

compare and contrast followership and servant leadership army 1

Followership and Servant Leadership in the Army: A Comparative Analysis

Introduction

The effectiveness of any military organization hinges on the dynamic interplay between leadership and followership. While leadership often garners the spotlight, the crucial role of the follower is increasingly recognized as fundamental to mission success. This article delves into a comparative analysis of followership and servant leadership within the context of the Army, exploring their distinct characteristics, shared principles, and how they contribute to overall organizational efficacy. Understanding the nuances of both concepts allows for a more holistic appreciation of military operations and the development of cohesive, high-performing units. We will examine the core tenets of each, their practical applications in an Army setting, and the synergistic relationship they foster. This exploration aims to provide a comprehensive overview for those seeking to understand the multifaceted nature of command and control in a modern military environment.

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Understanding Followership in the Army

Followership, often overlooked in favor of leadership studies, is the bedrock upon which military effectiveness is built. It encompasses the behaviors, attitudes, and contributions of individuals who are part of a group led by another. In the Army, followership is not passive obedience but an active engagement that requires critical thinking, initiative, and a commitment to the mission and the leader. Effective followers understand their roles, responsibilities, and the chain of command. They are adept at executing orders, providing feedback, and supporting their fellow soldiers. The spectrum of followership can range from disengaged and passive to actively supportive and critically engaged.

Types of Army Followers

Within the Army, various archetypes of followers can be observed, each influencing the group dynamic differently. These classifications help in understanding the diverse ways individuals contribute to the collective effort.

- **Effective Followers:** These individuals are independent thinkers, possess strong commitment, and are courageous enough to offer constructive criticism and innovative ideas. They are crucial for challenging the status quo and driving improvement.
- **Partners:** Similar to effective followers, partners are engaged and contribute actively. They are often proactive in identifying and solving problems.
- **Contributors:** These followers are engaged and dependable, but may be less inclined to offer proactive suggestions or constructive criticism. They reliably execute tasks.
- **Subordinates:** Characterized by their obedience and reliance on the leader for direction, subordinates fulfill assigned duties without significant independent thought or initiative.
- **Isolates:** These followers are disengaged and detached from the group's activities and mission.
- **Killjoys:** Often negative and resistant to change, killjoys can undermine morale and hinder progress.

The Importance of Active Followership

Active followership is paramount in the demanding environment of the Army. It transcends mere compliance, fostering a culture of shared responsibility and mutual support. Active followers are not afraid to question, innovate, or take initiative when appropriate, always within the bounds of their roles and the mission's objectives. This engagement contributes to a more resilient and adaptable force, capable of responding effectively to complex and rapidly evolving operational landscapes. The ability to anticipate

needs, offer solutions, and support unit cohesion are hallmarks of active followership.

Exploring Servant Leadership in the Military Context

Servant leadership, a philosophy championed by Robert K. Greenleaf, emphasizes the leader's commitment to serving first, then leading. In the Army, this translates to a leader who prioritizes the needs, growth, and well-being of their subordinates. A servant leader in the military is focused on empowering their team, fostering an environment of trust, and ensuring that the welfare of the soldiers is as important as mission accomplishment. This leadership style often leads to increased morale, loyalty, and a stronger sense of shared purpose.

Core Principles of Servant Leadership

The principles of servant leadership are particularly relevant and impactful within the hierarchical structure of the Army, fostering a more people-centric approach to command.

- **Listening:** Servant leaders are attentive to the needs and concerns of their team members, actively seeking to understand their perspectives.
- **Empathy:** They strive to understand and share the feelings of others, demonstrating genuine care for their subordinates.
- **Healing:** Servant leaders work to mend relationships and foster a positive, supportive environment where individuals can thrive.
- **Awareness:** They possess a high degree of self-awareness and situational awareness, understanding their impact on others and the environment.
- **Persuasion:** Rather than relying on coercion, servant leaders use persuasion and influence to build consensus and gain commitment.
- **Conceptualization:** They possess the ability to think beyond day-to-day realities and focus on the broader vision and goals.
- **Foresight:** Servant leaders can anticipate future consequences and plan accordingly, ensuring long-term success.
- **Stewardship:** They feel a responsibility to serve the greater good and protect the interests of the organization and its people.
- **Commitment to the Growth of People:** A primary focus is on developing the potential of each

individual, helping them grow both professionally and personally.

- **Building Community:** Servant leaders foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose within the team.

