

Leadership in Cinema



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

(Partnership with Drexel University's [LeBow College of Business](#) students)

A Few Good Men

Submitted by: Dana D'Angelo with Contributions E-mail: danad@drexel.edu
Studio: Castle Rock Entertainment.....Released: 1992
Genre: Crime/Drama/Mystery.....Audience Rating: R
Runtime: 138 minutes

Materials

A Few Good Men DVD or online movie access, appropriate projection system, participant note-taking tools, and online readings access to the following concepts and theories (and related online links):

- Kouzes and Posner's Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership
<http://www.leadershipchallenge.com/About-section-Our-Approach.aspx>
- Goleman Style Leadership
<http://www.fastcompany.com/1838481/6-leadership-styles-and-when-you-should-use-them>
- Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles
<https://www.nwccg.gov/wfldp>
- Followership
http://leadership.uoregon.edu/resources/exercises_tips/skills/followership

Objective

Students will review various leadership theories illustrated within the film and discuss leadership lessons learned with group members or mentors as well as complete activities and assignments.

Basic Plot

A navy lawyer, Daniel Kaffee, is assigned to defend two Marines, Loudon Downey and Harold Dawson, who are accused of the murder of fellow colleague William Santiago. He originally pleads a bargain for his clients rather than bring them to trial but after gathering information and talking with his colleagues, he is convinced there is more to the case and it should be brought to court. Under questioning, Downey and Dawson reveal that Santiago died in the midst of a hazing ritual

Some links in this document will direct you to a non-government website that may have different policies from those of NWCG.

known as “Code Red” after he threatened to inform higher authorities that Dawson opened fire on a Cuban watchtower. They also say that the order was given to them by Lt. Jonathan Kendrick. Kendrick’s superior, Col. Nathan Jessup, denies any knowledge of the order to torture Santiago, but when Lt. Col. Matthew Markinson confides to Kaffee that Jessup demanded the “Code Red” for violating his order of silence, Kaffee and Galloway have to find a way to prove this in court.

Cast of Main Characters

Tom Cruise	Daniel Alistair Kaffee
Jack Nicholson	Nathan R. Jessup
Demi Moore	JoAnne Galloway
Kevin Bacon	Jack Ross
Kiefer Sutherland.....	Jonathan James Kendrick
Kevin Pollak.....	Sam Weinberg
J.T. Walsh.....	Matthew Andrew Markinson
James Marshall.....	Louden Downey
Wolfgang Bodison.....	Harold W. Dawson
J.A. Preston	Julius Alexander Randolph
Matt Craven	Dave Spradling
Michael DeLorenzo.....	William T. Santiago

Facilitation Options

A Few Good Men displays excellent forms of leadership through a variety of characters. All students should be able to connect this film to the following types of leadership: Followership, Goleman’s Styles, Wildland Fire Principles and Values, and Kouzes’ and Posner’s Behaviors. Not only does leadership serve as an important theme, but team-building and collaboration do too. Main Protagonist Daniel Kaffee is featured in the main leadership role throughout the entirety of the movie, but many other characters can be studied as well. By answering the discussion questions and going through exercises students will be able to complete objectives of the lesson plan.

(Disclaimer: YouTube clips may become unavailable without notice.)

Sample Full Film Facilitation Guidelines

- Read the articles written by Gary Peterson and S.A Boatman on Followership
- Connect the views of Followership and compare the views of Peterson and Boatman
- Show the film *A Few Good Men* and pause for crucial scenes that involve discussion
- Stop the movie at the scene when Dawson rejects the Plea Bargain
- Pause the movie and break into small groups and discuss which relationship defines Followership more accurately, Weinberg to Kaffee or Downey to Dawson
- Take a poll and find out which pair each individual thinks is more accurate of Followership

- Go over discussion questions with the class as a whole
- Ask class for any other theories that could be applied to the film and why
- Connect the film examples with personal experiences and describe how they relate
- Close the class by asking whether or not Leadership is a prominent theme found in *A Few Good Men*

