

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Marine Corps University
User's Guide to Marine Corps Values

LEADER AND FOLLOWER

1. Introduction. To be a good leader, Marines of all ranks need to know their responsibilities as both a leader of Marines and a follower. There should be no gray areas in these responsibilities.

2. Overview. The purpose of this instruction is to discuss the philosophy, policies, and relationships between leader and follower, and the techniques for establishing and maintaining proper senior-subordinate relationships. Finally, we will identify and analyze some improper senior and subordinate relationships.

3. References

Marine Corps Manual, paragraph 1100 (establishes guidelines for leadership and personal relationships)
Manual for Courts Martial, UCMJ Articles 92 and 134
Manual for Judge Advocate General of the Navy and Navy Regs (establish individual authority and standards of conduct)
MCO 5330.3D Civilian Employment of Marine Personnel, paragraph 10. (Outlines policies and regulations guiding business relations between senior and subordinate.)
Webster's 9th New Collegiate Dictionary

4. Discussion Leader Notes. Not applicable.

5. Discussion

a. Definitions

(1) Leader. A leader is defined by Webster as "one who or that which leads."

(2) Follower. A follower is defined as "one in service of another, one that follows the opinions or teachings of another, or one that imitates another."

(a) In the Marine Corps, this leader-follower is discussed as senior-subordinate relations. Many join the Corps to be leaders of Marines, but we must remember all leaders are also followers of someone else. Thus, we come into the Corps to be leaders--and we continuously talk about, read, and discuss leadership--but the follower part, or followership, is often overlooked.

(b) All of your actions or inactions as a leader or a follower may be perceived differently by each individual who observes you.

Transition. Now let's look at the basis of our philosophy concerning senior-subordinate relationships.

b. Philosophy

(1) The Marine Corps' basic philosophy on senior-subordinate relations is found in paragraph 1100.3 of the Marine Corps Manual (MCM). "Effective personal relations in an organization can be satisfactory only when there is complete understanding and respect between individuals." It is further defined in paragraph 1100.4:

Duty relationships and social and business contacts among Marines of different grades will be consistent with traditional standards of good order and discipline and the mutual respect that has always existed between Marines of senior grade and those of lesser grade. Situations that invite or give the appearance of familiarity or undue informality among Marines of different grades will be avoided or, if found to exist, corrected.

(2) The following guidelines for commanders contained in the MCM apply to all seniors, officer, SNCO, NCO, and enlisted. Commanders will:

(a) Strive for forceful and competent leadership throughout the entire organization.

(b) Inform their Marines of plans of action and reasons, whenever it is possible and practical to do so.

(c) Remove those causes which create misunderstanding or dissatisfaction whenever possible.

(d) Assure that all Marines/Sailors of the command are acquainted/familiar with procedures for registering complaints/problems, together with the action taken to resolve them.

(e) Build a feeling of confidence which will ensure the free approach by subordinates for advice and assistance not only in military matters, but for personal problems as well. In other words, be approachable, both personally and professionally.

(3) Additionally the Marine Corps' philosophy includes:

(a) The concept that there should exist a "spirit of comradeship in arms" between seniors and subordinates in the Corps. This mutual understanding of their roles as the senior and the subordinate establishes the "Brotherhood/Sisterhood of Marines." As part of this unique bond, each Marine shares the common experience of depending upon fellow Marines for accomplishing the mission.

(b) The senior-subordinate relationship is based on a mutual trust and understanding and thrives on trust and confidence.

(c) The "teacher and scholar" relationship is outlined in subparagraph 1100.4.b. of the MCM, i.e., the commander has a responsibility for the "physical, mental, and moral welfare, as well as the discipline and military training" of his/her subordinates.

Transition. Let's now look at the Marine Corps' policies governing senior-subordinate relations.

c. Marine Corps Policies

(1) Policies governing the senior-subordinate relationships can be found in the following:

(a) Manual for Courts-Martial, Uniform Code of Military Justice (Article 92 and 134), Manual of the Judge Advocate General of the Navy, and Navy Regulations which establish individual authority and standards of conduct.

(b) Marine Corps Manual (paragraph 12100) establishes guidelines for leadership and personal relationships.

(c) MCO 5330.3 outlines policies and regulations guiding business relations between seniors, subordinates and civilian employees.

