

As delivered

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Leadership, Change, and Continuity
Coast Guard Academy
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Amenities:

Thank you for such a warm welcome. I was disappointed the weather prevented me from getting up here last month, but then, this has been a heck of a month for snow in New England!

[If New England wins the Super Bowl:] And it's also been a heck of a year for sports fans in New England! As a lifelong, diehard Sox fan, my frustrations came to an end this past fall -- and with the Patriots' win yesterday, well, it doesn't get much better than that.

I owe a special thanks to Admiral Olsen for hosting my visit here and providing this opportunity for my first major leadership address of 2005.

And it's great to see the entire New London Coast Guard community represented here: the Corps of Cadets, Academy faculty, staff, and alumni, the LDC staff, our PCO/PXO afloat and CWOPD Class 04-05, the OCS staff and OCS Class 01-05, EAGLE sailors, and First District Auxiliarists. And I understand today marks a highlight for the Class of 2005 -- it's 100 days until graduation!

Introduction:

This is the fourth year that the Commandant has visited the Academy at the beginning of the New Year for an annual address on the topic of leadership. Three years ago, Admiral Loy spoke about practicing integrity in leadership. Two years ago, I spoke to you about inspired leadership, operational excellence, and a commitment to excellence through an emphasis on alignment, accountability, and accomplishment. Last year, I extended the discussion of leadership in today's Coast Guard with specific focus on individual responsibility and a commitment to leadership.

Today, I want to talk to you about leadership in a changing environment.

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- Realignment and reorganization of field commands ...
- Reorganization of district commands ...
- Realignment of Headquarters offices ...
- A new Department ...
- An expanding mission portfolio ...
- A new domestic law that significantly expands Coast Guard authority and operations ...
- A new international agreement that significantly expands Coast Guard authority and operations ...
- Growth in the number of Coast Guard personnel ...
- Expansion of our coastal communications systems ...
- An increased port security role for the Coast Guard ...
- Boarding of vessels at sea and escorting them into port ...

Sound familiar? Many of you may be thinking that I'm talking about today's Coast Guard: about Sectors, Regions, the Department of Homeland Security, the Maritime Transportation Security Act, the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, Rescue 21, Sea Marshals, and Maritime Security and Safety Teams.

Actually, I'm referring to our Service in 1915 and the few years following, when the Revenue Cutter Service and the Life Saving Service joined to become the United States Coast Guard. That merger was accomplished under the leadership of one of our greatest Commandants: Commodore Ellsworth P. Bertholf, an 1887 graduate of the Revenue Cutter School of Instruction, predecessor to the Coast Guard Academy. Commodore Bertholf had a most distinguished career: he was one of the heroes of the 1898 Overland Relief Expedition in Alaska, earning a unique gold medal of honor from Congress; he fought to preserve the Revenue Cutter Service when a Commission report recommended abolishing it; he was one of the architects of the merger of the Revenue Cutter Service and Life Saving Service; he was the last Commandant of the Revenue Cutter Service and the first Commandant of the Coast Guard; and he was our Service's first flag officer.

This was a man who could lead change!

Some of the changes Commodore Bertholf experienced were ones he could anticipate and prepare for. Other changes didn't give much of a

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warning and he had to adapt and manage those changes based on his core values and understanding of the Coast Guard's role in serving our Nation.

The same can be said for a number and magnitude of the changes we see in the Coast Guard today.

Part of the process to select Admiral Loy's successor back in the fall of 2001 included each candidate writing a paper for Secretary Mineta on the way ahead for the Coast Guard – our goals for the Coast Guard, if chosen to be the next Commandant. I titled my paper, "Change within Continuity." I wrote, "These are demanding times. Urgent and complex challenges ... and opportunities ... abound. The next Commandant will need to do more than extend current imperatives. *The essential task at hand for the next Commandant will be to lead change.* The next Commandant must transform our Service in select key areas while holding fast to our core characteristics (the Coast Guard as a multi-mission, military, maritime service) and precious core values (honor, respect, and devotion to duty). Ironically, preserving these time-tested characteristics and values will give the Coast Guard the flexibility, discipline, and capability to respond to changing national priorities. In keeping with the spirit of "change within continuity," the following reflect my current thinking on the strategic areas of emphasis for the next four years." I then went on to describe what became my Commandant's Direction of Readiness, People, and Stewardship. There were some changes for our Service that I knew were coming – Deepwater, our new security laws and regs, but there were others that were not yet in the works, that today have come to fruition, like our transfer to the Department of Homeland Security. Although I did not know about all the changes we would face, I knew there would be substantial change. And I knew that if led correctly, these changes would make our Coast Guard stronger, better, and well prepared to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

Now, let me point out that I said "led correctly." By that I do not mean led by me alone ... because I could not lead and can not lead the changes that are happening in the Coast Guard alone. We need every leader of the Coast Guard, from my Assistant Commandants to the Station OIC, to first line supervisors to lead and manage the changes in our Service.

