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# THE PROGRAM

## LETTERS ON LEADERSHIP

### - LETTER ON LEADERSHIP #84 -



- Photo highlighting Program instructors using the "I" in E.D.I.P.

Leaders are teachers (and lifelong students, but more on that later). Louise Kapitulik, my Mom, was a teacher for 35 years. She taught me that there are two types of teachers. Those who care about presenting the material to their students and those who care about their students learning the material. In an effort to be the latter, Marine leaders teach following the acronym E.D.I.P.

Explain. Demonstrate. Imitate. Practice.

As a teacher, first Explain (E.d.i.p.) to your teammates, be they your athletes, co-workers, or Marines, why something (i.e., the assigned task) needs to be done. There are situations when you, as the leader, may not have the time to do so. However, this should be a rare exception and corrected at the earliest moment possible. Even if your team may not like that something needs to be done, knowing why they are doing it helps ensure greater buy-

in. Also, as the leader, this acts as a reality check for yourself; if you can't clearly articulate why it needs to be completed, maybe your team shouldn't do it...?

Next, although it is often best to ask the team how the task should be accomplished, for the purpose of this letter, I also want to highlight that some tasks must be accomplished by following a specific Standard Operating Procedure. One of our corporate clients, an energy provider, has certain "Rules to Live By" that help ensure their teammates (i.e., their coworkers who work in a very hazardous industry) remain safe while providing power to their clients. One of their Standard Operating Procedures is a Circle of Safety: a person operating any vehicle must walk completely around it, look for, and note any safety hazards prior to the vehicle's use. Conducting one is not a choice. It is a Rule to Live By. Why and how to do so is based on years of combined experience. The best teachers first explain why the task must be completed and then explain how to do it properly. Remember to close every Explain session with a Backbrief (The Program Book, Chapter 75).

Second, as leaders, if we next demonstrate (e.D.i.p.) to our team what we just explained, we place a visual imprint onto the brains of our teammates of how it should be completed correctly. Why is this important? It is a form of positive communication. It helps ensure our teammates do not incorrectly form their own visual imprint on how something might be done. How often have we had someone explain to us what they wanted done, created a mental picture in our minds of how they wanted it done, and then, after we did it, we were told it was not at ALL what was desired? I personally have at least a hundred examples of this with my wife alone! First Explain. Then Demonstrate. Again, remember to close every Demonstrate session with a Backbrief. A suggestion for a way to conduct this Backbrief is to select a team member or members and have those individuals demonstrate. Further, if you make it a habit to do so, the entire team will start to pay attention more consistently, knowing that they might be selected to demonstrate at some point in the future.

Next, have the entire team leave the warm embrace of the seat they are relaxing in while you Explain and Demonstrate, and make them all Imitate (e.d.I.p.) it. All four steps of the E.D.I.P. process are essential but take especially great care ensuring that every member of the team is imitating "it" EXACTLY how "it" should be done. We have ONE chance to create a great habit. Once a bad habit has been created, we can still develop a great habit, but unfortunately, that bad habit will always be there. This is one reason why getting everyone to consistently conduct a Circle of Safety at the energy provider I spoke of earlier is so challenging. Since we all started driving, how often have any of us conducted one...? Imitate affords us the opportunity to develop great habits. As leaders, we must take this opportunity! In the photo above, Program Instructors are making the group leader imitate. After doing so successfully, the leader will then ask his entire team to do the same.

Finally, Practice (e.d.i.P.). Always remember that something doesn't typically become a habit until we have done it at least twenty-five times. 25! When was the last time we practiced something, anything, twenty-five times before we attempted it "for real!?" Too often, whatever our own Rules to Live By might be, we practice them initially. We receive training, but then we go to work. We get busy. Really, really busy. And we "don't have the time" to train, to practice. Until, in the case of the energy provider, someone is injured or worse. And magically, we then make the time to conduct refresher training, to practice

what we learned at some point earlier in our career. Be a better team than that. Practice. And then Practice. And then Practice again. As we say in the Marine Corps, “training is continuous.”

In this author’s humble opinion, the Marine Corps is the finest war-fighting organization the world has ever seen because Marines are life-long learners. So too, any world-class team. Great teachers who care about their students learning the material help facilitate it. Teachers who Explain, Demonstrate, make their teams Imitate, and then Practice.

E.D.I.P. Use it!

And Attack!

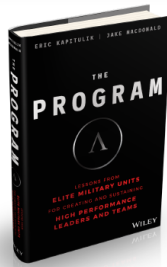


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## THE PROGRAM BOOK



THE PROGRAM, CEO, Eric Kapitulik, and Lead Instructor, Jake MacDonald, share great wisdom and insight on building world class teams in the co-authored book, The Program, Lessons from Elite Military Units for Creating and Sustaining High Performance Leaders and Teams.

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