

# Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence<sup>1</sup>

Reviewed by Major Daniel Mazzone\*

*I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them.*<sup>2</sup>

## I. Introduction

American culture is dominated by the lure of making money. People are always looking for new ways to become successful and wealthy. As this cash-first mindset has consumed the American public, many authors have thrived as they provide people with different blueprints for financial success. The theories and strategies in each book vary, but a consonant theme is that ultimately, to truly become wealthy, you must be a leader. You cannot follow; followers make money for other people. Leaders are the profiteers, the successful ones whom people long to be. In *Primal Leadership*, the authors argue that “[g]reat leadership works through emotions.”<sup>3</sup> Leaders must not only possess “emotional intelligence,” which is the ability to understand how emotions impact people and performance, but must also learn to cultivate positivity.<sup>4</sup> A great leader must have complete control of his emotions and foster a positive environment in the work place. Doing so will ultimately create the foundation for a successful venture because, quite simply, “[w]hen people feel good, they work at their best.”<sup>5</sup> Leaders who are able to connect with positive emotions create resonance in the workplace. Resonance is contagious, spreads easily, and creates a greater commitment to the leader’s vision or mission.<sup>6</sup> Though not a foolproof methodology, the theories contained in *Primal Leadership* are valuable tools that should be considered by all judge advocates. Nevertheless, judge advocates can just as easily turn to readily available Army publications on leadership that address this topic more thoroughly.<sup>7</sup>

## II. Leadership Matters

Mastering leadership is the baseline of competency for a Soldier at any level; a Soldier may never know when he will be called upon to lead others in highly stressful situations. *Primal Leadership* provides some useful advice that judge advocates should consider when developing a leadership style from the moment they enter military service. While the authors do not provide an exact formula for success as a leader, they do stress that to be successful, leaders must exude positivity and empathy.

According to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, a successful leader must be competent in the four core domains of emotional leadership: “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.”<sup>8</sup> Success in each of the four domains depends on mastery of eighteen competencies,<sup>9</sup> or “learned abilities, each of which has a unique contribution to making leaders more resonant, and therefore more effective.”<sup>10</sup> At first glance, it appears that creating emotionally intelligent leaders is a difficult task, but the key learning point of this book is that positivity fosters leadership success. Positive people are well received and can motivate those around them to perform to higher standards.

Cultivating highly effective leaders is essential in the military.<sup>11</sup> Because the Army’s mission can be daunting, the Army is keenly aware of the importance of leadership to its

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<sup>1</sup> DANIEL GOLEMAN, RICHARD BOYATZIS & ANNIE MCKEE, *PRIMAL LEADERSHIP: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE* (2013).

<sup>2</sup> OSCAR WILDE, *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY* 103 (1890).

<sup>3</sup> GOLEMAN ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>6</sup> See generally *id.* at 20–21 (explaining that the concept of emotional intelligence easily spreads and stays with employees if they are encouraged to believe in the mission and the team).

<sup>7</sup> See *infra* notes 13, 18, 22, 23, 25 and accompanying text.

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<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 38.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* app. B, at 38, 253–56 (Emotional Intelligence). The leadership competencies and techniques are: emotional self-awareness; accurate self-assessment; self-confidence; self-control; transparency; adaptability; achievement; initiative; optimism; empathy; organizational awareness; service; inspiration; influence; developing others; change catalyst; conflict management; and teamwork and collaboration.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 38 (highlighting the point that the listed competencies are not innate talents, but learned abilities).

