

SMA's Book Club Discussion Guide

Leaders Eat Last

This discussion guide is intended to support SMA Dailey's Book Club. The Book Club is designed to provide junior leaders guided opportunities to engage with their Soldiers on Army Profession concepts by discussing literature featuring subject matter across many genres. For that reason, it falls in the Not in My Squad toolbox. The SMA will schedule book club discussions into his troop visits, allowing for a common conversation about leadership and the Army Profession among the enlisted force.

The guide is separated into several topic areas with suggested questions and supporting information to facilitate a small group discussion on the topic. The page numbers referred to throughout this guide are based on the Portfolio/Penguin hardcopy edition of the book, dated 2014; page numbers will be different for different editions of the book, but chapter references should be the same regardless of edition.

Leaders Eat Last takes a look at why some teams are able to trust each other so deeply that they will literally put their lives on the line for each other, while other teams are doomed to infighting, fragmentation, and failure. The author, Simon Sinek, gives examples of how the best organizations foster trust and cooperation because their leaders build a Circle of Safety that separates the security inside the team from the challenges outside. He incorporates the influence of biology on leadership and the workplace. *Leaders Eat Last* offers lessons in a wide range of leadership and ethical topics.

Prepared by the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE)
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Leading a Facilitated Discussion

Leaders are responsible for training their Soldiers to high levels of competence, developing their character, and inspiring commitment to our shared identity as trusted Army professionals. An effective method for professional development is the reading and facilitated discussion of stories in a small group setting. In this case, the story is a work of non-fiction, "Leaders Eat Last." The book presents a group of participants with leadership and ethical challenges and concepts to identify and discuss. By sharing ideas, values, and principles related to the book, you can begin to assess your subordinates' understanding of professional concepts and develop their character, competence, and commitment.

This discussion guide provides questions by topic area along with amplifying information to support discussion. There are numerous techniques you can use to facilitate the discussion. You should be the source of questions. Ask both general and direct questions. Actively listen, choose speakers, follow up your questions with pertinent feedback on answers, challenge the assumptions of participants to bring out alternative viewpoints, and sustain the discussion. It is vital to guide the conversation and ask the right question at the right time, not forcing the questions or treating them as a checklist. Try to shape the conversation without allowing your personal opinion or bias to impact the outcome or stifle discussion of alternative viewpoints. You can concentrate on one topic area of interest by guiding the discussion or allow the participants to take the discussion into numerous topic areas.

Some recommended best practices include:

- Prepare in advance; decide how you will organize and guide the discussion, but be prepared to go in other directions depending on the flow of the discussion
- Arrange the classroom so everyone can see the face of the other persons
- Start with open-ended questions; minimize the use of yes/no questions
- Call on different people; get everyone involved in the discussion
- Actively listen in order to connect one participant's ideas with another
- Paraphrase; check your understanding and the participants
- Redirect inaccurate or incorrect statements to the class for correction
- Have the participant elaborate to explain why they believe something to be true
- Encourage participants to back up their statements with facts from the book
- Keep the discussion going without interjecting yourself as the authority

The goal is to assist your Soldiers and Civilians to become Army professionals who think critically, creatively, and ethically about what they do. For more information and example videos on facilitating discussions, visit the CAPE website at:

<http://cape.army.mil/facilitator.php>

Topic: The Army Ethic to include Army Values

The Army Ethic is the heart of the Army and the inspiration for our shared professional identity as trusted Army professionals. It motivates our conduct and binds us together in common moral purpose. (Reference ADRP 1, The Army Profession, see Figure 2-4).

1. Within the Army Profession, we state that Soldiers and Army Civilians share a professional identity as trusted Army professionals. In his book, Simon Sinek discusses identity and the importance of identity in organizational cultures (Ch 2, pg 17; Ch 17, pg 129; and Ch 26, p 213).

