

Fredrick William Baron von Steuben at Valley Forge: A Case Study of the Art and Science of Leading Organizations Through Change

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Fredrick William Baron von Steuben at Valley Forge: A Case Study on the Art and Science of Leading Organizations Through Change, by MAJ Thomas C. Shandy, 43 pages.

Fredrick William Baron von Steuben made a vital contribution to the readiness of the Continental Army at Valley Forge by balancing the “art” of leadership with the “science” of drill and procedure. His method improved the psychological capacity of individuals to perform complicated movements under stress while leveraging the uniqueness of American character. He mentored the ragged colonial army into a more cohesive force that was confident and ready to fight a European style battle. Cohesive teams drive readiness from the tactical to the strategic level. FM 6-22 and ADP 6-0 discuss the characteristics of building teams enabled by the mission command philosophy but does not provide a clear example or direction for moving forward. ADP 6-22 touches on leading organizations through change and methods of influence but requires context to clarify concepts and better inform practice. A study of Steuben’s example along with additional leadership theorists can provide clarity for future practice.

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Abbreviations

ADP Army Doctrine Publication

FM Field Manual

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Section 1: Introduction

I am now convinced beyond a doubt, that unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place in that line this Army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these three things. Starve—dissolve—or disperse.

—General George Washington to Henry Laurens from Valley Forge, 1777

General George Washington faced a complex set of problems from the start of the revolution to build, train, and sustain a force against an experienced and professional adversary. He needed to win battles at the tactical level, but he also needed to elevate the professionalism of the army at the strategic level. The stoic commander needed an experienced officer to make big changes while the army based at Valley Forge for the winter. He needed help to implement a system of training, readiness, and discipline. Fortunately, an ambitious and experienced Prussian officer arrived at camp in February of 1778.

Fredrick William Baron von Steuben confidently inspected his dark blue regimental cloak adorned with the Star of Fidelity one last time as he finally approached Valley Forge. He traversed the thick mud and melting snow to translate pleasantries with General Washington but was surprised by the cool and quick reception. The general wasted little time escorting the stocky German as their horses slopped along the mucky trail, riding side by side further into the camp. Expectations of the baron were unclear despite the celebrity like reception he received after first meeting with congressional delegates. Still, the sound of soldiers shouting commands and the smell of smoke from burning green wood were all too familiar. Sleet began to fall, and the temperature dropped below freezing as dark clouds closed in on the last ray of sun. He knew he must prove his worth to Washington to earn promotion and command of troops in battle.¹

¹ The titles “de” and “von” are observed in multiple sources concerning Stueben. The title of “von” indicates the origin of Prussian nobility and will be used for this work. Steuben only used the term “de” in personal writings to refer to himself; David M. Ludlum, *Early American Winters 1604-1820* (Boston: American Meteorological Society, 1966), 105; Steuben to the Baron de Frank, 4 July 1779, in

Baron von Steuben increased the readiness of the Continental Army at Valley Forge through standardized training and drill. His method transformed a ragged colonial army into a cohesive force that was ready for a spring offensive. Washington was continually frustrated with the lack of discipline in camp, the poor oversight by officers over their men, and the lack of standardized training and procedure. He repeatedly ordered his officers to exercise their soldiers in drill and to “teach them the use of their legs,” but officers did not have the experience required to conduct standardized exercises.²

The Continental Army contained five regionally organized divisions. Washington wanted divisions to form and maneuver quickly in the open field, but each regiment was distinctive in training, experience, and leadership. Steuben simplified and standardized drill to bring an army of citizen-soldiers to an acceptable level of readiness for large-scale maneuvers. His work galvanized Washington’s army during the wintery conditions and supply shortages of 1777-1778 for the fighting season.³

Steuben’s training and leadership had impacts beyond Valley Forge. The Americans had showed endurance and exceptional bravery in previous battles at Bunker Hill, Trenton, and Princeton, but Monmouth was the first test of Steuben’s training method. During the battle, Washington’s army displayed unified maneuver against overwhelming artillery and musket fire. Despite the initial retreat of Major General Charles Lee, officers and soldiers displayed a new level of trust and confidence in one another and withstood an unprecedented duel of artillery. They maintained their lines against enemy charges and demonstrated skill with the bayonet. The British claimed success at Monmouth because they left the field under darkness to continue a

Kapp, (New York: Mason Brothers, 1859), 655; Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 75-76.

² George Washington, Circular Instructions to the Brigade Commanders, 26 May 1777, *The Papers of George Washington, Revolutionary War Series*, ed Philander D. Chase, vol. 9, 28 March 1777-10 June 1777 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 532-533.

³ “Valley Forge Muster Roll,” accessed 1 October 2019, <http://valleyforgemusterroll.org/encampment.asp>.

planned forced march uncontested, but the Americans clearly believed that they drove the British from the field. Either way, the results increased the confidence of soldiers and officers to fight on equal footing with the British.⁴

Steuben's work continued after Valley Forge and Monmouth. His Blue Book provided a base line for rules, regulations, and traditions that lasted until Winfield Scott adopted the French Army Regulations in 1835. In 1778, the baron's regulations produced major personnel changes in infantry regiments to improve the effectiveness of officers and men. The Continentals were a well-trained army by July of 1779. Washington's forces continued to experience personnel shortages into 1780, but fought well in a variety of circumstances.⁵

The Prussian drillmaster had no particular task or title initially at Valley Forge, but clearly had intentions of promotion and combat command in mind. Even so, he understood the conviction of the citizen-soldier and tailored an appropriate training path to improve readiness. What was Steuben's secret to success? What specific leadership attributes and characteristics did Steuben leverage to implement organizational change and build unity at Valley Forge? What were his training methods, and why were they effective? How do drill and procedure impact readiness and unit cohesion? How can his example be applied to the contemporary environment? Can lessons be drawn about managing change within organizations from his actions? Leaders can learn from his example of balancing authority and influence. He used the art and science of leadership to implement organizational change and build readiness.

Based on the historiography, doctrinal readings, and theoretical leadership studies, Fredrick William Baron von Steuben implemented organizational change through the use of multiple leadership tools. Steuben's work is an example of the *art* of influence combined with the

⁴ Alexander Hamilton to Elias Boudinot, 5 July 1778, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold C. Syrett, vol.1, 1768–1778 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 510–514.

⁵ Robert K. Wright, *The Continental Army* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2006), 150-52.

science of drill, procedure, and presence. The baron created resonance with the tough and independent Americans through a balance of humor, leadership, and discipline. He applied these tools at a critical time to get the best out of his soldiers. His training generated trust between the officers and their soldiers by forcing them to work closely together. His instruction was charismatic and even intriguing to the men. He provided officers with an example of leadership and gave soldiers a boost in confidence. His approach to drill improved the psychological capacity to perform complicated movements under stress and the chaos of battle. The baron's hard work was displayed at Monmouth on 28 June 1778. Steuben's example of leadership and training provides clarity for concepts described in current army leadership doctrine. Technology, tactics, and strategy may evolve, but the challenges of leading organizational change remain the same.⁶

US Army Doctrine discusses how leaders manage change. Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-0 and Field Manual (FM) 6-22 require leaders to build cohesive teams to accomplish the mission. ADP 6-22 describes leadership competencies to help drive organizational change and improve readiness for mission accomplishment. Using this historical context, a closer examination of the Continental Army at Valley Forge can lead to better understanding the art and science of managing organizational change.

Steuben's work at Valley Forge provides a positive example of balancing leadership attributes and competencies. The baron's leadership style is comparable to the contemporary leadership requirements model in ADP 6-22, but psychological and behavioral theory provide additional depth to the doctrinal concepts demonstrated by the baron's approach.

History, theory, and doctrine provide a lens to study Steuben's leadership. The works of Paul Lockhart, Wayne Bodle, David Hackett Fischer, Mark Lender, Garry Stone, and Fredrick Kapp provide a detailed understanding of the events that occurred before, during and after the

⁶ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 82; Anthony King, *Frontline: Combat and Cohesion in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11.

Continental Army's encampment at Valley Forge. Steuben's personal writings and correspondence with George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and other observers describe his method. Psychological and leadership theorists, including Daniel Goleman, John Kotter, Anthony King, Mary Jo Hatch, Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann provide a deeper understanding about why his method made such a significant impact. Historical research through a doctrinal and theoretical lens provide direction for future practice and study.

