MENTORING

Mentorship Guide
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE and INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTORSHIP DEFINED</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOLS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUIDANCE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXERCISES</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINAL THOUGHTS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“*A profession is a peculiar type of functional group with highly specialized characteristics. Professionalism distinguishes today’s military member from the warriors of previous ages. In our society, the businessman may command more income, the politician may command more power, but the professional commands more respect.*”

– Samuel Huntington
From the Authors  Our Take On Mentorship

Purpose

This workbook describes how, at every level and across all units, leaders can develop junior, mid-grade and senior leaders for our future. The following pages lay out ideas, backed by research and experience, on the best practices surrounding mentorship. All members of our profession should take it upon themselves, after reflecting upon this pamphlet, to own the development of themselves and those on our team. Our mission is elevating, educating, and facilitating mentoring for the military and beyond. We are a purpose driven organization for your development.

Introduction

Today’s military professionals routinely operate in global environments that are precarious, dynamic, unconventional, and limited in scope. Though the majority of our force is uniquely trained, educated and equipped for our ranks, we have a variety of members integral to our mission that are continually at different developmental stages. Furthermore, we continually need to refocus and hone our core professional attributes. In the past, we have overly relied on officer and enlisted professional military education for development. We have hoped that mentorship would naturally flow from organizational connections. Though these are important multipliers, doing so should never abstain us from our responsibility to ensure we build and facilitate the development of every member of our team.

Even with a shared understanding, the situation in units is not supportive. The military’s formal hierarchy and compartmentalized nature make organic relationships outside of the chain of command almost impossible to achieve until either a boss or subordinate has left the unit. To make it even more difficult, we shuffle seasoned leaders to cloistered staff jobs, recruiting duty, and shore tours right when they could best serve as mentors or benefit from it. At the root of all of this is the fact that real professional mentoring involves personalized interaction by people who have a vested interest in professional development. Individuals must participate freely, have the resources to develop each other, and share a desire to shape the next generation of leaders while learning from others who have gone before them.

To address these gaps, we stress the importance of person-to-person, hands-on relationships that can eventually grow to mentor partnerships. This requires each of us to invest the needed time into our people beyond just our limited time in the unit or team. A life-long commitment to the people around us is not only vital to our profession and our national defense – it’s vital to our future.

In summary, this document is a guideline for you with respect to guided leader development. We will all move on to a new position, move to a new organization, and eventually take off the uniform one day. We must take personal responsibility with respect to mentorship... now.

Jim Perkins and Chevy Cook, Co-Founders of Military Mentors
How Did We Get Here? Why Mentoring is Lackluster in the Military

We all may know that we need to mentor, but that does not make it any easier. In fact in most instances, it usually becomes forced, formal, and inauthentic.¹ When this occurs, mentorship becomes more of a burden and a challenge than a benefit.

After years of overseas contingency operations many believe that we are not equipped with the adequate manpower or time to properly engage in developmental relationships. How can we do more with less? The answer lies within our people.

While we must always focus on what is urgent, we cannot neglect what is important. Too often, urgent tasks (those that demand your immediate attention such as deadlines, emails, daily actions, etc.) consume all of your energy and important tasks (those that contribute to long-term goals) are too often left to wither (see inset right).² Units train and deploy, while development is left to our school house institutions.

Simply put, the problem we have found in both our experiences and research is that all military services take excessive risk by placing the burden on the individual for his/her own self-development. Survey data from studies over the years indicate that a full third (33%) of Army leaders do not understand “specifically what they need in order to develop as a leader.”³ Based on these findings one might find a receptive audience to a more involved role in the development of themselves and others.

“If you light a lamp for someone it will also brighten your own path.”

– Buddhist proverb
Part I: Starting Fresh  Mentorship Defined

Even for academics, it is often hard to differentiate teach, coach, and mentor. Words can have different meanings and each service has their own terminology. As a result, in many instances, we tend to associate these three terms together. They do have many things in common; they involve person-to-person interaction, are developmental in nature and should be rooted in some form of assessment. However, each of them has distinctions.

