



[Share this Page](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[Links](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Home](#)

Mission: To strengthen the leadership of the social sector

[Articles, Books, Resources](#) | [Collaboration](#) | [Self-Assessment](#) | [Thought Leaders Forum](#)
[Innovation Award](#) | [Conferences](#) | [Hesselbein Fellows](#) | [About Us](#) | [Join Us](#)

[Leader to Leader](#) | [Full Text Article List](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Be, Know, Do by Army Leadership

copyright and
permissions

Leader to Leader, No. 26 Fall 2002

AFTER mentioning the U.S. Army's Leadership Manual in an earlier Leader to Leader (Number 23, Winter 2002, p. 48), the Drucker Foundation has received many requests for more information. We are pleased to share brief portions of the foreword to the manual by the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General Eric K. Shinseki, and selected highlights from the manual's first three chapters. (Civilians can purchase this remarkable leadership resource. See "For More Info" at the back of this issue for details.)



From **Leader to Leader**,
No. 26 Fall 2002



- [Table of Contents](#)
- [From the Editors](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [Leadership Action Guide](#)

[Additional resources for this article](#)

From the Foreword

SOLDIERS represent what's best about our Army. Day in and day out, in the dark and in the mud and in faraway places, they execute tough missions whenever and wherever the Nation calls. They deserve our very best -- leaders of character and competence who act to achieve excellence. That theme resounds throughout FM 22-100, Army Leadership, and echoes our time-honored principle of BE, KNOW, DO.

This leadership manual lays out a framework that applies to all Army leaders -- officer and NCO, military and civilian, active and reserve component. At the core of our leadership doctrine are the same Army Values embedded in our force: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage (LDRSHIP) . . .

I urge Army leaders to read this manual thoroughly, study it carefully, and teach it faithfully. But above all, I challenge you to be leaders of character and competence who lead others to excellence. Whether supporting, training, or fighting, America looks to you to BE, KNOW, and DO what is right.

Eric K. Shinseki
 General, United States Army
 Chief of Staff



Highlights from Chapters One to Three of Army Leadership

You have been entrusted with a great responsibility. How do you prepare yourself? How do you learn and embrace those values and skills that will enable you to meet the challenge? This manual is a tool to help you answer these questions, to begin or continue becoming a leader of character and competence, an Army leader. . . . What you must BE, KNOW, and DO as an Army leader. (See [Figure 1.](#))

FIGURE 1
THE LEADER
of Character and Competence Acts to Achieve Excellence

"BE"		"KNOW"	"DO"
Values	Attributes	Skills	Actions
Loyalty Duty Respect Selfless Service Honor Integrity Personal Courage	Mental Physical Emotional	Interpersonal Conceptual Technical Tactical	Influencing – <i>Communicating</i> – <i>Decision Making</i> – <i>Motivating</i> Operating – <i>Plan/Prep</i> – <i>Executing</i> – <i>Assessing</i> Improving – <i>Developing</i> – <i>Building</i> – <i>Learning</i>

Leadership starts at the top, with the character of the leader, with your character. In order to lead others, you must first make sure your own house is in order. For example, the first line of *The Creed of the Noncommissioned Officer* states, "No one is more professional than I." But it takes a remarkable person to move from memorizing a creed to actually living that creed; a true leader is that remarkable person.

Army leadership begins with what the leader must BE, the values and attributes that shape a leader's character. It may be helpful to think of these as internal qualities: you possess them all the time, alone and with others. They define who you are; they give you a solid footing. These values and attributes are the same for all leaders, regardless of position, although you certainly refine your understanding of them as you become more experienced and assume positions of greater responsibility. For example, a sergeant major with combat experience has a deeper understanding of selfless service and personal courage than a new soldier does.

Your skills are those things you KNOW how to do, your competence in everything from the technical side of your job to the people skills a leader requires. The skill categories of the Army leadership framework apply to all leaders. However, as you assume positions of greater responsibility, you must master additional skills in each category.

But character and knowledge -- while absolutely necessary -- are not enough. You cannot be effective, you cannot be a leader, until you *apply* what you know, until you act and DO what you must. As with skills, you will learn more leadership actions as you serve in different positions. Leadership is about taking action, but there's more to being a leader than just what you do. Character and competence, the BE and the KNOW, underlie everything a leader does. So becoming a leader involves developing all aspects of yourself. This includes adopting and living Army values. It means developing the attributes and learning the skills of an Army leader. Only by this self-development will you become a confident and competent leader of character. Being an Army leader is not easy. There are no cookie-cutter solutions to leadership challenges, and there are no shortcuts to success. However, the tools are available to every leader. It is up to you to master and use them.



BE

CHARACTER describes a person's inner strength, the BE of BE, KNOW, DO. Your character helps you know what is right; more than that, it links that knowledge to action. Character gives you the courage to do what is right regardless of the circumstances or the consequences.

