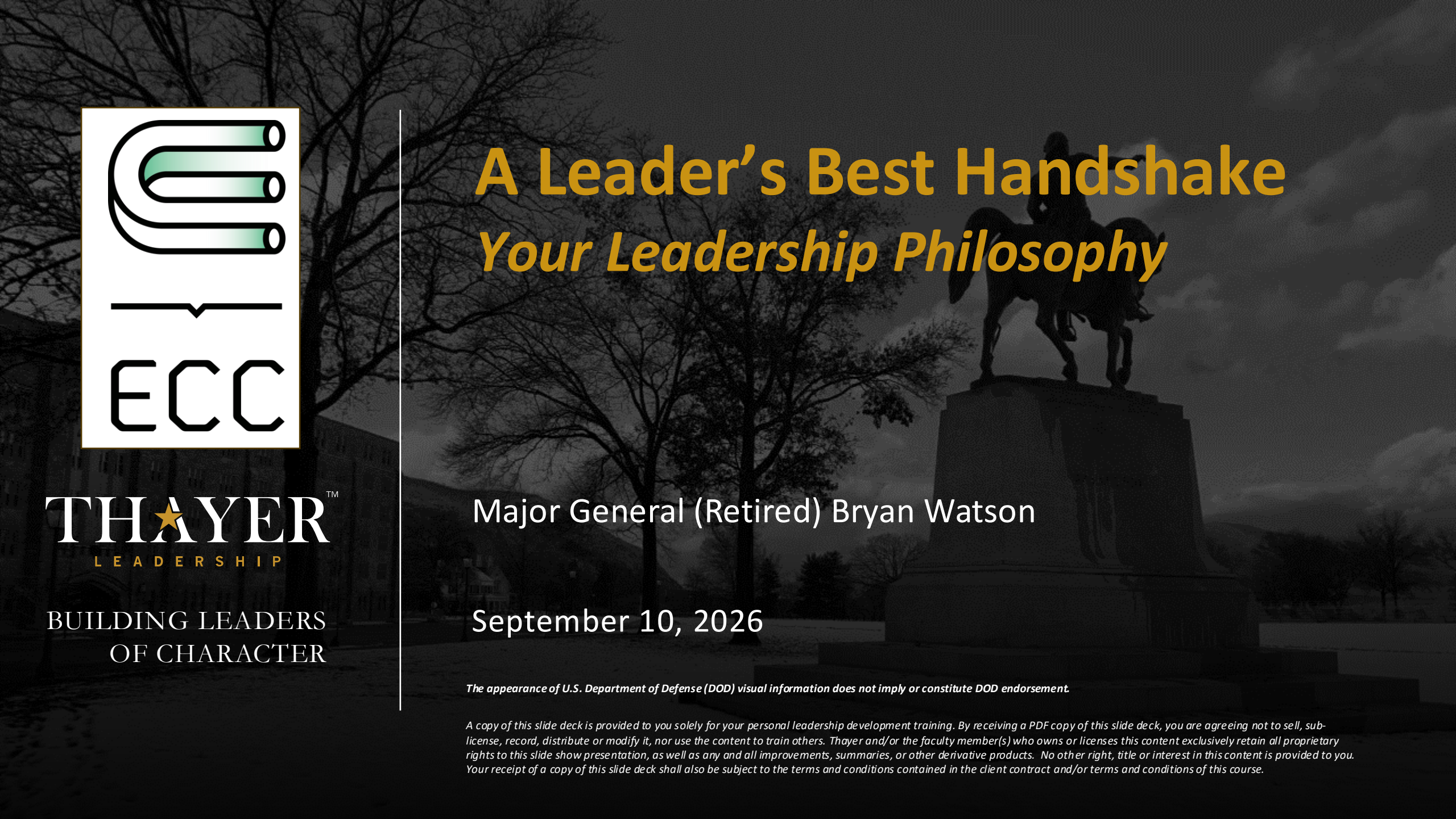

A Leader's Best Handshake

Your Leadership Philosophy

Major General (Retired) Bryan Watson

September 10, 2026

The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) visual information does not imply or constitute DOD endorsement.

