Abraham Lincoln: Lessons in Leadership

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Introduction

The origin, development and study of leadership are inextricably linked to the origin, development and study of the human race. As the attack and defend activities of the early hunter-gathers became more sophisticated, warfare developed from a largely amateur process to an activity more closely associated with the attainment and exercise of power; emanating from this, was the formation of a professional and warrior class. In turn, leadership was refined as part of a necessary and complementary activity. Accordingly, warfare was, and still is, the crucible of outstanding leadership.

As human society became even more developed, increased emphasis was placed on what leadership actually involved. For example, in his ‘Republic’, Plato held that elements such as justice, wisdom, integrity and the absence of self-interest were the basis of civil leadership.

In the collection of writings known as The Art of War, Sun Tzu emphasised the importance of strong leadership along with qualities such as intelligence, courage, trustworthiness and humaneness. Interestingly, Sun Tzu embraced leadership concepts like self-awareness, self-reflection and emotional intelligence - centuries before research and experience validated their criticality for leadership. As Sun Tzu comments in The Art of War, “Thus it is said, that one who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements. One who does not know the enemy, but knows himself will sometimes be victorious, sometimes meet with defeat. One who knows neither the enemy or himself, will invariably be defeated in every engagement.”

In a more contemporary sense, the study of leadership has seen one of the most exponential increases of any academic area of research. Although it depends on the search engine, and the particular words used, keying-in the word leadership will return computer ‘hits’ that run into the millions. Numerous theories and models have emerged to help make sense of the complex nature of leadership. An indication of such complexity is the fact that even by the 1990s, Fleishman et al held that sixty-five different categories had been developed to define the various aspects of leadership. Such categories include the trait approach, the skills approach, situational leadership and transformational leadership.
Whilst it is not the intention of this paper to explore in any great depth, the leadership of Lincoln within the context of any particular theory, it is apparent that he could be seen to exemplify many of the historical as well as contemporary theories and models.

Where the *trait approach* to leadership is concerned, Lincoln can be seen to fit into the ‘Big Five’ factors of trait theory. These factors emerged from many years of trait theory research, from Stogdill’s seminal work in 1948 and 1974, through to Kirkpatrick and Locke’s non-traditional view that such key leadership traits can be learned as well as inherited. The Big Five factors are: intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability. As this paper endeavours to document, such traits, (particularly intelligence, determination and integrity) define Lincoln’s leadership.

One important difference between the traits and the skills approach to leadership is that the former is largely held to be fixed and innate, whereas skills can be acquired and developed. The *skills approach* also clearly signals that leadership qualities (such as charisma and sociability) in themselves are not enough - a leader also needs to be competent.

With regard to the skills approach, this paper poses the view that in many respects, Lincoln was ‘learning on the job’. Such learning was painful on many occasions (heightened by the context of a bitter civil war), but once learned, Lincoln can be seen to use the new skill to particularly good effect.

Despite the fact that important developments in the skills approach to leadership have been the result of contemporary research (e.g. Mumford et al.), it was an article in the Harvard Business Review by Robert Katz that was instrumental in generating the Three-Skill approach to leadership. Katz held that three skills were crucial to effective leadership; the *human dimension*, the *conceptual dimension* and the *technical dimension*.

Again here, Lincoln can be seen to embody all three. For instance, his humanity defined him not just as a president, but also as a person; his willingness to understand and forgive is well documented (even by his enemies). Lincoln’s conceptual ability is apparent in his strategic grasp of military operations and the general conduct of the war. However, the Gettysburg Address is not solely a rhetorical tour de force, its power also lies in the manner in which Lincoln conceptualised high ideals such as liberty, justice and freedom for all; the essence of democratic government and human aspiration.
Lincoln’s grasp of technical issues associated with the war often surprised his Union military commanders. But this grasp was a combination of his intelligence, common sense approach, hard work, and the necessity to understand how the technical impacted upon the strategic (e.g. what was possible in terms of logistics and materiel). As indicated above, credibility with military commanders was also an incentive for understanding technical issues. What set Lincoln apart from many other leaders was his ability to move quickly from the conceptual to the technical or practical; often within moments.

The basis of situational leadership is the belief that different situations require different kinds of leadership; crucial to the success of situational leadership then, is flexibility of leadership style. Though the theoretical root of situational leadership was Reddins’ 3D Management Style theory, it was significantly enhanced by Hersey and Blanchard. They constructed a Situational Leadership Style model that embraced four leadership styles with associated behaviour. The first style is Directive (highly directive-low supportive behaviour); the second is a Coaching style (highly directive, but also highly supportive behaviour); the third style is Supportive (high supportive and low directive behaviour); the fourth and last style is Delegating (low supportive and low directive behaviour). An important aspect of situational leadership theory is that the leader matches their style to the abilities or level of development of their followers. For example, followers who are deemed to be low in terms of commitment and/or competence will experience a directive style of leadership.

As with the other leadership approaches mentioned so far, Lincoln can again be seen to reflect important dimensions of situational leadership. Whilst understandably, he expected the very best from those he had delegated responsibilities to, at the same time he was extremely supportive. Lincoln’s relationship with his cabinet provides clear evidence that in addition to being loyal and supportive, he often adopted a coaching approach in order to reach consensus and solve important problems.

Despite much evidence of Lincoln’s loyalty and supportiveness, as circumstances changed, so did Lincoln’s approach. For instance, Salmon B. Chase (Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury) was highly competent, and at the beginning, very committed. Consequently, Lincoln was able to delegate significantly to Chase with low direction. Nevertheless, when Chase’s commitment flagged, Lincoln had no hesitation in becoming highly directive.
This situation can also be seen to be reflected in Lincoln’s relationships with his generals. Until Grant was appointed, Lincoln’s relationship with his generals tended to follow the recurring pattern of delegation, then direction. Although Lincoln was very tolerant of his generals’ shortcomings, when his patience finally ended and the situation required, he could be just as directive.

An example in this respect was his decision to relieve General Fremont of command on October 24th, 1861. Shortly before this, in a letter to General Hunter Lincoln stated, “His cardinal mistake is that he isolates himself; and by which he does not know what is going on”. However, Fremont’s perceived lack of grip was not the only reason for his dismissal. Much to Lincoln’s displeasure, and whilst he was performing a difficult balancing act concerning the border states, Fremont had previously proclaimed on the 30th of August 1861, that all slaves owned by Confederates in Missouri were free (this was revoked by Lincoln on September 11th, 1861).

Yet another example of Lincoln’s directive leadership style was the removal of the over-cautious George B McClellan in July 1862. After being accorded much patience and understanding from Lincoln, McClellan was removed from his position as General-in-Chief because he continually refused to capitalise on Confederate defeats and casualties (thus giving the strategic advantage to Lee).

Of all the approaches to leadership considered so far, it is perhaps, the concept of Transformational Leadership (TfL) that ironically captures the essence of Lincoln’s leadership.

Despite the fact that the concept of TfL is ancient in origin (and Downton used the term in 1973), James McGregor Burns is generally held to be the figure whose seminal text, ‘Leadership’ expounded and expanded upon the theory. Whereas the common transactional approach to leadership centres round the everyday transactions between leader and follower (and entails control through a system of extrinsic reward; or admonishment as the case may be), TfL raises the relationship between the leader and followers to a higher moral plane. Consequently, those who follow TfL leaders are not motivated solely by monetary or other tangible rewards. Notwithstanding, it is important to view transactional and TfL as being complementary, not mutually exclusive; both are essential for effective leadership.

Crucial to the TfL process, is the leader’s ability to generate an attractive vision for their followers, to successfully articulate this vision, and to enable followers to live the vision. The
effective transformational leader is one who has brought about that fundamental shift from control to commitment; getting their followers to do something, not because they have to - but because they want to.

Following on from McGregor Burns, researchers and writers on TfL such as Bernard Bass have highlighted four key elements of the TfL process; these are referred to as the 4Is:

**Idealised influence**

this is the leader as role model; they espouse and demonstrate moral and personal values to a high degree. They display and engender a sense of purpose, determination, confidence and trust.

**Inspirational motivation**

the leader communicates a clear vision of the future and inspires followers to accept the vision as their own. The engagement between leader and followers is such, that both are raised to higher levels of motivation and morality; self-interest is transcended by the need for a common purpose.

**Intellectual stimulation**

the leader presents new ideas and encourages followers to think creatively and innovatively. Challenging current thinking and the status quo are important aspects here.

**Individualised consideration**

through skills such as active listening, the leader identifies the personal concerns, needs and abilities of their followers. Additional key factors here are the leader’s ability to provide challenging and developmental learning opportunities; coaching and feedback are central to the process.

As alluded to previously, the link between Lincoln and TfL is an ironic one since he did not set out to assume such a role. Indeed, his main political motivating factor as the clouds of war were gathering, was the maintenance of the status quo - the preservation of the Union (and all that this entailed). There is much evidence for this contention in his actions, speeches and letters. For example, Lincoln tried everything he could to avoid the civil war and his most offensive action before the war began was merely to re-supply Fort Sumter (the consequent attack on Fort Sumter by Confederate (secessionist) forces was the spark that ignited the civil war).
Whilst Lincoln can be seen to be a transformational leader in many respects, the 4Is outlined above are a convenient framework for examining his leadership in this respect.

Many post-Burns (James McGregor Burns) TfL commentators such as Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio viewed *Individualised influence* and charisma as one and the same. As Bass himself comments, “*Idealised influence encompasses influence over ideology, influence over ideals and influence over ‘bigger than life’ issues. It was conceived as a substitute for the term charismatic*” 13. Bass goes on to highlight a number of reasons for this, including the contemporary meanings of ‘exciting’, ‘magnetic’ and ‘awe-inspiring’; and the terminology used by researchers (“…for researchers such as House, and Conger and Kanungo, charisma was an all-inclusive term for transformational leadership” (ibid). Bass importantly identifies another significant aspect of charisma, “…it was believed that a leader could provide challenge and meaning through the use of simple words, symbols and metaphors to generate acceptance of missions, without necessarily being charismatic” (ibid). Here Bass makes the crucial point that leaders do not have to have outstanding rhetorical skills to engage followers and obtain buy-in to the vision and the mission. What is important for followers are leader dimensions such as leadership by example, high personal values like integrity and a willingness and ability to relate to others.

Consequently, whilst issues such as Lincoln’s ability to persuade and influence will be dealt with in the main text, this section on *idealised influence* will consider non-rhetorical aspects.

Followers will only genuinely subscribe to a vision if they subscribe to the values upon which it is based. Therefore, honesty and integrity are the keystones of leadership and are tested not just through a leader’s words, but also through their actions. Although the Gettysburg Address is often held as the epitome of Lincoln’s idealised influence, it was through the ordinary, everyday relationships that he demonstrated and reinforced the high personal standards of leadership. By displaying openness, high standards and supportive actions in his dealings with others, Lincoln was admired even by his enemies. A case in point is that despite the appalling manner in which General McClellan treated Lincoln, Lincoln refused to conform to the demands of senators in October 1861, that he sack McClellan.

