

SI in Ranger School: A Call for Universal Leadership Principles During a Time of Transformation

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Social Intelligence (SI) is an emerging theme — both nationally and globally — in economic, military, business, and various organizational priorities. Successful leaders understand IQ does not always correlate to organizational success.¹ Companies do not rise and fall on the abilities of leaders at the top but rather are built on the foundation of constituents' and juniors leaders' ability to work as a cohesive whole. Leaders are defined by how they meet these challenges at the decision points. Decision points are generally critical events that, in their very nature, can greatly shift the momentum of the organization. However, these critical events are not where learning organizations apply the endurance to sustain greatness over decades. Lasting organizations make the most of touch points. Touch points are rarely met with climactic music and a ticker tape parade. They are the daily interactions that define relationships. These touch points are crucial conversations comprised of opposing opinions, strong emotions, and high stakes.² The thousands of touch points leading up to a decision point can make or break organizations and leaders. The U.S. Army, and specifically the Infantry community, is amidst a time of transformation and transition with the admittance of women in U.S. Army Ranger School. While this topic has sparked conversation and varying opinions, the focus should be on maintaining the basic, universal principles making Ranger School a premier leadership opportunity.

The purpose of this article is to relate academic theory to real-world application through personal experiences at the U.S. Army Ranger School, enabling individuals to define their interpersonal leadership dimensions of SI and build effective organizations. A strong foundation of principles, putting people first, and showing alignment of word and deed through practice of organizational values (the "3 Ps") provides a method of improving productivity and creating success. The 3 Ps is an approach to leadership — through SI — that incorporates the academic assertions of servant leadership, principle-centered leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).³

What is SI?

All organizations strive to produce results (e.g. quarterly earnings and profit margins in corporate America, ministry and community following in a church, or combat effectiveness and security in our nation's armed forces). Achieving desired results (end state) at minimum cost necessary (ways and means) is the strategic purpose of any organization. However, organizations often look to more quantifiable and traditional metrics for success (IQ, grade-point average [GPA] and other statistics) when hiring or evaluating employees. Factors such as emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) — one's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions/influence the emotions of others — often go unconsidered.⁴

The direct link between human resource and relationships (HR) — as a combination of factors like EQ and SI — and organizational output/profitability has proven more vast than previously assumed.⁵ SI is the combination of understanding the emotional, interactive, social, and behavioral elements at work — both internally and externally — summed up as situational awareness. It requires the ability to implement this awareness to effectively interact with individuals and influence the organization.⁶

Ultimately, it allows the organization to achieve common goals. SI is the combination of two “ingredients:” * Social awareness — what we sense about others, and * Social facility — what we do with that sense.⁷

If that is the analytical approach to SI, the essence of SI is people and providing them SPACE (situational awareness, presence, authenticity, clarity, and empathy).⁸ SPACE leads to socially intelligent, thought-provoking, developmental, and learning leaders. These learning leaders create learning organizations.⁹

Understanding SI is one facet, but applying it requires the “3 Ps.” One of the most effective ways to test the authentic core of a person’s character (and SI) is shared adversity and struggle.

Principle: Acting from Within

Ranger School, widely accepted as one of the most difficult and elite leadership schools in the armed forces, taught me the importance of communication and SI when enlisting the support of others. Ranger School showed me my weaknesses and the impact they have on mission success. Looking back five years, I still see the need to improve in these areas of my leadership. But, the one area of social intelligence that I favored is quite possibly the reason I was able to make it through with the help of my Ranger buddies. A strong foundation of principles, shared across the formation, is absolutely critical to the “3 Ps” and ultimately to SI.

“Rangers are honest [...] the first step in living in sync with yourself is figuring out what principles or philosophies govern your actions. What are your morals?”¹⁰ My experiences at Ranger School taught me the importance of leading from principle. Physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion pushed my peers and me to the brink and provided an environment so challenging, the lessons learned would not soon be forgotten. There are times at Ranger School when you are faced with moral and ethical decisions, but there is always someone watching. You can save momentary pain by choosing the easy wrong, but it is the hard right that will pay off in the long run. I truly believe this principle saved me from possibly recycling Mountain Phase of Ranger School.

Trust flows from principle-centered leadership and creates a foundation of loyalty.¹¹ SI is ineffective without the credibility that flows from congruent actions and authenticity. Principle-centered leadership — the result of personal trustworthiness, interpersonal trust, managerial empowerment, and organizational alignment — builds the credibility and authenticity needed. But, to reach empowerment and alignment (i.e. practice), leaders must start with personal trustworthiness and interpersonal trust.

