

CHAPTER ONE

ALBERT M. CALLAND III



My View of Leadership from Thirty-three Years as a Navy SEAL

Vice Admiral (VADM, retired) Albert M. Calland III (“Bert” or “Melrose” to friends) was born in Columbus, Ohio, and raised in Zanesville, Ohio, where he was a star three-sport letter winner in high school. He was an oceanography major at the US Naval Academy (USNA) and was a three-year starter on the Navy football team. He still holds the USNA record for most receptions in a season, is second in all-time career receptions, and was the team MVP his senior year. Following graduation, he was selected and qualified as a Navy SEAL. During his thirty-three years of active duty, VADM Calland served in numerous unique positions of national significance and impact. In 1987, he deployed to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Earnest Will as Commander, Naval Special Warfare Task Unit, Pacific, aboard a mobile sea barge, conducting interdiction and capture missions

utilizing a variety of joint airborne and seaborne assets. He commanded Navy Special Warfare Development Group, a Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Priority One Major Command as well as Navy Special Warfare Command, in charge of all Navy SEALs. VADM Calland was Special Operations Commander Central Command (SOCCENT) when the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, occurred. He directed, in-country, more than 3,000 US and Coalition Special Operation forces in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. This effort included direct and first in-country liaison and arrangements with the current controlling factions in Northern Afghanistan for entry and operation of Coalition Special Forces throughout the campaign region. He was, literally, the initial “tip of the spear” in the War on Terrorism, directing with boots-on-the-ground the successful victory over the Taliban regime. VADM Calland was appointed Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency by President George H. Bush in July 2005 and served until he was specifically selected, in July 2006, as Deputy Director for Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counterterrorism Center to set up and develop that organization. Following retirement from the Navy, VADM Calland continued his involvement in counterintelligence and the War on Terrorism as Executive Vice President for security and intelligence integration at CACI International Inc.

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THE TOPIC OF LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTING PEOPLE OF an organization to accomplish a goal, or whatever definition

you want to pull from the internet, old-fashioned dictionary, or the multitude of books, presentations, class notes etc., on the subject has been around for a long, long time, and I don't really believe I have anything unique to add to these already adequately expressed characteristics and advice. I have some personal experiences—or “sea stories,” as we sailors call them—where I have utilized some leadership techniques that might be worth reviewing. However, we could shorten the whole discussion by just reviewing some historically proven guidance on leadership. If you want to know how some very successful “leaders” managed that success, you can simply read their printed advice. In fact, a detailed, interesting, and proven course of instruction on leadership could easily be put together based on historical quotes by proven leaders. One of history's most storied leaders, Winston Churchill, gives a wonderfully witty abundance of information on leadership. If you just successfully implemented the wisdom in his advice, you would be a more-than-adequate “leader”: “You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word. It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.”

Few of us will ever face the absolutely dire situation and world catastrophe facing Churchill and his nation, but the intent is simply stated and leaves little doubt for interpretation. He knew that goals are easy to describe but also that the strategy to achieve them and attention to detail in executing that strategy are even more important. He also had another piece of advice that might fit numerous leadership situations: “Tact is the ability to tell someone to go to hell in such a way that they look forward to the trip.” This emphasizes the

point that, oftentimes, it is not only what you say but how you say it and, just as importantly, how you inspire those under your command.

Although I am not a big General Douglas MacArthur fan, as he was a little too flamboyant for my tastes, he had some excellent advice that certainly fit my perceptions of a good leader. “A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the quality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.”

General Colin Powell, another tried-and-tested leader, also had a number of great observations on leadership that could also form the basis of an outstanding course of instruction. I’ll limit my reference to this very simple statement: “Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt, to offer a solution everybody can understand.”

