The CORE Leadership Model


What is a leadership model? More often than not, a leadership model is portrayed as a series of connected components such as self-development, institutional education, values, and ethics. The concept is that it takes different developmental strategies for each functional area of the model. In fact, many theories on leadership models state that the overriding goal of the model is to provide a means to disperse leadership training throughout the entire organization. A leadership model should further provide a well-defined means for understanding how a leader acts when faced with challenges. I agree with this concept wholeheartedly. Unfortunately, many of the current models on the market – at least in my research – lack a necessary and critically important behavioral aspect of leadership, focusing instead on the theories of leadership. The idea is that by learning and understanding theory, the leader will be able to apply it. The results have been mixed at best. I do believe that we may be providing better academic leadership education to our leaders, but without creating a direct correlation between learning, operational application, and then evaluating for effectiveness, we will always have a disconnect where the rubber meets the road.

Many current police and business leadership models that are out there have some connection to the military. After all, the military has the largest laboratory of leadership development in the nation. I served in the US Army and I have a sound understanding of what it takes to be a military leader. While I have been able to use this military experience and training to my benefit, I have come to realize that there is a significant distinction. Simply stated, the difference between the Army’s leadership training systems and the police-related training systems that I have been exposed to as a police officer can be quantified through a single word: Demonstrability.
After every leadership academy or training session I attended in the military, I was responsible for demonstrating that I could apply what I had learned. My chain of command made it clear that I had to meet the expectations and standards of leadership for my particular rank as imparted during training. This is a simple enough philosophy that has proven itself time and time again, with 18-year-old kids being able to lead on the battlefield. But can this same philosophy actually apply to the police world? I believe that it can, but I have also come to see that in reality it often does not. Let me explain.

In 2000 I was promoted to the rank of sergeant. As I began to put together my transition plan for leading my squad, I decided that, based on my experience as an officer, I wanted to make sure that training was one of my priorities. I searched around for a list of common tasks - much like I had while in the Army - in which a police officer needed to be proficient. I contacted the academy staff and made some inquiries, but in no uncertain way I was stonewalled. Training, it appeared, was the exclusive right of the advanced officer training unit at the academy. OK, while I can understand the need to centralize certification-related training, I had a difficult time understanding why I was not responsible for individual tactical training within my squad. In my mind, one of the major responsibilities of a supervisor is to ensure that their people are proficient in all aspects of their job. To abdicate this responsibility, to my mind and experience, to someone else was analogous to surrendering a significant part of leadership. I pressed on with my inquiries of the academy staff and during a meeting with both the training commander and the sergeant, I was finally made aware of the major concern that they both held. In no uncertain terms I was informed that they believed that some - if not a majority - of the sergeants did not possess the skills to properly train their officers. I was dumbfounded. The first thing that came to my mind was to consider how a leader could properly evaluate an officer's performance if they were not capable of providing the training that comprises that performance. I quickly went and reviewed the leadership model that I had been provided with upon promotion that was principally based on the standards for completing personnel evaluations. The model - if it really could be called a model - also stressed the condition that leaders be, above all other things, competent in their job and leadership ability. This sparked my search to determine just how and what comprised this leadership competency. Other than the promotional process that I had just completed, the only other reference available to me was the Personnel Performance Evaluation which had been so prominently at the forefront of my sergeant training up to that