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## Recommended Reading

### *Handout: Skills Required for Leadership*

See pages 3 - 5 of this Learning Module for the reading assignment to answer the following questions.

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1. Consider taking a personality profiling tool such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (about \$50 at <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/take-the-mbti-instrument/>) or complete another similar profile tool to help you identify your own individual characteristics.  
Now that you have identified your individual personality traits, name the personal strengths you can put to work in your chapter that will be of benefit to the DAR mission.
  
2. In reviewing the People Skills listings, which three Interpersonal Communication tips would be of greatest benefit to you if you practiced them more in DAR situations?
  - i.
  - ii.
  - iii.
  
3. Which directive in Preparing for Meetings is the one you have been least likely to practice in DAR meetings?
  
4. Which three of the Email Best Practices do you most need to work on in DAR communications?
  - i.
  - ii.
  - iii.

5. Name three sources of Problem Solving Solutions which are available to you in your DAR position through your chapter, state and national DAR Societies.
  - i.
  - ii.
  - iii.
  
6. Describe a recent decision you've made in your DAR position and the pros and cons you considered in making it. If there is anything you could have done differently that you now believe would have resulted in a better outcome, describe that also. (use additional space as needed)
  
7. Describe how the paragraph on Respect for Context illustrates and informs your personal DAR experiences. Discuss in general terms (no names, please) what influence "bad attitudes" versus "great attitudes" have had on your DAR membership endeavors. (use additional space as needed)
  
8. Describe your past experience on a really good DAR team, and what you believe made the team so good. (use additional space as needed)
  
9. Describe your past experience on a DAR team that did not function well and what you believe it needed to be a good team. (use additional space as needed)

# Skills Required for Leadership

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Please consult this book for further background and information about these skills and principles. It is available at booksellers and libraries and also at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

## Principles of Professionalism, Critical Thinking and Followership

- 1. Self-Evaluation:** Regularly assessing one's own thoughts, words, and actions against clear, meaningful standards; and one's own performance against specific goals, timelines, guidelines, and parameters.
  - Research studies show that what really drives learning and growth is real self-awareness through regular, productive, honest self-evaluation against clear standards. The mirror is the best teacher, provided that you learn how to use the mirror to measure your own performance against concrete goals for improvement.
- 2. People Skills:** Attentive listening, observing, and reading; perceiving and empathizing; effective use of words, tone, expressions, and gestures – verbal, written, and otherwise – one-on-one and in groups; in person, and remotely.

### Interpersonal Communication

- Listen twice as much as you talk.
- Never interrupt or let your mind wander when others are speaking.
- Empathize: Always try to imagine yourself in the other person's position.
- Exhibit respect, kindness, courtesy, and good manners.
- Prepare in advance before meetings or one-on-one conversations so you are brief, direct, and clear.
- Never speak of a problem unless you have thought of at least one potential solution.
- Take personal responsibility for everything you say and do.
- Don't make excuses when you make a mistake.
- Don't blame or complain.
- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Always take your commitments and responsibilities seriously.
- Always give people credit for their achievements, no matter how small.

### Preparing for Meetings

- Before attending any meeting, make sure you know what the meeting is about and whether your attendance is required or requested.
- Identify what your role in the meeting is. What information are you responsible for communicating or gathering?
- Is there any material you should review or read before the meeting? Are there any conversations you need to have before the meeting?
- If you are not a primary actor in the meeting, often the best thing you can do is say as little as possible and practice good meeting manners: Do not "multi-task," make unnecessary noise or activity, and do stay focused on the business at hand.
- If you are tempted to speak up, ask yourself: Is this a point that everyone needs to hear, right here and now? If you have a question, could it be asked at a later time, off-line?
- If you don't have a clear role in the meeting and yet find yourself there anyway, try not to say a single word that will unnecessarily lengthen it.

## Email Best Practices

- Send fewer and better messages.
- Before sending a message, always ask yourself whether this is really something that should be communicated in person at a scheduled one-on-one or a scheduled meeting.
- Stop sending first drafts! Send first drafts to yourself.
- If you are “messaging” so you don’t forget, then send the reminder to yourself!
- Only cc people who need to be cc’d.
- Use red flags and other indicators sparingly and with true purpose.
- Make subject lines smart; context is everything.
- Change subject lines on later emails if the subject changes.
- Make messages brief, simple, and orderly.
- Create a simple folder system for filing incoming and outgoing electronic communication based on how YOU will use them later.
- Establish time blocks daily when you will review and respond to electronic communication and let people know when to expect your responses.

3. **Problem Solving:** Mastering established best practices – proven repeatable solutions for dealing with regular recurring problems – so as to avoid reinventing the wheel. Using repeatable solutions to improvise when addressing problems that are new but similar.

