

TRAINING AIR WING FOUR READING GUIDE FOR *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss so You Both Win**

As you read *Leading Up*, I would like you to think about the transcendence of some of the author's ideas as they apply to your role as a leader in the military, whether uniformed or not. Simultaneously as you read, I would ask you to ponder the question of why I chose this particular tome as next in the TW-4 professional reading series. As usual, the page numbers coincide with a passage that triggered the associated question or comments. I look forward to the discussion!

CHAPTER 1: INFORMING YOUR COMMANDER

“General Johnston’s failed working relationship with President Davis caused his downfall.”

1. (p. 8) I think most commanders would hope (and expect) subordinate commanders to welcome (and even seek) their advice, as did Jefferson Davis. Should it be an inherent responsibility of all of us to inform our immediate superior in the chain of command of issues we face and our plan of action? Why or why not? What are the barriers to such transparency, human or otherwise?
2. (p. 18) Everybody has a boss (even if that boss is an electorate). Why was General Johnston seemingly so oblivious to that fact in regards to Jefferson Davis? How do you achieve an understanding of the perhaps broader issues faced by your boss?
3. (p. 20) How important is the relationship with your boss to *your* mission? How much effort do you as one responsible for achieving specific elements of the overarching mission (training combat aviators) ensure you have the relationship necessary to your ability to exert upward influence?
4. (p. 27) How do you determine what level of detail your boss requires? Have you consciously and conscientiously done so? (HINT: In my experience, simply asking your boss what level of detail he requires is not the correct answer...ever.)
5. (p. 31) “A bias for action is what your superior wants.” How do you balance this bias for action while also giving your boss the chance to inform your action with considerations that are perhaps unknown to you? Hint: Revisit the concept of “command by negation” so successfully used in our weapons firing doctrines.
6. (p. 31) I think the simple lesson regarding numbers is this: Don’t manipulate statistics to enhance your argument. If valid, your ideas and recommendations should stand on their own merits. Your best path forward is to find those merits while also acknowledging and shedding light on the potential risks. Additionally, like McClellan, without demanding disciplined intellectual rigor of yourself, you could wind up believing your own bad data. Can you give an example from your personal experience in Training Command where this has happened? How could you/we have prevented it?
7. (p. 39) In my opinion, good leadership requires brutally honest introspection. Think about the relationships you have had with bosses throughout your life. Can you find examples of each type of relationship as exemplified by those described in this chapter? McClellan-

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Lincoln? Johnston-Davis? Lee-Davis? What have you done to consciously learn from your previous relationships in order to improve current and future ones?

CHAPTER 2: CONVINCING A COMPANY TO TURN INSIDE OUT

“The best way to master what you are clueless about is to take company responsibility for it.”

1. (p. 41) How have you acted on this statement in your life? Have you? Do you believe the author correct in the unwavering nature of his statement (it ends with an implied “period,” does it not)?
2. (p. 49) Can you think of times when you have “been too persuasive?” Fundamentally, when you present all of the reasons why your idea should be adopted without any negatives, have you not done a disservice to progress? Does our typical reliance in the military on PowerPoint briefs result in a similar selling of ideas without adequately addressing alternatives, dissenting opinions or underlying assumptions?
3. (p. 52) How do you address criticisms of your boss? Is there intellectual rigor in both your argument *and* your method? Equally important, how might you build an atmosphere for such challenges that is “safe” and rewarding for your subordinates?
4. (p. 59) I thought the implied balance between “shooting from the hip” and “the equally pernicious error of analysis paralysis” was right on the mark. We’ve all worked for military officers whose desire to be decisive resulted in the proverbial “ready, fire, aim” model of leadership. Equally dangerous, however, are those who (and again we’ve all worked for them) have to gain mountains of information before moving forward. This risk aversion can be crippling in combat as it puts the organization on the molasses-in-January battle rhythm, frustrating those balanced leaders who don’t need to reduce ambiguity to near zero or ask permission from a labyrinthine hierarchy before they turn ideas into actions. As ineffective are those in leadership positions lower on the chain who tend to seek their boss’s permission before ever acting. All this does is shifts accountability up to the boss, which is antithetical to the very essence of military command. Keeping the boss informed and asking for permission are two wholly different things.
5. (p. 62) “...say less, hear better, and explain more.” Now that’s a piece of advice all of us Type A military leaders can benefit from! (And it applies to our communication up, lateral and down the chain of command.)
6. (p. 67) In launching the single-tier service, Pottruck was looking for a balance between lower revenue and increased volume. What was it that he really wanted to focus on in selling the service to his customers if it wasn’t the low cost per trade? What is more important than, and in fact is a superset of, cost?

