

CENTRE FOR AUSTRALIAN ARMY LEADERSHIP



Developing Army's Leadership, Character and Ethics

LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY

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Formed in 2019 and based in Canberra, the Centre for Australian Army Leadership (CAAL) is the 'centre of excellence' developing leadership, character and ethics initiatives within the Australian Army. CAAL is also responsible for delivering the Australian Army Leadership Program (AALP) across all promotion courses.

The Leadership Quarterly is published periodically by the CAAL to inform and promote the leadership debate in the Army. The views expressed in the Quarterly are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Australian Army. They can serve as the basis of leadership development days, study sessions and promotion course preparation. Visit the RMC-A DPN page and find the CAAL tab for a range of leadership articles and videos for your next Professional Military Education session.

<http://drnet.defence.gov.au/Army/RMC-A/HQRMC-A/SitePages/CAAL.aspx>

As Army is headed into the end of year long break, CAAL has provided two articles and two book reviews for your reading. We have chosen to publish two, potentially conflicting views on leadership, seeking to generate discourse around the topic of Leadership. We look forward to your feedback.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY

Corporal Lee Newham - 2 RAR & Member of the Australian Army Junior Leader Fellowship

Leadership competence is an essential quality to any military leader, from the Chief of Defence Force to the Junior Non-Commissioned Officer. It is argued in this article that leadership skills of Other Ranks, Private to Non-Commissioned Officer, are poorly taught, developed and critiqued in the Australian Army. Three arguments are presented to outline why this is detrimental holistically to the organisation itself and also to the motivation and retention of individual soldiers. Firstly, the Army focuses on training Commanders,



not Leaders. Second, a soldier's development of their individual leadership style is expected through osmosis. Third, current methods of performance critiquing fail to thoroughly analyse an individual's leadership skill and effectiveness. This article will also examine the refutation to its claim that leadership skills are adequate due to the continued operational effectiveness of the organisation. It will thus conclude that the instruction and development of leadership skills is currently inadequate to the requirements of the Australian Army.

The Army trains Commanders, not Leaders. Command is the authority through rank or assignment to plan and execute the mission. Leadership is the influence a Commander has to motivate and inspire their team to achieve success. Effective leadership enhances the inherent abilities of the team to achieve results and has a positive legacy effect on whom it influences. A common assumption about leadership is that an individual will either have what it takes to be a good leader or not. This is derived from a person's genetic make-up and developed neurology from their life exposures. This assumption is flawed in an organisation which promotes soldiers to leadership positions based primarily on seniority amongst peers, not on potential. There is scientific basis to this 'have it or not' assumption, in that certain genetic markers in a person's DNA will predetermine social aptitudes and emotional intelligence that directly correlate with effective leadership. Those same aptitudes however, can be learned by individuals not genetically predisposed.

A critical component of leadership is Emotional Intelligence, which has four key domains (Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Quadrant); self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship building. Understanding and applying these aptitudes is paramount to a Leader's effectiveness. They are the core to what makes for a great Leader. These competencies are currently not educated to soldiers through Army training courses. Through promotion and specialist courses, soldiers are trained to command, control and instruct, yet they are inadequately taught to lead. The Junior Leadership Course, Supervisor Infantry Operations - Section/Platoon, Promotion Subject Courses and their equivalents primarily focus on the methodology to plan and execute operations and the competencies to instruct as per the Army Lesson Format. The skill components attributable to good leadership techniques are not adequately educated on these courses. Further, there is no emphasis or opportunities for current and future leaders to develop and enhance their leadership skills through educational programs.

It is viewed that a soldier should gain their leadership style through osmosis of experiencing those previously and presently in command of them. They are expected to form their own opinion of what does and does not work and develop that into their own approach. While this view has some merit, it presents several issues. Firstly, we don't know what we don't know. A person cannot learn ideas, competencies and methodologies unless they are educated to them. This may come from self-research or through a provided education system. Second, a soldier cannot learn leadership skills if those in command do not know or practice them themselves. Third, a soldier may not experience a range of differing leadership techniques prior to being required to fill a leadership position. This may arise from limited postings to different teams or units and therefore being under command of a single or few individuals. Finally, a soldier will form their opinions of others through the lens of their own emotional and cognitive interpretation, which may or may not give a clear understanding of the bigger picture or actual

effectiveness.