Finally, one of my favorite quotes from my “History of War, Colloquium” class at the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) is by Alexander the Great: “I am not afraid of an army of lions led by sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.” And despite my contention that a good leader should build a team that can ably function without him or her, Alexander cleverly points out that leadership can be so very critical to success! (On a personal note, I was a huge Alexander fan and even named my first “new” sports car after the world conqueror.) To see the proof in Alexander’s statement, you can look at how much of an impact the head coach of any sports team makes to the team’s success or consider the number of generals President

Lincoln went through in our Civil War before U.S. Grant found success and victory.

I will just say right now, at the very beginning of this narrative, that my leadership style, my personality, and my journey through life is and has been all about three principles. First and foremost, **Integrity**—simply stated: do the right thing, be transparent up and down the chain of command, admit errors, try to repair them, and don't repeat them. Secondly, **Teamwork and Team Building**—create/be part of a team that is motivated to perform to the best of individuals' abilities to hopefully accomplish the assigned task, with or without active guidance, I might add. Thirdly, making what I call "**Quality Decisions**"—those junctures/situations in your life/career/assignment where you need to make something happen for the better. I will be focusing my discussion mainly in these three areas; I will give some personal experiences and try to explain how they line up with the commonly accepted attributes of good leadership. I also want to say upfront that I was extraordinarily fortunate to serve with an outstanding group of teammates in most of my leadership assignments; the successes I attained in a long career were due as much to their superior attitudes, support, and amazing performance as to my leadership competence! And, to emphasize a point I will make throughout this discourse, in the military, you get a lot of leadership training and assistance; so, I am going to list here, at the beginning, those leadership competencies that were part of one of the earliest leadership courses I took while in the Navy, including Leadership and Management Education and Training (LMET) courses. The myriad competencies listed for an effective leader were someone who: Sets

Goals and Standards, Takes Initiative, Plans and Organizes, Optimizes Use of Resources, Delegates, Monitors Results, Rewards, Disciplines, Exercises Self-control, Influences, Team Builds, Develops Subordinates, has Positive but Realistic Expectations, Understands, and Conceptualizes. While that is a fairly exhaustive list, throughout my career, I was able to incorporate most of these “competencies” within my smaller and easier-to-remember mantra of “**Integrity, Teamwork, and Quality Decision Standards.**”

I am a 1974 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, where I also I played football all four years. It was there where my military leadership training started, as the military schools are all about training young men and women to become leaders in military service after graduation. This culminates in your senior or first-class year. This is the year where you are truly in a leadership role, as this class leads the other three underclasses in all daily activity and competition; it was during this time I commanded one of the six battalions in the brigade. The lessons learned while at the Academy establish the baseline that you are able to build upon, as, after graduation, you are immediately placed in supervisory positions with leadership roles. While you certainly receive a great deal of leadership and management training, the required leadership skills and personality are not fully in place. This highlights the need to start out in a measured and disciplined manner while taking in all the lessons learned and continually adapting to the types of people you will lead, the complexity of the mission, the ever-changing landscape, emergence of threats—some seen, and some not so discernible—and the need to ensure alignment with a host of factors which also need to be considered! This is

different from most other leadership positions such as sports teams, industry, exploration expeditions, leading protests/riots, etc., where parameters are more fixed, variables are fewer, and outcomes not as critical. All of this reinforced to me that leadership is a continual learning experience that never really ends until you are no longer in a leadership position and just trying to figure out where your next fishing or golfing trip will take you. I was in leadership roles and leadership-learning situations for the next forty years of military and corporate assignments and was learning the entire time.

