

BOOK REVIEW

A Review of "Hal Moore on Leadership: Winning When Outgunned and Outmanned"

Lt Gen Harold G. Moore, USA, Retired and Mike Guardia, Maple Grove, MN: Magnum Books (2017)

Review By: George Warton, Ph.D.

"There is always one more thing you can do to influence a situation in your favor. And after that, one more thing."

Hal Moore Lt Gen, US Army, Ret.

Pointed, practical, and professional, Lieutenant General (Ret.) Hal Moore offers principles on leadership in a refreshing yet seasoned manner. Moore, who led men in the jungles of Vietnam and is well known for his exploits as a battalion commander in the Ia Drang Valley, schools the reader with focused commentary on the "how to" of leading within any context, not just a military environment. His thoughts are practical without a lot of theoretical underpinnings—they are implied. He speaks from experience, which he shares from his atypical military career. The book is a biography folded into a primer on leadership lessons learned. From childhood to retirement, his leadership insights spring from a professional ethos developed through his personal journey demanding the reader's attention and careful consideration.

Hal Moore began his lifelong education in leadership development under the careful tutelage of his parents, to include traveling through a culture defined by the poverty of the great depression. Moore explains the basis of his leadership style came through mom and dad's example with their expectation of exemplary comportment within any context. This experience led him to conclude that, "The discipline that makes an effective leader begins in the home...the best leaders strive to create a 'family environment' within their organization." Moore's people were always upper most in his mind next to the mission.

Moore's journey took him through a tough application process for West Point, occupation duty in post-war Japan, platoon and company commander roles while still a lieutenant, along with numerous other assignments. Moore provides an entertaining historical tour of significant life events coupled with periodic reviews of lessons learned. These lessons interlace with personal experiences bringing basis to the ideas Moore brings forth. Most of the observations are intuitive yet some are surprisingly profound.

Four principles of leadership form the framework of Hal Moore's practical leader insights and they provide one of the threads running through the book.

1. "Three strikes and you're not out." Always be self-confident with a positive outlook. Uncertainty and defeatist attitudes are leadership death knells. Leaders, though uncertain of exact outcomes, must never allow an air of uncertainty to be part of their persona. The positive attitude and outlook of "the boss" keeps the organization functioning well despite setbacks.
2. "There is always one more thing you can do to influence a situation in your favor. And after that, one more thing."
3. "When nothing is wrong, there's nothing wrong – EXCEPT there's nothing wrong. That's when a leader has to be the most alert."
4. "Trust your instincts."

These four principles comprise the main threads running through the narrative. That is, despite working diligently, knowing your people, and staying focused on the objective, the day will arrive when you are "outgunned and outmanned." This is no excuse for lying down and giving up. Rather, "Even in the midst of

defeat, carry yourself professionally and maintain your discipline." Setbacks are no excuse for not pursuing success. Stay calm in the melee and never consider defeat because when you do, "you have already lost." Not surprisingly this philosophy translated to Moore's home life to include his two sons. Despite their young age when stationed with father in Oslo, they were tasked with some fairly strenuous responsibilities. Dad had no doubts and neither did they. "The bottom line is that Dad instilled the self-confidence and will to win in us at an early age – just as he did in every unit he commanded." One can easily see Moore's four principles supporting what to do when outgunned and outmanned.

Another essential thread noted in the historical narrative that parallels his four leadership principles but not specifically identified as an overarching construct, is what Moore considers the key center of gravity: People. Moore reveled in flipping a demoralized unit that had suffered under toxic leadership. He knew in every unit that when he challenged his people, inspired them, worked them, and trusted them, they would rise to the occasion. Along with this he made sure they got the credit for their exceptional work, never taking ownership for work accomplished by others. In the midst of the unit revitalization he came to understand: "No job is ever 'beneath' you. In whatever you do, do it to the best of your abilities." He spent hours checking up on everything in order to make sure people had what they needed to get the job done. His presence also helped his troopers know that their work was essential and thereby worth their time and worth pursuing a job well done. He set the example with intermediate supervisors and NCOs by asking them how to get the job done. Moore advocates spending time frequently in their presence engaging the battle or mission. Troops and employees rally to a boss who knows what it is like to work in the trenches. Finally, Moore understood the nature of human relationships when forced to operate under extreme conditions. "Soldiers in battle fight, kill,

and die primarily for each other.” Never underestimate the nature of relationships, good or bad, within organizations as they will bring about success or defeat.

Moore’s four main principles and key center of gravity are almost simplistic yet their effectual application requires some deep soul searching and candid self-critique. The book is a historical review of Moore’s life, together with leadership lessons learned that spring from the narrative. If you are looking for a book by Maxwell, McGregor, or Yukl, prepare to be disappointed. Yet after reading a treatise on leadership by one of these recognized experts in the field, Moore’s book becomes a logical expression of the theoretical works of these authors. Moore does not reference sources outside his own experience base, and as a result his principles are outworking’s of a professional warrior ethos developed over decades. The principles he brings forth are timeless.

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