This underlies the importance of education versus exposure. A soldier or JNCO is currently critiqued on their leadership skills through observation by their superior and reported via the Platoon Commanders Note Book (PCNB) and Performance Appraisal Report (PAR) process. In the case of the PCNB, this is expected monthly and with the PAR annually or biannually through a supplemental. There are several flaws in this approach. Firstly, neither of these processes define the aspects or competencies of leadership, leaving the assessor to judge based off their own conceptualisation of leadership. Secondly, the critiquing is conducted from the top down and assessment criteria is of individuals, not teams. A Commander may be viewed by superiors as having good leadership skills if they achieve the aims and directives required, without analysing the impact of the assessed member's leadership style on those subordinates to whom they have primary influence upon. In extreme cases of poor leadership, due to the hierarchal system of command, a subordinate may require to submit a complaint above or outside of their chain of command, in order to have issues remediated. Such extreme action may be the first sign to a superior that a Commander is displaying poor leadership. In refutation to the presented arguments is the circumstance that the current education and application of leadership skills of Commanders in the Australian Army is adequate to its requirements. In rebuttal to this argument is the matter that leadership skills and the psychological impact of leaders are continually evolving and understood. A Leader's development of their leadership skill is an enduring endeavour. As such, the implementation of programs designed to focus on instruction and continual development of leadership skills will produce more effective leaders. Further, implementation of such programs will provide criteria for assessment of leadership competencies by superiors for the purpose of critique.

Having such common understanding at all levels also provides a gauge to peers and subordinates by which to assess the abilities of those in leadership roles. Leadership skills are poorly taught, developed and critiqued in the Australian Army. The emphasis of training commanders, not leaders, leaves soldiers inadequately prepared to lead. The assumption of learning through osmosis may lead soldiers to developing inappropriate leadership styles. The current methods for critiquing an individual's leadership skills does not allow for remediation of poor leadership qualities. These factors lead to an environment where poor leaders can operate and have negative influence on those under their command. On the premise that poor leadership is a direct contributor to soldier motivation and retention and to the organisation's morale and effectiveness, it is therefore inadequate to the requirements of the Australian Army.

CAAL Comment: CPL Newham's observations, in general, match the observations and discussions gathered from CAAL's 2019 Army wide baselining tour, where 66 working groups from all different ranks were held, generating 9000 data points. CAAL's remit seeks to address many of the issues CPL Newham has raised, and CAAL thanks you for your continued feedback on Leadership areas that you believe need to be addressed within Army.

TOXIC LEADERSHIP

Major Andy Hargreaves - Army Knowledge Centre - Army Headquarters

This article has been written to provide information on toxic leadership, how to identify it and ideas on how to deal with it. The article summarises and integrates both civilian and military literature on this topic. The Army has many good leaders and this is not surprising given the ongoing promotion of good leadership techniques throughout our military careers. However, it only takes one toxic leader to have a negative impact and affect many soldiers. This negative impact can spread like a virus and degrade a positive, hardworking culture turning units into places where soldiers do not want to parade or into places where they are just turning up for the pay cheque as opposed to parading somewhere where they are passionate about their unit, its role and how it fits into the bigger picture of Army.

Army relies on good people and these good people will enjoy a good career in Army if they are managed under good leadership. This is important in both full time and reserve units alike. Toxic leadership can lead to poor parade records and is particularly important in reserve units where reservist have more freedom with the hours they choose to commit to their unit. A unit that promotes strong leadership and training will attract a strong workforce with good attendance records as opposed to a unit that struggles to get quality people who actively contribute to the running the unit. Those who are motivated under good leadership will naturally contribute more and provide Army a better capability.

What is Toxic Leadership?

