

1

TIME OF TRIAL

Ike and America Enter the War

Although the United States was still at peace, World War II was under way in Europe when Eisenhower returned to the United States after long service as Douglas MacArthur's right-hand man in the Philippines. In January 1940, he was appointed both regimental executive officer and commander of the First Battalion, Fifteenth Infantry, Third Division, at Fort Lewis, Washington. In March 1941, he was promoted to full colonel and in June transferred to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, as chief of staff of the Third Army. Promoted yet again, to the rank of temporary brigadier general, he became one of the chief planners of the Louisiana Maneuvers, which took place in September 1941. Ike's role in this vast and crucial exercise drew the attention of George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, and when Pearl Harbor thrust the nation into the war on December 7, 1941, Marshall summoned Ike to the War Department in Washington, D.C., and named him assistant chief of the Army War Plans Division, a post in which he served midway through June 1942, having been jumped in rank, as of March 1942, to major general.

Ike's work in the War Department during the dismal, desperate, and chaotic early months of America's involvement in the war consisted of formulating strategies for national military survival as well as for an eventual counteroffensive intended to convert defeat into victory. Assigned to prepare plans for an Allied invasion of Europe, he then had to switch to planning for the invasion of North Africa instead, because President Roosevelt agreed with Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, that the best way to approach

a counteroffensive in Europe was via the Mediterranean, starting with the conquest of North Africa.

In May 1942, Marshall sent Ike to London to work on strategy and policy for joint defense, and on June 15, 1942, Marshall jumped him over 366 more senior officers to become commander of all U.S. troops in the European theater of operations (which included North Africa). After promotion to temporary lieutenant general in July 1942, Eisenhower was named to command Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of French North Africa.

Launched on November 8, 1942, Operation Torch was the first major Allied offensive of the war. Eisenhower remarked that his job, leading a diverse and often disputatious Anglo-American high command, was like “trying to arrange the blankets smoothly over several prima donnas in the same bed.”

From these first, monumentally difficult phases of his World War II career emerged a leadership philosophy that is reflected in passages of Eisenhower’s extraordinary postwar memoir, *Crusade in Europe*, and found within the mountains of secret cables, dispatches, official memoranda, diary notations, and personal letters he wrote from the beginning of 1940 to November 1942.



Lesson 1

Compromise and Management

For those on staff work the days became ceaseless rounds of planning, directing, inspecting; compromising what had been commanded with what could be done.

—*Crusade in Europe*

The U.S. Army entered its first two offshore wars wholly unprepared. In 1898, it fought the Spanish-American War with a tiny regular army force, supplemented by militia and volunteers, and

although valiant in combat, the army fell all over itself in the clumsily improvised process of shipping out to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. In April 1917, the United States entered World War I with a professional full-time army of just 133,000 officers and men, vastly smaller than all but the smallest armies of the smallest nations involved in the war. It is a myth that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, caught the United States similarly unprepared. Ever since Hitler invaded Poland in September 1939, President Roosevelt had begun preparing the nation for war, first by gearing up production of materiel and increasing military budgets, then, on September 16, 1940, by signing the Selective Service Act, the first peacetime military draft in American history.

In January 1940, Ike returned to the United States from a long assignment in the Philippines on the staff of Douglas MacArthur. He was tasked with training and commanding troops at Fort Lewis, Washington. The draft had not yet commenced, and neither had the buildup of equipment and weapons. Ike, like other field-grade officers at this point in time, was faced with what seemed the certainty of war and the job of preparing a woefully inadequate number of underequipped troops to fight it. This was hardly a comfortable position, but, as it turned out, it provided extraordinarily valuable experience in executing the key leadership and management task of “compromising what had been commanded with what could be done.”

Even at the height of the campaign in Europe, as the Allies advanced into Germany and Eisenhower commanded millions, he would find that this cardinal rule still applied. For in war, there are never enough men, never enough equipment or supplies, and what can actually be done has always to be compromised with what is commanded.

What is true of war is true as well of every complex, high-stakes enterprise. There is always the necessity of compromise. That is the very essence and art of management: a balancing of expectations and desires against resources and results. Economists call it working

within the principle of scarcity. Military leaders, if they're as good as Eisenhower was, call it reality, and they are grateful for having been trained to deal with it.



Lesson 2

Create Satisfaction

I determined that my answer should be short, emphatic, and based on reasoning in which I honestly believed.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Just days after Pearl Harbor, General George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, summoned Ike Eisenhower to the War Department in Washington. After briefing Ike for twenty minutes on the disasters of the Pacific theater, describing what seemed at the moment a situation overwhelming in its hopelessness, Marshall stopped, then asked Eisenhower a single question: “What should be our general line of action?”

Struggling to maintain a poker face, Ike replied, “Give me a few hours.”

“All right,” Marshall said and, with that, dismissed Eisenhower.

Ike took the problem back to the desk that had been assigned him in the War Department’s Operations Division. His first thought was, “[I]f I were to be of any service to General Marshall in the War Department, I would have to earn his confidence.” This meant, he reasoned, that “the logic of this, my first answer, would have to be unimpeachable, and the answer would have to be prompt.” With that, a “curious echo from long ago came to my aid.”

Ike recalled something his beloved mentor, Major General Fox Conner, had said to him shortly after World War I. It was that another war was inevitable and, when the United States got into that war, it would do so with allies. “Systems of single command will have to be worked out,” Conner had said to Eisenhower. “We must

insist on individual and single responsibility—leaders will have to learn how to overcome nationalistic considerations in the conduct of campaigns. One man who can do it is Marshall—he is close to being a genius.”

The memory of this discussion prompted Ike to conclude that whatever answer he gave to Marshall “should be short, emphatic, and based on reasoning in which I honestly believed.” Why? “No oratory, plausible argument, or glittering generality would impress anyone entitled to be labeled genius by Fox Conner.”

Before even tackling the daunting problem Marshall had posed, Ike thought about the true significance of the question—that it was as much Marshall’s way of testing him as it was a question about the conduct of the war—and he thought about what kind of answer would satisfy Marshall—what product would satisfy this particular customer. He summoned up the most important fact he knew about Marshall: that a man Eisenhower deeply admired regarded Marshall as very nearly a genius. To pass the test Marshall had posed, Ike would have to earn the chief’s confidence. Because Marshall was a genius (or very nearly so), Ike would have to earn his confidence with a short and thoroughly reasoned answer.

What he came up with was a plan to do whatever was possible, little as that might at the moment be, lest the endangered Allies in the theater give up hope and write off not only themselves but also the U.S. military: “They may excuse failure but they will not excuse abandonment.”

“I agree with you,” Marshall said when Eisenhower presented his report to him. “Do your best to save them.”

George Marshall was famous for his laconic manner. A man of very few words, he was not given to praise. But in this exchange—a question posing the impossible and eliciting a brief, impeccably reasoned answer proposing the possible—was born the confidence that would soon move Marshall to appoint Eisenhower supreme commander of U.S. forces in North Africa and Europe and, later, motivate his nomination of Ike as commander of the Normandy invasion and supreme commander of all Allied forces in Europe.

The right answer is the one that satisfies all the needs of the person who asks the question.



Lesson 3

The Sins of Leadership (According to General Marshall)

[H]e . . . gave clear indication of the types of men who in his opinion were unsuited for high position.

—Crusade in Europe

During his time in the War Department, Ike worked directly for George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, and he dedicated himself to learning all he could from Marshall, paying particular attention to what his boss considered the cardinal sins of poor leaders.

Marshall could not tolerate “any effort to ‘pass the buck,’ especially to him.” Ike often heard him say that he could get “a thousand men to do detailed work but too many were useless in responsible posts because they left to him the necessity of making every decision.”

Although Marshall wanted “his principal assistants [to] think and act on their own conclusions within their own spheres of responsibility,” he had “nothing but scorn” for the micromanager. If you “worked yourself to tatters on minor details,” you could have “no ability to handle the more vital issues.”

Marshall could not abide the “truculent personality—the man who confused firmness and strength with bad manners and deliberate discourtesy.”

Marshall avoided those with “too great a love of the limelight.”

He was “irritated” by those “who were too stupid to see that leadership in conference, even with subordinates, is as important as on the battlefield.”

He “could not stand the pessimist—the individual who was always painting difficulties in the darkest colors.” Marshall tried to avoid delegating responsibility to pessimists and “would never assign an officer to a responsible position unless he believed that the man was an enthusiastic supporter of the particular project and confident of its outcome.”



Lesson 4

Refuse to Consider Failure

[General] Marshall's . . . utter refusal to entertain any thought of failure infused the whole War Department with energy and confidence.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Some leaders consider themselves realists because they dare to face the possibility of failure. Following the example of George C. Marshall, however, Ike Eisenhower simply refused to entertain any thought of failure. This was not an exercise in self-delusion, but a means of preparing himself and his command for total victory. Factor out the thought of failure, and you are left with energy and confidence.

