

YOU ARE THE GREATEST LEADER

YOU

JUST DON'T KNOW IT YET

**GREAT LEADERSHIP
IS
FROM THE HEART**

**Sergeant Michael Roberson
Garland County Sheriff's Dept**

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A man encountered an angel in the village market. He asked the angel who was the greatest military leader of all time.

The angel replied, "That old man over there. He's the greatest one. He just doesn't know it." Shubentsov (1998 p.VI)

Every day the opportunity of leadership arises before every law enforcement officer. As law enforcement officers and supervisors, we have the ability to dramatically impact people's lives and make a difference. Recognizing that everything we do not only as law enforcement officers, but also in our personal lives has a positive or negative impact on others. Because of this, the need for skilled law enforcement officers and leaders is of utmost importance in today's society.

Too many times I have seen good officers with good intentions and the ability to become great leaders fail, not for lack of potential, but because they lack the emotional intelligence and survivability skills needed in this profession. We must recognize that we are not born leaders; rather we must become leaders who possess and display fundamental values.

I believe leadership is a multifaceted, multidimensional quality whose total makes up its real definition. Leadership *is* the sum total of many features and qualities that make a true leader.

In the following pages I will list some of the qualities that makes great law enforcement leaders and what it takes to survive in today's law enforcement organization. I hope that by sharing these views we become smarter and more aware of the complexities of leadership and its pitfalls.

A Leader Must Have Passion

Passion comes before leadership. You must have a burning desire to bring about something positive. You must internalize what has to be done and turn that passion into action. Those officers with the bars and stripes without passion are simply a person with a fancy title and no sense of direction. When you have a passion and act on it, you become a leader compelled by a tangible desire. Passion comes from the heart and I consider it most important.

Exercising passion is an expression of our aliveness. But that aliveness can slowly slip away daily as we get beat down, put down, or silenced. Too many good officers put up a front of self-protection to insulate themselves from the dangers of stepping out. But, when you put up a false front, you risk losing those qualities that are the essence of being alive. It's easy to turn innocence into cynicism, curiosity into arrogance, and compassion into callousness.

Linsky (2002 p. 226), in the following table summarizes the common dynamics that take over when people lose heart.

Losing Heart

<u>Quality of heart</u>	<u>Becomes</u>	<u>Dressed Up As</u>
Innocence	Cynicism	Realism
Curiosity	Arrogance	Authoritative knowledge
Compassion	Callousness	Thick-skin of experience

Straying from our passions may be a safe way to live and operate in the sometimes political environment of law enforcement but it also suffocates the very

aliveness you should strive to protect. The hard truth is that it is not possible to experience the rewards of leadership without experiencing the pain as well.

To succeed in law enforcement and in life, be true to your heart. This can be achieved by being very self-aware of one's self. Great law enforcement leaders have a deep understanding of their emotions, their strengths, and limitations. They have a deep sense of values and what motivates them. Only when we are loyal to our hearts, can our accomplishments and achievements be the most rewarding and fulfilling.

Acceptance of Fear

A great leader must have the ability to accept fear as part of the risk we take. Fear is something that comes with everything that is unknown or new to us. Unlike the fear we face as law enforcement officers as part of the job, a leader understands that all challenges have an element of fear that must be confronted. No matter how hesitant you may be, a leader knows he cannot show fear, especially if others who are following are watching closely. Leaders learn to stare down fear and know with certainty that they can overcome a challenge if they make up their mind to do so.

Law enforcement officers in general are strong individuals with many talents. They are capable of heroic acts and bravery. They can also be very critical and the first to point out flaws and weaknesses in your leadership ability. As a law enforcement leader you must have the courage to stand out among so many good officers. All of us have good intentions for the most part. But there are those who would tear you down and make small of your accomplishments and your style of leadership. A good law enforcement leader trusts in his abilities and is always striving to improve them. You cannot allow the

influence of the popular “cliques” and peer pressures stop you from pursuing your passion.

Good leaders learn to focus on their passion and excitement of the unknown at the same time working to diminish the possibility of failure. To a good leader there is always a way to overcome obstacles placed in their path. To overcome fear we have to take risk. If we don't, life will have passed us by and we can only look back with regret.

Toogood (2002 p. 180), a letter from a dying eighty-two-year-old man, as reported in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*:

If I had my life to live over, I'd try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax, I would limber up, I would be crazier than I've been on this trip.

I know very few things I'd take seriously any more. I would take more chances. I would take more trips, I would scale more mountains, I would swim more rivers, and I would eat more ice cream and fewer beans.

I've been one of those people who never went anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a gargle, a raincoat, and a parachute.

If I had it to do all over again, I'd travel lighter, much lighter than I have.

