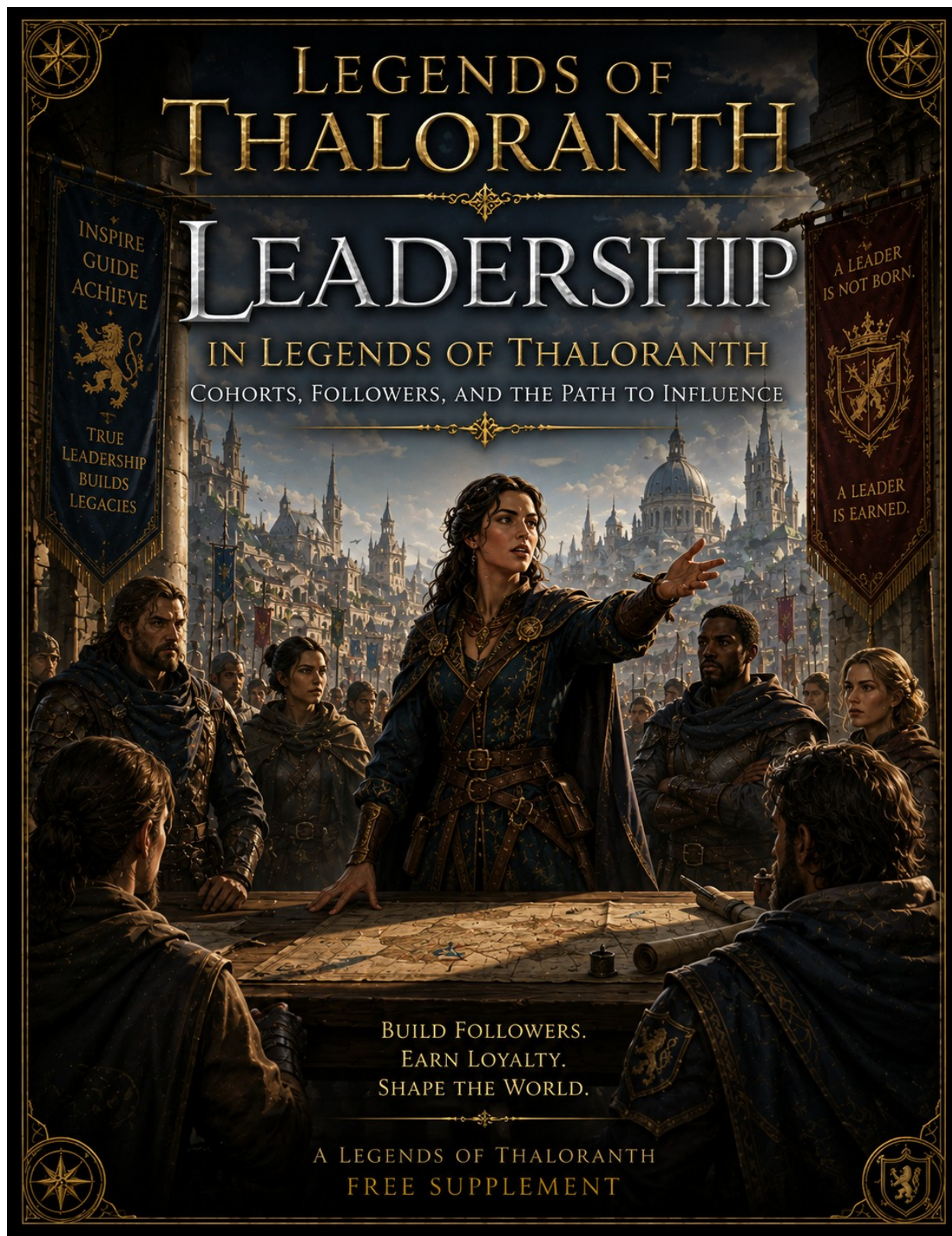




LEADERSHIP IN LEGENDS OF THALORANTH

Cohorts, Followers, and the Path to Influence

A Legends of Thaloranth Free Supplement

This guide introduces the Leadership skill system in Legends of Thaloranth: how it works, what makes it different from leadership systems in other RPGs, and what investing in it makes possible over the course of a campaign. The complete skill framework, Cohort construction guidance, and the full Prestigious Path mechanical content are documented in the Player's Guide and Game Master's Guide.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Leadership as a Skill, Not a Title.....	3
How Leadership Works.....	4
What Leadership Is Not.....	5
Sub-Skills and Specializations.....	5
Inspiring Allies.....	5
Commanding Followers.....	6
Strategic Decision-Making.....	7
Recruiting Cohorts and Followers.....	8
Followers.....	9
What Builds and Weakens Loyalty.....	10
Cohorts.....	11
The Weight of a Cohort.....	11
Building a Cohort.....	12
The Legacy Rule.....	12
Advanced Leadership: Guild Networks and Political Influence.....	13
Three Stages of Leadership Development.....	13
Stage One: Local Recognition.....	13
Stage Two: Regional Network Building.....	14
Stage Three: Political Influence and Power Projection.....	14
The Four Prestigious Paths.....	15
Where to Go Next.....	17
The Player's Guide.....	17
The Game Master's Guide.....	17
Legacies of Valor.....	17

INTRODUCTION: LEADERSHIP AS A SKILL, NOT A TITLE

She had not asked them to follow her.

That was the thing Mira kept coming back to, afterward. She had not given a speech. She had not invoked rank or obligation or the weight of what they were fighting for. She had simply made a decision in a moment where no one else was making one, and she had made it clearly enough that three people who had every reason to run chose instead to hold the line with her.

Later, when the dust had settled and someone asked how she had done it, she did not know what to say.

“I just told them what I saw,” she said finally. “And what I thought we could do about it.”

The soldier who had asked her nodded slowly.

“That’s it,” he said. “That’s the whole thing.”

Most roleplaying games treat leadership as an attribute or a class feature, something a character either has or does not have, measured in a modifier that applies to social checks and then mostly stays out of the way. The party has a face character. The face character leads. Everyone else follows.