Sample Clip Facilitation Guidelines

- Review the readings by Peterson and Boatman
- Review the theory of Followership and show the connection between the clip with Downey on the stand
- Break into small groups and discuss why this scene defines “followership”
- Discuss with class as a whole why Sam Weinberg was a follower to the leader played by Tom Cruise
- Decide which scenes define this type of leadership
- Wrap up the discussion with other theories that can be applied to this film and decide which scenes could be excellent choices for each respective theory

Part One: Kouzes and Posner Leadership in *A Few Good Men*

Objective

To analyze and discover the behaviors that fall under Kouzes and Posner

Activity

Take 2 minutes to talk with the person next to you and discuss what leadership values you think fall under Kouzes and Posner

Model the Way

In *A Few Good Men*, Lt. Kaffee models the way by working all hours of the day to try to prove Downey and Dawson innocent. He provides his team with an example of extreme dedication and diligence. Lieutenant Dawson models the way by taking Downey under his wing and setting a good example for him. Dawson is the definition of a proper marine and he leads the way for Downey.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Lt. Galloway inspired a shared vision because at first she was the only one who believed that the two accused marines were innocent. Therefore, she took the vision of them being free and shared it with her team. Although it took a little convincing for Lt. Kaffee, he eventually bought into the idea that he could win this case. Colonel Jessup also inspired a shared vision with his fellow marines. On the first day of training at Guantanamo Bay he forced all of his marines to

buy into the idea of perfection. Thus, whenever someone acted out of line, it was up to the other marines to handle the problem and fix it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CevDWRn-3-s>

Challenge the Process

A good example of a leader challenging the process is Lt. Kaffee accusing Colonel Jessup of issuing the Code Red when he was serving as a witness in the final courtroom scene. Even though Kaffee knew that there could be extreme consequences for his actions, he went along and did it anyway. He was either going to be a hero at the end of the day or a criminal. This was very risky and therefore challenged the status quo.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j2F4VcBmeo>

Enable Others to Act

Lt. Galloway enabled others to act by getting Kaffee to actually do his job. She inspired him by challenging him to work on the case. Although she had to keep pressuring him to work on the case, he finally listened and did it. Lt. Kendrick also enabled others to act by training the marines to do as he said. He was able to gain the trust of all the marines and they did everything they were told. Even though he did not give them any intrinsic reward, just his praise was enough for the marines.

Encourage the Heart

Lt. Sam Weinberg encouraged the heart by convincing Kaffee that he was meant to be a lawyer and giving him praise for a job well done. Even though Weinberg told Kaffee that he was crazy for challenging Jessup on the stand, he admired his courage and told him that he was the best lawyer he has ever known. Also, when Kaffee thought that their hopes of winning the trial were over, Weinberg convinced him that he could do it.

Part Two: Goleman Style Leadership in *A Few Good Men*

Objective

To analyze and discuss the Goleman leadership values in *A Few Good Men*

Commanding

Throughout the movie, the commanding style leadership is prevalent due to the constant appearance of Marines. It is quite common for Army and Marine officers to order around soldiers by yelling and screaming. However, the soldiers expect this and listen to every order given out by their superior officer.

Visionary

Lt. Galloway uses visionary style leadership in order to inspire her co-workers to work as hard as they can to prove the soldiers innocent. She leads them through her motivational and inspirational words. She sets a goal, shares a vision and challenges her colleagues to reach it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOHrGtKH4uQ&index=86&list=PLvuFqpYjMgt7WhPz0k812rOrrHVTivlYa>

Affiliative

Lt. Kaffee is characteristic of the affiliative leadership style because he always puts the needs of his team and clients first. Not only did he sacrifice a lot of time for the good of the case, but he risked his career and standing in the navy for his clients. A great example of this is in the last courtroom scene where he risks going to jail in order to prove that Jessup ordered the code red and not Lt. Dawson.

Democratic

As a whole, the lawyer team of Kaffee, Weinberg, and Galloway acted in a democratic style. They all asked each other for advice and made decisions together as a team. Also, even when a decision came down to one person taking a risk, they made it together. Once again, when Kaffee had to decide whether or not to interrogate Jessup on the stand, he asked the opinion of everyone on his team. Even though all the risk was in his hands, he wanted the input of his colleagues.

