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From command posts to corporations: applying United States Marine Corps leadership development to corporate organization development

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FROM COMMAND POSTS TO CORPORATIONS:

APPLYING UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

TO CORPORATE ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

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Paul D. Gowin

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Abstract

This research investigates the applicability of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) leadership development (LD) to corporate organizational development (OD). Despite significant investment in LD, many corporate programs do not meet expectations, highlighting the need for effective models. The USMC LD approach, emphasizing personal and subordinate leadership skills development, mission accomplishment, and team welfare, presents a unique model for exploration. This study examines the integration of USMC leadership components—traits, principles, and core values—into corporate leadership roles and evaluates the perception of USMC veterans on their applicability in corporate settings. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys of 125 participants and ten qualitative interviews to capture a comprehensive view of the USMC LD's potential in corporate OD. The findings suggest that USMC LD is not only applicable but also potentially beneficial in enhancing corporate leadership practices, indicating a need for further exploration in this area.

Keywords: personal development, leadership development, organization development, United States Marine Corps (USMC), corporate leadership, veterans, diversity equity & inclusion (DE&I)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Organization development is pivotal in today's dynamic corporate landscape. Organizations are continually advancing their capabilities and leadership strategies to optimize performance. This evolution is essential, as effective leadership fosters improved employee engagement, innovation, and strategic alignment, thereby bolstering organizational performance (Bass et al., 2003; Bass & Bass, 2009; Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Despite an annual global investment of approximately US$8 billion in leadership development (Bohnet, 2017), there is an emerging consensus that these programs often fall short of expectations. Some even yield unintended detrimental effects, such as animosity between co-workers based on identity politics and activating stereotypes (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). Modern business's intricate and globalized nature amplifies these challenges, necessitating leaders who can adeptly navigate diverse cultural contexts and adapt to rapid changes (Mendenhall et al., 2013). This study investigates whether the leadership development (LD) approach of the United States Marine Corps (USMC), focusing on leadership skill development, mission accomplishment, and team welfare, could offer valuable insights for corporate leaders for use in organization development.

Study Purpose

While existing research has examined veterans in the workplace (Gonzalez & Simpson, 2021; Lampka & Kowalewski, 2017; Shepherd et al., 2021), a comprehensive search of the electronic databases revealed a gap in exploring the applicability of the Marine Corps leadership models in corporate settings. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining:

1. Do Marine Corps veterans apply USMC leadership components in their current leadership role?

2. Do Marine Corps veterans believe USMC leadership training can be applied to corporate organization development?

For brevity, moving forward in this paper, I will collectively refer to the USMC leadership traits, leadership principles, and core values as "USMC leadership components."

Study Significance

Although corporations prize the leadership abilities of veterans, the military's approach to leadership development has not been examined well (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). The USMC, known for its exceptional leadership ethos and consistent battle success (Krulak, 1999), presents a unique model for study. Unlike its sister services, the Army and Navy, the Constitution does not guarantee the Marine Corps' existence, likening its survival to that of a private organization in its need to achieve missions and ensure team welfare (Cartwright & Zander, 1960). Furthermore, the Marine Corps' history of higher voluntary service rates than the Army or Navy during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries parallels the voluntary nature of employment in the corporate world (O'Connell, 2012). This paper posits that the USMC's unique LD program could offer corporate leaders valuable insights for developing their organizations.

Thesis Organization

This paper comprises five chapters. Chapter 2 delves into the theoretical foundations of LD, contrasting current corporate approaches with USMC practices. Chapter 3 details the research design, including methodologies and potential study limitations. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings, exploring the applicability of USMC leadership components in corporate settings. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, presents implications for applying USMC LD to corporate organization development, addresses the study's limitations, and suggests avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Cummings and Worley (2019) suggest that organization development (OD), rooted in behavioral science knowledge, practice transference, and application, is about leadership at a key micro-level. From this perspective, a closer look at leadership development (LD) may provide opportunities to improve corporate OD. LD plays a critical role in the growth and success of any organization (Day, 2000). Effective leaders can inspire, motivate, and guide their teams to achieve individual and collective goals (Northouse, 2013). In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding the impact of LD practices on OD, particularly in private corporations (Collins & Holton, 2004). The USMC is known for its rigorous and effective LD programs (O'Connell, 2012; Ricks, 1998). However, the potential applicability and effectiveness of USMC LD techniques in corporate OD remain relatively unexplored (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017). This literature review aims to understand LD, focusing on its theoretical foundations and contrasting current OD approaches with USMC practices. Moreover, this review will compare and contrast the LD needs and skills required in the USMC and private corporations, identifying potential areas of overlap and synergy.

The structure of this literature review is as follows. I begin with the theoretical foundations of LD, discussing the key theories and models. Next, I examine some standard corporate LD programs. The following section provides an overview of USMC LD, the USMC's definition of leadership, the four areas of leadership training, and the leadership components. The following section presents an overview of LD needs. Finally, I compare and contrast the LD needs and skills in the USMC and global corporations, focusing on similarities, differences, and areas of overlap and synergy.

Theoretical Foundations of Leadership Development

LD practices have undergone significant changes over the years, influenced by various theories, technological advancements, and societal shifts (Day, 2000; Day et al., 2021; Fulmer, 1997). LD can be traced back to ancient civilizations, including the ancient Egyptians, where leaders were often educated and trained through apprenticeship and mentoring (Bass & Bass, 2009). LD has become an academic field of study (Rost, 1991). Researchers have proposed various theories and models to explain and enhance the process. In this section, I briefly examine the early leadership theories, Behavioral Theory of Leadership, Contingency, Situational, and Transformational Leadership Theories. These theories represent broad areas of research and practice well beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I intend to acknowledge the range of frameworks, albeit briefly.

Early Leadership Theories

During the 19th century, the Great Man Theory dominated the understanding of leadership, which posited that leaders were born, not made (Carlyle, 1885). Trait theory marked the beginning of a shift in thinking, moving away from the notion that leadership was an innate ability and towards the idea that leadership could be developed by acquiring specific intellectual, physical, and personality traits (Khan, 2016). However, it has been criticized for its deterministic nature and lack of consideration for the role of situational factors in leadership effectiveness (Bass & Bass, 2009).

Behavioral Theory of Leadership

Researchers developed the Behavioral Theory of Leadership, which focused on effective leaders' specific behaviors and actions. Three notable models that emerged from this perspective are the Ohio State Leadership Studies' two-factor model of initiating structure and consideration

for others (Stogdill & Coons, 1957), studies from the Research Center for Group Dynamics describing leadership in terms of group maintenance and goal achievement functions (Cartwright & Zander, 1960), and the University of Michigan's three-factor model, comprising task-oriented behavior, relationship-oriented behavior, and participative leadership (Likert, 1961).

Contingency and Situational Leadership Theories

The Contingency Theory of Leadership emerged as a more comprehensive approach, acknowledging the importance of situational factors in determining leadership effectiveness (Fiedler, 1967). This theory suggests that the most effective leadership style depends on the context in which it is applied, with different styles being more appropriate for different situations.

Similarly, the Situational Leadership Theory, proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1993), argues that leaders must adapt their style based on the maturity and competence of their followers.

Transformational Leadership

As the focus of LD shifted towards interpersonal relationships, Transformational Leadership emerged as a prominent theory, emphasizing the importance of inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their full potential (Burns, 1978; DeRue & Myers, 2013).

Transformational Leadership is regarded as one of the most influential contemporary leadership models, which emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating their followers to achieve higher levels of performance and personal growth (Bass, 1985). This model has been widely researched and applied in various organizational settings, demonstrating its effectiveness in improving LD and organizational performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Stone et al., 2004; Yukl, 1999).

Common Corporate Leadership Development Programs

Several trends have emerged in LD practices, often directly based on one or more traditional theories (Bolden, 2007; Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020). This section summarizes practices such as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I), global LD competency, and also experiential learning, practical application, and on the job training.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

One significant trend is the increased emphasis on DE&I in LD, as organizations recognize the importance of having a diverse and inclusive leadership team (Caligiuri, 2006; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). This has led to specifically tailored LD programs to promote underrepresented groups in leadership positions (Hunt et al., 2018).

Global LD Competency

Global LD competency programs have also gained prominence as organizations increasingly operate internationally (Bird et al., 2010; Caligiuri, 2006; Maznevski & Chui, 2013). Developing global leaders borrows from the traditional generic models but also requires a focus on cultural intelligence, adaptability, and the ability to manage diverse teams across borders (Ang et al., 2007; Bücker & Korzilius, 2015; Cohen, 2010). Many organizations have incorporated global leadership competencies into their LD programs, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural understanding and effective communication in the global marketplace (Den Hartog et al., 1999; Gelfand et al., 2007; Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2005; Schein, 1996).

Experiential Learning, Practical Application, and On the Job Training

The current trends in LD also emphasize experiential learning and practical application of leadership skills (Kirchner & Akdere, 2017; Kolb, 1984). Organizations are increasingly

incorporating action learning, coaching, mentoring, and job rotation into their LD programs to facilitate hands-on learning and real-world application of skills (Leskiw & Singh, 2007; Marquardt, 2004; Van Velsor et al., 2010).

<div align="center">**USMC Leadership Development**</div>

The USMC has a well-established reputation for cultivating strong, adaptable, and effective leaders in rapidly changing global landscapes (Wong et al., 2003). This section provides a brief overview of LD within the USMC, delving into the various programs, principles, techniques, and outcomes associated with its unique approach to leadership. The discussion begins with an overview of USMC LD programs and examines the key principles and techniques underpinning these initiatives. The final section evaluates the outcomes and effectiveness of USMC LD initiatives, highlighting the role of values, ethics, and character in shaping Marine Corps leadership (Krulak, 1999; O'Connell, 2012).

