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# EMPLOYING THE SEVEN ARMY VALUES TO WIN HEARTS AND MINDS

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## Introduction

From my first day at Basic Training to the writing of this article, the Army has taught and manifested the seven Army values into my life and the missions my fellow Soldiers and I conduct. They are: *Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage*. These values are the bedrock upon which a modern Counterinsurgency (COIN) war can and is being won in places like Afghanistan. These values are the heart of the Army and from this, American Soldiers are able to



fight a faceless enemy surrounded by innocents in the most inhospitable locations on Earth. I believe these values can also be applied to the business realm.



## Loyalty

Loyalty has been present in all warrior societies as exemplified by the Spartans at Thermopylae, the 182 Texans at the Alamo, or the several dozen U.S. Rangers in Mogadishu. Loyalty among Soldiers increases fighting effectiveness and ensures cohesion amidst chaotic situations. For Army leaders, this

means taking an hour less sleep to listen; constantly looking for ways to improve operations; and fighting from the front with one's fellow Soldiers. In return, Soldiers follow difficult orders

– even life-endangering – to enable the unit to accomplish its mission. From this loyalty, Soldiers keep each other accountable and thus ensure the complex and hazardous guidelines given by higher command are followed. Loyalty is what motivates Soldiers to leave their armored vehicles and enter the town markets to buy Afghani produce or to have tea with local police. From these actions, the first step in building personal relationships with Afghans is accomplished and the COIN fight can begin.

In today's highly segmented business environment, I believe loyalty is a difficult, but beneficial quality, not only between employer and employee but with business and its customers. First, Americans are moving as a job requirement less currently than at any point in history according to the 2010 U.S. Census. If employees are remaining locally rooted, doesn't it make sense for businesses to return that loyalty and build upon that trust and as a propitious consequence, generate more productive workers? From a customer's point of view, the productive employee exhibits a greater willingness to serve and to form a personal relationship with the customer and as a result, the business acquires a competitive advantage in the modern marketplace. Why do I go to a certain BBQ restaurant in San Antonio? Because of the service. Why do so many Soldiers utilize U.S.A.A. financial services? Because of the service. In both cases, the working environment is very highly rated and the employees are extremely satisfied. This is manifested in outstanding job performances. Whether it's an IT technician or a M2 machine gunner, loyalty breeds effectiveness in the business place and the COIN fight in Afghanistan.

## **Duty**

Duty is a challenging value in a COIN war zone, especially in a place with perilous terrain such as Afghanistan. There is no big motivational push, no enemy defensive line to breach, and no identifiable opposition leader who can sign a peace treaty. Instead, duty involves getting up before daylight for weeks on end and traveling across the countryside and into villages where danger may take a life or never appear at all. It's remaining vigilant for mortar and rocket attacks; repairing roads blown up by the enemy – all while under constant gunfire; knowingly travelling down a perilous road where a fellow Soldier has just lost his life; being mindful of suicide bombers; and delivering ballots through rugged terrain to remote places for those who may or may not cast a vote. And this is all accomplished dutifully, day after day, and if lucky, Soldiers return home to redeployment orders and eschew fanfare and nonexistent tickertape parades. I am amazed by my Soldiers; they know all this and yet get into their trucks, put their boots on, and begin ground patrol – never wavering in their duty despite ubiquitous imminent dangers. This commitment is strengthened by the resolute belief that America's all-volunteer forces will break the insurgency in Afghanistan.

There is a well-publicized insurgent manual that speaks of the differences between American and Soviet forces in Afghanistan. During the Cold War, the insurgents were taught to target Soviet troop leaders to render the entire unit combat-ineffective. In juxtaposition, the manual discourages targeting American troop leaders as the affected unit will keep pressing forward. It is the Non-Commissioned Officers of the Army that instill and sustain the value of duty within the ranks. Thus, even the most challenging of all military doctrines – the COIN fight – can be executed and accomplished: winning hearts and minds while combating an extremely lethal enemy.

