

Re:Focus

simple ideas to help you thrive

by Simon Sinek

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Lead from the front and the back

On a recent visit to Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany, I had the great honor of meeting some of the wounded warriors coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq. They are brought through Germany for treatment and are then taken back to the US for further help.

On this day, there were about 20 wounded warriors, in varying degrees of severity, heading back home. Eighteen of them were in the Army and two of them were Marines.

It was freezing outside as I, and a few other staff, stood waiting by the buses that would transport them to the C-17 cargo planes that would fly them back home. I happened to be standing next to a Marine officer, with whom I made small talk. The door opened and a line of young men and women came out of the building, some on their own two feet, some carried on stretchers. The Marine and I kept talking as they filed past. That was until one young wounded Marine approached. As he walked past us, the Marine officer stepped forwards, put his hand on the young Marine's shoulder and thanked him. He also told the young Marine that he was here with him for the whole trip and repeated the sentiment for the other young Marine who followed behind. He then stepped back in line and continued to talk to me.

An essential component of inspiring people to be a part of an organization greater than themselves is that you look after your own. Strangely, there was no one there from the Army. But the Marines had taken two officers out of theater for the sole purpose to escort these two wounded comrades from the front lines back to the United States. That was their entire responsibility.

The strength of an organization is easily measured by the steps it takes to look after its own. To what lengths does a company go to show its people that they matter? An organization that shows commitment to its people can expect its people to show commitment to them.

Yes leadership is about leading, standing out front. Yes leadership is about painting a picture, a vision of the future that does not yet exist. Yes leadership is about being a beacon for people to follow. But great leadership is about turning back to those that you would want to follow you on your quest to thank them, personally, for being a part of what you are, together, trying to build. The US Marine Corps does not have an amazing culture simply because of what they do out front, it's also what they do at the back that matters. *Semper fidelis*, as their motto goes. Always faithful.

I urge anyone who aspires to lead to see the movie *Taking Chance* and you'll see what I mean.