

The Five Pillars of Team Leadership

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Abstract

The Army Leadership model of Be-Know-Do is a principle learned early in the U.S. Army early Infantry training and extending throughout the soldier's military career. This concept can then be extrapolated to other areas of leadership training more specifically in the educational sector. In fact, Be-Know-Do is the focus in leadership trainings for many private sectors, including colleges, universities and in education. The Be-Know-Do principle is geared toward developing organizational goals, motivation of people, focus on thinking 'outside the box', and decisions that uphold the entire institution, and not just 'siloed thinking'. Additionally, interlocking the Be-Know-Do principle with the tenets of the 'Five Pillars of the Army Leadership Model'. Contained in the Five Pillars are doctrines of Courage, Competence, Commitment, Conviction, and Character, all of which drive the attributes and competencies of the Be-Know-Do principle. This paper will intersect these above doctrines with the 'Leadership Primer' by General Colin Powell, while giving the student of leadership examples from experience as to the application of each principle.

Keywords: Leadership, Be-Know-Do, Army Leadership Model, teamwork, character, presence, intellect, attributes, competencies, courage, commitment, conviction

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1. Introduction

North-East-South-West are the four cardinal directions for our planet, Earth; however, without leadership, the ship is as without a mast, being tossed about in the ocean, indifferent to the direction of solid land. It is incumbent on the leader of the ship (the captain) to ascertain the goals, shoot the trajectory, and lead the subordinates under his command to the desired result, goal, or objective. This paper will use the Army Leadership model of 'Be, Know, Do' and interlock with the tenets of 'Five Pillars of the Army Leadership Model', by using examples from General Colin Powell – 'A Leadership Primer' to portray a trans-section of the two models coinciding with an intersection of examples from General Colin Powell's Primer.

2. Army Definition of Leadership

Leadership, as described in FM6-22 (2015) states: "An Army leader, by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility, inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals. Army leaders motivate people both inside and outside the chain of command to pursue actions, focus thinking, and shape decisions for the greater good of the organization (p. 1-3)."

FM 6-22 further delineates that the leadership definition is accomplished by the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization (FM 6-22, 2015). The challenge to the Army soldier is to parse this definition into usable principles and practices to accomplish the mission and goals through team-work and esprit de corps led by competent leadership. With

time, practice, and experience, the Army soldier can use these principles to lead subordinates to accomplish any mission and Army objectives.

3. The Three Pillars of Be, Know, Do

How does one weave into the Army definition of Leadership the Army principles of **Be, Know, Do**? First, a dissection of the topic is necessary. Whereas the pillars of **Be** and **Know** present the essence of a leader, the solitary pillar of **Do** distinguishes the actions of a leader, resultant from the **Be** and **Know** pillars (FM 6-22, 2015). FM 6-22 (2015) further specified the model in Figure 1 as the alignment of a common set of values both through development activities and personnel practices to achieve a desired outcome.

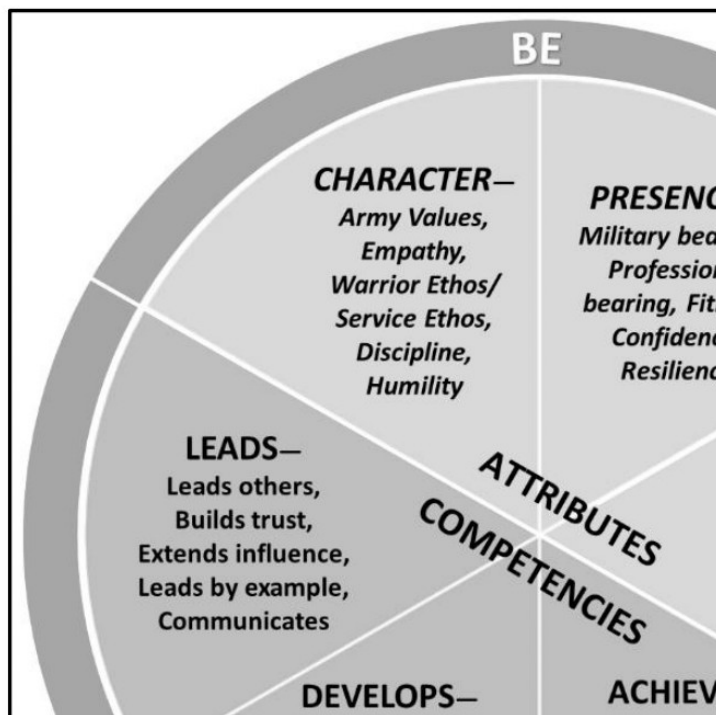


Figure 1. Dissection of properties of the Army Principle of Be-Know-Do. Retrieved from FM 6-22 page 1-4 (2015).

