14 Core Leadership Traits

A Marine Corps Approach to Business Leadership

Frank Gustafson – Semper Fi
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These 14 traits mirror the 14 Leadership Traits that are taught to every single Marine that enlists. They are, however not exclusive to the Marines or any branch of the military for that matter. These traits apply to every business person that deals with people; employees, vendors or customers. They are powerful! Read them, study them, apply them, model them and teach them to your team...

Leadership runs through the Marine Corps like a four lane highway, it is big, it is organized and well thought out and it serves an important purpose, Leadership is critical to the mission of any Marine unit.

From the first day a recruit arrives at bootcamp, whether they are being trained at Camp LeJeune, NC, or in SanDiego CA, he or she is being groomed as a leader. It may not feel like it during boot camp, at least not at first. However, everything that happens in recruit training happens with absolute purpose.

Day to day business on main street USA may not be exactly the same as Marine Corps Bootcamp, but the leadership traits that are instilled in every single Marine on the planet are every bit as applicable in business leadership.

This eBook will lay out and explain the 14 Marine Corps Leadership traits as they apply to your team or your business.

These traits include: Justice, Judgement, Dependability, Initiative, Decisiveness, Tact, Integrity, Enthusiasm, Bearing, Unselfishness, Courage, Knowledge, Loyalty and Endurance.

The Marines use an acronym to help them learn these traits as they learn to apply them to their daily lives, both on and off the job. The Acronym is JJ DID TIEBUCKLE

For continuity sake I will follow the acronym above to present the 14 Leadership
Traits. I do not believe that there is a hierarchy to the traits. They are all equally important.

I would encourage you, as you go through these 14 Leadership Traits and study them introspectively. Take an inventory of your actions and activities as the leader of your business. Additionally, consider discussing them with, and teaching them to your team. I have found that open dialogue with my prior teams about these leadership traits has helped solidifying the team and develop a mutual respect.

Read these traits, learn them model them and teach them to your team. Wouldn’t you love to have a full team of motivated professionals who display most of, if not all of these 14 Leadership traits?
**Forward, by the Author**

Who is Frank Gustafson and what qualifies him to expound on these Leadership Traits?

Good question. I’d like to start by telling you that I grew up bucking authority at just about every turn. I wasn’t a particularly “bad” kid, I just hated to be told what to do. It is probably the stubborn Scandinavian side of me.

I grew up in a home that for the most part, unbeknownst to me at the time, pretty much paralleled these 14 Marine Corps Leadership Traits. Though none of my family had ever served in the Marine Corps, the traits seemed to be the backbone of what my father expected of my brother and me.

I am not saying that my home life was militaristic or that the environment was particularly regimented, but these traits were what we lived by, and were what was expected of us. Certainly not letter and verse, but in a more general way.

So I had this authority issue… coupled with some high expectations that were put upon me and that I eventually took up and put upon myself. All of this made for a clash with the “man” in high school. I could not live under the oppressive regime of the principle and his seemingly wicked ways.

That is when the initiative and decisiveness and enthusiasm and courage and endurance traits kicked in. I was working full time in high school and loving it. Well… I decided that I’d rather do the work thing than the school thing, so I dropped out, with 2 weeks left in my senior year.

I always had leadership positions in every job I had up to this point in my life. I thought that my new found freedom would give me more availability to move up the ladder even faster. That’s when my father stepped in. Here came justice, judgement, bearing, dependability… traits that had alluded me thus far in my young life.
So now at 18, I was summarily booted from the safety and security of my parents house.

I dug in and worked, and worked, and worked some more. It was 1983 and I had to support a $110 payment on my 1977 Camaro, and a $160 car insurance payment and a $290 rent payment on a nasty little efficiency apartment. Life, at 18 was starting to bear down on me. My enthusiasm was waning, my courage was beginning to quake and decisiveness was beginning to look fuzzier every day.

I forgot to mention… my life’s goal was to be a millionaire by the time I was 30. I was beginning to realize that the train I was on did not go through Millionaire-ville.

What was I missing? What did I need to get me on that other train? How? Grrrr!!

Then it hit me. I looked in the mirror and saw that I had NO DISCIPLINE! How to get discipline… Ahhhh… I remember seeing some really disciplined guys at the Texas State Fair. It was the Marine Corps Silent Drill Team. Those guys were the picture of discipline.

So I went out and found a recruiter and joined the Marine Corps. They gave me a waiver, since I didn’t have a HS diploma. They made me sign, in blood, that I would take care of that after I got out of bootcamp and graduated my Marine Corps schooling.

So, I went off to bootcamp, in search of this discipline thing. Found it! Seriously, I learned more about discipline in the first 2 days than in the previous 18 years. You see, discipline is the back bone of the Marine Corps. Without a discipline, small unit leadership breaks down and small unit leadership is foundational to mission success.

Finally, I graduated bootcamp and went to Field Artillery Meteorology school at Ft. Sill, OK. This was some VERY techie stuff. They threw stuff at me that I had never seen before, lots of complex math stuff. My desire to prove something to my parents, my family and myself motivated me to really buckle down and study. I graduated first in my class!! Hey! I can do this school thing!!

I went home, joined my Marine Reserve Unit and earned my HS diploma at night and during the next two summers.

I spent 6 years in the Marines and loved “almost” every second of it. I eventually left the Corps in 1990 at the rank of Seargent.
I have lived these principles for the past 30 year. They have taken me far. From executive level positions in dynamic powerful enterprises to President and CEO of my own business.

Currently I am writing a blog at www.OneBoldMove.com and am working on a Podcast by the same name. My passion and purpose is to Educate, Encourage and Empower Entrepreneurs. I hope that this eBook accomplishes those three purposes for you and more.

Enjoy...
CHAPTER ONE

#1 - Justice

Justice is defined as the fair and impartial assignment of merited rewards and punishments.

As a business owner, it is imperative that you respond to the actions of your team, swiftly and fairly. Things that happen in your business from day to day will require you to be the purveyor of justice.

“Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.” - William Penn

If something needs correcting, correct it, and do it quickly and discretely. Don’t let a cancer form inside of your organization. If something happens that is worthy of reward, reward it. And do it loud and in public. The key is to be swift and decisive and most of all be fair.

Punishment

Many times Justice is a difficult task. It often means that you must discipline an employee for a violation that took place. People are just that, people, and people sometimes do dumb things. One of the hardest things we do as business leaders is disciplining great employees.

The key to discipline is justice. By definition justice is fair and impartial. Punishment and or reprimand done justly can actually boost morale. Your team needs to know that they work in a safe, fair environment where their rights are protected. They deserve to know that when rules are violated, the offender will be dealt with. Rules actually give people freedom.

Some things I keep in mind when dealing with punishment:
• Pick your battles
• Make sure the punishment fits the crime.
• How serious was the infraction. No really, how bad was it?
• Is this a repeat offense?
• Is there any remorse?
• Was there a lesson learned?
• Is this a training issue?
• Unless this was a very serious issue that needs to be addressed publicly (like a serious safety issue), keep it private.

Reward

Justice does not just cover the reaction to a negative action, it also includes reward. When a team member goes above and beyond, you, as their leader, should recognize that in some way.

Have you ever felt like you went way above and beyond the call of duty, you knew that your superior saw what you had accomplished, yet he or she never even said “thank you”, or “good job”? There is little more disheartening and demoralizing than that. Try to put yourself in the shoes of your team members. Rewards do not need to be lavish.

Examples of rewards: (make it public)
• A simple handshake or a pat on the back.
• A sincere compliment and a thank you.
• A public mention in a team meeting.
• A blurb in a newsletter.
• A written note of commendation presented in the midst of that employees peers.

What ever you decide is appropriate is just fine. The key is consistency and fairness. Don’t reward someone for an average performance. Additionally, don’t skip over someone that has gone the extra mile. These things will breed discontent and resentment.

This was tough for me. I would go home at night and talk about my day with my wife. I’d tell her that so-and-so did a great job today. She would ask me if I recognized that great work. “Did you say thank you, or give so-and-so a pat on the back?” Generally the answer was “no, I was too busy and besides so-and-so knows how I feel.” Wrong!

Don’t assume that your team knows that they are appreciated. When you are running around like a wild man trying to operate your business, it is very easy to lose sight of that. Stop, slow down, recognize and be present. Easier said than
done right… for me that’s where my wife played a key role. Who plays that role for you? Find someone, do it soon.

If you have never needed to establish guidelines for punishment and rewards in your organization, then you are probably a sole proprietor. One thing is for certain, people are unpredictable. If you have a team, they will surprise you with a job well done on one day, then turn around and leave you scratching your head the next.
CHAPTER TWO

#2 - Judgment

Good news... as the leader, you get to make the decisions. The buck stops with you and you get to decide.

Webster’s defines judgment as the process of forming an opinion or evaluation by discerning and comparing.

Get the facts

An accurate review of the facts followed by a swift and accurate decision is always the goal. That is sometimes easier said than done. You won’t always be swift and you won’t always be right. In the heat of the moment it is often difficult to stop, reflect and give any issue the due diligence that is appropriate. It is sometimes difficult to do this before you make the call.

“Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.” - Will Rogers

Little decisions, Big decisions

An entrepreneur’s day is chocked full of decisions. Many decisions are mundane. What type of toilet paper to buy or should we get blue or black pens, or both? Other decisions are obviously more important and will directly affect your operation in a much bigger way.

Judgement calls in the Marine Corps are often a matter of life or death. On main street USA, in your operation, those types of decisions are very rare. Not non existent, but rare. However, you will be called upon to make very important decisions.

Should we close early due to an impending blizzard? Should I hire an
additional warehouse worker to offload some stress on my warehouse manager? Does our web site need to be updated? Is that $25 thousand dollar piece of capital equipment going to save us money or help us make more money? Should I lay these 2 employees off or cut salaries due to a downturn in sales?

These decisions require judgement. They are important decisions as they effect peoples lives. A leader must collect the facts available weigh the options and make the best judgment that he can based on what he knows.

As the leader in your business, you will not always be right, but you are always responsible.

You Decide

As a leader, you have to do what you believe is right. Judgement should reflect your morals, ethics and values. Run everything through that filter and you will always find yourself in a position to make decision that you can stand behind.

Set the example, Empower others

Be known as a leader who is decisive. No one wants to follow a wishy-washy leader. I would rather follow someone who can collect the facts and make a choice, even if we have to change course down the road, than someone who can’t find his butt with both hands. Be a leader that makes decisions. Your decisiveness earns the confidence of your team.

Set the example, then empower your team to make decisions. Train them to think as you think, then give them some autonomy over a few smaller things. As they prove themselves, give them more authority to make bigger and bigger decisions. This is how you grow leaders in your organization.

Get input, Build consensus

Some decisions might be better made with the consensus of your team. On some issues, their input is valuable and even preferred. Bring key players in on decisions that affect them. Get their input, but remember that you are still ultimately responsible.

As a business owner, I did not take every decision to my team for their opinion or buy-in. There were times however, when it was prudent to get my warehouse supervisor involved in an issue that had a direct impact on him and the team that reported to him.
For example, I wanted to rearrange the warehouse to accommodate the growing equipment resale business. This involved moving work stations, moving shelving and generally disrupting the flow of everything in the warehouse. This was a decision that needed to be made with input from the ones who actually worked in the warehouse every day. It was their work environment and it really affected them.

I called my warehouse manager into the conference room and we invested an hour going over all of the options. He gave me valuable input as to how things actually flowed and we discussed safety issues and the impact on morale, then I made a decision based on all of the information now available. I was happy, he was happy and the warehouse team was happy.

**Freedom to fail**

You will never be right 100% of the time. That’s ok. Some of the best learning I ever did was as a result of bad judgement. Some of those mistakes can be costly and painful, but I learned from every one of them.

Collect the facts, compare your options, seek input if appropriate, run it through your ethics filter, then make the call!
CHAPTER THREE

#3 - Dependability

Dependability means consistently putting forth your best effort in an attempt to achieve the highest standards of performance.

Don’t you just love McDonalds? No, well most people would agree with you. Then, why in the heck are they so successful? It’s surely not their gourmet cuisine!

What does McDonald’s offer? Availability, Timeliness, Consistency, Reliability and Accountability. You can always depend on them to be there and be the same.

Available and On-Time

It may have been the way I was raised coupled with my time in the Marines, but being where I committed to be at the appointed time is a really big deal for me. I hate to be late!

Have you ever been left waiting in a lobby or at a coffee shop? Your appointment was for 10:00 and it’s now 10:20. Grrr!! Of course things happen and sometimes delays are inevitable. As long as that is the exception and not the rule.

Being there and being on time builds trust. Trust is absolutely critical to productive relationships, both in business and in personal life. We enjoy interacting with people we trust.

Consistent and Reliable

We are creatures of habit. Change is great and variety is the spice of life, or so I have heard. However, when it comes to running a business, being consistent is king.
Routine in business creates an environment where your employees can feel comfortable and confident. The rules of the game were the same yesterday, today and unless something requires improvement, they will be the same tomorrow. Your team knows what to expect and what is expected of them.

The output of your business must be consistent. Consistent high quality is best, but as McDonalds has proven, adequate and consistent almost always trumps inconsistent output.

Your customers or clients want the most for their money. I have found that most will stick with you if they know that you will be there through thick and thin if they know that you are available for them. Have you ever had a vendor that would not return a call, or failed to deliver over time. That will kill your business. Be consistent and reliable.

" Side note... I am sitting on the patio, outside of a coffee shop in Excelsior, MN. As I was writing the last paragraph, a guy (looked like a business man), walked out of the door as he was dialing his cell phone. He stopped and waited... the person on the other end answered... he said, “Where are you?”... he listened... then he said “Sure... fine... talk to you later”. Then he hung up, shook his head seemingly in disgust, jammed his phone back in his pocket and walked to his car. TIP - Don’t be the guy on the other end of that call. - When you say you’ll be there, be there! Period!

Accountable

Accountability has always been huge for me. I have even told people... if I’m not there, or I don’t deliver... call the local hospitals because I have probably been in an accident. Are you a person of your word? If you tell me you’re going to do something, can I put it in the bank?

I would venture to say that most of the issues in business today can be traced back, somewhere, to a lack of accountability. Think about a deal that went bad or a customer that was lost or a vendor relationship that you broke off. Was the down fall based on a lack of accountability?

If you say you are going to do something... DO IT! If you know that you won’t be able to deliver, don’t promise to delivering. It’s really just that simple.

The Golden Arches
If you are just an avid health nut... skip the conclusion that follows.

The next time you are on a road trip and the pangs of hunger catch your attention, you need to refuel the biological engine, but the question is, where to stop. You see the Golden Arches of McDonalds in the distance.

What do you know for absolute certain?
• their food is adequate
• you can get in and out in a timely manner
• the menu is the same as the one around the corner from your house
• if something goes wrong, they will fix it.

In short - They're Dependable, and you can trust them.

Always do what you say and say what you mean. If you are consistent you will build trust with your team, your vendors and your customers. Be a person of your word.
CHAPTER FOUR

#4 - Initiative

Initiative is defined as acting independently from outside influences and control. It means meeting new and unexpected situations with right action. It includes using resourcefulness to get something done without the normal material or methods being available to you.

“A good plan implemented today is better than a perfect plan implemented tomorrow.” – Gen. George S Patton

You are the boss, the leader, the captain of the ship. There is no one to tell you what to do or how to do it. You must identify issues and take care of them. Your mission is to reach your goal, what ever that goal is. This will require you to take and show initiative every day in your business.

#$!@ Happens

There will always be opportunities (issues, problems…) in your business. These “opportunities” will come in every size and shape you could imagine. Today it may be as simple as replacing some light bulbs or as complex as dealing with the expectations of a disgruntled customer. No matter what pops up, you, as the leader must act.

You may not have the skills and the tools required to resolve every issue, but you are responsible to take the initiative none the less. You must adapt, improvise and overcome. Either take care of it yourself, delegate the task to a qualified and empowered team member or you may need to hire an expert.

Take Action!

If you’re not sure exactly what needs to be done, don’t worry, “it” will come and find you. When it does, you will recognize it, then you must act quickly and
decisively. Your initiative will make or break your business and it will set the tone and the pace for your team.

There is an old saying: “If it is going to be, it is up to me”. That is what initiative is all about. As a business leader you will have plenty of opportunity to demonstrate initiative. You may not always have the best solution and many times you will do the wrong thing. However, it is often worse to do nothing than to make a mistake that can easily be corrected. Mistakes are sometime our greatest teachers.

Remember, you are not perfect and sometimes you will do the wrong thing. When you do, stop, pivot and move in a new direction. When you make a wrong turn while driving your car, do you just throw your hands up and settle for what ever destination is in front of you? No, you make a course correction and continue making progress towards your intended destination.

“Today, not starting is far, far worse than being wrong. If you start, you’ve got a shot at evolving and adjusting to turn your wrong into a right. But if you don’t start, you never get a chance.” – Seth Godin, Poke The Box

**Initiative Builds Trust and Confidence**

Have you ever been around people, or worked for someone who talked a good game, but when it came down to it, nothing really ever got accomplished. There are few things more frustrating than sitting in a meeting, discussing critical business issues, making plans to move forward, then hauling off and doing nothing.

“Be willing to make decisions. That’s the most important quality of a good leader. Don’t fall victim to what I call the ready-aim-aim-aim-aim syndrome. You must be willing to fire.” – T. Boone Pickins

Take the initiative and surround yourself with leaders who know how to take initiative. People want to follow someone that they can trust. Showing initiative builds others trust and confidence in you as a leader. Demonstrate initiative, and set an expectation for your team to do the same.
CHAPTER FIVE

#5 - Decisiveness

Decisiveness is defined as the power or quality to decide and take resolute action.