Legends of Thaloranth treats leadership differently. Leadership is a skill, a specific, learnable capability governed by the Social stat, developed through investment in sub-skills and specializations, and expressed not through a modifier to social rolls but through what the character can actually do in the world.

A character with significant Leadership investment is not simply better at convincing people. They have a retinue: followers who handle logistics, gather intelligence, and extend the party's operational reach. They have a Cohort: a specific person who has chosen to stand beside them, not as a retainer but as a genuine companion with their own history and stakes in what the character is building. And as that investment deepens, they begin to move through guild networks and institutional relationships at a level that shapes how power works in Vaeloranth, not just how the party experiences it.

This supplement explains how that system works and what makes it distinctive. The pitch for a prospective player is simple: if you have ever wanted to play a character who builds something that matters, who inspires not through magic but through presence, decision, and the specific gravity of someone who has earned the right to lead, this is the skill that makes that character possible.

HOW LEADERSHIP WORKS

Leadership is governed by the Social stat. All Leadership checks use Social as their base, plus the bonus from the relevant Sub-Skill and Specialization if invested. The GM sets the DC based on what is being attempted, who is being led, and the conditions under which leadership is being exercised.

The Base Skill represents foundational leadership capability: enough to give effective direction to a small group, make basic strategic decisions under pressure, and be taken seriously when attempting to inspire or recruit. It is the prerequisite for the Cohort and Follower system, and it opens access to all four Sub-Skills.

What distinguishes leadership checks from other social checks is what they are actually measuring. A Persuasion check measures the character's ability to change someone's mind in a single interaction. A Leadership check measures their ability to sustain collective action under pressure, to keep people moving toward a shared objective when everything around them is arguing for the opposite.