CHAPTER 3: BEGGING YOUR BOSS TO UNTIE YOUR HANDS

“Seeing to the most immediate needs stopped us from seeing what was reserved for us in the future.” –Brigadier General Roméo Dallaire

1. (p. 81) How do you actively balance your time between execution and planning? What is the correct balance based on your role? How do we do as a culture and organization in achieving the proper balance? Have you spent time thinking about this? How about time

2. (p. 87) Can you think of a situation you have been in personally where it took redundancy in your message to finally convince your boss about something? How about convincing your subordinates of something? Sometimes there seems to be an avoidance of redundancy (and simplicity) in what we are trying to convey. Why do you think that is the case? Certainly the media industry needs to try to be creative to avoid redundancy. Do we? My experience is that if something is worth sharing from a leadership perspective, it also likely worth expending the effort to make the message simple and to repeat it. Ever notice that I say essentially the same thing to every winging class?
3. (p. 94) Was the failure to communicate the true nature of the Rwandan crisis on the part of Kofi Annan or Dallaire? Think of this question in terms you've learned from Crew Resource Management in the aviation profession.
4. (p. 110) How might Dallaire have better dealt with his "8000 mile screwdriver?" What was the nature of his "command?" What should it have been? How do *you* prepare *your* subordinates for future command?
5. (p. 113) How do you improve your boss's view of reality? What role does your personal credibility play in that effort? What role does your boss's staff play in the effort?

CHAPTER 4: RETAINING THE CONFIDENCE OF YOUR DIRECTORS AND INVESTORS

"...a key limitation is insufficient appreciation for the power of superiors and the universal fact that all superiors despise surprises."

1. (p. 128) What serves as a similar metric to stock share price in government? Or, if there is nothing in place already, what do you think should serve as a similar metric? In thinking about an answer, could the concepts of measures of performance and measures of effect be germane? If so, how? If not, why?
2. (p. 131) Did the apparent contempt Wyman had for Paley (through action if not word) create an enemy? How might Wyman have better handled Paley? What similar instances have you found yourself in? Was Paley's response predictable? If so, what prevented Wyman from predicting and avoiding it?
3. (p. 135) What metric might we in the military/government use similar to the revenue per employee metric in business? How do we measure the value of our employees in TRACOM? Can we? Should we? What is our "tooth to tail" ratio of those who directly contribute to the value in our product (instructors) and those who don't?

4. (p. 137) Who are our “investors” in TRACOM and how do (or should) we measure our performance in achieving their expectations and return on investment?
5. (p. 139) Do the author’s factors (below) apply to us in military command? How or why not?
 - a. Three factors leading to leadership being voted out of a stockholder owned company:
 - i. Substantial drop in performance
 - ii. Significant surprise the setback was coming
 - iii. Executive approach of keeping those who own the company at arm’s-length
6. (p. 141) “Enterprise performance depends more on the quality of the top team than on the individual who heads it...” How and why is this true in our case as military leaders? Is it?
7. (p. 150) What do you think about the three-legged stool the author says executives sit on? Have you any examples of military leaders who were ineffective simply due to lacking their employees’ support?

CHAPTER 5: KEEPING YOUR HEAD WHEN YOU HAVE SEVERAL SUPERIORS

“Blunders are to be exposed, dissected, and transcended—not avoided, denied, and concealed.”

1. (p. 156) Are you the type of leader who can learn from your subordinates? We’ve all served with those officers who thought rank somehow made them smarter. Equally destructive are those who think their location on a hierarchical wiring diagram obviously makes them smarter (even if of the same or lower rank). If you are, however, one of those leaders willing to learn from subordinates, how do you cultivate an environment and your own ability to do so? Then Lieutenant Pace learned something from his sergeant based on the sergeant’s questioning look. How do you consciously train yourself to learn from your subordinates when what they have to offer is filtered through the hierarchical and cultural context we find ourselves in? How do you empower them to lead up themselves?
2. (p. 163) The author has given us a hierarchy of means of communication. Do you consciously use such a hierarchy in ensuring your advice up the chain (or your guidance down) is prioritized correctly? It seems obvious that making an appointment to discuss something with the boss face-to-face lends importance to the subject. In this age of computer-based messaging, however, have we lost our ability to add formality in writing in order to impress the intended audience with the importance of whatever is being communicated? Or is a serialized and signed letter on command stationary really no better than a well-composed e-mail?

