



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

REPLY TO
ATTN OF:

Your Supervisor

SUBJECT:

People

A New Lieutenant

"Do you like people?" This may sound like a silly question, but your answer will determine, to a great degree, your success as an Air Force officer. You have probably heard the statement that "In the Air Force, people are our most important resource." This statement is so profound I could write 100 pages on the subject and still not overemphasize its importance. I believe that it is impossible to enjoy a successful career in the Air Force unless you genuinely like people.

Most people will perform their duties willingly and with enthusiasm when led by a person who likes people. The leader who practices the "golden rule" and recognizes the power of such magic words as "please," "thank you," and "well done," is demonstrating his regard for people.

When people perform their duties well and behave properly on and off duty, it is relatively easy to like them because you like what they do. But, when they fail to perform as you require or when their behavior is so improper as to require disciplinary action, it becomes a little more difficult to like them because you dislike what they are doing. Nevertheless, no matter how much you disapprove of an individual's activities, never lose sight of your genuine regard for people.

This does not mean that you should allow your subordinates to get away with substandard performance, because you like them or because you want them to like you. You must maintain the capacity to reward good performers and counsel, admonish, and when necessary, discipline poor performers, always remembering that you like people.

People are more than just a resource. You don't own them nor do they own you, but you are responsible for them and to them, as they are to you. I believe that it is impossible to exercise your supervisory responsibilities properly, either in praise or punishment, unless you honestly like people.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul G. Patton".

Paul G. Patton, Colonel, USAF
AN OLD LIEUTENANT