

By [Josh Bowen](#), author of [3x5 Leadership](#)

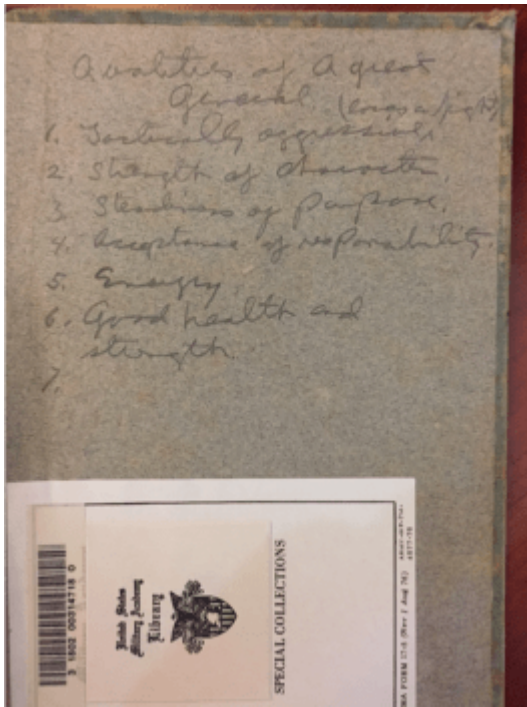
In the West Point's special collections inventory resides Patton's *Elements of Strategy* textbook from when he was a West Point Cadet back in 1909. This textbook was used for West Point's "History of the Military Art" core history class, commonly referred to as "Mil Art", and is still taught to this day. Inside Patton's cadet copy you can find many handwritten notes and thoughts as he took the course. Most notable, however, is his writing on the inside back cover of the book: what he asserted as the "qualities of a great general."

Cadet Patton's Qualities of a Great General

1. Tactically aggressive (loves a fight)
2. Strength of character
3. Steadiness of purpose
4. Acceptance of responsibility
5. Energy
6. Good health and strength

7. _____

What Is the 7th Quality?



Notice in the picture how #7 is empty? We don't know why, but it is fascinating to think about what Patton was considering as the 7th quality and why he didn't write it out.

So, what would you consider as the 7th critical quality of a "great general?" In making this more relevant to your life, the question could be what are the top qualities of an ideal tactical military leader or organizational [leader-manager](#)?

Making Your Own "7 Qualities"

This question is not necessarily about adding to Patton's list specifically, but more about determining what you consider to be the top qualities of a great leader. Once you have written down a list, the critical question is: *to what degree does your daily behavior align with those qualities?* This should be a daily reflection for every leader.

Now consider your people, peers and subordinates alike. What would you say are *their* top qualities that they desire in a leader? It is worth having them spell it out as an informal (or even formal) leader development exercise? This both educates you on their thoughts and

forces them to fully develop that idea. Now, how much does your behavior align with *those* qualities? How about *their* behavior aligning with *their own* identified qualities? It's easy to see how this simple exercise can have major impacts.

I encourage you to try it out. Think about what you consider to be the top qualities of an organizational leader. How do your behaviors align with that list?

Do the same for your people as a leader development exercise. Make them reflect on their own behaviors; you can also analyze your behavior against their lists.

I not only have my own list, but routinely reflect on it to update it as needed based on my experience and learning. Reflecting on it also ensures my daily leader behaviors align. I even discuss this topic with others (subordinates, peers, and superiors) to determine their thoughts as a simple self-development exercise for my own growth.

Here are some helpful resources to enhance these exercises:

- [Developing your leader self-awareness](#)
- [Transformational vs. Servant Leadership](#)
- [Understanding the dichotomy of leaders and managers](#)
- [How to use peer coaching to grow as a leader](#)

Finally, I'd love to hear what your top leader qualities are. There is incredible value in building a "community of practice" who engage in such conversations to add value to the leader development community. Feel free to comment below on this post, share on Facebook or Twitter (**#Pattons7Qualities**), or to email me personally at 3x5leadership@gmail.com. Engaging in such a conversation enriches all of our collective leader development journeys.

[Josh Bowen](#) is a US Army engineer officer currently working towards a graduate degree in Leadership and Organizational Psychology from Columbia University followed by an assignment as a West Point Tactical Officer. Josh writes for his own blog, [3x5 Leadership](#). The opinions expressed are his alone, and do not reflect those of the U.S. Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

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