You demonstrate character through your behavior. One of your key responsibilities as a leader is to teach Army values to your subordinates. The old saying that actions speak louder than words has never been more true than here. Leaders who talk about honor, loyalty, and selfless service but do not live these values -- both on and off duty -- send the wrong message, that this "values stuff" is all just talk.

Here are the Army values that guide you, the leader, and the rest of the Army. They form the acronym LDRSHIP:

- Loyalty
- Duty
- Respect
- Selfless Service
- Honor
- Integrity
- Personal Courage

Values tell us part of what the leader must BE; the other side of what a leader must BE are the attributes listed in [Figure 1](#). Leader attributes influence leader actions; leader actions, in turn, always influence the unit or organization. As an example, if you're physically fit, you're more likely to inspire your subordinates to be physically fit. The mental attributes of an Army leader include will, self-discipline, initiative, judgment, self-confidence, intelligence, and cultural awareness. Physical attributes -- health fitness, physical fitness, and military and professional bearing -- can be developed. Army leaders maintain the appropriate level of physical fitness and military bearing.

As an Army leader, your emotional attributes -- self-control, balance, and stability -- contribute to how you feel and

Help your subordinates use their emotional energy to accomplish

therefore to how you interact with others. Your people are human beings with hopes, fears, concerns, and dreams. amazing feats.

When you understand that will and endurance come from emotional energy, you possess a powerful leadership tool. The feedback you give can help your subordinates use their emotional energy to accomplish amazing feats in tough times. Self-control, balance, and stability also help you make the right ethical choices. (see [Sidebar: Personal Courage](#)).

Understanding Army values and leader attributes is only the first step. You also must embrace Army values and develop leader attributes, living them until they become habit. You must teach Army values to your subordinates through action and example and help them develop leader attributes in themselves.



KNOW

A leader must have a certain level of knowledge to be competent. That knowledge is spread across four skill domains. You must develop *interpersonal skills*, knowledge of your people and how to work with them. You must have *conceptual skills*, the ability to understand and apply the doctrine and other ideas required to do your job. You must learn *technical skills*, how to use your equipment. Finally, warrior leaders must master *tactical skills*, the ability to make the right decisions concerning employment of units in combat. Tactical skills include mastery of the art of tactics appropriate to the leader's level of responsibility and unit type. They're amplified by the other skills -- interpersonal, conceptual, and technical -- and are the most important skills for warfighters.

Mastery of different skills in these domains is essential to the Army's success in peace and war. But a true leader is not satisfied with knowing only how to do what will get the organization through today; you must also be concerned about what it will need tomorrow. You must strive to master your job and prepare to take over your boss's job. In addition, as you move to jobs of increasing responsibility, you'll face new equipment, new ideas, and new ways of thinking and doing things. You must learn to apply all these to accomplish your mission.

Army schools teach you basic job skills, but they are only part of the learning picture. You'll learn even more on the job. Good leaders add to their knowledge and skills every day. True leaders seek out opportunities; they're always looking for ways to increase their professional knowledge and skills. Dedicated squad leaders jump at the chance to fill in as acting platoon sergeant, not because they've mastered the platoon sergeant's job but because they know the best place to learn about it is in the thick of the action. Those squad leaders challenge themselves and will learn through doing; what's more, with coaching, they'll learn as much from their mistakes as from their successes.



DO

LEADERS act. They bring together everything they are, everything they believe, and

everything they know how to do to provide purpose, direction, and motivation. Army leaders work to influence people, operate to accomplish the mission, and act to improve their organization. As with leader skills, leader actions increase in scope and complexity as you move from direct leader positions to organizational and strategic leader positions. Leaders who live up to Army values, who display leader attributes, who are competent, who act at all times as they would have their people act, will succeed. Leaders who talk a good game but can't back their words with actions will fail in the long run.

Leader actions, the DO of Army leadership doctrine, include --

- *Influencing*: making decisions, communicating those decisions, and motivating people.
- *Operating*: the things you do to accomplish your organization's immediate mission.
- *Improving*: the things you do to increase the organization's capability to accomplish current or future missions.

What about combat? Trained soldiers know what they are supposed to do, but under stress, their instincts might tell them to do something different. The exhausted, hungry, cold, wet, disoriented, and frightened soldier is more likely to do the wrong thing -- stop moving, lie down, retreat -- than one not under that kind of stress. This is when the leader must step in -- when things are falling apart, when there seems to be no hope -- and get the job done.

The leaders must step in when things are falling apart, when there seems to be no hope.