What Leadership Is Not

Leadership does not replace the other social skills. A character with high Leadership investment who has not invested in Persuasion cannot negotiate a treaty. A character with Deception investment but no Leadership cannot rally a frightened group. The social skills are distinct tools for distinct situations. Leadership's specific domain is collective action, sustained direction, and the management of people who have chosen to follow rather than individuals who need to be convinced.

Leadership is also not command authority. A character with Leadership 1 and a formal military commission is not a better leader than a character with Leadership 8 and no title. The skill measures earned capability, not institutional rank. The two can exist together, and when they do, they compound, but the system does not conflate them.

SUB-SKILLS AND SPECIALIZATIONS

Leadership has four Sub-Skills, each providing +1 to relevant checks, and four Specializations that each add +2 stacking with their parent Sub-Skill for a combined +3. The Sub-Skill framework structures what a character's leadership capability actually consists of, which situations they are built for and which ones still challenge them.

Inspiring Allies

The capability of boosting morale, calming panic, and steadying nerves in tense or dangerous moments. This is leadership at its most immediate, the voice that cuts through chaos and reminds people what they are capable of. Inspiring Allies applies to all checks involving the raising of morale, the calming of fear, and the immediate inspiration of allies in difficult moments.

This Sub-Skill does not require the character to have Followers or a Cohort. It functions in any scene where the character is attempting to affect the emotional state and resolve of people around them, including party members, allied NPCs, and anyone whose courage or commitment is the question at hand.

Difficulty	DC	Inspiring Allies
Easy	5	Calm nerves in a tense but manageable situation.
Moderate	10	Rally allies who are genuinely frightened.
Challenging	15	Inspire a group facing serious danger.
Difficult	20	Steel hearts facing overwhelming odds.

Specialization, Master Orator: Your words carry weight in desperate moments. The Master Orator has developed the specific capability of delivering inspiration that holds, not just raising morale in the moment but sustaining it through sustained pressure. +2 stacking with Inspiring Allies for a combined +3.

Commanding Followers

The capability of directing groups through simple tasks, complex formations, and the sustained coordination that turns a collection of individuals into a functioning unit. Essential for anyone leading a retinue or expedition. Commanding Followers applies to all checks involving the direction of groups through coordinated action.

As Leadership investment deepens and the character's retinue grows to include Followers from multiple guild affiliations, Commanding Followers becomes the Sub-Skill that manages the specific challenge of coordinating people with different working methods, professional loyalties, and organizational cultures. The DC framework scales accordingly.

Difficulty	DC	Commanding Followers
Easy	5	Basic orders clearly communicated to a willing group.
Moderate	10	Coordinated action across a group under mild pressure.
Challenging	15	Complex maneuvers in difficult or dangerous conditions.
Difficult	20	Directing followers through dangerous missions in adverse conditions.

Difficulty	DC	Cross-Guild Coordination
Single guild	10	Coordinating followers from the same guild or organization.
Allied guilds	15	Coordinating followers from organizations with existing relationships.
Neutral guilds	20	Coordinating followers from organizations with no prior relationship.
Rival guilds	25	Coordinating followers from organizations with competing interests.

Specialization, Tactical Commander: Your voice in coordinated action is decisive. The Tactical Commander has developed the specific capability of directing groups through complex, high-pressure coordinated action with the precision and clarity that turns plans into outcomes. +2 stacking with Commanding Followers for a combined +3.

Strategic Decision-Making

The capability of planning tactics, structuring defenses, choosing routes, and making the high-pressure decisions that determine how a situation develops rather than just responding to it. This is leadership applied to time, the ability to think further ahead than the immediate moment and position a group for outcomes rather than reactions.

Strategic Decision-Making is the Sub-Skill most relevant to the planning phases of campaigns: the session before an assault, the negotiation over routes and timing, the analysis of competing threats and which one to address first. It is also the Sub-Skill that governs the character's contribution to Fields of Valor engagements when the campaign enters war.