Pacesetting

As mentioned with the Commanding style leadership, the Marines is also very characteristic of Pacesetting. In the movie, there are very high standards for the Marines, especially those stationed in Gitmo. The Marine officers expect perfection and anything less will not be tolerated. That was referenced many times during the interrogation with Dawson and Downey when discussing why a code red was even rendered on Private Santiago.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fglBG8q1Gjc&index=14&list=PLvuFqpYjMgt7WhPz0k812rOrHVTivlYa>

Coaching

A good example of the coaching style leadership in *A Few Good Men* is Lt. Galloway teaching Lt. Downey how to handle questioning in court. Although the movie does not really focus on this, there are short clips in which you see her working with him. Downey needed coaching because he was nervous so instead of overwhelming him with directions and orders, he was taught through “doing.”

Part Three: Wildland Fire Values and Principles in *A Few Good Men*

Objective

Students will learn to identify the Wildland Fire values and principles as they appear in *A Few Good Men* and see how they were used by different leaders throughout the movie. Students will also analyze the effects of these values when applied and when they are absent.

Duty Examples

Be proficient in your job, both technically and as a leader

Jessup is a great soldier and a competent leader, as illustrated in many of the scenes. One such scene occurs very early in the movie when Jessup is discussing the potential code red with his subordinates. Jessup shows his proficiency as a leader by discussing how things need to be done and then telling his subordinates how to do it. He was able to inspire confidence in his men and displayed his experience as both a soldier and someone in command.

Make sound and timely decisions

Galloway knew that the case was winnable but she also knew that the defense team would need her skills to keep them on task. Unable to convince anyone else that she should be on the team, she quickly formed a relationship with one of the defendants' aunts so she could be signed onto the case. From there she quickly mended any hurt feelings from her forcing her way onto the case and became a key contributor to the defense team.

Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished

Kaffee was the most knowledgeable member of the defense team when it came to how to behave in a courtroom and he made sure the other members were briefed on how to hand him documents, how to react to judge rulings, and how to deal with setbacks should something not go according to plan. He had them practice it and then was very clear in his feedback when he felt that Galloway had messed up in this process.

Develop your subordinates for the future

This can be tied back to the above scene referenced with Jessup, as he is attempting to develop his soldiers. The results of development can be seen in the relationship between Dawson and Downey, as Dawson has developed Downey into an incredibly loyal subordinate who even refused to answer questions under oath and lied under oath to protect Dawson.

Respect Examples

Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being

Kaffee displays this in the scene with Weinberg where Weinberg asks if he can leave the team because he doesn't feel like he's needed anymore, and Kaffee is able to convince him to stay on the team by selling him on how important his research skills will be to the success of the team. If Kaffee wasn't able to convince Weinberg to stay the defense team would have been weaker and less effective, and probably not gotten the desired results.

Keep your subordinates informed

Kaffee keeps both defendants, Dawson and Downey, constantly informed of their chances to win the case and what they need to do to help him help them. Without this line of communication he would not really be doing his job as a lawyer because his defendants may have had false hope and not been as forthcoming with some of the information Kaffee used to help them.

Build the team / Employ your subordinates within their capabilities

Kaffee did not handpick his defense team but he did an excellent job of using the skillsets of the teammates he was given in order to maximize everyone's performance and have the team run as smoothly and cohesively as possible. He utilized his team members' research and organizational skills and combined them with his own creativity and courtroom presence to create the best defense possible for his defendants.

Integrity Examples

Know yourself and seek improvement

Kaffee knew he was really only being a lawyer at the Navy because it's what his dad wanted, which was leading him to not put as much effort as he should have been into his cases. As he

came to terms with that he was able to grow into someone who wanted to give it his all no matter what and rededicated himself to the Dawson / Downey case that he had originally deemed unwinnable. Without this growth he probably would have left the defense team as he had originally planned to do and would have gone on with his career of striking plea deals instead of actually fighting for his clients.

Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your own actions

Jessup originally hid the fact that he had ordered the code red, but after admitting to it he accepted the responsibility of ordering it and even stood up for the practice of giving code reds as a valuable tool needed to train military personnel. He may not have originally sought responsibility but after hearing enough of Kaffee's argument he decided he wanted to take credit for the code red and defend his actions.