As a student of history (thanks to the tutelage of Major General Fox Conner), Eisenhower must have read the story of how Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conqueror of the Aztec empire, arrived in the New World, then bored holes in the hulls of his ships (attributing the damage to shipworm) so that he and his men could entertain no notion of returning home anytime soon—that is, they could afford no thought of failure. As a leadership tactic, banishing the very option of failure worked well for Cortés, just as it would serve Ike Eisenhower as he commanded the greatest alliance in the greatest struggle the world had ever seen.



Lesson 5

Reduce and Clarify

It is a characteristic of military problems that they yield to nothing but harsh reality; things must be reduced to elemental simplicity and answers must be clear, almost obvious.

—*Crusade in Europe*

World War II was all about big numbers and staggeringly complex situations perpetually obscured by the fog of war. At no time was the situation more overwhelming to the Allies than it was early in the war, when Germany (and, in the Pacific, Japan) was a juggernaut and everything the Allies needed was in critically short supply. Eisenhower came into his job at the Operations Division with the conviction that it did no good to gape at the vastness and confusion of it all. “It profited nothing to wail about unpreparedness,” he observed. Instead, the first task was to drill down to “harsh reality,” to reduce everything to “elemental simplicity,” much as one might approach a dauntingly complicated mathematical equation. Find the core, simplify the problem by identifying its elements, then formulate the answers to these.

Ike accepted the fact that many problems were complex, but he rejected the proposition that the answers to them had to be commensurately complex. If they truly addressed the elements of even the most complex problems, the right answers were almost always the simplest and most obvious. The first job of problem solving in a position of leadership is to identify the elemental reality of the situation. How do you tell when you’ve reached it? It looks, sounds, and feels harsher than anything swirling about and surrounding it.



Lesson 6

Do the Hard Work

I have been here about three weeks and this noon I had my first luncheon outside of the office. Usually it is a hot-dog sandwich and a glass of milk.

—Letter to LeRoy Lutes,
December 31, 1941

To lead, Ike Eisenhower quickly discovered, is to work. After about three weeks in the War Department in Washington, he wrote to Brigadier General LeRoy Lutes, a friend who had been summoned to an assignment in the department. Eisenhower described his work routine “just to give you an inkling as to the kind of mad house you are getting into.” Observing that it “is now eight o’clock New Year’s Eve,” Ike explained that he had a “couple hours’ work ahead of me, and tomorrow will be no different from today.”

Lutes’s wife was in a hospital in California. “The situation with respect to your wife is a most distressing one,” Ike sympathized. “I am as sorry as I can be and even more sorry that I can offer you no constructive suggestion in your problem.”

Such is war; such is leadership. It entails work, and it entails sacrifice. “This letter does not sound too encouraging but it is a bald statement of fact.” To commit to the work is perhaps the very first decision a leader has to make. The only way to make that decision is to base it on a “bald statement of fact,” regardless of how little comfort the facts may offer.



Lesson 7

Capture All Decisions

[T]he staff was able to translate every decision and agreement into appropriate action and to preserve such records as were necessary.

—Crusade in Europe

For most of his career up to World War II, Ike Eisenhower had been a staff officer, a position that put him in the middle layer of the army's command structure. Strategic decisions were made at the command level, and they were carried out by the officers and troops in the field, but it was the job of the layer in between, the staff officers, to ensure that the commands were properly translated into "action items" and to monitor the execution of those action items. Efficient staff work ensures an effective interface between the highest command levels and the personnel in the field. Faulty staff work creates delay, misunderstanding, and disaster.

Ike long regretted having been slotted as a staff officer. He wanted to lead troops. But now, elevated from assistant chief to chief of the Operations Division in the War Department, he found that his staff experience proved vital to him. Out of the innumerable conferences held in his office, Ike developed a host of decisions, "many minor but some of great significance." Ike understood that making the decisions was only a fraction of his job. Each decision "required action at some point within the Operations Division or the War Department or at some remote point where troops . . . were stationed." No manager can make decisions and then merely assume (or, worse, hope) that the appropriate actions will follow. "To insure that none [of the decisions] would be forgotten and that records for subordinates would always be available, we had resorted to an automatic recording system." Ike took this system to the next level by a "complete wiring of my war room with Dictaphones so placed to pick up every word uttered in the room." A secretary "instantly transcribed them into notes and memoranda [so that] the staff was able to translate every decision and agreement into appropriate action and to preserve such records as were necessary."

In large part, leadership is a stream of decisions, some reached alone, many in collaboration and conversation with others. It is essential to create a working environment in which all decisions are captured, put into "actionable" form, and distributed to those who must act on them. A leader's job does not end when the decisions have been made.



Lesson 8

Struggle to the Same Page

We've got to quit wasting resources all over the world—and still worse—wasting time.

—Personal note, January 22, 1942

It is not easy being thrown into a world war. Exasperated after about a month and a half in the War Department, Ike scribbled a note to himself: “The struggle to secure adoption by all concerned of a common concept of strategical objectives is wearing me down.” The problem was that “Everybody is too much engaged with small things of his own—or with some vague idea of larger political activity to realize what we are doing—rather *not* doing.” We can practically hear Ike’s anguish: “We’ve got to go to Europe and fight—and we’ve got to quit wasting resources all over the world—and still worse—wasting time.”

What saved him from panic and despair? Character, doubtless, but also the understanding that the very first struggle any leader faces is to get everyone on the same page. Once everyone has agreed on common objectives and strategies, the job may remain hard as hell, but the energies of all will be focused, and success will become a realistic hope. Depending on where and when you rise to responsibility in an organization, your first leadership task may well be to pull common purpose from a welter of conflicting needs, desires, and demands. In the meantime, the cacophony can be deafening, the anguish very real.



Lesson 9

Identify the Doable

[T]here are just three “musts” for the Allies this year.

—Personal note, March 10, 1942

On March 10, 1942, Ike scribbled one of the few genuinely optimistic notes he made early in the war. “Gradually,” he wrote, “some of the people with whom I have to deal are coming to agree with me that there are just three ‘musts’ for the Allies this year—hold open the line to England and support her as necessary; keep Russia in the war as an active participant; hold the India-Middle East but-tress between the Japs and Germans.”

There was plenty to be worried about during the early months after America’s entry into World War II, but what most disturbed Ike was the Allies’ lack of focus, which caused a lot of wasteful wheel spinning and squandering of resources. He saw his first task as defining initial, crucial priorities that could actually be accomplished. These were the steps necessary to keep alive the Allied prospects for ultimate victory.

When you are faced with the demands of an apparently overwhelming crisis, identify and define what must be done and can be done to keep everyone in the game. The first choices to be made are those that enable other choices down the road. Those critical first choices are the essence of survival as well as the means of ultimately converting survival into triumph.



Lesson 10

Stay in the Game

All other operations must be considered in the highly desirable rather than in the mandatory class.

—Secret memorandum to George C.
Marshall, March 25, 1942

Leadership is often about putting out fires. That can be hard enough when a single blaze is raging, but it can be overwhelming in the midst of multiple conflagrations. Such was World War II when the United States was thrust into it.

“The first question that must be definitely decided,” Eisenhower wrote to his boss, army chief of staff General George C. Marshall, “is the region or theater in which the first major offensive effort of the United Powers [the Allies] must take place.” Ike explained that from this initial decision all others would flow. Making the decision would require the very difficult step of at least temporarily turning away from other areas that might be under threat or even under direct attack. Ike was aware, however, that concentration on one area could not come at the total neglect of others: “Another question that must be decided upon . . . is that of the vital defensive tasks we must now perform in order that, pending the time when a major offensive effort can be staged, the strategic situation will not deteriorate so badly as to render all future effort practically futile.”

In this crisis of multiple conflagrations, it was necessary to decide, first, where aggressive action could best and most quickly be employed, even while ensuring that defensive steps were taken to prevent the disintegration of the overall situation into utter hopelessness.

With the basic strategic task thus laid out, Ike refined the problem: “We are principally concerned in preventing the arise of any situation that will automatically give the Axis an overwhelming tactical superiority; or one under which its productive potential becomes greater than our own.” He concluded that the “loss of either England or Russia would probably give the Axis an immediate ability to nullify any of our future efforts. The loss of the Near East or of England would probably give the Axis a greater productive potential than our own.” This being the case, the “immediately important tasks, aside from the protection of the American continent, are the security of England, the retention of Russia in the war as an active ally, and the defense of the Middle East.”

Thus Ike gave the war effort a focus. Vast as this focus was, it ruled out attending to a lot of the other fires, most obviously Japan and the Pacific. Because the United States had been brought into the war by the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, most Americans were eager for immediate vengeance

against the Japanese. It was a natural impulse. Ike recognized, however, that Japan was not the most pressing issue. “All other operations,” including any against Japan, “must be considered in the highly desirable rather than in the mandatory class.” It would take great collective discipline to forsake the emotional drive for revenge in order to focus first on the “mandatory” objectives, but discipline—the disciplined application of limited resources—is precisely what management and leadership are all about. (In any event, as Ike explained, allocating some major assets to the Middle East would, indirectly, act against Japan, as “defending the Middle East . . . prevents the junction of our two most powerful enemies”—Japan and Germany—even while it “renders a definite support to the left flank of the Russian armies and keeps open an important supply line.”)