I hear and read often that business leaders complain of the lack of a “work ethic” characterizing today’s employees. I do believe there is a fundamental issue facing America in this regard and a true sense of duty must be recaptured to compete on a global scale. Many factory workers in China believe that their work represents a collective sacrifice to strengthen their country and improve conditions for future generations. America has historically been one of the most efficient and hardest working nations in the modern era. I have seen this work ethic exemplified in the Army Corps and I know it is a fundamental characteristic of the American workforce. It is incumbent upon business leaders to inspire such a sense of duty in order to compete effectively in the global marketplace, understanding that the competition is no longer in Scranton or Chicago, but in Shanghai and Calcutta.



## Respect

Respect is at the very heart of the COIN fight. The basic premise of COIN is that the battlefield does not consist of a piece of land or a natural resource, but rather the people inhabiting the Area of Operations. In this fight, the inhabitants have the choice to side with the insurgents – who wish to destabilize the country – or align themselves with coalition forces who wish to stabilize it and to provide proper governance. One key failing of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s was the utter disrespect for and disdain of the local population. The U.S. Army in Afghanistan understands that



respect is the cornerstone of winning the support of the people and thus the overall COIN fight. This is evident in the General Order #1 read to all Soldiers when they enter the Afghan theater. Repeatedly, the need for genuine respect of the local people, their culture, and their

religions, is constantly stressed. U.S. forces are prohibited from entering mosques unless under eminent threat and are fervently reminded to treat village elders with deference (e.g., U.S. bases will not serve pork products on Fridays).

Another example of respect of cultural differences involved a U.S. engineering unit assigned to repair a road destroyed by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) crater on a particular Friday morning. The unit was approached by a village elder who complained about conducting work on the holy day. The U.S. Platoon Leader apologized for the oversight and promised to finish the work quickly, vowing to never again work in such a manner on the locally recognized holy days. Several days later, in the same village, the engineers were patrolling for IEDs, stopped, and purchased some watermelons. While doing so, they conversed with the village elder and again apologized for the construction on their holy Friday. The village elder accepted the public apology, thanked the engineers for their work on the road, and informed them of other IED blast holes located further south and east of the village. The engineers agreed to work on those in the future. The first time the engineers entered the village, they were shot at with Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPGs) and mortars. But by the time all the road repairs were completed, they had not been engaged by insurgents in months. This is the power of respect in a COIN fight: by gaining the acceptance of the villagers, insurgents were no longer able to attack with impunity.

## Selfless Service

Most Americans confuse this Army value with sacrifice. Sacrifice implies a final signature act. Selfless service may include that but it encompasses so much more. It is giving a piece of yourself, time after time, for the betterment of the Nation, the Army, the unit, and the Soldier next to you. Selfless service is a Sergeant First Class, husband and father of two, deploying for the third time because he cares about Soldiers. Selfless service is a mechanic



working through the frigid Afghan night to fix a vehicle because he knows his best friend will be driving it the next day. Selfless service is a skinny, pimple-faced Specialist carrying twenty pounds extra weight of defensive gear to protect his fellow dismantled Soldiers. This selfless service extends to the COIN

fight. Whether it is building Afghani electrical poles, repairing IED-riddled roads, or providing candy to children, the U.S. engineering Soldier is constantly helping those who view him with suspicion or even harbor ill. It is this selfless service that wins hearts and minds. I don't think most Americans understand the importance of this, nor do they appreciate the true difficulty. In the hedgerows of Normandy if a sniper shoots from a house, U.S. forces would usually call in artillery to destroy the entire building. In Afghanistan, such measures are generally not taken, and instead American forces put themselves at greater risk by closing in

on the enemy by foot, wearing up to 80 pounds of gear, to engage (or more likely scare off) the insurgent sniper. Why? To selflessly serve the innocent Afghan people, placing American lives at risk to ensure the safety of Afghans. The media rightly criticizes the Army for its failure to protect innocents and its unfortunate killing of some of them. However, these stories are the rare exception and not the rule and further pale in comparison to how many innocents are killed by insurgents. On too many occasions, U.S. Engineers witnessed innocent Afghans being struck by IEDs or watched errant insurgent RPGs strike homes and businesses. It is curious such stories are very rarely seen in the U.S. press.

