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**Article Reprint
Timeless Leadership Series**

MISSION-FOCUSED MOTIVATION A Leadership Tool

The Reporter, Volume 32-2 (2005)

Timeless Leadership Series: Article Reprint
By Chief Master Sergeant Alan Wise

This edition of the Timeless Leadership series comes from *The Reporter*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (2005). It discusses five motivational building blocks for successful leadership.

Motivational Building Blocks

There are many definitions of leadership, and you've probably learned several during your career. My personal definition comes from a quote I found in an issue of Reader's Digest. I even posted it on my office door when I was the Law Office Manager at Nellis Air Force Base. The quote reads:

Leadership is getting your people to do the mission because they want to do it.

To make that happen, I've used the following five motivational building blocks—along with my **“secret weapon.”**

1 Ask for performance

First, conduct a thorough review of your troop's records to determine their skills and knowledge. Then prepare feedback outlining your expectations. Always ensure your feedback describes the job to be done, explains how to do it, and sets specific expectations in a way that the subordinate understands. Then, and only then, sit down with the person and conduct feedback.

2 Give personalized positive reinforcement

Don't take acceptable work for granted. Thank folks for what they do. Praise them each time you see improvement in their performance. Most importantly, remember that positive reinforcement doesn't have to be saved until a formal situation. It can be done anytime, anywhere.

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3 Build relationships

Take time to get to know your people. Know what they want to do and what motivates them. People respond best when you respect and understand their individuality.

4 Model what you expect

When you lead by example, people follow. Approach your work with a sense of urgency, use your time efficiently, and meet your personal goals. By doing these things, you set a positive example and exhibit those behaviors you desire your subordinates to emulate. Others will follow your lead.

5 Refuse to accept poor performance

At times, we must tell people that their performance isn't meeting expectations. This can be the hardest building block to implement, but one of the most important. By not accepting substandard performance, you demonstrate that quality and performance matter.

The Secret Weapon

The "secret weapon" that makes these work and leads to success: **attitude**. Having the right attitude, whether you are leading or following, sets the tone for success. Without the proper attitude, it is very hard to motivate your troops. The best expression I've seen about attitude was on the business card of Chief Master Sergeant (Ret.) Dan Garza. It read:

**Attitudes are contagious ...
is yours worth catching?**

So, what should you do when you find yourself thinking, "How can I motivate my folks to do something because they want to?" First, examine yourself and ensure your attitude is one worth catching. Then, try these five building blocks.

Layout by Thomasa Huffstutler

About the Author

(2005 Biography from *The Reporter*, Vol. 32, No. 2)

Chief Master Sergeant Alan Wise

CMSgt Alan Wise recently retired after 30 years of service to the United States Air Force. His final position was as the Agency Paralegal Manager, AFLSA, Bolling Air Force Base, D.C. In that capacity he planned, managed, and directed the overall training, assignment, and development of all paralegals and civilian legal support personnel assigned to the Air Force Legal Services Agency/National Capital Region and its Detachments throughout the world. He first entered the Air Force in 1975 as an Administrative Specialist, 3353rd School Squadron, Chanute Air Force Base, Illinois and subsequently held a variety of paralegal positions at a number of assignments both stateside and overseas. He and his wife are retiring to Las Vegas, Nevada. We wish them all the best and extend out thanks to Chief Wise for his 30 years of service!