Overview of USMC LD Programs

The Marines define leadership in the words of the 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General John A. Lejeune, "the sum of those qualities of intellect, human understanding, and moral character that enable a person to inspire and to control a group of people successfully." The USMC recognizes the importance of developing strong, adaptable leaders to navigate complex and rapidly changing global landscapes (Wong et al., 2003). It has adopted a comprehensive approach to LD, focusing on three primary areas: institutional professional training, unit training and education, and self-study (Sovie, 2020).

Institutional Professional Training

Institutional professional training encompasses formal education provided through the Marine Corps University and other specialized schools (Sovie, 2020). These institutions offer

various LD programs for enlisted personnel and officers. The foundation of USMC LD is established during Basic Recruit Training at either Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) San Diego or MCRD Parris Island for enlisted Marines and at The Basic School for all Marine Officers, where individuals are transformed into Marines through a rigorous and challenging process (Bevan, 2014; Dooley, 1998; Gallagher IV, 2017; Hill, 2012). During this time, recruits and junior officers at their respective schools experience shared struggles, such as individual physical fitness, the study of basic Marine Corps leadership, and time management, and work together to achieve common goals, fostering a strong sense of cohesion and camaraderie that is vital for effective teamwork in the USMC (Grady et al., 2018; Nelson & Berry, 1968). Additional schools include the Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Drill Instructor School, Expeditionary Warfare School, and the Command and Staff College (Page & Miller, 2002). Each program addresses specific leadership needs, equipping Marines with the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively perform their roles and responsibilities (Sovie, 2020).

Unit Training and Education

Unit Training and Education focuses on continuously developing leadership skills within the Marines' operational environment (Sovie, 2020). This approach involves on-the-job training, mentoring, and coaching, which aim to reinforce leadership principles and practices taught during institutional professional training (Resillas, 2019).

Additionally, unit training and education include initiatives such as the Marine Corps Mentorship Program, which establishes formal mentor-mentee relationships to foster personal and professional growth (Rauschelbach, 2013).

Self-Study

Self-Study is a critical component of USMC LD, emphasizing the importance of individual initiative and personal responsibility in pursuing professional growth (Sovie, 2020). Marines are encouraged to engage in self-directed learning through various resources, such as reading lists, online courses, and professional journals (Sovie, 2020). This approach promotes continuous learning and helps Marines develop critical thinking skills and adaptability, essential to effective leadership in an increasingly complex world (Wong et al., 2003).

The USMC's LD programs employ a multifaceted approach, emphasizing institutional professional training, unit training and education, and self-study. This comprehensive approach ensures Marines have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively lead in diverse and dynamic environments (Sovie, 2020).

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Key Principles and Techniques of USMC LD

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The USMC LD programs aim to achieve two overarching objectives: to develop the leadership qualities of all Marines, enabling them to assume progressively greater responsibilities to the Marine Corps and society, and to ensure mission accomplishment and enhance troop welfare (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). These objectives guide all aspects of USMC LD, emphasizing the importance of effective leadership in achieving organizational success and fostering the personal and professional Marines (Spencer, 2009). The USMC LD programs emphasize the USMC leadership components that define the Marine Corps (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). These components lay the foundation for developing personal and subordinate leadership skills to ensure leaders accomplish the mission and enhance troop welfare.

USMC Leadership Components

The USMC leadership components comprise three core values, fourteen leadership traits, and eleven leadership principles that form the bedrock of developing personal and subordinate leadership skills.

Core Values

The Marine Corps' core values are Honor, Courage, and Commitment (U.S. Marine Corps, 2014). These values provide a moral compass for Marine leaders, ensuring they uphold the highest standards of integrity, dedication, and selflessness in service to their country (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). These values help shape Marines' identity and behavior, guiding their actions and decision-making processes throughout their careers. Table 1 captures the Marine Corps' description of the core values below.

Table 1

USMC Core Values

Core Value	Description
Honor	The bedrock of our character. The quality that guides Marines to exemplify the ultimate in ethical and moral behavior; never to lie, cheat, or steal; to abide by an uncompromising concept of integrity; to respect human dignity; to have concern for each other. The quality of maturity, dedication, trust, and dependability that commits Marines to act responsibly, to be accountable for actions, to fulfill obligations, and to hold others accountable for their actions.
Courage	The heart of our core values. Courage is the mental, moral, and physical strength the Corps ingrains in Marines to carry them through the challenges of combat and the mastery of fear, to do what is right in every situation, to adhere to a higher standard of personal conduct, to lead by example, and to make tough decisions under pressure. It is the inner strength that enables Marines to take that extra step.

Core Value	Description
Commitment	The spirit of determination and dedication in Marines that leads to professionalism and mastery of the art of war. It leads to the highest order of discipline for unit and self; it is the ingredient that enables 24-hour-a-day dedication to Corps and Country, pride, concern for others, and an unrelenting determination to achieve a standard of excellence in every endeavor. Commitment is the value that establishes the Marine as the warrior and citizen others strive to emulate.

Note. Reprinted from "MCWP 6-11 Leading Marines," by the United States Marine Corps, 2014, Marine Corps University, pages 1-6 and 1-7.

Leadership Traits

The Leadership Traits are a set of fourteen characteristics that serve as a guide for effective leadership. By cultivating these traits, the USMC aims to develop well-rounded leaders capable of making sound decisions and inspiring trust and confidence in their subordinates. Table 2 presents the Marine Corps' definitions and significance of these traits on the next page (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998).

Table 2

USMC Leadership Traits

Trait	Definition	Significance
Justice	Giving reward and punishment according to the merits of the case in question. The ability to administer a system of rewards and punishments impartially and consistently.	The quality of displaying fairness and impartiality is critical in order to gain the trust and respect of subordinates and maintain discipline and unit cohesion, particularly in the exercise of responsibility as a leader.
Judgment	The ability to weigh facts and possible courses of action in order to make sound decisions.	Sound judgment allows a leader to make appropriate decisions in the guidance and training of his/her Marines and the employment of his/her unit. A Marine who exercises good judgment weighs pros and cons accordingly to arrive at an appropriate decision/take proper action.
Dependability	The certainty of proper performance of duty.	The quality which permits a senior to assign a task to a junior with the understanding that it will be accomplished with minimum supervision. This understanding includes the assumption that the initiative will be taken on small matters not covered by instructions.
Initiative	Taking action in the absence of orders.	Marines must understand their Commander's Intent and use it to make appropriate decisions in the absence of direct guidance or supervision. Since an NCO often works without close supervision, emphasis is placed on being a self-starter. Initiative is a founding principle of Marine Corps Warfighting philosophy.
Decisiveness	The ability to make decisions promptly and to announce them in a clear, forceful manner.	The quality of character which guides a person to accumulate all available facts in a circumstance, weigh the facts, choose and announce an alternative which seems best. It is often better that a decision be made promptly than a potentially better one be made at the expense of more time.
Tact	The ability to deal with others without creating hostility.	The quality of consistently treating peers, seniors, and subordinates with respect and courtesy is a sign of maturity. Tact allows commands, guidance, and opinions to be expressed in a constructive and beneficial manner. This deference must be extended under all conditions regardless of true feelings.

Trait	Definition	Significance
Integrity	Uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles. The quality of truthfulness and honesty.	Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is looking. A Marine's word is his/her bond. Nothing less than complete honesty in all of your dealings with subordinates, peers, and superiors is acceptable.
Enthusiasm	The display of sincere interest and exuberance in the performance of duty.	Displaying interest in a task and showing optimism that it *can* be successfully completed greatly enhances the likelihood that the task *will* be successfully completed.
Bearing	Creating a favorable impression in carriage, appearance, and personal conduct at all times.	The ability to look, act, and speak like a leader whether or not these manifestations indicate one's true feelings. Some signs of these traits are clear and plain speech, an erect gait, and impeccable personal appearance.
Unselfishness	Avoidance of providing for one's own comfort and personal advancement at the expense of others.	The quality of looking out for the needs of your subordinates before your own is the essence of leadership. This quality is not to be confused with putting these matters ahead of the accomplishment of the mission.
Courage	A mental quality that recognizes fear of danger or criticism, but enables a Marine to proceed in the face of it with calmness and firmness.	Knowing and standing for what is right, even in the face of popular disfavor, is often the leader's lot. The business of fighting and winning wars is a dangerous one; the importance of courage on the battlefield is obvious.
Knowledge	Understanding of a science or an art. The range of one's information, including professional knowledge and an understanding of your Marines.	The gaining and retention of current developments in military and naval science and world affairs is important for your growth and development.
Loyalty	The quality of faithfulness to the country, the Corps, the unit, to one's seniors, subordinates, and peers.	The motto of our Corps is *Semper Fidelis*, Always Faithful. You owe unswerving loyalty up and down the chain of command: to seniors, subordinates, and peers.
Endurance	The mental and physical stamina measured by the ability to withstand pain, fatigue, stress, and hardship.	The quality of withstanding pain during a conditioning hike in order to improve stamina is crucial in the development of leadership. Leaders are responsible for leading their units in physical endeavors and for motivating them as well.

Note. Reprinted from "MCRP 6-11B (w ch 1) Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders," by the United States Marine Corps, 1998, Marine Corps University, pages 15-17 - 15-21.

Leadership Principles

The Marine Corps also emphasizes 11 Leadership Principles to guide leaders' daily interactions and decision-making processes. The Leadership Principles guide how to apply the 14 Leadership Traits effectively. Table 3 captures the Marine Corps' descriptions of these Leadership Principles below (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998).

