

Using the 5Ps Leadership Analysis to Examine the Battle of Antietam: An Explanation and Case Study

Bradley Z. Hull, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Logistics
Department of Management, Marketing, and Logistics
John Carroll University
University Heights, OH
bzhull@jcu.edu

Scott J. Allen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Management
Department of Management, Marketing, and Logistics
John Carroll University
University Heights, OH
sallen@jcu.edu

Abstract

The authors describe an exploratory analytical tool called *The 5Ps Leadership Analysis* (Personal Attributes, Position, Purpose, Practices/Processes, and Product) as a heuristic for better understanding the complexities of leadership. Using *The 5Ps Leadership Analysis*, the authors explore the leadership of General Robert E. Lee of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and General George B. McClellan of the Union Army of the Potomac—more specifically, the leadership of the two generals on September 17, 1862 during the Battle of Antietam. The paper concludes with suggestions for application in the classroom.

Introduction

This case study examines how two organizations compete and how two leaders can influence change and success given their resources. One organization is small and underfinanced with antiquated equipment. The other is large, well financed, and organized along traditional lines where each part of the organization operates autonomously and is coordinated by top levels of management. This type of confrontation between a small organization and a large competitor occurs often in American business. Two relevant examples might be Dell (in its early days) versus Compaq and Amazon.com (in its early days) versus Barnes and Noble or the now bankrupt Borders. No doubt there is much to gain from an analysis similar to the approach taken in *Built to Last* (Collins & Porras, 1997) or *Good to*

Great (Collins, 2001). However, a more novel approach may be to examine an extreme example where the competition is not two companies intensely competing for market share, but two armies locked in a life or death struggle. Military history provides examples where this type of competition is direct and a leader's actions are well documented.

For this paper, two armies have been chosen—the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia under General Robert E. Lee and the Union Army of the Potomac under General George B. McClellan as a case study for our analysis. The setting is the American Civil War and the date is September 17, 1862 during the Battle of Antietam. As we approach the 150th (September 17, 2012) anniversary of this crucial event in American history, it is appropriate to reflect on the role *leadership* played in the battle. By all accounts, the smaller Army of Northern Virginia was out manned, out gunned, and out funded, yet they delivered a draw for the Confederacy.

The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, the authors describe an exploratory approach called *The 5Ps Leadership Analysis (5PLA)* as a heuristic for better understanding the complexities of leadership. A second purpose is to apply the approach to a case study that focuses on the leadership of two legendary generals, Robert E. Lee and George B. McClellan. The authors provide a brief description of the 5Ps model and continue with the case under review—the Battle of Antietam. The paper concludes with suggestions for practice in the classroom.

The 5Ps Leadership Analysis

Dialogue about leadership can be difficult to navigate because participants enter the conversation at different points. As DiPaolo (2009) suggests “Many of our student leaders have been wearing the label of ‘leader’ without any real understanding of what that means” (p. 13). Some describe leadership as position, others examine behaviors, and many describe the personal traits or the results of an individual's efforts. Development level of the student impacts an individual's construction of leadership as well (Komives, Longersbeam, Mainella, Osteen, & Owen, 2009). Unfortunately, viewing leadership through a narrow lens may limit an individual's ability to accurately pinpoint the sources of success or failure. As Kellerman (2004) suggests, rarely does success or failure happen in a vacuum. Variables include the leader, the followers, and the context and each of these variables has several sub-factors as well. In fact, a major challenge to the study and practice of leadership is the many traits, abilities, skills, competencies, processes a leader must possess to be successful. One need not look any further than Bass' (2008) exhaustive account of the literature. One purpose of the present article is to honor complexity while also placing a container around some of the

major factors that lead to effective or ineffective leadership. The ability to discern *how* to critically examine leadership is important for both scholars and educators alike.

When analyzing leadership, and the attributes of effective leaders, we have found it useful to view individuals through the lens of *The 5Ps Leadership Analysis*. Burns (1978) suggested that leadership “is one of the most observed and least understood concepts on earth” (p. 2) and by no means does this heuristic provide an all-inclusive list of knowledge, skills, activities, abilities, and traits. However, the 5PLA provides students with a comprehensive tool to gain perspective on leadership through an organized, multi-faceted approach. The 5Ps—Personal Attributes, Position, Purpose, Practices/Processes and Product—can help students more critically examine effective and ineffective leadership and better defend *why* they came to the conclusion they did.