Definition and focus are the principal bulwarks against the chaos of multiple fires. First decide what must be done first. Various as they may be, these initial mandatory tasks have as their common objective the preservation of the future. They make it possible to stay in the game, to buy time for the preparation of other operations. Fail to address a mandatory task right away, and you may lose the future, creating circumstances that make further operations either impossible or futile.



Lesson 11

Make Now the Priority

Plans for the future could not take priority over the needs of the day.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Management leaders are by nature and definition planners, the helmsmen of an enterprise, whose job it is to see far ahead. Yet as any helmsman knows, the only job more important than seeing far ahead is seeing whatever is right in front of you. Fail in this, and dis-

tance hardly matters. Important as the future is, it does not in fact exist, whereas the needs of today are present, real, and often as hard and sharp as rocks. “Where there is no vision, the people perish” goes the proverb, but it is equally fatal to allow vision to obscure plain sight.



Lesson 12

Shut Off All Business

My Father was buried today. I've shut off all business and visitors for thirty minutes—to have that much time, by myself, to think of him.

—Personal note, March 12, 1942

David Jacob Eisenhower died on March 10, 1942. “I have felt terribly,” Ike wrote in his notebook on March 11. “I should like so much to be with my Mother these few days. But we’re at war! And war is not soft—it has no time to indulge even the deepest and most sacred emotions.” Yet Ike realized that even in the midst of war, he needed time—by himself—“to think of him.” He did not allow himself much, just thirty minutes, but they were minutes absolutely his and his alone, from which all business and visitors were barred.

Even the most dedicated leader requires a compartment of private space. Its dimensions need not be defined so much by quantity as by quality. A brief interval of genuinely personal time is of greater value than an extended “working” vacation. “War is not soft.” Ike understood that better than most. It affords “no time to indulge even the deepest and most sacred emotions.” Yet he also understood that *some* time had to be found for those emotions, and he insisted on giving himself thirty minutes that would otherwise have been devoted to war. This was the unselfish gift of a wise and effective leader.



Lesson 13

We Have Got to Win

We have got a fearful job to perform and everybody has got to unify to do it.

—Letter to his brother Edgar Eisenhower,
March 30, 1942

“We have got to win,” Ike wrote to his brother, “and any individual in this country . . . that doesn’t do his very best to fulfill his part of the job is an enemy.”

It was a powerful statement made even more forceful by Ike’s understanding of the consequences of *not* winning: “If they should win we would really learn something about slavery, forced labor and loss of individual freedom.”

No enterprise should be undertaken without a desire and commitment to win. An effective leader builds and amplifies that desire and that commitment by selling the benefits of winning as well as the consequences of losing. Without this context, victory is a hollow word and winning an empty concept.



Lesson 14

Streamline

Reduce equipment of all organizations in order to minimize demands on shipping.

—Secret memorandum, April 20, 1942

Ike issued a memorandum calling for “a recommendation to the Chief of Staff” to direct the commanding generals of “the Ground Forces, Air Forces, and Services of Supply” to “restudy . . . the problem of excluding . . . all equipment not deemed absolutely essential to the execution of basic missions.” The problem was not a short-

age of equipment but a shortage of shipping: the means of delivering the equipment. Accordingly, Ike called for the streamlining of equipment requirements, paring supplies down to essentials and pooling additional equipment to be issued only “to meet special situations to be exploited to the utmost.”

There is a natural tendency to load yourself and your organization with more equipment than may actually be necessary. Not only is this directly wasteful of resources, but to the degree that it actually impedes action—slows people down or requires additional resources for the maintenance of the excess equipment—overloading can be even more harmful.

Streamline. Determine minimum requirements and operate as close to those minimums as possible, provided that everyone has access to what he or she needs to “meet special situations” or exploit opportunities when they present themselves. The majority of complex organizations operate most efficiently by adopting some form of a “just-in-time” approach, a system that aims to deliver needed equipment when it is needed and neither before nor after. Such a system ensures that no resources are wasted handling unnecessary materials, yet no opportunities are lost for lack of necessary equipment. The just-in-time approach requires dynamic, proactive management, but it reduces overhead and increases efficiency, allowing people to focus on the task at hand rather than all the surplus equipment around them.



Lesson 15

Invest in People

I try to pick bright boys who learn rapidly.

—Letter to Dabney Elliott, May 8, 1942

While Ike was laboring in the War Department, before he became supreme Allied commander, he had continually to vie with other

officers to secure the best subordinate personnel. He soon discovered a dilemma. If he chose senior personnel—at the level of colonel—he was certain to obtain men of proven experience, but he was just as certain to lose them after a short time on the job. Good senior people were quickly promoted out of his department, and even when such promotions were not ordered by Ike's superiors, he had no desire to stand in the way of another officer's opportunity to rise. Therefore, as he explained to his friend Colonel Dabney Elliott, "I have gone to the practice of asking for only Majors and very junior Lt. Colonels. I think I have a chance of keeping this type of officer for a few months at least. In many cases, of course, I sacrifice the degree of experience I would like to have; but I try to pick bright boys who learn rapidly."

Ike understood that the business of war—like any other business, really—was first and foremost a people business. Victory depended on making the right investments in personnel. The obvious choice, of course, was to invest in proven value: senior officers with loads of experience. But Ike soon realized that these individuals tended to be volatile commodities, subject to almost instant evaporation through promotion. He therefore looked for subordinates at a more junior level who nevertheless showed great promise. An investment in such officers was riskier, but the potential rewards were proportionately greater because, provided the officer was a fast learner, he would become a valuable *long-term* asset.

An effective manager gives careful thought to the people he or she hires, often choosing to invest in those with more promise than experience—that is, with more future than past. The inherent risk in this approach is, on the face of things, greater, but the rewards—in terms of longevity and loyalty—typically justify the risk. It is a bad thing to discover that you have invested in someone who cannot do the job or do it well, but it is even worse to invest in someone only to have him or her take your investment to another department or a competing enterprise.



Lesson 16

Wheedle

Since we are obviously not in a position to use force . . . we must depend on wheedling.

—Secret memorandum to George V.
Strong, May 16, 1942

George V. Strong, assistant chief of staff, G-2—an intelligence officer—in the War Department, wrote a letter to the State Department in which he demanded that the department essentially strong-arm the governments of South American countries to allow the United States to set up a much-needed intelligence network. Ike, who reviewed the proposed letter before it was transmitted, wholeheartedly agreed with Strong that such a network was urgently needed, but he sent the message back to him with the comment that “your letter is a bit abrupt. . . . I have made . . . changes I think soften it up a bit.”

Why would a high-ranking War Department officer need to “soften up” a letter to the State Department?

Ike knew that however important rank was, reality always trumped it. “Since we are obviously not in a position to use force, in pursuit of our policy in the south Americas,” he explained to Strong, “we must depend on wheedling.” That meant appealing to the “only wheedlers we have,” not the officers of the U.S. Army, but the diplomats in the State Department. Because we need the wheedling expertise of the diplomats, Ike advised Strong, “I think it to our advantage to keep the best relationship with them we can.” And that meant doing a little preliminary wheedling in the form of softening the tone of a letter.

Inept leaders labor under the delusion that power and authority are derived from impressive titles and a perch in the corner office. Successful leaders understand that their power and authority consist of the continuously earned consent of those they lead. It is certainly fatal to make any absolute demand in the absence of

absolute power or absolute authority, and, even when your authority is great, it is almost always more effective to seek, to win, even to wheedle cooperation than it is to demand it. A skilled leader establishes “best relationships” with key subordinates and other leaders through the use of a continual appeal to mutual and collective self-interest rather than by relying on some arbitrary hierarchy or command structure. “We need to do this so that we can succeed” is always a more compelling directive than “You need to do this because I am the boss.”



Lesson 17

Visualize

Wherever possible, diagrammatic charts rather than figures should be used.

—Secret memorandum to St. Clair
Streett, May 21, 1942

Early in the war, Ike ordered the “establishment of large statistical charts” to be posted at “selected places in the Operations Division,” the War Department division he commanded. “I am particularly anxious,” he explained to General Streett, who was in charge of compiling the statistics, “that these charts show in visual form, our projects for each theater, what we have actually done to date, and dates on which we can expect reinforcements.” He closed the memorandum by reiterating his requirement for “diagrammatic charts” rather than charts listing mere “figures.”

Throughout World War II, there was plenty of talk about the responsibility of higher command to “see the big picture.” Ike took this responsibility seriously and literally. He appreciated the importance of statistics, but he wanted them in a form that would reflect the “big picture” as it continually evolved. By translating the num-

bers into a visual and graphic form, Ike found a means of actually seeing the evolving shape of the war and the war effort.

There is no such thing as having too much information, provided that the information you have is presented in a usable form. Ensure that all the data you need—statistics, feedback, profits, losses—contribute to a picture you can see, interpret, and use. The function of data is to *convey* reality, not to block your view of it.