- The key to problem solving is to anticipate the most common recurring problems and prepare for them with ready-made solutions. Ready-made solutions are simply best practices that have been captured and turned into standard operating procedures to better address regularly recurring problems. Solving problems with proven best practices is the best way to gain experience in solving problems successfully.

4. **Decision Making:** Identifying and considering multiple options, assessing the pros and cons of each, and choosing the course of action closest to the desired outcome.

- Good decision making is really about being able to predict likely outcomes – the ability to see the connections between cause and effect – to project out the consequences of one set of events and action, as opposed to another. The irony is that the only way to develop that “go forward” ability to predict the future is to learn from the past. The key to learning from experience is paying close attention and aggressively drawing lessons from one’s experiences. Being able to see the patterns in causes and their effects, enables one to think ahead with insight. Ultimately, that’s the key to decision-making.

5. **Respect for Context:** Reading and adapting to the existing structure, rules, customs, and leadership in an unfamiliar situation.

- No matter who you are, what you want to achieve, or how you want to behave, your role in many interpersonal situations is determined in large part by factors that have nothing to do with you. Every situation has a context that limits possibilities and limits the scope of your potential role. Once you have a handle on the context of your particular situation, next you have to ask yourself where you fit in this context. Why are you here? What is at stake for you? When did you get here? What is your appropriate role in relation to the other people in the group? What is your appropriate role in relation to the mission? What expectations and hopes are reasonable for you to have? Once you really understand your role in any group context, then your number one responsibility is to play that role to the absolute best of your ability. That means, contribute your very best, and put in more time and effort no matter how lowly, mundane, or repetitive your tasks and responsibilities might seem in relation to the overall mission of your organization.

- Some people are harder to deal with in the workplace than others. Here are some “bad attitude” types:
  - “Porcupines” – they send the message: “Get away from me!”
  - “Entanglers” – they want everybody else to be involved in their issues. They want to be noticed, observed, listened to, and engaged, even if those issues are not the concern of others.
  - “Debaters” – they always have an argument to make, regardless of whether it is a good argument or not.
  - “Complainers” – they point out the negatives of a situation without offering a solution.
  - “Blamers” – they are like complainers, pointing out negatives, but blamers point the finger at a specific individual.
  - “Stink bomb throwers” – they make sarcastic (or worse) remarks, curse under their breath (or aloud), or even make loud gestures such as slamming or yelling.
  
- Some people are very easy to deal with in the workplace. Here are some “great attitude” types/qualities/behaviors:
  - Approachable, welcoming, and professional
  - Communicates in a highly purposeful manner – brief, straightforward and efficient
  - Chooses arguments carefully and takes a position based on clear evidence, rather than assertions or opinions
  - A good troubleshooter, placing the focus on what steps can be taken to make things better
  - Goes out of the way to make positive, optimistic, generous comments, speaks in positive tones, and makes positive gestures and expressions

6. **Teamwork:** Playing whatever role is needed to support the larger mission; coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating with others in pursuit of a shared goal; supporting and celebrating the success of others.

- The military has a rare combination of profound patriotic mission, life-threatening gravity, and extraordinary resources from which to draw great lessons about building the conditions to support great teamwork. The strongest peer relationships in the workplace form in environments with a strong focus on the shared mission, the shared work, and the common ground. Yes, it is important to value and leverage everybody’s different strengths on a team. But the key to supporting the spirit of “teamwork,” per se, is focusing on what everybody has in common. For the most part, you don’t get to choose who is going to be on your team. You don’t get to choose your own leaders. You don’t get to choose your own mission. You don’t get to choose your own position. Not everybody gets to be the MFP. Not everybody gets a trophy. But everybody on the team did choose to be in this job at this time. As long as you remain here, we are all in this together. We must depend on each other in order to succeed. So we must depend on one another.

Yes, some people pull more weight than others. Some people do more work, better, faster, and with a better attitude. But don’t ever tell yourself you are doing a great job if you are not also being a great team player. Being a great team player is part of your job. That means staying focused on shared mission and how each person contributes to that shared mission. It means making yourself available and easy to work with. It means coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating with others. It means playing your assigned position as needed to support the larger effort. It means focusing on the best interest of the whole, sometimes at the expense of your own prominence. It means supporting your other team members and helping them succeed and celebrating their successes.

Here’s the bottom line: Some people really get things done. Right? And there are plenty of times when you need to get things done and you need someone’s help. Right? So you want to be able to go to the right people, the ones who really get things done. Those people are known as ‘go to’ people. That’s because everybody – just as you do – wants to ‘go to’ those people. Get it? ‘Go to’ people don’t just get things done. They get things done for other people. That’s why ‘go to’ people are the most in-demand people – because everyone knows they can be relied on to deliver for the team. Be one!