Often, leadership is about taking risks on followers and subordinates in order that trust is earned. Although it was broken many times, Lincoln continually placed trust in his generals: to
McClellan (27.7.1863): “This letter is in no way an order”; to Burnside (27.9.1863): “It was suggested to you, not ordered”  

The soubriquet ‘Honest Abe’ was earned by Lincoln when he was just a young man. As Donald Phillips, a commentator on Lincoln asserts, “Lincoln was just as honest as he has been purported to be, if not more so”. Without question, honesty is one of the major qualities that made him a great leader. Although there is no doubt that promises were made without his knowledge, Lincoln made no deals during the 1860 Republican Convention. Indeed, when he was President he sacked Simon Cameron, his first Secretary of War for improprieties in awarding defence contracts. Lincoln’s stand on issues such as this was made clear on a number of occasions, most notably in reply to Senator Stephen Douglas, at Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854, “Stand with him while he is right, and part from him when he is wrong.”

A key difficulty Lincoln had as the civil war progressed was the maintenance of morale and motivation. Whilst the confederate soldiers had the prime motivator of ‘defending hearth and home’, their federal counterparts had to rely upon ‘the maintenance of the Union’. Astutely, Lincoln met this difficulty by introducing a moral dimension, the abolition of slavery:

“In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free – honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve”

There is little doubt that many of Lincoln’s most eloquent and idealised arguments were based on the immorality and injustice of slavery. Before Lincoln issued his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, the following comments in a letter from a northern soldier of the Irish Brigade, reflected the views of many:

“If anyone thinks this army is fighting to free the Negro…they are terribly mistaken”

However, after the proclamation was issued, a Union private from New York wrote:

“Thank God the contest is now between slavery and freedom and every honest man knows what he is fighting for.”
The latter comment is but one piece of evidence for the view that during the darkest days of the civil war, it was Lincoln’s idealised influence, especially the moral dimension, that had the most impact on others.

As suggested before, the essence of *Inspirational motivation* is that the leader communicates the vision in such a way that followers are inspired and find it compelling. As the eminent leadership scholar Bernard Bass has acknowledged, rhetorical skills are not the only means of inspiring others; associated behaviours are critical

The writer believes that the following behaviours are essential:

- Exhibiting unwavering conviction, self-confidence and determination (particularly in times of crisis)
- Building an emotional attachment between duty, work and a higher-level purpose
- Living beliefs and values (leaders have to be the person they want others to be)
- Behaving in a reliable and consistent manner
- Instilling hope and confidence in others
- Interpreting and explaining the importance of issues and events
- Personalising leadership (e.g. ‘walking the job’)

Many behaviours associated with inspirational motivation are also linked to individualised consideration; this is because the common denominator is people.

Lincoln’s conviction, self-confidence and determination was evident not just in the words he used, but in his seizure of every opportunity to reaffirm these qualities in the public arena. Even in his First Inaugural Address in March 4th 1861, Lincoln clearly and resolutely reaffirms one of his core beliefs, “I hold that, in contemplation of universal law and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual” 20. And when war came, Lincoln was not found wanting in terms of
determination, “...for every soldier of the United States killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed; and for every one enslaved by the enemy or sold into slavery, a rebel soldier will be placed at hard labor on the public works” 21

Again, the behaviours that represent an emotional attachment between duty or work are commented upon throughout this paper, but one in particular (Lincoln’s letter writing) serves to eloquently illustrate this aspect. It also combines the personalisation of leadership, and the espousal of a higher-level relationship (‘the altar of freedom’):

> Dear madam, I have been shown in the files of the War Department a Statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts, that you are the mother of five sons* who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours, to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom. Yours, very sincerely and respectfully, Abraham Lincoln

(letter to Mrs. Bixby in Boston, 21st November, 1864) 22

Lincoln constantly supported people, especially when they were under pressure or criticised by others. Often he would use humour, but the principle did not escape the person in question or their detractors. When colleagues who were jealous of General Grant’s victories criticised him and spread the rumour that he was drinking, Lincoln commented, “Well, I wish some of you would tell me the brand of whiskey that Grant drinks. I would like to send a barrel of it to my other generals” 23

Not only did Lincoln perceptively explain the importance of key issues and events (“Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and dedicated, can long endure” 24), he also constantly demonstrated the high ethical and moral standards he expected of others (“The probability that we may fall in the struggle ought not to deter us from the support of a cause we believe to be just; it shall not deter me” 25)

* The files of the War Department were inaccurate, since Mrs Bixby lost only two sons. However, this does not diminish the sentiments expressed or the humanity behind them
Where *intellectual stimulation* is concerned, Lincoln certainly faced a formidable challenge. Firstly, the officer corps left a lot to be desired. In 1861, eight out of the nine highest ranking officers were veterans of the war of 1812, and the Mexican War was also a long time ago (1846-48); Winfield Scott, Lincoln’s General-in-Chief, was seventy-four years of age. Secondly, training was a key issue since West Point at that time placed more emphasis on mathematics, engineering and fortifications than staff work. Thirdly, the War Department was a small, second-rate department and no real general staff existed. An example of the state the department was in, was the fact that one general went off to war with maps he bought at a local book store.

To compound matters, the pre-war army was very small (approximately 16,000 men) and was scattered across vast distances. Consequently, apart from the organisational, logistical and training challenges, the intellectual stimulation required to develop mindsets to cope with a major civil war was a significant and daunting task.

Carol Dweck, the respected Stanford University psychologist, has highlighted the importance of ‘fixed’ and ‘growth’ mindsets. Individuals who possess fixed mindsets dread failure, and accordingly, they are less likely to embrace innovation and change. Conversely, individuals who possess growth mindsets are less affected by failure and believe that success is the result of hard work and learning. Therefore, in order to overcome the stagnation that can result from fixed mindsets, leaders need to embrace a number of strategies. Firstly, they need to develop a strategic plan that meets the challenges and changes in the short and long-term. Secondly where necessary, they must recruit new personnel with new ideas and a desire to succeed. Thirdly, they need to create a learning environment where there is support from the top, failure is tolerated (to a degree) and innovation is actively encouraged. Fourthly, they themselves must be a role model for intellectual stimulation; Lincoln adopted all four approaches.

As the main text of this paper confirms, Lincoln brought to his cabinet the brightest and the best, even those who had previously opposed him such as William H Seward. Lincoln realised that the vanities and strong opinions of such strong characters would lead to debate; the essence of intellectual stimulation. As Doris Kearns Goodwin comments, “Lincoln had a quiet self-confidence that allowed him to surround himself with people better known than he was. He knew that they would argue and debate with him.” With such able individuals and their intellectual stimulation, Lincoln would add to and have the organisational support for his most important strategic plan – victory against the secessionists and the maintenance of the Union.
Lincoln quickly appointed ‘new blood’ and had varied success in this respect, especially where senior officers were concerned. The appointment of George B. McClellan as General-in-Chief brought significant intellectual stimulation in terms of the training, re-organisation and improved efficiency of the Union army, but he had a serious failing as an army commander – he was reluctant to engage the enemy. Despite this, Lincoln’s appointment of Brigadier General Montgomery Meiggs as his Quartermaster General was a stroke of genius. Meiggs (somewhat of a genius himself) went on to become the key figure in the reformation and success of the Union army.

As an inventor himself, Lincoln had a natural enthusiasm for the learning environment. He readily embraced intellectual stimulation in terms of weapons and armament development, and he was the driving force behind many of the innovations that would give the Union the edge in this context. Against the Confederacy’s 266 patents, Lincoln’s government issued 16,000. Lincoln viewed inventors as absolutely key in this process, and saw many of them personally. He commented in this respect, “They don’t ask much; they get little, I must see them” 28

In many cases, Lincoln was personally involved in weapons development and tried some of the weapons himself. Examples in this regard were the breech loading rifle, the Spencer carbine and the ‘coffee-mill gun’ (an early version of the hand-cranked machine gun). When others did not respond to ‘intellectual stimulation’ and encouragement, Lincoln simply acted on his own. A case in point was when his ordinance chief, the heel-dragging Brigadier General James Ripley, saw little value in the new coffee-mill machine gun, Lincoln purchased ten of the weapons himself (these were first used to good effect at Middleburg, Virginia in 1862). McPherson writes in this respect, “during the war Lincoln functioned at times as chief of ordinance” 29

By 1863, the breech-loading repeating rifles and carbines were making a significant impact in battles such as Mechanicsville, the Chickahominy and the particularly tragic theatre of Antietam. Lincoln’s active encouragement was also behind the development of rifled cannon, incendiary shells and the ironclads (he enthused about and backed, John Ericson’s plan for armouring the Monitor in order to combat the Confederate Merrimac).

Despite the importance of Lincoln’s intellectual stimulation activities in relation to ordinances, materiel and general strategy, it was his perceptive grasp of the significance of the new
invention of the telegraph that was to bring real impact to the Union’s prosecution of the war against the secessionist states of the Confederacy.

Although the importance of quality, accurate and timely information has always been acknowledged by military commanders (particularly in times of war), before modern technology, the ability of a national leader to have almost instantaneous communication with their forces in the field was impossible. In many cases, the fate of nations would not be known for days or even weeks after a key battle.

In 1861, when Lincoln was inaugurated, the potential of the new telegraph technology was under-appreciated in general, and certainly not seen as a vital aid to military communications. Incredulously, US Army clerks had to stand in line with the general public at Washington’s central telegraph office; Lincoln was to radically change this situation.

Though Lincoln was to send less than a 1,000 telegrams during his presidency, it was a case of quality rather than quantity, and information gathering as well as dissemination. Without a training manual or technical advice, Lincoln used the telegraph not just as a means of communication, but also as a means of intellectual stimulation and strategic direction. For instance, in 1863, when the Union’s General Hooker saw the Confederate’s move north as an opportunity to move against their capital, Lincoln used the telegraph to remind Hooker, “I think Lee’s army and not Richmond is your true objective …” 30

An example of how Lincoln used the immediacy of the telegraph to impact upon the tempo of battle can be seen in his message to a colonel during the Battle of the Second Manassas (the Second Battle of Bull Run), “What became of our forces which held the bridge till twenty minutes ago”? 31

Whilst the telegraph was installed in the War Department, the White House remained without a connection. This meant that Lincoln would inhabit the War Department’s telegraph room to such an extent that the manager commented, “Lincoln hardly left his seat in our office and waited with deep anxiety for each succeeding despatch” 32. Unwittingly then, Lincoln had created the first White House Situation Room where the President was engaged in the nearest thing to real time communication with his forces in the field. In this respect, Wheeler claims that Lincoln, “developed the model for modern electronic leadership” 33.
Consequently, the dots and dashes of telegraphy were used by Lincoln not just to transform the nature of the civil war, but also the nature of the presidency. In doing so, Lincoln ushered in a new age of leadership where information and communication would become even more critical to the discharge of leadership responsibilities. In turn, and in years to come, such a transformation would also become a key element in determining how leaders would be perceived, judged and held accountable.

Even this brief examination of the 4Is of the transformational leadership model confirms, in a number of ways, that Lincoln was a transformational leader of exceptional and perhaps unique merit. Despite his driving motivation to maintain the status quo in terms of preserving the Union, the ensuing civil war dictated that in order to preserve the Union, he needed to become transformational in many respects. Herein lies one of the great leadership conundrums; the need to sometimes implement radical change in order to preserve what is valued the most.