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THAYER™ LEADERSHIP

BUILDING LEADERS OF CHARACTER

5 You decide!

4 Leadership Philosophy: equipping you with the most power tool

3 Trustworthiness: a leader's imperative

2 It starts with a great leader handshake

1 What is leadership?

Image Source: Valentin from Pexels

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What Is Leading?

Influencing people by providing:

Purpose
Direction
Motivation
…and Improving the Organization
To Accomplish the Mission

Not a Sole Responsibility, but a Soul Responsibility

Image Source: With consent from Bryan Watson

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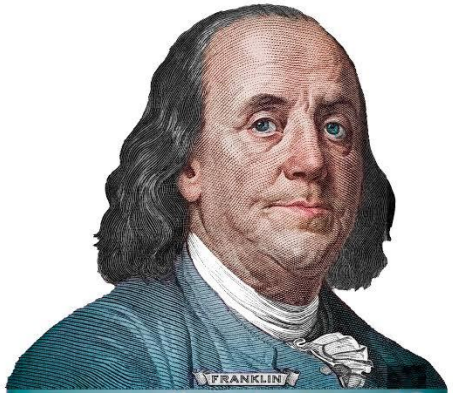
An Analogy and a Premise

Team cohesion, consistent excellence, agility in crisis, and team resiliency…all start and end with a **leader's handshake**



"The handshake of the host affects the taste of the roast."

-- Benjamin Franklin

What makes a great handshake?

What is your "emotional take-away" from a great handshake?

Image Source: This image was created using ChatGPT on 8/3/2026 to depict a leader's handshake

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Trust:
one's willingness to place ourselves vulnerable to another person(s)

Mutual Trust:
a willing relationship based on interdependent vulnerabilities

What is TRUST?

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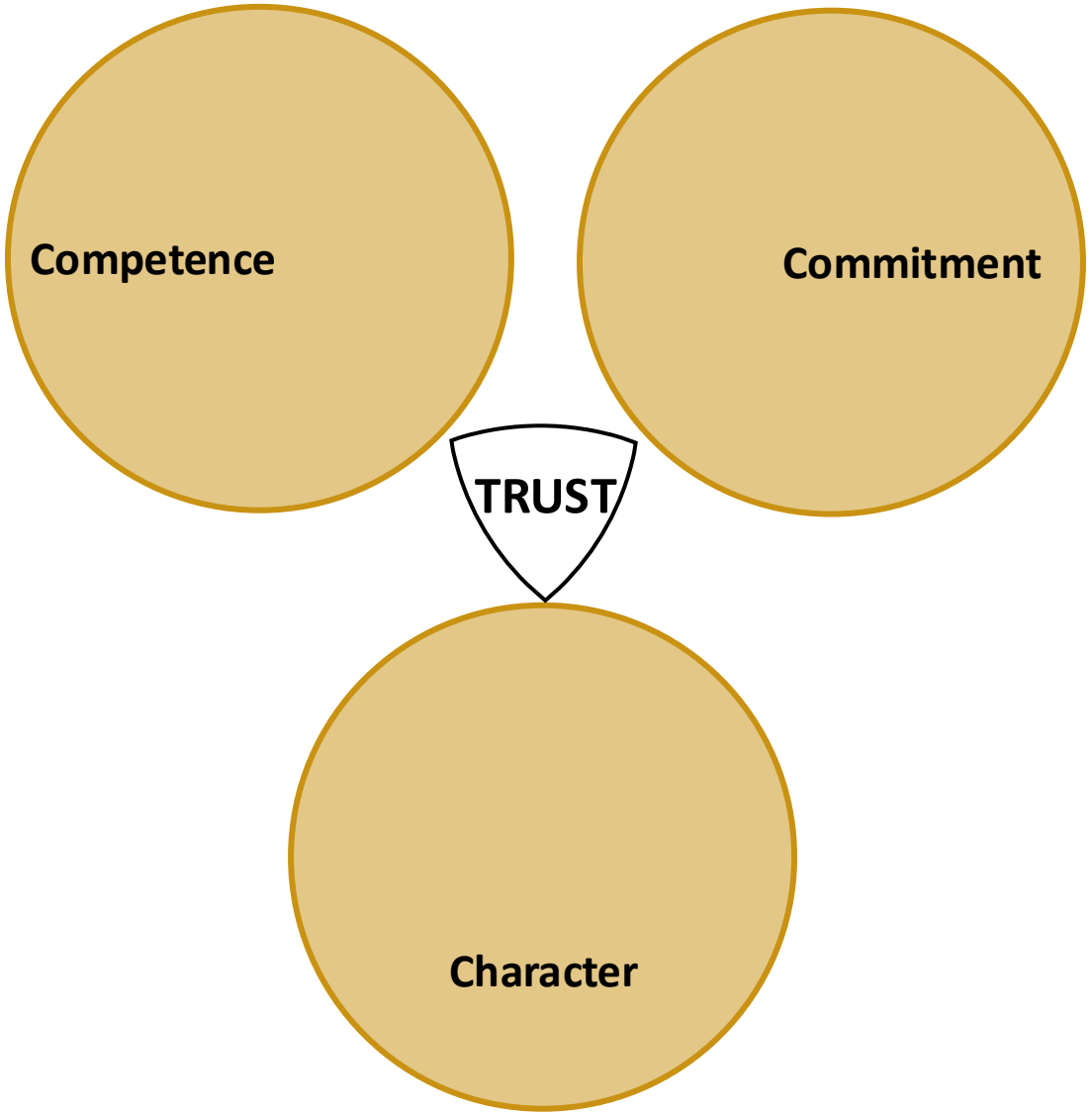
How We Trust: an Army Model