Leaders at all levels must be able to implement organizational change. Managing change effectively increases cohesion and builds a favorable climate. The Fortieth Chief of Staff of the Army, General James C. McConville, clearly outlines the importance of building cohesive teams to prepare for future conflict. He discusses the obligation of army leaders to build cohesive teams that are highly trained, disciplined, and ready. Cohesive effort drives readiness from the tactical to the strategic level. Today's army is in the process of tremendous change including updated doctrine, modernized equipment, and a new physical fitness assessment. Leaders must manage these changes carefully to ensure they resonate with soldiers. ADP 6-22 explains leading organizations through change but requires context to better inform practice. FM 6-22 and ADP 6-0 discuss the characteristics of building teams enabled by the mission command philosophy but does not provide a clear example. Steuben developed his training method from his experience as a soldier, leader, diplomat, and educator to provide discipline and cohesion to the Continental Army. He accomplished this task with a dynamic leadership presence and limited resources in austere conditions over a few short months. An examination of these events can provide insight on how to quickly build cohesive organizations in the future.⁷

⁷ US Department of the Army, "Fortieth Chief of Staff of the Army Initial Message to the Army Team" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019).

Literature Review

The Prussian drillmaster understood the unique culture of the Continental Army and tailored his initial training method accordingly. Washington shaped the ingredients that made up the army to provide a sense of purpose and a model for conduct. Even so, American soldiers were much different than those of the Prussian Army. Continentals did not necessarily respond to discipline unless they had confidence in their leadership. Harsh punishments for infractions of discipline in the Prussian tradition were not acceptable in Steuben's current environment. This environment would require leadership based on *influence* and *purpose* rather than authority and punishment. Steuben's influential use of adaptability, enthusiasm, humor, and showmanship still resonate in good army training today. A review of doctrine and organizational leadership theory provides a lens to analyze his approach through a variety of perspectives.⁸

FM 6-22 and the newly published ADP 6-0 describe army team building. Doctrine explains the importance of building teams and acknowledges that it is a challenge. The publications hint at surface level activities for team building including the use of doctrinal terms and symbols to synchronize efforts. Doctrinal definitions of leadership and the art of command use words such as purpose, direction, motivation, and judgment, but lack depth in psychological and organizational behavioral theories of leadership that are often used in modern business publications. The 2019 edition of ADP 6-22 begins to explore organizational behavior theories, but still requires clarity for the reader. Army doctrine should clarify and educate readers on additional leadership skills to meet the US Army Chief of Staff's intent of building cohesive teams at all levels. Understanding additional theories behind personal motivation, interdependent relationships, and human behavior can help leaders build more cohesive teams.⁹

⁸ Ricardo A. Herrera. *For Liberty and the Republic: The American Citizen as Soldier 1775-1861* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 24.

⁹ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 2-20; US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 1-3; US

Primary group relations are vital to understanding how teams form and begin to work efficiently together. Ties form as groups experience collective tasks. The result is group self-protection. Military cohesion results from work on mission specific practical tasks and procedures. This work increases the psychological capacity for combat effectiveness. Practical tasks leverage the diverse experience of the group and inspire them to be courageous in front of their comrades. Steuben integrated practical tasks to create unified effort at all levels and increase combat effectiveness.¹⁰

Organizational culture is a crucial component of group cohesion. Culture comprises the behaviors, knowledge, values, and goals that are common to the unit. It provides diverse individuals with the capacity to belong to a group with a shared purpose. Leaders who understand organizational culture and group dynamics are better prepared to develop a leadership approach that will resonate with subordinates. They can leverage the motivations of others to align with their own objectives. Culture communicates meaning and maintains social order. A positive culture unifies individuals under a common purpose and leverages their uniqueness for the benefit of the organization. It was important for the drillmaster to understand the culture of the Americans before developing a training path.¹¹

Leadership also requires emotional intelligence. Leaders leverage various tools to provide purpose direction, or motivation to a variety of circumstances. Emotional intelligence contains four subcomponents; self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These four components allow leaders to understand themselves and methodically employ influence over team behavior and performance. Groups change once they have fully understood their functionality. Leaders remain aware of their environment to reduce conflict or

Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Leader Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 9-4.

¹⁰ Anthony King, *Frontline*, 8.

¹¹ Mary Jo Hatch, *Organizational Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 193-94.

apply stress when necessary to help the group meet its full potential. Carl von Clausewitz even acknowledges that leaders must demonstrate self-control and not be “unbalanced by the most powerful emotions.”¹²

Section 2: Historical Context

Continental soldiers in the winter of 1778 had already experienced over two years of fierce campaigning. The New England militias at Lexington and Concord as well as Bunker Hill had fought hard against the British. Washington absorbed a considerable blow at Brooklyn Heights on 27 August 1776 and had lost New York. The Virginian commander knew he must preserve his forces.

General William Howe viewed the colonials as undisciplined cousins who could be quickly defeated by a demonstration of British military power. He offered pardons to those who would sign oaths of loyalty to the crown before expanding his lodgment southward into Trenton, New Jersey. Enlistments for Washington’s army began to expire, and he moved his forces behind the Delaware River for winter refuge. Washington demonstrated unparalleled leadership and kept the army together. He developed a system of intelligence gathering and mounted an amphibious attack across the Delaware and south into Trenton on 26 December 1776. Congress and Washington struggled to keep the army together even after success at Trenton.¹³

Washington continued his campaign into Princeton in January of 1777 and camped in Morristown for the winter. From the Elk River to Valley Forge, the army continued to improve despite a series of defeats at Brandywine and Germantown from 11 September to 4 October 1777. General Howe is reported to have admitted, “the damn rebels form well.” His Hessian aide-de-

¹² US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Leader Development*, 1-3; Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*. (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 177; Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 106.

¹³ Wayne Bodle, *The Valley Forge Winter: Civilians and Soldiers in War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 19-21.

camp, Captain Friedrich von Muenchhausen, wrote “Washington withdraws with great speed and especially good order.” He went on to describe Washington’s work as a “masterpiece of strategy.” In early December, the Continental Army repulsed Howe’s attack at Whitemarsh while Washington convinced Congress that it was not time to launch an offensive to regain Philadelphia. The general began to select a location for the winter encampment of 1777-1778.¹⁴

The Valley Forge Winter

Whitemarsh was a series of skirmishes that were not strategically significant for either army, but it did settle the question of a winter encampment for the Continentals. Officers understood the necessity for winter quarters despite debates over the actual location. Congress was concerned about the army leaving the Philadelphia area, but eventually conceded to Washington’s judgment. He pulled in his senior officers in late 1777 to discuss the impact of a winter campaign in the tradition of his usual democratic leadership style. Brigadier General Henry Knox and Brigadier General Peter Muhlenberg both argued that the “preservation of the army” should take precedence over any “small advantages” to be gained by a winter campaign. On 19 December 1777 after much discussion, Washington finally encamped his army at Valley Forge along the Schuylkill River.¹⁵

¹⁴ Herman O. Benninghoff, II, *Valley Forge: A Genesis for Command and Control, Continental Army Style* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas, 2001), 10-17; Ernst Kipping and Samuel Smith, *At General Howe’s Side 1776-1778* (Monmouth Beach, NJ: Philip Freneau Press, 1974), 31.

¹⁵ Wayne Bodle, *The Valley Forge Winter*, 58-71.