No one wants to follow a leader who can not make a decision. As a business owner you will make many decisions every day. Don't be one of those "deer in a headlight" types. People around you need you to make decisions, and make them confidently and timely.

When to Decide

Does the decision need to be made right now or should it wait? That depends on the impending risk. Should we buy copy paper from this office supply store or that one? Do we have all of the facts? Price, delivery, warranty, availability? If so, decide... if not... wait.

“Decisiveness is a characteristic of high-performing men and women. Almost any decision is better than no decision at all.” - Brian Tracy

Every decision needs to be made, but not every decision needs to be made right now. There is a big difference in being unable or unwilling to make decisions and knowing the proper timing for making that decision. As a leader you must know the difference.

Right or Wrong

There will be times when you will be unsure of the proper course of action. Unfortunately, you don't have the luxury of taking a pass on the decision to respond. The worst decision is often indecision. Many times you will have to use the information at hand and respond quickly and decisively.

Several years ago I read a great book by Marcus Buckingham called "Now
Discover Your Strengths". One of my primary strengths is "Activator". An activator is a action taker, a "just get it done" type of person. This has been a mixed blessing for me. I tend to make decisions quickly and often without all of the facts. Most of the time things work out great, however there are times when I need to regroup and change course.

When your back is against the wall and something needs to happen, not making a decision is often far worse than making a wrong decision. When you decide incorrectly, be willing to stop and change course if necessary.

Confusion and Mistrust

Decisiveness avoids confusion. Your team needs direction from their leader. When a decision must be made and you don't step up, the result is confusion and mistrust.

In my last business we had a mobile hard drive shredding practice. We would go to a client location take their old out of service hard drives, which contained sensitive information, and literally turn their old hard drives into tiny pieces right before their eyes, ensuring that their sensitive data would never be subject to breach. We used was a 24 ft dock truck equipped with a huge generator and an industrial shredder capable of shredding several hundred drives per hour.

Our truck had some fairly serious mechanical issues. My driver was counting on me to make some decisions that greatly affected his ability to perform. These decisions, I felt, were very costly and I chose to put them off. My indecisiveness was a huge problem. My team felt like I didn't care or that I was too cheap to fix the issues that were causing them pain. In the end, the fix was only a few thousand dollars. In retrospect, my indecision caused way more problems than necessary.

Are there some decisions that you have been putting off? Determine your priorities and get off the dime and make a decision. In the end your decisiveness will foster trust and loyalty.
CHAPTER SIX

#6 - Tact

Tact is a sense of what is fitting and considerate in dealing with others, skill or judgement in handling difficult or delicate situations. It is the art of discretion and diplomacy.

**Dealing with People**

Business leaders will inevitably be forced to deal with difficult or delicate issues. These issues will almost always concern and be centered around other people. These people may be team members, vendors or customers. Your ability to exercise tact is critical to maintaining productive relationships.

As I have mentioned before, I am a Type A, bull in a china shop kind of person. The use of tact is sometimes very challenging for me. It has been a muscle that I have had to exercise and I am still pretty weak in this area of my life... most of the time.

So this chapter is for me... If you see something here for you... grab it and apply it to your life as needed.

Your organization and your reach in the marketplace grows, as the leader you will be forced to deal with many different types of people. There will be plenty of times when tactful people skills will be necessary.

“Tact is the ability to tell someone to go to hell in such a way that they look forward to the trip.” - Winston Churchill

The fact is, that your "show must go on". That is, you have got to transact commerce. That is what keeps your lights on and makes payroll every month. To do this you have to maintain relationships. There will be disagreements in every relationship. The key to your success in maintaining these relationships is how you
confront "Professional Disagreement".

**Practical Tact Tips**

I found a great YouTube [video](#) that provided some great tools related to tact, specifically, 5 questions to ask yourself when dealing with other people:

1. How can I relay info in a polite and respectful way?
2. How would I feel to be on the receiving end?
3. Do I act in a professional manner?
4. Is there a more tactful way to handle this situation?
5. Are my words free from condemnation, sarcasm, blame or anger?

Wow, what a great list. If there was a way to inscribe these questions on the inside of my eyelids, my life would probably be a lot easier. So, I will write them on a note card and tape them to the corner of my screen.

**Facebook? an Unlikely Tact Tutor**

There are so many opportunities to express opinions on Facebook. Before I began to use it for business I really didn't think much about posting with tact. If I saw something I liked or had a reaction to something that was happening in my world... BAM... I would let it all hang out.

However, since I have been using Facebook to promote my business and my blog, I have had to do some soul searching. I still post pics of wonderful meals, but I have tempered my approach to some of the more controversial topics. I guess FB has helped me with my "tact" issues.
CHAPTER SEVEN

#7 - Integrity

Integrity is the foundation upon which a lasting business is built. As the leader of your business, flaws in your integrity will be faults in the foundation and stability of your organization.

Webster defines integrity as a firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values: incorruptibility.

**Integrity - Your Bond**

A leader’s word must be his bond. Whether it is a verbal commitment on a handshake or a fifty page iron-clad contract, your integrity is on the line.

There have been a number of times when I found myself in a bind. I made a commitment, perhaps without all of the facts, and in the middle of a project I realized that I bit off more than I could chew.

The first time that happened to me was in my very first business. I was 19 years old and was operating my own lawn maintenance and landscaping business. I went out to bid a job to clear the leaves from a “large” property. I shot the customer a number and she gave me the job. I ended up working three, ten hour days on this job... for 50 bucks! Do the math... However, I had given her my word, my word was my bond and I learned a very valuable lesson. Additionally and more importantly, my integrity was still intact.