(d) CMC White Letters, club regulations, and housing directives specifically address special situations surrounding senior-subordinate relations in the Corps.

(2) We are guided generally in our relationships by certificates of appointment, both officer and enlisted. These certificates are commonly referred to as promotion warrants. These documents:

(a) Establish the basis of your rank, status, authority, and responsibilities.

(b) Establish that very "special trust and confidence" between the senior and junior to perform your duties in the best interest of the Corps.

(c) Allow you to issue appropriate orders to all subordinates who are obliged to follow them.

(d) State you are subject to the orders and directions of seniors.

(e) Support the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that, "the taking of the oath of allegiance is the pivotal fact which changes the status from that of civilian to that of a [Marine]."

(3) Marines must know what is unacceptable between ranks--both officer and enlisted--whether in the work place or a social setting. These parameters should be dictated by the senior Marine in a manner that will not embarrass the junior.

Transition. It is now time to look at the relationship between leadership and followership.

d. Relationship between Leader and Follower

(1) Every follower is potentially a leader and every leader is also a follower.

(a) The most effective follower is that individual who has proven leadership abilities and who is loyal, dependable, obedient, and dedicated to uphold their responsibilities and perform their duties to the best of their ability, as well as exert positive influence upon their fellow Marines.

(b) Followership must be an integral part of our philosophy, for it is the base upon which future leaders are tempered and its enhancement among subordinates will ensure that professionalism is keyed at all levels--followers, as well as leaders.

(c) The most effective leaders are good followers. They set the example of followership and leadership for their subordinates. Subordinates watching the example of a leader can only be expected to exhibit the same degree of "followership" they observe. Leaders cannot pick and choose the orders they will or will not follow. This could set the stage for a double standard which will compromise their position and confuse the follower.

(2) We spend most of our formative years in following (and demonstrating signs of leadership) and though we study and try to abide by the leadership principles, we tend to copy the style and methods used by former leaders. We pick out some leader, or the strong points of several leaders whom we have followed, and try to emulate them. Marines can also learn what not to do by observing poor leaders using poor leadership. In theory, if a follower could acquire a combination of the good features they have observed in their leaders, they would command the qualities of the ultimate leader. So there is a very close relationship between leadership and followership.

(3) The follower must have a personal commitment to the successful completion of his/her mission or assigned task. The most effective follower is the one who accepts the necessity for compliance and who is committed to placing the needs of others above his/her own. Dedication is a commitment to a system or ideal. It is the vehicle of self discipline, competence, responsibility, and professionalism; it is the follower's guideline. Leaders are useless without followers, and followers are useless without leaders.

(4) Leaders must treat their followers as Marines and as individuals. Marines stripped of their dignity, individuality, and self-respect are destined to mediocrity and are potential "problems." The leader must ensure that what is best for the many can be achieved without cramping the life style or withering the individuality and initiative of those who follow. Leaders can achieve loyalty, obedience, and discipline without destroying independence.

(5) The leader must realize each Marine is a unique individual, and that it is natural to treat each one differently. The leader who claims: "I treat all my Marines alike," is confusing leader-follower relations with policy. Leadership relations with all followers should be consistent (i.e., fair, firm, understanding, etc.); their policies must not fluctuate (all shoes will be shined daily and everyone will have a regulation haircut); their actions should be reasonably predictable to their followers, who must know what is expected of them. The Marine from the Bronx who comes from a broken home, however, is different from the Marine from a Kansas farm with close knit family ties--the leader will find it most difficult to counsel, communicate with, or otherwise treat these Marines alike.

(6) Most Marines expect and seek tough training or they wouldn't have joined in the first place; but Marines can be tougher, perform better in garrison, and fight harder in combat if their leaders show they care. Making Marines feel they belong

and treating them with dignity and respect, makes them feel important and valuable.

Transition. Let's now work on developing good followership.

e. Developing good Followership

(1) A leader is responsible for the development of good followership. Suggestions include:

(a) Listening--to be an effective listener, you have to practice.

(b) Encouraging subordinates to become innovative and self-starting.

(c) Setting a positive example that can be emulated.

(d) Delegating authority to subordinates and holding them accountable.

(2) Develop a sense of dedication and commitment to the mission at hand. This will be the vehicle of self-discipline, competence, responsibility and professionalism, which are key to good followership.

