

Leading Your Team

Three principles to guide you

BY GREG POWELL

There are great parallels between the financial industry and the military. Soldiers and advisors put themselves in harm's way every day. Advisors prospect by phone, ask tough personal, medical and financial questions and invite people to face their own mortality and morbidity.

Being an advisor is the hardest job you'll ever do. We've chosen this path though because we believe we can make a difference in people's lives. The rewards are tremendous, but it's not an easy career and leaders are needed.

Soldiers participating in a combat leadership course are taught 10 principles of leadership. Let's explore three of those principles that apply within this industry as well.

1. DEVELOP LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL WITHIN YOUR TEAM

You have a mission for your business — for the year, the month, the week, the day. If something changes, the mission still needs to be accomplished. Be sure you have a team that is capable of taking the mission to completion regardless of unexpected ambush, losses and enemy attacks. That means developing the potential within your team. So be attentive to those around you who exhibit leadership potential.

Provide members of your team with the opportunity to seek out and accept responsibility. You can do this by delegating tasks and projects. Coach them and provide feedback as they perform; allow them the chance to fail. You can be the role model for the behaviour you wish to see in these potential leaders. And when they handle the responsibilities you give them, give them more.

This applies particularly to those who you suspect may even be stronger than you are in their skills. Don't let ego or your personal ambitions get in the way of letting another perform to their ability; instead, be

proud you discovered and developed a talented person. Doing anything less compromises the mission.

2. KNOW YOUR PEOPLE AND PROMOTE THEIR WELFARE

Before asking a soldier to run 20 km carrying a rucksack, you first need to know his fitness level. In our industry, it's just as important to know your advisors' strengths, abilities, ambitions, background, education and lifestyle, so that you can adequately pro-

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vide them with training and opportunities that will complement these elements. Work on business relationships with each person in the team, not just the ones you naturally gravitate to. If you believe a member of your team has potential not yet developed, seek ways to provide that individual the chance to experiment with it.

Once you've identified areas to develop in your people, train them hard. Challenge and prepare them for the hardship they will face so that they can endure it and conquer it. This takes the form of teaching scripts, practising techniques, conducting roleplays and enlisting them in professional courses.

Soldiers are drilled over and over in battle procedures until it becomes natural and automatic. Similarly, our teams should be drilled in the survival skills of referral talks, closing, prospecting and handling objections. Once they have mastered the basics, increase the standards and professionalism in which these skills are executed. Create realistic and challenging training that requires the team to work together successfully.

3. BE A TEAM

A soldier is dependent on his unit's abilities, strength and support for his very life. Although our lives are not dependent on one another to that extent, we can certainly accomplish more of our business mission when we rely on one another to assist us.

When our mission is unfolding exactly as planned and the sniper is still hidden in the bush, each person can feel confident that the job will get done. However, when the bullets light up the sky and the ambush has begun, we need to link arms and get through the night. Remember: You are setting them out to do a difficult job where many don't survive. The most successful mission is the one in which arms are linked the tightest.

Communicate the goal of the mission — the "commander's intent" — to every member of the team. Set and accept only the highest standards from your team. And when your commanding officer comes by the office, talk about *the team's* achievement, not your own.

You are a leader; be worthy of the rank given to you and earn it every day. **E**

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