Coach→ teach→ mentor: (v.) verb, jargon; a meaningless, well-intentioned, all-purpose verbal triplet often used by military leaders

Teaching is “imparting a new skill or education upon another.”⁴ Teachers help to build specific task mastery. This is the simplest of the three terms. We should all look to pass along the lessons we have learned and the knowledge that we have expertise in. Teaching gives a sense of perspective and makes subordinates think creatively and critically. Admiral James Stockdale noted that “every great leader has been a great teacher; ‘teachership’ is indispensable to leadership and an integral part of duty.”⁵

If a mentee needed teaching, you would most likely set up a class on a specified topic.

Coaching is “a collaborative process used to assess and understand the coachee and his or her developmental task, explore new challenges and possibilities, and support sustained development.”⁶ Army doctrine defines it as “the guidance of another’s person’s development in new or existing skills during the practice of those skills.”⁷ Formal coaching processes consists of the psychosocial skills and methods involved in helping someone become more effective at what they are doing, using specific present-moment work-related issues.⁸ Coaching is not therapy or counseling. A major differentiation from the other two processes is that a coach only needs practice in a coaching methodology; they are trying to get you to your next station as opposed to passing on specialized subject matter (teaching) or describing the time they walked in your shoes (mentoring).

If a subordinate needed coaching, you would likely help them define goals, bring out their best traits, and help them set up the steps to get there.

Mentorship is a “committed, long-term relationship focused on the personal and professional development of another.”⁹ Army doctrine defines it as voluntary developmental relationship that exists between two people of greater and lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect.¹⁰ These aspects are crucial to the success and impact of the relationship. Mentorship cannot be forced.

Compared to teaching and coaching, this is the most personal interaction, as stories from the mentor should be passed along to the mentee. A major distinction with the other two is that mentorship should be a reciprocal relationship with both participants actively engaging in the growth of the relationship. Mentees seek out mentorship from individuals with shared traits while mentors “play an important role in assisting leaders in seeing their true selves, making meaning of their experiences, suggesting challenging experiences, and promoting reflection.”¹¹
If a teammate needed mentorship, you would connect them with a leader who may have a similar background, interest, career, etc. to pass along their own comparable experiences that would hopefully build the trust and respect needed for a long-term relationship.

Know that we can all be teachers, coaches, and mentors. Often times we are tri-hatted with these responsibilities, which contributes to confusion. With the knowledge you now have, ensure you demystify the fog surrounding teaching, coaching, and mentoring for others.

The key to developing others is determining:

1) What the situation dictates
2) What the subordinate needs

Tailor make your personal leadership and cater organizational solutions to the needs of your followers! More often than not, they’ll give you indicators that tip off which style they need the most.

“A mentor empowers a person to see a possible future, and believe it can be obtained.”

– Shawn Hitchcock
Part II: Why Mentoring Works *The Pieces to the Puzzle*

We all have lessons learned that we want to share – telling stories is in our ancestral DNA. In the end, the story of mentorship is more about critical reflection and application than it is knowledge and historical transfer. Adult learning is more than just a cognitive process; it is truly multidimensional.\(^{12}\) We learn through experiences and are very social beings. *Mentorship is both socially stimulating and beneficial.* This is not just anecdotal evidence; data from research on leaders in various sectors showed that 91% of those that use an organized mentorship process found the experience moderately or greatly beneficial to their overall success.\(^ {13}\)

One must carefully recognize the underlying components of their mentorship relationship. With this in mind, Kathy Kram, a Boston University researcher, identified two general functions for the mentorship process that we must be cognizant of – career and psychosocial.\(^ {14}\) Each has their own specific components:

**Career Functions** enhance career development. They consist of five functions – Sponsorship, Coaching, Protection, Visibility, Challenging Assignments, and Exposure-and-Visibility.\(^ {15}\) It’s important to guard against the pitfalls of career mentoring. This can easily turn into patronage as we discuss later.