Servant Leadership in Army Operations

The application of servant leadership in Army operations can manifest in various ways. It involves leaders who are willing to get their hands dirty alongside their troops, who are invested in the professional development of their soldiers, and who actively solicit feedback. This approach builds trust and respect, creating a more cohesive and motivated unit. For instance, a platoon leader who stays late to help soldiers with administrative tasks or a company commander who actively mentors junior officers exemplifies servant leadership. It's about leading by example and demonstrating a genuine commitment to the well-being of the force.

Comparing and Contrasting Key Tenets

While both followership and servant leadership are essential for military success, they represent different facets of the leader-follower dynamic. Followership focuses on the actions and attributes of the individuals being led, while servant leadership describes a particular style of leading. However, there is significant overlap and interdependence between the two concepts.

Focus and Responsibilities

The primary focus of followership is on how individuals contribute to the leader and the mission. Their responsibilities include executing orders, supporting the leader's vision, and maintaining unit cohesion. Servant leadership, conversely, focuses on the leader's responsibility to nurture and empower their followers. The servant leader's core responsibility is to the growth and well-being of their team, believing that by serving others, they enhance the collective capability and effectiveness of the unit.

Authority and Influence

Traditional military structures rely heavily on formal authority derived from rank. Followership operates within this framework, accepting and respecting this authority. Servant leadership, while not eschewing formal authority, places a greater emphasis on informal influence derived from service, trust, and genuine care for subordinates. A servant leader gains influence by demonstrating their commitment to their team, rather than solely through their position in the hierarchy.

Development and Growth

While effective followership inherently involves a degree of personal and professional growth to meet the demands of the role, servant leadership places a deliberate and central emphasis on fostering the development of followers. Servant leaders actively seek opportunities for their subordinates to learn, grow, and reach their full potential. This commitment to growth not only benefits the individual but also enhances the overall capability of the unit.

Mutual Respect and Trust

Both concepts thrive on mutual respect and trust, though the genesis of this trust can differ. In followership, trust is often built through the leader's competence, fairness, and integrity. In servant leadership, trust is cultivated through the leader's demonstrated commitment to serving the needs of their followers, their empathy, and their willingness to put the well-being of the team first. When a leader embodies servant leadership, it naturally cultivates stronger, more trusting followership.

The Role of Followership in Enabling Servant Leadership

The effectiveness of a servant leader is significantly amplified by the quality of their followership. Engaged, proactive, and critically thinking followers are essential for a servant leader to truly implement their philosophy. Without such followership, even the most well-intentioned servant leader may struggle to achieve their desired impact.

Active Participation and Feedback

Servant leaders value and actively seek input from their followers. This requires followership that is willing to offer honest feedback, even when it might be critical. When followers actively participate in discussions, provide constructive criticism, and share their perspectives, they enable the servant leader to make better decisions and address potential issues proactively. This open communication loop is vital for continuous improvement.

Taking Initiative within Roles

Servant leadership empowers individuals, encouraging them to take initiative. Effective followers understand their roles and responsibilities but are also encouraged to identify opportunities to contribute beyond the minimum requirements. This proactive approach allows the servant leader to focus on broader strategic objectives, knowing that their team is capable of managing operational details and anticipating needs.

Upholding Unit Values and Mission

Followership that is deeply committed to the unit's values and mission provides a strong foundation for a servant leader. When followers internalize these principles, they act with integrity and dedication, reinforcing the positive culture that servant leaders strive to create. This shared commitment ensures that the unit's efforts are always aligned with its overarching purpose.

Servant Leadership's Impact on Follower Engagement and Performance

The impact of servant leadership on follower engagement and performance within the Army can be profound and transformative. By prioritizing the needs of individuals, servant leaders foster an environment conducive to higher levels of motivation, commitment, and overall effectiveness.

Boosting Morale and Motivation

When soldiers feel that their leaders genuinely care about their well-being, development, and personal lives, their morale and motivation naturally increase. Servant leaders create a positive and supportive atmosphere where individuals feel valued and respected. This, in turn, leads to greater enthusiasm for their duties and a stronger commitment to the unit's success.

Enhancing Team Cohesion and Collaboration

Servant leadership fosters a sense of community and shared purpose among team members. By encouraging open communication, empathy, and mutual support, servant leaders help to break down barriers and build strong interpersonal relationships. This enhanced team cohesion leads to more effective collaboration, as soldiers are more willing to support each other and work towards common goals.

Driving Performance and Initiative

A key outcome of servant leadership is the empowerment of followers. When individuals feel trusted and supported, they are more likely to take initiative, demonstrate creativity, and perform at their highest levels. Servant leaders invest in the development of their team members, providing them with the resources, training, and opportunities they need to excel. This focus on growth and empowerment directly translates to improved individual and unit performance.

