

WINGMAN SORTIES

Target Audience: Leaders at all levels

PURPOSE

To bolster the confidence of Airmen (officer, enlisted, civilian) while fostering stronger relationships of trust.

DESCRIPTION

The term *Wingman* stems from a time honored tradition within our Air Force. It's a promise, a pledge, and a commitment between Airmen to be there for each other. The Wingman culture focuses us on our greatest asset—Airmen.

Strong leaders can cultivate and instill a Wingman culture in part by shining a light on the people who come together under their command to make the organization a success. Leaders can do this by having an Airman instruct them in an aspect of their expertise (on a subject the leader may know little about). By intentionally placing themselves in a vulnerable position, leaders will build relationships of trust and gain a better understanding of how people contribute to the organization. It also provides leaders with an opportunity to instill their vision.

EMPLOY

Deliberately engineer opportunities to act as a Wingman within your organization:

- Offer yourself up as a trainee
 - Have a technician (as a trainer) share their expertise with you on a specific aspect of their job. Choose something you may have little or no knowledge of (for example, have them train you to rebuild a pilot's helmet).
 - See how Dave Marquet, author of *“Turn the Ship Around!: A True Story of Turning Followers into Leaders”* implements this at: [“Leadership Nudge”](#)
- Conduct yourself with humility
 - Real humility is a sign of strength, authentic confidence, and courage. It is the mark of a true leader who must think of their own abilities and actions as no greater, and no lesser, than they really are.
- Emphasize praise
 - Reinforce the good work people do.
 - People will capitalize on the praise they are given and go out of their way to do the right thing, the right way, for the right reason.
 - It is critical to point out their expertise and emphasize to them how important their contribution is to the organization.
- Be a good listener
 - Encourage them to talk about themselves. Foster a relationship of trust to yield greater influence and instill a sense of commitment and loyalty to your vision of organizational mission success.



