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WILLIAM A. COHEN

THE ART OF THE LEADER

William A. Cohen, Ph.D.



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**This book is dedicated to the
United States Military Academy
that first showed me the way
and to the United States Corps of Cadets
who keep the spirit alive**

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They developed and taught an outstanding course in top level military leadership at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, National Defense University. One of their students was the author.

COHEN'S MAXIMS

Compensation. Compensation, whether in the form of profit, salary, or job-satisfaction, is the by-product of your contribution to society and is in direct proportion to this contribution. It is an error to make compensation the focus of your life's work. You will not reach your full potential, and you will have cheated society of the full benefit of your talent and ability.

Duty. Whatever your occupation, you have a duty to the society of which you are a member. If you are a soldier, your duty is to protect that society. If you are in business or industry, your duty is to create and manage the jobs, wealth, and products of that society. Therefore, failure will be harmful not only to you, but also to society, just as success will be beneficial not only to you, but also to society.

Individual Ability. Every individual has the potential to do great things. To reach this potential it is necessary to discover your special abilities and qualifications. This means that you should always attempt new tasks and accept responsibility for untried assignments whenever they are offered.

Leadership. A leader accepts responsibility. This means that the welfare of those that you lead must always come before your own well-being. Therefore, while your primary duty is the accomplishment of your organization's mission, the welfare of your subordinates comes second, and your own welfare last.

Planning. Successful actions are not results of accidents or luck, but rather of an analysis of the situation and the preparation and proper execution of plans. Because of a changing environment and other variables, plans will not always succeed as originally conceived. But planning will maximize your successes and minimize your failures.

Responsibility. If you are assigned a task, you are responsible for its successful completion. There are no acceptable excuses for failing to fulfill this responsibility, and the responsibility cannot be shifted to others.

Risk. Never be afraid to take risks. If you work for someone, that is part of what you are getting paid for. If you work for yourself, it is the only way you can become successful.

Self-Confidence. Self-Confidence comes from successfully completing increasingly difficult tasks and assignments. Give your maxi-

mum to every project, no matter how insignificant or formidable.

Success. Success does not come from working hard. Success comes from playing hard. Therefore, if you want success, you must position yourself so that the duties that you perform, no matter how difficult or challenging, are considered play to you and not work. If you do this, not only will you gain success, but you will have fun doing it.

INTRODUCTION

I've been a student of leadership for more than forty 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 until fairly recently. 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 that 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, non-profit 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 importantly, 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 of these incentives to becoming a leader, why aren't there more good leaders? 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 being or 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 is a compelling reason to become a 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 very 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 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.

Just about anyone can become a competent leader. 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 develop by studious reflections and practice is the leadership of men."¹

Of course, Eisenhower was talking about his experiences during World War II. Once you know what to do, studious reflections and practice about leadership will help you in leading both sexes.

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

So what happens? They try. But without leadership know-how, its 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 the 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.

Less than forty years ago, my professor and mentor, Peter Drucker said "Leadership is of utmost importance. Indeed there is no substitute for it."² But 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. Still it failed to enable people to learn how to become leaders . . . and so did books, papers, and speeches written after Xenophon.

I believe that Drucker meant this in the sense that one must start

¹Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Vol. 1* (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1983).

²Peter F. Drucker, *The Practice of Management* (Harper and Row: New York, 1955) p. 194

with some basic capacity for leadership. Yet this capacity may lie invisible and dormant. Because one does not start life as a general, company president, or outstanding leader.

As General William Tecumseh 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.”³

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 that 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 salesforce, 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. Several four star generals and admirals helped to

³Maxwell D. Taylor, “Military Leadership: What Is It? Can It Be Taught?” *Distinguished Lecture Series* (National Defense University: Washington, D.C.)

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 whatever you want.

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 Confidence as a Leader Yourself

This introduction is too long already. Turn to Chapter 1 and let's get started in becoming a top notch leader today!

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Chapter 1

THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership has an extraordinary power. It can make the difference between success and failure in anything you do for yourself or any group you belong to. 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.

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 in Oklahoma. This unit had been one of the finest B-52 bombing wings in Strategic Air Command, and had been the only wing to win the coveted Fairchild Trophy three times for competition in bombing accuracy. This unit was also one of the few wings never to have failed an organizational readiness inspection. 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 because of maintenance problems. Our sense of mission disappeared. We failed an important test of our flying and combat skills. Once we had ranked as one of the top three combat wings based on a point system maintained

on a weekly basis. On the same system, we were now ranked dead last.