Leaders of Leaders

AT any level, anyone responsible for supervising people or accomplishing a mission that involves other people is a leader. Anyone who influences others, motivating them to action or influencing their thinking or decision making, is a leader. It's not a function only of position; it's also a function of role. In addition, everyone in the Army -- including every leader -- fits somewhere in a chain of command. Everyone in the Army is also a follower or subordinate. There are, obviously, many leaders in an organization, and it's important to understand that you don't just lead subordinates - you lead other leaders. Even at the lowest level, you are a leader of leaders.

Anyone who influences others is a leader.

For example, a rifle company has four leadership levels: the company commander leads through platoon leaders, the platoon leaders through squad leaders, and the squad leaders through team leaders. At each level, the leader must let subordinate leaders do their jobs. Practicing this kind of decentralized execution based on mission orders in peacetime trains subordinates who will, in battle, exercise disciplined initiative in the absence of orders. They'll continue to fight when the radios are jammed, when the plan falls apart, when the enemy does something unexpected.

This decentralization does not mean that a commander never steps in and takes direct control. There will be times when a leader has to stop leading through subordinates, step forward, and say, "Follow me!" A situation like this may occur in combat, when things are falling apart and, like BG Thomas J. Jackson, you'll need to "stand like a stone wall" and save victory. Or it may occur during training, when a subordinate is about to make a mistake that could result in serious injury or death and you must act to prevent disaster.

More often, however, you should empower your subordinate leaders: give them a task, delegate the necessary authority, and let them do the work. Of course you need to check periodically. How else will you be able to critique, coach, and evaluate them? But the point is to "power down without powering off." Give your subordinate leaders the authority they need to get the job done. Then check on them frequently enough to keep track of what is going on but not so often that you get in their way. You can develop this skill through experience.

It takes personal courage to operate this way. But a leader must let subordinate leaders learn by doing. Is there a risk that, for instance, a squad leader -- especially an inexperienced one -- will make mistakes? Of course there is. But if your subordinate leaders are to grow, you must let them take risks. This means you must let go of some control and let your subordinate leaders do things on their own.

A company commander who routinely steps in and gives orders directly to squad leaders weakens the whole chain of command, denies squad leaders valuable learning experiences, and sends a signal to the whole company that the chain of command and NCO support channel can be bypassed at any time. Effective leaders strive to create an environment of trust and understanding that encourages their subordinates to seize the initiative and act.

Weak leaders who have not trained their subordinates sometimes say, "My organization can't do it without me." Many people, used to being at the center of the action, begin to feel as if they're indispensable. You have heard them: "I can't take a day off. I have to be here all the time. I must watch my subordinates' every move, or who knows what will happen?" But no one is irreplaceable. The Army is not going to stop functioning because one leader -- no matter how senior, no matter how central -- steps aside. In combat, the loss of a leader is a shock to a unit, but the unit must continue its mission. If leaders train their subordinates properly, one of them will take charge.

Strong commanders -- those with personal courage -- realize that their subordinate leaders need room to work. This doesn't mean you should let your subordinates make the same mistakes over and over. Part of your responsibility as a leader is to help your subordinates succeed. You can achieve this through empowering and coaching. Train your subordinates to plan, prepare, execute, and assess well enough to operate independently. Provide sufficient purpose, direction, and motivation for them to operate in support of the overall plan. Finally, check and make corrections. Take time to help your subordinates sort out what happened and why. There is not a soldier out there, from private to general, who has not slipped up from time to time. Good soldiers, and especially good leaders, learn from those mistakes. Good leaders help their subordinates grow by teaching, coaching, and

counseling.



Leadership and the Changing Threat

A factor that will have a major impact on Army leadership in the near future is the changing nature of the threat. For the Army, the twenty-first century began in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. America no longer defines its security interests in terms of a single, major threat. Instead, it faces numerous, smaller threats and situations, any of which can quickly mushroom into a major security challenge.

The end of the Cold War has increased the frequency and variety of Army missions. Since 1989, the Army has fought a large-scale land war and been continually involved in many different kinds of stability operations and support operations. There has been a greater demand for special, joint, and multinational operations as well. Initiative at all levels is becoming more and more important. In many instances, Army leaders on the ground have had to invent ways of doing business for situations they could not have anticipated.

Not only that, the importance of direct leaders -- NCOs and junior officers -- making the right decisions in stressful situations has increased. Actions by direct-level leaders -- sergeants, warrant officers, lieutenants, and captains -- can have organizational- and strategic-level implications. . . . The Army's organizational and strategic leaders count on direct leaders. It has always been important to accomplish the mission the right way the first time; today it's more important than ever.

The Army has handled change in the past. It will continue to do so in the future as long as Army leaders emphasize the constants -- Army values, teamwork, and discipline -- and help their people anticipate change by seeking always to improve. Army leaders explain, to the extent of their knowledge and in clear terms, what may happen and how the organization can effectively react if it does. Change is inevitable; trying to avoid it is futile. The disciplined, cohesive organization rides out the tough times and will emerge even better than it started. Leadership, in a very real sense, includes managing change and making it work for you. To do that, you must know what to change and what not to change.



