



Core Competencies, Key Leader Attributes, and Toxic Leadership



In order to produce an Army filled with professionals who have the ability to adapt and win in a complex world, the Army has identified core competencies related to all levels of leadership. The Army has also identified key leadership attributes that can positively affect a unit, and destructive leadership styles that can result in a toxic leader. Below are the “core leader competencies” identified by the Army, all of which can assist with producing quality performance and mission success:

- 1) **Lead Others:** Leaders motivate, inspire, and influence others to take initiative, work toward a common goal, accomplish tasks, and achieve objectives.
- 2) **Influence Beyond Chain of Command:** Leaders have influence that extends beyond their direct line of authority and shapes perceptions about their organization.
- 3) **Lead by Example:** Leaders are role models, and should provide examples of effective behaviors and Army Values to their subordinates and peers.
- 4) **Communicate:** Leaders express their ideas, listen to others, and recognize the importance of communication to other core competencies.
- 5) **Create a Positive Environment:** Leaders must maintain positive perspectives and attitudes, allowing for a setting that fosters positivity and effective work behavior.
- 6) **Prepare Self:** Leaders are aware of their limitations as well as their strengths, and should seek to develop their overall knowledge in order to increase effectiveness.
- 7) **Develop Others:** Leaders cultivate the learning of subordinates and teams in order to facilitate further achievement. Leaders will prepare others to assume positions within their organization, which will ensure a more versatile and effective unit.
- 8) **Get Results:** Leaders provide guidance and manage resources, which will ensure a quality work environment as well as consistent and ethical task accomplishment.
- 9) **Steward the Profession:** Leaders will steward their profession in order to maintain professional standards and effectiveness.
- 10) **Build Trust:** Leaders establish conditions of effective influence and create positive environment, resulting in the building of trust and reliability.

Along with the core leadership competencies listed above, the Army also expects leaders to adhere to desired characteristics. The Army has identified three key attributes that leaders are responsible for demonstrating:

1) Character: A leader's character is comprised of moral and ethical qualities, helps determine what is right, and gives leaders motivation to do what is appropriate, regardless of the situation. A leader's character should be influenced by Army Values, empathy, Warrior/Service Ethos, and discipline.

2) Presence: The impression a leader makes on others contributes to their success, and is the sum of their outward appearance, demeanor, actions, and words. Essential components of a leader's presence are military/professional bearing, fitness, confidence, and resilience.

3) Intellect: A leader's intellect draws upon mental tendencies and resources that shape conceptual abilities applied to one's duties and responsibilities. Essential components of a leader's intellect are mental agility, sound judgment, innovation, interpersonal tact, and overall expertise.

Army professionals are required to uphold the Army Ethic, model core leader competencies, and demonstrate key leadership attributes. In addition to these requirements, they must be careful to prevent counterproductive leadership behaviors from themselves and within the units with which they serve. If an Army professional does not adhere to the core competencies and key attributes, they risk straying into "toxic leadership," a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance. To be classified as toxic, behaviors must be recurrent and have a deleterious impact on the organizations performance or the welfare of subordinates. Toxic leadership behaviors will lead to investigations, potential removal from position, or other punitive actions. In order to prevent toxic leadership, Army professionals should avoid destructive leadership styles that can compromise effectiveness and discourage subordinates. The Army has identified five destructive leadership styles that can result in toxic leadership, and thus must be avoided:

1) Incompetent Managers: Inadequate cognitive/emotional fitness or inadequate prior experience to function at their level. Cannot move from tactical to strategic level when required. Cannot make sound decisions on time.

2) Affable Non-Participant: Interpersonally skilled and intellectually sound, but incapable of taking charge, making decisions, providing timely guidance, and holding subordinates accountable. Provide minimal guidance, avoid decisions, lack passion or creativity, and are fond of committees, meetings, and visitors.

3) Insensitive Driven Achiever: Usually bright and energetic, but consumed by a need for recognition. Can provide impressive short term results, but create a frenzied, micro-managed climate. Frequently inattentive to the morale of their organization.

4) Toxic Self-Centered Abuser: Usually bright, energetic, goal-oriented, and boss-focused. Capable of producing spectacular short term results, but are arrogant, abusive, intemperate, distrusting, and easily angered. Typically micro-managers, and are never burdened by introspection.

5) Criminal: May be energetic, bright, and charismatic, but cheats, lies, steals, defrauds, and assaults in order to achieve results.

Effective leaders are crucial to the success of any organization, and avoiding toxic leadership can solve many problems before they have a chance to impact work-product or morale. A leader that adheres to the core competencies and key attributes while remaining aware of destructive leadership styles can avoid investigations, increase the effectiveness of their organization, and prevent scrutiny of their leadership ability. For further information and more detailed descriptions of the above, feel free to browse Army Regulation (AR) 600-100, Chapter 1-11. You may also look at Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22. If you still have questions and are entitled to Legal Assistance, please call (706) 545-3281 to schedule an appointment with a legal assistance attorney at the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, Maneuver Center of Excellence, Fort Benning, GA.



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