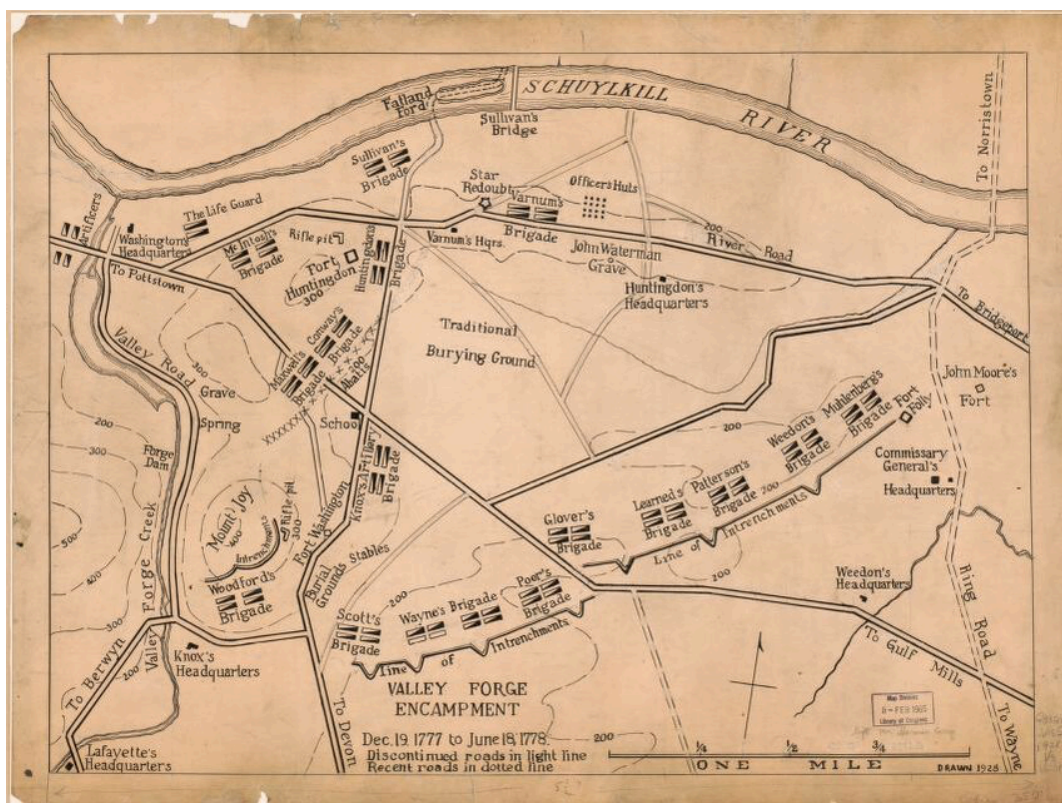


Figure 1. Map of the Valley Forge Winter Encampment December 1777-June 1778. Library of Congress. "Valley Forge Winter Encampment December 1777-June 1778," accessed 1 October 2019, <https://www.loc.gov/item/gm71000868/>.

Conditions at Valley Forge were muddy, cold, and wet. A mixture of snow and rain fell that destroyed roads while the Schuylkill froze in late December. In order to get his soldiers under shelter as quickly as possible, Washington offered a twelve-dollar prize for the first well-constructed hut built in each regiment. Soldiers completed over nine hundred shelters by the last days of January in spite of limited rations. Sickness and disease continued to persist as commanders struggled to manage the situation.¹⁶

The commander faced another daunting challenge. Diversity of tactics, formations, and maneuvers significantly handicapped the Continentals and were a constant concern for Washington. Close order drill provided a base for infantry tactics, and each state regarded

¹⁶ John B.B. Trussell Jr., *Birthplace of an Army: A Study of the Valley Forge Encampment* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1976), 20-21.

military doctrine differently. The army consisted of eleven different state-organized units of almost one-hundred individual regiments. Units used a mixture of French, British, and Prussian tactics and had no standardized method for marching. Cohesive maneuvers and teamwork were a requirement of the battlefield, and standardization was needed.¹⁷

The British system influenced American officers who thought training and administration should be left to the sergeants; however, non-commissioned officers also did not have the experience required to train cohesive maneuvers. The lack of training was not an indication of laziness or disregard for duty. The resident knowledge simply did not exist in the officer and enlisted corps.¹⁸

Colonial soldiers were more accustomed to the militia system which contributed to their diverse set of procedures. Americans did not trust a standing army, a longstanding belief dating to the seventeenth century, which lasted into the nineteenth, and even the early twentieth century. Colonists saw it as a potential threat to individual liberty and a sign of an oppressive government. The militia system provided local defense without a large standing army.

Congress also tightly controlled the size of the army and allowed for a system of 27,000 regulars. Congress even regulated Washington's power to direct military campaigns until the winter of 1776. The army needed cohesive units beyond the regimental level. This distrust of a standing army, value for individual liberty, and lack of formalized military experience would require an experienced leader to make big changes.¹⁹

The Americans demonstrated that they possessed the raw materials to become a formidable fighting force over three years of hard campaigning. Washington understood the problem at hand and routinely encouraged his officers to train their men through marching and

¹⁷ "Valley Forge Muster Roll," accessed 29 August 2019; John B.B. Trussell Jr., *Birthplace of an Army: A Study of the Valley Forge Encampment*, 56.

¹⁸ John B.B. Trussell Jr., *Birthplace of an Army*, 57.

¹⁹ Ricardo A. Herrera, *For Liberty and the Republic*, 21.

drill. Much to his frustration, little progress occurred, but help would arrive to train his army in discipline, drill, and procedure in late February.²⁰

The Drillmaster

The Baron von Steuben had a unique set of experiences. His path led from early potential to disappointment, and finally to unlikely fame. His time as a non-commissioned officer, company commander, adjutant, and diplomat along with his combat experience provided the leadership tools required to train the raw continentals.²¹

The Prussian drillmaster was born into a *junker* military family, which made him a member of the minor nobility but not wealthy. This dichotomy would be the theme of his entire life. His father was an engineer in the Prussian Army and took his young son to get his first taste of battle in the Second Silesian War in 1744 at the age of fourteen. He was fascinated with the excitement of the military and decided to pursue the life of an infantry officer. After spending several years initially as a non-commissioned officer, Steuben rose to lieutenant at twenty-two. Due to his experience, he greatly appreciated the struggles of the private soldier. He was also popular among his fellow officers, but spent his leisure time learning French and arithmetic while his peers gambled and drank. Steuben was careless with money, but always took care of soldiers and shared in their hardships. The young officer yearned for the opportunity to prove himself as an infantryman in combat.²²

Steuben's formation participated in the attack on the fortified city of Prague against the Austrians in 1757 and took considerable casualties. He later volunteered for a position in the notoriously ill-disciplined Mayr's Free Battalion. The young officer performed well and experienced battle once again in France that same year. His performance attracted the eye of

²⁰ George Washington, Circular Instructions to the Brigade Commanders, 26 May 1777, *The Papers of George Washington*, vol. 9: 532-533.

²¹ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 8-12.

senior officers. Steuben fought other engagements, but slowly his administrative duties overtook his time. In 1761 he took command of a Prussian company fighting the Russians in the northeast, but was forced to surrender. Steuben was a well-kept prisoner of war in St. Petersburg and used his time to make powerful friends. Upon his return, he began schooling under Fredrick the Great and showed potential for general officer. Steuben later had an unfortunate altercation with a vindictive classmate who had the ear of the king and was dismissed from the army as a captain.²³

Steuben found his way to the American cause through an unlikely set of circumstances. He worked as the secretary-manager of the prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen after dismissal from the army. The baron was responsible for educating the children of the prince and enjoyed being the center of the social scene. He still longed for military employment and sought commissions in multiple armies. He unknowingly came into conversation with an American agent in Paris who recommended the baron's talents to the new commissioner, Benjamin Franklin. The drillmaster's course was set toward America upon his introduction as the former lieutenant general to Fredrick the Great; however, Steuben faced a complex task ahead.²⁴

Americans were different than the conscripted Germans and provided a unique challenge for the baron. Discipline was the backbone of the Prussian system, and harsh punishment was the rule. The European soldier endured intense verbal intimidation and acted more out of fear than a sense of duty. Soldiers took orders and obeyed without question while punishments for infraction were severe. Punishments included beatings with clubs and "walking the gauntlet," which consisted of a series of beatings by the entire unit while walking with bayonets pointed to the front and rear. Drill and punishment trained men to a condition of unquestioned obedience. The

²³ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 13-20.

²⁴ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 25-32; Horst Ueberhorst, *Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben* (München, Germany: Heinz Moos Verlag, 1981), 9.

American army needed drill and discipline, but soldiers had a unique sense of duty and were not motivated by fear of punishment.²⁵

Service in the army was different for the Americans. Colonials were comprised mostly of volunteers and militiamen that had an independent, republican character. Infractions of discipline were not an indication of cowardice or laziness. They were more likely to occur when military officers failed to provide food and equipment, enlistments ran out, or were merely incompetent. Steuben later wrote that American soldiers did not blindly submit to orders and sometimes required an explanation as to why a task was to be carried out. This fierce independent nature was unique to the Continental soldier. Steuben tailored drill accordingly and standardized manning across formations. He impressed Washington with his personal judgment and leadership talent.²⁶

Washington worked with Congress throughout 1777 to establish the standardization of regiments and brigades. The states were trying to generate replacements rather than create and organize new units. Regiments started to standardize personnel in late 1777, but better doctrine was also needed. In February of 1778, the main army was with Washington, which provided a ripe opportunity to address training and discipline. Overall, the army was at one-third of its authorized strength and many lacked shoes or clothes. The raw materials existed, but they were in a poor state of readiness. Discipline chipped away the rough edges of the hungry yet determined soldiers of Washington's army at Valley Forge through the winter of 1777-1778.²⁷

The Baron Leads Change

The Prussian drillmaster demonstrated many of the steps of leading a large organization through change that are highlighted by modern theorists. John Kotter provides a list of leadership

²⁵ Horst Ueberhorst, *Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben*, 17; David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 61.