We assess three things before we **TRUST** another person

The extent of alignment determines the level of **TRUST** we have in another



Adapted from: Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession (2019)

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Discussion

Which element is most important to earning your trust?

Which element of trust is the hardest to assess in another person?

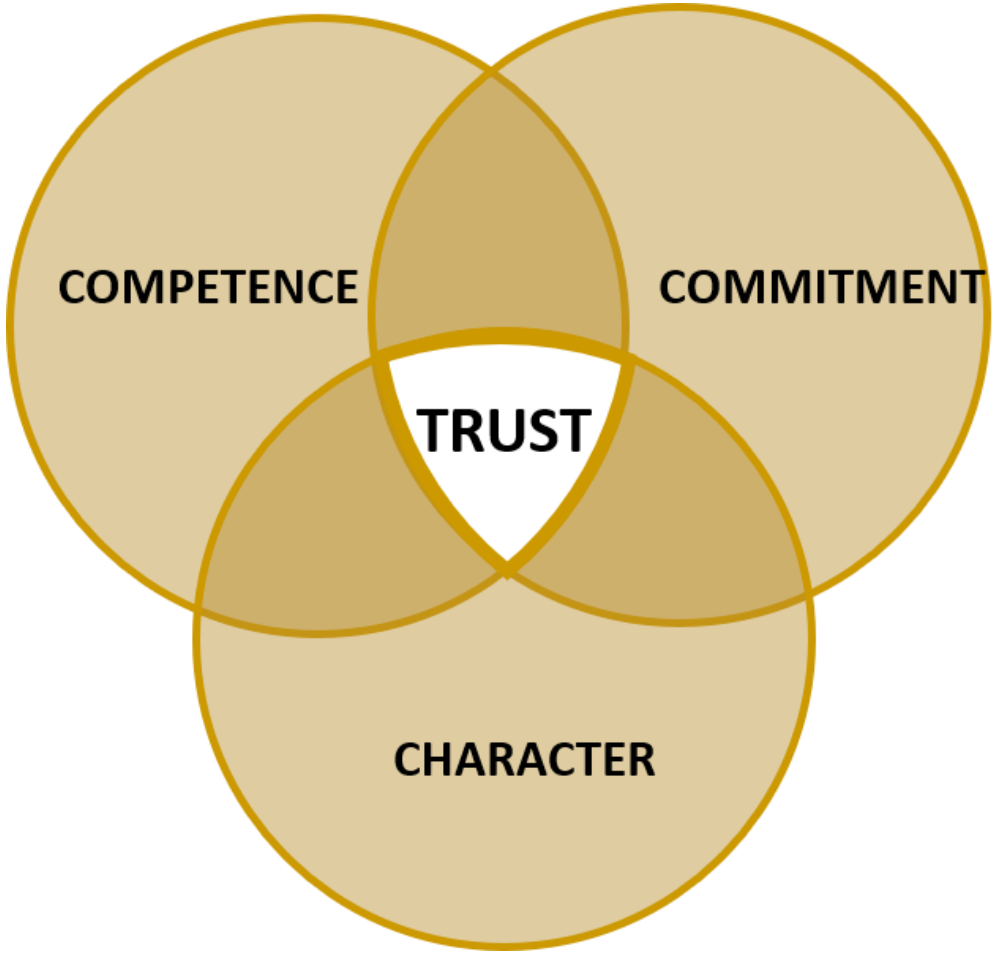

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Image Source: With consent from Bryan Watson

And NOW the rest of the story!

