Leadership Primary and Secondary Objectives

Purpose
This lesson will explain to you the primary and secondary objectives of leadership as defined by the Marine Corps.

Introduction
The primary objective of leadership is mission accomplishment. Mission accomplishment is achieving your goal. Achieving your goal is your primary focus when asked to take on a task. The secondary goal of leadership is troop welfare. The welfare of your troops should always be a consideration for you as a leader. Both objectives go hand and hand in accomplishing any task.

In the Success Academy program, these same objectives apply. You are expected to accomplish assigned missions and to take care of the cadets under your leadership. Accomplishing your primary and secondary objectives develops leadership.

Mission Accomplishment
Mission accomplishment means that you must know your job and do it well. You must know how to control and employ your unit under varied conditions. In military situations, leaders must be skilled in military sciences and in the use of weapons. Military leaders must ensure their troops know the basics: care and use of weapons and equipment; camouflage, fire and maneuver; cover and concealment; preparation of fighting positions; use of supporting arms, land navigation, discipline, hand to hand combat; and other essentials on how to fight, survive and win.

In the Success Academy, mission accomplishment is also your primary objective. As a cadet you are given many different tasks that your instructor expects you to carry out properly. Examples include: executing drill movements properly, or completing your assignments in a timely fashion. It is your responsibility to accomplish these tasks.

DID YOU KNOW?
President Harry S. Truman kept a plaque on his desk with the inscription “The buck stops here.” Truman was one of America’s most honest and ethical presidents. He never flinched from accepting responsibility for his decisions, however, unpopular or controversial.

Troop Welfare
The secondary objective of leadership is troop welfare. Cadet leaders must know their Cadets and take care of them. They must learn all they can about each Cadet in their unit: their background, their problems, their strong and weak points, their military skills, their endurance, and their courage. This knowledge will help predict and influence their actions. It enables the Cadet leader to make the most of each Cadet’s ability.

Leaders must put the needs of their troops before their own needs. They must instill a feeling of camaraderie and team spirit in their troops and a sense of trust in the leader.

In the Success Academy, the welfare of the cadets is of no less importance. In order to be the best, cadets must know that their leader is concerned about their welfare. Leaders, at every level, must make an effort to get to know the cadets they lead. No cadet is exempt. The leader must set the example and in doing so, will earn the trust and respect of their cadets.

Your first assignment as squad leader is to fold the U.S. flag at a ceremony. While you are meeting briefly with the platoon sergeant, your squad departs for the football field to prepare for a rehearsal. During the meeting, the platoon sergeant tells you who in your squad has been on these details before.

As you approach the field, you see your squad relaxing. Instead of going straight into a rehearsal, you decide to have a few knowledgeable people demonstrate how to fold the flag.

You state to the squad that you are going to conduct a demonstration and for them to move into a circle. They don’t move. You walk up to PFC Hart, whom the platoon sergeant said knows how to fold the flag, and he gives you a challenging stare as if to say, “I don’t want to be a demonstrator.” You ask him to come forward and take the flag. He says something disrespectful and still doesn’t move.

This action infuriates you, but you control your emotions and remain calm. Your mind swiftly goes to work on the situation. This subordinate has challenged your authority and put you in a difficult position. He has given you a major disciplinary problem – disrespect and insubordination – before you have even had the opportunity to get to know your squad members and the informal norms of the squad. The way you handle this situation will have a major impact on the cohesion, discipline, and the respect these people will have for you.

**Case Study Options**

After identifying this challenge as one of how to take immediate action to gain control and maintain discipline while earning the long-term respect of your subordinates, you consider the following alternatives:
• Reprimand PFC Hart in front of the squad, informing him that you will recommend him for an instructor's reprimand for his insubordination. If he continues to disobey, you will recommend that he be demoted.

• Stand directly in front of PFC Hart, look him in the eye, and order him to stand up and take the flag from you.

You quickly weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each course of action.

If you take the first course of action, you come across as decisive and strong and you immediately assert yourself as the authority. The disadvantage is that it is normally unprofessional to reprimand someone in front of others. In addition, it is never wise to tell a subordinate exactly what punishment you would recommend until you have had a chance to think the situation through and discuss it with your seniors.

If you take the second course of action, you would not be reprimanding PFC Hart in front of others – you could do that later in private. You would show your squad that you do not back down from a challenge, and that you do not resort to threats in order to maintain discipline.

Remember, you could still recommend punishment that you believe is appropriate later depending on PFC Hart’s actions. The disadvantages are that you would not be immediately asserting yourself as the unquestioned authority, and that some of your subordinates might think they could get away with disrespectful and insubordinate behavior.

You quickly think through the actions you could take, including the use of possible contingencies. If you order PFC Hart to stand and take the flag and he does, continue with the demonstration; then order him and his team leader to meet you immediately after the rehearsal. If he refuses, inform him: (1) that he is being insubordinate and give him another order, and (2) by refusing your order, he will have committed two serious offenses. If he still refuses, immediately send for the platoon sergeant or platoon leader while you select other squad members to do the demonstration. This plan prepares you for possible contingencies if he finally obeys you or if he continues to disobey.

Depending on what PFC Hart does, take action in terms of your plan or make appropriate changes. Also, observe the effect of your actions on the manner and obedience of the other squad members. Explain that you will not tolerate insubordination and disobedience, and that you will always take suitable disciplinary action against those offenses.

You decide on the second course of action. Initially, some squad members do think that PFC Hart got away with his insubordination, but they discover otherwise when they find out that you sternly reprimanded him in the presence of his team leader, counseled him, and recommended him for additional punishment.
Conclusion

As Success Academy cadets, it is important that you know and understand the primary and secondary objectives of leadership. These objectives are key to effective leadership. Remember, you must accomplish your mission but in doing so, you must also ensure that you are taking care of the cadets whom you lead. Understanding that good judgment, and respect for your own subordinates as people, will make you an effective leader in the Success Academy program. ✤