

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FOR

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PART I: PERSONAL VALUES

Innovative expertise is essential in today's constantly changing environment. While expertise provides the exact right answer to a previously seen problem, innovative expertise gives the cognitive flexibility to meet new challenges and find more efficient ways to solve current problems. I pride myself on my ability to adapt and overcome both as a leader and as a follower.

Moral courage in the face of adversity paves the way for the rest of my personal values. It's the foundation on which we can get the mission completed the right way at the right time. It is also the foundation of trust amongst my peers, my subordinates, and myself. A strong moral compass and a truthful tongue can solve the biggest of problems.

A **focus on mission success** may seem to be an obvious value when it comes to leadership, but I think it deserves specific consideration. All the hard work in the world is meaningless if the goal is not met or the task is left undone. This is also the fine line between doing what is asked and doing what is needed. We must always strive to look beyond the task at hand and make sure what we do paves the way for both current and future success.

Loyal dissent is a concept borrowed from my last wing commander, Col. Mark August. It is a value in both my subordinates and myself. The concept of loyal dissent is voicing concerns and trepidations with the sole intent of the betterment of the organization. By encouraging loyal dissent, I can create an atmosphere where purpose and principle are set ahead of egos and even careers. It allows problems to be solved before they become too big to handle at the lowest level and keeps my subordinates engaged in the task at hand, giving them ownership of the process.

Professional development in both skills knowledge and managerial knowledge cannot be understated. Stagnation is the death of morale and productivity. Continuous learning and development can lead to fresh, new ideas and possibilities. In Public Affairs, this is especially true because market trends and public opinion are constantly shifting. Only through research and development can a PA professional adapt to those shifts and communicate the Air Force story effectively.

PART II: Leadership Vision Statement

As a leader, I want to follow the transformational leadership model. I should be the idealized influence, a person of undisputed expertise and moral courage. I should be inspirational, driving my subordinates to work their hardest because they know I accept nothing but the best from them and because they take personal satisfaction in a job well-done. I should be giving my subordinates individualized consideration, so they know how much I care, and that this is not just a job for me. I should also be able to intellectually stimulate my subordinates so they know the only dumb question is the one never asked, and that they are free to exceed the possibilities set by their forebears.

My goal with every team I have led, and every team I lead in the future, is to have my team set the bar for others, to be the organization that is the undisputed leader in innovation, integrity, service, and excellence. My team will be the one others look to when they want to see how the mission *should* be done, as well as the one others wish they could be a part of.

As I ascend to higher levels of leadership, this concept will not change. If I am a MAJCOM functional, my MAJCOM will be the best trained and most equipped. If I work for the Defense Media Activity or Air Force Public Affairs Agency, we will be the envy of our civilian counterparts and sister services. In the off chance I make it to be Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, I will pen an new chapter of excellence in the world's greatest Air Power.

PART III: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Throughout this course, I identified a number of strengths and weaknesses.

My first strength is my **ability to communicate an idea**, regardless of medium. This largely ties to my job as a military photojournalist, but my communicative ability stems from my upbringing amongst teachers and creative professionals. Everything from playing word games on car trips to my eventual collegiate training in visual communications set the stage for my successes. Add to that five years of Public Affairs experience and I've learned how to effectively convey a concept or change an opinion using the least amount of words possible. That's not to say my writings and speeches are short, but rather that everything supports the idea and nothing is repeated.

Another strength I've identified is my **predisposition to mediation and negotiation**. Perhaps this is another skill from my upbringing, acting as the mediator between two fighting sisters. While I'm not generally decisive myself, I can generally work with two or more people to come to a mutually beneficial decision. This has been particularly evident in the interpersonal communication lessons, despite not doing so well on the formative exercise.