"We trusted you, at that moment in the minefields, with the lives of our brother Egyptian Soldiers because we got to know you…
your character."

Battalion Commander
217 Armor Battalion
3rd Egyptian Division

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Image Source: Valentin from Pexels

What a Leadership Philosophy Does?

- Helps you connect with others
- Communicates your personal character to the team
- Keeps you accountable…as a compass for your character
- Builds **TRUST** like no other leader tool I've seen

So how do you start?

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Get in the Right Mindset

- Think of the leaders who've inspired you the most
  - What did you enjoy most about being led by them?
  - Which of their leader behaviors would you like to demonstrate?
- What makes you distinct as a leader?
- How do you want to treat people to get the best from them?
- What do you expect from people, and what can they expect from you?
- What do you want your leadership legacy to be?

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Start With A Blank Page And Reflect

What values define you? How do they form you, as a leader?

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Too Many Values? Look for Themes!

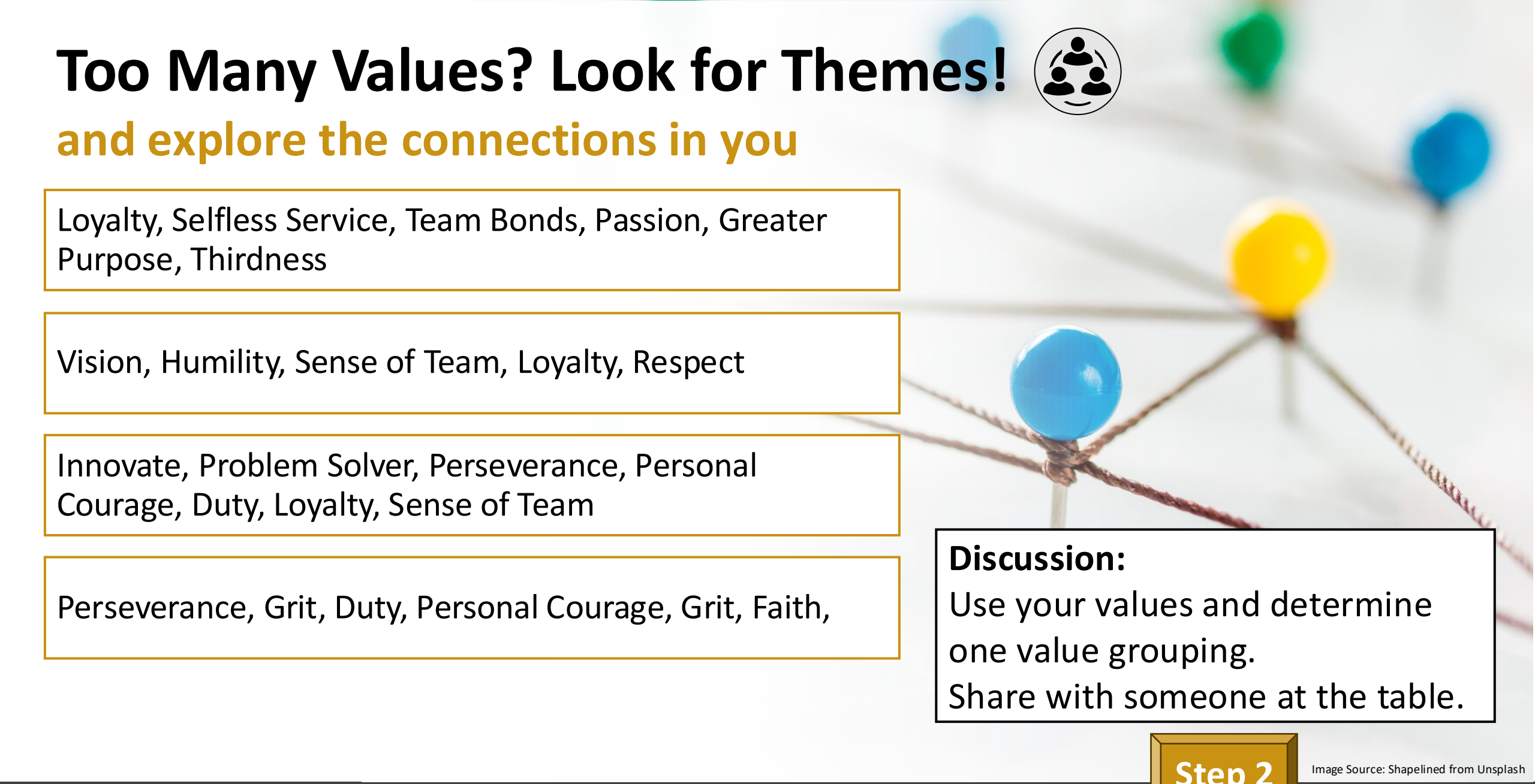
and explore the connections in you

Loyalty, Selfless Service, Team Bonds, Passion, Greater Purpose, Thirdness

Vision, Humility, Sense of Team, Loyalty, Respect

Innovate, Problem Solver, Perseverance, Personal Courage, Duty, Loyalty, Sense of Team

Perseverance, Grit, Duty, Personal Courage, Grit, Faith,



Discussion:
Use your values and determine one value grouping.
Share with someone at the table.

Step 2

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From Themes to Life Principles

Passion is everything; inspiration makes it endure
Loyalty, Selfless Service, Team Bonds, Passion, Greater Purpose, Thirdness

Vision is only as good as our grounding
Vision, Humility, Sense of Team, Loyalty, Respect

