

Knob Year Journal

NAME: _____ COMPANY: _____



INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on beginning a four-year “Citadel Experience” that will shape you as you develop as a principled leader. In some ways, this transformative process will be very obvious and apparent to you, and you will be intimately conscious of the change that is occurring. In other ways, the change will occur much more subtly and escape your notice as it is unfolding. This “Knob Year Journal” is a tool to help you capture, reflect on, and process the development that you are experiencing and the self-awareness that you are building. It is organized into four parts: Challenge Week Reflection, Crucibles, Mentorship, and Recognition Reflection

1. Challenge Week Reflection. Leadership theorists routinely use the word “awareness” to describe a condition where there is “more than the usual alertness, more intense contact with the immediate situation, and more is stored away in the unconscious computer to produce intuitive insights in the future when needed.”¹ As leaders look “out,” they must be situationally-aware, but they also must look “in” to become self-aware. Self-awareness is one of the critical components of the emotional intelligence required of leaders. Being self-aware does not mean being overly critical of one’s self. Instead it means honestly assessing one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and needs.²

Emotionally self-aware leaders recognize how their feelings affect them, other people, and their job performance.³ Self-awareness is a critical component of a leader’s ability to handle expected and unexpected challenges. Self-aware leaders knows which of these situations they can handle themselves, and which they will need help with.

1-1. Strengths and Weaknesses. One of the ways that leaders increase their self-awareness is by introspection, and one of the basic exercises of introspection is to note strengths and weaknesses. Leaders should be aware that often times their strengths and weaknesses “are two sides of the same coin.” For example, Bill George explains that “By challenging others in business meetings, I am able to get quickly at the heart of the issues, but my approach unnerves and intimidates less confident people. My desire to get things done fast leads to superior results, but it exposes my impatience with people who move more slowly.”⁴

In the space below make a list of what you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses.

1 Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 41.

2 Daniel Goleman, “Emotional Intelligence and Leadership,” in Timothy McMahon, (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc, 2010), 135.

3 Ibid, 135.

4 Bill George, “Authentic Leadership,” in McMahon, 576-577.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

1-2. Leadership Frame of Reference. Effective leaders build a personal frame of reference from schooling, experience, self-study, and assessment. They reflect on past experiences in order to learn from them and to help place the

current organization and situation in strategic context.⁵ Some of this learning is gained as a result of naturally-occurring experiences, but the leader can also build a frame of reference based on artificially created simulations training that stretches him or her to practice and prepare for situations in the future.⁶

However, the frame of reference is designed to expand, not limit, the leader’s horizons. The leader cannot unimaginatively apply a course of action that worked once to a new situation for which it is inappropriate. He must be mentally agile enough to understand the circumstances around him and adjust. The goal of a properly applied frame of reference is not to inappropriately create an over-simplified certainty based on a past experience, but instead to facilitate improved clarity and contextual understanding of a new experience.⁷

You will learn much about The Citadel’s model of “principled leadership,” but even now you have a leadership frame of reference based on the experiences you have thus far had in your life. Use the space below to describe your leadership frame of reference. Include your definition of leadership, what you think leaders do, what you think are characteristics of a good leader and good leadership practices, and an example of a leader you admire and why.

5 FM 6-22, Army Leadership, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), 12-10.

6 Bob Johansen, Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World, (Berrett Koehler Publishers, 2009), 161.

7 See Ibid., 5-6 for Johansen’s “positive definition of VUCA” (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity).

1-3. Personal Vision. At The Citadel, we use a “Citadel Training Model” to develop leaders and achieve results. It is a five step process that culminates with “growth.” As you embark on your Citadel experience, The Guidon encourages you to follow Stephen Covey’s proscription to “begin with the end in mind.” To do so, you must develop a compelling and understandable vision of a future state to provide direction, purpose, and identity.⁸ Kouzes and Posner write that “visions are about ideals... They’re about the strong desire to achieve something great. They’re ambitious. They’re expressions of optimism.”⁹ Thus, the direction that visions provide is toward a desired ideal end state that serves as a goal for your effort. As a goal, it represents something to be striven for and not necessarily something that is expected to be achieved in its entirety. Nonetheless, having a desired end state is what allows progress to be measured toward achievement of that goal.¹⁰

In the space below, describe the vision you have for the type of person you want to grow in to by the end of knob year.

8 Strategic Leadership Primer, 21.
9 Kouzes and Posner, 130.
10 Strategic Leadership Prineer, 19 and 21.

1-4. Specific Objectives. While a vision will keep you oriented on your ideal end state, it is helpful to generate “short-term wins” that help you measure progress in an objective and quantifiable way. So, for example, if your vision is to become a person who lives a life dedicated to service to others, you might establish a knob year objective of completing 50 community service hours with the Krause Center. Your battalion commander will discuss setting such specific objectives with you during a challenge week class. Record these objectives here:

2. Crucibles. The Developing your leadership philosophy is the result of a “continuous mental practice, a process of constant self-evaluation and the questioning of personal assumptions, beliefs and values, all of which ultimately will result in how we

manage individuals and situations we encounter.”¹¹ As the leader performs this exercise, she will undoubtedly discover significant events that shaped her as a leader. Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas call these transformational events “crucibles,” after the vessels medieval alchemists used in their attempts to turn metals into gold.