A necessary step is to separate and distinguish between *attributes* from *competencies*. Attributes are the necessary ingredients of what a leader needs to **Be** and **Know**. Competencies are the acquirable (learnable) skills necessary to **do** (or accomplish) the objectives. As described by FM 6-22 (2015), major importance is placed on distinguishing between attributes and competencies. Whereas, competencies are **developed** through training, attributes encompass personal characteristics are **molded** through experience.

Using an example of Be, Know, Do in history is Christopher Columbus, who in 1492 implored King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella for funds to find a new trade route to India (Schuman et al., 2005). Columbus exhibited the *Attributes* of his personal inborn characteristics, which consisted of focus on preciseness, resilience, concentration, and confidence, when procuring the monetary funds and embarking on an unknown outcome to find a shorter route to India. His *Competency* was demonstrated by achieving the results, even though Columbus died thinking the West Indies was actually India. In essence, one can derive the pillars of Be, Know, Do when focusing on the historical account of Christopher Columbus and dissecting those qualities into attributes and competencies.

4. Five Pillars of the Army Leadership Model

As delineated in the Army FM 6-22 (2015), the Five Pillars of the Army Leadership Model consist of: Courage, Competence, Commitment, Conviction, and Character. In this segment of the paper, the writer will investigate

the symbiotic relationship with the Army Leadership Model and the Principles of Be, Know, Do with corresponding definitions and examples of each category. Following in the next segment of the paper, the writer will offer an example of the individual pillar found in the Army Leadership Model (FM 6-22, 2015).

4.1 Courage.

In the framing of the Army Values, *Personal Courage* stands as the first characteristic in the warrior/service and ethos. Personal Courage promotes the associated principles, standards, and qualities in subordinates when the leader exemplifies selfless service in his actions. On the contrary, when personal courage falls short, consequences can affect soldier morale, missed goals and objectives, and even worse, injury and death within the troops.

4.2 Competence

Initially, an Army leader must know his competence level, which is a direct correlation to his training and experience in the field (Mitrosilis, 2022). If the leader is acting above his competence level, failure may be the result, which affects lives and morale of the subordinates and teams. Specifically, the leader must be *felt*, meaning that the subordinates must visualize that the leader knows what he is doing and has substantial experience in the particular exercise to exude confidence and capability in his team and soldiers (Mitrosilis, 2022). Competence builds trust within the troops, extends influence through training the subordinates, shapes esprit de corps, communicates the plan, but most importantly, leads by example (Powell, 2001).

4.3 Commitment

Commitment to task embodies the ‘do’ portion Three Pillars of ‘Be-Know-Do Army leadership training pipeline (Mitrosilis, 2022). Finishing the task is emphasized in this category. Initially, Commitment begins with living the Army values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honor Integrity, and Personal courage (LDRSHIP as the acronym). However, the motivated team leader integrates these values into his subordinates through his professional counseling and mentorship. Commitment also incorporates accountability in both readiness for future missions and After-Action reports detailing past accomplishments or failures in a mission. As a by-product from this commitment concept, leaders produce more agile and competent teams by decreasing knowledge gaps with experience. “Leaders have a directed responsibility to develop their subordinates; accountability for implementation follows responsibility (FM 6-22, 2015, p. 1-1)”. This translates to the leader who is responsible for a mission must accurately account for the achievement or failure to achieve the goal. Lessons-learned is an important aspect of Commitment coupled with the quality of integrity. Finally, Commitment embodies tenacity in the phrase, “never give up”, where the progress may be slow and deliberate; however, focus on the objective is never wavered.

4.4 Conviction

An Army Leader must possess the phrase ‘Unalterable Persuasion’ or, as stated in FM 6-22, 2015, using critical thinking skills to resolve conflict in times of uncertainty (p. 5-1).

Conviction of character is capable of making independent decisions for the successful outcome of his subordinates by using sound, discretionary decision making, rooted in solid-moral character (FM 6-22, 2015). Conviction leads to the utilization of critical thinking skills of “analyze, improvise, adapt, and overcome”, or being open to diverse ways of thinking and envisioning an outcome.

4.5 Character

Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, Personal Courage are collectively known attributes necessary for actions to achieve results in a manner that combines people, values, purpose and processes (Mitrosilis, 2022). Humility vs. ego must be emphasized in the development of character. Humility does not portray weakness, as many would assume; however, it fosters a modest view of oneself, so that one can focus the talents of subordinates in achieving the team’s goal.

5. Intersection of General Colin Powell’s ‘A Leadership Primer’

General Colin Powell (1937 – 2021) was an icon in American leadership in the U.S. Army for 35 years. A decorated Vietnam war veteran, Chairman of the Joint Chief’s of Staff under President George H. W. Bush, and U.S. National Security Advisor from 1987-1989, General Powell correlated multiple real-leadership examples into the Five Pillars of the Army Leadership Model, by using a practical and common-sense style of writing. This paper will address each pillar with General Powell’s eloquent examples, which correlate to each pillar of the Army Leadership Model.

