

# ADMIRAL PAUL F. ZUKUNFT

## PERSONAL LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY

### *Know your purpose.*

To lead, you must know who you are. What gives you purpose, energy and passion? My purpose is Service to Nation. It is the common thread that binds me to the country I serve and the communities in which I have lived. Purpose is the force that aligns your personal honor and integrity to the vision and Core Values of your organization. Take time every day to refocus your energy. Consider how you are contributing to something greater than yourself. Become the kind of authentic leader who inspires others to find their calling – to become great leaders in their own right.

### *Standards matter.*

There is a distinction between honor and loyalty that we must all recognize. They can be complimentary; however honor must come first. When faced with a dilemma, ask yourself if your decision is consistent with your values and the values of your organization. If it isn't – don't go there. Upholding standards is a hallmark of military service – they transcend rank or position. The standards you walk past are the standards you accept, on or off duty. As a leader, my greatest concern is being surrounded by a team of “yes” people who lack the courage to act.

Most mistakes are recoverable and leaders have a responsibility to use teachable moments to develop their people. However, departures from core values cannot be tolerated; this is an important distinction leaders at all levels must understand. The interwoven and enduring strands of Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty remain paramount for service in the Coast Guard; that is my “bright line” that shall not be crossed. Your decisions and behavior create the culture in which those you lead will live and work. You are the critical link.

### *Trust and empower your people.*

You may find yourself in a situation where you don't have all the answers or the right information. As a leader, you can't place all decisions squarely on your shoulders; this weight will drag you to your knees. Good ideas, the right solution and the way forward come from all levels of the organization; actively seek out these ideas and empower people to come forward. Enable diverse teams to connect and challenge them to exceed your expectations. Communicate your vision clearly and promote accountability that teaches and inspires. Open, honest communication is central to empowerment which in turn helps teams reach their potential. I am continuously humbled by the talent of the people around me. It is imperative you know what drives and motivates your people; integrate their natural skills and hidden talents to drive mission success.

### *Take decisive action.*

A bias for action is one of the foundational attributes I learned at the most junior level of command. In taking action, embrace the three knows: know your mission, know your people and know when to say “no.” Knowing your mission won't happen over night; it requires a bit of homework and dedication to the task at hand. Knowing your people takes time and personal commitment. Knowing when to say “no” can be the hardest of all. Situations evolve and we must adapt swiftly; as a leader your decision-making will be tested. Be bold and take appropriate risks; there is room for honest mistakes. You may have a great plan, but it's okay if your plan doesn't survive the day. Learn, adapt and execute your mission.