Personal Attributes are the traits, knowledge, skills, and abilities that leaders embody (Bass, 2008; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Stodgill, 1948). These traits vary from person to person, and must be capitalized upon and managed depending on the context. Individuals bring natural ability in some areas (e.g., cognitive ability) but this does not mean the individual can influence, inspire, and energize a group of people. Countless combinations of the attributes of the leader (and followers) will be needed for different contexts. Leaders and followers with an intentional awareness of their positive and negative attributes can better manage the personal dimension of leadership.

Position examines how the individual approaches the role of “leader” (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993; Gardner, 1990; Goleman, 2004; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; McCall, 2010). When others speak about the leader, it is often done so in deference to the role the individual occupies. Most often this person is in a position of authority over others. He or she is the president, executive director, or branch manager. However, if leadership is in fact a process of influence, then the Position need not be a formal one. In other words, each person can step into and out of leadership—often in a moment’s notice. Upon critical examination, a person with a position of authority or leadership could *not* act as a leader and those without a title (e.g., Gandhi, Mother Theresa) may in fact be exercising leadership. Regardless of how the individual obtained the role, Position is about the style the leader uses to lead others (e.g., Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993; Goleman, 2004).

The leader’s **Purpose** answers the question, “Leadership for what?” Leaders are clearly aligned around a cause or purpose (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). At times the Purpose could be deemed as noble and right. At other times, an individual’s Purpose may be unethical and suspect. The Purpose may be

set by the board to increase shareholder value or it could be mission driven, such as eradicating cancer. A Purpose may be an individual's vision, politically motivated or community driven. Regardless, Purpose is essential. Without Purpose, a leader will have a difficult time motivating others to work hard, innovate, and in some cases, place themselves and their families in harm's way.

The **Practices/Processes** of leadership describe how the leader achieves Purpose; moving the group, organization or community from point A to point B (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2010). This movement may include any number of Processes (timing, strategy, initiating structure, goal achievement) or behaviors (Practices) associated with effective leadership (see Bass, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). At times, the Practices/Processes are simple and straightforward and at other times a complex maze of possibilities (e.g., U.S. debt ceiling crisis in August 2011). Regardless, the Practices/Processes are crucial to the Purpose and may mean the difference between success and failure. For example, the chosen Practices/Processes can energize and engage followers, model desired behaviors, and align resources and people in a common direction. In addition, there are a number of explicit and implicit rules that will foster an environment of creativity and innovation or stability and conservatism. Ultimately, the goal is for leaders to intervene skillfully (Meissen, 2010) and act from a place of intentionality.

What is the end **Product**? Some wonder if the success or failure of the leader can be determined prior to knowing the final results of the Purpose (Ulrich, Zenger, & Smallwood, 1999). In other words, did the individual make a positive contribution that did in fact lead the organization, country or cause to goal attainment? Did they fulfill their Purpose? Or, is the institution worse because of the intervention? In some cases it takes years, maybe decades to know the full effect of an individual's actions (or inactions) and in the end, some go down in history as great leaders who fulfilled their Purpose and others do not.

By using the 5PLA as a lens to evaluate a leader, one can determine why some men and women have achieved great success and others have not. For instance, some individuals are adept at one or two of the 5Ps—a great man or woman may have an incredible purpose or cause for example but fail to implement process to produce results in a way that impacts the masses. Others can produce strong, large-scale results but in a horrifying or unethical manner (e.g., Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin). To apply the tool under discussion to a real case, we look to American history and a conflict between two generals, both West Point graduates who each graduated second in their class. Likewise, both were charismatic in their own right and respected strategists. Their background was somewhat similar, but the results of their leadership differed drastically.

A Leadership Case Study: The Battle of Antietam

The Battle of Antietam pitted the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia under General Robert E. Lee against the Union Army of the Potomac under General George B. McClellan. The date was September 17, 1862. The battle under examination (Antietam) became known as the “The Bloodiest Day in American History” due to the massive number of casualties on each side.

Setting the Stage: The Context

In the fall of 1862 the Civil War was nearly two years old and the Confederate States of America (the South) was suffering initial defeats at the hands of the Union (the North). The South had few arms or munitions factories to make weapons, unlike the technologically advanced North. The industrial revolution had made the North wealthy and the almost exclusively agrarian South was virtually bankrupt and lacking the infrastructure to wage war (McPherson, 2002).