On alert with my crew one evening, I received a hurried call from base operations. "There's a new commander on base. His name is Colonel Kyes. Stay out of his way."

We couldn't stay out of his way because Colonel Kyes visited us that night. He cancelled all leaves of absence. All "free time" of any sort was rescinded until further notice. This included weekends and even crew rest after flight. Colonel Kyes moved commanders and staff he judged to be lacking to less responsible positions on the spot. He encouraged others to retire. No career or individual was sacred.

Colonel Kyes met with each of the 1500 officers and airmen reporting to him. He told us where we were going . . . back to number one—and how we were going to get there. He said we would brief him personally on every mission flown before we could fly it. Pilots had to know as much about the target as their bombardiers and navigators, who in turn had to be able to back up their pilots.

If you wanted a transfer, Colonel Kyes would get you one. If you stayed in the wing, you were going to work your fanny off. And this was in peacetime!

At first, we hated Kyes. Our wives and girlfriends hated Kyes. Those whose careers he hurt especially hated him, and some left the Air Force.

Then our hard work began to show results. Our bombs hit on target. We took off exactly at take-off time, and our aircraft systems worked as they had never worked before. We had a surprise readiness inspection, and not only passed, but scored higher than we ever had in the past. We were ranked number one.

A strange thing began to happen. We felt pride in ourselves and pride in Colonel Kyes as our commander. Our hate turned to respect. When Colonel Kyes left the 11th Bomb Wing on his promotion to Brigadier General, there was a genuine sense of loss. Our respect had by then turned to love.

Colonel Kyes eventually wore the three stars of a lieutenant general; but for an untimely death, I believe he would have attained the fourth star of a full general.

General Kyes's life taught me some important lessons about leadership and the difference one individual can make in helping an organization to reach its goals. And I have seen that lesson repeated again and again. I have seen it in organizations large and small, formal and informal, military and civilian. The lesson is that

one individual and his or her leadership make all the difference between success and failure.

The Amazing Fact as to Why Some of the World's Best Known Men and Women Succeeded

Leadership has to do with getting things accomplished by acting through others. Regardless of your own abilities, there are many important goals that you cannot attain without the help of others.

Around the turn of the century, a young newsman by the name of Napoleon Hill interviewed steel magnate Andrew Carnegie. Andrew Carnegie was then one of the wealthiest men alive. He convinced Hill to devote twenty years of his life to a study of what made men successful. Carnegie helped Hill by giving him introductions to the mightiest, wealthiest, and best-known men of his day. These included Henry Ford, Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Schwab, George Eastman, John D. Rockefeller, Thomas Edison, Julius Rosenwald, Clarence Darrow, and many others.

Napoleon Hill discovered an amazing fact from his research. No successful individual became successful strictly by himself or by virtue of what he could do by himself. Every single one of the successful individuals that Napoleon Hill had interviewed had become successful through the help of others. These other individuals had a greater talent in some area.

Who were these others? They were bosses, colleagues, and subordinates. Without them, not a single person interviewed by Hill would have become successful.

Carnegie himself must have recognized this, because on his tombstone he had engraved a single sentence. "Here lies one who knew how to get around him men who were cleverer than himself.

While an MBA student at the University of Chicago, I found support for Hill's conclusion. A study of hundreds of top executives showed that every single one, whether in business, government, or the military, had a sponsor. What is a sponsor? A sponsor is someone who has actually promoted an executive's success at one or more points in his or her career. No one has made it to the top of any organization without a sponsor.

What does this mean? Quite clearly it means that you can reach the most difficult and important goals only with the help of others. Like Colonel Kyes, you can be successful only through exercising good leadership and helping others to reach their goals.

Why You Don't Need to Be a Manager to Be a Leader

Once I met a young engineer at a major aerospace company. He had become director of a major program although he was barely thirty. I was very much interested in how this came about. Here's the story as a vice-president told it to me.

Once a year there was a savings bond drive in this company. No one wanted the job of getting employees to sign up for additional bond deductions from their paychecks. Since no one wanted the job, they assigned this duty to the most junior engineer. Most did the minimum work possible and made no serious attempt at convincing people to make additional investments.

Somebody must have forgotten to tell this youngster, because he really took charge. He convinced every engineer and manager present in his department to buy, and he didn't stop there. He called all over the country to talk to engineers who were at temporary duty elsewhere. He got them all charged up. "Look," he would say, "at the end of this bond drive, they post results, and our organization is competing with others. We can be number one."

