadership is; excellence in all we do. According AFDD 1-1 excellence in all we do means Airmen constantly strive to perform at their best.⁸⁷ Excellence is a commitment to high standards.⁸⁸ It means a task worth doing is worth doing right.⁸⁹

At lower levels of AF leadership technical excellence is emphasized. Military culture esteems technical competence.⁹⁰ But at the institutional level, leadership is esteemed. Failing to transition from technical excellence to leadership excellence can cause senior leaders to fail. Excellent leaders lead in every direction. What distinguishes a merely competent leader from one who advances to the next level is the ability to lead in 360 degrees. A competent leader can lead followers. But a leader who can lead only followers is limited. To succeed at the next level of leadership, a leader must be able to lead in all directions.⁹¹

To avoid the pitfalls of strategic leadership the leader must develop the ability to be a 360 Degree leader by learning to lead up and across as well as down. To lead across, the senior leader needs to understand and practice the leadership loop of: caring, learning, appreciating, contributing, and verbalizing with peers. He needs to put completing fellow leaders ahead of

⁸⁷ AFDD 1-1, pg7

⁸⁸ AU-24 Ryan, pg54

⁸⁹ AU-24, Wynne, pg94

⁹⁰ Reed, pg68

⁹¹ Maxwell, 360 Leader, pg159

competing with them, develop friendships and relationships, and not pretend to be perfect.⁹² To lead up, the 360 leader needs to be prepared every time he is in front of the boss, know when to push and when to back off, and lead himself exceptionally.⁹³ What would have been different in the case study if the wing commander had been able to lead up? Could he have achieved his desired outcome for his subordinate without sacrificing his integrity?

One way for a senior leader to lead exceptionally is to develop his emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has proven to be twice as important as other factors in leadership excellence. Components of emotional intelligence include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The definition and hallmarks of each of these components can be found in Appendix 2. Research has demonstrated that people can develop their emotional intelligence. This is very important to the new strategic leader as the higher in rank of a star performer, the more emotional intelligence capabilities showed up as the reason for effectiveness.⁹⁴

Right Way Leadership – Service Before Self

The final core value in Right Way leadership is; service before self. The Air Force defines service before self as placing professional duties over personal desires.⁹⁵ Leaders are encouraged to place peers and subordinates ahead of self.⁹⁶ This model of service before self is applicable across leaders at all levels of the Air Force. However, it falls short in defining service before self for a senior leader. A better definition is needed.

⁹² Maxwell, 360 Leader, pg159, 210

⁹³ Maxwell, 360 Leader, pg157

⁹⁴ Taylor, pg40-41

⁹⁵ AF Core Values Pamphlet, pg7

⁹⁶ AFDD 1-1, pg6

That definition is selflessness.⁹⁷ AFDD 1-1 says, “Successful leaders have to continually ensure that the needs of the people in their unit are met.”⁹⁸ Combining AFDD 1-1 with the service before self core value defines the idea of servant leadership. “The will to serve and sacrifice for others, the willingness to set aside wants and needs in seeking the greatest good for others - this is what it means to be selfless. This is what it means to be the leader.” The servant leader makes his organization successful by meeting the organization’s needs, not by having the organization meet his needs. By embracing service before self, through servant leadership, the new senior leader will move from power based control to authority based influence.

When leaders are dedicated to identifying and meeting the legitimate needs of others, they will often be put into the position of having to make sacrifices. They will have to sacrifice ego, lust for power, pride, and other self-interests.⁹⁹ In order to sacrifice a leader must be humble. The very best leaders are a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will. They are ambitious, but ambitious for the organization, not themselves. Instead humble leaders view their leadership as an awesome responsibility and a position of trust.¹⁰⁰ A true humble leader views all of his decisions by what is best for the people or mission he is leading.¹⁰¹

Some detractors of servant leadership criticize it as weak, claiming it places growth of the follower ahead of the mission and is not useful in some environments.¹⁰² But this is not true. Servant leadership is not about pleasing everybody nor a popularity contest.¹⁰³ Servant leadership does not allow one to abdicate leadership responsibility to define the mission, set the

