

# **Hearts and minds, in that order!**

A critical review of British military and business leadership

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## Abstract

The established literature on leadership is vast and complex, ranging from the qualities and characteristics of the leader, to the eternal question of whether leadership can be taught or is genetically hotwired into those individuals who lead.

This paper explores leadership through the examination of the British Military model. The author reviews the implementation method known as 'mission command', in order to examine the qualities of leadership, which are the key components of the British Army's enviable track record of success. This work examines aspects of leadership in business and draws comparisons with the British Military method. This perspective is not new however; the author underpins his work with an ongoing research program, which examines Territorial Army Officers leadership methods and characteristics as they translate into the business space, through the framework of a project implementation program.

There are many authors who have reviewed military leadership and perhaps this is understandable as history is full of heroic examples. The author would contend that although many detailed dissections of character, style and method have been written, little has changed. The business model for the selection of leaders is still largely based on a successful transaction track record, whilst the British Military select on character

and values. This paper examines these different methods of identification, highlights some key differences and offers insight into potential utility.

The author places the development of leadership thinking in context by reviewing the origins of 'Mission Command', relating these developments to changes in leadership selection and development. The work also draws parallels between military development and academic understanding, through 'servant leadership' and participative 'action research' models which promote inclusion and understanding. This paper is not an exhaustive review of the range of leadership literature, rather a deliberately narrow critique of an important source of leadership theory. The author aims to generate debate and gain feedback from other academics researching this field.

The work draws to a close with a series of recommendations, which argues for a radical rethink of the business space. However, it also offers a real opportunity for developing organisations which are robust, dynamic, inclusive and engaging of their most valuable assets, namely their people. As business processes and communications speed up, the ever-increasing chaotic business environment requires organisations that can delegate decision making and promote measured risk taking. The organisations which are successful in harnessing the opportunities that this environment presents, will become the winners in tomorrow's commercial battle ground. Sustainable leadership is critical to the volatility of the modern market place. As organisations evolve and develop international and even global workforces the requirement of universal values based leadership is critical. The author challenges whether this can be achieved solely through a values based approach but suggests, that the method of

leadership must be more inclusive and engaging as empowerment and risk taking will only be sustainable within a framework of trust and belief.