Most progressive writers call for business leaders to take less income to reduce wage disparity, thus sacrificing compensation for the greater good of the workforce. I disagree with this entirely – people should be paid what they are worth. However, business leaders should consider their clients and customers. Is a CEO of a financial institution really doing all he or she can for shareholders and clients by taking an eight or nine figure compensation? Did Franklin Raines, former CEO of Fannie Mae, selflessly serve the American home-buying public? Today's business leadership should examine if they truly care about the businesses they lead, and if so, should consider the Army of Selfless Service to lead competitive ventures.

## Honor

Honor, as a word, has lost its power and relevance in the modern world. In the wake of political, business, and real estate scandals, the idea of honor has diminished in American society. The idea of a deal being consummated by a handshake seems quaint at best in contemporary society. However, honor is still meaningful in the Army. Honor is sacred among Soldiers, probably because its position as a personal covenant rises above the difficult realities of a war zone. It is not regulated by orders or law, but is a bond among warriors. In a Soldier's world full of dirt, cursing, diesel fuel, gun chatter, explosions, and long days – honor is rightly held in its lofty perch. Honoring



a fallen Hero on a bitter cold November evening in a howling Afghan wind through antiquated military customs and courtesies gives meaning and respect to a truly tragic event in a way aggrandizing political speeches and consumerist offerings never could. That is why honor is so important to a line Soldier – perhaps the most important value. This sense of honor is how a COIN fight is maintained in the face of difficulties. It would be easy for an engineer unit who just lost one of their own to enter a dangerous village and seek vengeance. Reporters would never dare venture to such remote places, platoon reports could shroud the truth from higher command, and the unit would probably kill an insurgent

or at least some of those supporting the insurgents. But Honor does not allow this violation of duty. Honoring the fallen Soldier – a brother and a friend – means doing the right thing out of respect to his ultimate selfless service. It means refraining from vengeful acts, continuing to respect the innocent villagers, and accomplishing the COIN mission – winning over the villagers without inflicting death and destruction. Honor is how American Soldiers keep their wits about them during the COIN fight.

## Integrity

Doing what is right, even when no one is looking, is the Private's definition of integrity. Breaches of integrity in the U.S. Army, such as Abu Graib, are widely known. This is unfortunate. The publicity of these failures severely overshadows the daily successes. Breaches of integrity and their ensuing consequences are bitter reminders of the importance of integrity. I believe integrity to be the most difficult of the Army values. It must come from within and provide the fortitude to constantly fight apathy, stress, and fatigue – especially in a combat setting. Something as simple and routine as calibrating an M2 machine gun before a mission is at the heart of integrity. Soldiers of the platoon must trust that the M2 gunner has integrity. For when the moment comes, that M2 must engage the enemy. If the gunner fails, the repercussions from a Chinese-made RPG could last a lifetime. For Army leaders, integrity is just as important for non-combatants as it is for Soldiers. On a daily basis, thousands – perhaps tens of thousands – of decisions are made by Army Officers, who must choose the hard right over the easy wrong.

One such decision might involve whether to engage locals digging near the side of the road on a route known for the presence of IEDs. The gunner asks the Platoon's Lieutenant to engage; the radio traffic is filled with fear and anger. The Lieutenant, fully aware that one of his Soldiers died less than 500 meters from that location only several days prior, uses optics and detects two men digging in the road, But something doesn't feel right. It would be easy to advance, and even if these men are not insurgents, they are most likely opposition supporters. But that cannot be the answer. So, the platoon adopts a defensive posture and continues to monitor – increasing this mission's length and risk. Men are now more tired and stressed, but integrity must prevail. After an anxious wait, a group of women and children join the men; they gather wheat from the side of the road and all return to their Qalot home. No IED was emplaced; there was no danger to the Soldiers. The difficult decision to wait proved to be correct. Breaches of Army integrity are serious setbacks to the COIN mission and the values of the Army, however, the daily integrity successes are the path to victory in the modern COIN fight.