Solve your commander's problems at all costs
Innovate, Problem Solver, Perseverance, Personal Courage, Duty, Loyalty,

Your fitness (mind, body, spirit) always shows in battle
Perseverance, Grit, Duty, Personal Courage, Selfless Service, Faith,

Begin thinking of a story from your past that amplifies the connection between value and principle

Step 3

Image Source: Shapelined from Unsplash

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From Principles to Leader Commitments

Passion is everything; inspiration makes it endure. When we have passion, we become all in. When we inspire others that commitment is passed on…and spreads throughout the team

I will inspire others with my passion

Vision is only as good as our grounding. We can have great vision for taking the next hill and falter when we forget what it's like to carry a rucksack. Success demands keeping both perspectives alive .

I promise to think big but always keep the squad's burden in mind.

Solve your commander's problems at all costs. Commanders have a select few on their staff that they go to for their instinct, problem solving, tenacity, and innovation. That what Engineers are.

I will solve the commander's problems with the urgency of combat even in peace.

Your fitness (mind, body, spirit) always shows in battle. Our ethos as Soldiers is founded on the premise that none of us will crumble under pressure…including me. We must stay wholly fit for each other.

I will stay personally fit for battle to fulfill our vow to each other.

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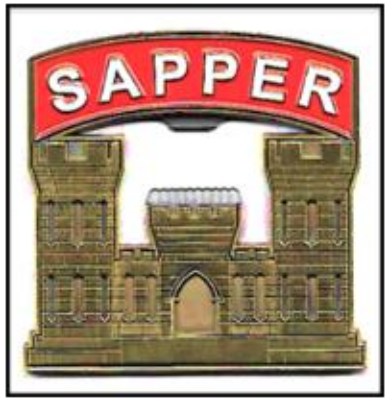

My Initial Handshake

Army Values

Loyalty
Duty
Respect
Selfless Service
Honor
Integrity
Personal Courage

Watson's Key Tasks:

Inspire others with passion
Think big, but keep the squad in mind
Solve problems with the urgency of combat
Stay personally fit for battle
Be your outfit's moral compass
Own the fight or Go Home!

My Personal Ethos

Lead to Serve…Always!