Upon assuming command of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, Lee won two initial victories and Southern spirits soared. England and France took interest in an independent South, which would give them access to its cotton crop. If Lee could deliver a significant victory on Northern soil, England and France were prepared to send warships to aid the South, which in the minds of many, would bring the war to a speedy end (McPherson, 2002).

Achieving such a victory was a major reason for Lee’s decision to invade the North, but there were others as well (Murfin, 1965). First, 1862 was a midterm election year and there was a growing anti-war sentiment in the North. With another Southern victory, Abraham Lincoln might lose control of Congress (McPherson, 2002). Second, invasion might convince Maryland to secede from the Union since it was a slave owning Northern state with many Southern sympathizers (Gallagher, 1999). Third, Lee knew he could not compete with the extensive resources of the North. With its large population and industrial might, he knew that the North would ultimately overwhelm the South. For the South to win, it needed to do so quickly.

Lee’s troops were tired from recent battles, underfed, and had antiquated firearms (Child, 2006). In a September 3, 1862 letter to his immediate superior, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America, Lee wrote, “And though weaker than our opponents in men and military equipment we must endeavor to harass, if we cannot destroy them” (Thomas, 1995, p. 256). Lee knew he had little alternative to invasion and now was the time to strike—on the heels of his recent victories, when spirits ran high. Thus, his decision to invade with an inferior force

was daring, but based on logic (McPherson, 2002). His decision to invade was also supported by Jefferson Davis who supported Lee throughout the War (Gallagher, 1996).

Lee took a daring risk and split his troops into five columns: three were dispatched to capture Harper's Ferry, one to investigate (unfounded) rumors of Northern troop movements, and one marched to Frederick, Maryland where Lee addressed the citizens in an attempt to influence them to join with the South. Dividing forces in enemy territory invited destruction—especially in this case, since Lee had only 38,000 invading against more than 95,000 Union troops (Sears, 1999).

In one of the most famous security mishaps in military history, a copy of Lee's orders supposedly dropped on the ground when Major General D. H. Hill mounted his horse was found by Union soldiers and swiftly turned over to General McClellan. Upon receipt of Lee's orders, McClellan stated, "This is a paper with which, if I am not able to whip Bobbie Lee, I shall be willing to go home" (Gibbon, 1928, p. 73). Finding the orders known as "Lee's Lost Orders" should have resulted in the swift destruction of Lee's dispersed forces, but it did not.

The Personal Attributes of Lee and McClellan

Much has been written about the personal attributes of the two military leaders. History has viewed Robert E. Lee as a tenacious, inspirational, impatient, and achievement oriented leader willing to take calculated risks even under the most challenging circumstances. A graduate of West Point and the son of a military hero in his own right, Lee "scored perfectly in artillery and in infantry and in cavalry. His math scores were superb" (Zwonitzer, 2011, para. 16). Graduating second in his class at West Point, Lee was a scholar who followed rules and was respectful in his interactions (Sanborn, 1966). Douglass Southall Freeman (Freeman, in Gallagher, 1996) perhaps Lee's best known biographer, described him as follows:

Lee was preeminently a strategist and a strategist because he was a sound military logician. It is well enough to speak of his splendid presence on the field of battle, his poise, his cheer, and his manner with his men, but essentially he was an intellect with a developed aptitude for the difficult synthesis of war. (p. 143)

Lee carefully handpicked leaders to manage his troops, and focused on developing highly creative battlefield strategies. As one humble in spirit, amiable, and respectful of others, Lee developed trusting relations with his boss, Jefferson

Davis, and his officers. He was a risk taker who expected the highest performance from his men, taking daring risks that were measured with cold probability based on their chance of success (Freeman, in Gallagher, 1996).

George B. McClellan was an organizer and battlefield planner who excelled at whipping troops into shape. Often in conflict with his superiors, some found him arrogant, inflexible, and an individual apt to view himself as an agent of the Lord—one who was called the role versus him seeking it out (Sears, 1999). He had considerable charisma (Child, 2006) and was popular with his troops who affectionately referred to him as “Little Mac.” He cared deeply for his troops and did not want them to die needlessly. This sentiment is perhaps best captured in a quote from his speech given on March 13, 1862, “I am to watch over you as a parent over his children; and you know that your General loves you from the depths of his heart” (Kearns Goodwin, 2005, p. 431).