- a. **What is your identity?** You can perform the following learning activity in conjunction with this question. Pass out 3 x 5 cards to your participants. Ask them to write down three things they identify with. I am _____. Then go around the room and ask them to share their answers. Were any of the answers “Soldier”, “NCO”, “Leader” or other things associated with the Army or their unit? Do they share an identity as a “trusted Army professional?”
- b. **Why is your individual identity important as a leader? Do groups take on a shared identity? Why is that important to understand?** Your individual identity is an expression of your purpose in life. Who you are. This drives what you value and how you lead. Groups do take on a shared identity, and often that identity is closely aligned with their leader’s identity. It’s important because you, as the leader, are influencing the identity of your team, whether you do so explicitly with purpose or implicitly in an unintended manner. If you don’t identify with being a trusted Army professional, it is likely your team members will not as well.
- c. **Do you identify with your unit? With the Army? Do you feel you are part of an Army family? As an Army leader, should you be building an environment of family? Why or why not?** At several points in the book, Sinek likens being a leader to being a parent. If you believe there are parallels here, you should be building a climate of trust like a family. Additionally, trust is the bedrock of the Army Profession and a key component of the mission command philosophy.

2. The title of the book is “Leaders Eat Last.” What does this mean to you?

You will probably get a variety of answers to this question. The book describes this in the “foreword” within the context of Marines eating in a chow hall. Most junior Marines are served first, and most senior Marines are served last. No order is given, they just do it. You may have experienced the same tradition in the Army, especially in a field environment, or in the Army’s tradition for Senior Officers and NCOs to serve junior Soldiers during Thanksgiving or Christmas meals in the dining facility.

The symbolism of leaders eating last is their selfless service, an Army Value that is also reflected in several of the moral principles of the Army Ethic. According to Sinek, the true price of leadership is the willingness to place the needs of others above your own. Great leaders truly care about those they are privileged to lead and understand that the true cost of the leadership privilege comes at the expense of self-interest. What's symbolic in the chow hall is deadly serious on the battlefield: great leaders sacrifice their own comfort – even their own survival – for the good of those in their care.

3. LTG Flynn of the USMC is quoted in the book as saying, “the cost of leadership is self-interest” (Ch 8, pg 65). What does he mean? Do you agree with his statement? Why or why not?

He means when you take leadership, you are expected to give up self-interest and provide selfless service (an Army Value) and protection to your team. This is why we have higher expectations of selflessness in leaders and why we are so offended when leaders operate out of self-interest using their power for their own profit or benefit at the expense of their subordinates.

4. Sinek discusses examples of companies or organizations (Apple with tax avoidance and the Titanic with lifeboats) that place the letter of the law over their moral responsibility in order to maximize profits (Ch 14, pg 104-107). Should companies place profit over moral principles? Should the Army place results over moral principles? Why or why not? How does it affect trust if we do so?

Both Apple and the company that operated the Titanic followed the law, but didn't do the right thing according to Sinek. In the case of the Titanic, it meant the loss of life. In ADRP 1, The Army Profession, we describe how the Army Ethic has both legal foundations (UCMJ, ROE) and moral foundations (Values, Creeds). Is it enough for you as a leader to simply follow the legal foundations of our Ethic? Doing the right thing (right = ethical, effective, and efficient) is often different than what's legal. The legal foundations of the Army Ethic prescribe the minimum standard of what we must do or can't do. The moral foundations of the Army Ethic are what we should aspire to everyday in our decisions and actions. If we don't, we could degrade trust externally with the American people and internally with each other. As a leader, if you consistently operate at the legal edge of the spectrum, you can expect your subordinates will operate within some normal Bell curve of your behavior, which means many of them won't even meet the legal standard. If you consistently operate at the aspirational moral end of the spectrum, it is less likely your subordinates will stray below the legal, minimum standard.

5. Sinek discusses social media and how abstractions like social media can lead people to abhorrent behavior, as if they are not accountable in the virtual space (Ch 15, pg 111-112). Should you be accountable for your behavior both on and off duty? On social media? Why or why not? What examples have you seen of people being unprofessional on social media?

The participants may have several examples of this to bring up. Society at large may be more accepting of having a separate identity or persona in virtual space or outside of work. But within the Army, this is not acceptable. It shows you haven't really internalized the Army Ethic; you are not committed to its moral principles. If you aren't committed, how can you expect your subordinates to be? One of the moral principles is "We take pride in honorably serving the Nation with integrity, demonstrating character in all aspects of our lives." For a case study on character in social media, see the video at the following web address: <http://cape.army.mil/case-studies/vcs-single.php?id=84&title=confronting-unethical-conduct-on-social-media> .