Difficulty	DC	Strategic Decision-Making
Easy	5	Straightforward tactical decisions with clear information.
Moderate	10	Planning under moderate uncertainty and time pressure.
Challenging	15	Complex multi-factor decisions with incomplete information.
Difficult	20	Strategic planning in crisis conditions where the cost of error is severe.

Specialization, Grand Strategist: Your plans account for contingencies most overlook. The Grand Strategist has developed the specific capability of multi-level planning, thinking across timescales simultaneously, factoring in the second and third-order consequences of decisions, and positioning their group for outcomes that simpler strategic thinking cannot anticipate. +2 stacking with Strategic Decision-Making for a combined +3.

Recruiting Cohorts and Followers

The capability of bringing new allies into your orbit, identifying potential Cohorts and Followers, making the case for why they should commit, and building the relationships that sustain loyalty over time. This Sub-Skill governs both basic recruitment and the guild-specific recruitment that advanced leadership investment makes possible.

Basic recruitment attracts individuals. Advanced recruitment, available to characters who have invested deeply in this Sub-Skill and developed their Leadership to the point of guild-level engagement, attracts institutions, guild members who bring not just their individual skills but the networks, relationships, and organizational standing of their entire guild affiliation.

Difficulty	DC	Basic Recruitment
Easy	5	Recruiting someone who already wants to join.
Moderate	10	Recruiting someone open but uncommitted.
Challenging	15	Recruiting someone with reservations or competing obligations.
Difficult	20	Recruiting someone from a hostile or rival organization.

Difficulty	DC	Guild-Specific Recruitment
DC 10	—	Apprentices and journeymen with standard guild training.
DC 15	—	Masters and specialists with significant expertise.
DC 20	—	Guild officers with access to guild resources and networks.
DC 25	—	Members from rival or traditionally hostile guilds.

Specialization, Charismatic Leader: You draw others to your banner even in difficult circumstances. The Charismatic Leader has developed the specific capability of making the case for commitment in conditions that would deter most recruiters, recruiting across guild lines, recruiting from hostile organizations, and maintaining the ongoing relationships that sustain a large and diverse retinue. +2 stacking with Recruiting Cohorts and Followers for a combined +3.

FOLLOWERS

A character with the Leadership Base Skill commands a number of Followers equal to their Leadership skill total multiplied by five. A character with Leadership 3 commands fifteen Followers. A character with Leadership 6 commands thirty. As Leadership investment increases, the retinue grows, not because the character has recruited more people in any given session, but because their demonstrated capability sustains a larger circle of committed attachment.

Followers are retainers, guards, assistants, porters, acolytes, apprentices, guild specialists, and anyone else who has chosen to attach themselves to the character's cause or enterprise. They are not frontline combatants unless specifically ordered into that role, and ordering them into danger has real consequences for loyalty. Their value is functional: they carry gear, keep watch, maintain camp, gather information, run messages, manage logistics, and absorb the organizational burden of running an expedition or enterprise. A party with Followers operates differently than a party without them, in ways that accumulate across a campaign rather than producing dramatic single-session effects.

Followers are not replaced automatically. A Follower lost to poor leadership, unnecessary risk, or broken promises does not simply reappear. Rebuilding a depleted retinue requires new investment in Recruiting Cohorts and Followers, at DCs that reflect the character's current standing with the kinds of people they are trying to recruit. The system tracks loyalty as a real thing that can be spent or built, not a background assumption.

What Builds and Weakens Loyalty

The following considerations are tools for GMs and players to orient how Follower loyalty functions in play. They are not a mechanical checklist, they are the kinds of things that matter, drawn from the Player's Guide's Follower framework, presented here as guidance for running Followers as people rather than resources.