“Honesty and integrity are absolutely essential for success in life - all areas of life. The really good news is that anyone can develop honesty and integrity.” - Zig Ziglar

**Integrity - Your Thread**
Integrity is a thread that goes throughout every aspect of your business. You must display integrity when dealing with employees, vendors and clients. I believe that it was Abraham Lincoln who said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time". No matter what, your integrity, or lack thereof will show itself in the end.

“The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office.” - Dwight D Eisenhower

**Integrity - Your Success**

People want to do business with people that they know, like and trust. Build your business on a solid foundation of unshakable integrity and you will never have to spend time looking over your shoulder. Your employees, vendors and clients will be your raving fans and they won't keep it a secret. The seeds of integrity that you have planted, will grow into a successful enterprise that you can be proud of.
CHAPTER EIGHT

#8 - Enthusiasm

It's the fuel that keeps your business afloat. Sure you need capital and customers and blah, blah, blah. But all of those things, with no enthusiasm? Forget it, you're sunk.

Here's what Webster's says about enthusiasm. Enthusiasm: strong excitement about something, a strong feeling of active interest in something you like or enjoy.

Enthusiasm Over Expertise

If given a choice of two prospective candidates for employment where one is an expert with a ho-hum attitude and the other an enthusiastic person willing and able to learn, I'll take the latter almost every time. Anyone with enthusiasm and a willingness to take on the task is generally the better choice.

“Flaming enthusiasm, backed by horse sense and persistence, is the quality that most frequently makes for success.” - Dale Carnegie

Enthusiasm Begets Enthusiasm

Have you ever been in a bad mood and walked into a room full of happy people? When you are in the presence of a bunch of smiling, happy faces your mood tends to shift towards the positive...

There's a saying about one bad apple spoiling the whole barrel. The same is true in your organization. An enthusiastic leader will attract enthusiastic team members. Your enthusiasm is contagious. If you approach your day with enthusiasm your team, even the surliest member, will eventually be lifted.

“If you have zest and enthusiasm you attract enthusiasm. Life does give back in kind.” - Norman Vincent Peale
Enthusiasm is the Fuel

People want to do business with people that they know, like and trust. I think we'd all agree that enthusiastic people are generally more likable than people who lack enthusiasm.

Your customers are people who want to do business with people that they like. Try a little enthusiasm with your prospects. Enthusiasm might be just the thing that will turn them from a prospect to a customer. Couple your great product or service, offered at a good value with a dose of enthusiasm and see what happens.

On the other side of the coin, if you just can't seem to muster the enthusiasm required today, go in your office and stay there. No one wants to deal with a grumpy leader. When you determine to be enthusiastic, come on out and take on the day.

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Enthusiasm or Mediocrity, You Choose

Today is the day to let your light shine. Enthusiastically approach new opportunities, new prospective clients, new and better ways of doing things. Keep your eyes and ears open, observe what happens when you choose enthusiasm.

“There is a real magic in enthusiasm. It spells the difference between mediocrity and accomplishment.” - Norman Vincent Peale

Enthusiasm and a positive attitude invokes possibility, while complacency and a bad attitude produce a feeling that there is no use trying. As a leader, I have witnessed this first hand. When I see the mood going south, I check myself first, to see if I have set this tone. If so, I own it and take the steps necessary to reverse the tide.
CHAPTER NINE

#9 - Bearing

Bearing... Typically a word used in the military, I don't think I had ever used bearing in a sentence until I arrived at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, in 1983 at the ripe old age of 18. I thought bearing was the thing that went out on the front wheel of your car, causing a hideous grinding noise. I quickly learned what real bearing was all about. I also learned that there were two ways to learn something, the easy way or the hard way. For some reason I was destined to learn the hard way... Ugh!

What is BEARING?

Bearing: the manner in which one comports oneself, the way in which a person moves, stands or behaves. Synonyms; deportment, demeanor or manner.

Bearing also relates to direction on a compass. What a great word picture. If you have a goal or a destination, you will need to know which way to go. Let's call that direction "true north". True north is the direction to your goal, your bearing is the manner in which you get there. That is the way you behave, the way you move, your professional manner.

Bearing and your Business

As the leader in your company, you may be the only touch point that a prospective customer, vendor or employee will ever experience. The way you handle yourself in any certain setting will give an impression about you and your company. A professional bearing or demeanor is critical. You will never have an opportunity to make a second, first impression. You are the face of your business, you are its mascot. So the question of the day is, how do you want your company to be perceived?

“You moon the wrong person at an office party and suddenly you’re not
"professional" anymore.” - Jeff Foxworthy

I love Jeff Foxworthy!

**Disciplined, but Fun and Relaxed**

It is possible to maintain a professional bearing and still operate in a culture that is fun and relaxing. It is typically more difficult in a larger organization than in a smaller one; more difficult, but not impossible. There are a number of very large companies that operate in a more relaxed manner, yet they are regarded as professional and disciplined leaders in industry. A great example is Google.

In a smaller organization it is very easy to let your hair down and let it all hang out. However, there's a fine line between a culture that is relaxed and one that is undisciplined. In my last company I fostered a very relaxed culture. We were pretty easy going, but we were disciplined. Our reputation in the marketplace was very important to us. We had a relaxed company culture which valued professional bearing and high performance.

When you're in the trenches it's sometimes hard to stay on top of this. If you haven’t yet, watched the hit television show "Undercover Boss". It is really interesting to see the CEO of a large company get back in touch with the culture or bearing of the organization that he or she created. The stories are fascinating and revealing.
CHAPTER TEN

#10 - Unselfishness

Why are you in business, or why are you thinking about becoming a business owner? What is your motivation? This is critical. Before you make the OneBoldMove into the world of the entrepreneur or before you open your company doors tomorrow morning, think about your motivation.

Are your motivations selfish? Are they centered around your own personal profit or pleasure?

People start and lead a business for a multitude of reasons.