6. Sinek describes a situation in which a Marine in Officer Candidate School falls asleep on watch (Ch 19, pg 149). Why was the candidate being considered for expulsion for falling asleep? Why is integrity important in the Army?

It wasn't the falling asleep, it was denying it. While he would be disciplined for falling asleep on watch, it is a learning moment, a mistake to be forgiven. The greater indiscipline was his lack of integrity. He denied falling asleep until presented with irrefutable proof. You have to take responsibility for your actions at the time of the action, not at the time you get caught. One of the moral principles of the Army Ethic states: "We take pride in honorably serving the Nation with integrity, demonstrating character in all aspects of our lives." This is also reflected in the Army Value of integrity. Integrity is critical to trust, and trust is the bedrock of our profession, especially in combat. Another of the moral principles of the Army Ethic relates to taking responsibility: "We embrace and uphold the Army Values and standards of the profession, always accountable to each other and the American people for our decisions and actions." We are responsible and hold each other accountable for our decisions and actions. This doesn't mean we are a "zero defect" Army. We should underwrite mistakes made with honest intent. But each of us should own our decisions and actions.

Topic: Character, Competence, and Commitment

Character, competence, and commitment are the certification criteria for trusted Army professionals as described in ADRP 1, *The Army Profession*. Army professionals who consistently demonstrate these criteria develop mutual trust within cohesive teams.

1. Character. Why is character important for trusted Army professionals?

- a. ***Sinek describes the example of the holocaust where subordinates claimed they “were just following orders” to explain how something so reprehensible could happen in a culture (Ch 13, pg 98). How do we prevent this from happening in Army culture?***

By living and upholding the Army Ethic in our decisions and actions. This is about character. We must consciously develop it within our profession. ADRP 1 defines character as: “dedication and adherence to the Army Ethic, including Army Values, as consistently and faithfully demonstrated in decisions and actions.” Army leaders must model this example and both leaders and followers must have the courage to reject and report illegal, unethical, or immoral orders or actions. Applicable moral principles from the Army Ethic include:

We serve honorably—according to the Army Ethic—under civilian authority while obeying the laws of the Nation and all legal orders; further, we reject and report illegal, unethical, or immoral orders or actions.

We take pride in honorably serving the Nation with integrity, demonstrating character in all aspects of our lives.

In war and peace, we recognize the intrinsic dignity and worth of all people, treating them with respect.

We lead by example and demonstrate courage by doing what is right despite risk, uncertainty, and fear; we candidly express our professional judgment to subordinates, peers, and superiors.

- b. ***Sinek discusses the connection between character and culture (Ch 17, pg 130). How are character and culture connected? What can happen when the culture of an organization emphasizes results over character? What does your organization emphasize in its climate or culture?***

An organization’s climate or culture is the environment in which its members serve. If that environment is unethical or fails to emphasize and value character, you may be in a culture that believes the ends justify the means; in other words, results are more important than accomplishing the mission in the right way (ethical, effective, and

efficient). It is very hard for an ethical person to remain that way in an unethical environment.

2. Competence. Why is competence important for Army professionals?

Sinek describes that competence is important, but also cautions that organizations that emphasize competence and results over character and doing the right thing have a dangerous imbalance. See the examples of Apple with tax avoidance and the Titanic with lifeboats from Ch 14, pg 104-107.

3. Commitment. Why is commitment important for Army professionals?

- a. ***Sinek discusses the value of purpose and proposes that human beings thrive when they are inspired to serve others. What is your purpose in life? Why did you join the Army? How do you serve in the Army?***

Sinek implies that a leader's role should be "to give us a good reason to commit ourselves to each other" (Ch 26, p 213). The Army is a team sport. Hopefully you joined the Army, at least in part, because it was a calling to serve the Nation and protect those you hold dear. As stated in two principles of the Army Ethic, we serve honorably:

We serve honorably—according to the Army Ethic—under civilian authority while obeying the laws of the Nation and all legal orders; further, we reject and report illegal, unethical, or immoral orders or actions.

We take pride in honorably serving the Nation with integrity, demonstrating character in all aspects of our lives.