Lesson 18

The “Single Command” Concept

Success in [a complex military alliance] rests ultimately upon personalities; statesmen, generals, admirals, and air marshals—even populations—must develop confidence in the concept of single command and in the organization and the leader by which the single command is exercised. No binding regulation, law, or custom can apply to all its parts—only a highly developed sense of mutual confidence can solve the problem. Possibly this truth has equal applicability in peace.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Our society is one of “binding regulation, law, [and] custom.” These are the hallmarks of any advanced society and, indeed, of any sophisticated organization. Leadership by one strong man or woman might be fine for a mom-and-pop operation, but great enterprises require regulations, laws, and customs. Put one person in charge of anything really big, and you have a cult of personality—a most dangerous situation. At least, that is what we fear.

We fear and distrust strong personal leadership on a large scale because it seems primitive, a throwback to more reckless times, and we prefer to comfort ourselves with the notion that our collective

fate lies not so much with a single person as it does with a whole system, one that includes certain checks and balances. People are fallible, we think, but systems, immune to whims and passions, are reliable.

Dwight Eisenhower's single most significant leadership insight, from very early in the war, was the realization that, despite our fears of creating a cult of personality, of relying too completely on a single leader, the very greatest, most urgent, and most complex enterprises—those involving millions of people from different nations banded together for the highest stakes imaginable—are actually best led by a “single command” in which confidence is absolute. Moreover, he defined this “single command” in terms of a *personality*. A human being, an individual, this personality would be fallible, to be sure, but also powerful and authoritative precisely because of his very humanity and individuality.

The truly remarkable thing about the position of supreme Allied commander, which Ike was to hold, was that it had no basis in law, international or domestic. “Only trust and confidence,” Eisenhower wrote, “can establish the authority of an allied commander in chief so firmly that he need never fear the absence of . . . legal power.” He did not analyze or explain this insight, but, in writing these words, he showed that he understood it at a profound level.

Leaders and managers of civilian organizations may envy military officers, whose leadership authority (they believe) is derived from and supported by military regulations. Eisenhower knew better, of course. He was keenly aware of what military leaders call “command presence,” an indefinable quality of *personality* that effective officers always project and that serves to encourage their troops, inspiring them to prompt and cheerful obedience as well as courageous initiative. Essential as command presence is to an officer commanding a company or a battalion, Ike believed it even more important in a supreme commander, who was responsible for a vast and varied alliance. Indeed, he thought it equally important in effective leadership during peace.



Lesson 19

Be the Guy

The C/S [Chief of Staff] says I'm the guy. . . . Now we really go to work.

—Personal note, June 11, 1942

On June 11, 1942, General George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, told Eisenhower that he had been designated commanding general, European theater of operations, effective June 25. “I’m the guy,” Ike scribbled in his notebook. Colloquial and laconic, this phrase says all that really needs to be said about the ultimate responsibility of leadership: *you are the guy*. That is how others see you, and that is how you must see yourself. The result of this understanding should be no less than an instant and enthusiastic commitment to “really go to work.”



Lesson 20

It All Depends on You—Still

[I]t is sometimes assumed that the influence of the individual in war has become submerged, that the mistakes of one responsible officer are corrected or concealed in the mass action of a great number of associates. This is not true.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Anyone looking at the vast spectacle of America and Britain mobilizing for Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, might assume that the “methods and machinery” of war had “become so extraordinarily complex and intricate,” with high commanders surrounded

by “gargantuan staffs for control and direction,” that “the influence of the individual” no longer much mattered.

Ike knew better.

“Personal characteristics,” he wrote, “are more important than ever before in warfare.” His explanation of why this was the case in war also applies to the role of the individual leader in any large, complex organization. In the day of Napoleon and Wellington, Ike pointed out, a single commander really could direct a major battle all on his own. In modern warfare, however, “teams and staffs” are required as the mediators “through which the modern commander absorbs information and exercises his authority.” This middle layer of people “must be a beautifully interlocked, smooth-working mechanism. Ideally,” Eisenhower wrote, “the whole should be practically a single mind.” This being the ideal, Ike observed, the most important role of all is played by the “personalities of senior commanders and staff officers.” Those whose abilities are marred by “too obvious avidity for public acclaim” or “the delusion that strength of purpose demands arrogant and even insufferable deportment” are not only *not* submerged by the vast machinery of war but tend to wreck it or, at least, to impair its “beautifully interlocked, smooth-working mechanism.”

Modern organizations typically consist of teams, which have a most unfortunate tendency to give expression to the personality of the least congenial member. Instead of submerging the misfit, teams tend to bring him or her to the surface. They magnify rather than reduce individual flaws. Among the most dangerous assumptions a leader can make is that the individual counts for less than everything. The bigger and more complex the organization, the more dangerous this assumption is.



Lesson 21***The Highest Type***

The personnel of this division represents the highest type of governmental servant.

—Farewell memorandum to Operations
Division staff, June 16, 1942

Before he left Washington and the War Department's Operations Division to assume command of the European theater in June 1942, Ike issued a "personal message to say 'goodbye and thank you'" to the staff of his office. He told his staff that they represented the "highest type of governmental servant," which he defined as "the kind that quickly determines the basic elements of complicated problems, promptly finds acceptable answers, and energetically translates those answers into concrete directives." In this, Ike defined not merely the highest type of government worker, but the ideal employee of any great enterprise.

Managers who find it difficult to write job descriptions for staff members need look no further than this three-part list of requirements. You need people (1) who can distill complex problems to their elements; (2) who, having analyzed the problems, find answers to them; and (3) who then complete their work by formulating the means of implementing the solutions they propose.

**Lesson 22*****Unquestionably Legal but Ethically Questionable***

My government had entrusted me with important tasks, carrying grave responsibility.

—Memorandum for the record,
June 20, 1942

Ethical behavior is an investment in the long term. Most acts of questionable ethics result not from outright dishonesty but from shortsightedness: a desire for instant gain even at the risk of long-term loss.

Shortly before he left Washington and the War Department to assume command in London of the European theater, Ike was visited by Emanuel Quezon, the exiled president of the Philippines. "His purpose," Ike wrote in the memorandum, "was to tender me an honorarium for services rendered during the period I was acting as General MacArthur's Chief of Staff in Manila, where he (MacArthur) went as Military Adviser to the Philippine Government. . . . President Quezon brought with him to my office a draft of a citation which he had written to accompany the presentation [to] me of the honorarium."

Ike explained to Quezon that "while I understood this to be unquestionably legal, and that the President's motives were of the highest, the danger of misapprehension or misunderstanding on the part of some individual might operate to destroy whatever usefulness I may have to the allied cause in the present War." In this, Ike expressed a very advanced form of ethical understanding. First, he understood that legal behavior and ethical behavior are not one and the same. The fact is that ethical action is almost always legal, but legal action is not always ethical. Ethical behavior must meet a higher standard than legal behavior. Second, he expressed his unwillingness to sacrifice larger, longer-term, and more important objectives for the sake of immediate gain, no matter how tempting.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was by no means a wealthy man, and the offer of an honorarium must have held some very real appeal for him. But he saw the offer as a bad bargain, and he had the wisdom as well as strength of character to decline it—albeit with magnificent grace. Respecting Eisenhower's scruples, Quezon proposed presenting the general "in official form, the citation he had written to accompany the honorarium." Ike replied that "such a citation would

be of great and more lasting value to me and my family than any amount of money his government could possibly present to me.”



Lesson 23

You've Got to Believe

Belief in an underlying cause is fully as important to success in war as any local esprit or discipline induced or produced by whatever kind of command or leadership action.

—*Crusade in Europe*

“That a soldier should understand why he is fighting would not seem to be an arguable point,” Ike Eisenhower wrote, yet, he continued, he had heard commanders attempt to oversimplify the problem of belief by claiming that soldiers “fight for only a few simple and essentially local reasons,” including pride in a unit, respect for the opinion of comrades, and blind devotion to an immediate leader. Eisenhower believed that all of these were in fact important, but he also understood that the “American soldier, in spite of wisecracking, sometimes cynical speech, is an intelligent human being who demands and deserves basic understanding of the reasons why his country took up arms and of the conflicting consequences of victory or defeat.” Ike’s own experience as well as his knowledge of history convinced him of this. He recalled the example of Baron von Steuben during the American Revolution, who “explained in a letter to a friend that in Europe you tell a soldier to do thus, and he does it; and that in America it is necessary also to tell him why he does it.”

In any enterprise requiring the collaboration of intelligent people—and that means just about any enterprise worth doing—the “underlying cause,” or motivating principle, should never remain a guarded secret or a vaguely articulated cliché. People work

for money, it is true, and a fair salary may produce a fair day's labor, but it is a shared vision that makes possible the best work and the greatest achievement.



Lesson 24

Demand Faith, Require Optimism

Any expression of defeatism or any failure to push ahead in confidence was instant cause for relief from duty, and all officers knew it.

—*Crusade in Europe*

“In the summer of 1942,” Ike admitted, when the forces of the Axis were victorious on all fronts, “it took a very considerable faith, not to say optimism, to look forward to the day when the potentialities of the United States would be fully developed and the power of the three great Allies could be applied simultaneously and decisively against the European Axis.”

