

Story by:
Olivia Caisley

A NEW SENSE OF BELIEF



Above: Former soldier and now businessman Tyrone Gawthorne, who will compete in the Sydney Invictus Games. Left: Former serviceman Gareth Desmond, who trained and deployed with Gawthorne, now manages the Body Beyond Belief gym in Cairns



Leadership Secrets of the Australian Army

Brigadier Nicholas Jans (Ret'd), OAM
208pp, Allen & Unwin, \$29.99

"It's the backswing, stupid." Army brigadier Nicholas Jans OAM (Ret'd) uses the golfing metaphor to hit home his point that leadership culture is the foundation of organisational performance. In his book he distils the leadership "secrets" of the Australian Army, which "consistently punches above its weight", into a simple formula he calls the 3Rs: Representing, Relating and Running the team.

The secrets, according to Jans, aren't secrets because the military wants it that way; the principles behind the culture seem so self-evident to those within it that they are rarely explained or analysed. Civilian misperception of an authoritarian rather than authoritative style is part of the reason so many valuable lessons go ignored. Jans debunks this misperception with another fitting metaphor: the military is like "a jazz band in which a handful of players works with — as opposed to work to — a central theme".

This is my experience too. As a former army captain who joined out of school, I am aware of how rare army leadership practices are in "civvy street". One such practice is the importance of explaining "why" before "what", which Jans says is a fundamental part of basic army communication protocol. It is based on the premise that "it is very difficult to get serious buy-in from intelligent people if they do not have a clear understanding of the bigger picture".

Jans weaves anecdotes from former and current serving members with well-researched leadership theory and an easy to follow formula. Leadership examples that are both uniquely Australian and uniquely military give colour to the theoretical underpinnings. A warrant officer recalls a sign behind a superior's desk reading "GOYA" that served as a constant reminder to him to Get off Your Arse. The message was clear: forget your in-tray and get out there and interact with your people. A national serviceman takes a practice from his Vietnam days of walking around the gun batteries talking to the soldiers into the corporate office, with an equivalent daily commitment. The essence is practical and egalitarian leadership.

The theory and practices in Jans' pages are equally relevant at both an individual and organisational level. For individuals the lessons are wide ranging and the 3Rs model serves as a "mental app" for day-to-day self-monitoring, reflection, self-development and self-critiquing. At the organisational level, Jans emphasises the importance of sowing the leadership seed early, deeply and widely because far too many organisations leave it too late.

Perhaps the most pleasing element is the broad applicability and proven effectiveness of the practices in Jans' guide. He first tested the core principles in a seminar he ran as part of an executive MBA at Sydney University. He stress-tested it shortly after in a community leadership context as he helped his home town of Marysville in Victoria's Central Highlands recover from the Black Saturday fires.

Lieutenant General David Morrison AO, former Australian of the Year and Chief of the Army, offers this endorsement of the book: "Read it and be wise".

Royalties from sales of *Leadership Secrets of the Australian Army* will go to *Soldier On*, the support services provider for national service personnel.

Sam Duncan

Invictus athlete and entrepreneur Tyrone Gawthorne credits his Australian army career with giving him the entrepreneurial nous and drive he needed to launch three thriving businesses.

Since being medically discharged in 2011, Gawthorne has overcome physical injury and post traumatic stress disorder to open a gym, Body Beyond Belief, based in Cairns. He's also opened two supplement shops and a hotel in Townsville.

Gawthorne's work in the fitness and hospitality industries may be a world away from his time as a rifleman in the Australian Defence Force, where he made three tours to East Timor and two to Afghanistan, but the mental fortitude he developed along the way has given him the drive to succeed in such varied roles.

"When we first opened the gym we worked 12-hour days, seven days a week for 12 months," Gawthorne says. "My army training meant those hours weren't as difficult as they could have been."

While Gawthorne admits that he misses the camaraderie, focus and loyalty of the military lifestyle, he has found new strength in the fitness industry and through his involvement in the Invictus Games. "It's a completely different life," he says. "I miss everything about the military lifestyle, but my life is more balanced now."

The ex-soldier's new lease on life has even inspired him to offer support to other recently discharged members of the ADF community. "A lot of veterans volunteer at our shops because they like to help out," Gawthorne says. "It helps them transition from military life because they're still surrounded by army fellas and it helps them build up those social interactions again."

So deep are Gawthorne's army connections that he continues to work with his friend and former serviceman colleague, Gareth

Desmond, who is the manager at Body Beyond Belief. The former housemates, who were deployed overseas and posted to the same battalion together, are also competing in the same event, Powerlifting, at the Games in Sydney next month.

Gawthorne, who will also compete in discus shotput at his second Games, says it's been a challenge juggling his intensive training schedule with his relatively new businesses. So jam-packed is his schedule he's speaking to *The Deal* while on the 350km journey from his Townsville hotel to his Cairns gym.

"My initial interest with Invictus was to set a benchmark to other members of the ex-army community so other people would give it a crack as well," he says. "It's so important to me because I can see the change in myself and the difference it has made to other veterans, who may be quite introverted and struggling. Some can't get out of bed each day so witnessing their progress has been really inspiring."

As one who has successfully managed the tricky transition from soldier to a civilian, Gawthorne's main advice to newly discharged veterans is "don't give up".

"Set yourself a goal and work towards it every day," he says. "You can overcome injury and mental illness as long as you keep working on it."

Gawthorne believes the ADF needs to do more to support its soldiers by implementing a "transition force" to make the change as seamless as possible.

"I'm looking forward to these games and wish my teammates the best of luck," he says of the upcoming event. "It really puts it in perspective because there are a lot of people out there who are in positions far worse than me."