CHAPTER 6: GUIDING YOUR GUIDE

“...although authority is to be respected, self-reliance, initiative, and upward intervention—leading up—must have their place too.”

1. (p. 181) Everest is recognized as the “ultimate trophy” of mountain climbing. There are similar trophies in every profession including ours. Importantly, it is not only blind pursuit of the ultimate trophy that can get people in trouble...or killed. Can you think of pursuits in our business, particularly on smaller scales of both time and scope that require similar, though scaled, considerations? (Hint: get the X)

2. (p. 182) Perhaps the appearances that were deceiving noted by the author also included the leaders believing their own press? In aviation it is often the case that mishaps occur when the pilot exceeds a personal capability envelope; in effect believing him or herself better than is actually the case.
3. (p. 185) Hubris obviously invaded Fischer's psyche as evidenced by his "yellow brick road" comment. What other attitudes that tend to accompany hubris can lead to mishap (in mountain climbing or aviation)?
4. (p. 186) What are some issues in military aviation analogous to the "2:00 P.M. rule?" I'll bet you can come up with 10 examples in less than a minute if you challenge yourself!
5. (p. 193) What do you think of Beck Weathers' decision not to share his temporary blindness concern with his guide? Did he intentionally incur risk for his fellow climbers? If not intentional, knowingly? Can you draw any analogies to aviation (qualitatively if not in scope)? Is the finish line the top of the mountain...or the bottom? Is the ultimate goal of a training sortie a completed X or a safe return to the air station?
6. (p. 195) What do you think of Hall's decision to allow Weathers to stay behind while waiting for his eyesight to improve? What motivated this decision to violate his pre-climb decision not to separate prior to the midpoint? (Hint: OK, I'll just have one more...)
7. (p. 196) How good was Weather's branch planning? What near-fatal question did he fail to ask? What assumptions did he fail to challenge?
8. (p. 196) Using theory of constraints as it applies to value stream flow and what you have read in this chapter, can you calculate the maximum number of people who can summit Everest in one day? What is it?
9. (p. 199) Explain how our "sandbagging" term might apply to this whole situation. Were the clients and other team members "leading up?" How or why not?
10. (p. 207) How can Pittman's failure to question her leader and render assistance to him be discussed in terms of CRM?
11. (p. 208) In aviation terms, Beck Weathers failed to even identify his bingo point. What is the fundamental (and simple) question that must be constantly asked in order to identify and plan for contingencies? (Hint: Whiskey India)
12. (p. 209) Priority #2 while I've commanded here at TW-4 has always been "Take care of each other." Expound on what that should mean in a 360 sense based on your reading of Pittman's lesson.
13. (p. 210) What kind of organizational culture do you have? Obviously there are times in military operations that, similar to mountain climbing, require unquestioned obedience from those lower in the chain of command. We all, however, have worked for those bosses who set a climate in which subordinates are not comfortable or obligated to clarify guidance or orders from the boss. Is it not in fact the duty of everyone to challenge the boss when they know that is the right thing to do? Is not the duty of the boss to create such a culture whereby subordinates understand this? Those bosses who we've all worked for that can't create such a climate are typically lacking self-confidence (or competence). Again, what kind of organizational culture have you created for those who would lead you up?

CHAPTER 7: DESIGNING A FUTURE YOUR BOSS CAN'T QUITE ENVISION

"Upward service requires one's own development of a vision and then helping one's superior to appreciate and act on it, not waiting to be told."