²⁶ Ricardo A. Herrera, *For Liberty and the Republic*, 16-26; Steuben to the Baron de Gaudy, 1787-88, in Kapp, 678.

²⁷ Robert K. Wright, *The Continental Army*, 121-26.

principles to assist organizational leaders with change. Kotter's eight-stage model consists of establishing a sense of urgency, building a coalition, developing a strategy, communicating the vision, empowering action, generating short term wins, consolidating gains, and anchoring the approach to the organizational culture. ADP 6-22 provides a list of steps based on Kotter's model as a guide to leading at organizational and strategic levels. The baron intuitively applied these steps at Valley Forge to improve the Continental Army.²⁸

Steuben did more than just manage change, he created resonance through training. He exemplified methodical leadership by providing inspiration, vision, and purpose. In short time, he assessed his environment and managed relationships to build a coalition of support. The Continentals were in a state of crisis, and Steuben needed to work quickly to prove his worth to Washington. Spring was approaching in just a few short weeks. The snow faded away, and the roads thawed. The spring campaign was imminent. A combination of experience, rank, and luck got him to the colonies, but he relied on influential leadership rather than positional power to build a coalition of support for change.²⁹

Creating a Sense of Urgency

Steuben did not rush into action initially. Instead, he observed the environment and assessed the situation at hand. The baron inspected every corner of the encampment during his first three weeks at Valley Forge. Most importantly, he did not just take notes. He engaged the ranks to understand the condition of training, morale, and welfare. A sixteen-year-old private named Ashbel Green wrote that the baron "looked like an ancient fabled God of War." Soldiers watched this stocky foreigner with his adorned blue uniform and silver-headed swagger stick sit proudly in the saddle. His loyal aides, Alexander Hamilton and John Laurens, were at his side to translate his guttural phrases into English. Steuben wanted to know about their rations, their

²⁸ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 21; US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Leader Development*, 9-2.

²⁹ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 83.

health, and the conduct of their officers. This simple step had a dramatic impact. Soldiers took notice of his genuine interest in their welfare from their leaky huts and barracks. The assessment phase allowed him to build a base of support among the men.³⁰

The stocky German built trust with the soldiers but still needed to gain the confidence of Washington. Steuben crafted a blunt memorandum of his findings for the commander. The baron discussed the importance of a capable corps of light infantry, detailed the training requirements to maneuver large bodies of troops more efficiently, and described the lack of security and fortification within the camp. Washington welcomed his honest and grim assessment, which grew into a series of professional meetings on the health of the army. Steuben gained the trust of his commander by articulating possibilities for improvement instead of merely describing shortcomings. He explained that drill and field discipline could reduce sickness, improve the strength of the regiments, and increase morale. The baron provided the commander with the *art of the possible* and established a sense of urgency.³¹

Building the Coalition

Steuben needed to build trust among his cohorts. This was a daunting task for a foreigner who barely had a grasp of the language. Prior experience as an aide to the Prince of Hohenzollern-Hechingen polished his charm and prepared him for the task. Steuben attended a social dinner every night for his first month in camp and was a regular guest of Major General Nathanael Greene, Major General William Alexander, and Martha Washington. He had an openhearted friendliness and a literary wit with everyone he met. The baron even treated his aides as intellectual and social equals. Steuben began to pool his rations with his staff to host parties of his own. His charm became legendary. The Prussian later insisted on hosting members of the ranks, which he called “a set of ragged, but merry fellows.” In a final strategic act to gain trust,

³⁰ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 87-88.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

Steuben mentioned to Washington that he was not interested in rank or pay. This was untrue, but it helped him gain favor. The baron sensed that he gained the trust of those around him in a very short time. Washington wrote to Henry Laurens that Steuben was a worldly, knowledgeable gentleman who would be entrusted with the training of troops.³²

Developing a Vision

The baron's initial assessment directed him to the root of the problem at Valley Forge. He focused on organization of personnel, basic soldier discipline, and officer leadership. He already gained support from Washington and sparked curiosity among soldiers. The Prussian needed to capitalize on the interest he generated.

Steuben first noted the need for standardized units. He observed that many officers did not know the number of soldiers within their formations. Each unit was also unique in its approach to drill, organization, size, and structure. He observed varying sizes of regiments and companies as small as twelve men. Some regiments were even stronger than brigades. Steuben witnessed a regiment of thirty men and a company of one corporal! Officers often responded when asked of their personnel, "I have about 200-300 men in my regiment." He first ensured that soldiers knew the names of their commanders, and the officers, in turn, had an accurate account of personnel.³³

Since officers had little contact with their men, equipment was in a deplorable state. Weapons were covered in mud and rust. Most soldiers had varying degrees of pouches, and only half had bayonets. Some soldiers were almost literally naked. Steuben even observed a continental mounting guard outfitted in a makeshift dressing gown made of an old blanket. He did not berate soldiers because he understood the hardships they endured. Officers needed to look

³² Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 83-85; George Washington to Henry Laurens, 30 April 1778. *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, ed. Edward G. Lengel, vol. 13, 26 December 1777-28 February 1778 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 686-688.

³³ Fredrick Kapp, *The Life of Fredrick William von Steuben* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1859), 96.

their men in the eye every day. Officer presence was a key element of his initial approach to improvement.³⁴

The drillmaster rose at three o'clock every morning for a single cup of coffee and a smoke of his pipe. He mounted his horse by sunrise and was on his way to drill and inspect the army, with or without his aides. It was mid-March and time to get to work. Time was precious, and he had no tolerance for tardiness. The baron relied on his unique flair for showmanship as he trained the men. He had little grasp of the English language, but looked the part of a seasoned general and directed them with confidence. He wanted to make a good impression on the veterans of Valley Forge.³⁵

The ambitious German had a clear vision for the army. First, he standardized companies, regiments, and brigades. Next, he improved discipline. Steuben trained soldiers to care for their equipment and welfare. Finally, the army trained to perform the most basic maneuvers in the field with speed and efficiency. Weapons were cleaned, the camp was organized to prevent the spread of disease, and soldiers were in regular contact with their officers. These were big changes for a large organization in only a few months. Steuben got to work and personally led a small formation of soldiers in drill.

Training, Empowering, and Short-Term Wins

The drillmaster was anxious on the first day of training on the morning of 19 March 1778. Unlike conscripted Prussian soldiers, he needed to win the respect and trust of the Americans. He influenced them through simple direction, genuine concern for their well-being, and a touch of showmanship. The baron approached two ranks of soldiers in battle formation on the grand parade field as the grey mist rose in the early morning. His aides rode behind him as he dismounted. The contrast between Steuben's well-dressed noble disposition and the tattered

³⁴ Fredrick Kapp, *The Life of Fredrick William von Steuben*, 97.

³⁵ Fredrick Kapp, *The Life of Fredrick William von Steuben*, 110; Paul Lockhart. *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 95-96.

clothing of the gaunt continentals was evident. The baron did not waste their time with long speeches about the task ahead. He pulled out the notes he scribbled through the night and went right to work.³⁶

The stocky Prussian formed a company of specially selected soldiers to experience his “manual exercise.” He focused on the execution of basic maneuvers without some of the useless minutiae of the Prussian system. The vital movements included changing a front, forming a column, loading, firing, and attacking with the bayonet. His training method included precision and repetition, but did not include verbal chiding. The baron’s intense look of disappointment was enough to inspire maximum effort from participants. Steuben continued the cycle and frantically scribbled out his training plan by candlelight every night in time to meet his company of guards at sunrise for training. He ensured they were well dressed, their arms were clean, and their general appearance was in good order. Finally, they demonstrated their new talents in front of all of the officers at Valley Forge. He immediately dispersed his new disciples to teach all they had learned and to apply his method to battalions and brigades. He paraded a division for Washington just three weeks later.³⁷

³⁶ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 98.

³⁷ Fredrick Kapp, *The Life of Fredrick William von Steuben*, 108-110.



Figure 2. Baron Von Steuben Training the Troops at Valley Forge, by E.A. Abbey. New England Historical Society. "Baron Von Steuben Training the Troops at Valley Forge," accessed 1 October 2019, <http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/baron-von-steuben-shows-the-army-a-bayonet-is-not-a-grilling-tool/>.