The first step in identifying toxic leadership in the workplace is to recognise the behaviours, characteristics and symptoms of a toxic leader. Common traits of a toxic leader are as follows:

- Poor interpersonal skills
- Subordinates are unmotivated
- Usually succeed by tearing others down and often take the credit for other work
- Exercise an over controlling leadership style instead of promoting commanders intent and allowing subordinate freedom of movement to meet that intent
- Always focused on the visible short-term mission accomplishment as opposed to keeping an eye on the bigger picture
- Unconcerned about, or oblivious to, staff or troop morale and lack of concern for the wellbeing of subordinates
- Motivated primarily by self-interest as opposed to the interest of the organisation and subordinates
- Oblivious to the unrest and the contempt that is breeding in their troops
- Leads by fear through means such as bullying, threats and yelling
- Covert forms of bullying such as instilling the fear of a poor PAR or administrative bullying where subordinates are continually loaded with tasks that are virtually impossible to accomplish
- Leadership actions that are considered as immoral or unethical
- Glory in turf protection, fighting, and controlling rather than uplifting subordinates
- Running the unit as if it were solely theirs own and treating unit assets and manpower

as if they are a personal entitlements

- Tasks subordinates in activities that are unproductive and meaningless
- Often assumes that there is something a subordinate is hiding from them
- Unhealthy levels of competitiveness where they want to get to the top of ladder at all cost, even if it hurts the soldiers beneath them
- Toxic leaders can make themselves look good up the chain, however their deficiencies are evident to subordinates and peers.

Toxic leaders may or may not be competent in their field and there are many instances of both competent and incompetent toxic leaders alike; however, incompetent toxic leaders can use their leadership style to cover their shortfalls. These leaders may often have short term successes however their success is unsustainable in the long run.

How toxic leadership can affect units

Toxic culture in one leader can easily spread to others who hold leadership roles and this attitude may last in an organisation beyond the tenure of the toxic leader. Toxic work environments are a serious concern at any level of an organisation. Leadership training at all levels in Army is a good safeguard to ensure that good leadership is promoted throughout the entire organisation to minimise toxic behaviours.

Army expects a lot from soldiers and, although our soldiers are compensated well through remuneration, there also needs to be higher reasons to motivate both soldiers and officers to want to stay associated with Army. One higher motive is esprit-de-corps. Pride inspired by good leaders who truly believe in Army and what it means to be a part of it.

Nobody wants to be on the receiving end of toxic leadership. Subordinates may tolerate a degree of toxic leadership knowing that they only need to put up with it until either they or their boss are posted out. If toxic leadership is wide spread in the unit, waiting for the next posting may not work.

Units or organisations that have been effected by toxic leadership are evident through characteristics such as:

- One or more leaders in the unit are considered by the majority of subordinates as arrogant, self-serving, inflexible and petty
- Soldiers lack a sense of pride in their unit
- Subordinates losing faith in the promotion system as they see toxic leaders advance to positions of increasing rank and responsibility
- Unit may appear that they have unnecessarily been run into the ground
- Unit has a stigma and has turned into a place where soldiers try to avoid
- Unit has retention issues
- Unit members are defensive, suspicious of others and display a lack of trust
- Units actions appear to be impulsive and non-focused
- Organisation attitude is delusional and living in a world of its own
- The boss's mood swing determines the climate of the office on any given workday
- Attitude in the unit that taints enthusiasm, creativity and innovation

How do determine if leadership is toxic or not

The traits of toxic leadership for individuals and organisations listed above should not be considered as absolute characteristics of toxicity. We should not assume that loud and demanding leaders are automatically put in the toxic leadership category. The quiet, softly spoken leader can also be a toxic leader. Toxic leaders or organisations would typically have a number of the traits listed above. There are many examples of good leaders that work their team hard to achieve good result and working them hard may often involve high expectations, a degree of tight control at the right moments or involve some motivational yelling when required. Every situation is different and different leadership traits need to be considered in context. A good sign that a leader or organisation is toxic is evident in the number of people who are in mutual agreeance.

Could you be a toxic leader?

For those in a leadership role, look at the traits of a toxic leader and conduct your own self-assessment of where you think you sit. Most people would not consider themselves to be toxic leaders; however, if you have numerous traits listed above there is a chance that you may need to re-assess your leadership style and your attitude towards Defence's values. Strong leaders in Army acknowledge Defence's core values, which become a kind moral compass.

Take time to think about where your subordinates and your peers think you are at. The last thing you want is to be thought of a toxic leader, despite your genuine good intentions.

How do we fix the problem of toxic leaders?

Toxic leadership can be a very touchy topic, particularly if your boss is one of those toxic leaders. There is no magic wand or instant fixes that are going to convert a toxic leader. Start by talking about the issue. Talking to a peer will help you determine if others notice the same toxic traits you are noticing. There is no absolute correct way of reporting toxic leadership. Another way is to discuss this with another leader whom you trust and who may be able to take some sort of positive action without unnecessarily placing you in the firing line (this might mean bypassing the chain of command where appropriate). If there is a real problem with leadership, corrective actions need to occur to rectify the situation and the only way positive action can occur is if those who have influence are made aware of it.

If you are personally being victimised as a result of toxic leadership, you should try to avoid solo interactions. This may not always be possible, but it is a point to consider if you are feeling victimised. It takes guts to blow the whistle on toxic leadership, especially if the leader is the one writing your PAR which in turn could affect your career.

Anyone in a leadership role who manages other leaders has a responsibility to be observant of toxic behaviour in subordinates and be prepared to respond in the most appropriate way to prevent it from continuing. PAR's hold a lot of weight towards Army's future choice of leaders and it is imperative that those assessing identify toxic leadership if it exists so that toxic leaders are not placed in preferential postings above those who uphold good leadership.

We are a values-based professional organisation. PARs are a great reminder to reflect on per-

formance against Defence's core values of Service, Courage, Respect, Integrity, and Excellence. If the chain of command is not dealing with a subordinate's toxic leadership, these poor leaders can fly under the radar through posting cycles and negatively influence other units. Toxic leaders can survive a long time through the rounds of posting cycles if not dealt with adequately, however the reality is if these leaders have to remain in a unit for a long time, their success would likely fall apart as their subordinates lose faith in their leader.

Conclusion

This article paints a somewhat bleak look at the bad traits leaders hold, though it is important to note that most of our leaders do a great job and take pride in managing soldiers in a way that aligns with Defence's values. Although there are no easy fixes to dealing with toxic leaders, awareness of the issues and understanding the risk to Army's People, Preparedness, Profession, Potential, and Partnerships, is a good place to start.

For further reading on Toxic Leadership, CAAL recommends: The toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments.

June 2007 *The Leadership Quarterly* 18(3):176-194

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222521379_The_toxic_triangle_Destructive_leaders_susceptible_followers_and_conducive_environments

Want to write the next Leadership Quarterly? Email us your proposal at:
centreforaustralianarmyleadership-caal@dpe.protected.mil.au

THE LEADERSHIP LIBRARY - WHAT WE'RE READING THIS QUARTER.

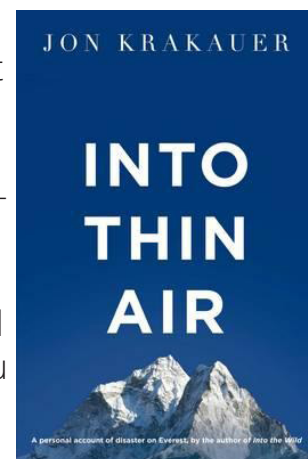
Into Thin Air - A personal account of the Mount Everest Disaster

- John Krakauer

Reviewed by Lieutenant Samuel Cox- 1/19 Royal New South Wales Regiment

Drawn from the Centre for Australian Army Leadership reading list, you'll find this book a refreshing change if you want professional development but have had enough of the military perspective.