<sup>11</sup> Principles of successful leadership within the Army culture are not easily learned, especially for officers receiving a direct commission. See U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, REG. 601-100, APPOINTMENT OF COMMISSIONED AND WARRANT OFFICERS IN THE REGULAR ARMY (21 Nov. 2006) (explaining the sources and requirements for commissioning officers in the U.S. Army). Direct commissionees do not receive the leadership training instilled in other officers during Officer Candidate School, the U.S. Military Academy, or in the Reserve Officer Training Corps; rather, they come directly into the Army from law school. Law school teaches students to question everything and to zealously advocate a position. It can be difficult to transition from a mindset of questioning everything to one requiring the attorney to balance the questioning mindset with immediately following orders and upholding standards.

mission.<sup>12</sup> “The military is set apart from other professions because Soldiers must be prepared to use deadly force and have the courage to overcome hostile forces. Army leaders exercise a profound responsibility because the consequences of their decisions . . . affect the lives of Soldiers, their families, the enemy and non-combatants.”<sup>13</sup>

To provide structure to the concept of leadership, the Army defines it as “the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”<sup>14</sup> Essentially, Army leaders must be aware that their attitude is contagious, for better or worse. This is precisely what the authors in *Primal Leadership* explain throughout their book.<sup>15</sup> So the reader is left asking, “Where do I start if I want to become a successful leader?”

### III. Steps to Leadership

*Primal Leadership* explains that to become an effective leader, one must look inside oneself to become aware of how one behaves and how that behavior impacts others. A leader’s ability to shape the attitude of a workplace is remarkable; he can elevate a team to new heights or knock that same team down to new lows, simply by behaving in a positive or negative manner. A truly positive leader who wants to see the best out of his subordinates inspires his employees to do their best. At the end of the day, if an employee believes his leadership cares for him and truly wants him to succeed, he will go to great lengths to see that he does not let his leaders down. Subordinates will dig deeper when things become difficult; they will strive to ensure that the leader’s vision becomes a reality and that his expectations are exceeded.<sup>16</sup>

Leaders must be cognizant that their attitudes are contagious. Employees are watching their leader and they learn from his strengths and weaknesses; this carries over to job performance.<sup>17</sup> Judge advocates must understand this from the moment they are sworn in. As commissioned officers, judge advocates are the bearer of all standards. Soldiers look to officers to set the standard for behavior and appearance; it is necessary that officers act appropriately at all times. It is much too easy to complain about a tasking or a requirement from higher headquarters than it is to remain positive, grin and bear the inconvenience, and set a positive tone for everyone working in the office.

<sup>12</sup> See generally U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, REG. 600–100, LEADERSHIP (8 Mar. 2007).

<sup>13</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, DOCTRINE PUB. 6-22, ARMY LEADERSHIP para. 1-1 (1 Aug. 2012) (C1, 10 Sept. 2012).

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* para. 3.

<sup>15</sup> GOLEMAN ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 5, 9–14, 19–31, 91–112, 225–48.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* at 9–13.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

The authors are precisely accurate when they explain that empathy is the major emotion that will bond you with your subordinates. A leader must be demanding because a mission needs to be accomplished, but when he shows that he cares about his employees, morale will soar.<sup>18</sup> When a leader is in tune with the struggles or achievements in an employee’s life, the employee develops a sense of belonging within the workplace.<sup>19</sup> The seemingly impossible can be easily achieved with a positive leader who shows his subordinates that he cares about and believes in them; his employees will strive to emulate the positivity he puts forth and exceed the standards he has set for them.<sup>20</sup>

Given the effect that attitude can have on an organization, it is imperative that leaders are cognizant that their behavior impacts those around them. Leaders must learn to hone the emotions that surface during stressful times so that the stress of the mission is not complicated by a leader’s pervasive negativity. While the authors give minimal guidance regarding how a leader can understand his strengths and weaknesses, they believe the most important tool for becoming self-aware is performance feedback.<sup>21</sup> Improvement and self-awareness relies on frank evaluations by everyone you encounter in the workplace, ranging from immediate supervisors, to peers, to subordinates.<sup>22</sup> The purpose of performance feedback is not to belittle or demean a co-worker, but rather to promote improvement.

