



## (U) Are Leaders Made or Born?

FROM: Charles H. Berlin III  
SID Chief of Staff  
Run Date: 09/16/2003

(U) In the last articles we have explored the basis of leadership according to Berlin (you'll find I have an opinion about most everything!). I have received lots of feedback (both way good and way bad) and I am glad it's a topic of discussion. No one seems "blah" about the subject, that's for sure. I maintain that people are good, leadership makes a difference and leaders have to be prepared to lead with a passion for the mission. But any good engineer would make sure this whole equation was feasible first. So the question remains out there: Can leaders be made? Can people be trained to lead? Or are just a few born to it? It's the old nature verses nurture question.

(U) Well, here it is, up front: **Leaders are made, not born**. To be sure, they are not cranked out of a factory. Schooling alone does not a leader make. It takes a combination of schooling, experience, and mentoring to make a leader. Here's the other thing: almost anyone at any level can do it! "Important" position is not required; genius mental capacity is not required; world-class athleticism is not required; and (fortunately for some of us) good looks are not required either. But, at the same time, there are a few qualities that must lie within you to lead. The rest of leadership can be taught. The good news: the required qualities are in all of us to some degree. In my mind it comes down to these three: Heart, Courage and Resiliency.

- Heart is the trait that keeps a leader from giving up - to push it over the top, to overcome obstacles.
- Courage is the trait that keeps hope alive - to set sail in uncertainty.
- Resiliency is the trait that gets you back up when you get knocked down.

(U//FOUO) In reality, we are all born leaders to some extent - so I contradict myself a bit - but it's not a simple binary choice, like so many important things. We have these traits in some combination. But it takes a series of training and mentoring events in combination to make us effective leaders. The experience of taking on responsibility is probably the best teacher. It is a test of heart and courage and resiliency every time. Any leader development process must have this component. A series of ever-increasing levels of responsibility is the template of a leader's career. I believe it is a strategic imperative for the Agency to embark on a serious leader development path. You can see the beginnings of this commitment in the Center for Leadership and Professional Development at the NCS. We will need the mentorship part and the workplace experience part to round this out. That's our job as operational leaders. Do we have the program in place? Have you been developed? Have you developed yourself? Have you developed someone else? It's a journey, but one you need not take alone. Want to join me? Let's lead!



### SERIES:

#### (U) Charles Berlin Discusses Leadership

1. [Leadership: Your View of People](#)
2. [Leaders Really Do Make a Difference](#)
3. [What Does a Leader Do?](#)
4. Are Leaders Made or Born?

(U//FOUO) Speaking of joining me, I will be having a **brown bag lunch** this **Friday from 1130-1230 in Ops 1, 2C087** to discuss leadership in a group setting. What to do when your leadership is bad? Where do I get a mentor? Who am I to judge anyone? Why is being a leader so hard at NSA? Can I lead from an Enlighten newsgroup? Are leadership and collaboration mutually exclusive? These and the meaning of life can all be discussed - see you then.

**"(U//FOUO) SIDtoday articles may not be republished or reposted outside NSANet without the consent of S0121 ([DL sid comms](#))."**

---

DYNAMIC PAGE -- HIGHEST POSSIBLE CLASSIFICATION IS  
TOP SECRET // SI / TK // REL TO USA AUS CAN GBR NZL  
DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108