

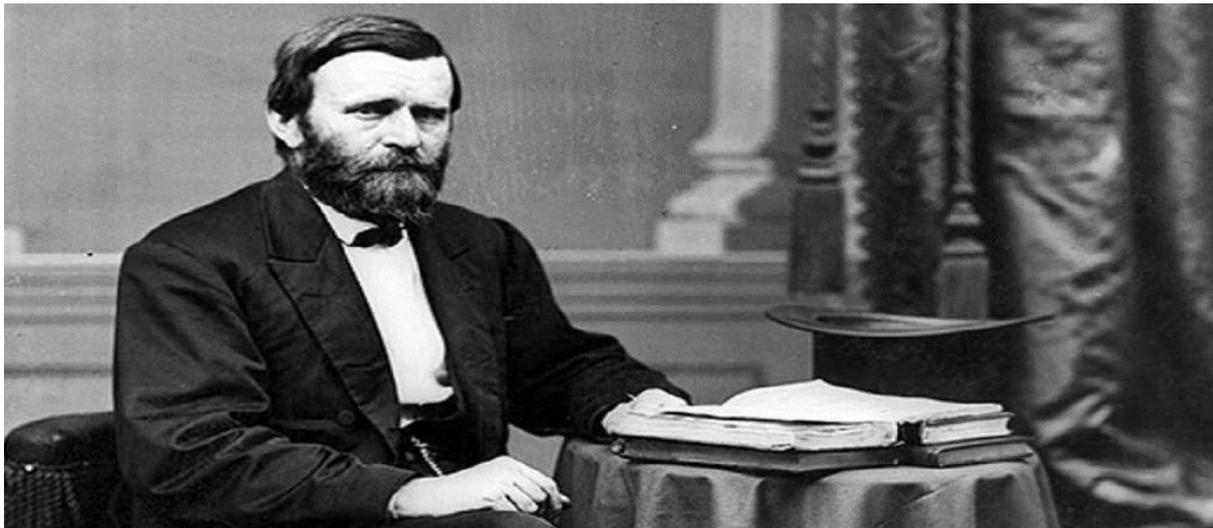


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ULYSSES S. GRANT – SOME LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP



"In every battle there comes a time when both sides consider themselves beaten then he who continues the attack wins" Ulysses S. Grant

Ulysses S. Grant, born Hiram Ulysses Grant was a General, Commander of the Union army during the American Civil War and, the 18th President of the United States from 1869 to 1877. Ulysses S. Grant was viewed as a national hero, and focused on reconstruction during his administration, in an attempt to reunite the North and South, while trying to protect civil rights of black slaves. Though Grant was honest, some members of his administration were corrupt, making his presidency notorious for scandal.

Born April 27, 1822 in Point Pleasant, Ohio, Grant was son to Jesse Root Grant and Hannah Simpson. Grant grew up in Georgetown, Ohio and described his childhood as "uneventful."

In 1839, Grant commenced at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. While Grant had no interest in military life, his father pressured him to attend, and Grant knew if he did not, he would not gain any further education. Due to a clerical error, Grant was incorrectly registered as Ulysses S. Grant but he never corrected the mistake, and eventually accepted this as his real name. Grant excelled in horsemanship though was an ordinary student and earned average grades, graduating from West Point 21st out of 39 in 1843.

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After graduating, Grant was assigned as a brevet second lieutenant to the 4th United States Infantry. He served in the Mexican-American War as a quartermaster, allowing him to gain a valuable understanding of army supply. Grant learnt about leadership and military tactics while serving under General Zachary Taylor and General Winfield Scott. He developed a hunger for action and consequently entered into battle in 1847 as first lieutenant and captain. While leading in battle, Grant was recognised for his bravery under fire. Grant was allocated to a number of isolated army posts, separating him from his family. In 1854, Grant resigned from the military.

In 1861, after the Civil War commenced, Grant volunteered his military services, assisting to recruit, equip and drill troops in Galena. Grant then was appointed a colonel of the 21st Illinois Volunteers. Before the enemy had been engaged, President Abraham Lincoln made Grant a brigadier general. The first key victory for the Union during the war was in 1862 when Grant's troops captured Fort Donelson in Tennessee. When Grant was asked about his armies' terms for surrender, Grant stated, "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted." In 1864, Grant was appointed lieutenant general and obtained command of all the U.S. armies. He commanded a number of campaigns which eventually weakened the Confederate army and assisted to end the Civil War.

In 1868, Grant was elected as President of the United States. At the age of 46, not only was Grant the youngest president-elect in history up to that time, but he was also politically inexperienced. Grant became President during the midst of the Reconstruction era, and attempted to foster reconciliation between the North and South. Grant supported amnesty for Confederate leaders civil rights for former slaves. He pushed for ratification of the 15th Amendment, allowing black men the right to vote. Grant asked Congress for legislation, the Ku Klux Klan Act to enforce strict penalties against terrorist organisations and suppress the Ku Klux Klan. Also during his Presidency, Grant signed legislation creating the Weather Bureau, Department of Justice and America's first national park, Yellowstone National Park.

A number of lessons can be learnt from Grant's leadership. Some include:

Command and control

When Grant was in command, this is exactly what he did. While he was not one to take charge, whenever he was put in charge, Grant gave consistent orders, provided recognition, was able to adapt when necessary, and always had momentum. The values of both clear authority and loyalty reflected his straightforward approach. Grant commanded with great power and never had trouble getting people to follow his lead.

Ensure your Communication is Clear

One of Grant's most distinctive traits was his capability to communicate with others and ensure his point was understood. Grant had a way with words; he was a master of syntax. The style of both his writing and speech replicated his character – calm, direct, clear and reserved. Whenever he spoke, his words were reliable, encouraging and honest.

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Grant was always clear in his communication. This was particularly important during battles when he gave orders to his men. When delivered, his men instantly understood the message, allowing his armies to be efficient and move at speed. The orders which Grant gave contributed to his military success.

Be Courageous

Grant was incredibly brave and fearless. He could always be counted on to press the enemy. During battle, Grant constantly demonstrated undeniable courage. He would sit scribbling orders with bullets dashing past, while he directed his army elsewhere to drive the enemy. At times when he was injured, generally from moving about so quickly on horseback, Grant alongside his men would tolerate the hardships of an army in the field.

A strong test of Grant's courage was during the last year of his life. Grant was bankrupt after his business partner had embezzled investors' money and was dying as he developed throat cancer. Not only was Grant suffering enormous pain, the effects of his humiliation on his family was tremendous. Grant decided to spend his time writing his memoirs which would later return the wealth of his family and restore his honour.

Be Confident

Grant had to overcome his doubts and learnt to alleviate his fear. His first victory instilled confidence in not only himself, but his nation's cause. Such confidence made him believe that he would be able to win the war. Grant had the ability to understand a situation, take charge, achieve results and exploit the enemy. His positivity was particularly contagious, and as momentum built, his soldiers too gained confidence and enjoyed being with a winner.

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