



Summary of Extreme Ownership

1. EXTREME OWNERSHIP (E.O.)

A true leader takes 100% ownership of everything in his domain, including the outcome and everything that affects it. This is the most fundamental building block of leadership that cuts across all other principles. It applies to leadership at any level in any organization.

2. NO BAD TEAMS, ONLY BAD LEADERS

Leaders fundamentally decide their teams' level of performance. Under exemplary leadership, any team can thrive.

3. CLARITY AND BELIEF

As a leader, you must fully understand and believe in a mission before convincing others to embrace it and lead them to do what is needed to succeed.

4. MANAGE YOUR EGO

Great leaders prioritize the broader mission over their ego. They are willing to learn, accept good ideas from others, and own up to their mistakes. They also manage their team members' egos to keep everyone focused on the team's mission.

5. COVER AND MOVE (TEAMWORK)

Cover and Move is a standard military tactic, where one team covers during another moves, so they can jointly gain ground. This is all about having different teams working together and supporting one another.

6. KEEP THINGS SIMPLE

Keep your plans simple to be easily communicated, understood, and adjusted in response to real-time changes.

7. PRIORITIZE AND EXECUTE

It can be overwhelming to face many time-sensitive, high-stake problems, which may snowball into more significant issues. In such situations, good leaders stay calm, take stock to identify the top priorities, then tackle them one at a time.

8. DECENTRALIZED COMMAND

Break down your teams into groups of 4-5, with an assigned leader for each group. Ensure that all leaders understand the overall mission and immediate goals, including what the team must do and why.

9. SOUND PLANNING

Great leaders ensure a sound planning process that includes mission clarity, evaluation of options and risks, engagement of all levels, post-action debriefing, and systematization of the planning process.

10. LEAD UP AND DOWN THE LINE

Great leaders concurrently lead upward (by offering information and updates to help their leaders understand and support their work) and downward (to help junior leaders and frontline staff see the bigger picture).

11. BE DECISIVE AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

As a leader, you must be prepared to make the best possible decisions based on available information.

12. DISCIPLINE BRINGS FREEDOM

Discipline does not mean rigidity and is essential for freedom and results. They also look at the other dichotomies of leadership and what it means to balance them.

THE DICHOTOMIES OF LEADERSHIP

1. THE ULTIMATE DICHOTOMY

The most significant and challenging dichotomy in leadership is to care deeply about your people yet must make decisions that may put them at risk for the broader mission. It is about building solid relationships with your team without letting your feelings stop you from doing what is necessary; it is about driving results without pushing too hard.

2. OWN EVERYTHING BUT EMPOWER OTHERS

Great leaders balance extreme ownership and decentralized command to find the equilibrium between taking too much ownership (micro-management) and too little ownership (hands-off approach).

3. BE RESOLUTE BUT NOT OVERBEARING

Leaders must know when to stand firm and when to allow some flexibility. It is about finding the equilibrium between being too lenient vs. too tyrannical.

4. NURTURE PEOPLE BUT KNOW WHEN TO LET THEM GO

Leaders must do their best to improve each member's performance yet know when it is time to let someone go for the broader good of the team.

5. TRAIN HARD BUT TRAIN SMART

Practical training must be hard enough to push teams beyond the existing limits yet not so hard that it demoralizes/overwhelms people to the point that they cannot learn.

6. BE AGGRESSIVE BUT NOT RECKLESS

Be aggressive (or proactive) by default but balance it with adequately evaluating the risks and benefits.

7. BE DISCIPLINED BUT NOT RIGID

Discipline, SOPs, and repeatable processes/actions can help a team to maneuver quickly, but they must also be balanced with the flexibility to adapt to realities. Leaders must apply common sense and creative/critical thinking instead of rigidly following SOPs.

8. HOLD PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE BUT DON'T HOLD THEIR HANDS

Many leaders rely on accountability (i.e., personally supervising everything) to ensure things get done. This must be balanced with education and empowerment so people understand why they are doing something and are empowered to do the right things without constant oversight.

9. BE A LEADER AND A FOLLOWER

Good leaders can take charge and make tough decisions. However, they can also listen to and follow others. They can recognize, respect, and navigate disagreements instead of bulldozing.

10. PLAN, BUT DON'T OVER-PLAN

For a mission to succeed, you need careful planning, i.e., find solutions to prevent/mitigate controllable risks and manage contingencies. Yet, you would be overwhelmed if you tried to develop solutions for every problem.

11. BE HUMBLE BUT NOT PASSIVE

Humility is about (i) realizing that you do not know everything and (ii) seeing beyond your needs to consider broader strategic perspectives. However, taken to the extreme, it can lead to passivity, i.e., failing to take a stand or push back on things that truly matter for the team or mission.

12. BE FOCUSED BUT DETACHED

Leaders must pay attention to details to avoid getting lost in the details that they lose sight of the big picture.