



Bedrock of Excellence

Our Corps' reputation for battlefield prowess is older than the republic we serve. From the early patriots of the Revolution to the Marines of the present, there has been an unbroken line of service excellence in times of peace and war. We are the proud stewards of this heritage, and it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to hand it down to future generations. Our forebears expect it, our nation needs it, and future generations of Marines demand it.

As we march smartly into the next century, we must continue to build upon our bedrock of character and tradition of service: service not only to our Corps and country, but to each other—to our fellow Marines. We can continue our noble tradition of proud, excellent service by keeping within our sight three character guidons to mark our steps.

First, bloom where you are planted. We are MARINES, not tankers, pilots, grunts or box kickers. We joined our Corps to be Marines. It is essential that each of us do what is required, in whatever billet, in whatever MOS, we are assigned in—every day is Qual Day! We must focus on the task at hand. Our actions, deeds and example speak louder than words. Do your best; bloom where the Corps plants you.

Second, lead by example. Whether you lead, follow or get out of the way—someone is watching you! Your presence, personal appearance, character and actions in every circumstance are under observation. Lead by example. Be good followers. Seniors observe juniors, juniors observe seniors, peers observe peers, and non-Marines observe us all. Each of us carefully looks over the other—always on the watch for strengths to emulate, for weaknesses to avoid. Every Marine is a potential leader, and every Marine is an example to those around him. Our Corps and our future demand that we maintain the highest standards and set the finest examples. As a whetstone sharpens a knife, excellence produces excellence. Sharpen each other; hone yourselves in character, values, ethics and the profession of arms. Set the example by leading by example.

Third, maintain high ethical standards. Exchanging moral and ethical excellence for short-term gain will rot our Corps. This excellence of character is never situational, and it must never be compromised. As we have learned from the past...situational ethics is not a promise but an epitaph; it serves no use to our Corps. The highest compliment that one Marine can pay another is, "You did the right thing." Our bedrock of character and ethics is not situational—the situation, whether important or insignificant, does not matter. What does matter, is that the right moral and ethical decision was made and stuck to!

Excellence doesn't just happen. It must be forged, tested and used. It must be passed down and woven into the very fabric of our soul until it becomes our nature. It takes time to bring excellence to maturity. All of us must take the time to seek it out, to develop it, and more importantly—to use it.



A stylized, handwritten signature of C. C. Krulak in black ink.

C. C. Krulak
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps