



North Carolina Law Life

Conduct Unbecoming To Your Enterprise: What Does Leadership Mean to You?

By: Donna Ray Chmura. *This was posted Tuesday, January 4th, 2011*

I work with business owners and executives. We are watching the unfolding story of Capt. Owen Honors, a decorated Naval officer who was just relieved of his command of the prestigious [U.S.S. Enterprise](#) aircraft carrier.

A few years ago as second-in-command of the Enterprise, Honors wrote and produced a series of on-ship [videos](#). These were supposed to be humorous, morale-builders for sailors who were deployed long-term to support the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The videos have been described as containing either "[locker-room humor](#)" or "[virulent anti-gay slurs](#)," depending on your point of view.

To the executives I spoke with, the most interesting question is not whether the content is humorous or offensive, but what kind of [leadership](#) Honors provided. Leaders, whether military or civilian, set the [tone](#) for the character, ethic and environment in the enterprise they lead.

I know a woman who is an officer in a company that is emerging as a significant player in its field. Its new potential clients are some of the largest and most powerful companies in the industry. In the past, senior management privately mocked the owner's often comical mis-use of language. Now, her office as the company's president has become a more meaningful leadership role (as she puts it, she finally has something to preside over). We have been brainstorming about how she transitions from colleague/friend to respected leader, and how she can re-direct the senior management team's culture and values.

Leadership matters. If the leader is "one of the boys" who seeks the affection and camaraderie of his troops, his ability to implement or enforce tough positions may be compromised. In my acquaintance's case, she is now struggling to regain her professionalism as she guides her company to a new level. Her workplace friendships are important, and even critical to her success, but she must determine what is appropriate in a larger, more formal workplace.

What does leadership mean to you?

<http://www.nclawlife.com/>

[Richmond](#) • [Christiansburg](#) • [Fredericksburg](#) • [Research Triangle](#) • [McLean](#)

Copyright Sands Anderson PC

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN OUR WEB SITE DESCRIBES LEGAL MATTERS HANDLED IN THE PAST BY OUR ATTORNEYS. OF COURSE, THE RESULTS WE HAVE ACHIEVED DEPEND UPON A VARIETY OF FACTORS UNIQUE TO EACH MATTER. BECAUSE EACH MATTER IS DIFFERENT, OUR PAST RESULTS CANNOT PREDICT OR GUARANTEE A SIMILAR RESULT IN THE FUTURE.