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GENERAL FREDERICK KROESEN, FORMER COMMANDER, US ARMY EUROPE

# The **NEW** ART *of* the LEADER

THE  
CLASSIC-  
NOW REVISED  
AND  
EXPANDED

WILLIAM A. COHEN, PH.D.,  
Major General, USAFR, Ret.

# THE NEW ART OF THE LEADER

LEADING WITH  
INTEGRITY AND HONOR

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## **DEDICATION**

This book is dedicated to the  
United States Military Academy  
at  
West Point, New York  
and to  
Wentworth Military Academy  
Lexington, Missouri  
who teach “the art” and keep the spirit alive

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I want to acknowledge the help and example of thousands of leaders in and out of uniform who have led ethically, honorably, and humanely for the benefit of others than themselves, sometimes at great sacrifice. In doing their duty, they served as powerful examples for the concepts and techniques in this book.

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# INTRODUCTION

I've been a student of leadership for almost fifty years. From West Point to combat to the boardrooms of major corporations, I've seen leaders of all types operate in a wide variety of environments.

I thought I knew a lot about leadership, but one thing continued to puzzle me. There is a high demand for leaders everywhere. And leaders are well rewarded for what they do. Good leaders:

- Advance more quickly in organizations.
- Receive more money and other material rewards.
- Have greater prestige and more job security.
- Have more control over their lives.
- Get greater satisfaction from their jobs.
- Are able to get groups they lead to perform more productively.

Of even greater concern, our country needs more good leaders of every type to lead countless thousands of companies, nonprofit organizations, government departments, clubs, associations, schools, universities, churches, synagogues, and many other groups. If we don't get these leaders, our country will surely fail . . . maybe not in war . . . but just as important, in its ability to advance its society and the interests of its citizenry.



What was the one thing I couldn't figure out? With all these incentives to becoming a leader, why aren't there more good leaders? For a long time, this question stumped me.

Some say that leaders are born as leaders and come into existence in no other way. Thus their scarcity is as a result of Mother Nature. Research proves this wrong. Many leaders who later were acknowledged as great leaders went unrecognized for years.

I saw that many factors some thought important for leadership had little to do with, or was of lesser importance to becoming a good leader. These included education, wealth, years of experience, or even position in an organization.

Maybe you thought that you must be the formal manager of some organization to be a leader. I have seen hundreds of outstanding leaders who weren't formal managers of anything. Yet they and their organizations received significant benefits from their leadership.

If you are a manager or an executive, this fact alone is a compelling reason to become a better leader now . . . and this book will help you to do so. But being a manager doesn't automatically make you a leader.

My inquiries finally yielded a simple answer to my question as to why we don't have more good leaders. The answer was so obvious that I was surprised I had overlooked it for so long. Maybe it was too obvious. The answer was this: A good many people that could become excellent leaders just didn't know how, or they have a mistaken notion about what leadership is. So they never really begin to learn about leadership. They do what they've seen their leaders do before them. And even though they know that these previous leaders are not leading well and are not gaining their and others' support, it is the only model they have to follow.

Academic learning in leadership is rarely much better. In teaching leadership to executives in seminars sponsored by major corporations and to organizations in government and to graduate and undergraduate students in a university setting, I discovered that many have a mistaken notion about leadership. Sadly, some think

that leadership is simply manipulation. Others think it to be a theoretical subject like philosophy, and not much good in the “real world.” Few understand what they have to do to get others to follow them, not because they are simply the boss and give orders, but because those who follow become wholeheartedly committed to the leader’s project of their own accord.

To help others perform ethically and to the maximum level that they are able to accomplish any mission, project, or task is the highest expression of good leadership. And just about anyone can become a competent leader to achieve this lofty goal. The only thing you need to know is what to do and then to do it. As President Eisenhower told his son, “The one quality that can be developed by studious reflections and practice is the leadership of men.”<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower said “men,” but he was talking about both sexes. Once you know what to do, studious reflections and practice about leadership will help you in leading both men and women.

This may sound overly simplistic. The fact is that many intelligent, well-educated, motivated people who want to be good leaders simply don’t know how to do it. And some of the things they think they know about leadership are just plain wrong.

So what happens? They try. But without leadership know-how, it’s like a doctor doing brain surgery without being taught how. Maybe you can learn how eventually through experience. Chances are after your first big failure, you won’t get a second chance. Without knowledge of how to perform brain surgery, you are bound to make mistakes. Those mistakes will probably cause you to fail.

You can’t perform brain surgery without knowing how to do it. And you can’t lead successfully without knowing how to lead either.

My professor and mentor Peter Drucker said back in 1955, “Leadership is of utmost importance. Indeed there is no substitute for it.”<sup>2</sup> He went on to say that the first systematic book on leadership, written by Xenophon three thousand years ago was still the best book on the subject. Xenophon’s book may have been the best

back in 1955, but it didn't enable people to learn how to become leaders, because most who read this book were unable to apply Xenophon's observations to their own situation.

But, the fact is that leadership can be learned. As General Sherman, famous or infamous, depending on your point of view, for his "march to the sea" during the Civil War expressed it: "I have read of men born peculiarly endowed by nature to be a general . . . but I have never seen one."

General Maxwell D. Taylor, former paratrooper general during World War II and later Chief of Staff of the Army felt the same way. In a lecture on leadership to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in the spring of 1977 he said, ". . . there seems no reason to doubt that the leadership qualities . . . are susceptible to being taught and learned."<sup>3</sup>

That's why I wrote this book. There are no "blue-sky" theories to master. The emphasis of the book is on how to do it. The leadership techniques I will show you have proved effective over thousands of years. They will work for you as they did for Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln, or George S. Patton.