Table 3

USMC Leadership Principles

Leadership Principle	Description
Know yourself and seek self-improvement	Constantly evaluate yourself to determine your strengths and weaknesses. Work to improve upon your weaknesses.
Be technically and tactically proficient	A Marine leader must know his or her job thoroughly in order to make good decisions and have credibility with his or her Marines.
Know your Marines and look out for their welfare	This allows a leader to keep his or her forces strong and to most effectively employ them in accordance with their capabilities.
Keep your Marines informed	When practical, a leader should inform his or her Marines of all happenings and give reasons why things are to be done. Informing your Marines of the situation makes them feel that they are a part of the team and promotes morale.
Set the example	A Marine leader's personal conduct is always on display for his or her Marines. Remember that Marines tend to emulate the characteristics of their leaders.
Ensure that the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished	Leaders must give clear orders that cannot be misunderstood and then, by close supervision, ensure that his or her orders are properly executed.
Train your Marines as a team	Teamwork is essential from the smallest unit to the entire Marine Corps. As a leader, you must insist on teamwork from your Marines. Ensure that your Marines know their roles and responsibilities within the team framework.

Leadership Principle	Description
Make sound and timely decisions	Marine leaders must be able to rapidly estimate a situation and make good decisions. Hesitation to make a decision–or failure to make a smart decision–leads subordinates to lose confidence in their leaders.
Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates	Doing so allows subordinates to accomplish tasks and remain productive in the absence of direct guidance or supervision. It promotes initiative and wholehearted cooperation in the accomplishment of the mission.
Employ your command in accordance with its capabilities	In order to ensure mission accomplishment, a Marine leader must have a thorough knowledge of the tactical and technical capabilities of his or her Marines.
Seek responsibilities and take responsibility for your actions	Seeking out responsibilities will ensure that you continue to grow and remain productive as a Marine leader. Taking responsibility for your actions and decisions is a matter of integrity.

Note. Adapted from "MCRP 6-11B (w ch 1) Marine Corps Values: A User's Guide for Discussion Leaders," by the United States Marine Corps, 1998, Marine Corps University, pages 16-7 - 16-10.

Incorporating the core values, leadership traits, and leadership principles into the USMC LD programs ensures Marines develop a strong foundation of ethical decision-making and practical leadership skills. These elements, coupled with the institution's professional training, unit training and education, and self-study components, create a comprehensive approach to LD that enables the USMC to fulfill its two primary objectives (Sovie, 2020).

Ensuring Mission Accomplishment

Ensuring mission accomplishment is the Marine Corps's primary focus, and every leader's responsibility is ensuring their unit can achieve its objectives (Spencer, 2009). This involves developing leaders who can think critically, adapt to changing circumstances, and effectively communicate their intentions to subordinates (Wong et al., 2003). Institutional Professional Training programs, such as the Drill Instructor School, the Staff Noncommissioned

Officer Academy, The Basic School, the Expeditionary Warfare School, and the Command and Staff College, place a strong emphasis on developing these skills, as well as instilling a deep understanding of Marine Corps doctrine, tactics, and procedures (Page & Miller, 2002).

Enhancing Troop Welfare

Enhancing troop welfare is a critical component of effective leadership, as the well-being of subordinates directly impacts their ability to perform and contribute to mission success (Spencer, 2009). USMC LD programs address this objective by emphasizing the importance of empathy, ethical decision-making, and communication skills (Resillas, 2019). Additionally, programs such as the Marine Corps Mentorship Program foster personal and professional growth by establishing formal mentor-mentee relationships, which help to create a supportive and nurturing environment for Marines (Rauschelbach, 2013).

Objectives and Outcomes of USMC Leadership Development Initiatives

The USMC LD programs ensure the organization has a consistent supply of competent and skilled leaders capable of meeting the challenges of present and future operations. As a result of these programs, the USMC has achieved several notable outcomes in terms of leadership effectiveness, adaptability, and overall mission success.

The comprehensive approach to LD, incorporating institutional professional training, unit training and education, and self-study, has produced leaders who demonstrate ethical, solid decision-making, and effective leadership skills (Sovie, 2020). By fostering these components, the USMC aims to create a cadre of leaders who can effectively manage their subordinates and contribute to the organization's overall success (Spencer, 2009).

The USMC's focus on LD has created adaptable leaders capable of responding to the ever-changing demands of modern warfare. Through continuous professional development and

exposure to various training scenarios, Marine leaders handle complex and uncertain situations that may arise during their duties based on their training (Sovie, 2020). This adaptability is essential to the USMC's ability to fulfill its mission in a rapidly changing global environment.

The ultimate measure of the effectiveness of the USMC LD programs is their impact on the organization's ability to achieve its mission. The strong foundation of LD, based on the leadership components, has produced leaders who can effectively guide their subordinates and contribute to the overall success of the Marine Corps (U.S. Marine Corps, 2014). By developing skilled and competent leaders, the USMC has maintained its position as a highly effective and adaptable fighting force.

The focus on troop welfare is critical to the USMC LD programs. By fostering a sense of responsibility among leaders for their subordinates' well-being, the USMC meets the needs of its service members, which contributes to the organization's overall readiness and effectiveness (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). This emphasis on troop welfare also plays a significant role in maintaining high levels of morale and cohesion within the ranks, further enhancing the Marine Corps' ability to accomplish its mission.

Comparing and Contrasting LD Needs and Skills

The previous sections have established the fundamentals of LD in the USMC and private corporations. This section aims to compare and contrast the LD needs and skills required in both domains to identify potential areas of overlap and synergy. This comparative analysis makes it possible to explore applying USMC LD techniques to private corporations and whether they might enhance corporate OD initiatives.

Similarities Between USMC and Private Corporations

The USMC and private corporations require strong leadership to ensure organizational effectiveness and success (Avolio et al., 2009; U.S. Marine Corps, 1998, 2014). In both contexts, leaders must possess the ability to communicate effectively, make strategic decisions, and inspire and motivate their teams (Bass & Bass, 2009; U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). Furthermore, both domains emphasize the importance of ethical leadership, as trust and integrity are vital in creating a positive organizational culture (Brown et al., 2005; U.S. Marine Corps, 1998).

There are also similarities in the approach to development. Both USMC LD and corporate OD tend to focus on a combination of formal training, experiential learning, and mentorship to foster leadership skills (Day et al., 2014; Hannah et al., 2009; Page & Miller, 2002; Rauschelbach, 2013; Resillas, 2019; Sovie, 2020; Spencer, 2009).

Finally, the overlap between private corporations' and the Marine Corps' necessity to accomplish the mission while caring for the team seems to be a universal north star (Cartwright & Zander, 1960; U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). These commonalities suggest the potential for cross-pollination of techniques between USMC LD and corporate OD.

Differences Between USMC and Private Corporations

Despite the similarities, there are notable differences between the USMC and private corporations regarding the context and challenges leaders face. In the USMC, leaders must operate in highly dynamic and high-stakes environments, often dealing with life-and-death situations (Demchak, 1991; U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). In contrast, private corporations typically deal with market competition and stakeholder demands, which require different skills and competencies (Haymaker, 2019; Hitt et al., 2013; Riggio & Lee, 2007).

Additionally, the organizational culture and structure in the USMC are generally more hierarchical and regimented than in private corporations, which may have flatter structures and place a higher emphasis on collaboration and innovation (Bass & Bass, 2009; Schein & Schein, 2016). This difference in organizational culture might affect the transferability of specific USMC LD techniques to corporate OD.

Overlap and Synergy Between USMC and Private Corporations

Although there are differences between USMC LD and corporate OD, there are potential areas of overlap and synergy. For instance, both domains can benefit from fostering resilience, adaptability, and effective decision-making under pressure (Good, 2014; Hannah et al., 2009; Luthans et al., 2007; Pulakos et al., 2000; U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). Furthermore, the USMC's emphasis on discipline, teamwork, and mission-oriented leadership could be valuable in private corporations where leaders need to balance competing interests and drive performance (Bass, 1985; Maznevski & Chui, 2013; U.S. Marine Corps, 1998, 2014; Yukl, 2010). Table 4 summarizes the key similarities and differences of LD needs and skills between the USMC and private corporations below.

Table 4

Summary of Key Similarities and Differences of LD Needs and Skills Between the USMC and Private Corporations

Factor	USMC	Private Corporations
Context	High-stakes, dynamic environments, life-and-death situations	Market competition, stakeholder demands, safety protocols
Organizational Culture	Hierarchical and regimented, accomplish the mission while enhancing troop welfare	Flatter structures, collaboration, innovation, accomplish the mission while enhancing team welfare

Factor	USMC	Private Corporations
Leadership Skills	Effective communication, strategic decision-making, inspiring and motivating teams, ethical leadership	Effective communication, strategic decision-making, inspiring and motivating teams, ethical leadership
LD Approach	Formal training, experiential learning, mentorship	Formal training, experiential learning, mentorship
Key Competencies	Resilience, adaptability, decision-making under pressure, discipline, teamwork, mission-oriented leadership, emotional and social competencies	Resilience, adaptability, decision-making under pressure, balancing competing interests, driving performance, emotional and social competencies

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I reviewed literature exploring the intricate dynamics of LD within the realms of USMC and private corporations. This chapter offers a broad understanding of the leadership landscape by reviewing theoretical frameworks, from the Great Man Theory to Transformational Leadership, and examining corporate and military leadership development practices. It juxtaposes the structured, mission-focused approach of the USMC with the innovative, market-driven strategies in the corporate sector, highlighting similarities and differences in their leadership needs and skills. This comparative analysis reveals potential synergies and areas for cross-application between Marine Corps and corporate leadership methodologies.

