

# KAZGUU LIBERAL ARTS DIGEST

VOLUME 03  
MAY 2022



"KLAD" is a student journal first published at M. Narikbayev Kazguu University School of liberal arts. This journal is aimed at enhancing students' involvement into science and research.



## INFORMATION ABOUT THE JOURNAL

“KLAD” is a student journal first published at M. Narikbayev Kazguu University School of liberal arts. This journal is aimed at enhancing students’ involvement into science and research.

«KLAD” journal admits for publication various types of articles: original research, review articles, short reports or essays, reflections, case studies, methodologies and cases in english; containing the results of fundamental and applied research in the field of philosophy and identity, history of kazakhstan, pedagogy, linguistics and methods of teaching languages, translation, and tourism.

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PART 02

KAZGUU LIBERAL ARTS DIGEST

BOOK  
REVIEWS



# LEADERSHIP STRATEGY AND TACTICS: FIELD MANUAL BY JOCKO WILLINK

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**Abstract:** This paper reviews the book Leadership Strategy and Tactics: Field Manual by John 'Jocko' Willink. Jocko Willink is a former Navy SEAL officer from America with an extensive experience in leading other people. The book review sheds a light on the main topics considered by the author and correlates these ideas to personal experience. In the first part, the ideas of the author on the Leadership Strategies are discussed. They are foundations and core principles of leadership that allow readers to understand the prerequisites. Jocko Willink's Leadership Tactics are discussed in the second part of the book review. In addition, at the end of each section of the Book Review, some suggestions for practical application are presented.

**Keywords:** leadership, strategies, tactics, manual.

## INTRODUCTION

This review paper builds on the book of Leadership Strategy and Tactics: Field Manual by John 'Jocko' Willink and prepared by the group of three students. This paper reflects our common perception of leadership as we made great efforts to analyze the entire content and come to a common understanding. In this book review we highlighted the most important and noteworthy themes from the book and demonstrated their connection to our experience.

## BOOK SUMMARY

Jocko Willink is a retired American Navy SEAL officer who tries to share his vast experience of combat leadership with a world community. His long-term experience of serving in Navy SEAL has dramatically changed his attitude to life. Starting as an enlisted man with no distinctive features, John made his way to a commander of the platoon by developing his own strategies

and tactics to become a better version of himself. The variety of leadership approaches makes this book a great tool to be used not only by novice, but also more experienced leaders.

This book consists of Introduction, Leadership Strategies part, Leadership Tactics part and Conclusion. Leadership Strategies shed a light on the foundations and core principles that allow readers to understand the prerequisites and the theory of leadership that makes some leaders more successful than the others. Leadership Tactics emphasizes the practical part including necessary skills and maneuvers to take a step forward and guide others under your command.

All the concepts are developed based on the personal experience of the author as he backs them up with real-life and practical examples. Although all the recommendations given by Jocko are from a military point of view, they can be easily applied in work-related situations and for

the personal growth of each individual. Moreover, the ideas of the book coincide with the beliefs and thoughts we have shaped as a team during the Leadership Psychology classes. The following paragraphs review the core notions in more detail in order to draw a holistic picture of the John's theory of leadership and they will contain our honest personal reflection on them.

## LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

Strategy planning is one of the most important principles of leadership that provides team members with a sense of direction and outlines the clear and visible steps to reach the cohesion. As a SEAL platoon leader, Jocko has been taught many lessons from his own failures occurred on the battlefield, which eventually laid the foundation for the development of the following powerful leadership strategies that could be also implemented in ordinary life situations.

That being said, Jocko emphasizes that leadership is always about building trust and relationships between fire team members. As long as we have a common assignment, we could not agree more with the idea that good relationships lead to effective communication, and the fact that the more people trust each other, the stronger they will become as a team. Good relationship means being honest. The Leadership Psychology course has several group works trying to make us act as leaders. We have to tell the truth to our peers to effectively accomplish a task. As we always try to use our true intentions when giving feedbacks to each other during the project works, we share Jocko's opinion that this behaviour is appropriate both in military life and any other fields.