Principle-centered leadership was the only level of SI I could achieve and verify prior to entering Ranger School. The Army values define a foundation for leadership (see Figure 2), but unless inculcated through previous experiences it is merely an acronym.¹² As an individual, your responsibility in this phase of the “3 Ps” is to reflect on your past experiences (youth sports, parental lessons, etc.) to determine the principles you hold at your core. In order to intentionally practice principle-centered leadership, you need to be aware of what principles comprise the core of your character. For me it was servant leadership, but Ranger School taught me that servant leadership doesn’t always mean serving on your terms.

Practice: Congruency through Aligned Organization

“Acting in line with your beliefs will allow you to reduce stress, sleep at night, and become predictable to your leaders and subordinates.”¹³ Ranger School, while more of an individual experience in leadership growth, taught me the absolute necessity of congruence in what you say and what you do. There is no 9-5 at Ranger School; you are with each other every waking moment, which tends to be a lot considering the lack of sleep. If a Ranger’s actions are not aligned with his words, he will immediately lose the support of his peers, never reaching Stephen R. Covey’s third and fourth levels of principle-centered

leadership (managerial empowerment and organizational alignment).¹⁴ Without the support of your peers, a Ranger candidate will likely recycle for patrols or for a low peer evaluation — and may ultimately fail the course.

My focus going into Ranger School was to earn my Ranger tab by practicing servant leadership through my actions. Throughout the first phase of Ranger School, this plan served me well. I was not as physically or mentally tested as I thought I would be. I was in high spirits and focused heavily on carrying more than my share of the task. To me, at the time, that meant always carrying the heavy equipment. Lightening the load for my Ranger buddies was how I was going to serve them. In the first phase, my thought, word, and deed were congruent, and my peer evaluation matched. I was in for the most important lesson of my career — one that I try to keep close to my heart and work on daily — during Mountain Phase.

The emotional challenges of working through my own struggles while serving the needs of my peers during Mountain Phase proved to be difficult. I failed to understand servant leadership does not always mean serving as you would intend. I entered Ranger School with the plan to carry more than my share of the task. To me, that meant physically. I would physically carry heavy equipment. I did not understand the meaning, and importance, of carrying other types of burden. I did not carry the burden of a positive attitude when the sleep depravity of the patrol leader was leading him astray. I did not carry the burden of motivational spirit when I felt others were not carrying their weight. I was critical of the team. My intentions were pure and my physical deeds matched my principles, but my words were failing. I did not understand congruent practice in the “3 Ps” is born of thought but displayed through word and deed.

Thankfully, my peers expressed these concerns to me and helped me learn about myself. While my peer evaluation was lower in Mountain Phase, it did not limit my ability to continue. More importantly, I learned something about myself I carry with me to this day. As I stated earlier, it is what you do when faced with the easy wrong and the hard right that will make all the difference. I truly believe the times I helped my peers through the physical hardships, the times I picked up the heavy equipment, and the times I volunteered to be a team leader made all the difference. Had I not done those things, those of my peers who overlooked my failings in Mountain Phase may have been more harsh on my peer review — and rightfully so. Thankfully, I was provided the opportunity to learn my lesson, identify my mistakes, and focus on improving.

The effects of highly committed constituents on organizational performance are largely founded on the managing practices of socially and emotionally intelligent leaders in the upper chains of hierarchy.¹⁵ This is to say, leaders set the foundation upon which their constituents build their motivation and output. Constituents will regard more neutral orders within the “zone of indifference” — “ok he is in charge, and he told me to, so who cares...I will do it.” — more controversial or difficult orders will require trust.¹⁶

Trust built through actions congruent to shared values (thought-word-deed), is critical to building a commitment-compliant continuum.¹⁷ This level of commitment — where trust, credibility, congruence, and authenticity reign supreme — leads to commitment and constituent buy-in.¹⁸ Every organization is “selling” something, but to market it efficiently to the target audience those in the organization should buy in. In Ranger School, you are selling — to your peers — your trustworthiness and that using their limited energy output on helping you get your “Go” will pay-off in them getting theirs. This kind of trust can only be sold through authentic transparency.

People: Success is a Team Sport

Ranger School taught me the importance of approaching leadership from a servant perspective. Mental, emotional, and physical struggle is a vital part of the Ranger School experience, but that struggle separates the socially intelligent and selfless leaders from those who are average. I say average because

suffering is often seen as individual; no matter how bad or inclusive the suffering is the individual concerns him/herself with an intimate view of suffering.¹⁹ It is human nature — average — to focus on your own suffering instead of selflessly focusing on those around you. By understanding the key elements of SI and HR, I learned to place my own struggles aside and engender cooperation from my peers.