**Psychosocial Functions** clarify personal identities and feeling of competence. Kram found four psychosocial functions – Role Modeling, Acceptance-and-Confirmation, Counseling, and Friendship.\(^ {16}\)

Some people need mentoring for motivation, path making, and ‘go power’ (think career). Others may do it more socially or for the feeling (think psychosocial). **Both are important.** More often than not, our ever evolving human intricacy makes mentoring a mix of the two.
Part III: What’s My Role? How to Create a Mentor Relationship

It’s easy to assume that when a mentor and protégé meet learning just happens. The mentor is probably older and wiser, so just by engagement the mentee is engulfed in learning, right? We beg to differ. We all must set up a specific environment to ensure that exploration and discovery happen. We have to have a two-way methodology built on mutual discovery.

To reiterate from earlier, mentors should not simply pass along the answer key from the tests they have aced. Instead, they should cultivate and nurture a broader perspective in their mentees that allow them to come to their own level of understanding.

In her book “The Mentor’s Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships” Lois Zachary lays out seven critical elements to a learning-centered mentoring paradigm:

- **Reciprocity** ensures the two-way street is maintained.
- **Learning** is about creating opportunities for engagement and discovery.
- **Relationship** is about actually getting to know each other on a personal level through openness.
- **Partnership** is about trust and respect to create security in your mutual efforts.
- **Collaboration** seeks sharing, consensus, and togetherness for the individual engagements as well as the way-ahead for the mentor-mentee team.
- **Mutually Defined Goals** establishes, clarifies and articulates the flow of your ongoing conversation and ensures a continual discovery intent and mindset.
- **Development** is about a presence of mind that allows for a future orientation, which naturally induces the momentum or ‘potential energy’ within the mentor-mentee connection.

There is obvious overlap among many of these elements, and we believe that is the intent. A mentor-mentee relationship shouldn’t have a checklist; it should feel like the natural outcropping of true connective tissue being built. As you discuss who you really are (relationship) it shouldn’t be one sided (reciprocity) and you should be establishing a safe environment for those first discussions (partnership) and for the ones in the future (development).

Since Zachary defines them specifically as elements, we believe that the most effective way to use them is to look at your mentoring relationships and assess what is missing. If one of these elements is somehow not a part of what you have, 1) ask yourself why, 2) talk about it with the other person, and 3) figure out a way to add it to what you’ve got going. Like parachuting, ad ust and steer the relationship toward success.
Part IV: Breaking It All Down A Mentor’s Kitbag

Leader development is simply not a forgone conclusion; research tells us that not everyone will simply get better over time – some get worse, some do not change, and some improve more quickly than others.\textsuperscript{18} Leaders are both born and made. To address both types of needs we must use a systematic approach. Having a plan, a “mentorship approach,” is especially critical with organizational development, because without a framework for the diagnosis, understanding, and implementation of our plan what we end up with is whimsical at best.\textsuperscript{19} No plan is complete without the “how”.

For proper mentorship to occur, it is imperative that we 1) understand the potential types of mentor relationships, 2) are familiar with the three levels associated with a good mentor-mentee partnership, 3) know what to do to create developmental experiences, 4) ensure guided reflection transpires, and finally 5) recognize potential hiccups. We could stay at a high level, lauding the values of mentorship, but doing so would not fit the bill. Let us now delve further into these five components:

**MENTORSHIP TYPES**: Traditional mentoring involves a personalized one-on-one relationship. With an ever connected and technologically savvy society, that is just the baseline. We have found that there are various other types of mentorship, so find which one is best for the mentee. These types include (but are not limited to):\textsuperscript{20}