What is Your Reason

- You feel like there is a better way to do something and you can fill a void in the market.
- You think you have a product that would be beneficial to society and you want to make a difference.
- You hate your job and naively think that owing a business will be easier and come with fewer headaches.
- You have a maniacal scheme to rake in a ton of money.
- You believe that business ownership is the natural fulfillment of the American dream, so you want to take your future into your own hands.
- Or, a mixture of the above plus one of a hundred more reasons.

“Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Your reason is what it is, but I can tell you from experience that no one EVER did anything great by himself. Your success will ALWAYS require other people. A successful business will typically require employees and it will always require customers, clients, or patients. All of the involved parties will have personal needs, wants and desires. As a business leader you will have to decide how to balance
What is a Business Anyway

Let’s see what the word business means. According to Webster, business is the activity of making, buying, or selling goods or providing services in exchange for money.

Break it down:
- Activity - an action, something done or to be done
- Making - creating, preparing, assembling a good or service that is deemed to have value
- Buying or Selling - exchanging something of one person or entity values, for something another person or entity values
- Goods or Services - something necessary, something of value, that which fulfills a need
- Exchange - a fair and equitable, mutually beneficial trade of a medium that is deemed to have value
- Money - the typical aforementioned medium

By its very nature, business must be a cooperative activity. You have something, someone else wants it and you agree on a way to make that happen. Any other motivation will not sustain the activity. If the transaction is one sided and guided by selfishness, it is not sustainable. If someone gets screwed, your enterprise will be short term.

Selfish or Unselfish Motivation

So business is what it is but your motivation is your driver, your reason, the fuel that starts the business engine every morning and keeps it running until late in the evening. Your motivation will either be focused on what you can do, who you can serve, what need can you fulfill (unselfish) or it will be focused on how others can serve you, what you get out of the deal and how many people you can talk into giving you their time and resources (selfish).

“Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live.” - Oscar Wilde.

I have been in leadership roles my entire professional life. I have seen leaders come and seen them go. I believe that I have experienced just about every leadership strength and weakness out there. I have worked for and with a wide array of companies and organizations. I have witnessed a wide range of motivations.
I rarely came across a leader who was solely interested in his or her own personal gain. However, they are out there. They typically do not last. Their selfish motivation and nearsightedness are typically not sustainable and they or their venture is typically destined for failure. The market weeds them out.

**My Motivation**

Late in 2008, at the depth of a bad economy, I made the decision to leave substantial six figure position behind in a company that I helped found to go out on my own and give this entrepreneur thing a fresh shot.

My initial motivation was that I wanted more control over my destiny. Even though I had a lot of autonomy, I wanted more control. The new venture was in the electronics recycling and information destruction industry. I have never been all that "green" or ecologically minded, however when I saw what was going on in third world countries, my motivation shifted.

There were tons and tons and tons of scrap electronics being dumped in developing nations. There were/are places in the world where it is abnormal for a child to be born normal due to the lead and other pollutants in their soil and water. I had a new motivation. I knew that recycling was a field that would produce income and I knew that it was a "good" thing to do. There was a benefit to mankind and I was motivated to do something about it.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

#11 - Courage

Courage is defined as the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere and withstand danger, fear or difficulty. Danger is part of the daily life of a combat Marine, however not so much in a business setting, yet fear and difficulty are ever present in the life of an entrepreneur. If it is missing in your organization... you’re probably coasting, and you’ll be gone soon any way.

“Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others.” - Winston Churchill

If you have not had an opportunity to display courage yet, then you probably are in the pre-start-up phase of your business. If you do not have any fear, then you may need to take a closer look and determine if this business ownership thing is really for you. If you live and transact commerce on the edge, you will undoubtedly encounter difficulty of some type.

Put Fear into Perspective

Fear is often times just a reaction to something you have conjured up in your mind. There are lots of acronyms for F.E.A.R.

- False Evidence Appearing Real
- Face Everything And Recover
- Fail Early and Responsibly

Call it what you will, just don’t let it stop you in your tracks!

How to Muster Courage

Self disciplined action will put fear in its place. But first you must:

- Develop a vision.
- Know your purpose.
• Have a plan to achieve it.
• Work your plan. (action)
• Never give up.

If you fear something, there’s a pretty good chance that is the thing you need to do. Face the fear with disciplined action. Your actions must align with your vision and purpose. Action based on a clear vision, backed up with a definiteness of purpose is virtually unstoppable.

“Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision.” - Peter Drucker

Deal with Difficulty

As I mentioned earlier. If you own a business and seem to never have any difficulties then you are floating. Have you ever been in an inner-tube in a river? It may feel like you are standing still, but in reality you are being taken down stream to eventually be dropped at the lowest point. In business you are either fighting your way up stream or floating down stream.

As a small business owner, moving forward can be difficult. It takes effort. It means that you will have to stretch, run hard, avoid obstacles, scale walls and sometimes leap tall buildings in a single bound. Like a hurricane, difficulty comes and if you’re not prepared it could wipe you out. If you live in the coast line you probably experience a lot of nice sunny days. So why do you have storm shutters on your house? Right... you are prepared.

Preparation and contingency planning are the storm shutters for your business. In 2009 I decided to go into the hard drive shredding business. It seemed like a good thing to do. I purchased a 24 ft dock truck, a 75 Kw generator and an industrial hard drive shredder. This thing would turn a hard drive into little metal bits in a matter of seconds.

We put our new truck on the road and began to market our service to local clients. The first time we went out on a shredding job... DEAD... the shredder would not even fire up. We were out of business before we even started. I ran into difficulty and I had no back up plan. Long story short, we diagnosed the issues, fixed it, and kept a kit of essential part (expensive ones) on the truck as a back up.

We had a vision, we knew our purpose, we developed a plan, we worked the plan, we overcame obstacles and we never gave up.
CHAPTER TWELVE

#12 - Knowledge

As a leader your knowledge will be constantly tested. The great thing is that you don't have to know everything. The things that you do know that are marketable and in demand will be the differentiation between you and your competition. Take what you know, areas of your greatest strength, and focus on increasing your value every day.