*The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him, in other men, the conviction and the will to carry on*[^34]

Walter Lippmann

Lippmann’s quote succinctly illustrates the impact that exceptional leaders can have on their followers. Although this impact can be the result of factors like style and charisma, it is most often the possession and genuine exercise of what the writer terms, the ‘Cs of leadership’; qualities such as character, competence, conviction, commitment, confidence, compassion and effective communication. It is within this practical context of qualities and skills, that the exceptional leadership of Abraham Lincoln will be examined.

**Abraham Lincoln – Lessons in Leadership**

When Lincoln was alive, he was revered and reviled in almost equal measure by his fellow Americans; when he died on April 14th 1865, he entered the pantheon, of not just great American presidents, but of the worlds greatest leaders. He personified, in the literal sense, the ‘American Dream’ of ‘log cabin to White House’. Yet even before he entered the White House, there were many who thought that a serious mistake had been made, and that Lincoln was not up to the job. In truth, there were many times when he thought this himself. Even a brief study of Lincoln as President confirms that leadership is dynamic, and that people can and do, change and...
improve over time. Consequently, a study of Lincoln is a study of the transformational aspects of leadership because Lincoln not only changed himself, he transformed and redefined America during one of the most critical periods in its history.

**Early years**

The great mystery of Lincoln is not how he became one of the greatest American presidents of all time, but how he became President in the first place. Many leaders face adversity throughout their careers, for Lincoln, adversity was a frequent visitor. In addition to the fact that at a young age Lincoln and his family were forced to leave their home, and his mother died when he was aged nine, the following are just some of the problems and disappointments he faced:

1832: he ran for the Illinois legislature - and lost  
1835: a business venture Lincoln was a partner in, failed; he spent years paying off the debt  
1836 (aged 27): he suffered a nervous breakdown  
1838: he ran for the post of Speaker in the Illinois legislature - and lost  
1844: he ran for Congress twice - and lost  
1850: his four year old son Edward died (only one of his four boys was to reach adulthood)  
1851: he was rejected for the post of land officer  
1854: (aged 45), he ran for the Senate - and lost  
1856: he sought the Vice-Presidential nomination - and lost  
1858: he ran for the Senate again - and lost  
1860: he was elected President of the United States - by a minority of the vote  
1864: when he was seeking re-election for a second term as President, not one member of the US Senate supported him

As some of the above points indicate, even though Lincoln was elected President, his problems were only beginning: firstly, he was in a very weak position because he was a compromise candidate with only 40% of the votes cast (he did not appear on the ballot in nine Southern states, and won only 2 of 996 counties in the entire South); secondly, by the time he took office, seven Southern states had seceded from the Union; thirdly, the Southern states that had seceded had taken control of all Federal agencies and had seized almost every fort and arsenal in Southern territory.
As if the above situation was not bad enough, Congress had taken no steps to put down the rebellion and the Senate had voted to lower military spending. The situation was compounded further by the fact that the Mississippi River, the lifeblood of the nation’s commerce was in Southern hands, and Washington was left almost completely defenceless.

In other words, the country was divided and there was no effective leadership in government - no wonder the outgoing President Buchanan declared that he was, ‘the last President of the United States’

But Lincoln was not about to give up, his whole life was one of sacrifice, disappointment and to conquer these: resolve and determination. Born on February 12th, 1809 in a log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky, Lincoln had little formal schooling. He went with his parents to Spencer County Indiana, and after his mother’s death, moved with his father and new stepmother to Macon County Illinois in 1830. Lincoln’s experience of the wider world had begun in 1828, when he took a flat boat to New Orleans. It was during a second trip to New Orleans in 1832, that Lincoln is reputed to have had his first experience of a slave auction; an experience that was to affect him for the rest of his life. Eventually, Lincoln settled in New Salem, Illinois in 1831

Whilst Lincoln was to have many jobs such as working in a store, splitting rails, a postmaster, surveyor, and partner in a business; it was his work as a lawyer that was to refine his skills of rhetoric, using evidence effectively and persuasion. Lincoln became one of the most respected lawyers in Illinois, and grew quite affluent through representing some of the biggest companies in the state. However, after giving a few local speeches that were well received, Lincoln took his first step into politics by running for a seat in the Illinois General Assembly in 1832. The fact that he was unsuccessful did not dampen his enthusiasm, and he was finally elected in 1834 as a member of the Whig Party.

Now married, (he married Mary Todd in 1842) Lincoln ventured into national politics and from 1847-49 served one term in Congress. Nevertheless, his attacks on the government’s motives for going to war with Mexico made him unpopular. This, along with a failure to secure the post of Commissioner in the General Land Office, caused him to become disenchanted with politics and he returned to practising law.
Rise to national prominence

One key event was to revive Lincoln’s declining interest in politics and change the course of American history, the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. The Act proposed dividing the Louisiana Purchase into these two territories. Senator Stephen A. Douglas (the leading Democrat for Illinois) coined the term ‘popular sovereignty’ to describe the situation whereby the two territories could decide for themselves whether or not slavery was allowed. Whereas for Douglas, slavery was only a political issue; for Lincoln, it was both a political and a moral issue. Thus for Lincoln, the Kansas-Nebraska Act was an Act for the extension of slavery, and he set about opposing it vehemently. Lincoln’s driving force where slavery was concerned, was not the fact that he was an Abolitionist (he rejected their radical agenda), but his belief that slavery undermined the ideals of the Founding Fathers - the very basis of the United States of America.

In 1856, Lincoln became a prominent member of the new Republican Party and at their state convention, gave what many believed was the most compelling speech of his political career (known as the ‘lost speech’). Dissension over the issue of slavery increased in the years 1856-57, particularly when the U S Supreme Court’s Dred Scott Decision held that Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories. 1858 saw Senator Douglas’ campaign for re-election; the Republicans chose Lincoln to oppose him. In his acceptance speech, Lincoln made his ‘House Divided’ comment; the scene was set for the famous Lincoln-Douglas Debates

From August to September 1858, seven three-hour debates across seven different cities were held. During the second debate at Freeport Illinois, Lincoln’s debating skill forced Douglas to commit a tactical and political error by proposing the Freeport Doctrine*. Despite the fact that Lincoln had a good chance of winning, and indeed, the Republicans won a majority of the vote, Douglas was re-elected by a majority of 54 to 46. However, Lincoln was far from dejected, “I am glad I made the late race. It gave me a hearing on the great and durable question of the age… I believe I have made some remarks which will tell for the cause of civil liberty long after I am gone”

* The Freeport Doctrine was espoused by Senator Stephen A. Douglas in Freeport, Illinois on August 27th, 1858. He held that despite the Supreme Court’s decision in the Dred Scott case, slavery could be prevented from any territory by the refusal of the people living in that territory to pass laws favourable to slavery. Likewise, if the people in the territory supported slavery, legislation could be enacted to provide for its existence. Douglas was clearly attempting to find a compromise between slavery and anti-slavery positions. Lincoln’s view was that fudging the issue would simply lead to the extension of slavery.
Lincoln had lost yet again, but the debates with Douglas had undoubtedly raised his political profile beyond Illinois. Importantly, it convinced the Republican Party that they had a ‘runner’, someone who could represent the Party and what it stood for at national level. Equally importantly for Lincoln, his debates with Douglas (one of the foremost orators of his day), proved that he could ‘hold his own’ on the some of the most pressing matters of the day (slavery not least among them). Whilst other public debating opportunities such as the Cooper Union Speech were to confirm that Lincoln was a political force to be reckoned with, it was the debates with Douglas that set him on the irrevocable course to national prominence and the presidency itself.

Lincoln may have lost the electoral battle with Douglas, but as history confirms, he was about to win a much bigger battle: the battle for ideas. This battle was to serve not just as a basis for the premise that slavery was wrong, not just to ensure that the Union would survive, but also to guarantee in Lincoln’s own words, “…that a government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth” 36

This defeated would-be Senator was to leave America with a legacy of democratic government and ideals that would prove a guarantee of personal freedom for most, but not all Americans. Ironically, it would be a black American, Martin Luther King jnr., (the descendent of the very slaves Lincoln sought to free) who would help Americans realise, that even in the modern United States, whilst Lincoln’s dream was enshrined in the Constitution, it was not extended to all citizens.

**Emotional intelligence, brinkmanship and tactics**

In some quarters, conventional wisdom holds that emotional intelligence (EI) is a relatively recent behavioural model epitomised and made popular by Daniel Goleman’s book ‘Emotional Intelligence’ 37. However, it is generally accepted that Thorndike’s use of the term ‘social intelligence’ 38 and Payne’s use of the actual words, ‘emotional intelligence’, 39 importantly pre-date Goleman’s exposition of the concept. Moreover, the work of Salovey and Mayer 40 was a significant contribution to the field; and again, pre-dated the contentions of Goleman.

Despite the considerable contributions of the EI proponents, critics such as the eminent academic and theorist Hans Eysenck confidently assert that EI (and especially as espoused by Goleman) is not a form of intelligence at all, “[Goleman] exemplifies more clearly than most the fundamental absurdity of the tendency to class almost any type of behaviour as an
‘intelligence’…Goleman admits that they might well be uncorrelated, and in any case if we cannot measure them, how do we know they are related” \(^{41}\)

Although it is difficult to argue with Eysenck’s logical criticisms of EI in relation to the lack of concrete measures, in the same year (2000) that Eysenck delivered his rebuke, Carson, Carson and Birkenmeir \(^{42}\) were developing measurements of EI. These measurements consisted of five key factors: empathic response (the ability to understand the emotional makeup of others), mood regulation (the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods), interpersonal skill (the ability to manage relationships and build networks) and internal motivation (a passion for work that transcends purely extrinsic rewards).

Consequently, whether one views EI in terms of a set of abilities or the more neutral concept of ‘emotional perceptiveness’ such approaches enable an understanding of how exceptional leaders throughout history appreciated the important role that emotions play. As the following comment by General Sir Archibald Wavell confirms, such an appreciation, particularly in relation to their followers, was essential in determining a leader’s strategy, tactics and ultimately, the difference between victory and defeat.

“Field Marshal Allenby never quite realised that men are governed through the emotions rather than through the intelligence” \(^{43}\)

It is a fact of life that possession of a high IQ does not in itself guarantee success. For example, many individuals can be quite brilliant academically, but in social and interpersonal terms, somewhat of a disaster. Therefore, proponents of EI maintain that conventional measurements of intelligence are too narrow; and consequently, there are wider aspects of EI that determine how successful we are in life. In short, it is claimed that EI provides a more realistic way of understanding and assessing people’s behaviours, leadership styles, attitudes, interpersonal skills and potential.
According to conventional EI models, there are two main aspects of EI: understanding yourself (your goals, behaviour and how you react to others and events), and understanding others (appreciating their feelings and how they may respond to events). As figure 1 depicts, there are also important sub-sets of EI.

If one accepts the useful criteria established by Carson, Carson and Birkenmeir (empathetic response, mood regulation, interpersonal skill, internal motivation and self-awareness) then scarcely a day passed when Lincoln did not practise these to a significant degree. As documented in this paper, relationships with his cabinet, his generals, the common soldier, politicians and the general public attest to his intuitive grasp of how others felt about key issues and how they were likely to react to events. Almost daily, the events of the civil war caused Lincoln deep despondency. And in addition to regulating this, he also had to adjudicate between, and raise the mood of, an increasingly fractious cabinet.

