

Recommended Professional (Leadership) Reading List

The following is a list of recommended professional reading material above and beyond the normal Marine Corps Professional Reading program:

The Armed Forces Officer, Marine Corps Association (1950 Ed). Get the old one, not the redone edition. This is an outstanding book that every officer or SNCO should own. A timeless educational book that I use as a constant reference and is a seminal work on the profession of arms and leadership.

Guidelines for the Leader and Commander. Gen Bruce C. Clarke. A classic that is hard to come by but well worth the struggle to find and, once you read it, you'll know exactly why.

Meditations, Marcus Aurelius. Carried by many-a-leader and, like the classic it is, it's a great book to refer to from time to time for its timeless wisdom, guidance and self-improvement. I have an original hard copy that my dad gave me...perhaps a little heavy but it's near the top of my list.

Platoon Leader, McDonnough. Essential reading for the lieutenant and any company grade officers.

Fields of Fire, James Webb. Another excellent leadership primer; essential for our young readers and always a good read for our more seasoned leaders. If you don't like being around young people...find a new line of work.

The Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant, by Ulysses S. Grant. One of the best military autobiographies ever written and should be mandatory reading for SNCOs and officers...even NCO's if they are so inclined.

Sherman: Solider, Realist, American, by B. H. Liddell Hart. The beginning will likely make you toss it but you have to get through his early life and see the mastery that was Sherman. It is a fascinating read.

With The Old Breed, E. B. Sledge. The definitive combat book; simply written with noteworthy lessons for leaders of all ranks. I read it annually.

My Helmet For A Pillow, by Robert Leckie. In the same league, spirit, tone and tenor of Sledge's book. I know officers that read it annually and swear by it. The author doesn't like officers but don't let that stop you.

The Passion of Command, Col B. P. McCoy. A great, short read from an outstanding combat commander...universally applies to all ranks and discusses the essence of combat leadership and individual courage. Main theme: Discipline.

FMFM 1-0: Leading Marines, by The Marines. Mandatory reading for anyone aspiring to be a leader. Don't just read it, study it and live it. Laminate it, dummy cord it, and take it to the field.

Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal, by James D. Hornfischer. Think what you want about the Navy but don't judge them until you've read this epic tale. You won't be able to put it down.

Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command, by Lewis Sorley. A brilliant study of an officer of the highest integrity who is faced with some of the most vexing leadership and management problems of his time (running the Army during the Vietnam War); a study in courage, integrity and duty at the highest levels.

Black Hearts, by Jim Frederick. An essential small unit leadership primer about a group of soldiers in the stories 101st Airborne Division's 502d Parachute Infantry Regiment (Black Heart Bde) in Iraq during 2006. It the tragic story of small unit leadership gone horribly awry...when small unit leaders negligently allow standards and discipline to slip and moral fiber is completely broken down.