My leadership training started well before entering the Naval Academy, which leads to the question often asked as to whether leaders are born or developed. In my opinion, I contend the answer is a little bit of both. Some people are “born” with or develop early, more confident and outgoing personalities. They might seek out class-officer positions or, conversely, might become a class bully if popularity is an issue and they have not been given the right parental influence. Certain people have a stronger desire to assume leadership roles and take on political or social responsibilities. Confidence is definitely required to be a good leader in any of these roles, but it does not make you a good leader, does not give you good decision-making skills, does not teach you how to treat other people, and does not teach you integrity and honesty. Those traits begin at home, and that is where my leadership training began, with Nancy and Al Calland, my parents. They nurtured my competitive spirit, supported my athletic drive, taught me that winning isn’t always the goal, to always strive to do your best, to treat people fairly and with respect, and, most importantly, they required **honesty and integrity** from

me in all aspects of my young life. They also instilled in me the necessity for developing good habits. One of these habits was being on time, which reminds me of a comment from General Tommy Franks, someone I worked with and respect a great deal: “If you can’t take responsibility for your own life and show up on time, you have no right leading anyone else. Don’t *ever* be late.” Consequently, early on, I was always cognizant of the time issue and prided myself on being prompt. My parents also held me accountable for my decisions. I learned there are consequences to decisions and that it cuts both ways. Decision-making is a part of everyone’s life, and, here, I have made a distinction. I call them “**quality decisions**” instead of “**good decisions**,” because not all choices made with good intent end up being a good call. Quality decisions are the best choice you can make after careful analysis of all the available information. That’s the key, isn’t it? Available information and careful analysis of all the options/risks/outcomes.

I had an early experience with quality decisions when I was ten years old. We had just moved to Columbus, Ohio, for my Dad’s job. This was my first introduction to public swimming pools, and I did not know how to swim. After watching everyone splashing around and having fun in the deep end, I came to the realization that it was a more appropriate environment for me than the shallow end, which, to that point, had been the limit of my experience. I was convinced that I needed to expand my boundaries, and one day I set out in the direction of the deep end. I must add that this was not without forethought or preparation, as I had been practicing getting back to the safety of the pool edge in the shallow end, and after careful analysis, was sure that my shallow-end experiments would

translate to success in the deep end. After arriving at the deep end, I made the decision to go for it and jumped in. Knowing that discretion is also part of valor, I did ensure I jumped in close to the lifeguard chair, for reasons of my own security and well-being. Immediately after jumping, I sank straight to the bottom. I struggled back to the surface, barely managing to get my head above the water, looking to the lifeguard for help.

Unfortunately, even though I was right under the lifeguard's chair, he did not notice me, as his attention was diverted due to all the other splashers, rule-breaking runners, yelling youngsters, and diving-games noise. I panicked, sank to the bottom again, and continued to repeat this process several times, swallowing pool water and gasping for air, until after what seemed an eternity, I was able to somehow finally make it to the safety of the pool edge. I was clearly shaken but undeterred, and while walking home, I thought about my risky decision and made another, more-practical, quality decision and a promise: I needed swimming lessons, and while I, like everyone else, would have to eventually die, I was going to do my very best to not die by drowning! I discussed this with Mom and Dad, and they agreed. I took swimming lessons, joined the swim team, and even won five medals in the Junior Olympics. Later, that promise to avoid drowning was tested several times during my adventures as a Navy SEAL!

As a youngster, I was very competitive and loved to play sports. Football, basketball, baseball, swimming, track. You name it—I gave it a try, and I was pretty good at all of them. But I quickly learned that being a good player didn't mean we would win the game. To win, obviously, takes **teamwork**. Having a really great player on your team is good, but having

a team of good players who are coached and motivated to best utilize their skills and to work together as they are coached has a much better chance of giving their very best effort and winning. My high school football coach, Ron Apperson, was another early influence on me and was a strong advocate of **teamwork**, best effort, and **honesty** with yourself and about your contribution to the team. He convinced me that winning isn't everything, although, winning, of course, should be the goal every time you take the field. You sometimes learn more about yourself and your team from losing. Sometimes you just lose to a better team. But remember: never blame a single teammate for the loss even if he believes it was his fault. It is the team, not an individual, that wins or loses a game. It's also important to always look at the things you did right and those you did wrong as both as a team and an individual. Figure out how to avoid those mistakes the next time you play. That's where the team leader, the coach in this case, is an instrumental catalyst. Albert Einstein once said, "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result is insanity," which is certainly true when referencing mistakes. As I moved into more competitive arenas and played Division One college football at Navy against recognized national-powerhouse teams, the importance of **teamwork**, coaching styles, skills, and motivation to give best effort became even more apparent.

During my time at the Academy, I was fortunate to have a great group of classmates and upperclassmen and was able to observe and experience leadership, both good and bad, every day; that was another good lesson. When you are in leadership roles, you are always on display and being observed from below as well as by your seniors. I learned that

leadership is about building trust and confidence with the junior Midshipmen by being fair, making **good decisions**, and setting clear **boundaries of right and wrong**. I certainly wasn't the perfect Midshipman by any means, but I, naively perhaps, respected and trusted the Senior Midshipmen to do the right thing. That was, unfortunately, not always the case. This was another lesson: people have their own personalities, habits, and agendas, and just because they have been trained and screened to be a good example/leader/citizen does not necessarily mean that will be the outcome. You need to pay attention to those habits in the people you work for and those who work for you. Again, experience is the best teacher, and you often learn more about how "not to do it" rather than good characteristics to emulate.

I would be remiss in not mentioning another great influence on me at the Naval Academy. I was an Oceanography major, and one of my professors, Captain N. G. "Monk" Hendrix, USN (retired), had been a World War II submariner. He eventually had command of his own submarine as well as other high-level command assignments during his thirty-year Naval career. He loved the ocean, earned a Ph.D. in oceanography, and came back to teach at the Naval Academy and commiserate with future naval officers. He was a feisty character and had been an All-American lacrosse player at Navy when he attended. He would invite several of us to his office after hours for "extra instruction (EI)" on his courses but nearly always included talk about being good sailors and good commanders. I think he recognized that those of us he invited were going to be career naval officers, and he wanted to give a little old-school philosophy, learned in combat and in less-than-ideal conditions.

It was a great, if somewhat disorganized, forum, and during these sessions, he would oftentimes toss a lacrosse ball with his stick against a brick wall as he spoke, asked questions and opinions, and told “sea stories.” What I learned from him only emphasized what I had already started to recognize—**integrity, team building, and quality decisions** for yourself and your people. He also had a unique command philosophy that he simply stated as “Firm, fair, consistent—train to win the war, and when time and opportunity allow, have some fun, both for yourself and your people.”

During my Naval Academy senior year, prior to graduation, I was selected as one of five individuals to go directly to Basic Underwater Demolition School in Coronado, California. If successful, I would then begin my career as a Navy SEAL. The leadership training continued as I went through this very challenging and difficult ordeal (I think that is a fair description). After nearly six months of rigorous training, arduous physical demands, and intense mental self-evaluation challenges, I was one of eleven from an original class of seventy-two to graduate. While only eleven may seem inordinately low, that is a normal attrition rate, and this was, without a doubt, absolutely one of the hardest things I have done in my life. I can't really say how others mentally handled the ordeal, but, for me, it was a simple agreement with myself that I was not going to quit. The instructors, whose job it was to weed out those individuals who did not have the physical or mental stamina—and, just as important, the heart and mindset for the job—may tell me that I was not qualified, but I was not going to quit. One interesting discovery about leadership in making the cut was that it was obvious that the few of us who progressed

into the SEAL teams were all highly motivated, very capable individuals. The leadership demands and skills required in dealing with such elite and motivated people and their very complex and varied assignments would be more complicated than anything I had so far observed.