1. (p. 220) Are you clear about your organization's purpose? How would you articulate in a manner to ensure equal clarity of all those who are either part of, or support, your organization?
2. (p. 222) Can you think of an example of parallel campaigning you've done in order to achieve your mission? What constituencies does your organization have which must be brought on board in order to progress to the objective?
3. (p. 231) Does the concept of lateral persuasion to effect upward leadership apply to our military structure and organization? Explain.
4. (p. 235) Assuming lateral persuasion is applicable in our military organization, can you give an example of how you have used it to achieve a positive change recently? Better, as a leader can you give an example of how your subordinates might have used it to effect a change or decision made by you?
5. (p. 246) Have your superiors been "clearly expressing their general intent but delegating its elaboration and execution to you?" The author has, perhaps unknowingly, stated a fundamental tenet of military command and control, namely; the commander should issue clear and simple guidance and then rely on those lower in the chain to execute the necessary tasks within that guidance based on their training. Though we still speak often of the necessity for simple mission-type orders and the inherent decentralized execution that follows, how are we in the military doing in this vein in light of 21st century technology? As a leader have you pushed execution decision-making to the lowest appropriate level in the hierarchy? Are you an "8000 mile screwdriver" or just being screwed by one? Do you unintentionally squelch initiative and innovation by detailing how to suck the egg? Or do you give your people simple and clear guidance on the objective of the mission/task with caveats on how it cannot be done (ROE, etc)? I worked with a Navy commander when I was a junior officer who used to tell us, "I don't care how you skin the cat. I just want a cat and I want it naked!"

CHAPTER 8: PERSUADING THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

"Being truly responsible to those below us sometimes means confronting those who lead us."

1. (p. 249) Without comparing our leaders to God (no blasphemy intended!), I thought it interesting the author considered the case of leading up in the Old Testament as it applied to prophets asking God to "modify or adapt his heavenly plan." Isn't it often the case in our military organizations that one who is leading up is not questioning the boss's purpose, rather just trying to inform him of consequences from the perspective of those lower on the chain of command? Have you ever experienced a military boss who too often jumps to the conclusion that any question or advice from a junior is manifest sign of that junior's insubordination? I'm sure we've all worked for officers who set a tone of, "Don't question me!" Such a tone is often really just a sign of insecurity or incompetence. What do you think? Of course, how you frame your questions to the boss, and in what audience, are of utmost importance too.
2. (p. 262) Do you think a challenging attitude is a desirable trait in military personnel? Do you want those junior to you to be critical in their assessment of your policy objectives and the means you choose to achieve them? As a leader, do you actively attempt to be the type of boss you would like to work for? Think of an example where you pushed back on either an

3. (p. 263) How do *you* know when to resist and when to submit? What are the cues you must read in order to determine when to push back with your boss and how hard to do so? How do you achieve a balance in arguing for what you think right? What guidance do you use in choosing your battles carefully? How do you empower your subordinates to achieve the same balance?
4. (p. 271) Is a disciplined independence of mind anathema to military culture or critical to it? There are certainly times when we need independence of thought and action in the military even more than obedience. How do you inculcate your subordinates with the ability to determine when each is appropriate? Perhaps even more important, how do you foster the environment for your subordinates to exercise such independence of thought and action in support of your organization's mission?
5. (p. 272-274) How might the author's recruiting criteria be applied in the military? Or are they really only applicable to executive recruiting in the private business sector? (They are summarized below for convenience)
 - First criterion: Strong enough to question a superior's decisions and honest about own failings.
 - Second criterion: Allegiance in both directions, staying true to superiors and subordinates.
 - Third criterion: Accepting complete responsibility for their people's shortcomings and blunders.
 - Fourth criterion: Rising to the responsibility that comes with proximity to power.
6. (p. 275) Do you allow, perhaps even encourage, your subordinates to argue with you? Why or why not? How often do they win the argument? Is it possible that their success at winning is a positive reflection of your leadership? I dare think it is!
7. (p. 276-7) Are you an "executive prophet?" How? Do you have any "executive prophets" on your team? If not, why not? Think of how much "inventive insight" we can turn into "accepted reality" if we could focus all of the gray matter power residing in our organization.
8. (p. 282) Have you ever worked for a modern version of Admiral Shovell? I have personally witnessed officers in our modern Navy treat subordinates with such disregard. While not killing them outright as Shovell did his sailor, they kill independent thought and the desire to contribute, wasting our most valuable resource.
9. (p. 284) How does your organization practice and reinforce upward leadership. Equally important, how do the organizations *within* your organization do so?

Finally, I leave you with a hint to answer the first question posed in this reading guide: Always keep learning and cast a wider net!

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