Lee characterized McClellan as an “able but timid commander” (Sears, 1999, p. 273). Historian James M. McPherson takes Lee’s comment further, “The trouble with McClellan was that he was psychologically unable to commit this mechanism that he had created to battle. He was afraid that having created this wonderful machine, if he started it up, he might destroy it” (Gruben, 2001, Part Four, para. 15). In addition, he was slow to move, defensive in battle, and was known to over-plan. It is well documented that Abraham Lincoln and George McClellan had a tenuous relationship and the president once suggested that “McClellan suffered from the ‘slows’ and was ‘good for nothing’ in an offensive campaign” (Sears, 1988, p. 260).

How Lee and McClellan Used the Position of Leader

Just as their Personal Attributes differed, so did their approach to leading others. Lee used his position to create an organization which encouraged individual initiative and rewarded operational skills. Lee handpicked battle tested and proven leaders he could trust and who could take initiative on their own. Lee and his generals formed a mutually supportive, high performing team, where each had absolute trust in the others. They easily interchanged duties, troops, and artillery among each other. This team was responsible for survival at Antietam and major Confederate victories both before and after Antietam (Manassas, Chancellorsville, and Fredericksburg). Lee shared and discussed his strategy with his generals. He made the final decisions and granted his generals autonomy in carrying them out (Freeman, in Gallagher, 1996).

Lee assumed risks, such as invading with an inferior force, knowing that his generals were capable of carrying out his plans. With extensive information about the enemy’s size and whereabouts, he could accurately assess the risks. Likewise,

Lee and his generals Stuart, Jackson, and Longstreet used their role to lead by example. During the Battle of Antietam, Lee and his team of generals were actively engaged in repositioning troops and artillery and encouraging their men. For example, at one critical moment, Longstreet and his field officers patched a Confederate line to keep it from breaking (McPherson, 2002).

Although Lee's organization had few functional barriers, McClellan's did. His army was composed of six individual corps, each with its own separate command structure, infantry, and artillery. Many of the corps had not worked together before and some had no previous battle experience. Rivalries among the corps commanders made management of his team challenging. To tighten his control of the corps, Mac reassigned his commanders shortly before battle, promoting some and demoting others, which exacerbated their rivalries (Sears, 1999). McClellan further tightened his control by micromanaging by personally laying out explicit battle plans for each corps commander to follow, with little input from most of the commanders themselves (Sears, 1999).

In fact, prior to Antietam, McClellan convened no staff meeting to share plans with his generals. During the battle, he personally directed their actions from his headquarters, two and one-half miles from the front lines, visiting the field only once (Sears, 1999). By some accounts, he was asleep when fighting began (Sears, 1999). He issued orders to his generals through couriers and flag signals, but there were no written copies. In addition, he kept apprised of the action by telescope (Sears, 1999) even though parts of the battle were not visible. This distancing potentially clouded his judgment, reducing his ability to achieve success. Along with his "hands off" and "slow" approach on the battlefield, Lincoln had addressed his communication style with his team. Lincoln at one point wrote to McClellan, "I am constantly told that you have no communication or consultation with them [the three corps commanders]; that you consult and communicate with no one but Gen. Fitz-John Porter and perhaps Franklin" (Rosebrock, 2010, *Army of the Potomac—George B. McClellan*). Porter and Franklin were two of McClellan's generals during the battle.

The Purpose of McClellan and Lee

The explicit Purpose for each general would be to win the battle but it is apparent that other motivations influenced the actions of each man. McClellan's explicit purpose was to defeat Lee, drive him out of Maryland, and defend Washington (Sears, 1999). However, he seemed to fight the battle so as to avoid defeat (Murfin & Sears, 1995). As noted in the Personal Attributes section, McClellan was extremely cautious in his approach to battle. For instance, he was in possession of Lee's Lost Orders for more than 18 hours before he acted—critical lost time that allowed Lee to regroup. Lee's spies in the Union camp almost

immediately communicated the mistake to him. Thus, a purpose that drove McClellan was getting it right and ensuring the perfect plan—a difficult task in war. McClellan was noted as saying, “Every poor fellow that is killed or wounded almost haunts me” and “I am tired of the sickening sight of the battlefield with its mangled corpses & poor suffering wounded... Victory has no charms for me when purchased at such cost” (Sears, 1999, p. 196). He clearly valued getting it right—and minimizing casualties—perhaps to his detriment.

