



tampa bay leadership review

A LEADERSHIP PARABLE

by **Rod Buchen**

CEO Question: Who can replace me?

Challenge: Cut the most trees down in 24 hours.

Prize: Winner will take over the business.

Challenger #1 has a reputation as a doer; someone who gets things done quickly, picks up his ax and saw, races to the nearby forest and starts to cut.

Challenger #2 has a solid reputation for delivering results turns on his laptop to research the best way to cut down a tree and learns that trees fall faster if you cut on both sides, not just one. Then he picks up his ax and saw and races to the forest.

Challenger #3 has a reputation not only as a driver for results, but also as a strategic thinker and problem solver, sits and reflects on the challenge. . .

Twenty-four hours later, the CEO is in his office and each of his would-be successors are sitting outside waiting to be called in.

The CEO asked #1 how many trees he'd cut down and how he had accomplished the task:

"Well sir, knowing that the early bird gets the worm so to speak, I immediately picked up my tools and ran to the forest to start cutting, and I learned that if you first cut a notch in one side of the tree and then start cutting on the other side, you can fell a tree faster than if you only work on one side. So as time passed I became a better tree cutter. You know I'm always eager to learn. All in all I cut down 123 trees, almost five per hour over the 24 hours period, and that's why you should pick me as your successor.

The CEO then asked #2 how many trees he'd cut down and how he had accomplished the task:

"I did some research to learn the most efficient way to cut down a tree. As a result, I believe I was able to cut down more trees in 24 hours than anyone else. All in all, I cut down 155 trees; that's an average of more than six trees an hour! If you're looking for the best person to deliver high performance, then I'm the one you need to select as your successor.

The CEO asked #3 the same questions: How many trees



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did you cut down and how did you go about the task?

"Let me explain my thinking, before I tell you my total number: I started by looking at the situation from multiple perspectives and trying to determine what you were really expecting. I asked myself: 'What are you really looking for in the leader who will replace you?' My answer was someone who can see the forest as well as the trees and also exceed expectations. Here were the steps that I took:

- First, I went to observe #1 and #2 and saw that although #1 started first and was working hard, #2 would quickly surpass him; he was using a more efficient technique.
- Next, I recruited some teammates to help me cut down trees (you never said that only I could cut down trees; the challenge was to cut the most trees in 24 hours).
- I bought some axes and saws for each teammate and also some tools to sharpen them so that as we cut down more trees we could keep the blades sharp.
- Next, I found a training video that showed all of us how to most successfully cut down trees.
- I've learned that the most successful generals are the ones who join their troops on the front line.
- Knowing current labor laws, I was careful to implement breaks every four hours during which I interacted with each team member, complimenting their work and thanking them.
- We cut down and stacked more than 320 trees!

I learned the following lessons from this challenge and intend to use this same process to solve future problems:

1. Think about tasks from multiple perspectives.
2. Observe what others are doing.
3. Research best practices.
4. Give my team the right tools to get the job done.
5. Train them on how to use those tools.
6. Be there with them on the front lines.
7. Recognize their strengths.
8. Thank them for being on the team.
9. Compliment them for a job well done."

The CEO sat silently for some time and then said: "#3 you forgot just one step: explaining to your team in specific terms what our objective is and why it's important to them; otherwise, everything you did demonstrated your capabilities as a leader. Congratulations, you will be my successor."

ARE WE THAT DIFFERENT?: THE APPLICATION OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES FROM THE MILITARY TO THE GLOBAL BUSINESS CONTEXT

by **Bella L. Galperin, Ph.D.**

On Feb. 6, 2013, we had the pleasure of hosting Maj. Gen. Michael D. Jones, U.S. Army (Ret.), for our speaker series. During his presentation, "Leveraging the 'Long War' Experience to Stimulate Economic Resurgence," Jones examined the past decade of conflict and how military management techniques might benefit our economic competitiveness in the global market. His main question was, "What have we learned about management and leadership of organizations through 12 years of war?"

In essence, Jones argued that the challenge to "adapt or die" confronts many businesses today. Organizations require flat, but often geographically distributed organizations to remain competitive; they must maintain sufficient control without stifling local initiative. Similar to the military, organizations require a high degree of collaboration as there is interdependency with external systems and players. Jones outlined six major areas to which military principles can be applied to the business environment. The six areas are: (1) flattening organizations; (2) managed information systems; (3) metrics; (4) risk management; (5) cyber security; and (6) rapid innovation and adaptation.



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(1) Flattening Organizations: The military believes flat is more efficient and, therefore, more economical. However, the real value of flat organizations lies in the agility to respond to emerging changes in the environment. As in many businesses, the military quickly learned that flat is not only about eliminating echelons but rather about retaining the sufficient hierarchy to ensure leaders have the energy and capability to properly supervise. For example, Jones recounted the effective use of flattening to strike a terrorist in a timely manner. Due to the lean processes in place, actions were coordinated between various levels, and the decision was made to support the operation. Within a few hours, helicopters were in the air and the operation succeeded.

(2) Managed Information Systems: Focused and managed information systems are fundamental to being both flat and lean. Rather than struggling to get enough information, military and business leaders must now process excessive information. The military developed analytical processes to determine which information is relevant to enable rapid decision-making. As an illustration of the effective application of management systems, Jones recounted the situation when Capt. John Phillips, of the Mersk Alabama, was taken hostage by pirates off the coast of Somalia in 2009. Due to legal implications of

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Dr. Bella Galperin, Maj. Gen. Michael D. Jones, Dean Frank Ghannadian



Jones, far right, taking questions from students post presentation

Are We That Different?...

