

THE PROGRAM

LETTERS ON LEADERSHIP

To access our full archive of The Program Letters on Leadership, please visit [Letters on Leadership - TheProgram.org](http://LettersonLeadership-TheProgram.org).

- LETTER ON LEADERSHIP #98 -



“I want to finish today, Dad!” - Jack Bleakley

I’ve now had the privilege of taking all three of my sons on their “Bleakley Bar Mitzvah” hikes. Each challenge was unique, but one thing remained the same: pushing through adversity to accomplish something difficult.

Jack's adventure would take us over 24 rollercoaster miles along the Mogollon Rim in Arizona. It was a challenging hike, made even harder because Jack caught a cold early on. Jack woke up miserable after a steep uphill seven-mile stretch and a cold night camping. He wanted to quit. He had every excuse to stop. But somewhere between breakfast and

breaking camp, his mindset shifted. As we started back to the truck, Jack stopped me and looked back down the path.

“I want to finish today, Dad,” he told me. And he did. Jack pushed through fatigue, sickness, and 17 miles ahead of him. He didn’t just finish - he crushed it.

Each of my sons had different motivations for their hikes (see [The Bleakley Bar Mitzvah Part 1](#)). Cooper wanted to get home in time to finish Thor on Netflix. Isaac wanted to outdo his older brother and claim bragging rights. Jack wanted to prove that he could finish, even when his body told him to stop.

Jack's hike was more than just a personal challenge. It was a real-world example of what it takes to build a world-class team. Success isn't just about physical ability or raw talent. It's about having the **right people**, setting the right **goals and standards**, and fostering a culture of **commitment and accountability**.

Best People

My son's success wasn't just about talent - it was about mindset and alignment with our core values: perseverance, grit, and resilience. The best teams aren't just skilled; they live their values. Leaders must define and reinforce these values, or talent is wasted.

Goals and Standards

Goals are important and each hike had a **goal** - to finish. Equally important are standards: pushing through discomfort with positive energy, embracing hardship, and staying disciplined. All teams have goals. World-class teams have goals and standards; standards that align with their Core Values. We must be aware of our goals; winning matters, but we stay laser-focused on our standards and daily behaviors that lead to goal/mission accomplishment.

Commitment and Accountability

Jack's decision to push forward despite being sick showed true **commitment** - not just to finishing but to our team's standards. As discussed earlier, the best teams and teammates are aware of their goals but are laser-focused on meeting and exceeding their standards. To do so, accountability is key. We must hold ourselves accountable first, and then the warriors to our left and to our right, our fellow teammates. Without accountability, standards aren't standards. They are simply suggestions.

World-Class Culture

Jack's hike proved that success requires more than ability. It takes the **right people**, clear **goals and standards**, and a culture of **commitment and accountability**. These principles define world-class teams in business, sports, or military leadership. **Does your team have them?**

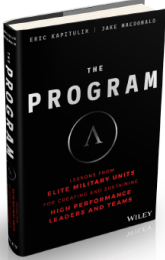
Attack!

Jon Bleakley
Senior Leadership Instructor and Executive Coach

"Letters on Leadership" are published periodically by The Program, a leadership development and team-building company that works with the nation's leading corporations as well as professional and collegiate athletic teams. To sign up to receive them, please visit <https://theprogram.org/letters-on-leadership/#signup>.

For information on developing better leaders and more cohesive teams at your organization, visit <https://theprogram.org/>.

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.

#THEPROGRAMPODCAST



PODCAST

Dive deeper into your knowledge of leadership by following #THEPROGRAMPODCAST. Listen to great insights from corporate leaders, coaches, authors and our Program teammates by subscribing and listening to our podcast. Follow by clicking the buttons below.

PURCHASE BOOK HERE



SERVICES PROVIDED



GREAT TEAMMATES. GREAT LEADERS. WORLD-CLASS TEAMS.



The Program, LLC, 48 Quinebaug Road, North Grosvenordale, CT 06255, USA, (781) 281-0751

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)