- b. ***According to Sinek, "80 percent of people are dissatisfied with their jobs" (Ch 2, pg 15). Do you enjoy your service in the Army? Is it merely a job to you or a calling to service with a team of people and mission to which you are committed? Why or why not?***

In the end, it is about the work environment, climate and culture we establish in our organizations and the Army. If you establish a climate or culture of trust, or as Sinek describes it a "Circle of Safety" in the workplace, you will gain the commitment of your team members and profession.

4. Trust. Sinek discusses air traffic controllers and states "we don't just trust people to obey the rules, we also trust that they know when to break them" (Ch 9, pg 74-75). Do you agree with this statement as it applies to the Army Profession? Why or why not?

Trust is gained when you see that an Army Professional has character, competence, and commitment. You must have all three to make the discretionary judgments that could result in the loss of life or justly taking the lives of others in combat. Think of a leader who has competence, but no character. He may be extremely competent at getting the mission done, but at the expense of his subordinates or in a way that results in undue loss of life to civilians on the battlefield. Think of an engagement in combat. Do you trust your people to know when to break rules of engagement or are they unbreakable? How do you build that trust? Do you underwrite their discretionary judgment to break a rule? Even when they make a mistake? Sinek would probably say that you must trust people not rules.

Topic: Leadership

ADP 6-22, Army Leadership, describes a leadership requirements model with attributes (what a leader is) and competencies (what a leader does) necessary for leaders to provide the purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission. (Figure 1)

1. What leadership attributes did Sinek discuss in his book? Which of these attributes are most important to you as an Army leader?

Some examples include:

- Empathy. A good leader *cares*. Empathy is the bond between leaders and followers. In Chapter 1, pages 7-8, Sinek tells the story of Johnny Bravo who risks his life to provide air support for Soldiers in contact with the enemy on the ground. Johnny Bravo states that the most important thing he requires to perform his mission is empathy. He says “They would have done the same for me.”
- Service Ethos. In Chapter 27, page 215, Sinek writes “Everything about being a leader is like being a parent. It is about committing to the well-being of those in our care and having a willingness to make sacrifices to see their interests advanced so that they may carry our banner long after we are gone.”
- Resilience. In Chapter 26, page 209, Sinek discusses shared struggle and uses the military as an example. Think back to some of your best times in the Army. Were these times of challenge or times when everything went well? Were some of these times when you were deployed and potentially in harm’s way? Why is shared hardship important to you and your unit in the Army? As a leader, expect challenge up to and beyond your breaking point. Challenge and shared hardship helps you develop resilience as well as team cohesion and trust. The challenge helps you push to an ever increasing standard of performance while also understanding the breaking point of your team members.

2. What leadership competencies did Sinek discuss in his book? Which of these competencies are most important to you as an Army leader?

Some examples include:

- Develops others. In Chapter 21, pages 168-169, Sinek discusses a leader’s legacy when they depart the organization. He writes about the importance of the leader developing their subordinates so they can continue the mission without skipping a beat when the leader leaves. In Chapter 15, page 120, Sinek describes why providing “time and energy” to people is more important than “money” or resources. While we do need money and other resources from our leaders to accomplish the mission, merely providing that is not enough. You will create a fleeting legacy if you do not dedicate your time and energy to developing the people within your organization. Providing time and energy to people shows you have empathy and truly care about them, thereby building a climate of trust and commitment from the

team. As leaders, we carry an inherent responsibility to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to our care. This includes developing people; people are the most important resource we have in the Army.