As his armies rolled over most of Europe, Hitler made it very easy for his opponents to believe that their defeat was inevitable. Imminent defeat seemed nothing more or less than an entirely realistic assessment of the war situation. It was Eisenhower's job, first and foremost, to alter that destructive perception. For whether or not Hitler would finally defeat the Allies, Allied defeatism *certainly* could and would.

Even in the most threatening situations, as a leader you must counter defeatism, and when there is a paucity of hard facts to fight this devastating emotion, you must turn to faith: the simple, naked belief that you and your enterprise will prevail. If faith is difficult to create, you may emulate Ike and summarily outlaw “any expression of defeatism.” If this sounds perilously close to nurturing self-delusion, that is because it is. But the risk of delusion is well worth taking to avoid the sure poison of defeatist thought.



Lesson 25

Get, Use, Discard

The problem of having it when you want it, using it as you need it, and then getting it out of the way when you don't want it, is really something to solve.

—Letter to Leonard T. Gerow, July 16, 1942

Shortly after setting up his headquarters in England, Ike wrote to his friend General Leonard T. Gerow about the importance of “skill in handling motor transportation.” In the course of the discussion, he distilled the essence of what today would be called just-in-time management—the logistical ideal of having what you want when you want it, using it as you need it, then getting rid of it when you don’t want it. Static management concepts call for stockpiling. As mentioned in Lesson 14, “Streamline,” Ike understood that stockpiling not only was wasteful of materiel in and of itself but also required a surplus of manpower and equipment to manage the stockpile. He vastly preferred a dynamic management approach, by which the right equipment reached the right hands only when actually needed and was gotten out of the way when it was needed no longer. This approach ensured that everyone’s focus was on the task at hand, not on the equipment that was either standing idle or tardy in its arrival. Neither stockpiling nor waiting is a valid management technique.



Lesson 26

Build Rapport

I am convinced . . . that if these things are properly explained to our personnel, the response will be highly gratifying.

—Letter to Russell P. “Scrappy” Hartle,
July 19, 1942

Relations between the British and American allies were not always cordial. Faced with a flood of GIs coming into their country, Brits often said that there were three things wrong with the Yanks: “They’re overpaid, oversexed, and over here.” Shortly after his arrival in London, Ike wrote to one of his senior commanders, General Scappy Hartle, to express his concern over problems created in Anglo-American relations by the “great difference between the pay scale of our men and of the British.” Ike elaborated: “There is no need to recite again the risks we run, collectively and individually, of creating ill-feeling through, what the British will consider, lavish expenditure of money” by our troops.

It was one thing to recognize the existence of this problem, but quite another to do something about it, to devise a way to build rapport between the Americans and their British hosts. Ike proposed “sustained and vigorous campaigns to induce our officers and men to allot or deposit large portions of their pay or to buy bonds and war savings stamps,” so that they would not have the loose cash on hand to spend so ostentatiously. He expressed his belief that if “these things are properly explained to our personnel, the response will be highly gratifying.”

Ike’s leadership in this case was especially impressive. He saw a situation—American soldiers were paid more than British soldiers—but refused to simply accept it as a given. Instead, he proposed a positive, innovative means of creating, without coercion, a favorable change in the work environment. It was a practical means of building rapport on the scale of the whole work environment, yet it would be accomplished through an appeal to the individual behavior of each and every American soldier stationed in Britain.

Effective leaders build rapport any way they can. And this begins with a calm but resolute refusal to accept any circumstance that threatens or undermines rapport.



Lesson 27***The Action Imperative***

We have . . . tried . . . not to be blinded by a mere passion for doing something.

—Memorandum to Harry C. Butcher,
July 22, 1942

Very early in the war, Ike, General Marshall, and other top U.S. military planners advocated Operation Sledgehammer, an invasion of France across the English Channel. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and top British military leaders opposed this as premature, Churchill advocating instead an Allied offensive in North Africa as a first step in launching a general assault in the Mediterranean area—what the prime minister called the “soft underbelly of Europe.”

Despite British objections, Ike wanted very much to carry out Sledgehammer, but he was well aware that the odds were stacked against the success of the operation, and he frankly considered the possibility that his own advocacy of it might be nothing more than the result of a desire for action—*any* action: “We have sat up nights on the problem involved and have tried to open our eyes clearly to see all the difficulties and not to be blinded by a mere passion for doing something.” This passion is a common affliction of leaders faced with the frustrations of a complex, difficult, and even overwhelming situation. Inaction breeds panic and feelings of failure, whereas action suggests mastery. As Ike explained to his naval aide, Harry C. Butcher, he finally decided that in this case and despite the long odds, there was a great and real value in action itself. “The British and American armies and the British and American people need to have the feeling that they are attempting something positive. We must not degenerate into a passive . . . attitude.”

The Sledgehammer decision was one of the most difficult of the many difficult decisions Ike had to make. He clearly saw the

dangers—the danger in the operation as well as the danger inherent in the proposition that action for its own sake is inherently worthwhile—and he decided to accept the very large risks entailed by mounting an Allied invasion at this early stage of the war. In the end, however, higher authority, Churchill and Roosevelt, overruled Sledgehammer and directed the military to plan instead Operation Torch, the Allied landings on North Africa. Ever since, military historians have speculated about what would have happened had Operation Sledgehammer been carried out. Most agree that it would have been grossly premature and, therefore, a military disaster. The really tough thing about making decisions? There is never any guarantee that the decision made will be the right one.



Lesson 28

Caution Is Not Timidity; Timidity Is Not Caution

And it is well to remember that caution and timidity are not synonymous, just as boldness and rashness are not!

—*Crusade in Europe*

An effective leader uses words as scalpels, not butter knives. They are sharp and precise, their function to incise rather than smear. One must distinguish between caution, a necessity in leading any enterprise of genuine value, and timidity, a character flaw fatal to leadership.

Timid leaders are often rash. They act in panic and with little thought. Don't mistake this for genuine boldness, which is made possible by caution: the husbanding of resources that enables maximum effort, the thorough planning that creates the confidence to act in good faith with the whole heart and with every muscle.



Lesson 29

Invasion Equation

The more I study the operation . . .

—Secret report to George C. Marshall
on planning for Operation Torch,
August 9, 1942

One of the first things any good manager learns is the difference between cost and value. Bearing in mind that investment is a strategy and strategy is an investment, “cheap” and “expensive” are absolute concepts that address only one side of the investment-strategy equation and are, for that reason, meaningless. In contrast to them, the concept of value works both sides of the equation and is the very key to its solution.

Ike approached strategic planning as an equation. His purpose was to determine how best to invest the resources available to him to achieve the most favorable outcome with the least expenditure—that is, to achieve the greatest possible value.

“The more I study the Operation [Torch], the more I am convinced that a high proportion of armored vehicles should be in the assault,” Ike wrote General George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff.

His explanation of this conclusion is a perfect example of strategic planning as equation solving. Bringing in the armored vehicles, Ike admitted, “introduces additional difficulties in the provision of suitable landing craft”—and, as both Ike and Marshall well knew, landing craft were in critically short supply. This, however, was only one side of the equation, so Ike continued: “but current reports indicate that the greatest weakness of the [Axis-allied Vichy] French at present is anti-tank equipment.” Despite the added difficulty involved, the best solution to the strategic equation was to use against the enemy the kind of weapons for which he lacked adequate defense. When you know your enemy is weak in anti-tank equipment, invest whatever effort and resources are required to attack him with

tanks, lots and lots of tanks. Playing to your strengths is important, but despite the risks, playing against your opponent's weaknesses is even more effective.



Lesson 30

“The Best Is the Enemy of the Good”

Continuous study of the possibilities has forced us, as is always the case, to seek the best possible compromise between desirable execution of operations on the one hand and definitely limited resources on the other.

—Secret report to George C. Marshall
on planning for Operation Torch,
August 9, 1942

One of the favorite sayings of George S. Patton Jr. was “The best is the enemy of the good.” War, he believed, was not about perfection, but about doing the best you could do as soon as you could possibly do it. Waiting for perfect conditions meant losing present opportunities or, worse, simply losing. Ike quickly discovered the validity of this approach as he planned the Allies’ offensive operations early in the war. There were grand objectives to be achieved, but limited resources to apply to them. However, each day of waiting for more resources gave the enemy another day for further conquest and consolidation.

War, like any great and complex enterprise, is dynamic. Both opportunity and risk are linked to this dynamism. They come, they go, they increase, they diminish—daily, even hourly. Perfection, in contrast, is static, literally timeless. For that very reason, the concept of perfection has no place in the flux of either war or business. Meaningful action in these realms always requires a compromise between what is desirable and what is, at the necessary moment, possible. Like his friend Patton, Ike understood that compromise

was not a bad thing, but simply another dimension of the ongoing task at hand. In the real world, which is the only world that counts, compromise plays a role in every decision to act. Accept compromise. Better yet, embrace it.



Lesson 31

Drop Everything

Right this minute I am going to drop everything and take a drive in the country for about three hours.