What strengthens loyalty

- Public recognition of Followers' contributions
- Fair treatment and equitable share of rewards
- Being trusted with real responsibility
- Clear direction and consistent leadership
- Feeling part of something larger than themselves
- Seeing the character keep their word under pressure

What weakens loyalty

- Witnessing cruelty or unnecessary harm
- Lack of clear direction when direction is needed
- Broken promises, especially publicly
- Being treated as expendable
- Dangerous risks that could have been avoided
- Watching the character hesitate at a moment of decision

Followers whose loyalty has been built over time will do things for the character that newly recruited Followers will not. The retinue that has been treated well through hard situations is a genuinely different resource than the one that was assembled last session. The Player's Guide's Follower Quick Generation provides additional considerations for establishing individual Followers' backgrounds, motivations, and personal investment in the character's work.

COHORTS

A Cohort is earned, not bought. A character gains their first Cohort when they have invested six points in the Leadership skill. This is not an automatic mechanical unlock, it is the threshold at which the character has demonstrated the kind of sustained, invested leadership that draws a specific kind of person: someone who wants not just to follow but to stand beside.

A Cohort is not a Follower. They are not part of the retinue count. They are a specific person who has chosen this relationship with full understanding of what it involves, a genuine companion with their own personality, history, capabilities, and personal stakes in what the character is doing. The GM designs the Cohort with input from the player, and their background, capabilities, and personal investment in the relationship are established through play rather than through a character creation process.

The distinction matters. A Follower provides functional support. A Cohort provides something harder to define and more important: the specific presence of someone who has invested in the character's success at a level that changes how the character experiences what they are doing. A party with a Cohort attached to one of its members has a different internal dynamic than a party without one. The Cohort has opinions. They remember things. They have relationships with the party's NPCs that exist independently of the player character. They are a character in the campaign, and they behave like one.

The Weight of a Cohort

If a Cohort dies, they cannot be replaced.

This is intentional, and it is worth understanding why. A Cohort represents a specific relationship, the particular person who chose this particular character at this particular point in the campaign. That relationship cannot be replicated by recruiting a different person who happens to be equally capable. The loss of a Cohort is a narrative event with real weight, not a resource depletion that can be managed through reinvestment.

Characters who treat their Cohorts as expendable, ordering them into danger that could be absorbed by the broader retinue, using them as tactical resources without regard for their safety, will find the system responding to those choices. Not through mechanical punishment, but through the specific way that a world populated by people responds to someone who treats relationships as tools.

The character who has lost a Cohort carries that loss forward. It is part of their story.

Building a Cohort

The Player's Guide provides the framework for Cohort construction. What follows here are the considerations that make a Cohort feel like a person rather than a companion NPC.

A Cohort needs

- A reason they chose this character specifically, not leadership in general
- Something they want that the character can help them achieve
- Something they will not do regardless of what the character asks
- A relationship with at least one other party member that exists independently of the character
- Something they are carrying that the character does not yet know about

The last item is the most important. A Cohort who has no secrets is a Cohort who exists entirely in relation to the player character. A Cohort who has their own unresolved things, a past obligation, a personal fear, something they saw once that changed how they understand the world, is a Cohort who feels like a person. That is the difference between a companion and a companion who is actually interesting to play alongside.

THE LEGACY RULE

When a character with Leadership dies, their Cohort is the natural heir to their story.

A Cohort who has trained beside their leader, carried their burdens, and witnessed their choices is already a character in the world, not a bystander but a participant with their own developed relationships, their own understanding of the campaign's stakes, and their own investment in its outcome. As such, the Cohort may immediately step into the role of player character without interruption. The campaign continues. The relationships persist. The story finds its thread in someone who was already part of it.

The Legacy Rule serves three purposes. Narrative continuity: the campaign does not stall or stumble when a character dies. Emotional weight: a Cohort who assumes leadership carries the fallen character's memory, and their motivations shift accordingly, what they

are doing is no longer simply their own agenda, it is also the fulfillment of a relationship they did not expect to outlive. Practical play: because Legends of Thaloranth is classless and skill-based, the Cohort is fully capable of taking center stage from the moment they do so, without needing catch-up mechanics or adjustment sessions.