Reducing Turnover and Increasing Loyalty

In any organization, including the Army, high morale and engagement are linked to reduced turnover and increased loyalty. Soldiers who experience servant leadership are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and commitment to their unit and their leader. This reduces the likelihood of them seeking opportunities elsewhere and fosters a more stable, experienced, and dedicated force.

Challenges and Synergies: Followership and Servant Leadership in Practice

Integrating servant leadership principles and fostering effective followership within the hierarchical and often demanding environment of the Army is not without its challenges. However, the synergies that emerge when these concepts are effectively implemented are crucial for modern military success.

Navigating Hierarchy and Tradition

The Army's inherent hierarchical structure and established traditions can sometimes present a perceived conflict with the more egalitarian and empowering nature of servant leadership. Overcoming this requires leaders to skillfully balance formal authority with their service-oriented approach, ensuring that mission objectives and chain of command are always respected. Similarly, followership needs to understand that supportive engagement does not mean undermining authority.

Developing a Servant Leadership Mindset

Shifting from a purely command-and-control mentality to one of service and empowerment requires a significant cultural change and dedicated training. Both leaders and followers need to be educated on the principles of servant leadership and active followership. This cultural evolution is a long-term process that requires consistent reinforcement from higher echelons of command.

The Synergistic Relationship

When servant leadership is practiced effectively and supported by active, engaged followership, a powerful synergy is created. Servant leaders, by prioritizing their team's needs, foster an environment where followers are empowered to contribute their best. This, in turn, allows the leader to lead more effectively, creating a virtuous cycle of trust, performance, and mission success. The combination of a leader who serves and followers who actively engage is a potent force for achieving organizational goals.

Conclusion: The Integrated Strength of Followership and Servant Leadership

In conclusion, both robust followership and the practice of servant leadership are indispensable components for a highly effective Army. While followership focuses on the proactive engagement and contributions of those being led, servant leadership emphasizes a leader's commitment to serving and empowering their subordinates. These concepts are not mutually exclusive but are deeply intertwined, with effective followership enabling the successful implementation of servant leadership, and servant leadership fostering a more engaged and high-performing follower base. By understanding and cultivating both, military units can achieve greater cohesion, enhance morale, and ultimately, excel in mission accomplishment. The integrated strength derived from this dynamic relationship is a cornerstone of modern military readiness and success.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the core difference between followership and servant leadership in an Army context?

Followership is primarily about an individual's role in supporting and executing the mission as directed by a leader, demonstrating loyalty and competence. Servant leadership, conversely, is a leadership style where the leader prioritizes the needs, growth, and well-being of their subordinates, empowering them to achieve their full potential while still driving mission accomplishment.

How does the emphasis on mission accomplishment differ between a follower and a servant leader?

A follower's primary focus is on efficiently and effectively completing assigned tasks and supporting the leader's vision for mission success. A servant leader, while equally committed to mission success, views mission accomplishment as intertwined with the development and empowerment of their followers, believing motivated and skilled individuals are crucial for sustained success.

In what ways can servant leadership be seen as a more advanced or evolved form of followership?

While followership is a fundamental role, servant leadership represents a proactive and intentional approach to leadership that cultivates the very qualities of effective followership – trust, competence, and commitment – by investing in and uplifting those being led. It shifts the paradigm from 'following orders' to 'enabling success through empowered individuals.'

Can an individual be both an effective follower and a servant leader simultaneously within the Army?

Absolutely. An individual can be a dedicated and high-performing follower to their superiors while simultaneously embodying servant leadership principles towards those they supervise or influence. This dual capability is a hallmark of effective leadership at all levels.

What are the key characteristics of effective followership in the Army that a servant leader aims to foster?

Effective followership in the Army includes loyalty, obedience, competence, initiative (within bounds), critical thinking, and support for the leader and the mission. A servant leader actively cultivates these by providing clear direction, opportunities for growth, constructive feedback, and fostering an environment of trust.

How does a servant leader's approach to decision-making differ from that of a typical follower?

A follower typically executes decisions made by their leader. A servant leader, however, often involves their followers in the decision-making process, seeking input, understanding perspectives, and empowering them to contribute to solutions. The ultimate decision may still rest with the leader, but the process is more collaborative.

What are the potential challenges in implementing servant leadership within the traditional hierarchical structure of the Army?

Challenges include overcoming ingrained hierarchical expectations where obedience is paramount, potential perceptions of 'weakness' or indecisiveness if not communicated effectively, and the time investment required for individual development. Leaders must balance servant principles with the need for decisive action and adherence to established protocols.