—Letter to Arthur Hurd, August 11, 1942

“You are quite right in your estimate as to the perplexities and responsibilities of this job,” Ike wrote to his friend Hurd. “Right this minute I am going to drop everything and take a drive in the country for about three hours—I’m sick of this office, to which I’ve been confined for the past weeks with very little respite.”

The job of commanding American and British forces in the invasion of North Africa was essentially a 24/7 proposition. Ike knew and accepted this. But he also knew that a tired commander was a bad commander. Fatigue distorts vision, typically giving rise to pessimism and panic—two commodities fatal to leadership. Ike knew he had a big job to do. He knew there was no substitute for hard work to do it. But he also knew what it meant to be “sick of this office,” and if a three-hour drive in the country would buy another week of the ability to do the hard and necessary work, he would leave the office for those three hours.

The object of leadership is not personal martyrdom. It is the success of the enterprise. And that success depends in large part on the energetic optimism of a healthy, rested, and alert leader. Sometimes the best leadership decision you can make is to drop everything.



Lesson 32***Let Them Call You Ike***

I damn near decided to throw your note in the wastebasket and not answer it because of your conclusion that you couldn't call me "Ike."

—Letter to LeRoy Lutes, August 12, 1942

“But I decided that, after all, maybe you really did have better sense than to think I would get so over-powered by an additional star that I couldn't longer be on natural terms with my good friends.”

Ike's elevation from major general to lieutenant general was a momentous promotion, and, as Ike pointed out in his letter to Major General LeRoy Lutes, “a particular and important feature of this job is that I am held personally responsible now for almost everything that happens, both British and American.” Eisenhower could have been excused if he had decided that so exalted a figure as he had now become could no longer afford to allow himself to be called Ike. But, in fact, nothing was more important to Eisenhower—now, more than ever—than to remain on “natural terms” with friends. And that meant making sure they still called him Ike.

Be proud of the trust and responsibility vested in you, but don't make the mistake of trying to escape the gravity that keeps your feet on the ground. If they called you Ike before your third star, let them call you Ike today and tomorrow as well.

**Lesson 33*****Beware “Academic Concurrence”***

I have never had any trouble getting academic concurrences; but there are plenty of difficulties to be encountered when you bring up the question of actual operations.

—Letter to Fox Conner, August 21, 1942

Ike's beloved early mentor, retired major general Fox Conner, wrote him on July 20, 1942, that he believed the immediate task facing the Allies was to relieve pressure on the Russians in order to keep them in the war. If the Russians made a separate peace with the Nazis, all would indeed be lost. On August 21, Ike wrote back (Conner's letter having taken a month to reach him) in full agreement, pointing out, however, that although he was able to get "academic concurrences" from his colleagues, bosses, and subordinates on this very proposition, securing agreement on "actual operations" was another matter altogether.

Ike had discovered the enormous gulf that yawns between agreement in principle and agreement in fact, between assent to an idea and commitment to action. Winning agreement to a proposition should not be counted a victory until that agreement has been translated into action. Failure to acknowledge the often very substantial gap between academic concurrence and actual operation can be fatal. After all, it's a very long way down.



Lesson 34

A Time to Push

I merely insist that if our beginning looks hopeful, then this is the time to push rather than slacken our efforts.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Early in Operation Torch, Ike was pressured to reduce the planned buildup for the operation "so as to proceed with other strategic purposes." Intent on maintaining focus and direction by sticking to what he deemed a well-conceived plan, he replied with a rationale for rejecting "possible reduction" and instead insisted on "seeking ways and means of speeding up the build-up to clean out North Africa." He believed that large-scale strategic planning should by all means continue, "but for God's sake let's get one job done at a time."

A leader must know precisely where the project stands at a given moment, and, armed with this knowledge, he must ensure that the enterprise remains focused on the agreed-on objectives. Ike put it this way: “We are just started working on a great venture. A good beginning must not be destroyed by any unwarranted assumptions.”

Leadership is about shaping and directing energy, then husbanding that energy wisely and jealously to make sure that none is squandered as a result of poor focus, poor planning, or strategic whim.



Lesson 35

Simplify

I believe in direct methods, possibly because I am too simple-minded to be an intriguer or to attempt to be clever.

—Letter to Fox Conner, August 21, 1942

As Ike saw it, all other things being equal, the simplest, most direct approach was always the best. If this seems self-evident, just consider how many people you encounter day to day who appear constitutionally incapable of producing direct and simple requests, directives, questions, answers, statements, or actions. One of a leader’s hardest tasks is to shed habits of intrigue and cleverness and to cultivate instead a simple mind suited to direct methods.



Lesson 36

Commit Everlastingly

By keeping everlastingly after all these problems, we can lick them.

—Letter to Russell P. “Scrappy” Hartle,
August 25, 1942

Ike was keenly aware of the destructive potential of two serious personnel problems among the forces preparing to invade North Africa in Operation Torch. One was friction between African American and white soldiers. The other was friction between American and British soldiers. In a letter to his friend General Scrapy Hartle, he thanked the general for his “letter describing the methods you have developed for establishing harmonious relations between colored and white troops,” and he enclosed his own thoughts on establishing similar harmony between American and British troops.

Ike was convinced that these were big and important problems and that they were not going to go away by themselves or anytime soon. They were rooted, after all, in long-lived, closely held prejudices that seemed to persist in direct proportion to their essential irrationality. Their ubiquity and stubbornness made Ike all the more determined to dispose of them by committing himself “everlastingly” to their solution.

Effective leaders identify tough problems that resist solution but nevertheless must be solved. Having identified those problems, they resolve to keep after them until they are licked. Surrender is not an option.



Lesson 37

Identify and Promote Leaders

I am convinced that any officer who can produce a notable success in matters requiring constructive effort, particularly when they lie outside the realm of the written regulation, is possessed of the qualities of the real leader.

—Letter to Russell P. “Scrapy” Hartle,
August 25, 1942

Eager to promote productive and harmonious relations between British and American soldiers, Ike asked General Hartle to “bring to

my attention, at any time, with a view to his promotion, the name of any officer that you find particularly skillful” in devising ways to create Anglo-American rapport on an individual, soldier-to-soldier basis.

Ike well knew that there was no rulebook, no army regulation that addressed this issue of inter-Allied relations. In fact, it was up to him to invent the rules, to create rapport, to make this titanic and unprecedented military alliance work and work effectively. He knew that rapport did not materialize in response to an order; rather, it required winning the heart and mind of each individual soldier. The people best able to do that were the army’s managers—the officers in charge of the lower echelons—especially at the level of company commander. Ike was determined to identify the ablest of these managers, those capable not merely of executing orders and applying regulations but of producing “a notable success in matters requiring constructive effort, particularly when they lie outside the realm of the written regulation.” These, Ike believed, were the real leaders in an organization, and it was urgent that they be identified and promoted into the most influential positions. In this way, Eisenhower hoped to speed the creation of an army—as well as an alliance—capable of victory.

Too many leaders are overly possessive of leadership and guard it jealously. The fact is that leadership is a rare and valuable commodity and, as such, constitutes one of the greatest assets of any organization. A real leader never holds leadership selfishly, but relentlessly searches for it throughout the organization, and, finding it, promotes it.



Lesson 38

Look for Leaders

This is a long tough road we have to travel. The men that can do things are going to be sought out just as surely as the sun rises in the morning.

—Letter to Vernon E. Prichard,
August 27, 1942

It is need, urgent need, that finds leaders. Need tests and refines all who offer themselves as candidates for the job.

In a letter to friend and fellow commander Vernon E. Prichard, Ike took up the theme of leadership he had discussed in his letter to Scrapy Hartle just two days earlier. “Fake reputations,” he wrote, “habits of glib and clever speech, and glittering surface performance are going to be discovered and kicked overboard.” Those who remain are people capable of “solid, sound leadership,” possessed of “inexhaustible nervous energy to spur on the efforts of lesser men, and iron-clad determination to face discouragement, risk and increasing work without flinching.” Those who remain are the people who also possess “a darned strong tinge of imagination—I am continuously astounded by the utter lack of imaginative thinking among so many of our people that have reputations for being really good officers.” Finally, those who escape being kicked overboard are those who are most dedicated and “able to forget . . . personal fortunes. I’ve relieved two seniors here because they got to worrying about ‘injustice,’ ‘unfairness,’ ‘prestige.’”

Need will find leaders, but Ike counseled his friend Prichard to get a jump on need by starting to look right now. “While you are doing your stuff from day to day, constantly look and search among your subordinates for the ones that have these priceless qualities in greater or lesser degree. . . . [Y]ou will find greater and greater need for people upon whom you can depend to take the load off your shoulders.”

If the advice seems obvious (Ike himself called his list of leadership characteristics “platitudes”), just consider how many bosses, managers, and supervisors, for fear of jeopardizing their own authority, are reluctant to identify and promote the leaders in their organization. Mistaking such fear for self-preservation is the surest way to self-destruction.



