Developing Leaders of Character through Experiential Learning

Arthur Gibb, III, Ph.D
Commander, U.S. Navy
Permanent Military Professor of Leadership and Ethics
United States Naval Academy
Describe your concept of leadership with a drawing... no words allowed.
Good leaders must be...

Effectiveness:
- Effective
- Innovative
- Dedicated
- Empowering
- Empathetic
- Compassionate
- Fair

Character:
- Charismatic
- Articulate
- Competent
- Expert
- Intelligent
- Knowledgeable
- Organized
- Humility
- Commitment
- Courage
- Truthful
- Forthright

Additional Qualities:
- Positive attitude
- Charismatic
- Confident
- Inspirational
- Humor
- Critical thinker
- Sense of duty
- Upright
- Ethical
- Moral
- Selfless
- Loyal
- Lead by example
- Conscientious
- Innovative
- Upright
- Conscientious
- Inspirational
- Empowering
- Dedication
- Sense of duty
- Critical thinker
- Moral
- Ethical
- Forthright
- Truthful
Character

- Character is the sum of virtues
- Avoid the extremes and seek the mean
- Character developed through habituation

*We judge character by the actions we observe*
Personality and Behavior

- Personality manifests as patterns of behavior:
  - Dutiful (N)
  - Diligent (C)
  - Bold (O,C,E)
  - Cautious (O)

- Dark side traits associated with strong personality traits:
Weak Environment

- High stress
- Unclear roles
- Low supervision
- High uncertainty
Strong Environment

- Positive leadership
- Clear expectations
- High competence
- Mutual trust
Culture of Accountability

- Vulnerability and trust
- Constructive conflict and criticism
- Commitment to company

Performance and Character Development
Leadership Development through Experiential Learning

Three ELD components
- Responsibility
- Risk
- Reflection
Experiential Learning Process

Leadership Learning Model

Concrete Experience
- Your life experiences
- Success and failures
- Family
- Work
- VALUES CONFLICT!!!

Experimentation
- Testing
- Choosing
- Imagining

Conceptualization
- Derive general rules from experience
- What is a value?
- Knowledge formation

Reflection
- What’s most important
- Prioritization
- Values
- Ideals
- Tangible things

(Adapted from Kolb 1984)
ELD Components: Responsibility

- We want seekers of responsibility

- How can we encourage responsibility?
  - Climate of empowerment
    - Delegation
    - Mentoring
    - Encouraging risk
    - Learning from failure

How do you encourage responsibility?
ELD Components: Risk

- Risk is vital to experiential learning
  - Heightens emotions, focus, and critical thinking

- Managed risk is vital to company’s growth and success

How can we encourage positive risk attitudes?
Safe alternative \((S)\)

Risky alternative \((R)\)

\[ x_s - r \]

\[ x_b - r \]

\[ 1 - p \]

\[ x_w - r \]

Status quo

How is the quality of the outcome determined?
  • Self-interested
  • Best interests of the company

Probability of success
  • Do you have a culture of accountability?
ELD Components: Reflection

Transforms participation into active learning

- Systematic
  - Journaling, after-action reports, lessons learned, goal-setting, 360° feedback

- Shared
  - Off-sites, short exercises, staff lunch, teams

- Guided
  - Mentoring, coaching
Do your company’s values resonate with your employees?
Do you create a culture of accountability?
What do you do to encourage responsibility and positive risk attitudes?
Do you encourage personal and institutional reflection?
Any Questions?