I would start barefoot earlier in the spring. And I would ride more merry-go-rounds, and catch more golden rings, and greet more people, and pick more flowers, and dance more often. If I had it to do all over again. But you see, I don't.

Do not let fear stand in your way of opportunities; life and careers in law enforcement are much too short. That willingness to take a risk, to step out, to speak up can lead to so many rewards. When the risk leads to failure, a good leader takes

corrective actions and learns from his mistakes then moves on to the next challenge. A good law enforcement officer will continually hone his skills through education, training, experience, and *he learns from his past mistakes.*

To help in over coming the fear that sometimes holds us back, you must have a sense of one's self-worth and your capabilities. You need to know your strengths and limitations, and develop the ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control. This deep self awareness allows us to understand what we fear and how best to overcome it.

A Leader is Honest

You must be honest with yourself, but more importantly you must be honest with your people. Your integrity must be intact; it cannot be weak or full of holes. Leaders cannot lie to themselves or to those around them. In both cases you would lose the respect of those you lead if they felt they were being misled or deceived. A leader does not hide or shade the truth, he knows it would be disrespectful of the others right to know the truth.

Covey (1991 p.141) says about integrity; *When we are true to the light we have been given, when we keep our word consistently, when we are striving continually to harmonize our habit system with our value system, then our life is integrated. Our honor becomes greater than our moods, and we can have confidence in ourselves because we know ourselves. We know that we will be true and faithful under temptation. Integrity is the foundation of all true goodness and greatness. The internal security that emerges from it eliminates the need to live for impression, to exaggerate for effort, to drop names*

or places, to borrow strength from credentials or possessions or fashions or affiliations or associations or status symbols. We have no need for cynicism or sarcasm or cutting humor. Our sense of humor becomes spontaneous, healthy, and proportionate to the situation.

You cannot be a good law enforcement officer or leader if you lack this basic core value. You can see how important this element is in our own Law Enforcement Code of Ethics.

You must look deep in yourself and see what you hold as sacred. Your first challenge is to know what your core values are and if you are living them. Your second challenge is to see clearly what must change and take the steps to correct bad habits. If your beliefs and mindsets need to change, you cannot rely on someone else or wait on an event to prod you into that change. You have to desire a change and reevaluate yourself regularly, and commit to improving your integrity.

Quotations (2005): "Character is doing what's right when nobody's looking."

J.C. Watts, Jr., Politician

Law enforcement officers in general can smell a lie or deception a mile away. If we as law enforcement leaders do not have the basic core values of honesty and integrity, those we command will never follow us or trust us because they want to, but because they have to. To survive as a law enforcement leader you must display these traits, you cannot hide behind a false front and expect to be a successful leader.

Commitment

Commitment is so important in being a good leader. When you tell someone you are going to do something, you are giving your word. You cannot be a good leader if you do not follow through on what you say. A leader's word is his bond and is directly related to others' perceptions of your commitment and loyalty. How can you trust someone who doesn't keep their word?

I have seen so many officers say they are going to do something, or bring about something and not follow through. We hear it in the ranks and in upper management. They say they will see to a task or look into a problem and months later, we or the citizen are still scratching our heads. In the mean time, the person that said they would look into it fails to deliver. A good leader knows when to say yes, but more importantly, they know when to say no. To survive in the law enforcement arena you have to know how much you can take on in a given span of time. Too many officers are afraid to say no for fear of looking bad.

When you take on a commitment, you cannot waiver once you have accepted the task. To do so will result in loss of confidence in you by your subordinates and superiors alike.

Quotations (2005); "Most companies don't die because they are wrong; most die because they don't commit themselves...You have to have a strong leader setting a direction. And it doesn't even have to be the best direction-just a strong, clear one."

Andy Grove, CEO, Intel

Another aspect of commitment is the ability to adapt and the courage to make unpleasant decisions. As a leader and a law enforcement officer we are sometimes the

bearer of bad news. If officers and management cannot adapt they will be left behind and become another casualty. Casualties occur when an organization goes through significant changes, such as cut backs and lay offs. No one should enjoy having to make unpleasant decisions. But when you are in a leadership position this often goes with the territory.

Accepting casualties signals your commitment. If you give the impression that you are unwilling to accept a loss, or deliver bad news, you present the uncommitted people an invitation to push aside your perspectives. Your ability to accept losses sends a clear message about your courage and commitment to seeing a challenge through.

I believe the key to commitment is not sending mixed signals. Keep your word and understand it is your bond. Do not take on more than you can handle and have the courage to make difficult decisions.