I think every leadership and management scholar would agree that change only for change's sake is, at best, busy work, and at worst, a disaster ... and in every case a way to lose credibility with those you lead. Change is

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not a goal unto itself – it is part of the process to achieve a higher strategic goal.

So, how do we as an organization change in the face of shifting external factors and mission demands? How do we do it correctly, with a strategic purpose? How do we know what to change and what to leave alone?

Of the hundreds of leadership books that have come out in the past couple decades, there are two in particular that have rung true with me. They are The Power of Alignment: How Great Companies Stay Centered and Accomplish Extraordinary Things and Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies. Both are written with businesses in mind, but many of the points they make apply just as well to all organizations, including government agencies.

One of the main points addressed in The Power of Alignment that I think hits the nail on the head for continued success in the Coast Guard is a concept the authors call “distributed leadership.” The authors write, “When the subject of leadership comes up, most people automatically think of a handful of people at the top: the CEO and the senior management team. Strong leadership at the top is always important, but it is insufficient for sustained success. Leadership is required at every level, a concept we call ‘distributed’ leadership, which we define as the presence of capable leadership in different units and at different levels of an organization. Distributed leadership is found at the edges of the aligned organization, among men and women who are both empowered to act and knowledgeable about what must be done. There it aligns employee activities with the broader goals of the organization.”

In the Coast Guard, I see distributed leadership in three ways:

1. a shared vision – knowing our core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty and our goals of People, Readiness, and Stewardship ,
2. then good communication both up and down the chain of command, and finally,
3. enabling and empowering individuals throughout the entire organization to lead.

Many of you in this audience are in leadership positions either in the Corps of Cadets or in the active duty Coast Guard or Coast Guard Auxiliary.

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How do you align with and contribute to “distributed leadership”? As your Commandant, I set the broad framework, the general direction, and the goals of our Service, but within those, there’s a great deal of latitude in what individual leaders can do – and that’s the idea of distributed leadership. Within the broad boundaries set, you are expected, in your individual leadership role within our organization, to lead your people in a particular direction – and to teach them to lead in that same way.

In Built to Last, written 11 years ago, the authors assessed a number of companies, all founded at least 50 years before, and discussed why certain ones succeeded in the face of massive economic and global change, and others in the same industries didn’t fare nearly as well.

In Built to Last, a key point was that, “a visionary company almost religiously preserves its core ideology – changing it seldom, if ever. Core values in a visionary company form a rock-solid foundation and do not drift with the trends and fashions of the day; in some cases, the core values have remained intact for well over one hundred years. And the basic purpose of a visionary company – its reason for being – can serve as a guiding beacon for centuries, like an enduring star on the horizon. Yet, while keeping their core ideologies tightly fixed, visionary companies display a powerful drive for progress that enables them to change and adapt without compromising their cherished core ideals.”

The most successful companies know who they are. They hold their organization’s values and character dear ... they are steadfast when it comes to their core values and character ... but everything else is subject to change ... ruthless change if need be.

Well, we’re a lot more than 50 years old – and in the book, Character in Action: The U.S. Coast Guard on Leadership, Don Phillips and Admiral Loy do a great job of discussing our values and character: “Solid history and tradition in an organization serves as a foundation upon which everything else rests. For the U.S. Coast Guard, it’s the long blue line, the core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty, and an anchor that dates back to the dawn of the nation itself, to the U.S. Constitution, to Alexander Hamilton, and to other great champions of character in action.”

The authors go on to show how every mission of the Coast Guard maps directly to the Preamble to the Constitution, that every day, we do, in fact ...

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establish justice ... insure domestic tranquility ... provide for the common defense ... promote the general welfare ... and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

From the earliest days of our Constitution and the Revenue Cutter Service to Bertholf's day and the establishment of the Coast Guard to the challenges we face today ... change has always been a part of our history. Today that change is accelerated. Today, we are confronted with challenges that our founding fathers never imagined ... the world's greatest superpower and greatest democracy was attacked in its homeland by a network of terrorists who seek the destruction of our freedom, our economy, our culture, and our lives. No one will ever forget the lasting image of airliners crashing into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania field. And from the horror of those moments came changes for our Nation and our Coast Guard.

Over the past three years, we've adapted operationally and culturally. Homeland security is a major part of our daily operations; we work ever closer with federal, state and local counterparts; and we're also working even more closely with our Department of Defense counterparts.

We are changing ...

- our budget
- our force structure
- our capital plant
- our organization
- our strategy
- our doctrine
- our policies and procedures
- our training infrastructure

We have never been more relevant. Our missions and how we succeed in them are visible daily at the White House, the Pentagon, and on CNN. We are continually on the front page of newspapers around the Nation ... not just for our traditional humanitarian efforts of search and rescue, drug and migrant interdiction, oil spill cleanup, and icebreaking ... now, the photo could just as easily be of a crewman on a harbor security patrol, casting a vigilant eye and manning a machine gun, protecting our nation's ports and waterways.