Transitioning into the next chapter, I shift focus from theoretical underpinnings and comparative analysis to the practical aspects of research design and execution. This next chapter details the methodological approach adopted to empirically investigate the applicability of USMC LD in the corporate OD context.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study, aiming to investigate the potential application of USMC LD in corporate OD programs. The primary aim of USMC LD is to develop the leadership qualities of all Marines, enabling them to assume progressively greater responsibilities to the Marine Corps and society. Additionally, it aims to ensure mission accomplishment and enhance troop welfare (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998). The applicability of these goals in the corporate context forms the foundation of this research. I adopted a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques, to provide a comprehensive and balanced view of the research questions. This chapter outlines the research design, participant recruitment strategy, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures employed in the study.

Research Design

The study utilized a mixed-methods approach to answer the research questions. This approach combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research, offering a more holistic view of the topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The quantitative component involved using an online survey to gather statistical data from participants, while the qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of individual experiences and perceptions. This approach is suitable for examining the relationships between demographic information, LD techniques learned in the Marine Corps, implementation of those techniques in Marine Corps leadership roles, and LD techniques learned in corporate OD programs. Before any participant participated in this research, they expressed their consent via an online disclosure statement for the survey and a written and verbal confirmation for the semi-structured interviews.

This study explored the following two research questions:

1. Do Marine Corps veterans apply USMC leadership components in their current leadership role?

2. Do Marine Corps veterans believe USMC leadership training can be applied to corporate organization development?

Participants and Recruitment

The target population for this study consisted of individuals who have completed Marine Corps Basic Recruit Training and/or The Basic School for Marine Officers, are at least 19 years old, and are currently employed in an organization. These participants have self-identified as leaders while serving in the Marine Corps and have transitioned into a leadership role in a private organization. Participants were recruited from the business-based social media platform LinkedIn to participate in the online survey. At the conclusion of the survey, a final question asked respondents if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview regarding their leadership experiences. The survey ensured anonymity by gathering only demographic data but not personal information. To recruit survey respondents, I created posts requesting participation on LinkedIn.

Data Collection Instruments

The online survey gathered demographic data and respondent attitudes regarding the utility of USMC leadership components within the Marine Corps and the corporate environment. I designed the survey questions to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of current LD practices and identify potential areas to integrate USMC training techniques.

In addition to the online survey, I conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants from the military and corporate sectors. These interviews delved deeper into the personal perspectives and experiences of leaders in both contexts. The interviews aimed to

explore specific experiences in applying LD techniques and their challenges. The nuances of LD

practices and understand the perceived advantages and disadvantages of applying USMC LD to

corporate OD.

Online Survey

The primary purpose of the online survey was to answer the first research question with

as many people as possible. The secondary purpose was to solicit participation in the

semi-structured interview. The online survey comprised respondent profile information and the

Marine Corps leadership component application.

Respondent Profile Information

This part of the survey anonymously captured respondent profile information in three

sections: demographics, Marine Corps service information, and current leadership role

information.

The demographics section prompted two multiple-choice data points regarding the

respondents' backgrounds:

- Gender

- Race or ethnicity

To gather data regarding respondent's Marine Corps service, the Marine Corps service

information section asked three multiple-choice questions:

- What year did you first serve in the Marine Corps?

- How many years did you serve in the Marine Corps?

- Please select your highest pay grade/rank in the US Marine Corps

The current leadership role section collected two data points regarding respondents'

current leadership roles:

- How many years have you worked in your current leadership role?

- Please select the experience level best describing your current leadership role

Marine Corps Leadership Components Application

This part of the survey began with a definition of leadership, leadership training, and

Marine Corps leadership training,

> For this survey, leadership is defined as "the sum of those qualities of intellect, human understanding and moral character that enable a person to inspire and to control a group of people successfully."
> For this survey, leadership training is defined as any program, training, or other experience intended to:
> - develop your leadership skills
> - personally foster the leadership skills development of others
> - ensure mission accomplishment
> - ensure the welfare of those in your charge
> USMC leadership training is based on the fourteen leadership traits, eleven leadership principles, and three core values.

The survey then requested respondents to select the five most applicable leadership

components from among the twenty-eight listed (see Tables 1, 2, and 3 above) that pertained to

the leadership roles in the Marine Corps and their current leadership role using two prompts:

- Please make up to 5 selections that were the **most applicable** to *your Marine Corps leadership roles:*
- Please make up to 5 selections that are the **most applicable** to your leadership training within *your current leadership role:*

At the survey's conclusion, a final question asked respondents to participate in a

30-minute semi-structured interview. The question prompted respondents to email me to

schedule an interview to segregate the participants' responses from their identities. To streamline

setting up an interview, I hyperlinked my email address to compose a draft email with an

easy-to-complete set of proposed times to schedule the interview.

Within the first 24 hours of my initial post soliciting online survey participation, I

received over 20 responses for interviews. This number easily surpassed my target of 10

respondents presented in my IRB, so I turned off this question to no longer solicit interview participation. I contacted those interested in interviews in the order they emailed me to mitigate potential bias. Once I scheduled thirteen interviews, I obtained a sample set of ten respondents, with three people later unable to meet. Having ten respondents, I contacted the rest who expressed interest and informed them I had reached my target number of interviews.

Survey Validity and Reliability

A pilot study was conducted with a small sample of participants to enhance the survey's validity and reliability. I used feedback from the pilot study to refine the survey questions, ensuring the instrument effectively captured the data needed to address the research question. For example, the initial online survey asked too many questions, and some pilot group members reported the survey duration to be much longer than 30 minutes. I wanted to gather data regarding leadership experiences, which I later included in the semi-structured interviews. I initially asked respondents to rank the leadership components within their five selections, adding unnecessary length to this initial study. The revised survey generally took less than nine minutes to complete.

Semi-structured Interview

The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to answer the second research question by capturing qualitative data from respondents to better understand the potential applicability of USMC LD to corporate OD.

Leadership Experiences

Aligned with the definition of Marine Corps leadership training presented in the online survey, I asked respondents to compare and contrast their Marine Corps leadership roles with their current leadership roles around the four following areas:

- Fostering personal leadership skills development

- Fostering subordinate leadership skills development

- Ensuring mission accomplishment

- Enhancing team welfare

In addition to exploring these four areas, I asked each respondent, "Do you believe that USMC leadership training applies to corporate organization development?"

Semi-structured Interview Validity and Reliability

A pilot study was conducted with a small sample of participants to enhance the semi-structured interview's validity and reliability. I used feedback from the pilot study to refine the interview questions, ensuring the questions effectively captured the data needed to address the research question. For example, I initially sought to gather much more open-ended data, such as "Provide a story of how you applied a USMC leadership component both in the Marines and in your current leadership role." When I modified the questions to explore the overlap and differences between USMC and corporate leadership experiences, it allowed me to hear some story highlights while optimizing time during the interview.

Data Analysis

After completing the semi-structured interviews, I closed the online survey to further participation. This approach allowed for the maximum time possible to capture survey responses. I then reviewed the quantitative and qualitative data.

Online Survey

To better understand who participated in this anonymous online survey, I analyzed the demographical data gathered around gender, race/ethnicity, Marine Corps experience, and their respective leadership roles. This analysis helped me understand if my sample was an accurate

representation with regards to Marine Corps demographics of gender and race/ethnicity; the year of entry into the Marine Corps, the longevity of service, and the rank distribution of respondents; and the tenure and seniority of respondents' current leadership roles.

To understand the sample representation of basic biographical information, I calculated the participation percentages by gender and race/ethnicity. I juxtaposed these calculations with historical Marine Corps percentages of gender and race/ethnicity. I calculated the average gender distribution of enlisted personnel and commissioned officers from 2006-2016. I used these averages as the historical Marine Corps demographic reference to compare my sample to the average Marine Corps population.

To understand the Marine Corps experience of respondents, I clustered the entry year of Marine Corps service by decade, clustered the duration of service by four-year blocks, and calculated the percentage of rank distribution by rank group.

To understand respondents' current leadership roles, I calculated the percentage of longevity in their current roles and seniority classifications.

I also wanted to understand if Marine veterans applied Marine Corps LD to corporate OD. I analyzed the leadership components selections from respondents' application of USMC LD to their Marine Corps and current leadership roles. I tallied the number of times a leadership component was selected to calculate the frequency. I calculated the percentage of selection of each leadership component based on the number of respondents. I then identified the top five selections based on these frequency percentages. Finally, I identified the three overlapping leadership components from the top five selections from USMC and current leadership roles.

Semi-structured Interviews

My approach to analyzing the semi-structured interview data was grounded in thematic analysis, widely recognized for its flexibility and depth in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Identifying themes was primarily guided by overlapping examples in the participants' responses rather than merely focusing on specific words or phrases. Examples were developed based on sentences or answers conveying a coherent idea or concept relevant to the research questions.

For example, when identifying examples around applying leadership principles, one participant might have explicitly mentioned "learning leadership from peers and subordinates." At the same time, another discussed "watching, listening, and learning from good leaders." Despite the different phrasing, I categorized both quotes under "Learning from others." This example illustrates the thematic analysis's focus on the underlying meaning rather than just the literal wording.

This method of thematic analysis was not just about aggregating data but also about interpreting and making sense of the emerging patterns. It involved an iterative process of reading, re-reading, and reflecting on the data to ensure that the examples accurately represented the participants' experiences and perspectives. This process was critical in ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings, providing a robust foundation for the conclusions drawn in this study.

Protection of Human Subjects

As a part of my obligations as a researcher, I completed the Human Subjects Training provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). I prepared a research proposal to conduct my research that was subsequently reviewed and approved by the

Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following the IRB's approval of my research proposal, I began collecting data.