My first fleet assignment as a new Ensign but now, proudly wearing the SEAL warfare trident, was with Underwater Demolition Team 11 (UDT 11). That was the start of a long succession of leadership challenges and learning experiences, and all would emphasize the great importance of **integrity, teamwork, and quality decisions**. I worked with SEALs who had served in Vietnam and were “the experts” in jungle warfare, actual combat situations, and small-group warfighting tactics, and now they worked for me. During this phase of my career, I served in various and escalating leadership assignments from weapons officer, to assistant platoon commander, and then to platoon commander. During this “new guy” period, I used the lessons from previous leadership training and experience and developed my own leadership personality, still observing and learning. But I was now exposed to the importance of Navy middle management—Chief Petty Officers. The Chief Petty Officers, or CPOs, are the experienced, detail-managing, hands-on supervisors for the troops in the command. They reached their professional status through years of experience and positive evaluation by peers and seniors. I worked hard to get to know them and to solicit their advice. That recognition of the importance of these specialized middle managers would continue throughout my career.

SEAL Platoon Commander is, in my view, the most important job a new SEAL officer can have. Platoons, over time,

have varied in size from fourteen to sixteen men. The platoon chain of command is Platoon Commander, Assistant Platoon Commander, Master Chief, Senior Chief, Chief, and Squad Leaders. All these leadership positions must be able to operate cohesively but often independently. So, as Platoon Commander, that was my “team,” figuratively, from my leadership perception and literally, as the SEAL organization calls them “teams.” Team formation and **teamwork** are critical! The Platoon Commander must gain the trust and confidence of the Chief Petty Officers. The relationships between the officers, the Chief Petty Officers, and the troops must be smooth/good/transparent in order to accomplish some very hazardous and very independent missions. To become a good leader, you must understand and show appreciation for members of your team; you must earn their respect for your leadership and especially your cognitive reasoning and ability to make quality decisions without total or accurate information; you must recognize those who excel and encourage those who are struggling. Your reputation as a leader will follow you as you move to new assignments. However, past performance is no guarantee of success, so regardless of what you have done in the past, you will be called upon to form a new team that performs to your standards, and you will be continually observed and judged by your people on your leadership skills. Positive judgment will go a long way toward making the team successful.

As I became more senior, besides being the ultimate team-builder and decision-maker for my group, one of my biggest responsibilities was to teach good leadership to my teams, both by my observable actions and tactful (or not so tactful, if required) advice and direction. I don't know if I was a “natural”

leader, but I felt comfortable with the job. I worked hard to engender the trust of those who worked for me as well as with my seniors. I definitely became a better leader with experience and tried to create a “success environment and mindset” for my guys: quality work is much more valuable than the number of hours you work; get it done, but get it done right the first time; if you are struggling, talk to those who have the most experience in the work you are doing; ask questions; demonstrate that you are willing to listen; learn from others even if they work for you. In spite of the fact that you are the “leader,” you are not “all-knowing,” and if you ever think you are, you’re in the wrong job. You also have to realize that not everyone in your team will be onboard with everything you advocate/direct. You definitely want feedback and input, even dissent, but everyone should know that, once they have given their very solicited advice/opinion, yours is the final decision, and your plan will be executed. Troublemakers often challenge leaders and may try to divide the team. This must not happen, and you cannot let your team become divided. If you are the leader, you must take control and make sure everyone knows who is in charge. In the most severe cases, the troublemaker must be fired or reassigned—but not before you have had a discussion with his friends and supporters about why his methods were not in keeping with the team’s best interest.

It’s fairly clear, I think, that team building is a constantly changing challenge and that leadership is a very situational issue. Traits/techniques that work in some situations may not be applicable in other situations. Later in my career, I had another unique leadership opportunity, when I deployed to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Earnest Will (a U.S.