- Builds trust. In Chapter 2, page 16, Sinek writes about a father giving the hand of his daughter to another at a wedding and expecting her husband will protect her as he has. “Every single employee is someone’s son or someone’s daughter. Like a parent, a leader of a company is responsible for their precious lives.” America gives the Army their sons and daughters. The Nation expects us to protect them and employ them in a way that upholds the Nation’s values through the Army Ethic. When we do, we build trust with the American people. When we do something opposed to the Army Ethic using their sons and daughters it degrades that trust. Love your Soldiers and Civilians as family and you will build trust.
- Creates a Positive Environment. In Chapter 10, page 78, Sinek discusses that it’s not the people that are the problem. Rather, it’s the environment in which the people operate that is the problem. How often have you heard leaders say that they have a problem Soldier? Is it the Soldier or the environment? If you set a positive environment and develop your subordinates within that environment, you will have fewer problem Soldiers.
- Leads by example. In Chapter 27, page 216, Sinek writes that leadership “is the responsibility of anyone who belongs to the group.” This means both leaders and followers have the responsibility to influence others in the group in a positive manner. Just as you shouldn’t accept illegal, unethical, or immoral orders, you shouldn’t accept bad leadership, indiscipline, and low standards. We each bear responsibility to set the example. This is closely tied to SMA Dailey’s “Not in My Squad” initiative. The overall purpose of NIMS is to empower junior NCOs to enhance mutual trust, build cohesion, and take ownership of critical issues facing today’s Army. It is the responsibility of all members of the squad to lead by example and self-regulate team members. For more information on the NIMS initiative visit the website at: <http://cape.army.mil/not-in-my-squad/#> .

3. *What other leadership lessons did you take from the book? How would you apply those lessons to your leadership within the Army?*

These general questions should generate a variety of individual perspectives that could touch on previous points above or be completely different interpretations of the author.

Topic: Mission Command.

IAW ADP and ADRP 6-0, Mission Command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent. Six principles of Mission Command are: build cohesive teams through mutual trust, create shared understanding, provide a clear commander's intent, exercise disciplined initiative, use mission orders, and accept prudent risk.

1. Build cohesive teams through mutual trust. Why is it important and how do we do it?

a. What does Simon Sinek mean when he talks about a "Circle of Safety?" Is your squad or organization a "Circle of Safety?" If not, how do you make it so? How is it related to mission command?

A Circle of Safety is an organizational environment where everyone within the organization feels valued, trusted, and protected from both external and internal dangers. Leaders don't create an "inner circle" where only a few select people are valued, trusted, and protected; rather they extend the circle to include all members of the organization. Within this circle, group members are open and transparent, given the flexibility to take prudent risk, and allowed to make honest mistakes. By its very nature the circle of safety builds shared identity and cohesive teams through mutual trust.

b. In Chapter 10, page 78, Sinek writes: "Trust is like lubrication. It reduces friction and creates conditions much more conducive to performance." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

The philosophy of mission command tells us that mutual trust is essential to building cohesive teams that exercise disciplined initiative and accept prudent risk in order to accomplish the commander's intent. Can you imagine allowing a unit to exercise disciplined initiative if you don't trust them? Are you willing to accept the risk that the unit will accomplish your intent when you don't trust them? All six principles are required to have high performing units that operate under the philosophy of mission command, but trust sure does make it easier.

c. Do we actually follow our philosophy of mission command in practice? Why or why not?

In Chapter 12, page 95, Sinek states: "Too many of the environments in which we work today frustrate our natural inclinations to trust and cooperate." How does the Army culture frustrate our natural inclinations to trust and cooperate? How would you change this? According to Sinek, organizations collapse because of an imbalance in their culture. Does the Army have an imbalance in its culture? If the Army wants a culture of trust, it must not only espouse a philosophy of

mission command, but also act in accordance with that philosophy. If our deeds don't match our words, it does create an imbalance in culture, or at unit levels in climate, which then breeds cynicism. There is also potential risk to the Army as a profession. Bureaucracies don't exercise mission command. If we fail to steward our profession and our bedrock culture of trust, we may be destined to operating solely as a bureaucracy.

d. Does the Army provide you with the same level of trust in garrison as in combat? Why or why not?

Sinek tells the story of Ron Campbell and the company HayssenSandiacre (Ch 2, pg 10-12). Why do the office workers and employees on the factory floor have different standards of trust? One of the employees states "I had more freedom while I was away at a customer site than I do here." Have you ever felt this way when comparing the amount of oversight you receive in combat versus in garrison? Why? What can the Army do to create a culture of trust both in garrison and combat environments?

e. What happens when your organization doesn't have mutual trust?

In Chapter 21, page 170, Sinek describes a company in which employee complaints against management went up right before end of year numbers were published. Why did this happen? Company leaders looked at end of year numbers (results) to make decisions on laying off employees in order to meet projections. Employees would make complaints to protect their bonuses and jobs. It's harder to lay off an employee with an open complaint against the company. There was no mutual trust in this company. Leaders operated out of self-interest and subordinates knew it so they matched the behavior that was modeled by their leaders. Have you seen similar examples in Army organizations? How do you regain trust once it is lost?