Central to ensuring participant safety was obtaining voluntary informed consent from each person before participating in my research. Before anyone could participate in the online survey or the semi-structured interview, I presented an Informed Consent Form that each respondent reviewed and submitted documentation of their voluntary participation in the research. Before beginning the semi-structured interviews, I asked if the participant had any questions regarding the Informed Consent Form and verbally received confirmation of their voluntary participation in the interview.

Conclusion

In Chapter 3, I delineated the methodology employed in this study, centered on assessing the applicability of USMC leadership training within corporate OD programs. This research employed a mixed methods approach, intricately combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to extract robust insights. This chapter detailed the research design, participant recruitment, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures, ensuring a holistic understanding of the potential integration of USMC leadership training in corporate settings. The exploration of this methodology sets the stage for a nuanced understanding of the applicability and effectiveness of USMC leadership principles in the corporate world.

As we explore this study's findings, I shift the focus to presenting and analyzing the data collected through this methodology. In the next chapter, I aim to shed light on the core research questions: if Marine Corps veterans apply USMC leadership components in their current corporate roles and their perception of the applicability of USMC LD to corporate OD.

Chapter 4: Findings

To better understand the application of USMC LD to corporate OD, this research investigated Marine veterans' application of USMC leadership components during their time as leaders in the USMC and their current leadership roles.

This chapter presents the findings from the 125 responses to the online survey and the ten interviews by reporting the data and resulting key learnings in three sections. The first section discusses the profile sample of the survey respondents and compares it to the average demographics of the USMC years 2006-2016. I conducted this comparison to evaluate the representativeness of the sample. The second section presents the top five leadership components from the online survey, answering the first research question, "Do Marine Corps veterans apply USMC leadership components in their current leadership role?" In the third section, I present findings from the semi-structured interviews, built to answer the second research question, "Do Marine Corps veterans believe USMC leadership training can be applied to corporate organization development?"

Online Survey Respondent Profile Sample

The first part of the online survey gathered the demographic and career information of the respondents. These answers provided insight into the respondents' gender, race or ethnicity, when they entered the Marine Corps, years of service, highest rank attained, the years in their current leadership role, and their current leadership role experience level.

Gender

In the survey, respondents chose their gender. Table 5 shows the gender distribution of online survey respondents and USMC averages from fiscal years 2006-2016. One hundred eleven respondents were male (88.8%), 13 respondents were female (10.4%), and one respondent

preferred not to say (0.8%). Compared to USMC averages from 2006-2016 (Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity, 2016), males were slightly underrepresented, and females were slightly overrepresented in the sample. The USMC averages do not include Warrant or Chief Warrant Officer data. Although skewed toward male participation, this study's sample set was representative of historic USMC gender distribution averages from 2006-2016.

Table 5

Gender Sample Distribution of Online Survey Respondents and USMC Averages 2006-2016

Gender	Online Survey		USMC averages 2006-2016	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Male	111	88.80%	177,670	93.08%
Female	13	10.40%	13,206	6.92%
Prefer not to say	1	0.80%	0	0.00%

Race or Ethnicity

Respondents selected their race or ethnicity. Table 6 shows the race or ethnicity of online survey respondents and USMC averages from fiscal years 2006-2016 (Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity, 2016). The USMC averages do not include Warrant or Chief Warrant Officer data. The USMC averages also did not consider Hispanic ethnicity by race, and that ethnicity could only be Hispanic or non-Hispanic. Because the USMC averages data included Hispanic ethnicity as a reference only, comparing the respondents' data is problematic. Although skewed toward white participation, this study's sample set seems to be representative of historic USMC race/ethnicity distribution averages from 2006-2016.

Table 6

Race or Ethnicity Sample Distribution of Online Survey Respondents and USMC Averages 2006-2016

Race or Ethnicity	Online Survey		USMC average 2006-2016	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Hispanic or Latino	8	6.40%	N/A	N/A
White (not Hispanic or Latino)	98	78.40%	149,799	78.46%
Black or African American (not Hispanic or Latino)	3	2.40%	19,967	10.46%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (not Hispanic or Latino)	1	0.80%	1,742	0.91%
Asian (not Hispanic or Latino)	2	1.60%	4,481	2.35%
American Indian or Alaskan Native (not Hispanic or Latino)	3	2.40%	2,034	1.07%
Two or more races (not Hispanic or Latino)	3	2.40%	1,853	0.97%
Prefer not to say	7	5.60%	11,053	5.79%

Entry Year in the Marine Corps

Respondents selected their year of initial service in the Marine Corps. I then grouped their responses by decade. Table 7 presents the results of the data groupings. The sample set spanned seven decades, suggesting a trans-generational depth to the data, which may indicate that this study's findings may be applied to leaders of all ages.

Table 7

Entry Year in the Marine Corps Sample Distribution of Online Survey Respondents

Decade Entered USMC	Count	Percentage
1960	3	2.40%
1970	14	11.20%
1980	29	23.20%
1990	37	29.60%
2000	31	24.80%
2010	10	8.00%
2020	1	0.80%

Years of Service in the Marine Corps

Respondents selected their years of service in the Marine Corps. I then grouped their

responses into four-year blocks. Table 8 presents the results of the data groupings. The data

showed two primary groupings. About 53% of the sample served sixteen years or less, while the

remainder served between 17 and 32 years before serving in a current leadership role as a Marine

veteran. This distribution suggests an almost even balance of USMC experience levels between

those who served without reaching a 20-year tenured retirement and those who served after that.

Table 8

Years of Service in the Marine Corps Sample Distribution of Online Survey Respondents

Years of Service	Count	Percentage
1-4	24	19.20%
5-8	20	16.00%
9-12	13	10.40%
13-16	9	7.20%
17-20	17	13.60%
21-24	20	16.00%
25-28	9	7.20%
29-32	5	4.00%
33-36	6	4.80%
37-40	2	1.60%

Highest Rank in the Marine Corps

Respondents selected their highest rank attained in the Marine Corps. I then grouped their

responses. Table 9 presents the results of the data groupings. Respondents' highest rank spans the

full spectrum of ranks within the USMC, with significant representation at the noncommissioned

officer and field grade officer levels. The sample set was not representative of the rank

distribution of the USMC. However, because the USMC leadership components are standard to the fundamental training of all Marines, this skewing will not likely impact the overall study.

Table 9

Highest Rank Attained Sample Distribution of Online Survey Respondents

Rank Group	Count	Percentage
Junior Enlisted	2	1.60%
Noncommissioned Officer	35	28.00%
Staff Noncommissioned Officer	26	20.80%
Warrant Officer	3	2.40%
Company Grade Officer	14	11.20%
Field Grade Officer	43	34.40%
Flag Officer	2	1.60%

Years in Current Leadership Role

Respondents selected the number of years in their current leadership role. I then grouped their responses. Table 10 presents the results of the data groupings. It suggests that the sample contained Marine Corps veterans with a broad range of experience in private practice but weighted toward the lower and higher end. This data suggests a broad spectrum of tenure from which to make an informed assessment of the applicability of USMC leadership development in their current leadership role.

Table 10

Years in Current Leadership Role Sample Distribution of Online Survey Respondents

Years in Current Leadership Role	Count	Percentage
1-3 years	48	38.40%
4-6 years	27	21.60%
7-9 years	10	8.00%
10+ years	40	32.00%

Current Leadership Role Experience Level

Respondents selected their current leadership role experience level. Table 11 presents the results of the data groupings. The data suggests that the sample contained Marine Corps veterans with a broad range of current leadership role experience levels but weighted at the *Mid-Senior Level*. This weighting may be due to more respondents with this seniority level being active on LinkedIn or perhaps that USMC veterans enter civilian leadership positions at a higher level than internships, entry-level positions, or associates. The data suggests that the Marine veteran respondents are employed at levels of responsibility well beyond the *intern* and *entry level,* with over half currently serving in the *Mid-Senior* and *Director* levels. This finding also lends credence to the respondents' assessment of the applicability of USMC leadership training to their current leadership role.

Table 11

Years in Current Leadership Role Sample Distribution of Online Survey Respondents

Current Leadership Role Experience Level	Count	Percentage
Internship	0	0.00%
Entry Level	2	1.60%
Associate	5	4.00%
Mid-Senior Level	49	39.20%
Director	27	21.60%
Executive	19	15.20%
Owner/Founder	18	14.40%
Board of Directors	2	1.60%
Board Chair	3	2.40%

Online Survey Leadership Results

The second part of the online survey gathered respondents' selections of up to five USMC leadership components that were the most applicable to their leadership roles in the Marines and up to five in their current leadership roles. These selections provide insight into the possible application of USMC leadership training in corporate OD environments. I present the raw number of selections with their averages to see what leadership components might most apply to the total number of selections made.

Selections of USMC LD Components

Table 12 presents the selections of USMC LD components identified as most applicable while serving in the USMC and in the current leadership role and the corresponding percentage of the sample who selected that LD component.

The top five leadership components selected while in the USMC were integrity (n=70, 56.0% of respondents), decisiveness (n=61, 48.8% of respondents), initiative (n=52, 41.6% of respondents), know your Marines and look out for their welfare (n=51, 40.8% of respondents), and tied at n=45 with 36.0% of respondents were dependability and set the example.

The top five leadership components selected while in current leadership roles were initiative (n=59, 47.2% of respondents), integrity (n=55, 44.0% of respondents), judgment (n=55, 44.0% of respondents), dependability (n=45, 36.0% of respondents), and knowledge (n=43, 34.4% of respondents).

