



When you become a police officer, you must accept the mantle of leadership that comes with the job, regardless of rank.

Therefore, all officers, regardless of rank, must accept this mantle of leadership and strive to earn the respect necessary to be effective in this important role.

Many agree the primary crisis in the world today is leadership, or a lack thereof. Can this crisis be conquered? What makes a powerful leader? Is it something inherited? Is it learned behavior? Can anyone acquire leadership abilities with sufficient determination? Why do some people possess a presence that compels others to follow? What is it about them that results in a powerful ability to influence others? These questions have been asked for centuries.

In this column, I will present information about leadership gathered from a variety of sources. I've gleaned some of the information from a review of literature, both classic and contemporary. Also, while president of The Pointman Leadership Institute in Hume, Calif., I gathered data and opinions from people in leadership positions in more than 30 countries. But perhaps the most valuable insights I've gained have come through my own mistakes and occasional successful experiences in various leadership positions.

I believe the leadership crisis can and will be conquered by people who sincerely seek to understand what leadership really is and make the demanding commitment to live by its principles. You may be a field-training officer, a first- →→

PHOTOS: DALE STOCKTON

It's About Character

True, consistent leadership goes beyond behavior

Shortly after becoming a police officer, I learned people expected more from me than just enforcing the law. They began asking me advice on a variety of topics. I was asked to speak at local schools and PTA meetings, and to participate in community special projects. Even

though I was very young, they looked to me for leadership.

Like it or not, police officers are leaders in their community. They are the most visible form of government, so people look to them for leadership, and if no one else has the answer to a problem, people call a police officer.

level supervisor or someone who simply wishes to measure up to your leadership role in the community as a police officer. Regardless, the word "influence" summarizes the meaning of leadership in this column, and if you want to influence anyone, this column is for you.

True Leadership

True leadership occurs when people follow the leader as an act of their own free choice. This contrasts with management or supervisory control systems where obedience is achieved in response to a promise of rewards or the threat of sanctions or discipline. Such management and/or supervisory methods are completely appropriate and necessary. But there are many advantages to looking beyond classic management schemes to achieve true leadership.

For example, control techniques that depend on sanctions or rewards work well when the boss is present or there's a good chance the boss will hear of the follower's actions. But true



People in your community, particularly children, will look to you for leadership.

leadership, as we will define it, remains effective when the boss is not around. Leadership continues to impact a follower when they are alone and there's little chance their actions or responsibilities, either accepted or neglected, will come to

the leader's attention.

When leadership is effective, it not only impacts the follower's actions, it also influences their attitudes. Something very powerful happens: The leader succeeds in influencing how the follower thinks about an

issue. The follower's level of commitment, standards or values is affected. Thus, true leadership has a lasting impact on the follower's behavior, attitudes and values.

Influencing Behavior

The Pointman Leadership Institute has provided leadership training and consultation to leaders in more than 35 countries during the past 10 years. During the first few years, members of the institute conducted research to determine behavior that resulted in true leadership. This research revealed a strong consensus on behavior patterns that resulted in persuasive leadership. Most of the behavior patterns are well documented and discussed in leadership books too numerous to discuss in this first installment. However, four of them illustrate an important point. Followers highly value these traits in leaders:

1. Being a good listener;
2. Admitting when they're wrong;
3. Giving recognition; and
4. Keeping commitments.

Many leaders also value these behaviors and practice them on occasion. However, our research revealed that very few *consistently* exhibit them. **When the pressure is on, many revert to dysfunctional habit patterns** quite opposite to the four illustrated above.

Our mistake has been to focus attention on the surface; teaching behavior that results in leadership does not go far enough. Behavior can be taught, understood and practiced. But in order for a person to consistently exhibit leadership behavior, it must flow from that person's character, particularly when it comes to pressure and stress.

To consistently practice the four behavior traits listed above, you must focus on the character traits that support such behavior. Some will argue that character in adults cannot be changed, but there is evidence to refute that argument. Character can continue to develop and mature. But first the individual must make a

deliberate choice to focus upon character and a strong commitment toward growth.

Summary

Like it or not, many eyes are upon you. The new trainee fresh out of the academy, fellow officers and even the kids in the neighborhood are watching you. Give them a solid example of strong character, and you'll grow in your leadership role.

In future issues, I'll examine additional character traits that support powerful leadership behavior. **LOM**

BOB VERNON retired from the Los Angeles Police Department after 37 years on the force. He earned an MBA at Pepperdine University and is a graduate of the University of Southern California's Managerial Policy Institute and the FBI's National Executive Institute. After retirement, Vernon founded The Pointman Leadership Institute (visit pointmanleadership.org), which provides principle-based ethics seminars around the world for police agencies, parliament members, military leaders and a variety of other groups.