

How are **you** developing leadership skills
for yourself and others?



By: Dr. Anne Niccoli

Coast Guard members continue to call upon the Leadership Development Center (LDC) in search of self-serve, deployable leadership resources. Driven by customer demand, the LDC conceptualized and delivered a new innovative resource portal to assist with unit leadership development. The Leadership Development Resources (LDR) portal site provides easy access to leadership resources but more important, materials are designed for units to easily put into practice. [LDR](#) leadership content is accessible to all members from the CG portal at <https://cglink.uscg.mil/352fd6fe> (for a visual overview, see [LDR Intro](#) slides).

The [LDR](#) inventory includes over 50 resources with examples of questions and key points to engage members in meaningful, "round table" group discussions about leadership. The central aim is to create quality discussions because **talking** stimulates **thinking**, which deepens understanding, and **develops** leadership skills. The LDR homepage is simply organized with links to topic folders that include *Core Values, Inspiring Leaders, Teams, Communications, and Assessments*. LDR is intentionally designed with unique features:

- Resources are primarily videos (less than 30 min.).
- Facilitation guide sheets (1-2 pages) include a video summary, key points, and discussion questions.
- Each topic links to a Coast Guard Leadership Competency.
- Designed for leaders and members to facilitate local, customized events.

Each individual resource contains a 1-2 page facilitation guide that includes links to short videos and suggestions for discussion points. To further assist with facilitation, the portal site includes a [Facilitating Discussion Job Aid](#) as depicted in Figure 1.

Assumptions	Perspectives	Evidence Missing Information
Context Situation	Conclusion Recommendations	Consequences Ethics

Figure 1. Critical thinking elements that guide discussion (Niccoli, 2014).

The framework for developing discussion questions draws upon critical thinking criteria. More specifically, the questions seek to uncover assumptions, expand perspectives, and advance consideration of long-term and ethical consequences. Furthermore, this supports expectations put forth in the enlisted and officer Joint Professional Military Education Continuum programs: Professional Military Education should develop members' learning from *how to do to how to think*.

The LDR portal site also includes supporting content located in document and video libraries. In particular, the LDR inventory spreadsheet lists categories of topics for easy filtering that includes short video descriptions, related leadership competencies, associated folder locations, and information about each video viewing length.

Assumptions

Video libraries, such as those offered by [TED](#) (Technology, Entertainment, & Design), have an abundance of free resources. [TED](#)-style videos became the preferred source to draw from in facilitating discussions for several reasons: a) they are commonly viewed and shared among CG members; b) they are free and easily accessible; c) they are typically less than 30 minutes in duration; and d) video selections continue to expand. Moreover, by suggesting these and other similar resources, we inform members about sources for professional development and inspire them to dive deeper or to explore additional topics.

Nevertheless, the notion of using TED-style videos raises questions: How are these expert talk presentations different from classroom lectures? Why do viewers, who decry lectures, seek out and expend time listening to these speakers? Perhaps, compared to classroom lectures, TED-style videos foster intellectual curiosity. But also consider some distinguishing characteristics that partially explain some differences between these two “lecture” formats. Typically, TED speakers will:

- Draw the audience in by sharing a compelling story;
- Limit the number of slides;
- Maximize usage of graphics and images;
- Pose complex questions to engage thinking;
- Challenge audience members to think and do something differently.

Therefore, because of these qualities, there was a deliberate intention to draw upon TED-style videos in designing LDR conversations to nurture curiosity and learning. But more distinctly, LDR discussions endeavor to foster critical thinking and critical inquiry. The suggested discussion prompts and questions included in the facilitation sheets attempt to challenge assumptions and perspectives, thereby nudging deep-level thinking.

Field Test

LDR topics were field tested with members ranging from E-4 to O-4 and continue to be sought after by members. Whether a participant or facilitator, any member can draw upon these resources and customize learning and development for their unit. While the LDR material was designed for informal guided discussions, units may incorporate the resources and discussion points in formal training. Furthermore, training instructors can draw upon the [Facilitating Discussion Job Aid](#) in crafting questions to promote critical thinking, consequently augmenting formal learning experiences.

In addition, the LDR portal discussion forums promote a learning community where members can share best practices or generate new ideas Coast Guard-wide. Because LDR developers aspire to deliver relevant and engaging leadership content to all members, the LDR site offers feedback tools for submitting recommendations. The LDC is committed to expanding the inventory; therefore we seek members’ suggestions.

Together, the resources and discussion guides provide a foundation for fostering leadership growth and development. Towards this endeavor of **developing** leaders, the LDR delivers content to inspire **talking, thinking, and learning** among members. What will you do to develop leadership skills for yourself and others?

The LDR and content links to several Coast Guard Leadership Competencies: **Leading Self**, *Self Awareness and Learning*; **Leading Others**, *Influencing Others and Mentoring*; and **Leading Performance & Change**, *Customer Focus and Process Improvement*.



Talk. Think. Learn and Develop.

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