The top leadership components selected for both USMC and current leadership roles were integrity (n=125, 50.0% of respondents), initiative (n=111, 44.4% of respondents), decisiveness (n=100, 40.0% of respondents), judgment (n=96, 38.4% of respondents), and dependability (n=90, 36.0% of respondents). Three of these top selections, integrity, initiative,

Table 12

Sample Leadership Component Selections While in the USMC and Current Leadership Roles*

Leadership Component	In the USMC		In Current Leadership Role	
	Count	%	Count	%
Judgment	41	32.8%	55	44.0%
Justice	4	3.2%	4	3.2%
Decisiveness	61	48.8%	39	31.2%
Initiative	52	41.6%	59	47.2%
Dependability	45	36.0%	45	36.0%
Tact	12	9.6%	31	24.8%
Integrity	70	56.0%	55	44.0%
Endurance	12	9.6%	6	4.8%
Bearing	5	4.0%	10	8.0%
Unselfishness	23	18.4%	15	12.0%
Courage	22	17.6%	9	7.2%
Knowledge	19	15.2%	43	34.4%
Loyalty	10	8.0%	9	7.2%
Enthusiasm	6	4.8%	20	16.0%
Know yourself and seek self-improvement	21	16.8%	31	24.8%
Be technically and tactically proficient	31	24.8%	35	28.0%
Know your Marines and look out for their welfare	51	40.8%	22	17.6%
Keep your Marines informed	15	12.0%	18	14.4%
Set the example	45	36.0%	30	24.0%
Ensure the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished	23	18.4%	34	27.2%
Train your Marines as a team	12	9.6%	17	13.6%
Core value - Honor	15	12.0%	9	7.2%
Core value - Courage	10	8.0%	4	3.2%
Core value - Commitment	15	12.0%	17	13.6%

*n=125

and dependability, overlap between the top selections in USMC and corporate leadership roles. These three selections may indicate the most applicable leadership components in USMC and corporate leadership roles.

Summary of Sample and Sample Implications

Due to the anonymous nature of the online survey, I could not verify demographics for participation eligibility. However, due to the engagement, comments, and sharing of the LinkedIn posts soliciting participation, there is little to no reason to suspect that someone participating in the interviews was not qualified or that a respondent would falsify his or her demographics.

Semi-structured Interview Respondent Profile Sample

Although I stopped obtaining interest for interviews about 24 hours after the initial online survey solicitation, I do not have reason to believe this biased the type of people I interviewed. Two of the ten respondents were women, and the remainder were men. Compared to historical USMC averages, this survey sample was overrepresented by women and underrepresented by men. However, two reference points from women suggest better data than a single woman respondent. Table 13 presents the gender distribution of the interview respondents and the historical USMC averages.

Table 13

Gender Sample Distribution of Interview Respondents and USMC Averages 2006-2016

Gender	Online Survey		USMC averages 2006-2016	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Male	8	80.00%	177,670	93.08%
Female	2	20.00%	13,206	6.92%

Semi-structured Interview Results

I explored the four areas of USMC leadership training through semi-structured interviews with online respondents who volunteered for interviews. I also asked each of the ten participants if she or he believed that USMC LD applies to corporate OD.

Fostering Personal Leadership Skills Development

Derived from the USMC definition of leadership training, I first asked respondents about fostering their personal leadership skills in the Marine Corps and their current leadership roles. Then, I asked each participant to speak specifically about the similarities and differences they experienced in the two different environments.

Similarities Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

100% of the interviews stated there were similarities between fostering personal leadership skills development in USMC and corporate leadership roles. Two examples common to their responses are core leadership skill development and learning from others.

Core Leadership Skill Development. The first example, supported by 100% of respondents, acknowledged the value of possessing essential skills and competencies in USMC and corporate contexts. Developing core leadership skills—strategic thinking, decision-making, and effective communication—was fundamental to leadership efficacy. This theme explored structured approaches to leadership training that emphasized cultivating these essential skills. The military's rigorous training programs and operational experiences are platforms for developing disciplined, adaptable, and strategic leaders. Similarly, in the civilian sector, leadership development programs and professional growth initiatives aim to enhance these core competencies, preparing individuals for leadership roles. As one person stated,

> Before joining the Marine Corps, when you're coming out of high school, you have no real sense of direction, and how to handle yourself as a professional. So I joined the Marine Corps, and it was perfect to help foster those real core skills.

Another person shared,

> I think the overlap happens in the processes that especially the Marine Corps teaches you in terms of leadership development.

Learning from Others. This second example of the overlap between USMC and current leadership roles, supported by 80% of the interviews, underscores the importance of learning from the experiences, successes, and failures of others in the leadership journey. It highlights mentorship, observation, and feedback as crucial mechanisms through which individuals can acquire valuable leadership insights. Respondents stated that leaders in both military and civilian settings benefit from the guidance of experienced mentors, the observation of role models, and the feedback from peers and subordinates, facilitating continuous personal and professional development. One person shared,

> I've been privileged to serve around people who I think are great leaders throughout my career. And at first, they're all [senior to you]. And then you reach a point in your career where you're learning leadership actually from your peers and your subordinates as much if not more than from your leadership.

Another person stated,

> I attribute the fact that I had good leaders over me throughout my whole career, that I could watch, listen, and learn from and watch how they did things and pick the skills that I liked the most.

Differences Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

Nine of the ten interviews cited differences between the USMC and corporate environments for developing personal leadership skills. Some examples include structured progression versus flexibility, LD timelines, and consideration of emotions and personalities.

Structured Progression. This theme, mentioned by 80% of the respondents, highlights the differences in career progression between USMC service and civilian life. The USMC has a structured and hierarchical system with clearly defined steps for advancement and promotion. Specific milestones guide Marines through their career paths. In contrast, respondents often described the corporate world as offering more flexibility and requiring individuals to take more initiative in planning and advancing their careers. The civilian path may have different clarity regarding career progression, leading to differences in personal leadership development approaches. As one person pointed out,

> [As a civilian leader], if you misread the environment, [if] you misread subordinate personalities and communication skills, [if] you misread any of that and you act on that, and it produces a bad result, then okay, your learning curves just ended for you organizationally. The beauty of the military services is that doesn't happen for a long time. In private business, it normally happens a lot earlier. [The Marines] have a long flash-to-bang between when you're first exposed to leadership and how you're gradually held more accountable for increasingly senior posts of leadership.

Another person stated,

> In the Marine Corps, [promotion advancement] is extremely rigid. So, developing leaders is literally based on what you are assessed on. You have to be good at physical fitness, you have to be good on the shooting range, you have to do those things [to get promoted].

Consideration of Emotions and Personalities. Eighty percent of the interviews supported this example. It highlights the difference between the USMC and corporate contexts in considering emotions and personalities in personal development. In the Marines, there may often be a perception of a more rigid and structured system where feelings and emotions may receive less emphasis.

In contrast, the corporate world may prioritize individual personalities and emotional considerations for effective leadership and team dynamics. This difference in the role of

emotions and personalities can impact how individuals approach personal development. One interviewee explained:

> I really think personalities come more in play in the civilian world than they do in the Marine Corps. [Marines] look at what's on their sleeves, your knowledge, your background, and knowing your people. In some ways, it's no different in the civilian world. But I take feelings into more consideration in the civilian world than I did in the military. In the civilian world, I really need to take in their feelings into consideration.

Fostering Subordinate Leadership Skills Development

Building from the first area of USMC-defined leadership training, I asked respondents about fostering their subordinates' leadership skills in the Marine Corps and their current leadership roles. I asked each participant to speak specifically about similarities and differences they experienced in the two different environments.

Similarities Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

All ten interviews provided examples of the similarities between the USMC and corporate environments for fostering subordinate leadership skills development. Two examples across the interviews regarding these similarities are developing team members' skills and inclusive decision-making.

Developing Team Members' Skills. This example, mentioned by 100% of respondents, underscores the essential skill development aspect within the Marine Corps and corporate contexts. It reflects the commitment to fostering an environment where team members, especially newcomers, are integrated into the team and actively nurtured to enhance their skills. This investment in skill development ensures that every member contributes optimally, thus enhancing overall team performance. Therefore, in both Marine Corps and corporate settings, attention to skill development is considered indispensable for success. One respondent

highlighted the dedication to enhancing the abilities of new team members and ensuring they can

actively contribute to the team's goals, saying,

> You're only as strong as your weakest link. Anytime you have a new person, you really need to focus on developing their skills… you're pulling in somebody to help assist and support the team in this way.

Another person stated,

> We put people constantly in leadership positions. You don't get through boot camp without a certain number of Marines being made… they're thrust into a [leadership] situation where they're expected to do it.

Inclusive Decision-Making. This example, mentioned by 70% of those interviewed,

underscores the significance of collaboration, inclusive decision-making, and valuing diverse

perspectives within the USMC and corporate realms. It reflects the belief that the best decisions

often arise from the collective input of team members, irrespective of their rank or position. This

approach promotes a culture where every team member's voice is heard and valued and where

decision-making is transparent and inclusive. The underlying principle is to foster a sense of

ownership among team members regarding the decisions that impact them. This theme

recognizes the importance of soliciting input from subordinates, encouraging them to share their

insights, and ultimately making them feel invested in the decision-making process. This

approach may lead to more informed and effective decisions. One participant emphasized this

example, saying,

> So one of the things I like to do with my [civilian team] is make sure I ask them their opinion. [I share with them,] "This is the problem we are having. What do you think we ought to do?" I did the same thing in the Marine Corps with my senior enlisted [advisor] and my subordinate officers, and they [reply], "Ok, this is our problem [to solve].

Another person shared,

> Get the opinions of people no matter what decision you make. If your subordinates have a chance to have a say in the matter, then they will feel that they have a voice with what

went on, everyone was listened to, that they weren't discounted, and therefore they will embrace the decision that's made because they had a say in the decision.

