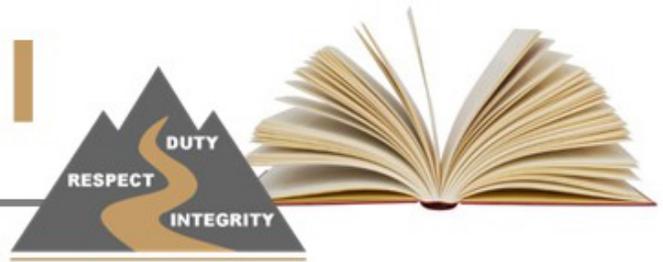


Professional Reading Program

Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program



The Dichotomy of Leadership by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin

Why Read *The Dichotomy of Leadership*?

“Leadership is the most important thing on the battlefield. Leadership – at every level – is the critical factor in whether a team succeeds or fails.”

“In leadership, you will find challenges, you will find rewards, you will find struggles, and you will find fulfillment. But as a leader, if you can think and act with balance, you will achieve the goal of every leader and every team: Victory.”

The Dichotomy of Leadership is a follow up book to *Extreme Ownership* and is great read for leaders of all levels and all leadership styles. No matter how or where you lead, you can find ways to be better in these pages. While it follows up on the concepts found in *Extreme Ownership*, it can also be read as a stand-alone by itself. This is a book that dives into the ways a leader can (and needs to) balance the skills and principles needed for great leadership. As is expected from these authors, the ideas and concepts in the book are clear, concise, and easy to apply in your own leadership situation, whether you're an early-career firefighter, a fire manager with decades of experience, or somewhere in between.

There are several videos about the book available online. Find some of them at the links below or by searching in any internet-based search engine.

- **Jocko Willink on The Dichotomy of Leadership (6 minutes):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSVszv8XrhA>
- **Jocko Podcast 138 w/ Leif Babin: The Dichotomy of Leadership (2.5 hours):**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zykkngrWY_A
- **AuthorConnect Chat: The Dichotomy of Leadership with Jocko Willink & Leif Babin (47 minutes):**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zPnkHN-wuk>

For more leadership ideas and to dig deeper, check out the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP) blog, Facebook page, Professional Reading Program, and more at the links below:

Blog: <http://wildlandfireleadership.blogspot.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WFLDP>

Professional Reading Program: <https://www.nwccg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/prp>

Main WFLDP page: <https://www.fireleadership.gov>

The Dichotomy of Leadership Discussion Questions

Chapter One: The Ultimate Dichotomy

How do you balance caring for your people and exposing them to hazards? As a leader? As a follower? How do you balance the “good” of the team with the “good” of the mission? What does that balance look like in your situation, team, or organization?

Chapter Two: Own it All, but Empower Others

Do you and your team have a succession plan? Is it your responsibility as a leader to teach your job to someone else? As a follower, should you learn the job of the person above you? How do you balance micromanagement and hands-off leaderships styles? Have you seen examples of leaders getting out of balance at either extreme? What could you have done, or can you do, as a leader or a follower to help achieve that balance?

Chapter Three: Resolute, Not Overbearing

In the fire environment, how might you decide what things to stand resolute on and what to let slide? How can you, in your current role, make the best use of your “leadership capital” Why is this balance so important in wildland fire leadership?

Chapter Four: When to Mentor, When to Fire

Is there a difference between coaching and mentoring? What can you do if you find mentoring isn't working? How can you separate your personal and professional opinions and biases in this type of situation? What's your responsibility, as a leader and a follower, to the team when it comes to collective and individual development? If you have an under performer in your team, how should you approach it as a leader? How about as a follower or peer?

Chapter Five: Train Hard, But Train Smart

What does training “hard but smart” mean to you after reading this chapter? What are you doing as a team to promote training? How does leadership training or personal improvement fit in? Can a team be “too busy” to train on leadership? How can you train yourself and others during high tempo operations? How can you ensure training is educational and not just a “test” of capabilities?

Chapter Six: Aggressive, Not Reckless

How do the concepts in this chapter apply to wildland firefighting? How much risk is too much risk? Do you believe that a lack of aggressiveness can sometimes be an issue? How about being too aggressive? How easy is it to take the concept of “default: aggressive” too far? Why is it important to make sure you and those around you clearly understand the “why” of the task, the mission, and the roles and responsibilities of those involved?

Chapter Seven: Disciplined, Not Rigid

Can it be difficult as a leader or follower to ask questions when you're in doubt about something? How can you as a leader create an environment (SOPs, attitudes, etc.) that's disciplined enough to be useful, but allows enough room for flexibility when needed? What are some ways that SOPs can stifle team creativity and performance? What are some ways that SOPs can improve team creativity and performance?

Chapter Eight: Hold People Accountable, But Don't Hold Their Hands

How can you, as a leader or a follower, encourage accountability without being overbearing? How important is leader's intent, and understanding why certain things are a certain way? How can accountability overwhelm a leader? What do the authors have to say about education and empowerment as they relate to accountability? Can you see anything in the business example that can be applied in your organization or team?

Chapter Nine: A Leader and a Follower

How do you utilize situational leadership? How can you as a leader smoothly move from the leader role to the follower role, or even combine those roles when needed? Why is it important to know when to defer to expertise? As a leader, can "failing to follow" undermine your ability to lead? As a follower, how can you support a leader who asks for input or advice? How can you support one who doesn't? How can you take ownership in situations where you're not in alignment with your immediate boss or leadership? Why is building good relationships so important?

Chapter Ten: Plan, But Don't Overplan

Do you preplan? Do you contingency plan? Can you plan for everything? Should you? How can you provide for overplanning with your team? Can experience help with proper planning, and avoiding overplanning? In a chaotic environment like wildland fire, how can you build flexible plans that allow for change? Why is some level of contingency planning or "red teaming" important?

Chapter Eleven: Humble, Not Passive

What are some ways that humility will make you a better leader? Why is it important to carefully prioritize when and where to push back? Why is staying humble important for building trust and good working relationships? How can you provide feedback while remaining humble but not passive?

Chapter Twelve: Focused, but Detached

How do you detach and go to "high port" in the wildland fire setting? When you get emotionally focused on or attached to something, oftentimes motivation and effort increase... how is this a strength? A weakness? How can you see the "big picture" as a fire leader, on assignment or at the station or office? What are some situations where you find yourself getting too focused on the details? Too detached, looking only at the big picture? How can your "ideal location" in the organization change based on your role? Is it the same for a crew boss or an IC on an incident? How about a firefighter or a chief officer in a non-fire setting? How can your level of focus change as you assume different roles?