Lincoln was also intensely self-aware, and indeed, self-critical. He regularly dwelt upon and related to others, his personal failings:

“As a general rule, I abstain from reading the reports of attacks upon myself, wishing not to be provoked by that which I cannot properly offer an answer” 44

(Speech on Reconstruction, Washington, DC, April 11th, 1865 - Lincoln’s last public speech)

Even a brief examination of Lincoln’s life confirms his internal motivation to succeed. This motivation of course, was to be greatly strengthened by a more powerful external motivator: the maintenance of the Union and the end to the increasingly destructive civil war.

Nevertheless, there were many occasions when Lincoln, despite his considerable emotional perceptiveness, decided that ‘right’ and integrity were more important that how others were likely to respond to his actions or decisions. Perhaps the best example of Lincoln’s emotional intelligence, brinkmanship and ‘tactical ability’ was his response to the key issue of slavery.
Criticisms of Lincoln’s stand on slavery can be seen to lie in a number of key areas. Firstly, that he did not want to abolish it, he merely argued against its extension; secondly, the comments he made in reply to Senator Douglas during the seven key debates previously outlined; thirdly, the contention by critics that Lincoln’s proclamation of January 1863 was just a cynical ploy to fill the depleted ranks of the Union army.

The argument that Lincoln was just against the extension of slavery, and not slavery as such, appeared to receive support from a number of his acts and comments over the years; not least, his comments in his letter to Horace Greeley in August 1862, “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union”. 45 There can be no doubt that the end of slavery is inextricably linked to the survival of the Union; if the Union falls, then the cause of emancipation also falls. Therefore, this is not just an example of Lincoln’s EI, it is also an affirmation of a core belief and a political reality.

As with many critics in general, those who condemn Lincoln’s motives regarding emancipation are very selective where evidence is concerned. For example, many neglect to mention Lincoln’s final comments to Greeley, “…and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free” (ibid)

Lincoln’s behaviour in relation to slavery during the Civil War, as well as before, also brought criticism. For instance, he countermanded the orders of General Fremont who freed slaves in Missouri, and did the same where General Hunter was concerned. Lincoln’s rationale was simple: on one hand, he had to advance the cause of emancipation, on the other, he had to proceed in such a way that he did not cause more states to secede. In this respect, border states like Maryland, Missouri and Kentucky were critical; Kentucky especially so, because of its strategic position on the Ohio River. This meant that in order to move forward on emancipation, he had at times to move backwards to assuage the concerns of key audiences such as the Border States and key Union military figures. This was because there were real concerns that many Union officers would resign their commissions if emancipation were advanced too quickly. Furthermore, Lincoln was aware that many Northerners were against emancipation.
Lincoln’s judgement proved correct – the border states stayed in the Union. Like all exceptional leaders then, Lincoln had the emotional intelligence and skill to balance opposing forces without alienating them or compromising his integrity.

During the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Lincoln had scored many important points, but in return, Douglas had Lincoln ‘on the ropes’ on more than one occasion. Firstly, Douglas accused Lincoln of believing that blacks and whites were intellectually equal; secondly, he accused Lincoln of supporting marriage between blacks and whites; thirdly, he asserted that Lincoln wanted full political and social rights for all blacks. In his answer to these charges, Lincoln was to demonstrate yet again, his mastery of tactics, verbal dexterity, political brinkmanship and emotional intelligence.

In reply to the charge that he found blacks and whites to be equal, Lincoln stated, “he (the negro) is not my equal in many respects – certainly not in color ...But in the right to eat the bread without leave of any body else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man” 46. Crucially, Lincoln is not categorically stating that blacks are inferior, he simply concedes the possibility. Moreover, Lincoln implies that even if blacks were inferior, this is not a reason for depriving them of their rights as Americans. The potentially even more damaging charge, that Lincoln supported racial intermarriage, was responded to by Lincoln with even more intellectual versatility, “I protest against the counterfeit logic which concludes that because I do not want a black woman for a slave, I must necessarily want her for a wife”. 47

Again, Lincoln’s cleverly stated response allowed him to repudiate the accusation by implying its flawed logic. In another part of the debate, Lincoln consolidates this response by reminding Douglas and the audience, that it was the very nature of slavery which produced the greatest number of mixed race children.

The war gave Lincoln the opportunity to extend presidential power to an extent not used by any previous president and he took full advantage of it. Consequently, military necessity became the basis for many of Lincoln’s radical and much-criticised changes.Whilst he used his innovative Presidential Proclamations for a whole raft of measures, he was particularly skilful when it came to undermining slavery. Hitherto, the Constitution had been used to protect slavery, Lincoln used the proclamations to undermine that protection. By July 1862, with the situation concerning the Border States relatively secure, Lincoln indicated his desire to issue an emancipation order. However,
Seward (his Secretary of State) convinced him to wait for a more appropriate time, such as a Union victory. On September 22, after the Battle of Antietam, Lincoln issued his preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation (this was formalised in January 1863).

Lincoln’s proclamation of 1863, whilst limited in scope in terms of granting complete freedom to the slaves, contained some key passages, “…And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose of the aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held within said designated states, and parts of states, are, and henceforth shall be free…And I further make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service…”. It was of course, a limited sort of freedom since it did not apply to the Border States in the Union, or to secessionist states under Union control. In addition, it was also true that it was designed to replace the increasingly depleted ranks of the Union army. Nevertheless, the emancipation document provided the legal framework for the emancipation of nearly all slaves. Furthermore, black people would be serving in the armed forces of the United States for the first time.

Lincoln’s judgement of the emotional response of the vast majority of Union supporters, that it would prove increasingly difficult to deny rights to Negroes in the Union (especially when Negroes had themselves fought for those very rights in the army of the Union), again proved to be correct.

Limited as it was, Lincoln’s proclamation was a start. He expelled any remaining doubt about his intentions regarding slavery by seeking a constitutional amendment whereby slavery would be completely banished from the United States. In point of fact, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution became not only a pre-condition for former secessionist states to be readmitted to the Union, but a bulwark in the defence of equal rights for all – this is an example of emotional perceptiveness and political nous par excellence.

Although criticism of Lincoln’s ambiguous position on slavery is at times valid, what is not perhaps examined too closely is his evolution of thought on the matter; from a position whereby he simply thought that it was morally and politically wrong, to a position where he believed that America would never truly be free unless all slaves were free. The long march for freedom for black people (which would take many, many years and perhaps would never be fully realised) had at last begun.
Apart from understandable events such as the death of his sons, Lincoln was invariably always in control of his own emotions. It was in the appreciation and understanding of the emotions of others that Lincoln excelled in terms of emotional intelligence; and how his perceptions in this respect dictated actions that were to stand the test of time and guarantee the survival of the Union.

**Lincoln as war leader**

It was perhaps his stewardship during the civil war that best exemplifies Lincoln’s natural gift for leadership and at the same time, illustrates the depth of his humanity. No other American political leader had had to govern during a civil war, this meant that Lincoln had no previous examples to work from, no template; he was in essence, learning on the job.

Whilst Lincoln is often accused of being a dictator, in reality, he combined a growing mastery of statecraft and increasing confidence of what was required for military success. On one hand, Lincoln had to negotiate between Republican radicals and moderates, and on the other, gain the support of key Democrats and the loyalists in the seceding states. Yet another example of his political skills was the ability to get critics and political enemies to work together for the sake of the Union. However, political skills are not enough, people must feel that they can trust the person they are dealing with; a key element here is integrity.

**Integrity and Compassion**

Integrity is the foundation stone of leadership and is generally held to be so because, whatever other qualities the leader possesses, leadership must have a moral basis. Integrity is a steadfast adherence to a strict moral and ethical code; it entails integrity of character (e.g. incorruptibility), and professional integrity. Leaders must always be on their guard that their exercise of integrity is not unconsciously motivated by righteousness or moral indignation.

Moral courage is inextricably linked to integrity because the mere espousal of values and standards is not enough; they must be ‘lived’ through the leader’s every actions. As stated elsewhere in this paper, the leader has to be the person they want others to be – 24/7. Important though it is, even this aspect of leadership integrity is not enough, and the following components can be seen to be equally critical:
Purpose - the moral leader reasons and acts within the framework of the organisation’s vision and mission. Where values and standards are not explicit, the moral leader establishes and reinforces these (in such circumstances, the leader is the moral compass).

Knowledge - as indicated above, the organisation’s ‘moral knowledge’ must be disseminated to all levels and genuinely shared by all. In a military context, doctrine plays a crucial role in this process. Where standards are deviated from, it is not acceptable for military personnel or others to put forward the ‘Nuremberg Defence’, or simply say “I did not know”. If this does occur, then senior officers or those in charge have painfully identified a serious training need or a significant moral lapse.

Authority - by the very nature of their position a leader has the power to decide and act. Moral leaders are not afraid to share their leadership (delegation, not abdication), and this encourages followers to contribute to the mission and vision. Such shared leadership powerfully reinforces the moral dimension.

Trust - leaders who demonstrate integrity not only inspire trust per se, they also generate the trust in followers to report transgressions of the moral and ethical code.

Compassion is a timeless human quality that is raised to its highest level when it is extended to enemies or those who deserve it the least. Compassion is closely linked to empathy, but where empathy is generally limited to recognising (and to a degree, sharing) the emotions and situations of others, compassion can extend to the desire to take action to improve the unfortunate situation or alleviate the distress of others.

Figures such as the respected philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer saw compassion as the very basis of morality. Equally, Nelson Mandela sees no contradiction between other leadership qualities and compassion, “a good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination”. 49

It is not unusual for some leaders, even those with a strong moral compass, to view compassion as a sign of weakness. This is particularly so when leadership is being exercised in a war situation. Genuine compassion (as opposed to ‘tactical compassion’ – impression management)
helps build trust and is a vital component of the ‘hearts and minds’ element of modern asymmetrical warfare. In his ‘Twenty-Eight Articles’ (Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency) David Kilcullen documents the criticality of the process, “Over time, if you successfully build networks of trust, these will grow like roots into the population, displacing the enemy’s networks, bringing him out into the open to fight you, and seizing the initiative” \(^50\)

Compassion of course, depends upon the willingness to comprehend the emotional and situational needs of others, and Daniel Goleman highlights a key prerequisite, “The act of compassion begins with full attention, just as rapport does. You really have to see the person” \(^51\). Leaders then, whatever their seniority or operational context, must be willing to see compassion as a key leadership quality and not a weakness. As the American politician Hubert Humphrey advised, “Compassion is not weakness, and concern for the unfortunate is not socialism” \(^52\)

Lincoln’s reputation for integrity and his soubriquet of ‘Honest Abe’ had been earned early in his career, when he was left with a substantial business debt by a partner who worked little and drank the profits. Whilst Lincoln could have reneged on the debt, he chose to honour it, and although it took many years, he paid it in full. His reputation for integrity was also greatly enhanced by his practice as a lawyer, and his stand on a number of issues in addition to slavery.