2. Create shared understanding. Why is creating shared understanding so important to mission command?

In Chapter 17, page 133, Sinek tells a story about the culture in Citigroup where leaders withheld important information from subordinates and peers because they felt threatened if someone else succeeded. Have you encountered organizations where people hold back information as a source of their personal power? How does this affect the organization? How does it affect the philosophy of mission command? How do you overcome this type of climate or culture? If you don't have a shared understanding of the commander's intent, doctrine, and military expertise, it is hard to exercise initiative and take prudent risk. You may do so, but in a way that is completely opposed to your commander's intent.

3. Exercise disciplined initiative. What does it mean to exercise disciplined initiative? Why is it important?

In Chapter 18, page 143-146, Sinek tells the story of a submarine crew. The Captain gives an order to run the engine at two-thirds of its maximum power. The Officer of the Deck repeats the order, “ahead two-thirds.” The Captain then discovers by chance that there is no two-thirds setting for that submarine. The submariners were blindly following orders that they knew to be wrong. What is the potential problem with an organization that blindly follows orders? How can you ensure this doesn’t happen in your unit? How does the Captain of the submarine Santa Fe go on to build an environment in which his subordinates can exercise disciplined initiative? We should not merely follow orders. If we understand the commander’s intent, we can adapt when presented with a challenge not anticipated in the plan. Orders will not cover every contingency so leaders must be prepared to take initiative. At the same time, the initiative should be within the bounds of the commander’s intent to ensure the unit accomplishes the shared vision or desired end state of the operation.

In Chapter 15, pages 113-115, Bill Gore proposes that there is a magic number of 150 people in a company or team. Once you exceed 150 in a work group, you lose camaraderie, teamwork, and even performance. Why does he say this? It’s related to the time available, brain capacity of the leader, and ability to build personal relationships. You can’t develop a close enough relationship with the people in your command when it is larger than 150 people. From your experience in the Army, do you agree with this theory? Think about the example Sinek gives in Chapter 15, page 114, where Soldiers refer to their platoon leader as “our LT” but the brigade commander as “the Colonel.” So what are the implications for the Army and you as a leader? The implication for a large organization like the Army is you must empower your managers of units with 150 people or less (companies, platoons, and squads). You must empower them with trust in their ability to exercise disciplined initiative, because they are at a level where they can have the most influence on Soldiers and Army Civilians to build cohesive teams through mutual trust.

Topic: Human Dimension.

1. In his book, Sinek often references four chemicals that are developed in the human body. How are these chemicals related to the Army Profession and leadership?

The Army Profession and the application of landpower is a human endeavor. Because we are humans, we are actually influenced by the chemicals generated in our body that are part of the human condition. These chemicals come into play in everything we do and influence key aspects of our individual and group interaction to include leadership and ethical reasoning.

There are feel good chemicals, selfish chemicals, chemicals of progress that drive us to gather, hunt, and achieve:

- Endorphins mask physical pain with pleasure. It feels good.
- Dopamine provides the good feeling we get from progress or accomplishment.

There are also selfless chemicals that keep the circle of safety strong, give us a feeling of belonging, and inspire us to work for the good of the group.

- Serotonin gives us a feeling of pride, the feeling we get when we perceive others respect or like us. It makes us feel strong and confident. We feel valued and feel connection with those who commit time and energy to us.
- Oxytocin gives us a feeling of friendship, love, or deep trust. Oxytocin makes us social and develops strong bonds of trust and friendship.

Sinek proposes that you need a balance of each of these chemicals, but that today's society and culture has established an imbalance as an unintended consequence of the instant gratification we value. Dopamine is about instant gratification but oxytocin is long-lasting. So if society values that the ends justify the means and results and self-interest are more important than character and selflessness, our bodies generate the feel-good chemicals to perpetuate that imbalance. For the Army Profession and the Army Ethic, we value accomplishing the mission in the right way. We need a chemical balance. If we want a culture that perpetuates the Profession and our Ethic, we must consciously value leaders who are selfless servants, Army experts, and stewards of the Profession.