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Lead On! A Practical Approach to Leadership

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Some may get a case of sticker shock from the price. Nevertheless, the attention paid to followership is itself a service to military leaders.

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Oliver, Dave, Jr. *Lead On! A Practical Approach to Leadership.* Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1992. 207pp. $9.95

This is the best book on naval leadership currently in print. It is also, without question, one of the most honest assessments of shipboard leadership techniques—both good and bad—ever published. Rear Admiral Oliver, the director of the General Planning and Programing Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, makes it clear in the opening sentence that he is going to pull no punches: "I was inordinately fortunate during my early professional career. I worked for some truly awful leaders." What follows are the lessons learned from a career in the submarine service, written in a style most short-story writers would envy.

Lead On! consists of twenty chapters of ideas on leadership, each based on a major incident that Oliver either experienced or investigated. These are not dry case studies—although I would recommend them for any business school—but lively and carefully crafted tales reminiscent of a nautical Aesop. No officer who reads this book will fail to find at least one situation, complete with leadership dilemma, that he or she has had to face without help. If only we had had this source of patient wisdom beforehand! Each chapter focuses first on situations and issues that demanded dynamic leadership but instead got inept management. It then provides a nugget of wisdom—hence the allusion to the morals of Aesop's Fables. These summarize Oliver's thoughtful insights into what motivates people in general, and naval personnel in particular, to achieve (or not achieve) excellence.

The tone of the book is one of a penetrating and warm conversation, the caring advice of a sage mentor. Along the way, the reader learns a great deal about basic submarining, but in a way that is understandable and enjoyable and makes the book an equally fine introduction to everyday submarine operations.

Oliver also examines the limits to leadership and how the Navy decided that urinalysis was the only practical way to enforce zero tolerance of drugs. Moreover, he offers evidence for the argument that many have long suspected: that enlisted retention, the subject of competitive unit awards, is a poor indicator of a commanding officer's leadership skills. (Officer retention, on the other hand, is probably the best.) The book also discusses injustices that occur within the naval bureaucracy—how "the bad guys win"—when "briefing in color" vanquishes the truth. I suspect the author's willingness to be this honest may have deterred a few potential publishers before Presidio accepted.

Clearly the message is one of leadership by example and by involvement, with the requirement for the leader

to use ethical and moral reasoning. For example, the author spends considerable effort exploring why subordinates frequently protect alcoholic commanders. Many officers may see leadership as a matter of common sense, and it is, but no one (I say again, no one, including the overall Total Quality Leadership program) has expressed it quite as well as Oliver. If plebes (and all officer candidates) are not receiving this volume in their initial outfit seabag, we are making a mistake. This is the career-molding introduction that will make all those leadership statistics they will soon be subjected to seem truly relevant. For the rest of us, my advice is, don't go to sea without it.

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Krol, Ed. *The Whole Internet: User's Guide and Catalogue.* Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly, 1992. 376pp. $24.95

Internet is the world's largest computer network. It is the result of nearly twenty years of development, much of which was sponsored by the Defense Advance Research Projects Agency. The purpose was initially to develop communications and computer networks. This effort was in parallel with the explosive advances in electronics and computer hardware that have led to affordable and widespread personal computers. Collectively, all of these developments are embodied in what is called information technology.

Ed Krol set out to provide a guide for the "garden variety" computer user,

the individual who simply has a job to do. He has succeeded admirably. He has also succeeded in minimizing jargon and "computerese." This book helps to bring the world of information technology within the grasp of those who are not computer science professionals. With this book at hand, those of us who are minimally computer literate can enter into discourse on a variety of subjects and on a worldwide basis.

With a personal computer or a lap-top, a modem (a device that connects the computer with the telephone network), and an affiliation with Internet, one can enjoy electronic mail (e-mail), electronic bulletin boards, and access to university libraries and to individuals who share hobbies or intellectual interests. But there is more in this for professional national security specialists, be they military or civilian.

Information technology, specifically large-scale computer nets, has brought operational and acquisition elements of the military departments to the threshold of revolutionary change. Modeling and simulation will be used by the operational forces and commands to evaluate, train, plan operations, and rehearse for them; the defense systems acquisition community has been enabled to revolutionize and shorten the acquisition process and reduce the costs associated with it. The promise of information technology has been recognized at the level of the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the service secretaries and chiefs. This reviewer urges readers who have access to the Defense Modeling and Simulation Office to become familiar with its