Lincoln’s integrity was closely linked to his compassion, and in some cases they were one and the same. During his early political years, in the full knowledge that it would alienate Illinois voters, Lincoln attacked President Polk for provoking the Mexican War in order to extend US territory. Again in relation to votes, Lincoln was to take a moral stance regarding the Sioux Uprising that cost the Republicans their strength in Minnesota.

Where the uprising was concerned, Lincoln was presented with over three hundred death warrants for those Indians who had taken part in the revolt. He personally reviewed the trial records to distinguish between those who had simply waged war against the US, and those who had committed crimes such as rape and murder against civilians. Despite the undoubted hostile reaction of Minnesota voters, Lincoln only confirmed thirty-nine of these (one was later reprieved). He had no regrets and his moral stance was clear, “I could not afford to hang men for votes” \(^53\)
Apart from integrity, Lincoln’s compassion was possibly the trait most admired by others. Whilst this is perhaps best exemplified in Lincoln’s 1864 letter to Mrs Bixby (recounted in the introduction section), there are numerous instances where his genuine compassionate approach was to have both personal and national ramifications.

Lincoln granted more pardons than any other President. He was particularly reluctant to sign death warrants for soldiers who were found guilty of cowardice. In one case, he signalled General George Meade that he was unwilling to have any boy under eighteen shot, thereby immediately saving the life of one sixteen year old. Towards the end of the war, Lincoln’s compassion was to prove a vital factor in the Confederate surrender. To the fury of Northern politicians, Lincoln signalled to the Confederates that although they were guilty of treason, they would get a fair deal. One of the most potent methods Lincoln used to convey this, was the following words from his Second Inaugural Address, “With malice toward none; with charity for all…”

**Trust**

Simply put, trust is the belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone or something; it is both an emotional as well a logical act. In certain situations however, such as those where the context may have serious personal consequences (e.g. military operations), Boon and Holmes have defined trust in a more particular manner, “…a state involving confident predictions about another’s motives with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk”.

When trust is genuinely earned it can be extremely powerful, and in ‘Leadership lessons from West Point’, Platoon Sergeant Sweeney documents this power, “Once trust is earned, followers will allow leaders to influence not only their behavior but also their thoughts, attitudes, values, goals and motivation.”
Trust can be seen to fall into various categories:

- **Person-centred or relational trust**: the trust one places in another (influenced by factors like values, personality, character, integrity, behaviour and shared goals).

- **Expert trust**: trust that is generated by our confidence in a person’s knowledge, skills, competence or training.

- **Structural trust**: this form of trust arises from the position the individual holds (we may know little about the individual, but trust the office they hold).

- **Transactional trust**: this can be affected by some of the above factors, but is basically time-based and is related to a particular issue (e.g. a one-of transaction or experience that inspires trust).

- **Communication trust**: this refers to the trust and belief individuals place in what or how another communicates (e.g. transparency, willingness to disclose, keeping a confidence, giving honest feedback).

Most of the dimensions of trust outlined above can be subsumed into person-based trust and category-based trust. Person-based trust tends to develop over time and is based on direct experience of another. On the other hand, category-based trust emerges in the absence of direct experience or knowledge of others and is often based on assumptions about the category to which the individual(s) belong (e.g. senior officers, padres, medics, bomb disposal personnel).

Lincoln can be seen to meet many of the categories of trust illustrated above, but initially, when he was inaugurated as President on March 4th 1861, he had few friends and many enemies; trust was in short supply. Not least among his political opponents were Wm. H. Steward, Salmon P. Chase and Edward Bates; all of who ran against him for the 1860 Republican Presidential nomination. It was indicative of Lincoln’s lack of malice, emotional strength and growing confidence that he appointed all three to his cabinet. But there were other, more practical reasons for the inclusion of these political opponents in his cabinet. Firstly, by including them in his cabinet, Lincoln minimised their outright opposition; secondly, he had men of great organisational
and administrative ability in his inner circle when the Union needed such scarce talents as never before; thirdly, Lincoln was invoking one of the most powerful of human emotions – trust.

However, upon appointment, Seward tried to influence events in a number of ways. As if activities such as trying to influence the selection of other cabinet members and directly attempting to determine the course of the war were not enough to warrant his dismissal, Seward engaged in secret talks with Southern leaders.

When Seward eventually realised that Lincoln was determined to discharge the duties of his office with all the power at his disposal, he offered Lincoln his resignation – Lincoln refused it. He convinced Seward that the Union was in too great a state of peril for personal disagreements to get in the way. In doing so, and despite the offence Seward had caused, Lincoln again confirmed the trust and confidence he placed in him.

Whilst Lincoln’s actions where Seward was concerned were genuine, like many outstanding leaders, Lincoln won over many of his actual and potential enemies by displaying the qualities of confidence, loyalty and trust towards them. Like many perceptive leaders, Lincoln was invoking the very powerful ‘law of reciprocity’; ‘when I place confidence and trust in you, and demonstrate loyalty - I expect the same in return’.

Such was Lincoln’s ability to do this that Generals Roscrans and Grant refused to run against him for the 1864 Presidential nomination.

In most cases, renewed trust has to be really earned, but where Seward was concerned, Lincoln signalled that he was prepared to trust him yet again, even though his original trust had been abused. Lincoln’s treatment of Seward is an example of the situation whereby some leaders view trust as an act of faith, an unconditional sharing of power, knowledge, responsibility and influence.
The structural dimension of Lincoln’s role as President was not in itself a significant trust-generator. Rather, it was the person-centred (relational), transactional and communication aspects of trust that mostly applied to him. In these respects, Lincoln’s character, humility, integrity, ability to convey genuineness when communicating – and his willingness to trust others without reservation, were without doubt, major factors in others placing trust in him. Perhaps the greatest evidence of this was the Presidential election of 1864.

Lincoln’s re-election in 1864 was an extraordinary confirmation of the people’s trust. This was particularly so because:

- The war had gone very badly at times for the Union cause (more terrible sacrifices were still to come).
- Lincoln had made bitter and powerful enemies within the Union and his own party.
- His former top general, George B. McClellan ran against him.

Despite the many problems that Lincoln faced regarding re-election, he won by a majority of 400,000 votes. In addition, and despite the terrible conditions and setbacks they faced (with the end of the war not yet in sight), over 70% of Union soldiers voted for Lincoln. Moreover, Lincoln managed to carry the Union-occupied states of Louisiana and Tennessee. Lincoln’s re-election achievement was a vindication of his belief in democratic government in general, and trust in particular.

Determination and Risk-taking

Throughout history, military and political leaders have suffered serious setbacks and significant losses through lack of determination and being too risk-averse. Indeed, the staggering Confederate losses at the Battle of Gettysburg (July, 1863) were caused in the first instance, by the reluctance of the Confederate General Richard Ewell to pursue the Union forces (though some state that Lee’s orders concerning the taking of Cemetery Hill were ambiguous). This serious mistake allowed the Union forces to regroup and bring up reinforcements.

In respect of determination and risk-taking, Lincoln was not to be found wanting. Right from his inauguration as President, he signalled his determination to discharge the responsibilities placed upon him; not least the resolution of the threatened secession of some states from the Union and the possibility of a bloody civil war.
As the following acts confirm, this determination was to manifest itself in no small measure of risk-taking. In a relatively short space of time, Lincoln:

- Acted without consulting Congress
- Suspended Habeas Corpus
- Declared a state of rebellion and instituted martial law
- Had thousands arrested and detained without trial
- Ignored findings of the Supreme Court
- Intervened directly in military planning and campaigns
- Significantly increased army numbers
- Established a blockade of the South

Lincoln’s main vehicle for these radical changes was the Presidential Proclamation. However, these were not ratified as valid until they were deemed so by a Supreme Court decision (5-4 majority) in 1863.

In short, Lincoln’s determination and risk-taking stretched the limits of presidential power and authority to limits previously not experienced. Effectively, he had placed himself in charge of the administrative, political and military conduct of the war as no president had done before. This radical extension of presidential power was to invoke accusations of dictatorship.

Despite the seriousness of such allegations, there are a number of factors that clearly point not to the exercise of dictatorship, but to an innovative exercise of power that was largely determined by the extraordinary event of a civil war. These factors include: Lincoln’s own rationale, his delegation of powers where his cabinet was concerned, and his reluctant intervention in military matters.

Lincoln’s rationale for the sweeping powers he assumed is evident in a number of comments he made. For instance, in April 1864 he stated, “…I felt that measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the Constitution, through the preservation of the nation” 56. This is no cynical play-on-words. For Lincoln, the end justified the means; if he could succeed in saving the nation, he would also succeed in saving the Constitution. This belief is perhaps more clear in a comment to Salmon P.
Chase (Secretary of the Treasury), “These rebels are violating the Constitution in order to destroy the Union; I will violate the Constitution if necessary, to save the Union” 57

Cabinet members previously mentioned, eventually gave Lincoln admirable support. Nevertheless, it was Edward M. Stanton, Secretary of State for War who, along with Lincoln, played a pivotal role in the conduct of the war. The key role of Stanton, along with the then General-in-Chief Halleck, ensured that although Lincoln was at times directing strategy in the absence of proactive leadership from his senior military commanders in the field, a balanced approach to the exercise of power was achieved. It was the key personnel in figure 3, the civil and military’ brains trust’, which ensured that although Lincoln was the pre- eminent figure in the conduct of the war (he held absolute power), there were restraining forces. Thus, the ‘brains trust’ was a key element in reducing the risk factors produced by Lincoln’s determination to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion and maintain the Union. The creation of the brains trust also confirms that most leaders, even outstanding ones like Lincoln, need a team they can rely upon and from whom they can derive support.

Grasp of Military Strategy

There is little doubt that Lincoln would have got actively involved in the conduct of the war anyway, but certainly not to the same extent if he had senior commanders who were not just competent, but willing to engage the enemy. His lack of success where senior commanders were concerned, whilst frustrating, also highlighted Lincoln’s qualities of strategic grasp of key military issues, unconditional support, practical (hands-on) approach and unbelievable patience.

Lincoln’s strategic grasp, whilst appreciated by few at the time (certainly not his senior commanders before Grant), can be seen in retrospect to be valid in many respects. Like many effective modern leaders, Lincoln was quick to see the merits in parts of a plan, even though the overall plan was unlikely to be successful. This was the rationale behind his modification of General Winfield Scott’s Anaconda Plan (suffocating the Confederacy with a naval blockade). This aspect of strategy was linked to crippling the South economically by seizing control of the Mississippi River.
Lincoln’s superb understanding of military strategy was evident in his perception (not shared by his generals in the early years of the war) that overall victory lay not just in occupying Confederate territory, but in the complete destruction of the Confederate armies. Even if Richmond, the highly symbolic capital of the Confederacy, fell, and the armies were still capable of waging war, the war would continue. This is why he could not understand why General McClellan did not pursue Lee after the damage inflicted at the Battle of Antietam (17th September, 1862); and again, why General Meade did not pursue Lee after the important Union victory at Gettysburg (1st-3rd July, 1863).

Patience and Unconditional Support

It was Lincoln’s relationship with his generals, or more accurately, his inability to find one who would proactively prosecute the civil war to a successful conclusion, that perhaps exemplifies his qualities of patience, unconditional support, and again, trust.