My Values

Christian Faith
Humble Thirdness
Grounded Vision
Innovative Spirit
Sense of Team
Grit of Heart
Laugh-ability
Perseverance

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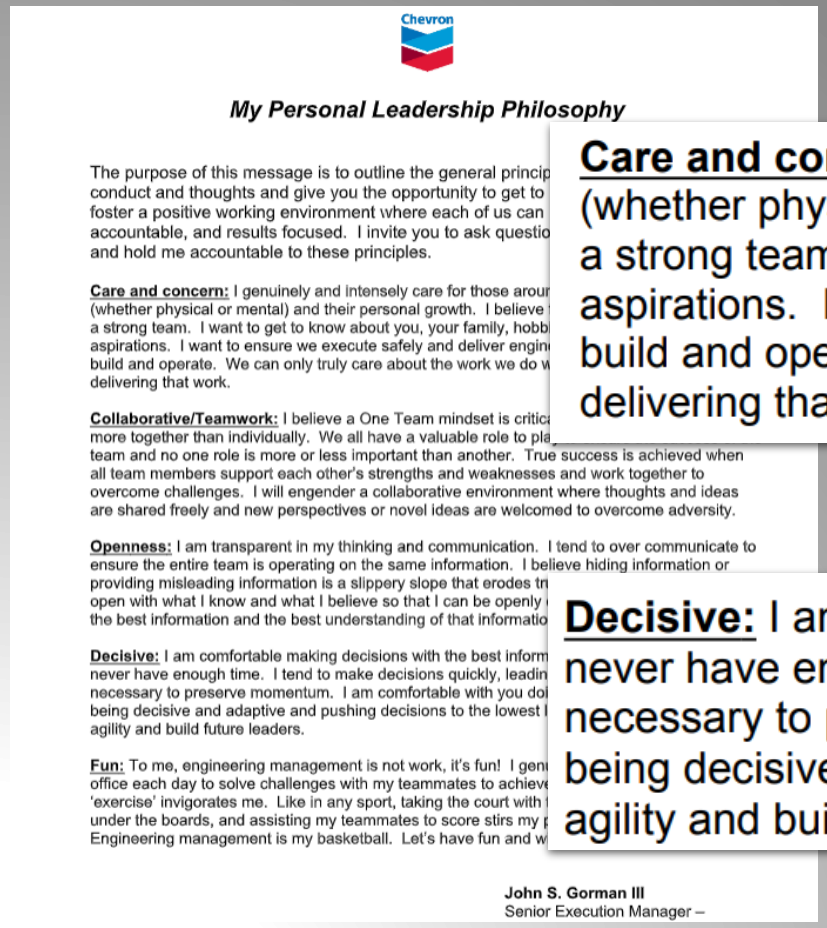
John Gorman III



Chevron

My Personal Leadership Philosophy

The purpose of this message is to outline the general princip
conduct and thoughts and give you the opportunity to get to
foster a positive working environment where each of us can
accountable, and results focused. I invite you to ask questio
and hold me accountable to these principles.

Care and concern: I genuinely and intensely care for those arour
(whether physical or mental) and their personal growth. I believe
a strong team. I want to get to know about you, your family, hobb
aspirations. I want to ensure we execute safely and deliver engin
build and operate. We can only truly care about the work we do w
delivering that work.

Collaborative/Teamwork: I believe a One Team mindset is critic
more together than individually. We all have a valuable role to pla
team and no one role is more or less important than another. True success is achieved when
all team members support each other's strengths and weaknesses and work together to
overcome challenges. I will engender a collaborative environment where thoughts and ideas
are shared freely and new perspectives or novel ideas are welcomed to overcome adversity.

Openness: I am transparent in my thinking and communication. I tend to over communicate to
ensure the entire team is operating on the same information. I believe hiding information or
providing misleading information is a slippery slope that erodes tr
open with what I know and what I believe so that I can be openly
the best information and the best understanding of that informatio

Decisive: I am comfortable making decisions with the best inform
never have enough time. I tend to make decisions quickly, leadin
necessary to preserve momentum. I am comfortable with you do
being decisive and adaptive and pushing decisions to the lowest
agility and build future leaders.

Fun: To me, engineering management is not work, it's fun! I gen
office each day to solve challenges with my teammates to achiev
'exercise' invigorates me. Like in any sport, taking the court with
under the boards, and assisting my teammates to score stirs my
Engineering management is my basketball. Let's have fun and w

John S. Gorman III
Senior Execution Manager –

Care and concern: I genuinely and intensely care for those around me – both for their safety (whether physical or mental) and their personal growth. I believe that strong relationships make a strong team. I want to get to know about you, your family, hobbies, passions, concerns, and aspirations. I want to ensure we execute safely and deliver engineering designs that are safe to build and operate. We can only truly care about the work we do when we care about the team delivering that work.