By some accounts an opponent of slavery and the slave trade (Sanborn, 1966), Lee’s primary allegiance was to his beloved Virginia. From the beginning of his appointment Lee was viewed as a tower of strength (Zwonitzer, 2011). His concern was about the sovereignty of Virginia, its rights as a state and when Virginia seceded so did Robert E. Lee. Along with his devotion to his state and his newfound role, Lee approached battle and the art of war in a different manner than McClellan. Years after Antietam, Lee suggested, “I went into Maryland to give battle...and could I have kept Gen. McClellan in ignorance of my positions and plans...I would have fought and crushed him” (Sears, 1999, p. 273). Expressing a warrior-like attitude, Lee passionately wanted to win on a number of levels.

The Practices/Process of Lee and McClellan

Another difference in the way the two men approached leadership is revealed through their Practices and Processes in getting the work done. Lee excelled at choosing the site for battle and at effectively deploying his troops. Arriving at Antietam first with a small force while his other troops were still dispersed, Lee selected the most advantageous positions. He then defended his superior positions, refusing to relinquish them, and the Union army arrived during the course of the afternoon. In so doing, Lee risked annihilation by early attack. Arriving second, the Union army was unable to survey the field now guarded by Confederate skirmishers. Thus, when the battle began the next morning after the arrival of the rest of Lee’s troops, the Union had imperfect knowledge of the position of the Southern army (Chiles, 1998; Sears, 1999).

During battle, Lee arrayed his troops in a semicircular shape, with Lee defending the perimeter and controlling the inside of the semicircle. Figure 1 depicts Lee’s forces defending with Union forces attacking. Lee’s troops and the artillery needed to move only short distances through the interior of the semicircle to be repositioned to other points along the semicircle. In the center, Lee established a supply hub at Sharpsburg, where powder, shot, and spare weapons were stored and deployed (Chiles, 1998).

This idea, of course, is the hub and spoke concept used by Federal Express today to provide overnight delivery. Federal Express's hub is the Memphis, TN airport and it flies virtually all its packages through Memphis. During the Civil War, though, the hub and spoke was a novel concept. It was pioneered and perfected by Lee, and was responsible for much of his punch in battle (Chiles, 1998). During the battle, the North mounted five major assaults and all were blocked. Each time, Lee repositioned enough cannons via these interior routes so that his artillery firepower was superior to that of McClellan's cannons many of which were used only once and not repositioned at all. During the final assault, Lee's troops were overwhelmed and retreating and it seemed as if the Southern army was ready to collapse, but the concentrated firepower of 45 repositioned cannons slowed the advancing Union troops until Lee's reinforcements arrived toward the end of the battle (Chiles, 1988).

On the eve of battle Lee was not the only one who was prepared. McClellan had excellent plans as well. His modern, high-tech, long distance cannons would occupy the center of the field where they would rake the Confederate lines from far beyond the range of the antiquated Confederate cannons. Three of his corps would attack Lee's left, and simultaneously another of his corps would attack Lee's right. Two of McClellan's corps, waiting in reserve, would then attack the Confederate center on weakness in the Lee's left or right (Ballard, 2007).

During the battle McClellan fully utilized his technological advantage. His artillery barrage was highly effective at raking the Confederate lines with impunity for most of the day (Chiles, 1998). However, his plan was poorly executed and instead of simultaneous attacks, he inexplicably authorized a series of five sequential attacks, each of which was repulsed. Had any two occurred simultaneously, they would have likely overwhelmed the inferior Confederate force. During the course of the day McClellan lost control of the action. One Union attack occurred spontaneously, without his orders. At the end of the day his two reserve corps (25,000 men) had not fought at all (King, 2001).