Despite the fact that armed operations had a great impact on Jocko's worldview and ideology, he showed himself as a caring and aware person. "You are the most important member" is what he always

tells his subordinates to strengthen their confidentiality and assure that they are highly appreciated (Willink, 2020, p. 97). This strategy can double the motivation of the employees, as it does not require much efforts, however there are also some limitations. For example, we should use words with a great caution. Leaders who use too many words have a risk to lose their credibility in front of their subordinates. At some point we ourselves realized that empty words become meaningful when supported by the relevant actions. Leaders should always remember that "the more they talk, the less people listen to them" (Willink, 2020, p. 41). We do think that seeking the balance between too much and too little information given is the one of the crucial leadership strategies.

Another strategy that determines the success or failure of any task refers to incentives that raise the pride having both positive and negative effects. Negative effects reveal when individuals feel more superior than others. As a result, the ignorant actions may disrupt the team from the inside because 'leadership is not about you, it is about the team', so these people may cause a danger to integrity (Willink, 2020, p. 218). On the contrary, the unit pride is something that can be instilled at the early stage of group work being a driving force to better results and performance. Pride comes from the past performance, people or place you work or study with. Studying at KazGUU University with a competent academic staff is a good reason to be proud of and never allow each other to the established performing standards.

## LEADERSHIP TACTICS

Any tactic always starts with the first move determining the pace and the results of the battle. The leadership tactics builds on the concept that any process starts at the moment when leaders decide to take a step forward. Jocko perfectly describes this momentary process as a time when no one takes responsibility under high pressure.

Therefore, there should always be a person who can take initiative in the right time and prove themselves reliable in a critical situation. To some extent this may seem obvious, but high-quality work in unpleasant circumstances and determination is what makes people powerful leaders. Another tactic here is to focus not only on yourself and the final goal, but on the way how your team can contribute to the common cause. As students who worked the whole course as one team, we realized how important it is to care and help each other to achieve one common goal. This simple principle has led us to better implementation of our individual skills and knowledge within the group projects.

Jocko once said that 'there can be no leadership when there is no team' (Willink, 2020, p. 68). That simple quote alone shows how much impactful the way the leaders approach their team members may be. Navy SEAL missions often require deploying troops far away from the target, so the entire platoon usually makes the final approach on their feet. That means that there are always some team members going in the tail. Being last is always a challenge due to the fog of war and zero understanding of what is happening around those at the beginning of the row, especially if the enemy starts unexpected ambushed shootout. That is why it is important for a leader to make sure that everybody is informed about every minute on their way to the target. Being informed is unmatched in that scenarios but let us reflect on our everyday lives. Have you ever noticed how the performance changes when your managers explain the need for your certain job at your working place? Having an understanding of how your contribution moves the process is already an excellent motivation. The correlation in leadership between extremely dangerous situations and our ordinary lives is something that people are usually missing being in a routine. Soldiers who are aware of approaching enemies and ready to respond to any attack, and the employees of the companies, who

understand what they need to do are the scariest performers for their opponents.

Without disputing the importance of approaching people and understanding a group of subordinates, it is extremely undesirable to become the 'Easy Button' for them. The concept of 'Easy Buttons' goes for those leaders who are willing to do all the job by themselves without challenging their teams. No challenges imply no room for improvement. Moreover, this ineffective approach lays more responsibility on the leader's shoulders making them much slower to react to opponent moves and endangering the entire team. The lack of maneuvering allows the enemy to make actions, which logically gives them an upper hand. The entire idea builds on the constant movement, even the slightest one that may lead people to the highest hills. According to our personal experience, making several small steps towards our goals always shortens the distance, even if it is less than 5% of the whole progress.

## CONCLUSION

The Leadership Strategy and Tactics: Field Manual is an easy-to-read book that is highly recommended for reading not only for military servants as it may seem at a first glance, but for any person who wants to strengthen and improve their way of leading. The book provided us with knowledge which can be beneficial when conducting our future group projects. In this review we tried to correlate the core concepts of the book with our life experience and the Leadership Psychology course.

## REFERENCES

Willink, J. (2020). Leadership Strategy and Tactics: Field Manual. Macmillan Publishers Aus.