⁹⁷ Simmons, pg11

⁹⁸ AFDD 1-1, pg2

⁹⁹ Hunter, pg78

¹⁰⁰ Collins, pg39 and Hunt, pg96

¹⁰¹ Blanchard, pg217

¹⁰² Smith, Brien, pg89

¹⁰³ AU-24, Blanchard, pg217

standards, and define accountability. Once these directions are set, then the servant leader becomes responsive to those being led by identifying and meeting their needs.¹⁰⁴ Servant leadership and getting the job done are not mutually exclusive.¹⁰⁵ Servant leadership could have prevented the case study above by reminding the senior leader of his responsibility to set the standards and define accountability.

As a leader makes the transition to a senior leader they need to take the time to focus on their leadership responsibilities.¹⁰⁶ They will have to decide what is important to them, their lust for power, ego, and pride, or success as a senior leader. If a senior leader embraces selflessness and puts service to his followers before himself, they will make him look great!¹⁰⁷ In the end, the senior leader must choose between being a servant leader or a self-serving leader.¹⁰⁸

Capstone Case Studies

The third and final case study provided highlights the entire Right Thing, Right Way leadership philosophy. According to AF Times, this wing commander was fired for creating an atmosphere and climate of oppression and fear. There were allegations of physical contact with subordinates, threats toward senior officers, and ridiculing airmen. The investigation revealed he used a leadership style of fear, intimidation, and verbal bullying. While he was endearing to junior military members, he was brash and confrontational with squadron and group leadership.

¹⁰⁴ Hunter, pg51

¹⁰⁵ Hunter, pg123

¹⁰⁶ Hunter, pg51

¹⁰⁷ Hunter, pg75

¹⁰⁸ Hunter, pg82

Three of the six allegations filed against him were substantiated and his superior lost confidence in his leadership ability.¹⁰⁹

When reading the article it is clear the leader was out of control and one is left to wonder how a leader could behave in this manner. Starting with the Right Thing, it is clear this commander did not place people first. By showing care and concern for his younger airmen, but not for his senior leaders, he missed the transition to institutional leadership, failing to understand that empowering his subordinate leaders, not powering over them, would ensure his success. Instead of creating a culture of leadership he created a climate of intimidation. He did not use a transformational leadership style instead he used an ineffective and threatening leadership style with his senior leaders.

Not only did he not do the *right things*, he also did not do *things the right way*. It is clear he was not the model of leadership excellence. Due to his lack of emotional intelligence, he was unable to grasp the idea of 360 degree leadership and was successful at only leading low level subordinates. Additionally, his repeated display of emotional outbursts over concern for how the actions of others would make him look is a classic portrait of a self-serving leader, not service before self. Ultimately the lack of Right Thing, Right Way leadership made this wing commander ineffective and provides a classic example of how not lead as a senior leader.

Conclusion

Senior leaders fail because they are ineffective or break the rules. Transitioning from lower levels of leadership to the institutional level is not easy and requires a new senior leader to prepare. A new senior leader can adopt the Right Thing, Right Way leadership philosophy to

¹⁰⁹ Rolfsen, Nov 1, 2010

successfully guide their transition. Right Thing leadership is a balance of people and mission. By transitioning from people development to leadership development the senior leader will create an effective leadership culture. When leading the mission, the senior leader needs to change leadership styles. Learning to adapt his leadership style away from the position based transactional style, to an influence and empowerment based transformational style more suitable for leading leaders.

By focusing on doing *things the right way* the new senior leader can avoid the ethical pitfalls that trip some leaders. Right Way leadership is founded on the AF Core Values. Integrity is critical to the senior leader to create trust and can be destroyed with one event. A senior leader of integrity controls his personal urges, and makes sure his words and actions match. Excellence at the senior level is defined by excellence in leadership, not technical or tactical expertise. Expanding leadership to encompass a 360 degree influence will ensure leadership excellence. Finally, service-before-self means becoming a selfless leader and placing the organization ahead of self.