How does trust play a role in both followership and servant leadership within the Army?

Trust is foundational to both. Effective followership requires trusting the leader's judgment and intent. Servant leadership actively builds trust by demonstrating integrity, competence, and genuine care for subordinates, thereby enhancing their willingness to follow and contribute.

In what ways can servant leadership improve unit cohesion and morale

compared to a more traditional leadership model?

By prioritizing the well-being and development of soldiers, servant leadership fosters a sense of value and respect, leading to increased morale and stronger unit cohesion. When soldiers feel supported and empowered, they are more likely to be committed to their unit and each other, improving overall performance and resilience.

What is the ultimate goal of a servant leader in the context of Army mission accomplishment?

The ultimate goal is to achieve mission success through empowered, capable, and motivated individuals. A servant leader aims to build a high-performing team where each member can contribute their best, not just by following, but by being invested in the mission and their own development as soldiers and leaders.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to comparing and contrasting followership and servant leadership in an army context, with descriptions:

1. The Unsung Heroes: Understanding Followership in Military Operations

This book delves into the critical role of followers in the success of military endeavors. It explores the psychological and behavioral aspects of being an effective follower within a hierarchical structure. The text highlights how strong followership, characterized by discipline, initiative, and commitment, is essential for mission accomplishment. It also contrasts passive obedience with active, engaged followership.

2. Leading from the Ranks: Servant Leadership in the Modern Military

This title examines how servant leadership principles can be effectively integrated into military command structures. It focuses on leaders who prioritize the growth and well-being of their subordinates while still maintaining operational effectiveness. The book provides case studies of military leaders who embody servant leadership and its positive impact on morale and performance. It underscores the leader's responsibility to empower and develop their team.

3. The Commander's Conundrum: Balancing Authority and Service

This book tackles the inherent tension between the authoritative nature of military command and the principles of servant leadership. It explores how commanders can foster a climate of trust and respect by demonstrating a genuine commitment to their soldiers' needs. The author discusses strategies for effective delegation, empowerment, and ethical decision-making within the military context. It contrasts traditional command-and-control with a more people-centric approach.

4. Beneath the Stars: The Psychology of Military Followership

This work offers a deep dive into the psychological underpinnings of why soldiers follow and how this can be harnessed for superior performance. It examines factors such as loyalty, trust, and shared purpose in

shaping followership dynamics. The book contrasts different models of followership, from compliant to exemplary, and their implications for combat effectiveness. It also touches upon how leaders can cultivate positive followership through their actions.

5. Echoes of Command: Servant Leadership and the Enduring Military Ethos

This book argues that servant leadership is not a departure from, but rather a modern interpretation of, core military values. It traces historical examples of military leaders who demonstrated servant-like qualities. The text emphasizes how prioritizing the welfare and development of troops aligns with the military's ethos of sacrifice and duty. It contrasts the perceived "hard" leadership with the "soft" yet powerful influence of service.

6. The General's Dilemma: Navigating Followership Expectations

This title investigates the challenges faced by senior military leaders in understanding and responding to the evolving expectations of their followers. It explores how a leader's ability to listen, learn, and adapt is crucial for maintaining effective command. The book contrasts hierarchical obedience with a more collaborative approach to decision-making. It examines how servant leadership principles can help bridge the gap between command intent and soldier experience.

7. From the Ground Up: Building Effective Followers in a Chain of Command

This book focuses on the practical strategies for developing strong, capable followers within the military. It highlights the importance of training, mentorship, and clear communication in shaping individuals who can execute missions effectively and ethically. The text contrasts the passive recipient of orders with the proactive, problem-solving follower. It demonstrates how leaders can foster environments where followers feel valued and empowered.

8. The Virtuous Soldier: Ethics, Followership, and Servant Leadership

This title examines the ethical dimensions of both followership and servant leadership in the armed forces. It explores how moral courage and integrity are essential for both roles. The book contrasts the ethical responsibilities of a leader who serves their people with the ethical obligations of a follower to their commander and mission. It argues that both concepts are intertwined in fostering an ethical military culture.

9. The Leader-Follower Synergy: Optimizing Military Performance

This work explores the symbiotic relationship between effective leadership and strong followership in achieving military objectives. It emphasizes that neither element can succeed in isolation and highlights how they can mutually reinforce each other. The book contrasts traditional command paradigms with a more integrated approach where leaders empower followers and followers support their leaders. It provides frameworks for building this synergistic relationship for enhanced operational readiness.

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