They say that knowledge is power... Meh... could be, but not always.

They also say, and I agree that leaders are readers. Study constantly. Make yourself an industry leader, an expert, the go to person in your field. Your knowledge plus experience over time brings wisdom. Wisdom is a powerful mojo that they can't teach you at Harvard Business School.

Get Paid for Your Knowledge

Getting paid for what you know is a winning formula. If you have a skill that is desirable in the marketplace you will never go hungry.

I don't know about you, but I HATE to paint. I can do it, sort of, but I can't stand to do it. I know that If I die and (God forbid) wind up in hell, Satan will hand me a paintbrush and make me paint the place, over and over and over again, for eternity. When I need painting done, I ask a trusted friend for a referral and hire the expert to do his thing.

That scenario goes for just about everything that can be done. Web design, carpet cleaning, shipping and receiving, electrical work, delivery service, making donuts, accounting... name it, it can be hired out. What special skills does your business have? Are there areas where you can expand or services that you can add to diversify your organizations port folio into other creative industries?
Enthusiasm + Knowledge

I will almost always take enthusiasm and creativity over knowledge. However, when the two are paired, it's combination that is hard to beat! Give me someone who has the enthusiasm and creativity to get a task done and I can teach him the task.

“The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.” - Albert Einstein

I had a warehouse manager who was not terribly outwardly enthusiastic. He mostly kept his enthusiasm to himself. It was there and it would pop out on occasion. He was however, creative and can-do oriented. If he did not have the knowledge to accomplish a task, he would take it upon himself to seek out the information necessary to accomplish his mission.

I wish I had a nickel for every time someone told me that they wished they had a guy like this on their team. He took his creativity and enthusiastically sought out the knowledge. A great guy to have on your side!

Personal and Professional Growth

The cool thing about knowledge is that you can take all you can get and there's still room for more. Studying and learning should be a life-long pursuit. When we quit learning we might as well just quit all together.

The key to learning is desire. You can try to force your team to learn something new, but if they are resistant, it won't stick. If personal and professional growth is essential to the success of your organization and you have a team member who rebels, it is time for a new team member. You can't make someone strive to learn and grow, you can only encourage them.

“Knowledge acquired under compulsion obtains no hold on the mind.” - Plato

I can only speak for myself, but personal and professional growth can never be underestimated. I have not always been a reader, but I can tell you that reading has changed my life. Seeking knowledge and understanding are keys to growth. I am constantly studying. At this particular time in my life, I study a minimum of 5 hours every week day, sometimes more.

This studying comes in the form of reading books, blogs and anything else I can find in the areas where I personally need to grow to take my endeavors to the next level. I am currently enrolled in 6 paid online classes. These classes are related to my desire to add value to business leaders.
* Can I add something here? Knowledge + Enthusiasm is great, but until there is action, nothing happens. Let’s add “hard work” to the equation. There… Knowledge + Enthusiasm + Hard Work… that should get the job done!
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

#13 - Loyalty

Loyalty is the bond that holds your business together. It is what makes your employees want to come to work in the morning. Loyalty keeps your customers buying from you instead of your competition. It is what endears you to those around you. Loyalty is a common trust, a devotion and a bond.

Webster defines Loyalty as the quality or state or an instance of being loyal or possessing fidelity. Loyal: giving or showing firm & constant support or allegiance to a person or institution.

There's a general misconception that loyalty is based on position. You provide the paycheck, your employees should be loyal to you and the company. After all you're the boss. Right? You bend over backwards for the customers. They should be loyal to you. Right? Not so fast... Loyalty is not automatic, it has nothing to do with your position in the equation. It must be earned and it must be nurtured and maintained.

Loyalty Must be Mutual

As the leader in your organization you want loyalty. Well, so does your team. It is every bit as important for you to be loyal to your team members as is it for them to be loyal to you.

Fidelity to your organization does not just happen, it is a process. It is based on trust and mutual respect. Once you have earned it, stay the course as it can be destroyed very easily.

“The foundation stones for balanced success are honesty, character, integrity, faith, love and loyalty.” - Zig Ziglar

Zig hit the nail right on the head. I believe strongly that loyalty is based on
several of the items he mentioned. As a business leader, if you are found lacking in honesty, character or integrity you will quickly destroy any modicum of loyalty that existed.

The same can be said with your customers and vendors. The best way to destroy a business relationship is to lie. A lie will absolutely destroy a 20 year relationship with your BEST customer. Your integrity and character are on the line every day. Don’t destroy them with a laps in honesty.

**Lasting Loyalty is Longevity**

It’s easier to keep a customer than to go out and get a new one (and cheaper). Same with employees. Maintaining long and lasting professional relationships gives your business stability and longevity. Get ’em, treat ’em right, give ’em your loyalty and keep them forever!

“I have a loyalty that runs in my bloodstream, when I lock into someone or something, you can’t get me away from it because I commit that thoroughly. That’s in friendship, that’s a deal, that’s a commitment. Don’t give me paper - I can get the same lawyer who drew it up to break it. But if you shake my hand, that’s for life” - Jerry Lewis

I love that. Wouldn’t it be great if more people were like Jerry Lewis? That’s the type of loyalty you need to foster with your team, your vendors and your customers. They need to know that you have their back. Give loyalty and they will have your back too.

**My Take**

I have been in a position to serve customers for almost 30 years now. I have created some very long lasting business relationships. I have a hand full of customers that I consider friends. These loyal relationships were built over the years on honesty and integrity. I have always tried to provide a valuable service at a fair price, and deliver what I promise, when I promise it.

Sadly, I have gone the other route a time or two as well. Those are some sad stories, but they have resulted in priceless life lessons. Out of my shortcomings has come knowledge and experience, I call that wisdom.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

#14 - Endurance

Endurance is the mental and physical stamina that is measured by your ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress and hardship. It is the ability to withstand a prolonged stressful effort or activity.