- **Reverse** – Younger to older due to knowledge or expertise. Consider a CEO who doesn’t understand new technology. Better yet, consider a senior officer who is coming back to a line unit after years in schooling or on staff positions. When a junior officer shares her experience and perspective with a senior commander, this is reverse mentoring.
- **Supervisory** – Boss to subordinate, very formal. It is difficult to be truly candid when your evaluation is on the line. Many military leaders see themselves as supervisory mentors, but don’t realize that the protégé is holding back.
- **Peer** – Members of your work group, but not friends. Think of a cohort of junior-grade surface warfare officers or infantry NCOs. Their array of experiences create opportunities to learn from each other.
- **Group** – One or more individuals facilitating the learning of many. A single lecture is not mentoring, but a sustained, voluntary process can be. Too few mid- and senior leaders offer their wisdom; even fewer cultivate a community around them.
- **Personal Board of Directors** – A group of hand-picked mentors for your individual achievement. Having multiple mentors is a good thing. We refer to this as a “constellation” because each perspective guides you towards your goal. Each mentor has something unique to offer at different times.
- **Distance/Virtual** – Anything not face to face. The constant churn of military moves makes virtual mentoring an absolute necessity. Are you still connected to your old bosses and subordinates? Do you talk about professional development and career planning? His may be a distance mentoring relationship.
THREE LEVELS OF SUCCESS: Not all mentors are created equally. Even if you have a relationship going, there is certainly room to improve it. Earlier, we offered the seven elements of mentoring. Viewed through a different lens, there is a three-level approach that will sound like something else that is very familiar: crawl, walk, run.

**Level 1: Connectivity** - Connections matter in general, but they are paramount in the mentorship process. You cannot have a real connection without being authentic and building rapport. Interaction between the mentor and the mentee is formulated at this first level, and the other two parts simply will not materialize if there is no connection. How well do you know each other? What do you share? What is in-bounds and what is off-limits? Forming a connection starts with a conversation and grows.

**Level 2: Feeling** - Having a connection and enjoying the process are two different things. A connection without feeling is just work – mentoring must be voluntary. Is the exchange worth the time invested? Are you always meeting at work, in one or the other’s office, or is it neutral territory? Do you sit next to the person and actively listen or are you swiping away at your touch screen device and rarely making eye contact?

**Level 3: Quality** - Mentorship is not just hanging out, though it does not have to be rigid either. It does not need a formal lesson plan, but it must be purpose driven. Does the mentorship work? Are you both growing from the experience? Have you laid out a developmental goal and used outside resources to enhance the quality of the first two levels?

These levels may seem complicated but they are just the layers to a structured developmental experience.

DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCES: Once you determine that you’re ready, you can begin building and enacting developmental experiences. Providing the right developmental experiences enables growth. These are not one-time, one-off events; they have to be iterative, planned and nested. It is incumbent upon leaders and mentors to deliberately craft continuous developmental experiences that assess, challenge, and support both individual and organizational growth.

- We assess by finding out what is really needed.
- We then provide a challenge by creating developmental friction through deliberate and realistic growth activities.
- Finally, we support by creating conditions for success via resources, emotional and physical care, and accountability.

These three key components (assess, challenge, support) craft true developmental experiences over time. Many mentor relationships may only last six months to a year, but beyond a year is the most effective as it engenders time for true reflection and growth.
**REFLECTION:** *Growth is never automatic.* Reinforcing new capacities and knowledge learned through structured developmental experiences is what sustains growth. Both structured and unstructured reflection must occur for learners to best derive lessons learned. Deep reflection stimulates connections with other experiences. Revisiting learning moments inspires this type of stimulation. Set up a way to craft a feedback loop.

Keeping a journal, even just a notebook (not a day planner) can work. Revisit old sections and reflect on the experience. This act eventually forces change to adapt new methods going forward. The reflective process ensures ample progress by controlling and managing change in the mentor relationship. “Individuals act and function on the basis of the information received.”

**POTENTIAL SNAGS:** *Creating the right relationship is hard.* Of course, there will be hiccups along the way. Anticipating and recognizing these snags can help save time and increase effectiveness.

