

A Ten Point Pledge For Commanders

1. **I WILL** subscribe in good faith to the solemn obligation to which I pledged, and particularly to my promise to faithfully discharge my duties to the best of my ability.
2. **I WILL** promptly adopt a specific program of projects and activities to be fostered during my term in office.
3. **I WILL** simultaneously appoint a full compliment of committees with capable chairmen who are pledged to perform their duties.
4. **I WILL** be guided constantly by the rules and regulations of proper procedures as defined in the Congressional Charter and By-Laws of the VFW.
5. **I WILL** create interesting programs for each regular meeting. Programs that will convince those in attendance that they belong to an organization that functions efficiently, one that deserves their continued active support because of the worthy purposes being accomplished.
6. **I WILL** open and close all meetings promptly at the appointed hours, wielding my gavel ruthlessly in the suppression of aimless debates or time wasting arguments over trivial issues.
7. **I WILL** honor and respect the purpose of the VFW Ritual by opening and closing all meetings with ceremonial dignity.
8. **I WILL** select capable comrades to serve on a Ritual Team that will conduct ceremonial functions in a way that will effectively dramatize the basic principles on which the VFW is founded.
9. **I WILL** tolerate no unkind utterances or performances at meetings that violate the ethics of good taste, or offend the morals of comrades who respect the presence of an open Bible on the altar.
10. **I WILL** cheerfully make those sacrifices of time and labor that will prove that the confidence of my comrades in my leadership qualities has not been misplaced and that will serve to inspire equal sacrifices from those who can help insure the success of my administration.

Aids to Leadership

While this is only a suggested guide, it is recommended that leaders at every level:

1. Should have a copy of the National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual.
 2. Should stress the importance of studying the Post, District, County Council, Department and National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.
 3. Encourage Commanders at all levels to study the contents of the VFW Commander's Leadership Reference Guide.
 4. Set up Schools of Instruction on parliamentary procedure and the proper methods of conducting meetings.
- **T** - HINK before taking action.
 - **H** - ow can we release the motivation within our members so they will have the desire to do the very best job ??
 - **I** - s the member you have appointed the best qualified or the one you like better??
 - **N** - EVER withhold the authority necessary for the completion of the task !!
 - **K** - NOWING the committee, and appointing the most interested and best suited, will do more to create a successful program.

The purpose of leadership development is to provide the dynamic force to mold basic elements into a stimulated individual who works for the good of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and for the highest level of attainments in its programs and purposes.

The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been.
-- Henry Kissinger, former U.S. Secretary of State.



LEADERSHIP CAN BE FUN

Leadership can be fun as Commander. **No one** can have a greater impact on the success of our organization than you. To ensure our future success, we must all continue with a positive leadership approach!!

Positive, forward-thinking leadership is the key to our success. Not just the leadership that your position calls for, but the specialized, unique type of leadership that is needed to advance the aims and purposes of the VFW.

The inspiration, guidance, supervision, and advice must come from the person who is close enough for personal contact—that's you—the Commander. YOU are the cornerstone.

ENTHUSIASM

YOU must be enthusiastic...dedicated...committed to the job...well informed...sympathetic...and, above all, you must be available.

BE WELL INFORMED

Be sure to read and study material sent to you from the various levels of our organization. A person can't give advice or take it and make the right decision without being well informed...so be well informed!!

- Read the VFW Magazine; "CHECKPOINT"; the Commander's Leadership Reference Guide.
- Study the National and Department General Orders.
- Be familiar with the By-Laws, Ritual and Manual of Procedure.
- Know about and understand all the programs of the VFW.
- Stay on top of program revisions as they occur during the year and be sure to pass these changes on to your subordinate officers.
- Be aware of changes within the organization or within those units under your jurisdiction.

BE PREPARED

- Hold regularly scheduled meetings.
- If necessary, send out notices well in advance of scheduled meetings.
- Be sure your meetings are well planned and well conducted.
- Meetings should be interesting and educational.
- Don't start your meeting at 8PM SHARP and end at 11PM DULL.
- The impression received at meetings could very well determine individual attitudes toward the entire organization.
- Instructional meetings or schools of instruction are necessary for our continued success.

BE POSITIVE

As you may have already noted, your duties are far greater than those prescribed in our By-Laws. Your job is not just to preside over meetings or to attend District or Department functions. Your job is a day-in, day-out, 365 days of the year, full time service. You need to be prepared to give the job all of the time and effort you possibly can.

- Be positive!!...Be enthusiastic!!
- Issue challenges to your officers.
- Offer friendly wagers to your chairmen.
- Don't be content with just equaling last year's records because you are then just breaking even.
- Remember...Problems that may arise are just opportunities waiting for your special attention.

TEAMWORK

A Commander who fully performs all the duties of his office is the busiest person in the VFW. The responsibility of providing effective leadership, coordinating activities, promoting programs, generating enthusiasm, initiating and developing new ideas is awesome. In most cases done as a labor of love, knowing the only satisfaction you will receive is the knowledge that you have done a good job during your year as Commander.

- Form a working team, not forgetting those Past Commanders to assist you during your year. Remember that they have already "been there and done that" and their knowledge will be a valuable asset.

- Delegate authority, but don't relinquish it. You can't do everything yourself, so assign various duties to the members of your team.
- Appoint the best chairmen. Use individuals who know the program, are interested in the program, are willing to promote its activities and are willing to sell the program to others.
- Did you wipe the slate of officers clean at the beginning of the year or did you appoint your friends to these positions?
- Don't appoint people on the grounds of friendship unless those friends can do the job!!
- Keep competent chairmen because their performance reflects on you. If the program fails, the blame will be yours.
- Follow up on appointments.
- Never assume the work has been done.
- Keep in touch with your chairmen. If they are not doing their job, remove them and appoint someone else. Don't wait until it is too late.
- Make up charts and graphs and set goals.
- Chart progress.
- Communicate with your officers and chairmen.
- Offer advice and assistance.
- Let everyone know that you are interested...That you care and that you are available.
- Be flexible and sympathetic.
- Be willing to accept changes, suggestions, ideas, and assistance from others.
- Don't be afraid to admit to a mistake.

APPEARANCE

- A positive image is very important.
- As the Commander, your image is the first perception of the organization.
- Look into the mirror. You are the future of the organization. What you see in the mirror is what other people see in you!!

APPRECIATION

Throughout the year and, finally, when the year is over, you must show your appreciation.

- You can never say "Thank You" enough.
- Never forget the "Grass Roots" of the organization and never forget the Ladies Auxiliary and all the hard work they do for us and for veterans.
- Thank everyone for their loyalty and support.
- Remember...It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice.
- Remember...You have far more to gain with a pat on the back than a kick in the pants.

If you follow any of the above suggested guidelines, leadership will be fun because:

- You will be successful.
 - You will meet your goals.

So, just DO IT!!

- For your Post!
 - For your District!
 - For your County Council!
 - For your Department!
 - For the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States!