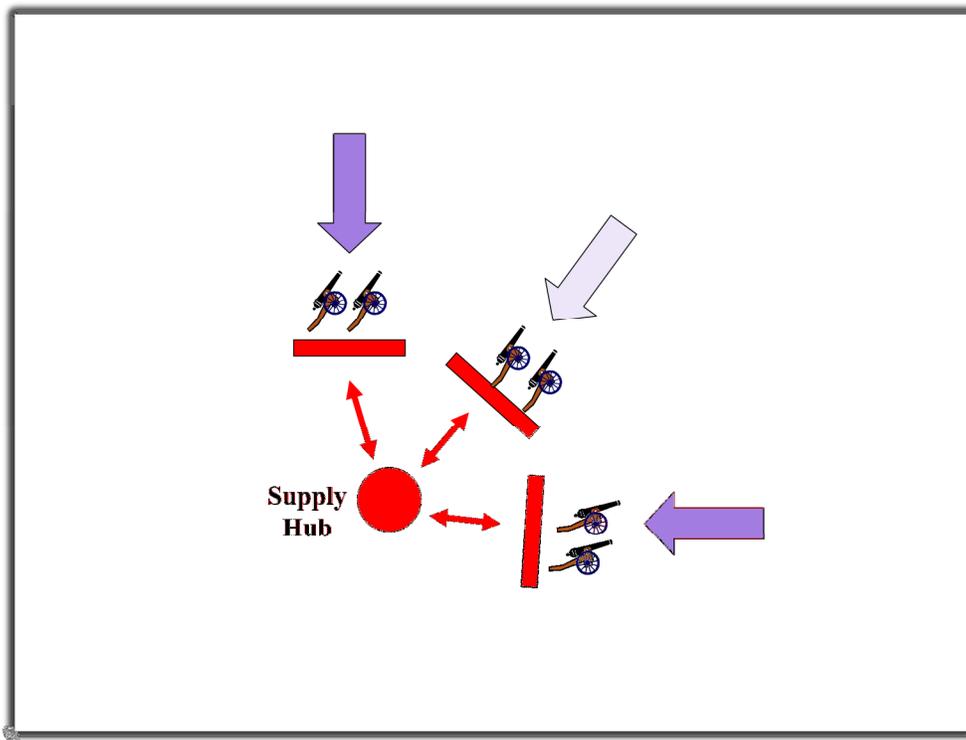


Figure 1: Lee's Forces Defending Supply Hub, McClellan's Forces Attacking from Three Directions

Prior to and throughout the battle McClellan was convinced that a well-armed Confederate Army significantly outnumbered him. The documentary *Abraham and Mary Lincoln: A House Divided* suggests, "Union forces twice seemed on the brink of destroying the rebel army. Each time, McClellan refused to order a final assault, persuaded that Lee had reserves hidden somewhere out of sight" (Grubin, 2001, part four, para. 82)

Several factors contributed to McClellan's failure to ensure success. First, he did not share his battle plans with his generals, and made all the decisions remote from the battlefield action. Likewise, rivalries among his generals may have impaired their performance and demoralized the corps. In addition, McClellan was convinced that he was out-numbered by the South (Murfin & Sears, 1995). This was based on his inaccurate information and the disastrous attack early in the day known as the "West Woods Massacre" in which he lost 3000 men in 20 minutes. Finally, organizational boundaries did not permit artillery sharing. For instance, at a critical point during the battle, the middle of the Southern line had broken, and one additional thrust would have ended the battle. The Northern general on the field requested artillery to provide cover for this last and final

attack, and was told that no artillery could be spared. However, the North had 350 cannons on the field, many of which were used once and never repositioned.

The End Product for McClellan and Lee

The Battle of Antietam was officially a stalemate between the two opposing armies at great cost to both. Upon examination, it is astonishing that Lee's army was not over-powered and the Confederacy defeated.

Throughout the day the Union raked Confederate lines with impunity because the Confederates had no artillery with comparable range. The Union launched five major assaults, each of which was repelled, and by evening, the Union had gained no ground. During the day, Lee's line wavered and broke at times but always regrouped. Each time the Union attacked they encountered such ferocious firepower that they were sure they were confronting a superior force. This firepower was generated by Lee's innovative hub and spoke system (Chiles, 1998).

The next day the two armies faced off against each other. The Union anticipated a powerful counterattack. Lee concluded that counterattack was not feasible, so at day's end he withdrew, ending the battle as a stalemate. McClellan did not pursue Lee. The battle was a tactical stalemate, but a strategic victory for the North. As a result, England and France did not support the South, nor did Maryland secede. Further, the battle provided Abraham Lincoln the opportunity to issue the Emancipation Proclamation which announced the freedom of millions of slaves. Further, Lincoln gained seats in both Houses of Congress. However, the results confirmed Lincoln's decision to replace McClellan. He was relieved of command a month after the Battle of Antietam.