SI is a key requirement of the HR savvy leader and the cornerstone of human relationships where the primary goal is to empower constituents.²⁰ Putting people first unlocks the door to transformative leadership and unparalleled success through retained trust and congruence.²¹

Successful organizations apply diverse perspectives to new problems finding innovative solutions aligned with common goals. Differences in worldviews, life experiences, social groups, and other factors contribute to diversifying organizations.²²

Diversification can cause disconnect — dividing team members and prohibiting coalitions — or leaders can intentionally use differences to strengthen the outcome through interaction. If the Army is a melting pot of America, Ranger School takes it one step further. Within a typical Ranger class, there are Soldiers, Marines, and Airmen of multiple ranks, Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), units, etc. There are captains coming out of the Maneuver Captains Career Course (MCCC), brand new Infantry second lieutenants out of the Infantry Basic Officer Leaders Course (IBOLC), specialists and privates from the 75th Ranger Regiment, NCOs from across the Army, international students, and more. Some students have combat experiences while others haven't experienced what it is like to hear a shot in anger. The socially intelligent Ranger finds a way to navigate these waters of diversity to motivate a group of individuals to become a collective whole. These interactions are the “work of a leader and the workhorses of an organization.”²³

Entrepreneurial-thought leaders have been linking empirical data to suggest a direct link between investing in people and receiving return on that investment through profits.²⁴ The power lies with the leader, and if he/she sees people as costs to be reduced and opportunistic free-riders who require micro-management then the connection is broken and the organization will never reap the profits of tapping into the strength of social intelligence.²⁵ The same concepts apply to Ranger School in how a student performs when the Ranger Instructor (RI) is not evaluating him. Every day at Ranger School is an opportunity to put others first — to practice servant leadership through prioritizing people.

Ranger students can demonstrate a “people-first” mentality by motivating a peer who is having a rough time, assisting in the planning process, carrying heavy equipment, volunteering to fill a team leader position, and countless other ways that do not directly place the student in a position to be evaluated by an RI. Ultimately, by expending energy, motivation, and time focusing on others without the direct opportunity for personal gain (a “Go” on a patrol), the Ranger student is investing in his peers. It can honestly be summed up with “being a good dude.” Sounds easy, but when Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has you at the very base of the pyramid, focusing on the needs of others can be more difficult than you think.

Conclusion

Social intelligence provides leaders with the link between people and profits, creating a common ground for dialogue and progress. The U.S. Army Ranger School teaches leaders the importance of SI leadership through principles, people, and practice. These “3 Ps” are an approach to leadership through SI that incorporates the academic assertions of servant leadership, principle-centered leadership, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). By firmly understanding one's principles; practicing congruency through authentic thought, word, and deed; and investing in people as the focus, Ranger

students have a glide-path to incorporate SI as a strength while in Ranger School — and as leaders in the U.S. Army.

Earning your Ranger tab is a milestone for every Infantry leader, but bearing the tab by internalizing the lessons taught in the school is what really matters. In every initial counseling statement I have given since graduating Ranger School, I conclude with “live the Ranger Creed.” Take a moment and read the creed; don’t recite it — read it. If a leader, tab or no tab, truly internalizes and lives that creed, he will display the “3 Ps” — principle centered, practice implemented, and people focused.

Notes

¹ Karl Albrecht, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Success Beyond IQ, Beyond IE, Applying Multiple Intelligence Theory to Human Interaction* (NY: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

² Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (NY: McGraw Hill, 2012).

³ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness* (NY: Paulist Press, 1977); Kevin Cashman, *Leadership From the Inside Out: Becoming a Leader for Life* (Provo: Executive Excellence Publishing, 1998); James W. Sipe, *The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership* (NY: Paulist Press, 2009); Stephen R. Covey, *First Things First* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994). Stephen R. Covey, *Principle Centered Leadership* (NY: Free Press, 1991); Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (NY: Free Press, 2004); Cam Caldwell, *Moral Leadership* (NY: Business Expert Press, 2012), Ch.1; Cam Caldwell, Do X. Truong, Phamp T. Linh, and Anh Tuan, “Strategic Human Resource Management as Ethical Stewardship,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 98, no.1 (2011): 171-182.

⁴ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (NY: Bantam, 2005).

⁵ Albrecht, xi-xiv, 10; Jeffrey Pfeffer, *The Human Equation: Building Profits By Putting People First* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998).

⁶ Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence: The New science of Human Relationships* (NY: Bantam, 2006), 84.; Albrecht, xiii.

⁷ Goleman, 2006, 84.

⁸ Albrecht, 28-29.

⁹ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1990).

¹⁰ Brace E. Barber, *No Excuse Leadership: Lessons from the U.S. Army’s Elite Rangers* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2004), 161.