Having caused an exodus of mid-level leaders,<sup>23</sup> the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan made clear the critical need for excellent leadership in the military.<sup>24</sup> Recognizing the need to develop new and adaptive leaders, Army leadership has recently adopted significant portions of the ideas of emotional intelligence in leadership with the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) 360 program.<sup>25</sup> The goal of the MSAF is to develop “competent, confident and agile leaders.”<sup>26</sup> This program provides superiors, subordinates, and peers the ability to honestly and anonymously evaluate the individual participating in the program. This requirement is precisely what *Primal Leadership* envisions,

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 20–21.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 91–94.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> TIM KANE, BLEEDING TALENT: HOW THE U.S. MILITARY MISMANAGES GREAT LEADERS AND WHY IT’S TIME FOR A REVOLUTION (2012).

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Tilghman, *The Army’s Other Crisis*, WASH. MONTHLY, Dec. 2007, available at <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0712.tilghman.html>.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, REG. 350-1, ARMY TRAINING AND LEADER DEVELOPMENT app. K (Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback) (18 Dec. 2009) (RAR, 4 Aug. 2011) [hereinafter AR 350-1].

<sup>26</sup> MULTISOURCE ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK, <http://msaf.army.mil/LeadOn.aspx> (last visited Dec. 20, 2013).

but depends on candid evaluation so that leaders can fully evaluate themselves and develop a plan for self-improvement.

Although the Army has embraced several principles outlined in *Primal Leadership*, the MSAF fails because it has not been properly implemented with direction and enthusiasm, as the authors advocate in the book.<sup>27</sup> The goals of the MSAF are admirable; however, the Army has fallen short on cultivating an environment where these tools and techniques are truly embraced. The intended outcomes of the MSAF have not been adequately explained to many officers; because of this, the program is not used as a productive tool. Instead, it is viewed as a required activity to be completed as part of a check-list rather than being utilized to improve leadership capabilities.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the Army has failed to completely incorporate the principles of emotional intelligence.<sup>29</sup> Despite the good intentions surrounding the MSAF program, it will not be successful if the program's purpose is not made clear to the people that it impacts most directly. This leadership development program must be embraced at the highest levels and pushed down enthusiastically to the lowest levels of the organization.<sup>30</sup>

By focusing on the skills identified in the book, a negative leader who creates dissonance in the workplace can become aware of the impact his negativity has on those around him. Such recognition allows the negative leader to take corrective steps to change that behavior. The techniques outlined in this book are not the panacea that will cure all leadership pitfalls in society; but combining self-awareness with positivity and empathy is surely a strong starting point.

#### IV. Flawed Presentation

Despite the many sound ideas contained in *Primal Leadership*, the book falls short on several fronts. First, the book never addresses what an effective plan for developing emotionally intelligent leaders looks like. Rather, the authors encourage hiring "executive coaches"<sup>31</sup> and going on

<sup>27</sup> GOLEMAN ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 221–22, 227.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF DEF., DIR. 2011–16, CHANGES TO THE ARMY EVALUATION REPORTING SYSTEM (15 Sept. 2011); *see also* AR 350-1, *supra* note 25, app. K (Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback).

<sup>29</sup> The Army's MSAF mission became clear to this author upon reading *Primal Leadership*. The goals of MSAF were never fully explained when the program was implemented. However, it is clear that it is designed to receive feedback regarding your strengths and weaknesses by those who are your superiors, peers, and subordinates. This constructive criticism should be used as a catalyst to make you a more effective leader.

<sup>30</sup> GOLEMAN ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 227, 239–41.

<sup>31</sup> *Id.* at 165, 228–29. An executive coach is an individual hired by a leader who assists a business leader with improving their leadership skills. "Most executive coaching processes involve leadership assessment and an ongoing focus on development." *Id.* at 228. The ultimate goal of an executive coach

retreats to exotic locations.<sup>32</sup> It appears that this book is nothing more than a tool to encourage businesses to hire these coaches to figure out how to create leaders who will elevate their business to the next level. As a result, it is difficult to truly accept all of the ideas and concepts set forth in the book.