When he took office in 1861, Lincoln found that the country was totally unprepared for war. As mentioned before, the standing army consisted of only 16,000 men, it was poorly trained and equipped, and the theories and strategies of the elderly General-in-Chief Winfield Scott were out of date. When Scott resigned in November 1861, Lincoln was to replace him with a number of senior generals before he was to find success with General Ulysses S. Grant. The first of these was Brigadier General Irvin McDowell, who, when leading the Army of the Potomac in July 1861, was defeated in the first Union offensive at the Battle of Bull Run (the Confederates called it First Manassas).

After this humiliating defeat, Lincoln replaced McDowell with the ‘Young Napoleon’, Major General George B. McClellan. Compared to other senior commanders, McClellan appeared young and quite brilliant. He was excellent at training and reorganising the Union army, but he had one key fault – he was extremely reluctant to engage the enemy. McClellan’s constant ploy to avoid engagement was to consistently inflate enemy numbers.
Some three months had passed since his appointment and McClellan had shown no signs of action. To encourage him to act, Lincoln passed ‘General War Order No. 1 on January 27th, 1862, (“A general movement of the land and sea forces of the United States against the insurgent forces”). However, by early March, McClellan had made no effort to engage the enemy, and hoping that it would allow him to concentrate on action, Lincoln reduced his responsibilities. McClellan was now only in charge of the Army of the Potomac; still he refused to engage the enemy.

McClellan had taken several months to execute his Peninsula Campaign. This involved moving upon Richmond by landing Union forces by sea to a position on the peninsula between the James and York rivers. McClellan landed at Fort Monroe on March 17th 1862, and by early April, was facing only a force of only 13,000 Confederates, but failed to press home an attack. In April 1862, Lincoln then writes to McClellan, “I beg to assure you that I have not written to you in greater kindness of feeling than now, nor with a fuller purpose to sustain you, so far in my most anxious judgement I consistently can. But you must act” 58. During this time, Lincoln defended McClellan to politicians and cabinet members alike. When again, this written prompt did not do the trick, Lincoln, along with Secretaries Stanton and Chase went to see McClellan at Fort Monroe to get things moving; but McClellan refused to see them.

By late May, McClellan had moved to within ten miles of Richmond, but was now faced by Confederate general Joseph E. Johnson. Although the ensuing Battle of Seven Pines (initiated by the Confederates), resulted in a Union victory, the ferocity of the fighting made McClellan even more cautious. Though McClellan was involved in other engagements such as the Seven Days Battle, he failed to capitalise on factors such as Confederate defeats and casualties; this gave the strategic advantage to Lee. McClellan’s nickname had now changed from the ‘Young Napoleon’, to the ‘Virginia Creeper’.

Lincoln had had enough and removed him as General-in-Chief in July 1862. There are few Commanders-in-Chief, let alone one who is accused of being a dictator, who, during a civil war,
would wait so long for his General-in-Chief to adopt an offensive strategy and aggressively pursue the enemy.

Despite all these failings, Lincoln gave McClellan another chance and reinstated him as overall commander of Union forces in the Washington and Virginia areas (after General Pope’s defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run). Once again however, just as he had had the ‘slows’ near Richmond, McClellan refused to pursue Lee after the Battle of Antietam (September 17th, 1862). Lee had moved off the battlefield first (allowing McClellan to claim victory), and with 12,000-14,000 casualties, was badly battered. McClellan too, had some 12,000 casualties, but since Lee’s army was nearly half of McClellan’s, Lee’s casualties had greater significance in terms of his ability to fight. Even a personal visit from Lincoln could not make McClellan budge. This was a serious failure that meant the bloody civil war would continue until April 1865.

Despite disappointment after disappointment where McClellan was concerned, Lincoln offered him unconditional support and showed unbelievable patience. However, McClellan reacted to the investment of these qualities by displaying a lack of will in prosecuting the war, refusing to see Lincoln and Stanton when they came to the front, engaging in vitriol behind Lincoln’s back and trying to undermine Lincoln’s authority.

Lincoln’s predicament with McClellan exemplifies the dilemma faced by many leaders. How does one strike the balance between supporting, mentoring and developing subordinates on one hand, and on the other, recognising that the sometimes fine line between delegation and abdication has been crossed (leaders who have integrity can delegate tasks, but never ultimate responsibility).

Walking-The-Job (WTJ)

All effective leaders need to be visible. Visibility is a means of demonstrating that leaders are seen as being ‘on-the-job’, interested in the work of followers (morale and motivation), seeing events at first hand (knowing exactly what is going on), gaining critical information and making informed and timely decisions. In short, ensuring that what is supposed to be happening, is happening. In accordance with his belief that WTJ was vital for leader effectiveness, Lincoln sacked at least one general for not engaging in the process.
Whilst General John C. Fremont had been guilty of misbehaviour such as misusing public funds, and surrounding himself with dubious characters, it was his failure to keep in touch with events that was the final straw for Lincoln. Some of Lincoln’s comments regarding Fremont’s self imposed isolation have been mentioned earlier, but it was the impact of this behaviour on his subordinates that also concerned Lincoln, “He is losing the confidence of men near him…” 59

WTJ can be seen to be an important aspect of Lincoln’s leadership style, and it is estimated that he spent 75% of his time meeting people of all ranks and from all backgrounds. Where the details of his walkabouts are concerned, Lincoln:

- Spent a significant amount of his time at the War Office (gaining key information first-hand)
- Regularly inspected potentially new weapons
- Called instant meetings in places such as the Navy Yard or the War Department
- Touried hospitals to visit the sick and wounded
- Met ordinary people so he could stay in touch with public opinion
- Endeavoured to inspect every state regiment passing through Washington
- Visited key players such as generals, cabinet members and congressmen – often in their own homes

Lincoln’s genuine display of affection for the people and the soldiers (particularly his compassion for the wounded) generated tremendous respect and loyalty from all quarters.

Examples of Lincoln’s visits to his senior generals are:
- McDowell after the first Battle of Bull Run
- Burnside after his terrible mistake at Fredericksburg
- Hooker after Chancellorsville
- Grant several times (e.g. Petersburg)
- McClellan at Fort Monroe and Antietam

WTJ can also mean learning on the job. Lincoln’s perceptive leadership style, his natural zest for meeting as many people as possible, and his capacity for seeking and using information effectively, proved for the Union, one of the most critical examples of learning from experience
Gaining and using information effectively became a critical activity for Lincoln. Information was not just an important means of exercising his presidential duties, but of controlling the Union’s response to the civil war. Lincoln was certainly not just Commander-in-Chief in name only, his visits to his generals were to gain up-to-date information from the front and offer support. However, it wasn’t possible to visit all the fronts, and the War Department and White House Telegraph Office became key sources of information regarding the war effort. In fact, there were times when Lincoln became almost a tenant in these two establishments.

Invaluable though WTJ was for Lincoln, he could not be everywhere. As illustration 5 confirms, he established key sources of information that also included trusted aides.

Lincoln was clearly prosecuting a new, modern kind of war, with a new and extremely effective approach to information management and decision-making. Many of Lincoln’s decisions had significant ramifications for the Union and the future of America. Few however, would prove as momentous as his ‘Fort Sumter decision’.

Lincoln’s decision regarding Fort Sumter, was perhaps his most fateful. Made in the early stages of his presidency (before the civil war had commenced), the decision was whether to reinforce the besieged Fort Sumter, or in the lesser degree, merely to re-supply. In order to make this crucial decision, Lincoln sent one of his most trusted aides (Stephen A. Hurl) to meet the Confederate leaders. Hurl’s report duly clarified the decision for Lincoln. Unless the Southern states were permitted to secede, war was inevitable. Lincoln chose a wise course of action; the least he could do was re-supply the fort – if the Union ships were fired upon, then it would be the South, not the North, who started the civil war.

Not only did Lincoln’s innovative methods for gaining and using information keep him in contact with a range of opinions, it also ensured that the information was unfettered by official
structures. In addition, it also meant that he was visible during a time when visible leadership was of critical importance.

In walking-the-job then, Lincoln was not just gaining vital information, keeping in touch with key groups; or indeed, allowing key groups to keep in contact with him, he was in fact practising a new and extremely powerful form of leadership. A form of leadership where no longer was there just absolute power to influence and decide; but also, where there was the opportunity for others to influence that power and the decision-making process. It was in essence, the extension of the ballot box; not just the election of a country’s leader, but the ability to influence him. It was the confirmation that people had elected a leader who was of the people, and who was exercising government by the people and for the people.

**Lincoln’s power of persuasion**

As previously suggested, a key leadership aptitude is the ability to bring about that fundamental shift in followers from control to commitment. Therefore, the ability to effectively persuade is a fundamental skill. The eminent psychologist Robert Cialdini has identified six ‘weapons of influence’: **reciprocity** (the psychological pressure to repay a favour), **commitment** and **consistency**, **social proof** (people will possibly imitate the behaviour of others), **authority**, **liking** (we like people who are similar to us) and **scarcity** (the imperative to seize the opportunity now or it might be gone).

Although Cialdini has perceptively identified key persuasion vehicles, some of these may be seen by followers as at least contrived, and at most, attempts at manipulation. For example, scarcity could be seen as reducing persuasion to the realms of the supermarket – ‘when it’s gone, it’s gone’ (Cialdini actually uses the term, ‘The scarcity scam’). Despite this, persuasion vehicles such as commitment and consistency can be used positively to reinforce values and standards. As Cialdini comments, “Once we have made a choice or taken a stand, we will encounter personal and interpersonal pressures to behave consistently with that commitment” (ibid). Consequently, the effective leader must always strive to use ethical and acceptable means to persuade.
The necessity for significant others such as leaders to persuade and communicate effectively was recognised by ancient philosophers like Aristotle and was referred to as rhetoric. Aristotle devised a simple model of persuasion that is still used today, and it consists of three elements: *ethos* (the personal character of the speaker), *logos* (the logic and interest of the argument) and *pathos* (the appeal to the emotions).

Ethos is perhaps the most important of the three elements because, if the communicator is not credible, it is unlikely that the message is. It is also important to note that the appeal to the emotions can be legitimate as well as a form of manipulation. Legitimate aspects can include such factors as values, standards and perceived obligations.

Ancient orators developed a number of other persuasive devices and the following are examples of these:

- **Allegory** a symbolic narrative
- **Anaphora** repetition of a word at the beginning of consecutive sentences
- **Asyndeton** omitting conjunctions between words and phrases
- **Hyperbole** exaggeration for effect
- **Metaphor** a word or phrase that implies a likeness between different things
- **Onomatopoeia** sounds that suggest meaning
- **Syllogism** a logical argument in three parts (two premises and a conclusion)

Ancient in origin though rhetorical devices such as the above are, they have been used down the years by people who wanted to persuade and exert influence over others. An example in this respect is President John Kennedy’s use of asyndeton, “*We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardships, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty*” (Inaugural Address, 20th January, 1961).

For Lincoln, influencing and persuading groups such as the general public, military personnel, his cabinet, politicians and those who could aid the war effort became an everyday activity.
Although Lincoln had a very limited formal education, his thirst for knowledge was insatiable. This desire for knowledge was in fact, the foundation stone of his powers of persuasion. Lincoln read newspapers, books on grammar, the bible, Shakespeare and Robert Burns, various classical works and political pamphlets. In addition to reading the thoughts of others, Lincoln’s command of rhetoric and persuasion can be seen to be formed by: firstly, his habit of conveying thoughts and ideas through conversation and story-telling (this was his great love, and developed timing and the ability to relate to people of all types); secondly, his legal experience (this perfected the skills of using evidence effectively and presenting arguments); and thirdly, his membership of the Salem debating society and his early work as a politician in the Illinois legislature (this honed his political debating skills).