As for Lee, he won two major victories against the North shortly after Antietam (Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville). However, the Civil War dragged on for three more years, when it could have ended on September 17, 1862. Lee eventually lost at the Battle of Gettysburg and surrendered at Appomattox.

Conclusion and Application to Leadership Education

In closing, we are left with a few questions: Can a small organization compete successfully with a large well-financed organization many times its size? Can it compete if the large organization also has a significant technological advantage? Does leadership play a crucial role in determining results? Based on the 5PLA, the answer to these questions is a resounding "yes." Likewise, the analysis

provides a description of *why* Lee's tired, poorly equipped and provisioned army stalemated the Union army (see Table 1).

Table 1.
5 Ps Leadership Analysis of Lee and McClellan

	Lee	McClellan
Personal Attributes	Strong intellect, emphasized collecting/analyzing data, analytic risk taker, decisive, humble, trusting	Organized, engaged in conflict with authority figures, arrogant, slow in decision-making, risk averse, detail oriented
Position	Selected generals with specific complementary strengths. Set the overall strategy and trusted his generals to implement it.	Micromanager who made decisions for his generals. Inherited his command and reorganized his generals (de-motivating some).
Purpose	To achieve a high profile strategic victory on enemy soil.	To avoid defeat (Murfin & Sears, 1995).
Practices/Process	Innovative use of hub and spoke concept. Innovative deployment of artillery and use of limited resources.	Hands-off/Distant. Communicated poorly and missed several opportunities for victory given his superior resources.
Product	Stalemate; strategic loss for Confederacy.	Stalemate; strategic victory for Union.

In short, Lee had high confidence and expectation for his underfed and outnumbered army and pushed them to the brink. However, McClellan did not aggressively utilize his numerical and technological advantages to soundly defeat the South. This sentiment is perhaps best summed up in the following quotation:

The principle commanders offered a striking contrast in personality and style—Lee pressing his worn army to the edge of ruin in pursuit of beckoning opportunity; McClellan repeatedly shrinking from commitment of his proud host in circumstances favorable beyond the imagining of most generals. (Gallagher, in Perman, 1998, p. 112)

As exemplified in the present case, the 5PLA is a useful heuristic for examining leadership. Whether it is a supervisor, the university president, Representative John Boehner, or Steve Jobs, the tool provides students with a method for determining why a leader experienced success or failure. However, we would suggest that leadership is socially constructed and some students and readers may come to a different conclusion than the authors (See Table 1). That is good news because the tool may spark spirited conversation in classrooms, workshops, and retreats. Likewise, the questions posed at the beginning of this section are two of many that may come to mind for both educators and participants alike. We propose that a great benefit of the 5PLA is its flexibility of use. As one reviewer of this article suggested, “the 5PLA should not always be the end product...it should be a springboard for rich discussion and activities/role-play/scenarios which can reinforce learning.” Thus, it is essential that leadership educators are clear about learning objectives so the activity supports and reinforces desired outcomes.

Along with the tool’s flexibility, we suggest that the activity and the process of completing the table (see Table 1) provides students with an opportunity to more critically examine the complexities of leadership. Rather than leadership being “one of the most observed and least understood concepts on earth” (Burns, 1978, p. 2), perhaps the goal of any leadership educator should be to make leadership *one of the most critically observed and best-understood concepts on earth*. The authors believe we can get there.

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Author Biographies

Dr. Bradley Hull is an Associate Professor at John Carroll University. Prior to John Carroll, Brad had an extensive career in the oil and chemicals industries with British Petroleum. His research interests are in the areas of purchasing and supply chain management, operations management, transportation management, and enterprise software. He has published articles in the *International Journal of Logistics Management*, *Journal of Macromarketing*, *International Journal of Production Economics*, *Journal of the Transportation Research Forum*, *Journal of Information Systems Education*, and *Logistics Information Management*.

Dr. Scott J. Allen is an assistant professor of management at John Carroll University. Scott is the coauthor of the *Little Book of Leadership Development* (AMACOM) and *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership: A Guide for College Students* (Jossey-Bass). Along with writing and speaking, Scott blogs (www.centerforleaderdevelopment.net), consults, facilitates workshops, and leads retreats across industries.