The endurance of a business owner is constantly tested. Your mental and physical endurance are critical to your ability to make it through another day, another project or the next sales call. To get you over the hump, think of the bigger picture, think of the reason that you decided to start your business.

**Endurance is an Action Word**

“For to be poised against fatality, to meet adverse conditions gracefully, is more than simple endurance; it is an act of aggression, a positive triumph.” - Thomas Mann

For our purposes here endurance is a verb. Thomas Mann calls it an act of aggression against fatality. He says that we should meet adverse conditions gracefully. In other words endurance can be seen as an action towards, not a reaction to fatigue, stress or hardship.

Ask any marathon runner and he will tell you that the marathon is a race of endurance. Sure it is physical and the stress and strain on the physical body are real, however the will to endure, is a mental battle. Endurance is an attack against the will to stop or to quit.

In business this scenario plays out in a looming deadline for a customer project, or a piece of equipment breaking down at a bad time. It is the mental will to pick up the phone and call the next prospect on your list after the ten before rejected your offer. Not only to do it, but to do it with a great attitude.
“Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, and its power of endurance – the cheerful man will do more in the same time, will do it better, will preserve it longer, than the sad or sullen.” - Thomas Carlyle

**Endurance Tips**

I recently sat through an online seminar that covered some tools that might be helpful to combat fatigue and stress. The presenter talked about some productive ways to manage energy. He also pointed out that we don’t typically have a “lack of time” problem, but we generally find that we don’t have the energy to devote to a particular task.

He suggested:

* Schedule high value activities for times when your energy is typically higher. For example, if you are a morning person, do important things in the morning.
* Physical activity is critical. Studies show that exercise improves energy.
* Take frequent short breaks. Even a short ten minute walk, get some fresh air, get some sun, recharge your battery to increase your energy.
* Do nothing. Take some time to turn off the chatter in your brain. Sit, breathe, rest.
* Focus on the Big Picture, what is your “reason”, your vision and your mission

The presenter recommended using a web site called calm.com. In fact I am using it right now. You should hear the soothing music in my headset. It is really relaxing. I believe that it has made me more productive, and definitely less stressed and on edge. Give it a try.

**My Endurance**

When I was younger endurance was not an issue. Can you relate? In early 1989, I moved from Dallas to the Minneapolis area. My fiance still lived in Dallas. I can’t tell you how many times I left the office at 3:00 pm on a Friday and drove straight through to Dallas (1000 miles), only turn around and drive back on Sunday evening. I would pull into the office just in time to go to work. Where did that energy go?

I have had to muster that same endurance mindset many times over the years. Countless hours after dark and on weekends were invested in my business. Why? Because I had a goal and a vision. I was prepared to do whatever it took to achieve my mission.
As I mentioned above endurance is an action word, it is mostly mental and it must be born out with a good attitude. As the leader in our business your endurance will play a critical role. If you can keep your mind and body right, you will do just fine. Just remember to focus on your big picture.
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Conclusion

There you have it... JJIDITIEBUCKLE

1. Justice
2. Judgement
3. Dependability
4. Initiative
5. Decisiveness
6. Tact
7. Integrity
8. Enthusiasm
9. Bearing
10. Unselfishness
11. Courage
12. Knowledge
13. Loyalty
14. Endurance

These leadership traits have held together one of the greatest military organizations that the world has ever known. They have been tried from the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli. They have been to every climb and place where a Marine could venture.

Some of the practitioners of these 14 Traits have taken what they learned in the Marine Corps and parlayed their knowledge and skill in enterprise as well. The 14 Traits have been displayed by top leaders in the board rooms of some of the largest companies, including:

- Robert Stevens - Lockheed Martin
- Fred Smith - Founder of FedEx
- Glen Bell - Founder of Taco Bell
The 14 Leadership traits have been played out on the field, course and in the ring by countless famous sports figures including:

- Rod Carew - Hall of Fame Baseball Player
- Ted Williams - Hall of Fame Baseball Player
- Art Donovan - Hall of Fame Football Player
- Jim Mora - NFL Head Coach
- Ken Norton - World Champion Boxer
- Lee Trevino - Hall of Fame Golfer

Countless actors including; Gene Hackman, Harvey Keitel, Brian Keith, Lee Marvin, Steve McQueen, R Lee Ermey and George C Scott have used these traits to excel to great heights in their careers.

The list of astronauts, congressmen, senators, governors, judges, justices writers, and musicians that have learned and demonstrated the 14 Marine Corps Leadership Traits is extensive.

I am not going to say that these 14 Traits are the sole determining factor for the success of these high achievers, but I will promise you that it sure as heck didn’t hurt. I can however, tell you that they made the difference for me personally. The Marine Corps took in a skinny, obstinate, rule breaking, high school dropout and transformed him into what I am today.

I am proud of the heritage and the legacy of the United States Marine Corps and take great pride in what the Marines stand for. I am honored to present these leadership traits to you in this book and pray that you take them, and weave them into your life and your business. I hope that they help take you and your business to what ever heights that you desire.

I’d love to hear from you... Your thoughts, good and bad. How have these traits impacted you or how do you plan to use them to reach your personal and professional goals with me and your fellow readers. We appreciate learning from you too. With that, thank you in advance for sharing those thoughts.

Semper Fi - Frank Gustafson
Outline: Links and Contact Information

OneBoldMove... Educating, Encouraging and Empowering Entrepreneurs

OneBoldMove is all about educating, encouraging and empowering entrepreneurs. All of our content is geared towards helping current and future business owners. I believe that small business is the backbone of our country. We need a strong and vibrant community that is committed to the traits enumerated in the eBook you just read. Please consider joining us in lively discussion, lively debate or just come see what our latest OneBoldMove is.

Please connect with me at the following links:
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I’d love to hear your feedback. Please leave your comments at one of the links above.

Please join my email list, I won’t fill your email box, but I will try to keep you informed with content that is relevant to business leaders... and... you can unsubscribe at any time if I fail to meet your expectations.

Thank you again for reading!

Semper Fi,
Frank