Second, the authors completely ignore the idea that sometimes employees are the problem in the workplace, especially in government jobs. Although not expressly stated in the text, the authors intimate that they would simply fire a problem employee whose bad attitude undermines the mission. Such an approach is complicated in the Army where Soldiers are afforded many rights if they are to be terminated.<sup>33</sup> Many of the techniques explored in the book can be easily undermined by an employee who is malcontent. Even the most empathetic leaders cannot connect with this type of employee on an emotional level that will help them to fully embrace the mission. These employees are motivated by a selfish desire to serve themselves. The tools Army leaders are given to correct this behavior do not resonate with these types of employees.<sup>34</sup> Many of these corrective tools can drive a bigger wedge between the leader and employee. They are simply ineffective if the employee refuses to support the idea of a team. Until the employee is empowered to change the vision of the organization or section himself, he will continually be dissatisfied and cause problems. The authors clearly establish that leaders must carry the burden of changing the culture of a workplace, but do not address what a leader should do if the employees refuse to conform. Failing to provide the leader with tools to address such employees is a major failure of the book.

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is to learn what a leader's passions and fears are to help him become a more effective and motivating leader. Doing so will ensure that the leader prospers financially. *Id.* at 228–29.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.* at 240–41. For example, the authors explain that in order for leadership development to truly prosper within an organization, employers must "create buy-in throughout the organization." *Id.* This is done by making an emotional connection with the company's employees. The authors highlight a strategy employed by the corporation, Unilever. Unilever created an effective leadership development program in part by holding an "executive's kick-off retreat" in Costa Rica. The trip involved physical challenges and large group conversations concerning leadership development. "Through this simple but profound series of conversations, held in the context of a magnificent and fragile ecology, people learned new ways of communicating with one another that would translate to new ways of operating together as a business." *Id.* at 241.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF ARMY, REG. 635-200, ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED ADMINISTRATIVE SEPARATIONS (6 June 2005) (RAR, 6 Sept. 2011); U.S. DEP'T OF ARMY, REG. 600-8-24, OFFICER TRANSFERS AND DISCHARGES (12 Apr. 2006) (RAR, 13 Sept. 2011).

<sup>34</sup> *See generally* U.S. DEP'T OF ARMY, REG. 27-10, MILITARY JUSTICE para. 3-3 (3 Oct. 2011); U.S. DEP'T OF ARMY, REG. 600-20, ARMY COMMAND POLICY paras. 2-3, 4-7 (18 Mar. 2008) (RAR, 20 Sept. 2012) (explaining administrative measures a commander may take to correct performance and behavior).

Additionally, the authors assume that employees will not work to their fullest potential if they do not work in a resonant environment.<sup>35</sup> While it is apparent that positive environments can foster excellent results, it is inconceivable to believe that employees will strictly perform to the lowest of acceptable standards in negative situations.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, a dissonant work place is not ideal, but such an environment cannot possibly cause people to perform poorly to intentionally sabotage the mission. The idea that people will not do a good job simply because they work for a mean person is preposterous, especially in a professional setting. Professionals demand a certain level of performance from themselves. These performance ceilings are usually high and only become higher if working for a difficult personality. An employee who quits or undermines the mission intentionally risks long-term professional fall out. If their behavior is pervasive enough to undermine a corporation, it is unlikely that they will ever work again in that field, never mind securing a situation where they have the ability to work for a resonant leader that will cause them to reach their fullest potential. As such, it is unrealistic to believe that poor leadership can lead directly to intentionally poor work product. The authors can make a more effective point by simply stating that a negative work environment can distract people from achieving their fullest potential at all times. While this point is addressed,<sup>37</sup> the authors fail to state why people can be distracted by negativity. Perhaps certain types of negativity cause employees to focus on issues that truly do not matter simply to appease the idiosyncrasies of their leaders.