military effort in 1987 and 1988 to counter Iranian attacks on Kuwaiti-owned oil tankers). My title was Commander, Navy Special Warfare Task Unit, Pacific, and my “at sea” command was a mobile sea-based barge, the *Winbrown II*. One of the assets assigned to my command were helicopter units from the Army’s 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne). These fast-mover small helicopters, Little Bird AH-6s, were perfect for interdiction missions and were flown by extraordinarily trained and talented pilots. One pilot took it upon himself, contrary to command regulations and briefings, to see how low and fast he could approach the barge and perform a pop-up maneuver from sea level over the barge—probably just a surge of testosterone without thinking. The barge was protected by a host of protective measures, including 50-caliber machine guns. Since the sailors manning those guns had no idea of the pilot’s intentions, only their good sense, intense training recognition, and maybe slow reaction prevented a friendly fire casualty. My leadership personality is generally a calm exterior, and I am a believer, most of the time, in the adage “An angry man loses his credibility and his audience.” But this was a situation where a point needed to be dramatically emphasized, and when dealing with people who have great confidence and skills, it is sometimes necessary to remind them in hard language and tone of team and individual standards, assignments, and responsibilities. Having an angry Tasmanian Devil act in reserve can be particularly effective if ever really required.

On September 11, 2001, I was serving as Commander, Special Operations Command Central, essentially in charge of all special-force activities from all services that were involved

in the Central Command Area of Responsibility (AOR). The CENTCOM AOR includes the Middle East, central Asia, and parts of Africa. Following the terrorist attacks against our country, we transitioned my headquarters warfighting functions from MacDill AFB, Tampa, Florida, to a forward-deployed Joint Forces Special Operations Component Command center (originally in Uzbekistan and then Mazar Sharif, Afghanistan) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and the War on Terrorism. This was an extraordinary leadership challenge and included coordinating with the Afghanistan Northern Alliance, which was the only anti-Taliban faction still available in the country, and to solicit them as allies. The Northern Alliance cohesion was tenuous at best; they were in retreat and held only 10% of the northern part of the country. So, the task of preparing them for a full campaign against the Taliban government forces was definitely a complex task. The three central figures were warlords of the alliance from different sects of the Muslim religion (Sunni and Shia) and controlled different areas of the very rugged and mountainous terrain. My biggest challenges were coordinating with these leaders to allow our multinational special forces to use the individual warlord-controlled mountain passes and territories (for a price, of course), building an alliance with them, embedding our forces, and supporting them in a coordinated campaign against the much better- and relatively modern-armed Taliban government forces. They were united in their dislike of the Taliban but not much else. These tribal leaders did not really like each other and would power-play for any advantage in what they could receive from our government and—even more difficult for me—how much effort they would provide in

support of the others' efforts. Much has been written and even movies made about these operations, so I won't be repetitive. I will just say that this was certainly a different situation than any I had experienced before, and the normal transparency I would advocate in building my team did not apply across the board here! One interesting item (not really leadership related) was that, just as you see in the movies, the Northern Alliance forces did a lot of celebrating by shooting their weapons into the air, and that is fact. We could never convince them that the law of gravity would bring those bullets back down to Earth at the same deadly velocity, so we ran to find cover during celebrations. The fact that they suffered several casualties in their exuberance did not deter the habit!

So, that is a brief summary of some thoughts on leadership. I mentioned at the beginning that there are a multitude of methods, types, traits, and competencies required to get an organization to move in a desired direction and achieve a goal. I was fortunate in my military service and corporate assignments to encounter a number of unique leadership opportunities and challenges and to watch and learn from some very successful—and some not-so-successful—individuals in their leadership roles. I had great support up and down the chain of command and cannot emphasize enough how much of an impact that can have on success or failure. Another almost immeasurable asset to my successful career was the support I received from home and family. Raising a family is hard in the best of conditions, with two present and vigilant parents. It is particularly hard in the military environment and even harder in a “get up and go at any time of day or night” situation. I just cannot over-stress my appreciation for relief from some

of that very important home-tasking while trying to deal with command issues, particularly while deployed. I was extremely fortunate and blessed to have a great companion, partner, and friend for a wife who took on so much more than she could ever have anticipated at the onset of our journey together.

In closing, one leadership recipe does not fit all situations or personnel, but if you focus on complete **integrity** in dealing with people, promote a strong sense of **teamwork**, and analyze the situations to make **quality decisions**, you'll have a good start. Be firm, fair, and consistent—and have some fun!