Decisive: I am comfortable making decisions with the best information time allows – and we never have enough time. I tend to make decisions quickly, leading rapidly, and adjusting when necessary to preserve momentum. I am comfortable with you doing the same. I commit to being decisive and adaptive and pushing decisions to the lowest level to both enable team agility and build future leaders.

Source: With consent from John Gormon III

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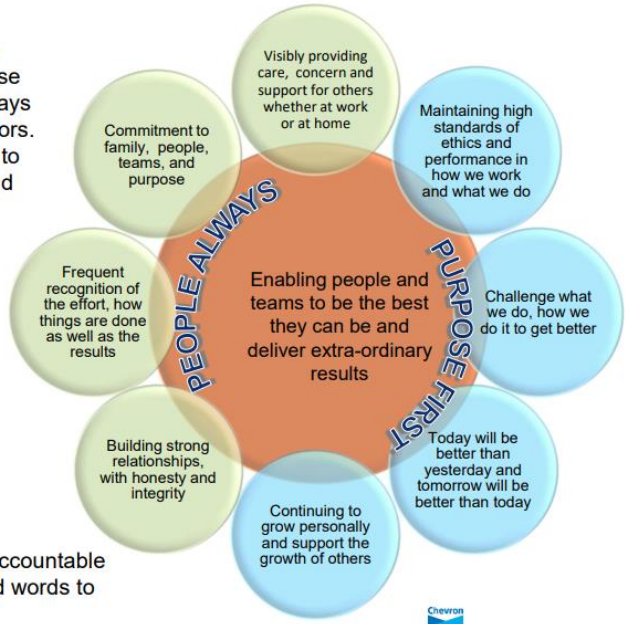
Paul Hargreaves

Paul's Leadership Philosophy - Passion for People

"Striving to be better each and everyday"

As a leader, I am committed to Purpose First and People Always through these behaviors. This is how I intend to "show up!" each and every day.



I invite you to hold me accountable through my actions and words to my values.

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Near term focus areas that I am committed to improving:

- Be more present with my family
- Improve my mental and physical well being
- Create deeper, richer and more collaborative relationships
- Seize and take charge of my personal and work priorities
- Empower others to own more
- Continue to deepen business and asset development knowledge

1

My family & fun things we do

Global work-place: Great places, great people.....

Source: With consent from Paul Hargreaves

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Sarah Bowden: Leadership Philosophy

PERSONAL ETHOS

Lead with Clarity | Pivot with Purpose

THE PILLARS THAT GUIDE ME

Accountability Builds Trust

Delivering on commitments creates trust and dependable team relationships

Curiosity Inspires Learning

Continuous learning and open-mindedness drive innovation and better decisions

Clarity Shows Respect

Transparent communication empowers people and reduces confusion

Energy Sets the Tone

A leader's enthusiasm influences team morale and productivity

Lead by Example

Modelling behaviours builds credibility and fosters share responsibility

The destination remains constant

The route may change

Stay focused *on what matters*

Adapt your route *when circumstances change*

Bring people with you *on the journey*

Source: With consent from Sarah Bowden

Build It, Own It, Live It

Build It

- Reflect deeply – don’t rush it
- Write in your own voice
- Keep it personal and one page

Own It

- Know your commitments
- Keep stories at the ready
- Use AI to polish – not create

Live It

- Share it personally
- Invite accountability
- Make it a “life habit”

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Image Source: Valentin from Pexels

Your Greatest Handshake

- Offering your hand first: **reflexive, unconditional, personal contact**
- Eye to Eye: your unique **values & character**
- Flesh on flesh: **human connection**
- Ends with **accountability**
- Becomes your **Character Compass**
- Builds **TRUST** like no other leader tool

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Cultivate. Inspire. Transform

MISSION: To build **values-based organizations** and **leaders of character** worldwide.

VALUES: We inspire action and change with

Purpose-Driven Character • Commitment to Excellence • Innovative Spirit

WHAT WE BELIEVE

- **Leaders Build Leaders**
- **Lead Yourself First**
- **Leadership is a Journey**

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