Compassion

Law enforcement officers must have compassion in their daily work. A good leader also has compassion for those fellow officers who need the extra hand. It makes me angry when I see officers ridicule other officers who just were not getting it or catching on fast enough.

Quotations (2005): "Keeping score of old scores and scars, getting even and one-upping, always makes you less than you are." Malcom Forbes (1919-1990)

A good leader knows that we are all born with varying skill sets. Each of us is equipped to do a particular job or jobs better than others. Some of us learn quicker than others while some struggle just to keep up. A good leader does not see this as a weakness, but see it as an issue that has to be recalculated and readjusted. If an officer is struggling

to keep up, a good leader searches to find what that person can excel at. Acknowledge that officer's strengths and give him the tools to work on their weaknesses. When you take an interest in another's struggle conveyed with genuine compassion, they will work harder at improvement.

Quotations (2005) "Managers should focus on people's strengths instead of their weaknesses. Rather than dwell on the areas where a worker is weak, find out what he does well, determine the context in which he is able to exercise his positive capabilities-and let him do it. Make his shortcomings irrelevant. The function of an organization is to make human strength productive-and this is accomplished by building on people's assets, not by bemoaning their limitations." Peter Drucker, Management Consultant

By having compassion for others you send the signal that you care for that persons welfare and success. When an individual feels that he is cared for and not just a number, they will follow you. Taking interest in another's success will lead to your own success. The realization that we are all individuals and just because someone does not do it the way you do does not mean they are not capable of being good officers. We must protect our selves from ego-centric blind spots and realize we all need a helping hand from time to time. This awareness is what keeps great leaders humble and connected to those they lead.

A Leader Must Be Able to Communicate

Communication is one of the most fundamental skills in life. It is probably one of the most vital skills of a leader. Bennett and Hess (2004 p.72) "*Communication is a*

critical part of policing. Research has shown that 93 percent of police work is one-on-one communication.”

We must learn how to communicate with ease, clarity, and conviction. Leaders know how to explain to others why things must be done or accomplished. Leaders know how to make others understand that the outcome will benefit all, not just the leader.

A key to being a good communicator is to be a good listener. As a leader it is not the responsibility of others to listen to you, it is your responsibility to get others to listen to you.

Communication is mutual understanding. One of the main problems in communicating is the “translation” problem. We must learn to say what we mean and learn to listen so that we understand what others say. The key to effective communication is trust. Covey (1990 p.138): *You can communicate with someone you trust almost without words. You can even make mistakes in your verbal communication and still find that they get your meaning. But when the trust level is low, you will find that it really makes little difference how hard you try to communicate or how good you are in technique or how clear your language is. When trust is high, communication is easy, effortless, instantaneous, and accurate. When trust is low, communication is extremely difficult, exhausting, and ineffective. The key to communication is trust, and the key to trust is trustworthiness. Living a life of integrity is the best guarantee of maintaining the climate of effective communication.*

Not only must we be trustworthy, but we must also be able to trust others. As law enforcement officers we deal with deception so much that you have to wonder how we can trust anybody. It starts with us as individuals first. When we can be trusted, then

those we are communicating with will be more apt to open up and communicate back to us.

I have responded to calls backing other officers up and seen the officers struggle in their attempt to resolve the conflict. I have watched people gravitate from one officer towards other officers whom I consider are very trustworthy, to help them. They were not wearing signs that said I'm trustworthy come and speak to me and I will help you with your problem. They were not always the officer with the bars and stripes. Rather I believe people gravitated towards them because their core values were intact. They have a *transparency* and people sense they can trust that officer more easily than the initial responding officer who may not have been as *transparent* or had skewed values.

Good leaders with high trust levels don't find it difficult to give recognition and share power. This leads to better and more open communication. Other officers with high competency levels do not threaten them and they don't feel every idea has to be their own. A good sergeant realizes that even the newest rookie on the force has something to offer and is willing to *listen*. He/she is always open minded and ready to listen with understanding, no matter what your rank or skill level may be.

Motivation and Morale

Quotations (2005): "Your ability to get people to follow you up the hill into gunfire, or into the next Net meltdown, is based on your ability to convince them that you have their best interest at heart." Dave McCormick, Senior V.P., Free Markets, Inc

When I started my career in law enforcement, I was excited and full of passion. I was ready to face the excitement of the unknown and make a difference in peoples lives.

It soon became apparent to me that all was not well. My morale began to slip and it became difficult to get excited about coming to work. I started asking myself why, and began looking at the other officers I worked with to see if they were experiencing the same thing. I discovered I was not alone.

