

Leading a Field Team

Original by KAD and KKB – 2001

Updated versions by BTR and MGS (2002), MGS and CPC (2003), and TMR (2004)

What is the most important part of leading a field team?

Leading.

You are the leader, they are the team. Field teams are not democracies. They are friendly, efficient dictatorships. There are many styles of maintaining control while still commanding respect. We will give you some tools, you will observe how others manage, and you will mold your own style. It is a dynamic process that you are in charge of. Good luck.

If you ever get confused, ask yourself these 4 questions:

Who am I?

Who are you?

What are we going to do?

How are we going to do it?

Leadership

Safety

Refuse a task if you don't think your team will be able to handle it.

Abort a task if time, weather, supplies, health or morale deem it necessary.

If in doubt, ask:

Briefer, BRMRGer, Base

Skills – Two kinds: Hard and Soft

Hard – tangible, technical skills

Soft – intangible, non-technical skills

KNOW YOUR SKILLS (know what you know, and know what you don't know)

Image/Attitude

Posture, volume, seriousness – These all convey **a positive sense of urgency**. Be professional so your team respects you. Be clear and casual so they understand you. A good FTL can balance those three attributes – **professional, clear, and casual**.

Maintain your sanity and wits by sleeping, eating, taking a break, tactful humor, screaming (another reason to use attraction)

Finally...Assess the situation, be assertive, don't assume, because when you assume, you make an...well, you get the idea. **Be conscious of yourself, your team, and the task.**

A Chronological Tale

At home...

Call comes. Are you READY, WILLING, AND ABLE?

No? Become R.A.W., go dispatch, or give your avails for tomorrow and rest

Yes? Get your gear. In addition to the traditional gear, you might want:

Waterproof pen
Paper
Mucho water
Mucho flagging tape
At least 2 solid flashlights
Extra batteries
First aid kit

Upon arrival...

SIGN IN.

Are you still READY, WILLING, AND ABLE?

No? Get yourself Ready, Willing, and Able, or find something else to do

Yes? Go to briefing and get a task.

In briefing...

(reference FTL briefing sheet)

Papers you need before you leave briefing:

TAF

Map

Subject Info Sheet

Small (but extremely important!) electric boxes you need:

Radios

Spare radio batteries

(Don't forget to do a radio check!)

Things you should look at before you leave briefing:

Overall map of search

Clue map

Color map of area

Do you understand how you are to do your task, and why you are doing your task?

No? Talk to the briefer again, talk to someone else in base, talk to a BRMRGer

Yes? Go get a team.

Finding a team...

(reference FTL briefing sheet)

Brief your team

A basic FTL briefing covers information on **you, your task, what to do if you find a clue, what to do if you find a subject, assessing your team** (see below) and the **subject information**.

Challenges you may face: **your age, gender, race, and background.**

Assessing your team (reference team member sheet):

Observe fitness, gear, and qualifications.

Inquire about training, health, equipment, medical certs, availability, and knowledge of area and subject. Make yourself avail for private discussion.

As the FTL, you can eliminate people from your team if you have a **GOOD** reason. Explain carefully and privately to the person why they could be better utilized elsewhere.

Get your team members' names on the TAF.

(Special Note: not all people are able to write their own name so be aware of your team members!)

Do you have a way to get to your task?

No? Find a way...

Yes? Go!!

In the field...

Explain again:

Rationale (**why** are we here), plan (**what** are we doing), and mechanics (**how** are we doing it).

Procedure:

For sweep – explain how a sweep task works, where people are located (remember critical spacing), pace, flagging, etc.

In the event of finding a clue, subject, or airplane:

1. Field team should be instructed to stop immediately on the sight of a clue. They should be instructed to yell "STOP" and call you over to investigate.
2. Investigate the clue. If determined to be important, back out of the area and call it in to base. When in doubt, call base.
 - a. Clear the Net vs. Secure the Net

These same precautions should be taken with a find as well.

3. "Flag it, Bag it, and Bring it in." Flagging for clues should be 3 flags with the **time, date, task number, FTL name and contact number, team ID, and map coordinates**.

In the event of getting lost – If someone gets lost, tell them to STOP, make noise, and wait for someone to find them.

How to be clue aware:

If they only remember one thing this should be it. You might want to come up with a short phrase that you can yell out during the sweep to remind everyone. "Look up, look down, look all around. Think small."

Maintenance:

DOCUMENT YOUR TASK. Scribble notes on the backs of TAFs, subject info sheets, anywhere. Your debriefer will want to know – **Where you were, when you called in which clues, where they were, clues you didn't call in, hazards, places where you felt a weird vibe, places where your team stared at the sky for 50 feet, etc.**

Remember, you are NOT searching.

You ARE managing your team.

Watch the people on your team.

Is it time for a water break?

Keep the chatter to a minimum.

Are they out of line? How is their spacing?