Amused, at first the old timers bought bonds for this reason. Then almost in spite of themselves they became excited. They became excited solely because of this new engineer. No one had ever appealed to them in this way before. Of course this organization finished in first place by a country mile, but that wasn't the end of it. The department head noticed that although savings bonds had very little to do with engineering, the bond drive had helped to increase productivity. People just seemed to feel better about themselves as a member of the organization and wanted to perform better. When they actually won, they really felt good!

The president of the company noticed the unusual bond drive results and asked about them. He remembered this young engineer's name, and knew that if this engineer could accomplish so much with a bond drive, he would accomplish even more as a manager.

Only four months later when an opening occurred, this young man was promoted over twenty other engineers who had more seniority in the company. It shouldn't surprise you that it wasn't too long after I met him that they promoted this young man again. You guessed it. This time they made him a vice-president, and you just know that he will be president some day.

Note that this engineer was a strong leader before he held an official position in the organization as a manager. I'll have more to say about this throughout the book.

How You Can Lead *Before* You Are Promoted

You may have heard someone say, "I'll wait till I'm promoted. Then I'll have an opportunity to demonstrate my leadership." That's like the old story about the freezing man and the wood-burning stove. The man looked at the wood-burning stove and spoke these words. "Give me heat and then I will give you wood."

You may laugh because everyone knows that you have to put wood on a fire before a fire will give you heat. The same is true about promotion. If you want to get promoted, you have to be a leader first. Then someone will promote you.

Tom Peters, the coauthor of *In Search for Excellence, A Passion for Excellence*, and other books, found similar situations in organizations he studied. All excellent companies had strong leaders at every level. Some were managers and some were not. I want to repeat this. Some were managers and some were not, but all were strong leaders. Therefore, you don't need to wait to be promoted to be a leader.

You don't even have to be in an organization to be a strong leader. You can start your own organization. Jimmy Calano and Jeff Salzman, started a company called Career Tracks Seminars almost right out of college. Within a few years, these two men found themselves at the head of one of the largest seminar companies in the country. They accomplished this by offering a quality product at a lower price than their competition.

Do Calano and Salzman give these seminars themselves? Absolutely not! Those who give the seminars are individuals who have had years and years of experience, many with advanced degrees in their particular fields. Jimmy Calano and Jeff Salzman don't have to be the experts. They are the leaders. Through their leadership, their employees have made them successful.

Good leaders attract others who are happy to help them achieve success. It is easier than you think to become a good leader. You can become a good or superior leader with others wanting to follow and to help you. They will help you achieve your goals because you will help them to achieve theirs.

The Leadership Model That Will Help You to Lead

I would like to propose a model of leadership. A model is only a theoretical representation of something real. It can have considerable value if the representation is accurate. Why? Because we can apply the model to a wide variety of situations without having to develop a new representation each time. Having found what works once, we can then apply the theory effectively again and again.

Now let's talk first about the model of leadership that I would like to propose. I want to propose to you what I call the combat model of leadership. Why do I recommend combat as a model? The most difficult circumstances in which a leader must lead are in combat. There is a great risk. There is considerable uncertainty due to confusion, changing circumstances, and lack of information. There may be considerable hardship because of the environment or actions of the enemy. There is a significant penalty for failure or reward for success.

Combat is probably the most severe environment in which you will ever lead other human beings in accomplishing any goal. If you can apply the combat model of leadership successfully, you can be successful in leading in many other difficult, but less demanding, environments.

General John T. Chain, Jr., Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command, said recently, "Military decisions are made in the fog of war, resulting in a significant degree of uncertainty about the validity of the very information on which the most critical decisions are made. Decisions must be made quickly and with life-and-death results. Coupled simultaneously with the need to deal with this uncertainty is the military leader's task of inspiring confidence in subordinate commanders and cohesiveness in the troops."¹

General Frederick J. Kroesen knows something about combat leadership. He fought in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. During this time, he rose from second lieutenant to four-star general as Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army, Europe, and the Central Army Group of NATO. Since leaving the Army, he has worked with corporations and other organizations on a variety of management and defense issues. During a meeting at which I was present, a friend asked General Kroesen about differences between leadership in the military and corporations. Said General Kroesen. "The principles of leadership aren't different. Where you have a successful leader, you have a successful corporation."²