

Being a leader might sometimes be a tough job. This is notably true if you're responsible for the security of Ramadi, the city which witnessed some of the most violent combats during the Iraq war.

This summary has its grounds on the reflections of two Navy SEAL task unit executives who worked in Ramadi during the battle, where their decisions and actions were highly dependent on the survival of their personals.

You might be asking why it would get your attention if you're not an army member. Fortunately, the success of the Navy SEAL units tells something useful for many of us. Their methods could be applied by various teams or companies that want to overcome the difficult passages on their business.

You'll be taught tactics such as "cover and move" and "prioritize and execute", which will give you the power to manage challenges.

Chapter 1 - Leadership means being in full charge of both failures and success.

While Jocko Willink, co-author of this book, was serving as a SEAL task unit commander in Ramadi, Iraq, in 2012, his unit was attacked by heavy fire. They first assumed that it was from mujahedeen or a hostile rebellion, but they realized soon after that it was caused by another SEAL unit and in the mess of this fire costed the life of a soldier.

This unfortunate experience made clear for Willink that being a ranking officer burdened all the responsibilities upon his shoulders whether they were good or bad. He took the blame for this awful incident. And can you imagine what this attitude provided him with? His job.

Whereas most of the business leaders wouldn't, his superiors kept him because they knew something special: Every leader becomes mistaken someday, but the ones who take responsibility for the failures are the good leaders. That's why Willink could stay as the commander of his unit.

We can also understand how significant the commander's attitude by considering the worst-case scenario military exercise of the SEAL teams. Remarkably, the teams that failed during the exercise mostly have the leaders who blame the failure on either the sketch, their or the minors, or the troops themselves. In another saying, the ones who avoid full responsibility mostly fail their tasks.

Whereas, we see that the successful SEAL units have the team leaders who were ready to be criticized, don't escape to take responsibility both of the failure and the success, and contemplate about how to get better.

If leaders don't shoulder the blame, its bad effects can be extensive. Let's think of Willink's experience, if a SEAL commander blames the failure on others, that bearing will probably

pass to his subordinates who will do the same when their times arrive. At the end of the day, this kind of position of a leader costs ineffectiveness and incapability of the team.

All such a team can do is pretexting and blaming the others, instead of trying sincerely to sort out the possible troubles. In this vein, future leaders who have responsible superiors will adopt the same attitude toward failure, and they won't escape the responsibility. So, accountability and ingenuity will transmit through the chain of command.

Chapter 2 - To fulfill your mission, first, you should realize how important it is.

One day, Willink's was said by his superiors that his exclusive and perfectly-trained SEAL team would be fighting shoulder by shoulder with the newly built Iraqi army. His first reaction was to say "hell no" because he didn't trust the badly-trained, badly fortified Iraqi army; also he thinks Iraqis could be disloyal to their American allies.

But still, he stayed quiet and didn't reflect his negative opinion about this practice with his team. Then what happened?

Well, before opposing it, first, he had to understand for which motives his superiors wanted to implement such a plan. Soon he figured out that this united operation of the Iraqi army and Navy SEAL was a strategic action that was planned to enable the departure of the US Army from the country. As he learned this real reason for the plan, he could believe the importance of this action and persuade his team to do so.

So, his belief, his sensible attitude toward the assignment passed to his unit. They could also understand the reason for the mission and they felt committed to it and did their best to fulfill it.

But, if Willink had refused to do it without question, and show his negative opinion clearly in the first place, the reluctance of his team would have incredibly escalated. The first response is critical because even if he had understood later, he wouldn't be able to convince his troop to help the mission. Most probably their hesitations wouldn't have changed and the strategy would have ended up in failure.

To put it differently, regardless of what you're doing in life, either you're a military commander or a businessman, you have to sincerely believe your mission, only in this way you'll manage to support the motives of your team. So, it would be wise to stay calm when you've received an order that seems problematic. You should try to see the broader frame of that only order, then you could see a greater strategy behind it.

Leadership makes you a part of something broader that exceeds you and your team. When you can't figure out the logic of the order you're asked to do, that's your job to investigate the real reason by asking from a superior. Such an investigation could be intimidating, but lack

of this strategic reasoning means that you escape from the responsibility. And refusing the responsibility, that's exactly what a leader must avoid all the time.

Chapter 3 - Consider your allies as a backing network, not as a rivalry.

During his mission as SEAL unit officer in Ramadi an unsafe city in Iraq, Leif Babin, the co-author of this book, felt himself all alone without support in the enemy zone. The only way to get out there was to jeopardize passing through the city in the daylight.

There was a great danger of being attacked by an enemy group, but the team managed to make it unharmed. After the mission, Babin realized that was a mistake because there was another SEAL unit over there, they were so close to help his team. However, he was too busy to think about the struggle of his team so that asking for help from another fellow team couldn't cross his mind.

This hasty action also meant that he failed to pursue a very basic Navy SEAL strategy "cover and move", which simply indicates working as a team.

In an ideal scenario, each element should work collaboratively and back all the others to succeed in the final goal.

In the example given from Babin's experience, he had been too blindly concentrated on his team's need to "evacuation without injury", so he couldn't think about the existence of another SEAL team near them, and how they could overcome this together, as a team.

Consequently, their team went through a greater danger than they had to.

So you're a military officer or a businessman, either way, you as a leader should consider both the mission itself and the situation of the broader organization. That includes other teams to which you might someday have to ask for help.