Lesson 39***The Courage of True Delegation***

True delegation implies the courage and readiness to back up a subordinate to the full; it is not to be confused with the slovenly practice of merely ignoring an unpleasant situation in the hope that someone else will handle it.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Delegation of authority defines the role of leader. That is, a leader is a person who delegates. A person who attempts to do everything himself may be a hard worker, a genius, a martyr, or a failure, but he is not a leader. This said, mere delegation does not a leader make. As Ike pointed out, ignoring a difficult problem in the hope that someone else will take care of it is neither true delegation nor genuine leadership. It is a kind of moral sloppiness practiced by incompetents who “are always quick to blame and punish the poor subordinate who, while attempting to do both his own and his commander’s jobs, has taken some action that produces an unfortunate result.”

True delegation requires sufficient courage to take responsibility not only for what you yourself do but also for what your delegates do.

**Lesson 40*****Learning Means Changing***

Until my experience in London I had been opposed to the use of women in uniform.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Ike welcomed to North Africa a contingent of Women’s Army Corps personnel. At the Allied headquarters in London, he had seen them “perform magnificently” in jobs ranging from clerk to antiaircraft gunner and “had been converted.” He understood that

“many officers were still doubtful of women’s usefulness in uniform,” but he ascribed this to a failure “to note . . . the changing requirements of war.” Gone forever was the “simple headquarters of a Grant or a Lee.” It had been replaced by headquarters of great complexity, requiring an “army of filing clerks, stenographers, office managers” and so on, “and it was scarcely less than criminal to recruit these from needed manpower when great numbers of highly qualified women were available.”

To learn is to change. Ike was willing to do both.



Lesson 41

Assign a General Mission

A qualified commander should normally be assigned only a general mission . . . and then given the means to carry it out.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Ike thought it a mistake to lay out a plan “based upon the capture or holding of specific geographical points” because doing so is “likely to impose a rigidity of action upon the commander,” and he had no desire to straitjacket a creative subordinate. Instead, Ike believed a superior should assign a “general mission” to a “qualified commander” so that he would be “completely unfettered in achieving the general purpose of his superior.”

Military commanders always seek what they call force multipliers—anything that leverages available resources, that amplifies their effect. Assigning general missions to qualified people is a force multiplier because doing so creates an environment flexible enough for the exercise of creative imagination. Given this freedom, a qualified subordinate will produce above and beyond expectation. Overly specific missions—symptoms of micromanagement—are force reducers, because they confine the imagination. Instead of two heads working a problem, you have at best just one and a fraction,

the subordinate merely duplicating much of what the superior has already done.

It takes courage to give freedom to others. After all, those others may fail. Yet an organization condemned to shuffle in lockstep has already failed, whereas an organization driven by the freedom of a general mission may well find the room to succeed and to succeed far beyond expectation.



Lesson 42

Every Positive Action Requires Expenditure

[E]very positive action requires expenditure. The problem is to determine how, in space and time, to expend assets so as to achieve the maximum in results.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Early in the North African campaign, Ike heard a story about how a young staff officer refused a brigadier general permission to transport part of his command via half-tracks (lightly armored vehicles with conventional tires on front wheels and tank treads instead of rear wheels) more than seven hundred miles from Oran to a place called Souk-el-Arba. The staff officer objected because the trip would consume half the useful life of the half-tracks. Ike observed that the young officer was not to blame for “this extraordinary attitude.” He had been trained “through years of peace, in the eternal need for economy, for avoiding waste.” What he had yet to accept was “the essential harshness of war,” which is “synonymous with waste.” Nor “did he understand that every positive action requires expenditure.”

The first step for you as a decision maker is to accept reality as it currently exists, even if it differs from what you are accustomed to. Once you have accepted and understood that reality, you must further accept that every positive action requires expenditure. Depending on the nature of current reality, the expenditure may be

greater or smaller than you are accustomed to. “The problem,” Ike reasoned, “is to determine how, in space and time, to expend assets so as to achieve the maximum in results.” Once this has been decided on, “then assets must be spent with a lavish hand,” especially, in the case of war, “when the cost can be measured in the saving of lives.”

True economy is never static. It is pegged to the variables of a changing reality. True economy is never one sided—a matter of saving or spending. It is, rather, a process of giving value to obtain value. In the reality of peacetime, driving a half-track seven hundred miles may be a foolish waste. In war, if using up a half-track will save lives, it is a bargain. To be an effective leader, you must adjust to reality as it exists and then persuade others to make the same adjustment, even if this adjustment requires a painful divorce from a comfortable past.



Lesson 43

Weigh Every Risk Against Every Reward

Direct risks of destruction . . . are much lower . . . but . . . we do not have a gambling chance to achieve a really worthwhile strategic purpose.

—Secret cable to George C. Marshall,
August 25, 1942

After Ike and his staff had labored to produce a plan for Operation Torch and had submitted it to the Combined Chiefs of Staff (the Anglo-American high command), planners in the War Plans Department submitted an alternative plan to Marshall, who asked Eisenhower for his opinion. Ike’s evaluation of the alternative proposal was contained in a single razor-sharp sentence, which reveals much about how he made decisions: “Direct risks of destruction of the attacking force are much lower under the proposed [alternative]

plan than in the one as now outlined and submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, but broad strategic risks are equally great and under the new proposal we do not have a gambling chance to achieve a really worthwhile strategic purpose.”

In evaluating a course of action, weigh *every* risk against *every* reward. It may be fatal to base your decision on partial information, on a partial evaluation of the available information, or on a single risk or a single reward. Look at everything and formulate the evaluation in as complete and concise an expression as possible. Ike’s sentence has the elegance and clarity of a mathematical equation—and as much truth: as to immediate risk, the alternative proposal is better than the current plan; as to “broad strategic risks,” the two plans are equal; but as to the opportunity for realizing a significant reward—“a really worthwhile strategic purpose”—only the original plan, initially risky though it is, offers a “gambling chance.” The equation is cold and hard, to be sure, but the answer is unmistakable: a risky plan that has a “gambling chance” of producing a worthwhile strategic purpose is far more valuable than a relatively safe plan that has no chance of producing anything of strategic value.



Lesson 44

Stick to the Plan

Unforeseen and glittering promise on the one hand and unexpected difficulty or risk upon the other present constant temptation to desert the chosen line of action in favor of another.

—*Crusade in Europe*

“A foolish consistency,” Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “is the hobgoblin of little minds.” A careful writer, Emerson thought about each word he used, including, in this case, the adjective modifying

the subject noun. Whereas adherence to a *foolish* consistency never constitutes effective leadership, consistency is at its very heart.

“History,” Eisenhower wrote, “has proved that nothing is more difficult in war than to adhere to a single strategic plan.” He noted that “glittering promise . . . and . . . unexpected difficulty” offer “constant temptation to desert the chosen line of action.” To yield to such temptation, more often than not, is wasteful of resources, opportunity, and time, as well as very harmful to morale.

As a leader, you cannot afford to maintain commitment to a course of action that is clearly failing. That would be, at the very least, a foolish consistency. But the essence of leadership is inherently conservative. Unless there is truly overwhelming evidence of failure of the current course or truly overwhelming evidence of success offered by a new opportunity, the leader’s task is to hold everyone to the chosen course, which, in the absence of overwhelming evidence against it, is the most likely road to success.



Lesson 45

Never Confuse Tactics with Strategy

The doctrine of opportunism, so often applicable in tactics, is a dangerous one to pursue in strategy.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Leadership is about making judgments, and one of the key judgments to make concerns when to think strategically and when to think tactically. Confusing the two modes of thought may be fatal.

The object of strategic thinking is to create long-term plans from which the organization will not deviate except in the most extreme of circumstances. The object of tactical thinking is to implement those plans in real time and in the real world. The first process is all about stability; the second, flexibility.

Ike continually found that his principal task was to keep his top commanders from abandoning the agreed-upon strategy when this or that opportunity or crisis happened to present itself. At the same time, he encouraged all his subordinates to recognize and exploit tactical opportunities as they emerged. By thinking in strictly segregated terms of strategy and tactics, a leader can combine steadfastness of purpose with flexibility of response. The difficulty is to know when to act on an apparent opportunity and when to pass it by. When a transient circumstance tempts the leader and the enterprise to jettison the plan, it is almost certainly a seduction to be resisted, no matter how difficult it may be to do so. When, however, a transitory event offers a way to improve or enhance the realization of the underlying plan, the leader should recognize it as a tactical opportunity to be acted on.



Lesson 46

Be Calm, Clear, and Determined

Deviation from fundamental concepts is permissible only when significant changes in the situation compel it. The high commander must therefore be calm, clear, and determined.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Good plans are “founded in fact and intelligent conclusions.” Once a plan is made, it “must be fixed and clear.” The purpose of a plan is to advance whatever has been determined to be the fundamental concepts. The intention of a plan is to be adhered to. Barring significant changes in the situation, an effective leader holds his or her organization to proceed in accordance with the plan, countering the natural tendency of large groups in high-stakes actions to deviate by responding impulsively to momentary events and issues.