Stueben quickly empowered subordinate action to generate short term wins for the Continentals. The eager Prussian trained and selected subordinate inspectors who would, in turn, select a squad from a brigade for training. Companies would then begin to train their squads based on demonstrated commands and techniques. Subordinate inspectors ensured that training was consistent. The baron disapproved of simply leaving accountability and drill to the sergeants. Officers led the exercise with no exception. Very quickly, a sense of pride developed amongst the men. They were excited about their accomplishments and performance. They found meaning in the exercise and were ready to fight again. Washington's look of approval on the parade field and endorsement of the baron's training method further fueled the flame of change within the army.³⁸

The commander was impressed with the progress. Crowds gathered to watch Steuben drill and inspect the men. The reaction to Steuben's training was almost universally positive because soldiers drew direct meaning from their practice. His enthusiasm, motivation, and humor entertained and inspired the men. Washington's order of 22 March 1778 solidified his success

³⁸ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 108-113.

thus far but ruffled a few feathers. Officers were now only permitted to use Steuben's methods of drill. The commander began to refer to the baron publicly as "the Inspector General."³⁹

The Battle at Monmouth

The Continentals demonstrated confidence and unity of effort during one of the largest scale engagements of the war. It is challenging to prove that Steuben's implementation of drill and discipline allowed the Americans to claim victory at Monmouth, still, observers of the action certainly linked the improved performance to the baron's work. During the battle, the Americans quickly formed under the direction of Washington to prepare to face the attacking redcoats. Next, the Continentals quickly repelled the British attacks at their center and flanks. Finally, Washington's forces demonstrated outstanding discipline and poise by standing up to three consecutive British bayonet charges and tremendous artillery. Many soldiers were new to the army, but they held firm under the deliberate instruction of their officers. Observers of the battle included Alexander Hamilton, Charles Lee, and General Washington, all of whom attested to the new level of performance against Henry Clinton's army. Winter training breathed a new sense of confidence into Washington's army. Monmouth produced a much-needed narrative for the Americans that solidified Washington's position and legitimized them as a professional army to their new French allies.

The plans for an offensive began when Washington held a council of war at Valley Forge on 10 June 1778 to determine his next move. Clinton had orders to evacuate Philadelphia to link up with the Royal Navy at Sandy Hook due to the new alliance between the colonies and France, but he had little regard for an attack by Washington's forces along the route. He had ten thousand overloaded soldiers and wagons of supplies prepared to slowly march out of Philadelphia. Washington wanted to take advantage of Clinton's overconfidence. Major General Nathanael

³⁹ George Washington, Circular Instructions to the Brigade Commanders, 22 March 1778, *The Papers of George Washington*, vol. 14, 28 March 1777- 10 June 1777 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 265; Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 106.

Greene wrote to Washington that if the army failed to attack the British on their movement through New Jersey, they would live to regret it. The people expected action, and the army was confident and ready.⁴⁰

Washington seized the opportunity to pursue Clinton and sent Steuben on a reconnaissance mission. He instructed Charles Lee to prepare for an attack at the rear of the enemy at Monmouth. Lee moved his division across sections of unfavorable ground to mount an attack and reset the cavalry behind the infantry. He quickly realized that he was significantly outnumbered and decided to retreat to more suitable terrain. Washington encountered the retreating forces and raged at Lee for disobeying orders to attack. Alexander Hamilton described the Virginian's reaction upon learning that his newly trained soldiers were ordered to fall back just as they were poised to fight. Washington turned the day and moved Lee aside by directing the army as a "master workman." His presence transformed confusion and retreat to an orderly formation of troops.⁴¹

Washington formed the line and directed Steuben to bring all soldiers up from the rear. The speed and efficiency of the Continentals to form was unprecedented. Witnesses were awed by the orderly formation of soldiers under the watchful eye of Washington. Hamilton immediately realized the value of the baron's drill. He described how the Americans moved with great order and superior speed to the British troops. The conduct of the officers and the men, in general, was unmatched.⁴²

⁴⁰ William S. Stryker, *The Battle of Monmouth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1927), 39-40; Theodore Thayer, *The Making of a Scapegoat: Washington and Lee at Monmouth* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1976), 25; Nathanael Greene to George Washington, June 24, 1778, *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, ed. Edward G. Lengel, vol. 15, *May–June 1778* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 441-444.

⁴¹ William S. Stryker, *The Battle of Monmouth*, 45-49; Alexander Hamilton to Elias Boudinot, July 5, 1778, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1, 510-514.

⁴² Alexander Hamilton to Elias Boudinot, July 5, 1778, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1: 510-514.

The British attempted to break the American lines by attacking at all angles. The Continentals refused to budge and quickly repelled all three surges forward. The British attacked Lord Stirling's division of infantry in an attempt to turn the left flank, but were quickly repulsed as the Continentals held firm, shoulder to shoulder. Lieutenant Colonel Aaron Burr held the Continental left flank against a second push by the British and had his horse shot from underneath him. Nathanael Greene and his men on the right faced the next test. Lieutenant General Charles, Lord Cornwallis gathered his best men together for another push forward in frustration. Henry Knox unleashed his artillery to disrupt the British lines. Greene's men held firm and drove back the redcoats quickly. The British mounted no other attack against the continental right flank. While the Americans repelled the enemy on the right, a vicious bayonet attack was prepared by Lieutenant Colonel Henry Monckton of the Forty-fifth Foot.⁴³

The American reaction to the final series of British charges demonstrated their newfound confidence against the bayonet. Henry Monckton was a brave and skilled British soldier who was admired greatly by his men. He directed the initial charge against Brigadier General Anthony Wayne at the center of the battlefield. The bayonet charge was a proven British move to break the American formation. This would not be the case today. The charge was cut to pieces in two separate surges forward. In a final act of passion, Monckton drew his sword and shouted, "forward to the charge, my brave grenadiers!" Wayne held his men steady, instructing them to "wait for the word and pick out the kingbirds!" The charge was cut down, and Henry Monckton lay dead on the field with his colors. The Continentals sprinted forward to seize the body of Monckton and the colors. The baron arrived moments later with three full brigades of reinforcements. The actions of the day came to a close, and darkness fell on the hot battlefield.⁴⁴

⁴³ George Washington to the President of Congress, July 1, 1778, *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, ed. David R. Hoth, vol. 16, *1 July 1778- 14 September 1778* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 2-7; William S. Stryker, *The Battle of Monmouth*, 210-215.

⁴⁴ William S. Stryker, *The Battle of Monmouth*, 216-218.

Washington rested under a large oak tree among the dead for the night, confident of final victory tomorrow. Clinton slipped away under cover of darkness and left his dead and wounded on the field along with fifteen American prisoners of war. Washington celebrated the battle as a great victory once he realized the British had left the field. He praised the unprecedented performance of his army. He watched his men quickly form after the initial confusion and repel attacks on all sides. They remained firm and punished the redcoats at each charge of the bayonet. He knew that the discipline acquired at Valley Forge served his army well.⁴⁵

The battle of Monmouth resulted in a tactical draw, but it was a strategic and moral victory for the Americans. Clinton purposefully disengaged to finish the march to Sandy Hook; however, Washington viewed the result as a win. It was the first large-scale battle in which the continentals stood face-to-face with the British that resulted in a withdrawal. The disengagement of the British during the night was just enough to provide a much-needed victory for Washington.⁴⁶

The Continentals displayed disciplined fire and organized maneuver at Monmouth. The drill under Steuben was the only shared experience for many of the fresh recruits. The unity of effort demonstrated by the new soldiers validated his work at Valley Forge. Washington described how his army drove back the enemy on the field through the blistering heat. He heaped praise on the artillery and infantry stating that “the behavior of the men could not be surpassed.” Alexander Hamilton witnessed the action and described how the Americans moved with more spirit and order than the British. He was not one to flatter the performance of the army in the past, but was never as pleased with them as he had been at Monmouth. The colonials demonstrated maneuverability and confidence. The British even recognized the new proficiency of the continentals. Andrew Bell, the British deputy muster-master of provincial forces, wrote in his

⁴⁵ William S. Stryker, *The Battle of Monmouth*, 225-226.

⁴⁶ Mark Lender and Gary Stone, *Fatal Sunday: George Washington, the Monmouth Campaign, and the Politics of Battle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 424-426.

diary that the Americans had stood better than ever before. The battle demonstrated that soldiers of the Continental line would not hesitate in the face of the British regulars, and they possessed a respectable amount of endurance, drill, and discipline. Trenton and Princeton brought fame to the New Jersey campaign, but Monmouth added a new shine to the army moving forward.

