



Followership

This module demonstrates everyone in the Coast Guard is a Follower. The student should identify characteristics of good followers and relate how demonstrating good followership impacts one's leadership success.

Road Map

Followership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership Definition• USCG Core Values• Receiving Feedback• Followership Definition• Follower Characteristics• Providing Feedback

STATE: The first thing we will do is to define leadership.

ASK: How would you define leadership?

You may get a variety of answers. Acknowledge all of them and look for similarities to:

YOU ⇒ OTHERS ⇒ GOAL
(YOU influencing OTHERS to achieve a GOAL)

**Leadership
Definition**

STATE: You are all close, but we are going to use the definition from the Coast Guard's Leadership and Quality Institute:

YOU influencing OTHERS to achieve a GOAL

STATE: Look at that definition. No where does it say a junior or senior, officers, chiefs, petty officers. Anyone can be a leader.

ASK: What are some of your leadership examples?

NOTE: A group of non-rates may not answer right away. Some examples may include (but are not limited to):

-Leading SN/FN

-Leading a work detail

-On smaller units, small boat coxswain, QMOW, JOOD, BTM, etc.

STATE: All of these people have roles as leaders. We are going to look at different aspects of leadership throughout this program.

NOTE: Be sure to provide writing paper and pens for this exercise!

ACTIVITY: Think of a leader who you respect a lot. It can be someone in the Coast Guard, an old sports coach, teacher, character in a book or movie. I want you to take a few minutes to write down five traits that made you respect that leader.

Give them 5 to 10 minutes to complete this task.

Have some of the people share their list. Look for similarities to the CG Core Values.

STATE: Look at your lists. I think it's fair to say that you would look for those traits in most leaders AND followers.

**USCG Core
Values**

ASK: How many here know what the core values are? What are they?

Give them a chance to talk about the core values. Then read the following:

USCG Core Values

HONOR - Integrity is our standard. We demonstrate uncompromising ethical conduct and moral behavior in all of our personal actions. We are loyal and accountable to the public trust.

RESPECT - We value our diverse work force. We treat each other with fairness, dignity, and compassion. We encourage individual opportunity and growth. We encourage creativity through empowerment. We work as a team.

DEVOTION TO DUTY - We are professionals, military and civilian, who seek responsibility, accept accountability, and are committed to the successful achievement of our organizational goals. We exist to serve. We serve with pride.

ASK: How do the Coast Guard Core Values match your list of important values?

NOTE: The Core Values and their list will not be a perfect match, but many will have the same intent. The following examples are typical responses, but are not an inclusive list.

Trust -- Honor

Responsibility – Devotion to Duty

Fair -- Respect

Funny -- Respect and devotion (if humor was used to motivate)

Honest -- Honor

Hard Working – Devotion to Duty

Knowledgeable – Devotion to Duty (learn all you can about a job)

ASK: What does it mean when your values closely match the organization's?

Despite a diverse background, our values have something in common.

ASK: So what do the core values have to do with leadership?

There are many possible responses. Let them work out a few answers on their own. The biggest impact has already been mentioned. All of their leaders had some set of “core values.” They respected those leaders because they had those values.

STATE: If you keep to the core values when using our definition of leadership, hopefully you’ll become like the leaders you respected.

**Receiving
Feedback**

STATE: Despite our Core Values and similarities, we have our differences – often about how to do a job! When you find yourself in the receiving mode of feedback about your performance, there are a few things to keep in mind.

Receiving Feedback

- Listen
- Don’t always try to defend your position
- Try to appreciate it

STATE: The key to receiving feedback is to listen. Often we receive feedback but fail to realize it.

STATE: Even when we are listening, we can easily become defensive. Rather than getting defensive, hear the person out. You may not agree with what they have to say, but there’s no harm in keeping your options open by listening calmly.

STATE: Sometimes the feedback we get is just off the wall or unrealistic. In those cases, try to appreciate that the person was most likely attempting to offer a constructive suggestion. Of course, you should always carefully consider the feedback you receive before discarding it.

Why Talk About Followership?

ASK: How is talking about followership important to becoming a good leader?

Allow several people to answer. Look for answers similar to, “the way you handle yourself as a follower could have an effect on how others view you as a leader.”

STATE: The more we understand what makes an effective follower, the better our chances are of being an effective leader.

Followership Definition

ASK: How would you define FOLLOWERSHIP?