Personal Courage

Personal courage isn't the absence of fear; rather, it's the ability to put fear aside and do what's necessary. It takes two forms, physical and moral. Good leaders demonstrate both.

Physical courage means overcoming fears of bodily harm and doing your duty. It's the bravery that allows a soldier to take risks in combat in spite of the fear of wounds or death. Physical courage is what gets the soldier at Airborne School out the aircraft door. It's what allows an infantryman to assault a bunker to save his buddies.

In contrast, moral courage is the willingness to stand firm on your values, principles, and convictions -- even when threatened. It enables leaders to stand up for what they believe is right, regardless of the consequences. Leaders who take responsibility for their decisions and actions, even when things go wrong, display moral courage. Courageous leaders are willing to look critically inside themselves, consider new ideas, and change what needs changing.

Moral courage is sometimes overlooked, both in discussions of personal courage and in the everyday rush of business. A civilian at a meeting heard *courage* mentioned several times in the context of combat. The civilian pointed out that consistent moral courage is every bit as important as momentary physical courage. Situations requiring physical courage are rare; situations requiring moral courage can occur frequently. Moral courage is essential to living the Army values of integrity and honor every day.

Moral courage often expresses itself as candor. Candor means being frank, honest, and sincere with others while keeping your words free from bias, prejudice, or malice. Candor means calling things as you see them, even when it's uncomfortable or you think it might be better for you to just keep quiet. It means not allowing your feelings to affect what you say about a person or situation. A candid company commander calmly points out the first sergeant's mistake. Likewise, the candid first sergeant respectfully points out when the company commander's pet project isn't working and they need to do something different. For trust to exist between leaders and subordinates, candor is essential.

In combat physical and moral courage may blend together. The right thing to do may not only be unpopular, but dangerous as well. Situations of that sort reveal who's a leader of character and who's not. Consider this example. . . .

On March 16, 1968, Warrant Officer (WO1) Hugh C. Thompson Jr. and his two-man crew were on a reconnaissance mission over the village of My Lai, Republic of Vietnam. WO1 Thompson watched in horror as he saw an American soldier shoot an injured Vietnamese child. Minutes later, when he observed American soldiers advancing on a number of civilians in a ditch, WO1 Thompson landed his helicopter and questioned a young officer about what was happening on the ground. Told that the ground action was none of his business, WO1 Thompson took off and continued to circle the area.

When it became apparent that the American soldiers were now firing on civilians, WO1 Thompson landed his helicopter between the soldiers and a group of 10 villagers who were headed for a homemade bomb shelter. He ordered his gunner to train his weapon on the approaching American soldiers and to fire if necessary. Then he personally coaxed the civilians out of the shelter and airlifted them to safety. WO1 Thompson's radio reports of what was happening were instrumental in bringing about the cease-fire order that saved the lives of more civilians. His willingness to place himself in physical danger in order to do the morally right thing is a sterling example of personal courage.

[Return to reference](#)

Copyright © 2002 by Army Leadership. Reprinted with permission from *Leader to Leader*, a publication of the Leader to Leader Institute and Jossey-Bass.

Print citation:

Army Leadership "Be, Know, Do" *Leader to Leader*. 26 (Fall 2002): 21-27.

This article is available on the Leader to Leader Institute Web site,
<http://leadertoleader.org/leaderbooks/L2L/fall2002/army.html>.

Permission to copy:

Send a fax (+1-201-748-6008) or letter to John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Permissions Department, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030 USA. Or online at <http://www.wiley.com/about/permissions/>.

Include: (1) The publication title, author(s) or editor(s), and pages you'd like to reprint; (2) Where you will be using the material, in the classroom, as part of a workshop, for a book, etc.; (3) When you will be using the material; (4) The number of copies you wish to make.

To subscribe to *Leader to Leader*:

Call +1-888-378-2537 (or +1-415-433-1740) and mention priority code W02DF or see additional options at

<http://leadertoleader.org/leaderbooks/L2L/subscriptions.html>.



[Leader to Leader](#) | [Full Text Article List](#) | [Subscribe](#)

[Articles, Books, Resources](#) | [Collaboration](#) | [Self-Assessment](#) | [Thought Leaders Forum](#)
[Innovation Award](#) | [Conferences](#) | [Hesselbein Fellows](#) | [About Us](#) | [Join Us](#)

Leader to Leader Institute [[home](#)]

(formerly the Drucker Foundation)
320 Park Ave 3rd Fl
New York, NY 10022 USA
Tel: +1 212-224-1174
Fax: +1 212-224-2508
Email: info@leadertoleader.org
Web: leadertoleader.org

[Share this Page](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#)
[Links](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Home](#)

[Privacy Statement](#)