For example, when Babin worked as a business consultant, he remarked that different departments in the same company were blaming other departments and behaving like they were in a rivalry against each other. So, they were breaking the "cover and move" rule which suggests that all internal elements should back one another and search the enemy outside, not inside. In another saying, the real rival was the other firms who attempt to attract your customers, not your co-worker from the HR department.

Chapter 4 - You can preserve your effectiveness by determining clear priorities and behaving accordingly.

It's in Ramadi at midnight, the SEAL team has just got outside from a building to move into what door they assumed was the roof of the next door. But soon after, they realized that that wasn't a roof, but it was a mere tarp, and one man fell through 20 feet high to the ground, wounded and revealed. This put the whole unit in an extremely vulnerable situation: they were stuck in an area surrounded by the enemy, with an injured comrade.

So, what could the leader do?

Expectedly, in a such situation, one would probably have plenty of problems to deal with. Because of this, the leader should remain calm and invent a quick and most effective strategy. With the same motive, by inspiring from his SEAL training, Babin employed a remarkably useful fundamental "prioritize an execute."

To make it easy to remember, SEALs put it differently "Relax, look around, make a call." All leaders would feel overwhelmed if they were to deal with all the problems at the same time. That's why prioritizing something and focusing on it is vital.

In this way, the leader can proceed from one priority to another and make his team determined. Let's go back to Babin's experience again, the first thing he had to prioritize was security, the second was grabbing the injured comrade and finally being sure all of his men were there. By assessing the situation calmly, he could manage the crisis well, despite all the thrilling stress.

Business leaders can also apply a parallel strategy. It is not probable that businessmen find themselves in vital situations, but still, prioritizing and executing serves them to overcome the challenges.

Let's look at how it will be:

Whatever your situation is, first you should start by deciding your highest priority. After that, briefly and clearly explain this priority to your squad. Then search for the contribution of other important leaders around you about the possible solutions to the forthcoming problem, finally, emphasis your team's reserves and implement the plan.

Repeat this mentioned process for each priority. But never forget that, as you move one priority to another, you should inform at each step and carefully explain the change to your squad.

Chapter 5 - Making a plan to succeed means carefully recognizing and softening the risks.

Just as a SEAL operation was about to be done to liberate an Iraqi who was taken hostage by the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, Babin's were told by his co-officers that the hostage was encircled by bombs and also protected by hidden machine guns.

This new information enormously rose the risk level of the operation. Nevertheless, Babin stays calm and implement what they planned previously because he had already considered a sudden possible threat before it appeared.

He had already prepared for any possible danger, as a SEAL unit leader. Because any unexpected damage would have been under his responsibility, he had to account for every little detail before the operation. Considering each potential risk and preparing a highly comprehensive plan for his team meant serious meticulousness.

Even before the operation, he had planned a series of actions to diminish the danger of potential bombs and machine guns encircling the hostage. So, he didn't need to prepare a new plan or cancel the operation although he was told something new by his intelligence.

Babin gives this experience as an example of the importance of being prepared for the new SEAL trainees. Also, he raises a hard question: "Would you still have executed this mission after discovering these risks?" What he wants to hear as an answer is always yes.

What we have learned from this is that leaders should be aware of all the possible dangers and outline a very comprehensive plan that names, counts, and diminishes all those potential dangers. Only in this way the team member can cope with the newly occurred situations during the operation and calmly take action even if things are in a complete change.

So, success is actually about how much prepared your team for any possible situation change. But never forget that some risks can never be diminished, that's why good leaders focus on only the risk that can be managed.

Chapter 6 - Don't be resentful by the meddling of your superiors, instead, prefer to give all the necessary information to them.

During the days Babin and Willink were working together as SEAL unit leaders, Babin often entered Willink's office to demand to understand the reason for those so many questions -as he felt stupid question he was asked by emails of his commanding officer. For what reason he was annoyed? He thought that the commanding officer should have known how many critical issues he had to deal with?

To answer this question, Willink responded: "No, because you're not taking responsibility for telling him." Taken this answer, Babin understood that superiority isn't something psychical, they were bombarding Babin with emails because they weren't given enough information and detailed updates.

In another saying, his superiors only wanted to know all the necessary information to be able to approve Babin's plans, pass them up to the higher approval officer and make him enabled to execute the missions.

Once he realized that real reason, he learned a lot: he had to carefully detect his negative sides try to give well- prepared operation plans with all the details to his superiors.

Nevertheless, most of the business leaders haven't learned yet that this is essential to remain in good relations with their superiors.

Most leaders assume that if their directors don't want to give them and their teams enough support, the fault on the superiors. But they should self-criticize and be aware that providing the necessary information to their bosses is under their responsibility. Only in this way they can take the support they want.

In other words, good leaders always convey the details and updates of the situation both through the up and down of the chain of command. Being in complete charge means that you're responsible to lead and inform all the people around you, regardless of their positions.

Extreme Ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs Lead and Win by Jocko Willink, Leif Babin Book Review

Either in the army or business world, the leaders need to take complete responsibility for their team and their missions. This requires accepting the responsibility even if there is a failure, outlining comprehensive plans that account for potential risks, and being in good communication with your co-workers.

Don't centralize your directions only one place to manage effectively.

As a general principle, people lose effectiveness if they are asked to manage more than six to ten people. Nevertheless, in business leaders usually deal with bigger teams. Here, the fundamentals of the Navy SEAL units can help: First, divide your squad into different sub-groups that don't include more than five persons, assign a team leader to each of them. Make sure that these leaders are aware of the final goal of the whole team as well as its mission. Then allow these new leaders to take initiative to succeed in the goal. So, this system will work perfectly without causing you stress.

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