5.1 Conviction

Lesson 14: “Effective leaders are capable of looking beyond the problem to determine the most effective solutions (Powell, 2001)”. As quoted by Madam Margaret Thatcher, “If you have to tell someone you are a leader, trust me, you are not” (Geovese, 2013. p. 127). Margaret Thatcher exuded leadership in her style of eloquence, dogmatic rhetoric, belief in the power of the United Kingdom, and impersonal love for the British people.

5.2 Courage

Lesson 1: “Effective leaders’ waiver not in the presence of opposition”. Or, as in the words of Gen Powell, “Being responsible sometimes means pissing people off (Powell, 2001, p. 7)”. In 1867, William H. Seward was the honorable U.S. Secretary of state, who envisioned the land of Alaska as a valuable and strategic resource for natural resources and gold pertinent to the growth of the United States. Amidst dogged opposition, Seward negotiated the purchase from Russia for \$7.2 million being labeled, ‘Seward’s Folly and Seward’s Icebox’. However, the Secretary of State never relented, and today, Alaska is considered to be a jewel of the United States (Hill, 2019).

5.3 Competence

Lesson 7: “Keep looking below the surface of appearances” (Powell, 2001). Do not shirk responsibilities and shrink from problems because you surmise you are not capable of defeating the enemy. No greater story of embodies competence in the face of evil than that of David and Goliath (Schembri, 2014). In 1 Samuel 17, David is described as shepherd, the youngest son of Jesse. The standoff between the Philistines and the Israelites had been waging in the Valley of Elah, with no resolution for 40 days. During that time, Goliath, a Philistine giant, came to the battlefield each morning and evening to taunt the Israelites in a battle. After rejecting King Saul’s armor, David relied on his competence with a sling shot and a stone, and David was able to kill Goliath (Schembri, 2014). David exuded confidence in his capabilities because he had training ‘in the field’ against wild animals.

5.4 Character

Lesson 10: “Never let your ego get so close to your position that when you position goes, your ego goes with it (Powell, 2001).” An example of ego overtaking rationality is that of Sir Winston Churchill in the Gallipoli Campaign in WW1. Churchill was instated as the First Lord of the Admiralty, and in an over ambitious move, Churchill commanded a naval attack through the Dardanelles to capture Constantinople (Istanbul). His ego believed that the plan would be a brilliant move to conquer the Ottoman Empire, but Churchill underestimated the strength of the Ottoman army, and the results were a disastrous failure because of poor planning and overconfidence. This failure followed Churchill and his political career for years (Dockter, 2017).

Commitment

Lesson 6: “Never let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision (Powell, 2001).” The attack on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, with the dropping of the Atom Bomb, was one of the most controversial decisions in the history of warfare (Rotter, 2008). Before the bomb was dropped the adverse facts were weighed against the justifications for using the bomb. The adverse facts were: 1) Massive civilian casualties would occur, 2) Survivors would suffer long-term health consequences, 3) The atomic weapon would set the stage for global nuclear warfare. The justifications were as such: 1) A quick end to WW2, 2) Demonstration of the power of the United States, 3) Deter the invasion of Japan (Rotter, 2008).

6. Conclusion

As outlined in this document through reference and examples, Army Leaders at all levels of leadership development must embrace the basic tenets of Character, Competence, Conviction, Courage, and Commitment (FM 6-22, 2015). The ultimate goal is to support the Army Commander’s intent by providing purpose, direction, motivation, and vision to subordinates and subsequent teams, while comprehending the full understanding of the execution and success of the mission (FM 6-22, 2015). In this endeavor, the Army leader will be able to navigate the directions of north-east-south-west and bring the soldiers under his command to the ultimate goal of victory.

Future research directions could include collection of data from an academic institution and seeing how leadership in education aligns with what is confirmed in the military. First, leadership data at a particular department within a school could be collected and then expanded to include other departments within the school, before expanding to an entire college as a whole. This will allow academic leaders to see which pillars require more emphasis and further update training or development manuals. (Anders, 2024)

Appendix A

Be-Know-Do	Five Pillars of Army Leadership	Gen Colin Powell – A Leadership Primer
Know	Courage	Lesson 1
Do	Competence	Lesson 7
Be	Commitment	Lesson 6
Do	Conviction	Lesson 14
Be	Character	Lesson 10

Table A

Delineating the convergence of the Army Leadership model of: 1) Be, Know, Do, 2) Five Pillars of the Army Leadership Model, 3) General Colin Powell – ‘A Leadership Primer’.

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