Washington leveraged the moment and described the battle to congress as a significant win for the Americans. After Monmouth, his position as commander was solidified and previous rivals now showered him with praise. Confidence soared with the French alliance and news of Monmouth. The performance in battle vindicated the efforts of Steuben and his implementation of discipline and drill during the bitter winter at Valley Forge.⁴⁷

The baron refined the regulations outlined in his Blue Book from 1778 through the remainder of the war. By 1781 most officers had memorized his principles. The baron's training plan of 1782 included large-scale maneuvers and a mock amphibious assault. The army was in the best shape ever. French generals even attested to the proficiency of the Americans that year.⁴⁸

Steuben followed the steps later outlined in Kotter's model. First, he made an assessment of his environment and communicated the need for training and discipline. Next, the baron developed an approach comprised of simplified drill and standardized unit structure. The drillmaster demonstrated a specially selected unit of trainees for the officers in camp to generate a short-term win. Steuben refined his methods and published his Blue Book which anchored his approach to the organizational culture of the Continental Army.

⁴⁷ George Washington to the President of Congress, 1 July 1778, *The Papers of George Washington*, vol. 16: 2-7; Alexander Hamilton to Elias Boudinot, July 5, 1778, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 1: 510-514; Theodore Thayer, *The Making of a Scapegoat*, 64; William S. Stryker, *The Battle of Monmouth*, 274-275; Mark Lender and Gary Stone, *Fatal Sunday*, 424-426.

⁴⁸ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 276-277.

Section 3: The Art and Science of Leadership

Steuben's training at Valley Forge demonstrated important leadership attributes and competencies. Leaders balance the *art of influence* and *science of authority* to successfully implement change and build readiness. The *science* of leadership comes from positional authority and basic activities outlined in army doctrine. These activities include the enforcement of procedure, training management, leader presence, and competence of the profession. The *art* of leadership includes the ability to influence others without regard to positional authority. Influencing others requires empathy, interpersonal tact, humility, and judgment. The drillmaster of Valley Forge demonstrated a unique integration of the *science of authority* and the *art of influence* to improve the readiness of the Continental Army.

The current army leadership requirements model in ADP 6-22, "establishes a core set of requirements that informs leaders of the expectations for what they need to be, know, and do." The model is comprised of attributes (character, presence, and intellect) and competencies (leading, developing, and achieving). Attributes are characteristics that are internal to the leader and are learned over time. Competencies are characteristics that can be trained and convey clear, consistent expectations of army leaders.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, VII-1-7.

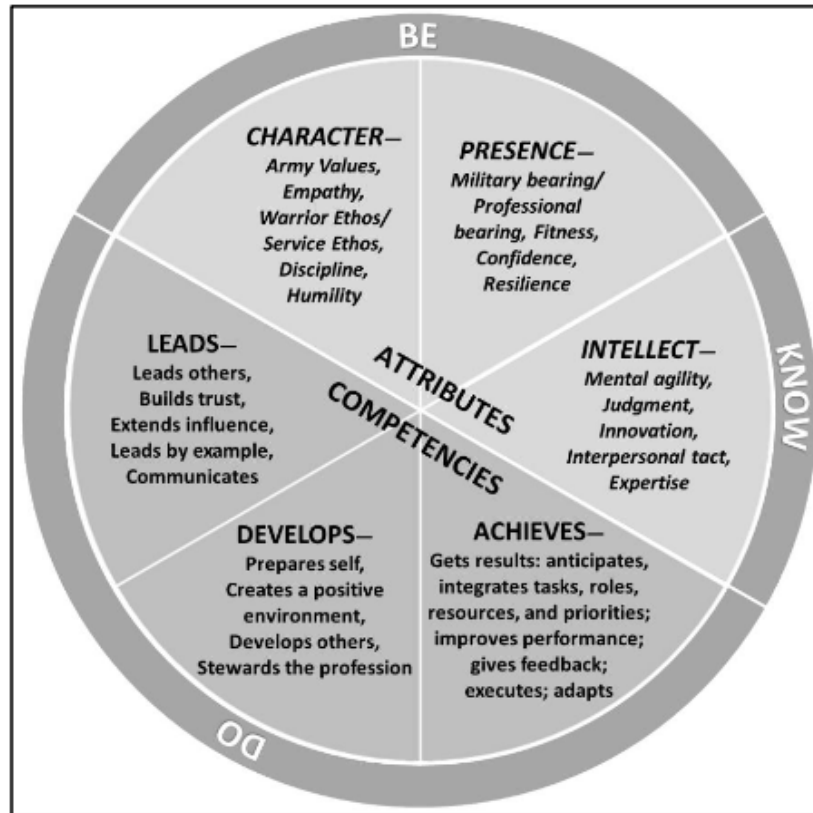


Figure 3. The Leadership Requirements Model. US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 1-6.

The requirements model is an introductory tool to begin thinking about basic leadership principles. The model is useful; however, additional leadership theorists can provide a deeper understanding of influencing others to perform their best. The army educates leaders to be agile and adaptive to win in rapidly changing environments. Leaders direct subordinates to do demanding tasks within the complexities of war. Theorists such as John Kotter and Daniel Goleman offer additional tools to address the human dynamics of warfighting and extend influence beyond authority. The requirements model is a starting point. It can be improved by categorizing activities into the *science* and *art* of leadership for deeper study. Activities within the science of leadership are basic. The art of influence requires knowledge of human behavior and

motivation. Steuben had a unique knack for leveraging these two ideas, which can provide an example of the *art* and *science* of leadership.⁵⁰

The Science of Leading Organizations

The *science* of leadership starts with authority. Authority level indicates a certain degree of knowledge and practice. Army doctrine defines authority as the “formal leadership granted to individuals by virtue of their assignment or responsibility according to their rank and experience.” Rank and authority guide the leader to manage training and procedure at the appropriate level. Leader placement is also based on authority. Leaders place themselves at potential points of friction but must also maintain situational awareness of all organizations within their area of responsibility. The Prussian leadership model leaned on authority rather than influence. Soldiers were conscripted and did not question orders. They were severely punished for disobedience and infractions of discipline.⁵¹

Disciplined procedure and drill are vital to readiness for war. Drills create the psychological capacity to perform in combat when exhaustion takes over. Standardized procedures allow action under extreme stress without thinking. Ritual techniques form groups into military machines that put collective tasks before individuality. The baron standardized procedure and drill for regiments and brigades at Valley Forge. His manual standardized every action from sick call to marching. Each officer trained his unit differently, if at all, before Steuben arrived. The baron provided basic instruction for every rank from the highest officer to the private soldier. Drill and procedure formed groups toward a common goal and made actions more predictable and controlled. This practice formed a profound bond between soldiers. Steuben simplified tasks to make procedures as lean and efficient as possible and established common

⁵⁰ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 86.

⁵¹ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 1-8; David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 61.

knowledge that generated quick results. Drill, discipline, and procedure are the essence of leadership science.⁵²

Training requires the thoughtful repetition of drill and procedure to form habits within the time and space available. For example, bi-annual visits to the range for marksmanship qualification do not constitute effective training. Training creates habits for the mind and body. Bi-annual qualification ranges only meet the minimal standards of army performance and are not frequent enough to enforce muscle memory under stress. Multiple iterations of drills in short periods are required to transform actions into habits. Routinely performing drills preserve organizational knowledge and transfer capabilities from the training area to the battlefield. The future inspector general of the army trained his demonstration squad daily on the most basic tasks. Those fundamental tasks were integrated into larger formations to solidify their execution on a larger scale. His drill manual emphasized repetition and instructed officers to exercise their formations on multiple pieces of ground. Officers were required to train these exercises repeatedly until every man performed them perfectly.⁵³

Leader presence consists of physical placement in relation to subordinates, professional appearance, and confidence. It is a vital component of the science of leadership. Presence represents who a leader *is* and the scope of their duties. Every leader has some sort of presence. Some leaders have weak presence because they are not genuine, lack competence, or are not comfortable in their own skin. Most importantly, leaders cannot have presence if they fail to

⁵² Anthony King, *Frontline*, 11; “Valley Forge Muster Roll,” accessed 29 August 2019, <http://valleyforagemusterroll.org/encampment.asp>; Frederick William Baron von Steuben, *Revolutionary War Drill Manual: A Facsimile Reprint of the 1794 Edition* (New York: Dover Publications, 1985), 125-151; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 62-68.