I have used a lot of examples to illustrate every technique. I have especially used military examples. More than that, I have consciously attempted to apply leadership techniques learned "the hard way" in battle to everyday leadership problems you will run into in the company and elsewhere. I have done this because leadership in battle represents a worst-case scenario. There are few leadership situations as severe or as challenging or with more risk and uncertainty. If you know how to lead others on the battlefield, you can lead others in the office, on the sales force, in the Boy or Girl Scout troop, in the church or synagogue, or anywhere else.

In preparation for writing this book, I went back and relearned everything I thought I knew about leadership. I also investigated almost every new concept and read almost every book. I interviewed many general officers for their ideas. Some of these generals had been my students in my leadership seminars.

In the fall of 1988, I was on active duty as a reserve officer in the Air Force. I was extremely fortunate in being able to attend a top-level leadership course taught at National Defense University in Washington, D.C. Nine four-star generals and admirals helped to teach this incredible course. Here I could see leadership from the perspective of a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a Chief of Naval Operations, or a Commander-in-Chief of an entire geographical area. It added immeasurably to the breadth of my own perspective.

I know that what you will learn from this book works. I can't guarantee that you will become a general, admiral, or company president. But if you act on what you will learn in it, you will become more competent as a leader. And no one can say that you can't become a general, admiral, or company president, either.

From this book and these techniques you will learn

- How to Take Charge in Any Situation
- How to Win a Group's Loyalty and Respect
- How to Build Your Organization Like a Winning Football Team
- How to Double or Triple Your Organization's Productivity
- How to Lead Others at Your Level
- How to Lead Your Boss
- When it is Important *Not* to Lead
- Seven Ways to Get Anyone to Follow You
- How to Use the Seven Influence Strategies
- How to Develop Your Self-Confidence as a Leader

This book is a revised edition. What have I learned new that warrants a new edition of this work? Plenty. One graduate student in business who took my leadership course told me that until the course, she thought leadership was a theoretical subject having to do

mainly with some nice words and manipulation. She was wondering how I would stretch what she perceived should be a short lecture out to eleven weeks. She was surprised to hear me say that I was still learning about leadership. She was more surprised that by the end of the course, she understood why I was still a student of the art.

Well, a lot has happened since I wrote the first edition that gives me the opportunity to prove that I am still learning. From Desert Storm to Moghedeshu to Bosnia to the air war over Kosovo, our nation has been in more wars in the last ten years than anyone could have imagined. In the corporate “battlefield,” companies have fallen and others have risen. Some leaders have succeeded brilliantly. Others have made some serious blunders that have led to major failures.

In my military career, I progressed through the ranks of lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier general, major general, and then on into retirement. As a professor, I have continued to write and do research as well as teach. My eldest son, Barak, whom I mention in the first edition of this book as a cadet at West Point in 1989, graduated. He led troops in Kuwait twice, left the army as a captain, and went into a civilian career.

Moreover, since the first edition of *The Art of the Leader* I learned from Barry Goldwater. He liked *The Art of the Leader* and told me so. But he also told me something that I took for granted in the first edition. “All good leadership is founded on basic honesty,” he wrote. “If you don’t have that, you’re not going to be much of a leader.” Senator Goldwater’s words, along with Peter Drucker’s comment about Xenophon, who was a Greek general writing about leadership in combat, led me to conduct research with more than two hundred combat leaders who went on to successful careers as leaders in civilian life. Sixty-two of these individuals were generals and admirals. I believe that the eight principles this research yielded form the basis of all the leadership techniques and procedures in this book, or of any other book on leadership. They are strategic. All leadership techniques are tactical.

So, I revised the chapter on “the combat model” of leadership extensively. The original priorities for the leader of mission and people first and leader last haven’t changed. But this now becomes a subset of the seventh principle or foundation of all leadership: duty before self. Moreover, Senator Goldwater’s statement on honesty is confirmed by the research. Although the other principles are in no particular order, integrity was easily ranked number one, and many successful leaders in and out of uniform told me so. Clearly, it is something that no leader should assume. I also revised the chapters on influence extensively to reflect my latest research.

But this introduction is too long already. Turn to Chapter 1 and let’s get started in examining the art of the leader.

## NOTES

1. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Vol.1* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).
2. Peter F. Drucker, *The Practice of Management* (New York: Harper and Row, 1955), p.194
3. Maxwell D. Taylor, “Military Leadership: What is it? Can it be taught?” *Distinguished Lecture Series* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University).

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# THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP

**L**eadership has an extraordinary power. It can make the difference between success and failure in anything you do for yourself or for any group to which you belong. I know this is a strong statement, but in this chapter I will give you examples to prove what I say. Further, I will show you that becoming a first-class leader is a lot easier than you may have thought.

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## HOW ONE MAN MADE THE DIFFERENCE

As a young Air Force lieutenant I was a member of the 11th Bomb Wing at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. It had been one of the finest B-52 bombing wings in Strategic Air Command. This unit had been the only wing to win the coveted Fairchild Trophy three times for competition in bombing accuracy. It was also one of the few wings never to have failed an organizational readiness inspection (ORI). Aircrews were consistently superior in navigation, bombing, aerial refueling, and other flying techniques.

Unfortunately, over a period of months, the unit had begun to drift. We failed to do some of our training requirements successfully. We made some late takeoffs due to maintenance problems. Our sense of