Finally, the authors hint that emotionally intelligent leaders are not necessary in the military due to the nature of the Army mission. They imply that the demands of the battlefield require military leaders to act in a militant manner and order their subordinates to complete the mission, versus embracing the principles of resonance and empathy detailed in *Primal Leadership*.<sup>38</sup> This argument must assume that those who join the military do so because they already

believe in the Army's mission: "To fight and win the Nation's wars."<sup>39</sup> This argument is flawed for two reasons.

First, despite the demanding mission placed upon military leaders, there is no place for the militant-type leader. Although military commanders must make difficult decisions at a moment's notice, they do not have to be demeaning while doing so. If the authors were suggesting that a militant style of leadership is necessary in the military to insulate commanders from the guilt associated with deciding who must complete difficult or nearly impossible missions, then the argument deserves more credence. However, leaders in tune with the principles of emotional intelligence will inspire Soldiers. They will want to fight not just for their lives, or for a sense of valor, but for the leader who truly cares about them. This type of connection is extremely powerful and can lead to amazing accomplishments.<sup>40</sup>

Second, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint precisely why an individual joins the military. Presumably, someone commits to the military because on some level he believes in its mission. Consequently, the person joining the military already believes in the Army's mission or vision, and it is unnecessary to commit the resources to get employees to fully commit to the mission. Even so, many people who join the military are not fully prepared for the demands that will be placed upon them in carrying out this mission. It takes emotionally intelligent leaders to motivate Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines to make the sacrifices necessary to successfully execute their given tasks. Great leaders will always inspire servicemembers to make the necessary sacrifices.

## V. Conclusion

The major concepts contained in *Primal Leadership* could have been presented in an abridged format and achieved the same result. The concepts of self-awareness, positivity, and empathy should be espoused by all leaders in the Army. Embracing these core values will surely make leaders a force multiplier, and they will no doubt have a positive impact on organizations. The book will not provide

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<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 19–26 (“In any work setting, the emotional and the business impact of a dissonant leader can be gauged easily: People feel off-balance, and thus perform poorly.”).

<sup>36</sup> The authors acknowledge that “[c]limate in itself does not determine performance.” They also note that predicting success is exceedingly difficult and that the world of business is “notoriously complex.” GOLEMAN ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 17. Despite acknowledging these shortcomings early on in the book, they are rarely addressed again throughout the text.

<sup>37</sup> GOLEMAN ET AL., *supra* note 1, at 21–31, 171–90.

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 77. The authors explain that the concept of ordering people to perform tasks is not appropriate in the workplace, but is on the battlefield. They go on to say that many “modern military organizations” employ a commanding leadership style with other techniques such as esprit de corps and teamwork. *Id.* Aside from this short entry, the authors do not apply the techniques described in the book to the military at any other point. Therefore, the strategy set forth does not neatly fit into what Soldiers do on a daily basis.

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<sup>39</sup> ARMY MISSION STATEMENT, <http://www.army.mil/info/organization> (last visited Jan. 3, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> STEPHEN E. AMBROSE, D-DAY, JUNE 6, 1944: THE CLIMACTIC BATTLE OF WORLD WAR II, at 193–94 (1994). In the hours after ordering the invasion into Normandy, General Eisenhower met with the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division to check on their morale and provide them with encouragement. He understood the gravity of his decision to invade and that the Normandy mission could fail, as evidenced by the letter he drafted informing the American public that the landings had failed. Despite these concerns, General Eisenhower remained positive and confident when he met with the troops that evening. As a result, his visit was met with enthusiasm and confidence. In fact, one Soldier is said to have remarked: “Now quit worrying, General, we’ll take care of this thing for you.” *Id.* at 194.

the reader with the blueprint for success, but it highlights some of the major leadership theories the Army has embraced over the past few years.<sup>41</sup> Rather than reading *Primal Leadership* to aid with professional development,

judge advocates should turn directly to Army publications concerning leadership;<sup>42</sup> their time will be better spent.

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<sup>41</sup> See *supra* notes 16, 25, 26.

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<sup>42</sup> *Id.*