**Focusing on Yourself:** It is common to have a mentor and protégé who just don’t connect; one is giving more traditional styled mentorship while the protégé is looking for something more non-traditional in style or setting. There can also be natural generational gaps (GEN X vs. Millennial). Focus on what you can do for the other person, not the other way around. Mentoring relationships should be developmentally asymmetric – the protege should grow the most. If you feel it’s not working, address it candidly. And when you can, find a mentor or a mentee who doesn’t look like you – his helps bridge the many differences we find across our society.

**Rising Stars and Patronage:** The other common setback is our tendency to gravitate toward offering mentorship only to so-called “rising star”, i.e., our top performers. This is why supervisory mentoring is delicate. Your actions create a self-fulfilling prophecy – she performs better because you are mentoring her. Your average or lower performers need attention, too, and your favoritism will be damaging. Looking more deeply, being a sponsor means that you advocate for junior leaders, but a quid-pro-quo relationship in the form of patronage can be toxic to commands. Your protégé might say that everything is fine, but they might also be afraid of telling you the truth.

These, and other demographic issues (cross-cultural competency, gender differences, socio-economic status, etc.), round out some of the concerns that erode the mutual trust and respect needed in mentorship. Ask yourself if the relationship is meeting your development needs. Evaluate it based on one of the frameworks offered here and start improving it.
Part V: Guiding Principles Your Mentorship Compass

This guide is not perfect, but in the absence of doctrine or strategy these guiding principles and tips will help you decide how to maximize the mentorship experience:

1. Leaders Develop Leaders. The best way to provide purpose, motivation, and direction for those around you is to be a moral exemplar. We all must display the appropriate attitudes and behaviors that inspire others to be their best-selves. We must invest the maximum time and focused attention not only to train but also to challenge all team members.

2. Mentorship is a Continuous Process. Development is unique for each teammate. As such it requires multiple experiences under the tutelage of leadership. Leaders should continually remind others that development is not limited to simple counseling, beer calls, or physical fitness sessions. Developmental experiences also include on-the-spot, informal, and other events that happen throughout our typical day. Every interaction is a developmental opportunity.

3. Mentorship is a Mutual Responsibility. Once each leader takes ownership of his/her own development, every member around you must also teach, coach, and inspire each other as they navigate their career. Shared understanding can only come from shared responsibility.

4. Mentorship Must Be Deliberate. We must clearly define developmental goals for appropriate growth. Leaders must be “all in” to ensure our own activities and policies support the goals of mentorship without undermining or impeding our day-to-day mission. Great outcomes may have some spontaneity, but permanent change comes from deliberate effort.

“I’m a success today because I had a mentor who believed in me and I didn’t have the heart to let them down.”

– Abraham Lincoln
Part VI: Exploratory Exercises How to Apply What We Have Provided

1. “MAP IT” – Remember these five tips as you prepare to engage in mentoring activities. They will set your perspective to be most available to others.

   • Tip 1: **MANIFEST** a mentee’s problem solving ability rather than handing out answers.
   • Tip 2: **ACTIVELY LISTEN** to those you mentor so you can meet them where they are.
   • Tip 3: **PERCIEVE** when you are jumping to conclusions; respect both the mentor’s and the mentee’s experiences and perspectives.
   • Tip 4: **INCREASE** self-awareness through counseling, objective feedback, and reflection.
   • Tip 5: **TAILOR** your mentorship style and approach to the person and the context.

2. SWOT Assessment – This assessment can be used by a mentor or protégé to set goals.

   **Strengths / Weaknesses** – Conduct a self-assessment and identify 6-10 attributes in each category. Expand on them as much as possible to include examples of how they manifested and impacted you.

   **Opportunities / Threats** – List by name the up-coming events and challenges that you expect to face. Organize them in order of difficulty. State the specific ways you might fail. Identify resources that may help you and focus your efforts accordingly.

3. Further Reading – Applying the lessons learned within this text is one thing. Adding to that knowledge by seeking other resources is another. Take your mentoring ability, as a mentor or a protégé, to new heights by being a continual learner and a student of this craft. The following are some great resources to leverage on your journey.