Wait for several people to offer suggestions. Most will be similar to the following.

STATE: The Coast Guard defines Followership as, “**Seeking** and accepting the command, guidance, or leadership of another.”

Everyone is a “Follower”

ASK: Looking at our definition of YOU ⇔ OTHERS ⇔ GOAL, where are you?

They are followers!

ASK: What about Chiefs? The Captain? How about the Commandant?

STATE: Everyone in the Coast Guard falls into the OTHERS part of our definition. Since everyone, even the Commandant, is a follower, let’s look at good followership.

Arrange the students in groups of 4-5 each and have them brainstorm a list of the characteristics of Good Followership. Tell them they have about 10 minutes to complete their list. Then they will share their list with the rest of the group.

NOTE: Be sure to provide writing paper and pens for this exercise!

Have each group present three items from their list. As they do, highlight similarities or themes. Look for: loyalty, initiative, dependability, commitment, learning from others, responsibility, effective communications, accountability, critical thinking, building credibility, aligning personal and organizational goals, and acting responsibly.

STATE: There are some characteristics of followers we’d like to look at a little deeper so we can get a better idea of what they look like.

**Follower
Characteristics**

Follower Characteristics

- Initiative
- Dependability
- Learning from others
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Critical Thinking
- Effective Communications
- Commitment

Go over the characteristics by asking about the behaviors associated with each one.

For each characteristic:

ASK: “What does (characteristic) look like?” or “What kinds of things would a person with (this characteristic) do?”

Example: “What does initiative look like?” Possible answers - doing a job without being told to, looking for ways to help people above and beyond what is expected.

Example: “What kinds of things does a dependable person do?” Possible answers - shows up on time for meetings and duty, always ready to lend an extra hand.

Do this for the entire list of characteristics. Be sure to get examples!

NOTE: Other examples of behavior associated with the characteristics:

Learning from others - willing to admit that he or she doesn't know the answer, seeks information and learning opportunities.

Responsibility - takes ownership in job, doing what is right vice what is popular, doesn't need supervisor constantly looking over their shoulder to make sure the job gets done, includes responsibility to the organization/leader/co-workers/self.

Accountability - accepts the consequences (good or bad) for their actions, doesn't try to shift blame.

Critical thinking - solves problem and finds creative solutions on his or her own.

Effective communications - good listener, gets point across in a succinct and persuasive way.

Commitment - doesn't talk bad about the boss, willing to put in extra effort/time to get the job done.

**Providing
Feedback**

ASK: Can we be committed to a job and still disagree with the boss?

YES!

ASK: When would it be appropriate to question an order from your boss?

Get specific examples, then provide examples of when it would **not** be appropriate.

ASK: If you don't agree with an order you have been given, is it OK to provide your boss with feedback on that order?

Don't be surprised if some of the group is cynical about this! But establish the point that it is OK if you can do it tactfully.

ASK: When you disagree with the boss, what are some ways to handle it tactfully?

Possible answers: providing alternatives, offering solutions, providing information, etc.

ASK: If you are **always** questioning orders from your leader and not following the chain of command, how will people who work for you react to your orders?

Expect answers like: begin to sound like a whiner, boss quits listening to and asking for feedback, your followers will begin to act the same way towards you, etc.

ASK: What other things would you consider when providing feedback to your boss?

Linking items from their list to the following visual will build buy-in for the concept.

**Rules for
Providing
Feedback**

STATE: Let's look closely at four **essential** rules for providing feedback.

Providing Feedback

- Risk Assessment
- Make sure environment is “right”
- Provide feedback on only 1 or 2 items
(to prevent overload)
- Focus on providing solutions & alternatives
(be constructive)

ASK: What are the risks from providing feedback?

ASK: What are the potential gains from providing feedback?

ASK: How do you know if this is really the time or place to address the issue?

STATE: You also want to make sure you don't overload them! Limit your feedback to one or two items. If you give more than that, they may get defensive and not listen or not try to change.

STATE: Finally, you want to shift the focus from what is wrong to what can be done to correct the situation. In other words, be sure the feedback is **CONSTRUCTIVE!**

STATE: Remember, being a good leader means showing others how to be a good follower. Be sure to keep this in mind when you provide feedback up the chain so that others will treat you similarly.

ASK: How does being a good follower impact our definition of leadership?

Knowing how to follow helps the leader effectively achieve the goal (YOU ⇨ OTHERS ⇨ GOAL).