

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN'S MANUAL FOR EXECUTIVES

Abraham Lincoln recognized the magnitude of the task before him in 1861 when he left Springfield, Illinois, for the presidential chair at the nation's capitol. He said at this time, "I now leave not knowing whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington."

The task proved to be greater than he anticipated, but he so conducted the affairs of state that the Union was preserved and international relations were harmonized. Some of the axioms which formed the basis of his executive philosophy are found in these excerpts from his writings:

Every man is proud of what he does well.

I need success more than I need sympathy.

The case cannot be gained by much talking.

Other means may succeed, this could not fail.

I say try, if we never try we shall never succeed.

Important principles may and must be inflexible.

Half-finished work generally proves to be labor lost.

The severest justice may not always be the best policy.

As our case is new, so must we think anew and act anew.

Having made the attempt you must succeed, must is the word.

Every particular case will have its modifying circumstances.

You cannot fail if you resolutely determine that you will not.

Suspicion and jealousy never did help any man in any situation.

I shall adopt new views as fast as they appear to be true views.

Exercise your own judgment and do right for the public interest.

Be sure to put your feet in the right place and then stand firm.

Determine the thing can and shall be done, then we shall find the way.

Success does not so much depend on external help as on self reliance.

We cannot succeed unless we try, and if we think with care we can succeed.

The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion.

He can compress the most words into the smallest ideas of any man I ever met.

Let no feeling of discouragement prey upon you and in the end you are to succeed.

You have confidence in yourself which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality.

Unless among those deficient of intellect everybody you trade with makes something.

It is a difficult role and so much greater will be the honor if you perform it well.

I know you are dissatisfied, which pains me very much, but I wish not to be argued with further.

I give you all I can and act on the presumption that you will do the best you can with what you have.

When you lack interest in the case, the job will very likely lack skill and diligence in performance.

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.

The leading rule for a man of every calling is diligence; never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.

In law it is good policy never to plead what you need not, lest you oblige yourself to prove what you cannot.

He is doing good serving in our cause and he will ask nothing not needed and misapply nothing received by him.

Tell him when he starts to put it through—not to be writing or telegraphing back here, but to put it through.

I hope to stand "firm enough" to not go backward, and yet not go forward fast enough to wreck the country's cause.

He who does something at the head of one regiment will eclipse him who does nothing at the head of a hundred.

It may as well be understood, once for all, that I shall not surrender this game leaving any available card unplayed.

Whatever piece of business you have in hand, before stopping do all the labor pertaining to it which can then be done.

I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be right and wise.

We know that you will not purposely make an unreasonable request, nor persist in one after it shall appear to be such.

Much—perhaps all—depends upon the celerity with which you can execute it. Put the utmost speed into it. Do not loose a minute.

I shall not try to read, much less answer all criticism of me and my associates. Else this office might as well be closed for any other business.

Without claiming to be your superior, which I do not, my position enables me to understand my duty in all these matters better than you possibly can, and I hope you do not doubt my integrity.

He must occasionally say, or seem to say, "by the Eternal." "I take the responsibility." These phrases were the "Sampson's locks" of General Jackson, and we dare not disregard the lessons of experience.

If you and he would use the same frankness to one another, and to me, that I use to both of you, there would be no difficulty. I need and must have the professional skill of both, and yet these suspicions deprive me of both.