Differences Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

Three of the ten interviews provided examples of the differences between the USMC and corporate environments for fostering subordinate leadership skills development. Given the low number of responses supporting the differences, it may be ineffective to extract meaningful data. However, two differences noted were the LD delivery style and the importance of accountability. The LD delivery style mentioned focused on adapting ways to interact with civilian team members in a corporate environment compared to fellow Marines. The difference in accountability centered around the methods to hold people accountable varies significantly in the corporate and USMC environments. Specifically mentioned, there is much more liberty to work after hours or to recall people before the start of the next day to hold them accountable in the USMC environment than in corporations.

Ensuring Mission Accomplishment

Continuing to explore the USMC definition of leadership training, I asked respondents to describe the similarities and differences in their leadership experiences in the Marine Corps and their current leadership roles regarding ensuring mission accomplishment.

Similarities Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

All ten interviews provided examples of the similarities between the USMC and corporate environments for ensuring mission accomplishment. Two common examples emerged across the interviews of a mission-centric approach and using a planning process.

Mission-Centric Approach. The first example, mentioned by 90% of respondents, delves into the mission-centric approach shared by the Marine Corps and the corporate world. It highlights the fundamental similarity in their dedication to achieving mission success. Whether it

is a military operation or a corporate project, the underlying principle is that each member has a

defined role and understands how to execute it effectively to ensure mission accomplishment.

One participant shared,

> I learned [mission accomplishment] from the Marine Corps. So, I took what I learned in the Marine Corps. If I had a deadline, it was done two days before and then looked at even more times. So I took that and that's one of the reasons our business is very successful because what I learned in the Marine Corps is a direct translation.

Another person stated,

> You accomplish your mission, you do your part, you do what you're supposed to do, you make sure that what needs to get done is done. Because the person to your right and left are depending on you to do [your part], and you are depending on them to do [their part].

> **Use of a Planning Process.** The second example, referenced in eight of the ten

interviews, underscores how the Marine Corps and the corporate sector recognize the value of

well-thought-out plans and the need to adapt in dynamic situations. In both contexts, leaders

emphasize the importance of teamwork, the ability to adjust plans on the fly, and the necessity of

maintaining a sense of humor amidst unexpected challenges. One participant spoke to the

necessity of having a plan and being willing to adapt it by sharing,

> The Marine Corps has a great planning process. I think as leaders, we need to apply a planning process to how we think we're going to accomplish the mission. You know, sometimes we're given missions; we have no clue on how we're going to accomplish them. And that's where teamwork comes in. And to say, "Okay, here's what we got to do, I have no clue how to get there. Let's put our heads together and come up with a way to do it." So you can have this well-thought-out plan. But you got to know that well-thought-out plans don't always work. And so you've got to be able to work on the fly. Now, you have to do the same thing in the civilian world. Have a plan, have your team together, hear from the team, change the plan, or let them change the plan. Knowing what's the mission, then what are we accomplishing and everybody has to understand that. But know that it goes back to that flexibility, adaptability, [and] above all, keep a sense of humor.

Another person stated,

I took [this approach] from the Marine Corps: [define] purpose, intent, someone to take charge, and then someone to execute what you need. And then bam, there you go: mission accomplishment.

Differences Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

Eight of ten interviews provided examples of the differences between the USMC and corporate environments for ensuring mission accomplishment. There were varying examples of differences, including clearly defined, specialized roles. However, the importance of accountability was a typical example shared by most respondents.

Importance of Accountability. Eighty percent of respondents stressed the importance of accountability as a critical difference between USMC and corporate leadership roles. The Marine Corps leadership style emphasizes that even the most minor tasks carry immense importance. This stringent approach heightens the gravity of accountability, demanding unwavering commitment. In contrast, the corporate arena operates more flexibly regarding the significance of tasks and roles. This varying approach sometimes blunts the seriousness with which individuals approach their responsibilities. One participant, working in the global financial industry, shared,

I don't have the luxury on the outside of stressing that level of importance [of accountability]. And actually, I think it's made it incredibly difficult for me on the outside. In terms of how serious that I do take something.

Another person stated,

So there's a zero-defect mentality [of failure in the Marine Corps] because of the type of relationships you have with your fellow Marines and what would be on the outside [as] your co-workers or your fellow employees. On the outside, the drive, the motivation, I think, is completely different.

Another offered,

When you're in uniform, you can always trust [your fellow Marines]. On the Marine Corps side of the house, you get the mission done and do it at the absolute highest quality. And [Marines] will work around the clock until it's done. So I learned those behaviors myself, and also I learned to expect that from the Marines that I worked with. On the civilian side, not so much.

Enhancing Team Welfare

Completing the four-part exploration of the USMC definition of leadership training, I

asked respondents about the similarities and differences in their leadership experiences in the

Marine Corps and their current roles regarding enhancing team welfare.

Similarities Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

All ten interviews provided examples of the similarities between the USMC and

corporate environments for enhancing team welfare. Two common examples emerged across the

interviews regarding these similarities: creating a sense of unity and establishing trust.

Creating a Sense of Unity. This theme, mentioned by 80% of respondents, involves

creating a sense of unity, with familial-like bonds, within the Marine Corps and corporate

settings. In the Marine Corps, when individuals earn the title of Marine, they become part of a

lifelong family characterized by trust, loyalty, and mutual support.

Similarly, in corporate leadership roles, building a cohesive and trusted team fosters a

familial atmosphere, encouraging teamwork and shared goals. This example underscores the

significance of a close-knit unit in enhancing team welfare. One participant shared,

> The biggest overlap comes back to that familial unit. In the military, the second you and I
> got our eagle, globe, and anchor, even the day we stepped on Parris Island or MCRD San
> Diego, but when you get that eagle, globe, and anchor, and you're called "Marine," the
> first time, you're part of a family forever, no one can ever, ever take it from you,
> regardless of your time, your discharge type, etc. You're part of an elite group.

Another person stated,

> I was able to take that attitude into bad situations in a corporate environment and say,
> "It's okay; we can achieve this together. We're on the same team. We can overcome this.
> We can soldier through this."

Establishing Trust. This example, mentioned by 70% of respondents, highlights the role

of trust in both military and corporate leadership in enhancing team welfare. Trust is a crucial

element, whether it is trust within the chain of command in the military or trust among employees in a corporate setting. Trusting relationships contribute to well-being and foster an environment where team members feel supported and valued. One participant highlighted this theme, "Instead of saying, 'know your Marines and look out for their welfare,' I believe you can also say, 'know, your employees look out for their well-being.' It's the same concept."

Differences Between USMC and Corporate Leadership Roles

Three of ten interviews cited differences between the USMC and corporate environments for enhancing team welfare. Given the low number of responses supporting the differences, it may be ineffective to extract meaningful data. Among these responses highlighted a difference in how to implement team welfare and an even greater concern for litigation in the corporate environment than in the USMC.

USMC LD Applied to Corporate OD

To conclude the interview, I asked each participant, "Can USMC LD be applied to corporate organization development?" Although there was a shared emphasis that the approach will vary from organization to organization and that the specific leadership development methods they experienced in the USMC would likely require adaptation for most corporate settings, 100% of participants agreed that USMC LD could be applied to corporate organization development. One person stated, "I think the corporate world could benefit more from Marine Corps leadership-type training." While another offered,

> I believe that [the USMC leadership] traits and principles are the fundamental basics for leadership at all levels. So before anybody is put into a managerial role of any significance, I think they should be familiarized with those. I wouldn't suggest that every corporation in America adopt the Marine Corps' 14 leadership traits and leadership principles. But I think it would behoove them, consistent with their culture, to evaluate those and to make sure that they've developed their own [leadership traits and principles], especially core values.

Another person responded,

> I would say absolutely, yes; you just need to be able to take it and approach it from a different lens. Marine Corps leadership training is phenomenal in the way of how it builds up an individual and teaches you to enhance the people around you and really focus on more of the big picture, which I think is needed more in the corporate world.

Another person stated,

> I think absolutely you can. As a matter of fact, I would even wager to say that many successful organizations are probably that way, because they have developed or incorporated some form of military leadership or military process in what they do. And I never saw that more than with project management.

Another person offered,

> I think at the micro level, when you break it down, you talk about philosophies, the principles, the traits, I think 100% [it can be applied]. It is both tangible, needed, and acceptable. I think it fits well.

Key Findings

Based on the responses from the online survey, USMC veterans apply many of the USMC leadership components in their current leadership roles. Three of the five top selections between USMC and corporate leadership roles in the survey responses overlap: integrity, initiative, and dependability.

The unanimous responses from the semi-structured interviews suggest that USMC veterans apply USMC LD in their current leadership roles. Table 12 presents a summary of the semi-structured interview responses below. Also, there was unanimous agreement from those interviewed that USMC LD can be applied to corporate OD, with all participants expressing success in already doing so.

Table 14

Interview Response Summary

7	Percentage citing similarities	Examples of similarities	Percentage describing example	Percentage citing differences	Examples of differences	Percentage describing example
Fostering Personal Leadership Skills Development	100%	Core leadership skill development	100%	90%	Structured Progression	80%
		Learning from others	80%		Consideration of Emotions	80%
Fostering Subordinate Leadership Skills Development	100%	Developing team members' skills	100%	30%	Leadership development style	N/A
		Inclusive decision-making	70%		Accountability	N/A
Ensuring Mission Accomplishment	100%	Mission-centric approach	90%	80%	Accountability	80%
		Use of a planning process	80%		Clearly-defined, specialized roles	N/A
Enhancing Team Welfare	100%	Creating a sense of unity	80%	30%	Personal life boundaries	N/A
		Establishing trust	70%		Concern for litigation	N/A

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study examined the applicability of USMC leadership development to corporate OD by answering these two research questions:

1. Do Marine Corps veterans apply USMC leadership components in their current leadership role?

2. Do Marine Corps veterans believe USMC leadership development can be applied to corporate organization development?

This chapter discusses the research findings, presents potential implications for applying USMC LD to corporate OD, identifies possible study limitations, and suggests recommendations for future research.

