

## My Leadership Philosophy,

To be a great leader; a person who inspires growth, success, and teamwork; has always been one of life's most distinguished achievements. This skill, though it may be as natural to some as shaking hands, is mastered by practice, hard work, self discipline, and opportunity. Leading others well requires filling many roles at once, never leaning too heavily toward one leadership paradigm. The tyrant, the king, the sheep, and the Sheppard all have their own strengths and weaknesses. Each can succeed, but only the one that is able to expand beyond any one style's conformities will persevere over time. Consistently succeeding is the golden ticket any great leader will possess. Fostering one triumph yet being unable to maintain the respect and teamwork necessary to replicate that success, is not the sign of a skilled leader.

**Establish and Work Toward Goals-** The ability to diligently work toward a goal, even in the face of doubt or hardship, is the trademark of successful individuals and groups. What goals do you have for yourself, what goals do you have for your department, district, or for your Coast Guard? My goal is to become an effective Officer in the Coast Guard, and to see my ideas implemented. A goal is something you are trying to do or achieve. Set daily goals, and write down your long term goals. Encourage people around you to work toward something measurable, and be available and willing to help them accomplish this. Remember that success is often the path that is taken toward a destination, rather than the destination itself. Work hard to accomplish your goals, never give up, and be willing to rethink and adjust. Failure to achieve a goal is excusable; however failure to do everything within one's power to accomplish a reasonable goal that they have set for themselves has no place in any successful organization.

**Focus on Communication** -Accomplishing personal goals requires that one knows him or herself. Accomplishing group goals requires that each participant knows the other; a common language is shared, group norms are established, and individual and group needs are met. Possibly the most important aspect of group dynamics is communication. Effective communication can mean the difference between mission success and mission failure. As a leader, one must not only focus attention on what they say, and how they say it, but on what is and is not being said to them. Creating an atmosphere where there are no "stupid questions," and each person's voice is equally valued, allows true effective communication to occur. Being a good listener is just as important as being a good speaker. Know when to use your voice, and when to let someone else do the talking. Take time to develop effective group communication through training, practice, and repetition. Commit yourself to setting an example as an effective communicator, and demonstrate this commitment on a daily basis.

**Encourage Creativity-** Difficult problems often require creative solutions, and today's rapidly changing world demands innovation. In order to prevent an attitude that the work we are doing as a group is "good enough," we must constantly seek new ideas and encourage fresh input. (Grigorian, 1997) Don't assume that as a leader all ideas will come from you. The more you create an environment where the idea that "people, given the opportunity, can improve anything" is at the center, the more your group will prosper.(Grigorian, 1997, p.43) Take time to ask others how they think a problem should be solved, and be sure to implement the ideas of others when possible. When creative ideas do not

work do not punish its creator. This will stifle further creativity. Debrief, discuss, and commend those who bring new ideas forward.

**Be Accountable for Your Actions-** Perhaps the single most important requirement for anyone aspiring to lead others is being accountable for their own actions. Leaders must understand accountability, demand that others be held accountable, and demonstrate personal accountability at all times, and at all costs. Accountability can make or break you as a leader. Being accountable for your actions can mean knowing when to admit you are wrong, doing the right thing when no one is looking, and holding yourself to the same standards that you hold others. Allowing others to continue, unhindered, when they demonstrate a lack of accountability will quickly divide a group. As a leader, it is your job to instill, oversee, demonstrate, and expect that strict accountability be maintained. Committing to uphold our core values in every aspect of your life, and the subsequent follow through with that commitment is an exemplary display of accountability.

**Reference:**

Grigorian, G. C. 1997. Major General William Tunner: A study in Creative and Innovative Leadership During the Berlin Airlift. In *LC 501-Preparing to Lead*, (pp. 43-58). Maxwell AFB, AL.