Are they not searching? (this affects POD)

After the task...

Debrief your team.

Review the task.

Is there anything they didn't mention? (such as missed clues, areas they didn't search, etc.)

Explain the 3 PODs simply:

Clues – “you have a box with 100 small things, and you scatter it in our task area, how many of the objects would we have found?”

Unresponsive subject – **DON'T SAY DEAD, INSTEAD SAY UNCONSCIOUS OR UNRESPONSIVE.** “If the subject was unresponsive, what is the percent chance we'd find them?”

Responsive subject – “If the subject was responsive, what is the percent chance we'd find them?”

Adjust the PODs as you see fit and write them down. **But don't tell them that you are overriding them.**

Compliment your team.

Tell them to rest and where they can find some food. Tell them about the possibility of future tasks. Tell them to be careful if traveling home and to sign out.

Base debriefing...

Take a moment to prepare.

Have your PODs and notes ready.

Tell the debriefer **everything**.

Might ask the debriefer – Is there another task ready? Why did you send us on this task?

Rest...

Eat, sleep, drink, joke around (in the right company and spirit!!).

You are not a machine.

Be aware of peer pressure (in all forms)

Don't be a wimp (do what you can).

Are you READY, WILLING, AND ABLE to go back out?

“Who Are You?”—Assessing Your Field Team

Revised 1-16-02

Smokey and Mary Lou (locals)

Advantages

- know the area, but not maps
- general knowledge

Disadvantages

- might know the subject
- untrained, might be difficult to control
- might be physically unfit

Your Plan

- earn trust and respect
- be clear, confident, and firm
- no jargon
- keep them closer to you

Uncle Kenny

Advantages

- motivated
- knows subject info
- knows area

Disadvantages

- emotional involvement
- not as fit, doesn't know his limits

Your Plan

- be respectful
- learn from them
- be emotionally sensitive
- keep them close by

Bob (ASRC personnel)

Advantages

- trained, knows how to search
- respects you

Disadvantages

- will ask pointed questions
(don't make it a competition)

Your Plan

- don't assume* they know search mechanics
- be clear
- maybe give them more responsibility
- don't 'hang out' with them- make them your wing-man

Firefighter Green (rescue squad)

Advantages

- medical, EMT training
- good medical officer
for your team
- might know area, subject

Disadvantages

- may not want to listen to a 'kid', or someone from a different group
- be weary of firefighter gear
- may be heavy
- may lack gear, or not be fit
- tend to be in groups

Your Plan

- don't assume they have knowledge

Sergeant Wilkins and Ranger Davis

Advantages

- can read topo maps
- have land nav skills
- might* have gear, be physically fit

Disadvantages

- might think their answer is better

Your Plan

- employ their abilities to advantage of team
- follow ASRC procedures, by the book
- don't cut corners

Dennis the Menace *Children and Minors*

Advantages

- enthusiasm, lots of energy

Disadvantages

- *Legal Issues-
need guardian consent,
responsible adult
- ask a lot of questions
- short attention span
- lack of control
- might not be physically fit
- don't know their limits

Your Plan

- take frequent breaks
- let base know of minors on
your team- base is
liable
- can tactfully refuse to have
minors on team
- keep them close to you
- be firm, be safe
- have extra food and water
for them

****Remember: Searchers are individuals with unique capabilities, problems, and concerns. Treat them as such.****

FTL Briefing/Debriefing

DWC & SDJ 01/02

TMR 04/05

Objectives

1. Understand the importance of your role as an FTL and the information you control.
2. Be able to differentiate between the briefings and debriefings with base and your team.
3. Be able to obtain and give thorough and accurate briefings and debriefings.

FTL Base briefing

This briefing is to explain your task and answer any questions you have for base. At the end of the briefing you should understand the importance and rationale behind your task. Briefing is done in staging by a staff member.

FTL briefing field team

This briefing occurs while still in base. The purpose is to establish you have a fully *functional* team and that they are *aware of their responsibilities*. You will assign roles and explain the specifics of the task. The briefing of the team continues in the field when setting up your team for the task. Especially if you have volunteers, you may also be teaching them how to search to clearly explain search procedures and commands.

FTL debriefing field team

The team debrief at the end of the task should occur while still in the field. The goal is to obtain information about the efficiency and thoroughness of your task (POD). Remember to ask about areas that were unsearchable or weren't searched well. Establish if and when your team will be ready for another task and instruct them on where to find refreshments and meet again.

FTL Base debriefing

The information you give to base in the debrief is the most important part of your task. The base staff will use your results in their plans for new tasks. When you return to base and your team is recouping, find the base debriefer at staging. Be very thorough and precise with what you tell your briefer. Draw on their map! Incorporate your judgment of the team's search ability with the results they reported when you tell the base briefer. Let them know about any problems you encountered with your team. If you're ready, get briefed for your next task.

