

Three Styles of Management to Avoid: A Military Veteran's Perspective

Here are lessons learned about leadership from military service.

Published on January 1, 2011 by [Ronald E. Riggio, Ph.D.](#) in [Cutting-Edge Leadership](#)

John Durfee is an Operation Freedom War veteran and a manager for Airsplat, the nation's largest retailer of [Airsoft Guns](#). He is our guest blogger and will share his experience with [leadership](#) in the military.

"I left the Army as a sergeant NCO, a point of pride I hold dear to this day. That meant I was in charge of the well-being and safety of 8-20 soldiers at a time. This taught me how to be a thoughtful, resourceful, and openminded leader. In my first few jobs after my service, I was often dismayed by the poor examples of leadership around me. When I finally reached a position of leadership, I made sure to be the best possible manager I could be.

Here are a few management styles which are easy to fall into, and which you should avoid in order to be an effective leader:

The Micromanager.

I strongly dislike the concept of micromanagement. These leaders may be people who have started up a company from the ground up, know the ropes of every department, and are more than capable of working successfully in each. However, to me, micromanaging inhibits the wheels of progress. For one, you're not actually managing; you're working through proxy of your employees. Secondly, it shows you don't trust your [team](#) with sharing your responsibilities. Working over someone's shoulder, or constantly interrupting for updates, takes away from their focus because they have to shift gears and report to you. If you find yourself starting to get caught up in the little facts, take a step back. Have a fellow employee review the work before being finally submitted to you for approval. You want to foster an [environment](#) where people are productive at all times, not just when you walk down the hallway.

The Fair Weather Leader.

This leader just can't find the heart to reprimand. They work well if they have a strong competent team behind them, but their faults show through when there's an employee that keeps making mistakes or doesn't pull their weight. They give too many second, third, fourth, and fifth chances. You need to set up a series of consequences for both minor infractions, as well major slip ups. In the Army, small mistakes were met with extra menial work, or doing pushups till the sun came up. Major errors in action or judgment were met with judicial review, disciplinary boards, and discharge. You can set up the same disciplinary actions in an office. Make your employees accountable by having a tally board or file - two relapses mean a verbal warning, three can be a write up, and four can be a day or two leave from work without pay. Mistakes are a healthy part of learning process, but they should be followed up with consequence. This way, employees learn to regulate themselves and become mindful of small errors. In the end, you can only give so many chances for someone to learn.

The Finger Pointer.

This last type of leader is rare in the military, but they would fall under the class of "despicable." They are the ones when questioned by their superiors about mistakes in their department, point the finger to the employees beneath them. It's very much like the adage, "stuff rolls downwards" (except replace stuff with another word). Mistakes are as much the fault of the one in charge as the one below. If my squad members (I was a sergeant) fell asleep during guard duty, I would be out there with them pulling the double shift the next night, or doing latrine duty. It's a matter of being self aware and taking on the responsibility of your employees. A strong manager can admit to mistakes and move forward -it's the weak one who raises his voice and points the finger."