Transition. Now let's cement the bond between leader and follower with various techniques for establishing and maintaining proper senior-subordinate relationships.

f. Techniques. The following techniques are proven methods leaders can use to teach and instill proper senior-subordinate relations. Employment of these techniques will add to their "people skills":

(1) Subordinates should not just be a number or a face. Learn their names.

(2) Never speak ironically or sarcastically to a junior Marine. They don't have a fair chance to answer back.

(3) Build pride and respect; don't ridicule or humiliate.

(4) Ask juniors for their opinion and be an active listener.

(5) Keep your door and mind open for feedback. Be approachable.

(6) Followers frequently have advice that can save you.

(7) Give public credit to subordinates for adopted suggestions. Praise in public/counsel in private.

(8) Don't over-supervise, but coach your Marines to do a good job.

(9) Tend to the welfare of those for whom you are responsible.

(10) Leaders and followers may have a firm and forthright friendship. There may be comradeship. Frank, intellectual discussion and the exchange of warm humor is proper. There is never a place for familiarity.

(11) If you have to be tough, be fair and impartial.

(12) Be flexible. Adjust your style to the need.

(13) Be aggressive and show courage.

(14) Look, sound, and act the role of a leader.

(15) Support your Marines with a strong personal example.

(16) Never be afraid to admit you were wrong.

(17) There is much to learn even from leaders who don't have it all.

(18) Visit unit members in the hospital, homes, barracks, sporting events, etc. You will be surprised at what you will learn, and the message you will send to your unit.

Transition. Here are some definitions and examples of improper senior-subordinate relations.

g. Improper Senior/Subordinate Relationships

(1) Marine Corps Manual paragraph 1100.4 defines an "improper" relationship as: "A situation that invites or gives the appearance of familiarity or undue informality among Marines of different grades."

(2) The sentence states that familiarity and undue informality between Marines of different grades is improper under any circumstances. It further states that it is an improper relationship if the situation invites or gives the appearance of familiarity or undue informality. A key point to remember is perception is in the eye of the beholder. You may have a

relationship with a subordinate or junior that is totally above board. If, for some reason, the unit perceives that relationship to be improper, you must take steps to correct the perception. Remember, perception and intention are usually opposite to each other.

(a) Familiarity. This term identifies a relationship akin to that of an intimate or near friend and is characterized by close acquaintance.

(b) Informality. Informality refers to something done without regard to rule or regulation and contrary to custom or established precedent.

(c) Undue Informality. This phrase indicates a complete absence of formality or ceremony. It is traditional and proper that relations between seniors and subordinates be somewhat formal at all times.

(3) Examples.

(a) Fraternization.

[1] Newly promoted corporals are still going on liberty to the enlisted club or to town with their old lance corporal friends, rather than going with other NCOs.

[2] The company gunnery sergeant is dating a female PFC in another squadron.

[3] A staff sergeant goes out with the company clerks from the office for "just one drink," and stays until closing time, and has to be carried home by his/her Marines.

(b) Sexual Harassment.

[1] The platoon commander tries to put pressure on a lance corporal to go out on a date.

[2] The admin chief who leaves an indecent "pin-up" on the office bulkhead--which isn't appropriate in any instance--despite the complaints from two Marine subordinates.

(c) Business Contacts. An excerpt of MCO 5330.3_, covers improper business contacts between seniors and subordinates, and was written to prevent the subordinate from being pressured into business dealings by the senior. Such contract includes selling insurance, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, or consumer products.

[1] The selling of insurance by an officer to the Marines in his/her unit.

[2] A SNCO who rents an apartment to a clerk from his/her office.

[3] The platoon sergeant who recommends a "favorite" laundry to do the platoon's uniforms and receives a special discount or free service on his/her personal laundry/cleaning.

Transition. The effects of improper relationships can devastate a unit, betray the trust and confidence of its members, and adversely affect its morale, discipline, and *esprit de corps*.

h. Effects. Even the perception of an improper relationship must be guarded against. If someone thinks something to be true, whether it is or not, it essentially is true to that person until they have been convinced otherwise. Leaders have a responsibility to clear up rumors and correct wrong perceptions. Sometimes the only way to handle a perception problem will be to modify the activity or relationship that is causing the wrong perception.

Transition. Now that we have spent time looking more closely at senior subordinate relations, are there any questions on anything that I have covered during this period of instruction?