Among the key skills an orator needs is the ability to convey complex ideas in simple language, and related to this, the capability to relate to the ordinary person as well as the privileged and well educated. Lincoln’s power as an orator can be seen to rest on these two fundamental skills.

Apart from leadership by example, a leader’s ability to persuade and motivate others can be seen to lie primarily in their ability to communicate effectively. Leaders who have an exceptional ability to communicate effectively, also have great power over others. However, this power must be tempered with integrity and the pursuit of truth over convenience. The reality is simple, for a leader to be persuasive they must be credible, to be credible, they must be truthful.

All of Lincoln’s public speeches can be seen to exemplify integrity and the highest ideals; a total commitment to reason and the truth. Lincoln himself explains the premise, “It often requires more courage to dare to do right than to fear to do wrong. He who has the right needs not to fear” (letter to General John McClernand, 12th August, 1863) 61

Lincoln’s ability to make impromptu speeches, as well as carefully planned ones, means that the number of speeches he made runs into volumes. Despite this fact, the following are seen as keynote speeches:

**The Lyceum Address, 1838** - this early speech reveals Lincoln’s attitude towards government

**The Temperance Address, 1842** - Lincoln upsets his audience by advocating reason and persuasion
His speech against the Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854 (repeated 12 days later on Oct. 16th, in Peoria Illinois, and known as the Peoria Speech) - the possible extension of slavery rekindled Lincoln’s fading interest in politics.

The House Divided Speech, 1858 - the famous speech during the Lincoln-Douglas Debates that signalled the start of Lincoln’s campaign for the US Senate.

The Cooper Union Address, 1860 - a stirring, but carefully worded speech that was conciliatory to the South. This outstanding speech brought him to national prominence and made him a leading contender for the Republican presidential nomination.

The Farewell Address, 1861 - Lincoln says goodbye to his friends before leaving for the White House.

The First Inaugural Address, 1861 - Lincoln’s plea to the South to avoid war.

The Gettysburg Address, 1863 - Lincoln’s most famous speech that heralded, ‘a new birth of freedom’.

The Second Inaugural Address, 1865 - Lincoln’s beautiful speech where he advocates forgiveness towards the South and the desire to heal the nation’s wounds.

Logic, Rhetoric and Commonly-held Beliefs

Though Lincoln’s famous Cooper Union speech at New York in February 1860, is held as the speech that brought him to national prominence, he had already shown what he was capable of during his opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 (the Act was written by the leading Democrat Stephen A. Douglas, and stated that each territory could be admitted as a state, ‘with or without slavery’ – Lincoln held that this could lead to the extension of slavery), “When the white man governs himself, that is self government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man – that is despotism. If the Negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that ‘that all men are created equal’, and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man’s making a slave of another” 62. This is a prime example of how Lincoln used devices such as logic, rhetoric and appeals to commonly-held beliefs (e.g. ‘my ancient faith …’).
Careful research and use of evidence

But it was not just rhetoric and other devices that made Lincoln such a compelling speaker; attention to detail and cogent use of evidence were also hallmarks of his power to persuade. During the Cooper Union debate, Lincoln’s opponent Stephen A. Douglas stated that the Founding Fathers had sanctioned slavery. Through careful research, Lincoln proved that the majority of the Founding Fathers had in fact spoken out, or voted against slavery - this was a hammer blow against Douglas’ argument.

Debating strategy

Lincoln’s carefully planned strategy during the Lincoln-Douglas debates meant that Douglas was caught on the back-foot a number of times. On one occasion, he was forced to propose the Freeport Doctrine. A previous legal decision held that territories could not ban slavery; this invalidated Douglas’ much vaunted view of popular sovereignty. In order to overcome this obstacle and trump Lincoln, Douglas proposed that territories could get round the problem by simply refusing to enact the powers necessary for police to enforce the law (as previously explained, this was the Freeport Doctrine).

But this ploy merely served to highlight the weakness of the popular sovereignty view that states could extend slavery. Although the ploy was enough to beat Lincoln and win the race for the Senate, Douglas lost key support amongst the slave-holding states and probably brought about the fall of the Democratic Party.

Biblical references and tone

Lincoln’s 1858 speech that started his campaign for the US Senate, was a rallying call to all Republicans since it raised the spectre of a divided Union as long as slavery existed. Most leaders in their careers reach a defining moment, a moment that confirms that they were the correct choice for the job (or determined that they should be); for Lincoln, the speech at the Cooper Union was such a moment. Many of Lincoln’s speeches reflected a biblical tone (the bible was a common reference frame for many at the time), this speech contained the words, “A house divided against itself cannot stand I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free”\textsuperscript{63}. The words \textit{A house divided against itself shall not stand}, appear in Matthew 12:25.
The epitome of persuasion - The Gettysburg Address

Perhaps the speech that will be forever associated with Lincoln, is the Gettysburg Address (made on November 19th, 1863). The Address still causes debate among Lincoln scholars because: there are five known copies, some are signed and dated by Lincoln, others vary in terms of length and the words used.

The five copies are named after the people who received them. The Hay and Nicolay copies were presented by Lincoln to his private secretaries John Hay and John Nicolay and are held to be written around the time the Address was delivered. The three other copies were given to Edward Everett (his fellow speaker on the day), George Bancroft (a famous historian and former Secretary of the Navy) and Col. Alexander Bliss (George Bancroft’s stepson). Because Lincoln signed and dated the Bliss copy, this is held as the standard version and is the source for most reproductions.

Although the Nicolay copy is believed to be the earliest one that exists, scholars cannot agree that this was the actual copy Lincoln used. A point often mentioned in this context is that the Nicolay copy does not contain the words ‘under God’ (i.e. “…that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom”). The fact that the words ‘under God’ do not appear in the Nicolay and Hay copies, but do appear in the later Everett, Bancroft and Bliss versions, has led some commentators to assert that Lincoln did not use the words ‘under God’. However, a number of reporters telegraphed their copy on the day of the Address and these texts contained the words ‘under God’.

Despite such scholarly differences, what cannot be disputed was the impact of Lincoln’s speech. It is important to remember that Lincoln was not the main speaker, and Edward Everett (the main speaker who gave his speech before Lincoln), spoke for two hours, and his speech was over 13, 600 words. In contrast, Lincoln’s speech consisted of only ten sentences and was delivered in only three minutes. The speech is considered as perhaps the finest defence of the democratic system of government. But it was not just about democratic government, nor was it just about the survival of the Union; Lincoln gave meaning to the sacrifice of the dead by holding out a new vision of the future for the living.

There is some evidence that Lincoln based key aspects of his speech on important comments previously made by others. For example, in 1830, the renowned American orator and
politician Daniel Webster stated, in relation to the origin of the American system of government (and the source of its power), “the people’s constitution, the people’s government; made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people” 65. Lincoln is also known to have read the opinion of Supreme Court Justice John Marshall containing similar comments.

In addition, a notated copy of the Reverend Theodore Parker’s 1858 anti-slavery speech containing the words, “a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people”, was found in Lincoln’s papers 66. Furthermore, the acclaimed American Civil War scholar James McPherson highlights the similarity between aspects of the Gettysburg Address and Pericles’ Funeral Oration during the Peloponnesian War (as described by Thucydides) 67

However, like all great orators, Lincoln did not just copy the words, he used them in a new context and gave them an added meaning; a meaning of sacrifice and a meaning of renewal. An acknowledgement of those who had paid the price, so that America could have a ‘new birth of freedom’.

The Gettysburg Address

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation: conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we can not dedicate - we can not - consecrate - we can not hallow - this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us - that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion - that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain - that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

The use of subtle references is a common tool of many orators. Although the opening words of the Gettysburg address can be seen to have a biblical ring to them (the term ‘threescore years and ten’ appears in the King James Bible’s Psalm 90:10), Lincoln also had an important implicit message. The words, “Four score and seven years ago”, of course mean 87 years ago. When this number is subtracted from 1863, the result is 1776. This can be seen to be a reference to the American Revolutionary War; a war during which Jefferson proclaimed that ‘all men were created equal’ (a founding principle). Moreover, Lincoln can also be seen here to be linking the people present to their forebears through a shared cultural memory.
In stating, “now we are engaged in a great civil war”, Lincoln is in fact saying, ‘this is the supreme test of whether or not America survives as a nation’. Importantly, by using the words ‘…or any nation so conceived…’, Lincoln also increases the significance of the challenge (i.e. this is not just about democracy in America, this is a test for democracy everywhere).

Lincoln can also be seen as employing particular rhetorical devices, some of which were mentioned earlier. Where the words, “But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground” are concerned, Lincoln is using the technique of asyndeton. In addition to the use of asyndeton, the statement is given even greater power by the spiritual nature of the words dedicate, consecrate and hallow. The impact is further heightened by the words we cannot being repeated three times (the ‘rule of three’).

Lincoln’s use of imagery, one of the most compelling oratorical techniques, can be seen to be a recurring theme in many of his speeches. In the Gettysburg Address for instance, the imagery of birth, life and death is quite apparent in the words, ‘brought forth’, ‘conceived’ and ‘not perish’.

Lincoln was also quite fond of the rhetorical technique, personification. It was present throughout his First Inaugural Address, “In your hands, my dissatisfied countrymen, and not in mine”; “The government will not assail you”; “You have no vote registered in heaven”; “We are not enemies but friends”. Similarly, in his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln states, “Fondly do we hope – fervently do we pray”; “let us strive to finish the work we are in”; “to care for him who has borne the battle”.

Personification is also evident in various places throughout the Gettysburg Address, “Now we are engaged in a great civil war”; “We are met on a great battlefield”; “We have come to dedicate”; “It is for us the living”; “…we here highly resolve”. The use of such words were motivated by the desire to produce a sense of togetherness; a common bond from which people can gain mutual comfort and strength.

Another rhetorical tool that is apparent in Lincoln’s great speech is that of the ‘problem-solution’ device. The problem is posited in the words, “a great civil war testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure”. The solution can be seen to lie in the words, “It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us”.
Apart from structure, further analysis of the Gettysburg Address reveals yet more rhetorical strategies, and two are of particular note: the use of antithesis and Aristotle’s play on emotions. The use of antithesis appears more than once, and examples in this respect are: the juxtaposing of the themes of preservation ("that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion") and “a new birth of freedom”; mortality and immortality (“those who here gave their lives”... “shall not perish from the earth”); the phrase, “The world will little note nor long remember” contrasted with “but it can never forget”. Lincoln is adding even greater meaning to this part of the Address by contrasting the death of soldiers with the life of the nation.

Orators need to be very careful where the use of emotion is concerned, since its misuse can seriously backfire; in the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln gets it just right. He carefully balances emotional themes like compassion, unity and spirituality through the use of key words such as honoured, the people, all men, us, liberty, cause, consecrate, devotion and God. The emotional impact of Lincoln’s words was further heightened by the rhythm and structure used.