⁵³ Anthony King, *Frontline*, 312-313; Mary Jo Hatch, *Organizational Theory*, 140; Frederick William Baron von Steuben, *Revolutionary War Drill Manual*, 33.

physically appear at critical times. The drillmaster valued the routine impression he made on his soldiers and made it clear that officers should endure hardships with their men.⁵⁴

The most basic act of military leadership is to be physically present with the soldiers. Contemporary technology allows leaders to communicate by phone, email, text message, or any digital system without physical presence. These technologies are useful but cannot replace the impact of physical contact with soldiers. President Abraham Lincoln certainly understood the importance of circulating informally among subordinates. He met with generals and cabinet members in their homes and in the field. He inspected new equipment, toured hospitals, and visited members of congress. He even relieved Major General John C. Frémont on 9 September 1861 from his command for having isolated himself from his men in the field.⁵⁵

The baron put great emphasis on physical presence. Daily inspections of the state of the troops were a staple of his leadership philosophy. He learned how soldiers lived and inspected the general condition of the encampment on his first day at Valley Forge. Many American officers initially left inspections and administrative duties to the sergeants; however, non-commissioned officers were also inexperienced and not trained to conduct administrative duties and inspections. Steuben outlined the requirement for physical contact with soldiers in his field regulations. “The only means to keep soldiers in order is to have them continually under the eyes of their superiors.” The drillmaster appointed an officer of the day and dictated regular inspections of arms and equipment by commanders.⁵⁶

Professional appearance, confidence, and military bearing were the stocky Prussian’s specialty. He dressed and carried himself as a seasoned general officer. Despite a little roundness

⁵⁴ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 3-1.

⁵⁵ Donald T. Phillips, *Lincoln on Leadership: Executive Strategies for Tough Times* (New York: Business Plus, 1992), 13.

⁵⁶ John B.B. Trussell Jr., *Birthplace of an Army*, 57; Frederick William Baron von Steuben, *Revolutionary War Drill Manual*, 125-127.

in the middle, Steuben ensured his uniform was perfect. He wore a dark blue cloak; a black beaver felt hat and gripped his *Exerzierstock* firmly in hand. He looked confident and beamed optimism through his presence. He ensured his appearance was perfect every morning before the ride out to instruct his soldiers.⁵⁷

Of course, presence must accompany competence of the profession. Subordinates will dismiss a leader who acts confident but fails to display professional expertise. Washington took time to evaluate this quality in Steuben and made his observations clear to Congress.

I should do injustice if I were to be longer silent with regard to the merits of the baron de Steuben: his knowledge of his profession added to the zeal which he has discovered since he began upon the functions of his office, lead me to consider him as an acquisition to the service and to recommend him to the attention of Congress.

Presence, competence, and enforcement of procedure are basic characteristics referenced in army doctrine. Authority and rank indicate the level of knowledge and experience required, but that is not enough. Leaders must demonstrate confidence and endure hardships with their men whenever possible to gain trust. The science of authority is a starting point, but the art of influence can create resonance and generate unity of effort.⁵⁸

The Art of Leading Change

The *art of influencing* others is more challenging to describe. It is linked to the attributes of empathy, interpersonal tact, humility, and judgment. These ideas are included in the army leadership requirements model but require further exploration. Academic theorists and business professionals have generated countless papers and articles in professional journals on emotional intelligence, building cohesive teams, and organizational dynamics. These ideas can help army leaders better understand how to lead people and organizations. Further exploration of these

⁵⁷ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 98.

⁵⁸ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 5-12; George Washington to Henry Laurens, April 30, 1778, *The Papers of George Washington*, vol. 14: 681-683.

concepts can provide a robust set of tools to leverage the unique qualities of human behavior and psychology toward a common goal.

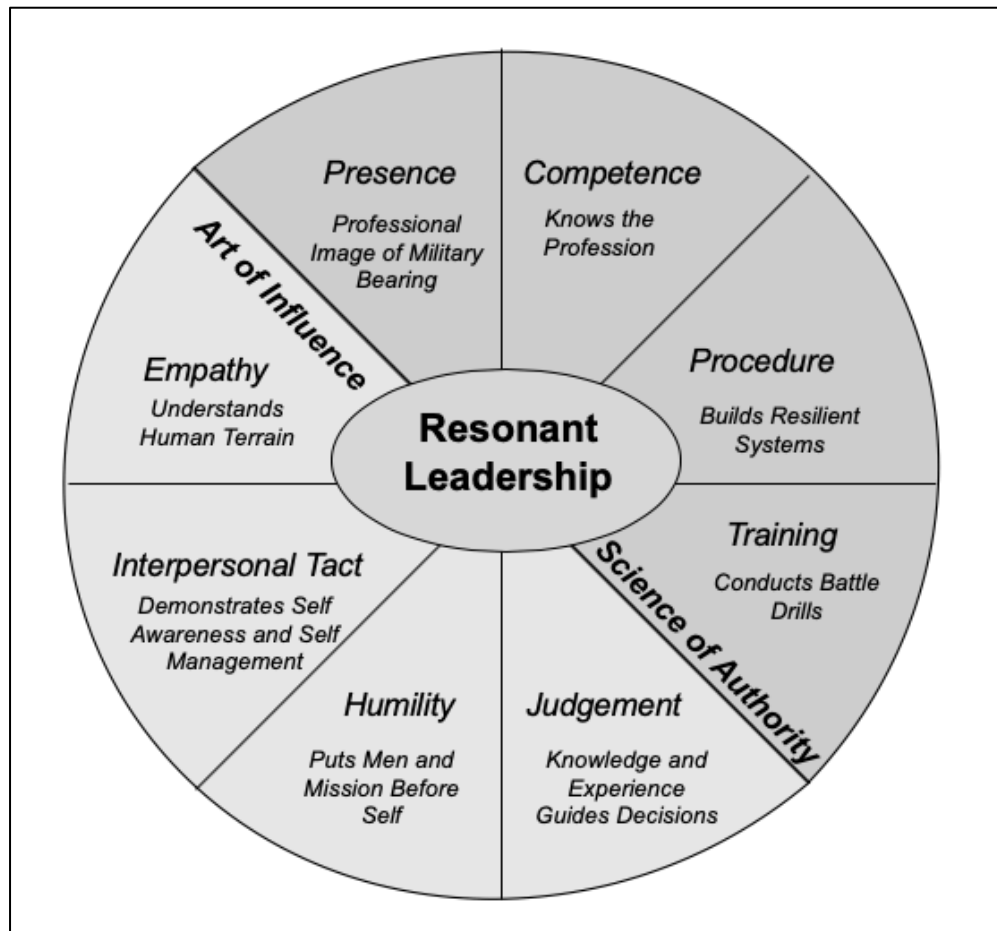


Figure 4. Leveraging the Art of Influence and Science of Authority in Leading Change. Diagram created by author.

Empathy is the ability to relate to people genuinely. It is not sympathy but instead provides a better understanding of what motivates others. It allows us to engage others with precision rather than blind emotion. Leaders bring out the best in subordinates when they tap into internal motivation. This connection creates *resonance*. Resonance will carry new ideas from the whiteboard to execution. Leaders create *dissonance* when they fail to understand the motivations of subordinates. Dissonance will cause new ideas to wither on the vine.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22 (ADP), *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 2-8; Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 6.

Empathy comes from the most primal neurological mechanisms of the brain. Humans often think of themselves as *thinking creatures that feel* but are better described as *feeling creatures that think*. The open-loop limbic system allows leaders to affect the emotions of others. In short, subordinates rely on connections with leaders to create resonance, stability, and meaning. Failure to make a connection with subordinates can lead to a poor command climate and a lack of cohesion.⁶⁰

Steuben had a unique knack for empathy and quickly grasped the culture of the Continental Army. The Prussian system of harsh punishment and discipline driven by authority would not work with the Americans. The colonials had a distinct civilian, republican, and independent character comprised of volunteers and militia that was much different than the Prussian army. Their unique nature generated from the identity as an army of resistance and revolution. Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens observed that the baron quickly understood the capability of the men. They were citizens, not subjects like Europeans. The drillmaster knew he must be empathetic to their situation. Failure to do so would result in dissonance toward his efforts to change the army. He genuinely asked about their well-being and demonstrated the responsibility of officers to connect with their soldiers. His drill manual instructed officers that their first responsibility was to “gain the favor of your men, by treating them with every kindness and humanity.” Empathy requires an exceptional awareness of *self* and how to interact with others.⁶¹

Interpersonal tact is a component of professional behavior that is clarified through the study of emotional intelligence. The attribute relies on understanding the character, motives, and actions of oneself and others and is linked to empathy. Emotional intelligence theory describes

⁶⁰ Sharan B. Merriam and Laura L. Bierema, *Adult Learning: Linking Theory and Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014), 170; Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 6.