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We are in the midst of a very significant period in our Coast Guard's history – one very similar to Commodore Bertholf's -- and it is up to us to make it one we are proud to say we had a hand in shaping. We envisioned it; we created it; we made it succeed ... and our country and our future were made better for it.

As officers, you become part of the team leading that change and you will share the joys and the responsibilities of making that change as positive and as painless as possible for our workforce.

Let me read one more quote to you, this one from a New York newspaper: “The consensus of those we interviewed on the streets of Manhattan is that we’ll welcome the new century with open arms. But don’t expect us not to be a little frightened. Business is changing. Work is changing. Science is advancing. The world political climate is unlike anything we’ve ever witnessed. Even the weather seems different. Many see the party coming to an end. Others see a dawn of even greater opportunity.”

Can you relate? Sound familiar? Well, that passage was actually written when then-Second Lieutenant Bertholf was XO on USRC BEAR -- December 1899 !!!

But the point is the same. Whether it’s a hundred years ago or a hundred years from now, change is constant and always brings some degree of discomfort. But it’s also a prerequisite for opportunity -- an opportunity for you to lead in the ever-evolving Coast Guard.

The last time the Coast Guard experienced the kind of change and opportunity we have today, was 90 years ago. The current state of play offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all of us.

My message to you here today regarding change boils down to three key factors for success. To be successful in a transformational environment, we must:

First, know who we are and live up to those high standards. As described in Built to Last, we need to know our core ideology, what to hold fast to -- and then be willing to change everything else if necessary and

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appropriate. For us, our core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty are our cornerstone. They remain steadfast no matter our Department, our mission portfolio, or our field command structure. Another touchstone for us is that the Coast Guard is military, maritime, and multimission – always has been and always will be. Never waiver from these simple yet profound values and characteristics and your capability to lead will remain intact no matter how much change you endure.

The second key is to have a clear game plan linked to high-level strategic objectives and to communicate it consistently throughout the organization to aligned leaders – what The Power of Alignment calls “distributed leadership.” My “game plan” is my Commandant’s Direction of People, Readiness, and Stewardship. As we stay focused on those, up and down the chain of command, we will be able to ensure the changes in our Service are the ones to make us better, stronger, and more valuable to the Nation.

The third key is to develop and invest in the principles and practice of Leadership – both as an organization and individually. We must be persistent about building, maintaining, and extending a leadership culture. My leadership address to you last year addressed a number of the initiatives we are taking to formally develop leadership throughout the organization – I don’t want to repeat them all here tonight, but there are a few I want to again emphasize.

This past summer I approved the Coast Guard’s Leadership Framework. It institutionalizes three elements that make up the core of our leadership development program.

The first element addresses our Leadership Competencies: 28 of them broken down into four categories: Leading Self, Leading Others, Leading Performance & Change, and Leading the Coast Guard.

The second element is Level of Responsibility, covering all members of the Coast Guard team, from Worker to Executive.

The third element in the Leadership Framework is Leadership Intervention, or formal leadership training.

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In addition to our Leadership Framework, I have just rolled out the Unit Leadership Development Program, developed right here at the Academy – see ALCOAST 57/05. The ULDP will address leadership at each individual unit, Coast Guard-wide.

I don't expect you to remember all that's available for you to lead your people but I do expect you to remember that the Leadership Development Center here is to the operational Coast Guard what the Academy is to you ... the LDC is responsible for Leadership Development "execution" – they run the Leadership and Management School programs, including a one-week leadership course I've mandated all E-5s attend, which is also available to Junior Officers – hint, hint. The LDC also runs the Chief Petty Officers' Academy and the Chief Warrant Officer Professional Development Courses as well as the Command Master Chief Course and a host of Performance Excellence programs that support my quality management initiatives ... ensure your eligible people have the opportunity to attend these courses.

Before I close, let me add a little more history about Commodore Bertholf, as I said before, one of our greatest Commandants and leaders ... he had a rather rocky start to his military career. In his biography of Bertholf, C. Douglas Kroll writes that in 1882, Bertholf entered the Naval Academy but after his first year, he was court-martialed and dismissed for hazing. The next year he entered the Revenue Service School of Instruction, where he also had some struggles. His record reflects that "he was placed on report for not coming promptly on deck when called, for not being prompt in reporting for watches or drills, for lounging on the quarterdeck when on duty, and for wearing inappropriate clothing while on liberty." He had the third-most demerits in his class ... and due to those demerits, although he graduated in 1887, he was not commissioned in the Revenue Cutter Service until 1889 – seven years after he started his journey to become a commissioned officer in service to his country. So for those of you who are collecting more demerits than you – and your company officers -- would like, well, you're in some good company.

Bottom line ... leadership is an all-hands affair ... it's not the sole preserve of the Commandant, the Superintendent, or your next CO.

Thank you, good luck with your studies, and Semper Paratus!