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## The Promise

as officers for granted. We don't get the chance to lead so much as we are entrusted with the privilege to lead. And part of that trust is readying the Sailors entrusted to us for leadership roles themselves.

Admiral Clark continues: *"In our Navy, as long as I'm the CNO, we're going to evaluate every leader on two points: number one — your personal commitment, your personal dedication to mission accomplishment. Getting the mission done is what it's all about, first and foremost. Number two is your personal dedication and your personal commitment to the growth and the development of the people who have been entrusted into your leadership."*

When you drafted your last FITREP, how many words were about what you did, and how many were about what you did for your people? Are you being a good mentor? Do you know the advancement opportunities available in each of the ratings of your Sailors? Have you shown them where to find the bibliography that identifies precisely from where all of the questions on their next advancement exam will come? Are you willing to make yourself vulnerable by entrusting them with decisions and actions that will help them grow, even if it means the chance they'll make a mistake on your watch?

*"Fundamentally, I believe that our young people want a chance to make a difference. They want a chance to prove what they can do. This is what we promise them. We promise them a chance to make a difference. And if they succeed in our profession, we promise them that they get a chance to lead, and that's the greatest thing that we can offer them. They will get a chance to hone their leadership skills, and they will get a chance to commit themselves to mission accomplishment. And they will get a chance to then grow and develop others. And when that happens, wonderful things happen in the institution. And I believe that is what's happening today."*

Under Admiral Clark's stewardship, amazing things have been happening in our Navy. We simultaneously meet commitments all over the globe. We can surge more carriers than any time since World War II. Our reenlistment rates are at all-time highs. Being a part of this Navy today means something special to our Sailors. We need to ensure that our Sailors mean something special to us.

*"So, leaders are stewards. They have been given this opportunity. We give them authority. We also give them a lot of responsibility. Then we hold them accountable. And our accountability chain has to do with these two things first: mission accomplishment, and growth and development of our people. To me, that's what covenant leadership is all about. It's about the promise that we make — the promise that we make to individuals, the promise we make to this institution."*

Take a moment to reflect on The Promise. How well have we fulfilled our promise to our people? Have we taken the time to get to know them, all of them, and understand their goals and dreams? Do we show the same concern for their career progression as our own? Would our Sailors think of us as "covenant leaders" who make a real difference in their lives? One of the greatest rewards of command, or of any leadership role, is helping our people grow. All too soon we have to pass the mantle of responsibility to the next generation. Can we say to ourselves that we've done everything possible to make them ready?

If you pause to reflect upon these questions, you may conclude that this covenant is really all about service. In becoming a "servant" leader, you inevitably become a positive force in the lives of your Sailors. This is when you begin to make a lasting difference in their lives. In living the role of a covenant leader and in serving your crew, you make a profound difference in your own life as well. ¶

**C**ould you explain to a business associate what "covenant leadership" means? Do you ever talk about it with your Sailors? Do you even think it's important?

Admiral Vernon Clark, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) does. He talks about it all the time. Maybe we should, too.

CAPT Steve O'Brien, who serves as the Executive Director of the Naval Reserve Leadership Training Continuum National Steering Committee, had an opportunity to speak with the CNO a few weeks ago about this very topic. Here's what Admiral Clark had to say.

*"I like to talk about the promise. The promise is about the magic that takes place in the leadership account. Our young people raise their right hands, and they promise to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. And they promise to obey the orders of the President of the United States. And (this is really a big part of the miracle) sight unseen, to obey the orders of all of the people in the chain of command between them and the President. I find that is an amazing commitment. And what I've been asking leaders is simply this: they promise that. What do you promise in return?"*

Take the time this month to attend a reenlistment ceremony, even if the Sailor is not "yours." Listen carefully to the oath of reenlistment. It's humbling when you reflect on the commitment our Sailors make to our country and the trust they place in us as their leaders. Ask yourself if we sometimes take our leadership roles