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involving the territories of Somalia, the decisions needed to be made by a numbers of parties and, hence, there was a substantial amount of information. Properly managed information systems allowed the right decisions to occur at the appropriate levels to ensure successful accomplishment of the objectives leading to Capt. Phillips' rescue.

(3) Metrics: The development of metrics to record past performance, as well as to predict future performance in order to avoid crises and leverage opportunity has been the focus of the military. Similarly, effective and predictive metrics assist business leaders with problem solving, cost avoidance, and increased productivity and competitiveness. Jones recalled an example when he was at the Civilian Police Advisor and Assistance Team in Iraq. In order to stabilize the volatile situation, police force was necessary along with a combination of statistical analyses, behavior science, and experience in the art of war. Various metrics were developed to quantify the inputs required and output desired with respect to the police size, skill, and equipment needed. The proper use of predictive metrics allowed for adjustments that achieved the production objectives.

(4) Risk management: According to Jones, the military is on the leading edge in risk management due to the high level of risk in war. He described the process as identifying the risks to the mission, quantifying the level associated with each risk, and developing mitigating actions. Jones stressed that especially in highly uncertain and high-risk business environments, such as insurance industries, the risk management process can be highly effective and reduce costs. Jones described the application of risk management in the aviation units of the First Cavalry Division in Iraq. As the aviation brigade prepared to fly an unprecedented number of hours, risk management procedures were used to analyze the mission. With enthusiasm, Jones remarked that "as a result, not only did the aviation brigade maintain an operational readiness rate almost 20 percent higher than their peacetime standard, we had very few aircrafts hit by enemy fire, a big accomplishment given the dangerous zones they were operating in."

(5) Cyber security: Cyber security involves a combination of various issues: computer network, information assurance, access management, and physical security. Consequently, all aspects of cyber security must be synchronized and coordinated to secure information. In order to achieve the maximum amount of cyber security, organizations must network all areas of information security into a holistic system. Since the military has the greatest number of

"Because of continuously changing and dynamic environments, organizations need to remain competitive and adopt a culture of innovation and adaptation."

secrets and classified information, this area of expertise that requires continuous development due to the vulnerability of their network systems. During his presentation, Jones alluded to the WikiLeaks fiasco in 2010 when U.S. Army soldier Bradley Manning was charged with federal espionage and computer fraud for giving hundreds of thousands of sensitive documents to the WikiLeaks website. After the formal presentation, a student asked Jones if the paucity of information about WikiLeaks indicated the military could not acknowledge failure. The general said he didn't believe so as many details of WikiLeaks might still be classified or unreleased because of pending prosecution. The failures were thoroughly investigated internally, the results shared, and actions taken to correct deficiencies.

(6) Rapid innovation and adaptation: Because of continuously changing and dynamic environments, organizations need to remain competitive and adopt a culture of innovation and adaptation. The military has experience in building knowledge systems and in creating a culture that values organizational learning. For example, Jones discussed the Iraq invasion and described how despite the strategic surprise of fighting the insurgency in Iraq, the military rapidly developed and implemented a counterinsurgency doctrine, reorganizing fighting units and modified training systems and re-equipped forces. The military's flexibility was recognized by other country leaders around the globe.

In closing, Jones outlined the six areas to which military principles can be applied to the business environment. Based on a wealth of unique military experience over the last 12 years, Jones argued that these six areas should be viewed as opportunities for economic resurgence and strength. On a broader level, Jones highlighted the similarities between the military context and the global business environment. Application of these similarities will prove beneficial to both arenas and will facilitate greater productivity.

IS COURAGE NECESSARY FOR LEADERSHIP?

by **F. Frank Ghannadian, Ph.D.**

One cannot pick up a book on leadership these days and not see the word “courage” or see a chapter devoted to it. Courage to make decisions, courage to confront, courage to speak up, and courage to take risks are a few traits described by many in their guides, articles and books. Several years ago, famous author Gus Lee visited The University of Tampa and introduced his new book, *Courage: The Backbone of Leadership*. Lee emphasizes that courage is part of the whole process of leadership, but discusses three acts of courageous leadership that reflect his philosophy.

First, “Honoring and Respecting All Persons.” Lee discusses the fact that even if you are dealing with a rival or someone you dislike, you must send respectful signals to that person through good eye contact and listening carefully, thoughtfully and respectfully. Second, “Encouraging and Supporting Others.” According to Lee, encouragement is reinforcement and giving courage to the circle of hope and building a solid relationship. This aspect of leadership is often left out. Third, “Challenging Wrongs.” This idea, of course, includes correcting wrongs in oneself.



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Acting for what is right regardless of self-harm or risk is necessary to challenge the wrong in others.

Recently, I heard another author, Mike Staver, speak in Tampa. In his 2012 book *Leadership is not for Cowards*, Staver asks a question: Are you a coward? His take on displaying courage involves a leader who is authentic and accepts responsibility. He also compares courageous leadership to navigating in an ocean full of waves. You are not bigger or tougher than the ocean waves, so allowing them to temporarily overpower you may give you time to plan your next move.

When we read history books or biographies of famous people from Churchill to Kennedy, we see courage and we feel they succeeded because they fought for what was right. Churchill fought against Nazi Germany, Kennedy pushed for creation of the U.S. Space Program, and entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs made computers an everyday tool for everyone.

Must we be a Churchill, a Kennedy, or a Jobs to display courage? Many actions in our everyday lives reflect this vital trait from making financial or business decisions to helping a stranger to raising a controversial question in a meeting. Adding courage to other vital leadership qualities such as vision and empathy boosts a leader’s capacity to inspire others and to grow personally and professionally.

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MBA Students Karl Craig and Matt Crum

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