¹¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (4th ed.) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), Ch. 215; Cam Caldwell and Linda Hayes, “Leadership, Trustworthiness, and the Mediating Lens,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 26, no. 3 (2007): 261-278.

¹² Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1, *The Army*, 2012: 2-3, Fig. 2-2.

¹³ Barber, 161.

¹⁴ Covey, *Principle*, 32.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Pfeffer, *Competitive Advantage Through People* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Chester I. Barnard, *Functions of the Executive* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1968), 168.

¹⁷ Cam Caldwell and Mark Hansen, “Trustworthiness, Governance, and Wealth Creation,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 97 (2010): 173-189.

¹⁸ Albrecht, Chapter 4; Kouzes and Posner, Chapter 2; Pfeffer, Human, Chapter 4; Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones, “Managing Authenticity: The Paradox of Great Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review*, 83 no. 12 (2005): 86-94.

¹⁹ Barber, 185.

²⁰ Eric M. Eisenberg, H. L. Goodall Jr. and Angela Trethewey, *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin’s, 2007), 73.

²¹ Caldwell, et al., "Transformative Leadership;" Cam Caldwell, *Ethical Duties and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Two Perspectives of the Psychological Contract*, not yet published; Pfeffer, *Competitive*, Ch. 4.

²² Eisenberg, et al., 3.

²³ Susan Scott, *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and In Life, One Conversation at a Time* (NY: Berkley Books, 2004), xix.

²⁴ Pfeffer, *Competitive*, 292

²⁵ Ibid, Ch. 10.

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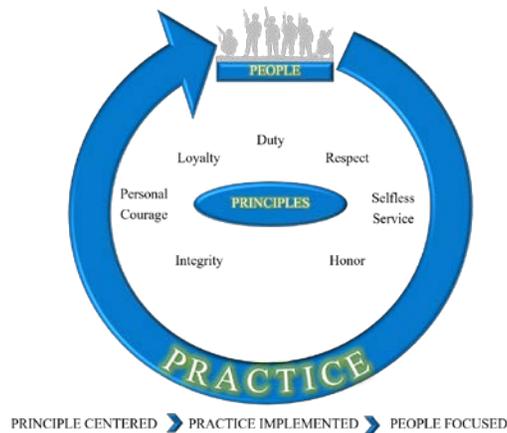


Figure 1

LOYALTY	<i>Bear true faith and allegiance to the U.S. Constitution, the Army, your unit, and other Soldiers.</i>
DUTY	<i>Fulfill your obligations.</i>
RESPECT	<i>Treat people as they should be treated.</i>
SELFLESS SERVICE	<i>Put the welfare of the Nation, the Army, and subordinates before your own.</i>
HONOR	<i>Live up to all the Army Values.</i>
INTEGRITY	<i>Do what's right—legally and morally.</i>
PERSONAL COURAGE	<i>Face fear, danger, or adversity (physical or moral).</i>

Figure 2



“CONGRUENT PRACTICE IN THE 3 Ps IS BORN OF THOUGHT, BUT DISPLAYED THROUGH WORD AND DEED.”

Figure 3

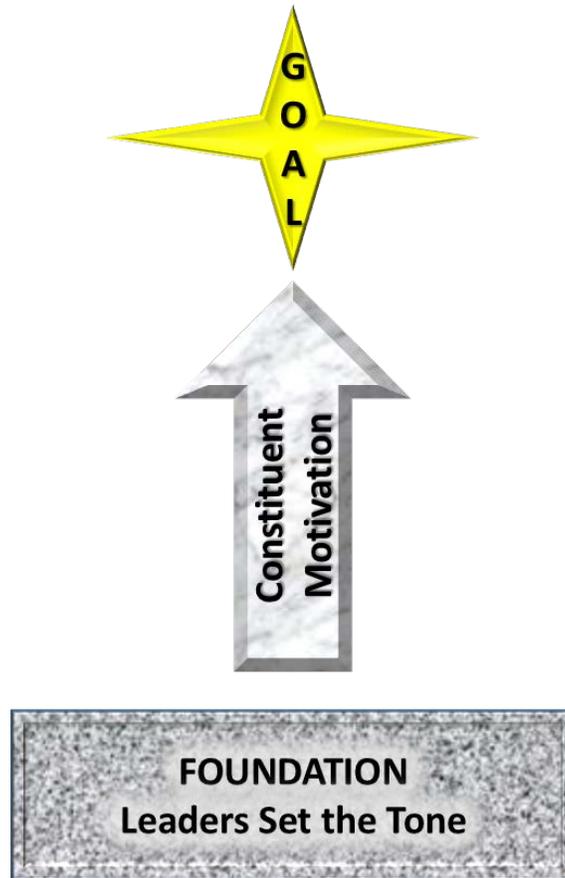


Figure 4