⁶¹ Ricardo A. Herrera, *For Liberty and the Republic*, 16-26; Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 82; Frederick William Baron von Steuben, *Revolutionary War Drill Manual*, 125-127.

four key domains that facilitate interpersonal tact and create resonant leadership. These domains are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Emotions do not control leaders who balance these four domains. They leverage their emotions to get the best out of others. Instead of letting anger build, an emotionally intelligent leader recognizes the cause and attunes his reaction to help guide the group. The overquoted Clausewitz even talks extensively about balancing emotions in war. “Inflammatory feelings” are of generally little value in war, and a strong character is not “unbalanced by emotion.” The four domains of emotional intelligence can facilitate interpersonal tact to create resonant leadership.⁶²

The drillmaster was a genius at using emotion to inspire, motivate, or entertain. He beamed enthusiasm and encouraged other officers not to chide or raise their voices to the men out of anger. He recognized confidence in the faces of the men around him and drew strength from their admiration. Crowds gathered to watch the spectacle of his training. He played to the amusement of soldiers and the crowd with intentionally exaggerated fits of anger and laughter. He drenched them with French and German obscenities, which brought him down from the pedestal of authority to reveal his humanity. It was all a very calculated performance. He bonded to the men and gained their respect as a soldier while maintaining enough distance and decorum to avoid familiarity. Self-awareness helped him to be critical of his own performance as he humbly returned to his quarters and scribbled out the training plan for the next day.⁶³

Humility is the absence of arrogance. Humble leaders put the mission and the men before selfish interests. Humility is difficult to judge, but a lack of it is easy to identify. This attribute cannot be separated from empathy, interpersonal tact, and judgment because a lack of it, or hubris, restrains the ability to be critical of oneself. Leaders with hubris will sacrifice soldiers and

⁶² US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 6-22 (ADP), *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 4-2; Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership*, 30; Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, 106.

⁶³ Fredrick Kapp, *The Life of Fredrick William von Steuben*, 215.

resources for personal gain, promotion, or just recognition. A lack of humility, personal reflection, and self-criticism can contribute to an environment of misconduct and poor resource management. Ambitious goals are acceptable, but the inability to put the men and the mission before personal ambition signals a lack of humility.⁶⁴

The baron was undoubtedly ambitious, but never placed his interest before his men or the cause. His ability to reflect-in-action was possibly a result of the disappointment felt from unexpected dismissal from the Prussian service. Steuben was clear in his intentions to reach the rank of major general, but he also knew that success depended on his ability to support the mission and care for the men. The baron also demonstrated humility through the flexibility of his leadership approach. Letters of 1787 describe the difficulties he encountered and the adjustments he made to the traditional process of drilling the army. He explained how his “good republicans” wanted instruction in the “English style” and according to the “French mode.” He handed them a “plate of sauerkraut in the Prussian method, and they wanted to throw it out the window.” Steuben learned and adapted to the independent thinking of the Americans by simplifying elaborate drill. He made his intention for promotion clear to Washington but proved his worth through the care and training of the army.⁶⁵

Keen judgement is a vital component of influential leadership and comes from experience. Leaders use judgment to draw rational conclusions, make decisions, and assess complex situations. Judgment is different than competence. Competence is the accumulation of knowledge. In contrast, judgment is the artful application of knowledge to a problem or situation. Judgment is a critical component of operational art comprised of creativity, experience,

⁶⁴ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 2-11.

⁶⁵ Steuben to the Baron to Von Der Goltz, 1785, in Kapp, 677.

assessment, and intuition. Steuben used judgment and experience to guide his approach to training the continental army.⁶⁶

The baron had a wealth of experience that aided his approach to training Americans to fight like Europeans against the British. He had been a non-commissioned officer as a young man and fought against the Austrians in 1757 as a young lieutenant. He fought in several engagements and was captured by the Russians in 1761. By the end of his Prussian service, he had been a non-commissioned officer, a company commander, an adjutant, a general in training, and a junior diplomat. He had trained raw recruits and served at the highest levels of the army.⁶⁷

His experience gave him the tools to recognize the difference between Americans and Europeans. Steuben described his initial frustration with the Americans.

In the first place, the genius of this nation is not in the least to be compared with that of the Prussians, Austrians, or French. You say to your soldier, Do this, and he doeth it; but I am obliged to say, This is the reason why you ought to do that, and then he does it.

He knew that imbedded in Americans was a deep sense of independence. He quickly surmised that they do not respect simply officers based on their rank. Steuben had to quickly generate resonance with his leadership approach, so he created a unique system stripped of all nonessential movement. Additionally, his creative use of a demonstration company and appointment of subordinate inspectors generated progress under considerable time constraints.⁶⁸

Steuben balanced influence and authority to improve the Continental Army. He introduced order, discipline, and procedure by understanding the human terrain. The baron made a connection to his training audience and created meaning through simplified drill. He sought

⁶⁶ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 4-2; US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), IV-5.

⁶⁷ Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 21.

⁶⁸ Steuben to the Baron de Gaudy, 1787-88, in Kapp, 678; Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge*, 104-105.

promotion, but always placed his soldiers and the mission ahead of selfish interests. The drillmaster also had the experience required to solve a complex problem for General Washington.

Section 4: Conclusion

Leading organizations through change requires a combination of the *science* of authority and the *art* of influence. A thoughtful approach to leading change results in cohesion, unity of effort, and a positive climate. Change is required for organizations to grow and improve. Leaders have the responsibility to anticipate and lead change while creating resonance with subordinates. The science of authority may begin to move the ball down the field but influencing the behavior and motivation of others can enable a new strategy to win the game.

Leading change often fails despite a clear strategy and vision. The US Army is changing at a rapid pace requiring leaders at all levels to develop an influential approach to create resonance within their formations. Army leadership doctrine discusses the stress of change and provides a series of steps based on John Kotter's eight-stage model. This scientific method offers a coherent and useful set of actions that leaders use to make change last. Leading change also requires an approach that integrates judgment, experience, and interpersonal skills. The case study of Steuben at Valley Forge is an example of the employment of both the science and the art of leading change to produce a cohesive organization.⁶⁹

Cohesive teams are also a product of effective training and procedure. Group cohesion results from routinely performing practical tasks under stress. Cohesive teams are disciplined, ready, and better prepared to accomplish the mission. The experience of learning and growing generates a common stock of knowledge which produces meaningful bonds between individuals. These bonds can extend influence, build resonance, and create a positive climate.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 9-2.

⁷⁰ Anthony King, *Frontline*, 6; US Department of the Army, "Fortieth Chief of Staff of the Army Initial Message to the Army Team"; Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 68.

The art of influence plays a significant role in fostering a positive climate. Climate describes how people feel about the unit and depends on the unique blend of personalities within the organization. The rotating of army personnel through different assignments and positions can make gauging personalities a challenge; however, influential leaders find creative ways leverage their people. Leaders who understand the unique personalities within the organization can create a message that lasts. They can extend their influence and create a vision for the future in a meaningful way.⁷¹

Army doctrine provides leaders with a common starting point; however, more depth is required to learn about creating resonant change. Behavioral and psychological theory can help leaders address complex problems. The science of leading organizations focuses on what the leader must *know* and *do* according to the requirements model. The art of leadership requires a continually evolving sense of judgment, empathy, interpersonal tact, and humility to guide organizations through change and build cohesion.

The drillmaster embraced the unique independent nature of the Americans and tailored his strategy for change accordingly. His combination of the art and science of leadership provided Washington with an American army better prepared to fight and win a European style war against the British. Steuben continued to polish the Continentals into a professional army throughout the war. The performance at Monmouth provided Washington with a much-needed victory. The alliance with the French combined with Washington's solidified position as commander-in-chief finally turned the war in favor of the Americans.⁷²

Steuben's work provides an excellent case study of leading organizations through change. The modern US Army is changing at a rapid pace. Leaders that can manage change exploit emerging opportunities and gain support for new ideas. Leaders can use these attributes and

⁷¹ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 5-10-6-5.

⁷² Mark Lender and Gary Stone, *Fatal Sunday*, 424-426.

competencies to implement new technology, introduce new programs, or integrate updated doctrine. Competent leaders introduce new ideas, but influential leaders can make new procedures and policies resonate.

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