Crucibles can be positive or negative events. Negative examples might be life-threatening disease, the death of a spouse or child, or a professional or financial crisis such as job loss or bankruptcy. Positive ones might be marriage, the birth of a child, or a promotion. By such experiences—both positive and negative—the leader gains a new or altered sense of identity. When leaders take the time and devote the energy to analyze these crucible experiences, they find that they “emerged from the crucible stronger and more sure of themselves and their purpose—changed in some fundamental way.”¹²

Such challenges force leaders to question who they are and what mattered most to them. Capturing the lessons of this self-examination helps the leader move forward in a better way. As Bill George explains, “Reflection on your life story and your experiences can help you understand them at a deeper level—and so you can reframe your life story in a more coherent way as your future direction becomes congruent with the knowledge of which you are and the kind of person you want to become.”¹³

2-1. Planned Crucibles. Freshman year at The Citadel is deliberately designed to provide you several crucible experiences, and you are encouraged to reflect on each of them. The “Knob Year Journal” focuses on three of the planned crucibles. These are Challenge Week, Parents’ Week Promotion, and Recognition. As you pass through each of these crucibles, record your experience in the space below.

11 Harry Garner, “Developing an Effective Command Philosophy,” *Military Review*, (Sept-Oct 2012), 77.

12 Warren G. Bennis and Robert J. Thomas, “Crucibles of Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review* (September 2002): 3. Cited in Garner, 77.

13 William W. George and Peter Sims, *True North*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 78.

One format to help you organize your reflection is to describe the experience in general terms and then specifically record how you were before the experience, what you learned from the experience, and how you will be a different type of leader as the result of this experience.

Challenge Week:

Parents' Week Promotion:

Recognition:

2-2. Unplanned Crucibles. In addition to the planned crucibles common to all cadets, each cadet will experience his or her own unplanned crucibles. These can include challenges such as an illness or a crisis at home, as well as triumphs such as winning an award or meeting a great new friend. In the space below, reflect on the key unplanned crucibles you experienced, using the same format you used to record your planned crucibles.

3. Mentorship. Mentoring is “the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect.” It affects both personal and professional development, and usually occurs over a substantive period time on a personal level.¹⁴

14 (ADRP 6-22, 7-11).

At The Citadel, knobs are assigned a senior mentor. While the knob's squad leader remains his principal trainer and direct supervisor, the mentor can help the knob grow in a different setting. The squad leader is responsible for approximately nine other cadets, where the senior mentor's one-on-one relationship with the knob allows for more personal attention. Likewise, the squad leader is holistically responsible for the knob, where the mentor and the knob can mutually agree on specific areas in which to focus their developmental efforts. Mentoring does not replace the developmental responsibilities of leaders in the chain of command, but it supports and augments them. Use the worksheet below to record you experience with your senior mentor and to share with him or her the goals you have for your relationship.

Mentor's Name _____

Mentor's Room Number _____

Mentor's Phone Number _____

Things I would like to learn from my mentor: _____

Things I would like my mentor to help me with: _____

MONTHLY NOTES

Notes from September: _____

Notes from October: _____

Notes from November: _____

Notes from December: _____

Notes from January: _____

Notes from February: _____

Notes from March: _____

4. Recognition Reflection. As part of the events leading up to Recognition Day, you will have reflection sessions facilitated by your commanders and alumni volunteers. As you prepare for these sessions, review your entire “Knob Year Journal,” but pay particular attention to your Challenge Week Reflection. Prior to your Recognition Reflection, record what you now consider to be your strengths and weaknesses, your leadership frame of reference, and your vision for sophomore year.

4.1. Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

4.2. Leadership Frame of Reference

4.3. Personal Vision

Sun Tzu and Knowing Yourself

*Sun Tzu was a military theorist from the Period of the Warring States in ancient China whose classic work is *The Art of War*. Self-awareness represents one half of Sun Tzu's dictum to "know the enemy and know yourself." If you can do these two things, Sun Tzu predicted, "you need not fear the result of a hundred battles." On the other hand, he cautioned, "If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."¹⁵*

This understanding of both friendly and enemy forces is what military professionals call the "net assessment" of the intelligence situation. Michael Handel argues that commanders are universally better informed about their opponent's forces than their own. He attributes this phenomenon to the conscious or unconscious tendency to conceal personal weaknesses and exaggerate personal strength. The result is that, regardless of how accurate is the intelligence about the enemy, the net assessment will be distorted because of the faulty analysis of one's own capabilities.¹⁶ Sun Tzu does not provide the predicted outcome of the battle in which the commander knows the enemy but not himself, but Handel's conclusion is a vivid reminder of the importance of Sun Tzu's admonition to know both.

*Today Sun Tzu's popularity extends beyond the military to such realms as business, sports, and politics. Indeed, Sir Robert Fry, a retired lieutenant general in the British Royal Marines and the Executive Chairman of the McKinney Rogers Group of companies, argues that *The Art of War* "offers a unique view of the world that transcends its original military focus as it discusses the notions of appropriate use of resources, of 'measuring, estimating, counting, comparing and gauging' both your own strength and that of the 'enemy'--indeed, the idea of classifying knowledge itself as a precious resource." Fry explains that Sun Tzu is "about looking at your competitor and saying, 'Where am I stronger?' And of course also saying, even though it hurts, 'Where is he stronger?,' and accepting that answer."¹⁷ Self-aware leaders are not only adept at collecting information. They also have the emotional intelligence to properly use it.*

15 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans by Thomas Cleary, (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1988), 82.

16 Michael Handel, *Intelligence and Military Operations*, (Abingdon, UK: Frank Cass and Company, 1990),

17 Robert Fry, "Sun Tzu: The Best Leadership Teacher of All Time?" *Forbes*, July 27, 2010.