**Structure**

Lincoln chose his structure very carefully and its strength was its simplicity. But this strength was maximised by the manner in which Lincoln links the three main parts of the structure (beginning, middle and end) to the past, the present and the future. In the first part of his speech, Lincoln resorts to the past to remind the audience of important concepts such as the meaning of liberty, and that all men are created equal.

Through the use of ‘our fathers’, he implicitly reminds the audience of the sacrifices the Founding Fathers made in order to establish America as a free nation (he deliberately uses the term ‘nation’ rather than Union).

Having set the scene, Lincoln moves to the present and reminds the audience that the current civil war is an important test of the belief in liberty, and the principle that all men are created equal (any nation so conceived and so dedicated).

Finally, Lincoln uses the sacrifice of the soldiers at the Battle of Gettysburg (The brave men living and dead) as a symbol that the work of renewal was still not complete. Lincoln implores that the fallen should not be dishonoured by the living failing to achieve renewal (a new birth of freedom). In his very last words, Lincoln signals his belief and determination that democratic
government in America will endure (government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth – another example of ‘the rule of three’).

Other points of note:
• Lincoln used the word ‘nation’ five times – but not the word ‘Union’
• He used the word ‘here’ eight times and the words ‘dedicate’ or ‘dedicated’ six times
• He avoided using the word slavery (but implicitly referred to this in the term, “…dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”)
• As mentioned previously, some scholars (e.g. McPherson 1992, op cit) have noted the resemblance between certain phrases used by Lincoln and the works of ancient Greek orators such as Pericles. During his funeral address for those fallen in the Peloponnesian War, Pericles comments, “I shall begin with our ancestors; it is both just and proper that they should have the honour of first mention on an occasion like the present…you their survivors, must determine to have as unfaltering a resolution in the field…”
• Lincoln was making fundamental points, not only for those present at Gettysburg, but for the American people as a whole:
  - the Founding Fathers of our country believed that all men were created equal
  - this great civil war is a test of whether or not we survive as a nation, and whether or not our democratic system of government survives
  - the war must continue if necessary, to ensure the preservation of the Union
Key points about persuasion

Like all leaders who are very effective communicators, Lincoln:

- Always had clear aims and objectives
- Provided a clear structure
- Often realised (as the Gettysburg Address confirms) that the simple messages can be the most powerful
- Held that a leader must know his ‘audience’ and be able to relate to them
- Believed that key themes and ideas must be emphasised - if necessary, more than once
- Realised that the words used must be capable of being understood by people from all backgrounds
- Understood the importance of speaking to people rather than at them (the use of personification where necessary)
- Used the strategy of relating to the audience by using commonly accepted beliefs, goals or aspirations
- Avoided contentious issues where possible - but didn’t shirk from the truth (he nearly always found an acceptable way of making the point)
- Used a speaking style he was comfortable with

Lincoln’s persuasive style was a reflection of key aspects of his leadership style: honesty, a willingness to embrace the views of others, a desire for compromise on many issues (but not those that embodied fundamental principles he held to be in the best interests of the majority), and to balance his willingness to compromise, the exercise of determination whatever the cost.

Lincoln’s presidency can be seen in many ways to have been about communication. As he demonstrated in his many speeches and writings, great leaders do not just repackage prevailing wisdom, but challenge it; they do not just confirm existing attitudes, but present a new vision; they do not just transmit information, but communicate ideas, values, standards and beliefs in such a way that they transform the world they live in. Lincoln proved that effective communication was the duty of all leaders; that it was, particularly in the context of the civil war, as powerful as any weapon. Weapons were necessary to save the Union, but only communication and dialogue could transform it. For Lincoln then, the most powerful weapon was an educated mind and its main projectile was communication.
Summary of Lincoln’s leadership

The American Civil War was a horrific, yet transformational event that changed the country forever. The war starkly revealed what America actually was (a mere collection of states) and at the same time, what it could be (a nation with a new concept of freedom and personal liberty). It was in the context of the civil war that Lincoln played a pivotal role in the political and social development of the so-called United States. From a slaveholding, ill-at-ease republic, to a nation founded on a newly-discovered awareness of the nature of personal freedom and the real meaning of liberty.

Lincoln’s gestures of conciliation towards the South before the war started, demonstrated that he was a reluctant revolutionary; but revolutionary he was. He grasped issues such as slavery, the preservation of the Union and the meaning of liberty. In doing so, he faced issues and problems not experienced by any previous American national leader. It was in coping with these issues and problems, that he demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities and skills.

Lincoln’s leadership abilities were apparent from an early stage: his display of qualities such as integrity, empathy and persuasion; his clear moral values (explicit in his condemnation of slavery); his perceptive and sensitive handling of the border states at the beginning of the Civil War; his defeat of Congress in their attempts to reorganise his cabinet in 1862; his neutralisation of the peace campaign in 1864 (this would have seriously threatened the existence of the Union and negated the deaths of all Union soldiers since 1861); his outstanding work as war president.

In addition to the above qualities, Lincoln possessed a tremendous strength of character, and an unswerving commitment to the truth. His empathy for the ordinary person, and life-long devotion to the rights of the individual, remain as testaments to the driving force of his leadership vision.
Modern leadership theory often provides comfortable categories to explain the many conflicting aspects of behaviour that leaders often display. The use of terms such as ‘manager’ and ‘leader’ are examples in this respect. For the perceptive however, management is largely about the ‘what’, and leadership is largely about the ‘how’ (a process of inspiration). Clearly, Lincoln could separate the two, and carefully balanced scarce resources (particularly exceptional people) with leadership by example.

As figure 9 indicates, one aspect of effective leadership is getting the balance right between, on one hand, people, plans and priorities; and on the other, the exercise of leadership qualities that are necessary to achieve results. For Lincoln, there were two key priorities: the survival of the Union, and the eradication of slavery. However, as the examination of Lincoln’s war presidency has revealed, before these objectives were to be attained, many an acute balance was to be reached. But in reaching such balances, Lincoln never compromised his core qualities of honesty, courage and compassion.

Great leaders are often very complex human beings; Lincoln was no exception. Forceful, yet thoughtful and reflective; humorous, yet given to regular bouts of depression; patient, yet intolerant of lack of progress from his generals; compassionate, yet determined to prosecute the civil war to a Union victory - whatever the human cost. Lincoln’s frequent bouts of deep depression were compounded by almost perennial failure and constant challenges. Like all outstanding leaders, Lincoln translated this almost continual adversity into renewed determination.

As alluded to before, Lincoln’s complexity as human being was also evidenced by his views concerning slavery. Recent research by Magness and Page (based on documents uncovered in British archives), has led them to claim that Lincoln wanted to send many of America’s slaves overseas. The evidence confirms that Lincoln authorised British officials to recruit for ‘Freedmen’ settlements in the British colonies of Honduras (now Belize) and Guiana (now Guyana). In addition, he is also said to have considered a plan to ‘relocate’ thousands of black soldiers to build canals in Panama.

The accusation of colonisation and ‘relocation’ concerning black Americans is no surprise to Lincoln scholars. Indeed, Lincoln mentioned colonisation favourably in the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Whilst Magness found evidence of Lincoln’s interest in colonisation as late as 1864 (a notation that verified Lincoln had asked the Attorney General if he could still
receive counsel from James Mitchell, his Colonisation Commissioner), there is evidence from Presidential Secretary John Hay, that by July 1864, Lincoln had “sloughed off” colonisation 69

One of the problems of historical revisionism is that past events are often viewed through a lens of contemporary mores and values. Consequently, unrealistic judgements and assertions can often be made. However, Magness and Page have not made such an error. They have complemented their excellent research by objective analysis, and an example in this respect is their view (shared by other scholars) that Lincoln always advocated that colonisation would be voluntary. They also point out that Lincoln was genuinely concerned that freeing slaves would cause serious racial strife. (Negroes had been lynched during riots in New York)

There is no doubt that the research of Magness and Page provides valuable evidence regarding Lincoln’s views on race in general and colonisation in particular.

But it must be remembered that Lincoln’s views were continually evolving on a number of issues, not least slavery and the future of America’s Negroes. Despite contradictions (often caused by political considerations aimed at assuaging fears concerning emancipation) Lincoln can be seen to steer an increasingly steady course that enabled the destruction of slavery and the advance of the cause of black suffrage. For a man who had been reluctant about such reforms a few years earlier, this was a massive and irreversible step forward. As Lincoln himself comments upon signing the final version of the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863) “I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do in signing this paper” 70

Writing in the Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association, Michael Vorenberg, states,

“… a clear picture emerges of Lincoln using the prospect of black colonization to make emancipation more acceptable to conservatives and then abandoning all efforts at colonization once he made the determined step toward emancipation in the Final Emancipation Proclamation” 71

Where Lincoln’s war leadership is concerned, he demonstrated a capacity for information gathering and decision-making on a scale largely unknown before his time. As previously stated, a critical aspect here was his habit of walking-the-job and being accessible to people from all walks of life. This ‘habit’ is now recognised as one of the most important aspects of effective modern leadership and is deemed crucial for gathering essential information and making effective decisions.
Whilst wit and storytelling were admired features of Lincoln’s leadership style, he was often criticised for making seemingly contradictory decisions. The compassion he exercised after the Sioux uprising and his response to a possible Confederate surrender are examples in this respect.

Although having a distinct leadership style is important, even more important is the ability to have flexibility of style. The apparent contradictions in Lincoln’s leadership style were largely due to his ability to react quickly and intuitively to changing circumstances; vital here, was his additional ability to consider all factors - especially those that were not immediately apparent to others. Exceptional leaders then, have the integrity and determination to make difficult decisions (despite the criticisms) based on the simple premise that different situations require different leadership responses.

However, Lincoln would not have had the opportunity to exhibit all the aforementioned leadership qualities and skills had it not been for his one key attribute - the ability to relate to others in a way that generated loyalty, confidence and trust. This was most apparent in his relationship with the war cabinet and the political/military ‘brains trust’. To gain the respect and trust of those who may not have liked him was an acknowledgement of Lincoln’s genuineness and integrity. To also gain the active support of those such as Wm. H. Seward who were plotting against him, was a confirmation of his outstanding ability as a leader.

Lincoln was not born a great leader or military strategist, but he was born with a fine mind and the qualities and skills that are the basis for highly effective leadership. Qualities and skills such as: an exceptional ability to communicate, courage, integrity, determination, a willingness to understand others, team-working skills, emotional intelligence, a clear personal vision, the ability to engender loyalty, confidence and trust, flexibility in decision-making and responding to events. All of these attributes were consolidated by genuine humility and a desire to serve the people (‘serve to lead’).

Experience almost always develops innate qualities and skills, and for Lincoln, the Civil War proved a demanding and brutal school. Nevertheless, Lincoln’s outstanding leadership through this, the most painful period of America’s history meant that the country was transformed. Transformed from a mere collection of states, (some of which embraced slavery) to a country that had, in his own words, “a new birth of freedom”
Lincoln had saved the Union and by also issuing the Proclamation of Emancipation, had signalled that America was to change forever. At the same time, this signal ignited the passions of Southern sympathiser and assassin of Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth. By April 1865, secession was gone, slavery was gone, but so too was arguably America’s greatest president and leader.

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