Appendix 1

AF Leadership Levels

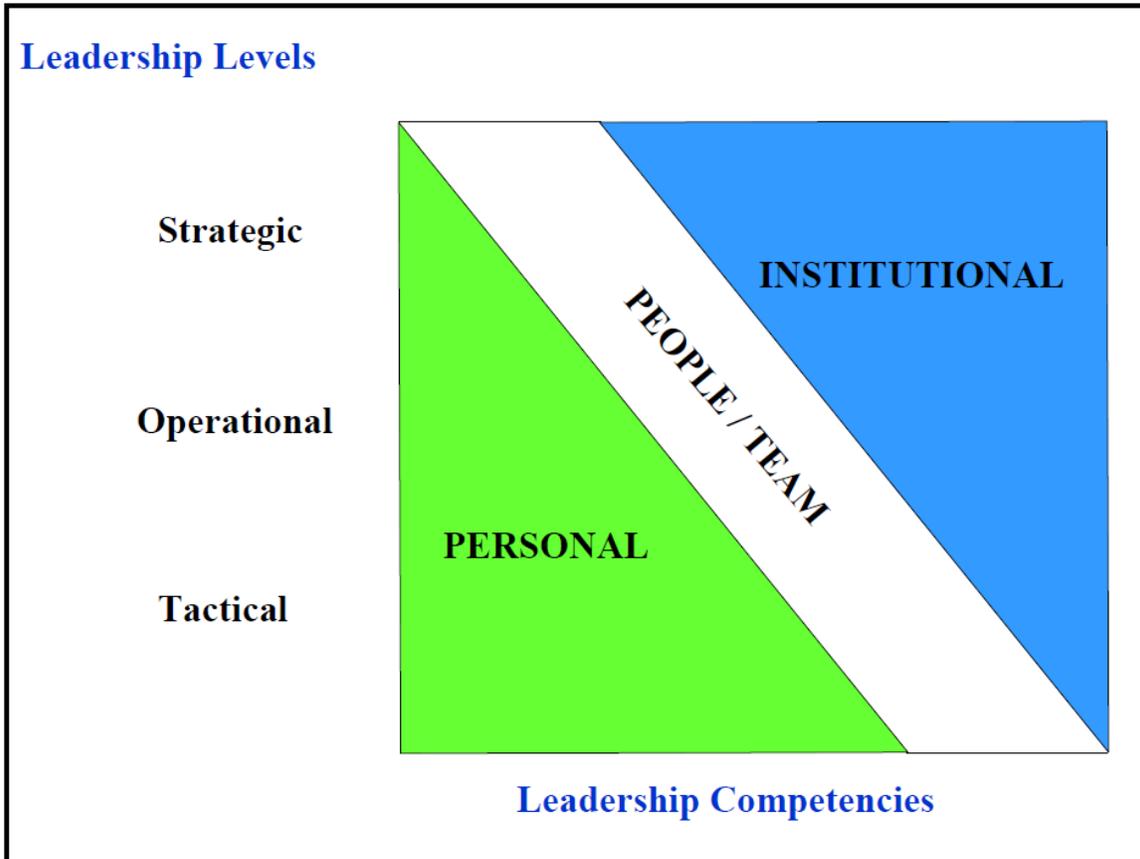


Figure 1.1. Relationship of Leadership Levels with Enduring Leadership Competencies

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Appendix 2

Definitions and Hallmarks of Emotional Intelligence

Component	Definition	Hallmark
Self-awareness	The ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others.	Self-confidence Realistic self-assessment Self-depreciating sense of humor
Self-Regulation	The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods The propensity to suspend judgment – to think before action	Trustworthiness and integrity Comfort with ambiguity Openness to change
Motivation	A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status A propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence	Strong drive to achieve Optimism, even in the face of failure Organizational commitment
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people Skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions	Expertise in building and retaining talent Cross-cultural sensitivity Service to clients and customers
Social Skill	Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks An ability to find common ground and build rapport	Effectiveness in leading change Persuasiveness Expertise in building and leading teams ¹¹¹

Taken from Military Leader, Taylor, pg42

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