Findings Discussion

Based on the responses to the online survey, Marine Corps veterans apply many USMC leadership components in their current leadership roles. Answering the first research question affirmatively, the leadership components most applied between USMC and current leadership roles include integrity, initiative, and dependability. Other leadership components that also seemed to transfer to the corporate leadership roles include decisiveness and judgment. Answering the second research question, based on semi-structured interviews, Marine Corps veterans unanimously agreed that the four areas of USMC LD – personal leadership skills development, fostering subordinate leadership skills development, ensuring mission accomplishment, and enhancing team welfare – applied to corporate organization development. On the other hand, eighty percent of the interviewees believed the USMC's emphasis on accountability was different and not as strong in corporations. Underlying this emphasis on accountability was the shared, voluntarily-earned identity as a United States Marine. Overall,

100% of the interviews agreed that USMC LD can be, and in many cases has been, and is currently, applied to corporate OD to significant effect.

The results suggest that although the specific leadership components vary by individual and leadership role, the overall approach of USMC LD–developing personal and subordinate leadership skills, ensuring mission accomplishment, and enhancing team welfare–applies to corporate OD. This observation overlaps with Stogdill (1948) in his literature review of personal factors associated with leadership,

Leadership is not a matter of passive status, or of the mere possession of some combination of traits. It appears rather to be a working relationship among members of a group, in which the leader acquires status through active participation and demonstration of his capacity for carrying cooperative tasks through to completion (pg. 66).

Additionally, the Marine veterans interviewed unanimously stated that they had already adapted and applied various aspects of USMC LD in their current leadership role. If a corporation seeks talent with leadership experience, Marine veterans are a potential deep well from which to draw.

These findings support my research on the theoretical foundations of leadership development and common corporate OD programs, with two notable exceptions: the Great Man Theory and DE&I programs. Because the Great Man Theory views traits as innate and immutable, it conflicts with USMC LD approaches around personal and subordinate leadership skills development. Also, USMC LD's emphasis on cohesion, voluntary participation, and accountability conflicts with DE&I training programs. This conflict may be partly due to the often coercive nature of DE&I training (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018) and the inefficiency of training programs to create lasting change unless there is genuine, voluntary participation in the program (Schein, 1999). Additionally, the USMC LD language is unifying and integrative, forming a

shared identity. For example, "'United States Marine' is more than a title. It is a shared identity that bonds all Marines to the purpose we fight for" (U.S. Marine Corps, 2021).

Individuals or teams engaged in corporate LD and OD efforts may benefit from this study in three ways: the benefits of using organizationally-determined traits to guide leadership development, promoting leadership and accountability at all organization levels as a means to ensuring organization success and enhancing team welfare, and the efficacy of on-going group training for lasting change.

Organizationally Determined Trait-based Leadership Development

USMC LD is deeply rooted in its core values of honor, courage, and commitment. These values align with the overarching mission to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States…" (Oath of Office, 1966). Research into successful transformational behavioral change highlights the importance of continuously developing specific organizational traits and values for effective change (Lewin, 1943; Schein et al., 1961). Thus, organizations aiming for transformation can initially establish a set of traits aligned with organizationally determined values geared towards a shared objective that all members can adopt and embody.

This study indicates that integrity, initiative, and dependability could be foundational traits for organizational leadership, inspired by USMC veterans' application of these qualities in military and corporate leadership contexts. Such leadership components can catalyze and sustain transformational change when integrated into the organizational culture. By adopting these traits, organizations can foster a leadership environment that mirrors the effectiveness and resilience seen in USMC LD practices. This approach enhances individual and team performance and aligns organizational efforts towards common goals, thus facilitating a cohesive and adaptive leadership model.

This study suggests aligning LD objectives and traits to a corporation's core values. As indicated in the survey and interviews, this approach has worked well in the USMC and may also work well in the corporate environment.

Promote Leadership at All Levels

Leadership and accountability are foundational elements within the USMC. From the outset of Basic Recruit Training, the USMC instills a principle of mutual accountability among recruits. Whenever there are two or more recruits, one is the leader and is responsible for their actions. This policy underscores the USMC's primary LD goal: cultivating leadership traits in all Marines, empowering them to undertake increasingly significant roles within the Marine Corps and society (U.S. Marine Corps, 1998).

Day (2000) articulates that traditionally, leadership has been regarded as an individual-level competency, focusing on developing personal knowledge, skills, and abilities through targeted training. This individual-centric view of leader development is vital, yet Day proposes a complementary approach emphasizing collective leadership development. This alternative perspective advocates for utilizing social capital and engaging the entire organization in the development process, thereby embedding leadership within the organizational culture through trust-based relationships (Day, 2000). From this standpoint, leadership is an emergent quality of effective organizational design, suggesting that all levels of an organization can develop leadership capabilities, not just within selected individuals.

Adapting the USMC's LD framework for application could offer a comprehensive strategy for organizational development, focusing on individual leadership skills and cultivating a leadership culture throughout the organization (Eva et al., 2019). This approach aligns with the broader perspective that effective leadership development is not solely about individual growth

but also about creating an environment where leadership is a shared responsibility and an integral part of the organizational structure (Day, 2000; Leskiw & Singh, 2007; Worley et al., 2014).

On-going Group Training

Studies highlight the importance of continuous group training for achieving sustainable organizational transformation (Lewin, 1943, 1946, 1947; Schein, 1999; Schein et al., 1961). The USMC exemplifies this through its LD initiatives, including professional training programs, unit-based education, and individual learning efforts. These initiatives consistently focus on core leadership components throughout a Marine's career, transitioning these principles from theoretical concepts to practical, everyday skills through active engagement in group settings. This approach facilitates the deliberate practice of leadership and embeds these principles into the daily routine, enhancing their application and impact.

Additionally, the USMC LD approach is multifaceted, incorporating, for example, face-to-face training, on-the-job training, virtual training, mentoring, and stretch assignments. Incorporating a holistic approach to bringing LD into a daily, ongoing conversation might benefit organizations. The USMC LD approach overlaps with the 70-20-10 formula identified by Lombardo and Eichinger (1996), in which a person realizes a current or future need and voluntarily begins to develop to satisfy that need. Successful development experiences can be grouped into 70% on-the-job training, 20% feedback, and 10% formal courses and reading. Voluntary engagement to solve current and future problems is so effective that it can save a person's life (Strassman et al., 1956).

Implementing a comprehensive group training program can be instrumental for organizations aiming to bolster their leadership capabilities. Such programs encourage the continuous development and refinement of leadership skills across all levels of the organization,

fostering a strong culture of leadership and collaboration. For organizations lacking the internal resources or infrastructure to support ongoing group training, partnering with a reputable training and development consultancy can be an effective alternative. A consultancy that tailors its services to align with the organization's specific traits and objectives can provide a valuable external resource, offering specialized training solutions that facilitate organizational growth and adaptability.

Limitations

A potential limitation of this study was the sample selection. Participation in the online survey was voluntary following an online solicitation from LinkedIn, and interview participants were a voluntary subset of the survey sample. To guard against bias, I only interviewed those who volunteered. Additionally, I responded to each of the approximately twenty Marines volunteering for interviews. I scheduled the first thirteen who replied, three of whom canceled or did not attend the interview and could not reschedule before the end of the data-gathering timeframe. This method allowed for the randomness of the survey sample. Finally, based on the demographics of race/ethnicity and gender of the sample compared to historical USMC demographics, the sample seems to be representative.

Another limitation was treating the different USMC leadership components as independent and mutually exclusive. The top five leadership components were chosen based on selection frequency. Given the long list, there are likely overlaps between the leadership components. Therefore, bundling related components might increase support for the top five leadership components.

An additional limitation may be observer bias. Having undergone significant leadership development as an enlisted Marine and commissioned officer over a fifteen-year career, I wanted

to see if what I learned in the Marines was applicable in corporate settings beyond my own anecdotal experiences. To limit this possibility, I utilized a quantitative survey to generate data on USMC leadership components applied to corporate leadership roles. Additionally, I utilized published definitions of USMC leadership training in the interviews to create open-ended questions with my interview participants. I looked at the transcripts to guide my analysis and for examples common in the interview responses.

Future Research Recommendations

Exploring strategic adaptations of USMC LD techniques to corporate OD programs presents a promising research avenue. Some opportunities to implement adapted USMC LD techniques are at the onboarding, continuing, managerial, and executive levels of corporate training. Linking the adapted training programs to organization effectiveness could yield insightful revelations regarding USMC LD methodologies' broader applicability and effectiveness in non-military settings. A research question could be, "Can adapting and adopting USMC LD techniques in corporate OD settings improve organizational effectiveness?"

Additionally, insights into voluntary, highly selective military components, such as the Navy SEALs, Green Berets, and Delta Force, may provide unique insights distinct from previous studies on the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

Conducting cluster analysis of the various, likely overlapping leadership components may provide additional insights into the efficacy of some leadership components compared to others when applied in USMC and corporate leadership roles.

Conducting a comparative analysis involving three distinct groups—an untreated control group, a group subjected to contemporary OD strategies, and another employing the USMC LD

framework—could illuminate the comparative efficacy and broader applicability of the USMC LD approach in enhancing organizational performance and culture.

Finally, developing a comprehensive online survey to assess the perceived importance of specific leadership components within and beyond the Marine Corps could facilitate deeper data-driven insights. Such an approach may enable a more nuanced understanding of which USMC LD principles are most effectively translatable to and impactful in corporate OD scenarios, potentially guiding more targeted and effective integration strategies.

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