Set the example

Galloway set the example for the rest of the defense team by having a tireless work ethic throughout the movie and always being optimistic about their chances of winning the case. Without her example to follow the rest of the team would have lost hope and would have lacked the motivation needed to see the case through to conclusion.

Additional Discussion Questions

- Did Galloway overstep her bounds by adding herself to the defense team, and how did Kaffee mitigate the problems that could have occurred by having an unwanted team member?
- Did Kaffee have full control of the team or was it more a leadership by committee where everyone oversaw their individual parts? What are some advantages/disadvantages to multiple leaders?
- Explain the roles of Duty, Integrity and Respect in the movie, as well as what happened when those traits were absent in a leader.
- Are there times when leaders need to ignore doing what's morally right in order to better the team? In those scenarios is morally bad behavior acceptable?
- When Dawson and Downey were discharged it created sort of a hollow victory for the defense. As a leader, how could Kaffee rally his team in the event that they needed to appeal or defend a new client after putting in all that work to not get perfect results?

Part Four: Followership in *A Few Good Men*

Objective

Students review the concept of Followership in the film and use critical thinking, identify, and discuss examples from the film.

Followership is defined, according to the University of Oregon, as the willingness to cooperate in working towards the accomplishment of the group mission, to demonstrate a high degree of teamwork, and to build cohesion among the group. (Followership, University of Oregon)

“The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it.” ~ John Ruskin

Behaviors of an Effective Followership

- Volunteering to handle tasks or help accomplish goals
- Willingly accepting assignments
- Exhibiting loyalty to the group
- Voicing differences of opinions, but supporting the group's decisions
- Offering suggestions
- Maintaining a positive attitude, even in confusing or trying times
- Working effectively as a team member
- Key Attributes to Strong Followership according to Gary Peterson of Forbes Magazine
- Trust: Through everyday behavior, “followership” requires that the leader provides evidence that they can be trusted.
- Stability: Leaders with strong “followership” remain calm in the face of panic and give a sense of confidence to those around them.
- Compassion: Strong “followership” leaders have unrelenting passion for people and show empathy when those folks are enduring hard times.
- Hope: “Followership” requires that the leader has unwavering belief that their product/service will not only succeed, but will change lives.

Examples of Followership

Downey is an excellent example of followership because he is convinced by Dawson to go through with the Code Red. Downey trusted Dawson and respected him as a superior. Dawson was an effective followership leader because he showed some of the key attributes specifically trust and stability. Downey is an excellent example of a follower and Dawson is a superb example of a leader, who exhibits the theory of followership. In a specific scene, Downey is in the courtroom and he releases the information that Dawson ordered the Code Red. Downey knew that Dawson was a stable and trustworthy leader.

Kendrick is another example of a follower and his leader is Jessup, who was his superior officer. Jessup is another fine example of a followership leader. Kendrick trusted Jessup so much that he lied under oath in order to protect Jessup. Jessup proved to be such an inspiring, trustworthy, and stable leader that Kendrick lied under oath in order to protect him. This is another fine example from the film of the theory of followership.

Discussion Questions

- Why is followership and having followers such an important part of being a leader?
- Why would stability be listed as one of the key attributes of a followership leader?

- Thinking about the idea of followership, why would leaders like Jessup and Dawson attract followers like Dawson and Kendrick?
- What were some of the defining features of Jessup and Dawson that made them followership leaders?
- Who are some other characters in the film who exhibit followership?

Contributions from this project were made by the following students in the Lebow College of Business at Drexel University. This project was developed in the course, Leadership in The Movies facilitated by the author, Dana D'Angelo, in the Spring Quarter of 2013.

Michael Giangjordano, Brian Yildirim, Jessica Lu, Dan Adams, and Joe Amato

Additional Valuable Articles and Resources for *A Few Good Men*

"Followership." Followership. The University of Oregon, 01 Jan. 2013. Web. 15 June 2013.

Student Leadership Development Approaches, Methods, and Models. Boatman, S. A. (1997)

Moral Leadership and Business Ethics. Gini, A. (1997)

Peterson, Gary. "Leadership 310: The Four Principles of 'Followership'" Forbes. Forbes Magazine, 23 Apr. 2013. Web. 14 June 2013.