   • Bridging Differences for Better Mentoring - Lisa Fain and Lois Zachary
   • Athena Rising - Brad Johnson and David Smith
   • Mentoring at Work - Kathy Kram
   • Mentoring 101 - John Maxwell
   • Radical Inclusion - Ori Brafman and Martin Dempsey

4. Be The Change You Wish to See – You might not have a mentor yet, and even if you do, consider your own actions and what simple changes you can make to help others.

   • Who has mentored me?
   • Who inspires me, but is not a mentor?
   • Who do I mentor? Who could I mentor?
   • How can I use my time to do more?

5. The following pages have exercises adapted from Lois Zachary’s “Creating a Mentoring Culture”.
## EXERCISE 1

**Framework for Mentoring**

*Instructions:* Record your answers to each set of questions. If also doing this for your organization, debrief the answers to each question and come to consensus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational/Personal need</th>
<th>What organizational needs/challenges is your organization facing right now that might be met by mentoring?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intended Audience</td>
<td>Whose interests and needs will be served by mentoring? How might participants benefit?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational/Personal benefit</td>
<td>Why is mentoring important for you? What about the organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning outcomes</td>
<td>What cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes might you expect to see as a result of mentoring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compelling reason</td>
<td>Why are we developing a mentoring process or program? What is the one compelling reason?</td>
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EXERCISE 2

Mentor Selection Worksheet

Instructions: Mentees can use this worksheet to help determine which potential mentor best meets learning needs and mentoring partnership criteria.

1. What are you seeking to learn and why is it important for you?
   Why?

2. List your criteria:
   What is important to you in a relationship?
   What might be important to you in a mentoring relationship?
   What kind of mentor do you think you need?

3. Using your answers to question two, identify your top four criteria; record one in each cell at the top of a column. Then list potential mentors to see if they meet your criteria in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write criteria here</th>
<th>Criterion 1</th>
<th>Criterion 2</th>
<th>Criterion 3</th>
<th>Criterion 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential mentor 1</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential mentor 2</td>
<td>Name:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential mentor 3</td>
<td>Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential mentor 4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential mentor 5</td>
<td>Name:</td>
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Final Thoughts About MilitaryMentors.org

In this pamphlet we have passed along our knowledge about mentoring. This is just the tip of the iceberg for the creation of a larger network of avid professionals who believe that other people matter. One specific type of network is called a *community of practice*. In these communities, informal connections among professionals with shared expertise and a hunger for joint enterprise leads to organizational improvement. This can happen one-on-one or it can be in groups. It can simply be meeting once a month for lunch or it can be an email network. It can have an agenda, but often does not and rarely adheres rigidly to one. Because the outcomes seem immeasurable, the value given to communities of practice may be viewed as low. However, they can drive strategy, solve problems, promote the spread of best practices, and recruit and retain talented members – all of which can be measured.

*By giving you this booklet, we have empowered you.* Today is your first day in a long journey to improve an organization that we at Military Mentors love deeply - the military profession. We need leaders who give back to it and replenish it for the next generation. Will you be one of them?

Military Mentors is dedicated to fostering and sustaining a community of military professionals who are passionate about improving themselves and the next generation of military leaders. Driven by our four organizational values of being *Intentional*, *Intellectual*, and *Integrated*, all while leading with *Integrity*, we seek to connect those who have an affinity for the military profession to each other and to the resources that they need to increase their self-awareness and grow into the most capable leaders and servants of our nation. Join us and take charge of your personal professional development.

*We are humbled and glad to be sponsored by the fellow organizations below.* Find us on all social media platforms. Our structure is a network. Our strategy is teamwork. Join us as we work to transform the military and the people who serve in it. Visit militarymentors.org to learn more as well as sign-up for the site and our monthly newsletter to realize where we can go together.

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Start a conversation. Spark a transformation.
9 McCauley & Van Velsor, 92.
10 FM 6-22, 178 (emphasis added by authors).
11 Peltier, 17.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
20 Zachary, 68-76.
21 Day, Zaccaro, Halpern, 89.
NOTES