At times the job itself was still rewarding and had its excitement when responding to calls and assisting the public. I felt like I was doing a good job but there was very little feedback from my superiors. The only time you heard from your superiors was when you made mistakes. If you complained you were told, "If you don't like it, quit. There are plenty of people standing in line for your job." I began to feel like a number, unimportant, and if I wanted to succeed I needed to be part of one of the popular "cliques". I would have to go with the flow and not rock the boat.

It soon became apparent to me that the department did not have my best interest at heart. I did not have a sense that I was cared about and that I was important to the organization. I began to lose trust in my leaders. I resolved that if I ever made it to a supervisory position, I would not let those people I lead end up feeling the same way.

Fortunately things have changed and I don't feel the same way. There has been a change in leadership and in key management personnel. I realized that much of my downward morale was a choice I made. I stopped blaming all the external motivators that I allowed to affect me and began to become more aware of whom I really am. I reminded myself why I wanted to get into law enforcement to begin with and realized I was in one of the greatest professions in the world. We as law enforcement officers have the greatest opportunities to impact lives throughout the communities we serve and within our

organizations. How we do that is up to each of us. The things we do can send a ripple effect throughout the world.

Regardless of our rank or status within the organization, each of us can acquire the abilities to be leaders and do something positive or even great. But to be a great leader, you must have Emotional Intelligence. It's how we say and do things that inspire people and gives them the desire to follow us. This is a noble profession and our leaders must be noble and emotionally intelligent themselves.

To survive as a leader in our profession good law enforcement leaders will be aware of their troop's morale. They know when to encourage others and motivate them to look past their limitations. No matter how difficult things get, leaders will not allow their people to lose hope and faith in what they have set out to accomplish in their law enforcement career. Leaders show no fear in the face of adversity and they ask you to do the same. A good leader will demand exemplary conduct when dealing with the public, whether it is the victims or the suspected criminals. A great leader will lead by example, not "do as I say, not what I do".

A good supervisor will take a personal interest in each of his people, whether it is in their personal lives or on the job. Good supervisors care about each person's success and he will help them along the way to ensure they are successful. A good supervisor will insulate themselves and their people from the negativity that is borne of criticism. They give credit where credit is due and they do not feel the need to take credit themselves. A good leader will not stoop to favoritism, nepotism, ageism, racism, or any other "ism". A great leader will know their people better than they know themselves. Leaders are not afraid of being dependent, that sometimes we must depend on those around us. Leaders

never give up and more importantly they never give up on you, even when you've given up on yourself.

Conclusion

Toogood (p.3-4): "What child has not wondered at the curiously mellifluous effect of a pebble arching through the air then falling with a delicious "plunk" into the molten surface of a still pond? When stone meets water, the stone wins. Water yields, generating concentric circles to mark the exact point of impact.

It is not long before the child observes that even the smallest pebble can send gentle shock waves to the farthest edge of the pond. And perhaps this boy or girl cannot help but wonder where those ripples might end if there were no limits to the pond.

Can a single pebble affect an entire pond? Can a single pebble make itself known even far away?

Watching and pondering these mysteries, some children will begin to focus on the ripples, while others will be drawn to the pebble. One child will watch the ripples spread. Another will delight in the path of the pebble and its splash.

At some point during this private moment of discovery, one child will experience an epiphany. This child will ask himself, is it better to be a ripple or be a stone? And for this child the answer will resonate like a loud bell ringing. The answer for this child is as clear as sunlight filling a room: It is better to be a stone.

Create something—anything—and you become a stone. Any willful act of creation—a plan, a letter, a sketch, a recipe, even a new hairstyle—creates waves, no matter how sublime. By contrast, if you choose to remain fallow and wait for something to happen, you will always be a ripple.

All of us in our law enforcement profession, our personal lives, and our social lives have the power of choice. If you are in a stagnant career, you can choose to do nothing and go along with the flow or you can recognize the power and passion in you to positively impact those around you and our organizations as a whole.

You may be the greatest leader in the world and you just do not know it yet. If you are one of those individuals taking the safe path and not being true to your passion for fear of failure. Drop the false fronts and pretenses and seek out what it takes to become a *great* leader.

We must be emotionally intelligent to inspire those we lead to become motivated. We must continually evaluate and seek to educate ourselves in a tireless effort to be the best we can possibly be. It is critical that we protect ourselves from ego-centric blind spots. Our integrity must be intact and our values transparent. We must know our limitations and ourselves and more importantly those we lead. We must have compassion and be committed to excellence. We must learn to communicate with ease, clarity, and conviction. We must overcome our fears and come to the reality that we cannot succeed alone. We must realize that to be a successful leader it is the sum total of many traits and qualities that define us. Finally it is not enough just to do the job; our most important job as leaders is to help build other leaders to represent this sacred and noble profession of **Law Enforcement**.

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