During the four lenses lesson, I realized that **I have a unique combination of cold analysis and empathy** (i.e. a combination of blue and green as my primary color). While this can be a weakness due to the inherent discord of polar opposites, I see this as a strength as well. The empathy in particular is useful to me as a leader, and something I feel I should tap into more. Finding a balance between the two will be key, as well as deferring to the appropriate side when selecting a leadership style for a given situation.

A definite weakness I've realized is my **lack of traditional credentials**. I have two certifications and a bevy of other non-traditional credentials, but the Air Force needs other "boxes checked." I've known for a while that I'd like to be a tech school instructor, but I seem to have forgotten that I need my CCAF for that position. I will also need a bachelor's degree to really be competitive for SMSgt and CMSgt.

Another weak area is my **personal resiliency**. Perhaps part of having a dominance in blue and a lack of gold has made me someone who wears my heart on my sleeve and doesn't always make time to take care of myself. Many of the resiliency mechanisms discussed in class are missing in my life. I need to find ways to prevent myself from burning out and taking things too personally.

My last weak area was actually the first identified, my **terrible memory**, especially with names. While not necessarily an aspect of the course material, it posed problems when I needed to address my classmates. It has caused problems for my job as well, being in a career which deals with people on a regular basis. My OIC even made a comment about it shortly before I left for NCOA, and made the observation that memory can be improved with deliberate practice.

PART IV: DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

I plan to continue developing my communication skills through workshops and programs hosted by the Defense Information School (DINFOS) such as the Worldwide Military Photography Workshop (WMPW) and Public Affairs Qualification Course (PAQC) as well as local workshops hosted by organizations such as the "Top 3." Many of the workshops are yearly, whereas PAQC is a one-shot item. PAQC should be completed within the next five years to prepare for a superintendent role, class opening permitting. Success can be measured by transitioning from participant to mentor in workshops and winning higher-level awards in the DoD information awards programs. Success can also be measured by the successes of packages for subordinate awards/decorations, or effectiveness of Public Affairs communications plans.

Mediation and empathy are somewhat innate skills. My primary means of developing them will be to use them whenever possible. In the balance of my empathic and analytic sides, it will take deliberate observation of the effect each side has when it is used on a given situation, finding patterns to get a better feel for when one is better than the other. Leadership development workshops held at whatever base I'm stationed at would be a good secondary means of development. Success can be measured by degree of success in mediation sessions with Airmen, as well as my ability to act on my empathy and analysis, creating referent power to help my Airmen. I'm estimating promotion to MSgt within the next five years, so I should have that referent power developed by then.

I plan to increase my traditional credentials base knowledge for future advancement through education. Within the next year, I plan to finish my CCAF degree as I apply for a bachelor's degree program. My ideal program would be the new Bachelor of Science in Music Production degree from Berklee College of Music in Boston, Mass. This will not only help with my credentials, setting me up for special duties such as tech school instructor, but also help with my audio-visual skills development as well. Assuming the bachelor's degree can be completed within the next five years, a possible subsequent degree could be the Master's of Science in New Media Journalism from Full Sail University. Success will be measured by completion of degree(s).

My personal resiliency can definitely use some work. I plan to take advantage of classes hosted by base agencies such as the chapel, Health and Wellness Center, and the Airman & Family Readiness Center. There is no specific timeframe for these classes, but success can be measured by evening out the manic cycles of work and rest I fall into, as well taking my job less personally while still maintaining a dedication to the mission. This will certainly be easier said than done.

Memory will be both the hardest and most straightforward weakness to remedy. I plan to make a conscious effort to read the nametapes and ranks of everyone I encounter at work and practice memorizing them. Hopefully, exercising my brain in this fashion will make memorization easier, as well as make the commission of names to memory habit rather than the exception. Eventually, this should transfer to names given over the phone as well. Practicing by memorizing names and dates presented in the history portion of the PDG could help too, with the added benefit of making me more ready for promotion testing. Success will be measured by how easily I can remember names each year. If this process alone is insufficient to improve my memory, there are other avenues and resources, such as internet-based memory exercises, which could help.