Ike believed that the most effective way to keep everyone on course was not by “adherence to fixed notions of arbitrary command practices,” but by an “ability to lead and persuade.” For Eisenhower, persuasion, not the mere assertion of authority, no matter how loftily ordained, was the key to leadership. He believed that the foundation of persuasion was confidence, an attitude that could be created, first and foremost, by the calm, clear, and determined demeanor of the leader as conveyed through everything he said and did.



Lesson 47

Remember to Breathe

I am just about as busy as a man can be and am always in the middle of a thousand problems.

—Letter to his brother Arthur B.
Eisenhower, August 27, 1942

“With surprisingly little delay a copy of the letter you wrote to [brother] Edgar on August 11th reached me here in London. It was a real treat to have so much news of the family, and I thank you sincerely for taking the trouble to write. . . . You are quite right in assuming that I am just about as busy as a man can be and am always in the middle of a thousand problems. However, the writing of short letters does not really take my time—it is my only relaxation and, frequently, the few minutes I take off to write informally to a friend or one of the family will serve to clear up things that I have been thinking about for a couple of hours. In the same way, the receipt of letters is a bright spot in many a high-pressure day.”

When you reach the point that you believe your days are too full to accommodate a word from family and friends, you’ve reached the point when your life is too full to accommodate—your life. And that is a dangerous point.

Perhaps no one in history has ever had more to do, day to day, than Dwight Eisenhower in World War II, but he never allowed his life to become too full for family, friends, and other emissaries of the reality beyond his headquarters. He knew that he could not afford to lose touch with that reality and looked to periodic contact with it for relief, refreshment, and even the opportunity to gain a fresh perspective on the work at hand.

No matter how busy you are, remembering to breathe, at least once in a while, can have only a healthy effect on you and your enterprise.



Lesson 48

The Answer Is Always People

It is not the problem itself that always presents the greatest difficulty—it is the trouble one has in finding people of sufficient caliber to tackle the job intelligently.

—Letter to George Van Horn Moseley,
August 27, 1942

No problem is solved without the right people to solve it, and Ike found himself getting “exceedingly weary of the little people that spend their time worrying about promotions, personal prestige, prerogatives and so on, rather than forgetting everything in the desire to get on with the work.” He saw his leadership task as “finding people of sufficient caliber to tackle the job intelligently,” which meant finding people willing “to get on with the work” rather than dissipate energy in looking after themselves and themselves alone.

But what to do when all you seem to find are “the little people”?

You lead them, mentor them, persuade them to become bigger until they are of sufficient caliber to get on with the work and get on with it intelligently. Fail in this, and no problem will be solved.



Lesson 49

Don't Throw a Good Man Away

[Send] him out with his troops.

—Crusade in Europe

Eisenhower asked for George S. Patton Jr. to lead the critical amphibious landings at Casablanca during Operation Torch. Accordingly, General Marshall ordered Patton to London, where Ike briefed him. “Hardly had [Patton] returned to Washington before I received a message stating that he had become embroiled in such a distressing argument with the Navy Department that serious thought was being given to his relief from command.”

Ike knew Patton well, that he “delighted to startle his hearers with fantastic statements” and that he alienated many, but he also knew that Patton was “essentially a shrewd battle leader who invariably gained the devotion of his subordinates.” Ike put getting along with others very high on his list of requisites for a commander, but he saw in Patton qualities that trumped even this. At the same time, he recognized that Patton was indeed a “problem child” (as he later called him). Asked to choose between two unacceptable alternatives, Ike refused both. Instead, he offered a third course that recognized the problem, solved the problem, *and* retained a good man: he suggested “that if [Patton’s] personality was causing any difficulty in conferences the issue could be met by sending him out with his troops and allowing some staff member to represent him in the completion of planning details.”

Provide a distraction. Sidestep. Invent a new job. Do whatever must be done to avoid throwing a good man away.



Lesson 50***End the Day***

I feel like the lady in the circus that has to ride three horses with no very good idea of exactly where any one of the three is going to go.

—Letter to George S. Patton Jr.,
August 31, 1942

During the planning of Operation Torch, Ike was pulled in various directions by a variety of British and American commanders, not to mention Prime Minister Winston Churchill. By the end of August, as he confessed in a letter to his friend and trusted field commander General Patton, the stress was telling on him. “I am in somewhat of an irritable mood,” he wrote, “because last night, when I hit the bed, I started thinking about some of these things all over again and at two-thirty I was still thinking.”

We all spend a sleepless night now and then, worrying about the problems of the day, but Ike had a hard time forgiving himself for having done so: “I suspect that I am just a bit on the weak-minded side when I allow myself to do that, but any way it doesn’t happen often.” Clearly, Ike believed in the importance of compartmentalizing, mentally and emotionally separating the business of the day from the rest of his life, so that when the day ended, it was truly at an end and did not carry over into the night. Problems are solved by clear thinking and sharp analysis, not by nocturnal rumination. Allow yourself to be robbed of sleep, and you allow yourself—as well as your enterprise—to be robbed of your full effectiveness the next day. Before you begin the night, make certain to end the day.



Lesson 51

Demand Satisfactory Performance

The time has passed for dilly-dallying.

—Secret memorandum to Harry C.
Butcher, September 15, 1942

In a memorandum to his naval aide, Commander Butcher, Ike noted a meeting he had with his immediate subordinates prior to the launch of Operation Torch concerning the urgent necessity of instituting “instructional programs that would insure a knowledge of elementary discipline and military courtesy on the part of all officers.” Without these elements, Ike believed, no advanced, demanding, or complex military operation could be successfully carried out. This being the case, he felt thoroughly justified in defining as “satisfactory performance” the ability to instill discipline and the observance of military courtesy throughout his command. With that definition established, Ike set the requirement in the most uncompromising of terms, pointing out “that the time had arrived when commanders of such units as are not coming up to standard, must be relieved”—that is, fired.

As a leader, you must set certain unambiguous, mandatory, and nonnegotiable standards. Set them a notch higher than you realistically believe you need, then define meeting them as your sole measure for “satisfactory performance.” Finally, demand that they *be met*. You will find, perhaps surprisingly, that no one will grumble, provided that the standards you set are declared and defined in objective terms and with crystal clarity.



Lesson 52

Make Performance the Measure

I informed them that success or failure in this task will be . . . the measure of the individual's value.

—Memorandum to Harry C. Butcher,
September 15, 1942

In his memorandum to his naval aide Butcher, Ike reported that he had taken special pains “to impress upon all the principal officers of the theater the importance of devoting everything to preparations for [Operation] Torch.” He did this by telling them that “success or failure in this task will be, so far as I am concerned, the measure of the individual’s value.”

It was a stark and unsparing formula, which left no doubt about the leader’s expectations. Ike promised: “if each of these officers were successful in carrying out the mission given, there would be no limit to the representations I would make the War Department on their behalf.” And he also warned: “on the other hand, failure would mean only that the officer’s usefulness was ended.” Moreover, “I urged them particularly to impress this idea on all subordinates.”

Ike was a great manager and motivator. He did not deal in threats, but in facts. He explained to the officers that Operation Torch “was not an ordinary task in which reasonable effort and reasonable measures had any application.” It was a task that required maximum effort, an effort that would call upon the whole being of each leader involved. Such an effort would be the measure of their value as leaders. This said, Ike advised his top subordinates to present the very same formula to *their* subordinates. In this way, he intended to plant the seeds of a truly maximum effort throughout the entire organization.

Challenge those you lead. Persuade them to deliver their personal best by reminding them that their work is a measure of themselves. Promise a realistic and worthwhile reward, but also apprise them of the equally real consequences of failure. Present nothing as a threat, a plea, or an opinion. Offer only the hardest of hard facts,

in which performance is the final measure, and success or failure the only arbiters of enduring worth.



Lesson 53

Keep Score

In war about the only criterion that can be applied to a commander is his accumulated record of victory and defeat.

—*Crusade in Europe*

Evaluate performance as objectively as possible. In war, evaluation of performance is a matter of weighing victories against defeats. As complex an undertaking as a great war is, sooner or later, everything that is done and that is not done comes down to a single product: triumph or surrender.

Business is just as complex and, in the end, just as simple as war. All business enterprises, no matter how vast, speak the same simple language. The language of business is money. Sooner or later, everything a business is and everything a business does is expressed in money earned, money saved, money spent, and money lost. As a military commander is judged by the simple yardstick of victory versus defeat, so the leader of a business enterprise is judged by his or her impact on the bottom line. Everything else is mere opinion and quite beside the point.



Lesson 54

“The Commander and Unit Are Almost One and the Same Thing”

I have developed almost an obsession as to the certainty with which you can judge a division, or any other large unit, merely by knowing its commander intimately.

—Letter to Vernon E. Prichard,
August 27, 1942

Ike reminded his West Point classmate Brigadier General Vernon E. Prichard how “we have had pounded into us all through our school courses that the exact level of a commander’s personality and ability is always reflected in his unit,” but, he confessed, “I did not realize, until opportunity came for comparisons on a rather large scale, how infallibly the commander and unit are almost one and the same thing.”

Never forget that any organization is the magnified reflection of its leader.