Enron, Fannie Mae, AIG, and the World News – without saying anything further everyone knows these are examples of integrity failures. Spanning the energy sector, government, banking and insurance, and even the media, the business community seems to be riddled with integrity lapses. If anything, these examples demonstrate that business cannot regulate itself. The motivation for business is to generate profits and earnings – not protect and nurture the greater good. We should never expect mythical businesses that put anything else before profits, for that cannot exist. Therefore, integrity should be insured through regulatory actions and the character of personnel.

## Personal Courage

“You won’t know how a Soldier will react until the moment comes.” Sound advice from a crusty Platoon Sergeant with whom I had the honor of serving. This Army value is ephemeral in a combat zone. Sometimes RPK machine gun rounds will wizz by and you’ll dive for cover behind a sand berm in the middle of a wadi in Khowst province. Other times it will be a moonless frigid fall night in the Ghazni Province and possible insurgents are advancing upon your location where an IED has just struck one of your vehicles. You will stand your ground behind a Qalot wall and deny the enemy his ambush. Insurgents can be fearless because they believe there is nothing left in life for which to live. U.S. Soldiers have courage because they believe in the Army values. Furthermore, most writers are partially accurate when they state that Soldiers have courage and serve because of their fellow Soldiers. Regardless of religious, political, economic, social, and lifestyle differences, these men place themselves in grave danger because of a shared value system – the seven core Army values. This is the one true common thread.



Courage is capricious. Courage is critical to a Soldier. Courage is the noblest of the Army values and well-celebrated in public discourse and political speeches. And yet, true courage – not simple words – is what American enemies fear, her allies rely on, and what Soldiers never need to discuss. In a COIN fight, this fearlessness is what is required against an enemy that will purposely commit suicide to kill Soldiers or innocents. It is this courage that will defeat desperate insurgents where others have failed.

Courage is the heart of American business and the path towards promise. Courage drives entrepreneurs to open their doors and begin to compete. Courage motivates drug companies to search for cures and energy companies to seek new supplies, programmers to provide solutions, and investors to invest. The current international economic climate makes business courage difficult. American business can hunker behind a berm of protectionism or it can stand up, embrace the challenge, and meet the competition.

## Final Remarks



The seven Army values of *Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage* are the basis of the American Army's modern character. Most of these can be extended and should be extended to the business world. Each Army value is tested daily in the COIN fight in Afghanistan – perhaps the most complex, personally dangerous, and nuanced modern military campaign. Without these values, an effective COIN fight could not be conducted. More than technology, grand strategy, or diplomatic initiatives, the core Army Values embedded within junior Soldiers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and junior Commissioned Officers on the ground **are** winning the hearts and minds – village by village, elder by elder, child by child – on a daily basis in the “graveyard of empires.” It is these undefeatable values – not the sophisticated equipment or the words of the politicians or even the infusion of capital resources – that will bring peace and security to Afghanistan.

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### **Author Biography**

Jonn Kusch graduated from Valparaiso University in 2004 with a B.S. in Civil Engineering and History. He helped found the University's chapter of Engineers-Without-Borders and was part of the 2004 team who traveled to Turkana, Kenya to help construct wind-powered water systems to facilitate irrigated farming for the local villagers. Upon graduation, Mr. Kusch worked as a civil engineer for the AECOM corporation and subsequently for the City of San Antonio's Public Works Department. During this time, he earned his MBA in International Business from the University of Texas – San Antonio. In July of 2008, he joined the U.S. Army, commissioning as a 2<sup>nd</sup>

Lieutenant through Officer Candidate School and was assigned to the 693<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Company (Sapper). The 693<sup>rd</sup> deployed to Afghanistan in May of 2010 and Lt. Kusch served as a platoon leader for Route Clearance Patrol 72 for nine months and then as the Company Intelligence Officer for the remaining three months. He is now a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant with the 7<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion and is posted to Fort Drum, New York.

### **DEDICATION**

**This article is dedicated to SPC Blake D. Whipple of Buffalo, NY, killed in action on November 5, 2010, in the Ghazni Province of Afghanistan by an IED strike.**