This true story about climbing Mount Everest describes the worst single-season death toll in the peak's history (at the time). It depicts the remarkable resilience of humans in the worst-case scenario when in 1996 a storm caught three expeditions on the exposed upper peaks during their so-called 'Summit Day'. When you join a commercial expedition to ascend Everest, you aren't with a cadre of close, trusted friends who've trained to climb together, built standard operating procedures, and been bonded by experience. You ascend in extremely dangerous conditions with strangers with vastly differ-



ent skill levels and motivations.

However, like an Army team, because the actions of one climber can significantly impact others in the group Krakauer needed to establish trust and rapport with his team members between the hike from Lukla to Base Camp, and the climb from Base Camp to the peak.

Many of those who 'stood-up' as leaders during the tragedy didn't hold appointed leadership positions (most were paying customers rather than guides), and yet were responsible for saving lives because they acted when others faced decision-paralysis and they choose to put team ahead of self.

Like military members, climbers are people who willingly choose a dangerous profession (or hobby) and are typically unaccustomed to failure or quitting. They may have paid up to \$80,000 to be granted one shot at reaching their goal, but must elect to retreat back down the mountain- sometimes within hundreds of feet of the peak- because they reached the agreed turn-around time (which will have them safely back at camp before nightfall), or there's too much snow on the peak, or the weather has become inclement.

Some readers may find themselves judging those who didn't make this decision in 1996 and who died because of it, but such a decision required these climbers to direct their enormous discipline and willpower in a way which is almost out of character for them: away from the feverish allure of their goal rather than towards it. The 'Everest Dilemma' is that if you're too driven, then you're likely to die.

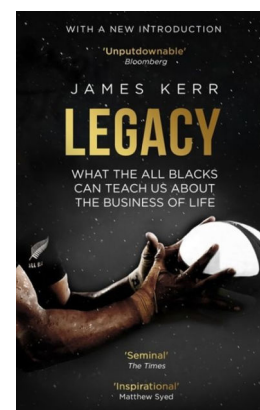
Legacy - what the all blacks can teach us about the business of life

- James Kerr

Reviewed by Major General Chris Field

Legacy articulates leadership relevant to our teams, families and lives:

1. Character – let someone else praise your virtues.
2. Adapt – when you're on top of your game, change your game.
3. Purpose – if you want higher performance, begin with a higher purpose.
4. Responsibility – leaders create leaders.
5. Learn – leaders are teachers of constant improvement and change.
6. Whanau ('be born') – follow the spearhead.
7. Expectations – let us prepare ourselves for the fray.
8. Preparation – practice under pressure with intensity and clarity.
9. Pressure – control your attention under pressure through clear thought, clear talk, clear task.
10. Authenticity – know thyself, a person who can be taken at their word. Leaders think: Why am I here? What's my purpose? How do I use my time here?
11. Sacrifice – find something you would die for and give your life to it. Leaders think: What do I offer the team? What would I sacrifice?
12. Language – leaders seek knowledge and communication. All Blacks' language: humility; excellence; and respect.



13. Ritual – create and renew culture.
14. Whakapapa – plant trees you'll never see. Understand the 'interdependence of everything – ancestry, spirituality, history, mythology and authority'.
15. Legacy – write your legacy through Defence values of: service; courage; respect; integrity; excellence.

Major General Chris Field, Australian Army, @ChrisFieldAUS, serves as Deputy Commanding General, Operations, US Army Central / Third US Army.

This review does not represent any official positions of the US Army or US Department of Defense or the Australian Army or Australian Department of Defence.

Our book reviews summarise notable leadership-related books from the CAAL Reading List available via the DPN and The Cove. If you are interested in writing a book review for the next edition of the Quarterly, contact us via email and we will send you a book from our reading list for free! Contact us at:

centreforaustralianarmyleadership-caal@dpe.protected.mil.au.

For further reading over the long break CAAL recommends:

The Slippery Slope: How Small Ethical Transgressions Pave the Way for Larger Future Transgressions (Full paper available at link provided below).

David T. Welsh - University of Washington, Lisa D. Ordóñez - University of Arizona
Deirdre G. Snyder and Michael S. Christian - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036950>

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