If the fallen character invested heavily in Leadership, the Cohort inherits a reduced Follower count, typically half, representing loyalty that lingers but has been shaken by the loss of its original source. As the new player character invests in Leadership themselves, the retinue stabilizes and grows. What was built does not disappear. It waits for someone to carry it forward.

The Leader's Path does not end with a death. It changes hands.

ADVANCED LEADERSHIP: GUILD NETWORKS AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Characters who invest deeply in Leadership, particularly those who develop the Recruiting Cohorts and Followers Sub-Skill to its Specialization, gain access to a more sophisticated tier of capability that extends beyond the management of a personal retinue into the larger systems of guild networks, domain operations, and political influence that shape Vaeloranth at a structural level.

The transition from basic to advanced leadership is not marked by a single threshold. It is a gradual expansion of what the character's leadership investment makes possible, from individual recruitment to guild-level recruitment, from directing a retinue to coordinating across institutional affiliations, from being known and trusted locally to having relationships that operate at the level of Thaloranth's major political structures.

Three Stages of Leadership Development

The Player's Guide identifies three stages through which sustained Leadership investment naturally progresses. These are not mechanical tiers, they are descriptions of what deep investment in this skill produces in a living campaign world.

Stage One: Local Recognition

The character is known and trusted within their immediate community. Their word carries weight. Their Followers are reliable and have been with them long enough to have histories together. Their Cohort is established and loyal. At this stage, Leadership

investment has produced a capable, cohesive retinue and the reputation that comes from being someone who leads effectively in difficult circumstances.

Stage Two: Regional Network Building

The character has cultivated relationships across multiple guilds and institutions. They can target specific guilds for recruitment, bringing in Followers who carry not just their individual skills but their guild affiliations and the networks those affiliations connect to. A Follower from the Scribes' Guild brings legal knowledge and access to official documentation processes. A Follower from the Merchants' Guild brings connections to the entire commercial infrastructure of Radia. A Follower from the Thieves' Guild, known in Radia as The Star, brings information networks and capabilities that no amount of conventional recruitment can replicate.

At this stage the character also begins to cultivate Guild Cohorts: figures who represent entire guild interests rather than simply their own individual capabilities. A Guild Cohort brings institutional knowledge, established relationships, and the authority to act on behalf of their guild in ways that a standard Cohort cannot.

The guilds available for targeted recruitment in Thaloranth include the Trade and Professional Guilds (the Merchants' Guild, the Stonewrights' Guild, the Blacksmiths and Forgers' Circle, the Apothecaries and Alchemists' Guild), the Civic and Service Guilds (the Scribes' Guild, the Teamsters' Brotherhood, the Lamplighters' Guild), and the Cultural and Shadow Guilds (the Musicians' Circle, the Thieves' Guild, the Bounty Hunters' and Trackers' Guild). Each provides unique capabilities that cannot be replicated through other means.

Stage Three: Political Influence and Power Projection

The character has become a genuine political actor, someone whose relationships, resources, and reputation allow them to influence events at the level of Thaloranth's major institutions. Council of Lords dynamics. Noble house relationships. Guild coalition building. At this stage, leadership investment has produced not just a retinue but a position in the world's power structure that the world responds to.

This is the stage at which the four Prestigious Paths become available, the formal institutional recognitions that mark a character whose leadership capability has reached the level that Thaloranth's most significant organizations are willing to formally acknowledge and incorporate.

THE FOUR PRESTIGIOUS PATHS

Prestigious Paths are not achievements unlocked. They are recognitions extended, the formal acknowledgment by an institution of sufficient authority that a character has met a standard worth marking. For leadership-focused characters, four Prestigious Paths represent the specialized directions that deep Leadership investment can lead.

These paths do not replace standard Paths. A character who earns a Prestigious Path retains everything they have built through standard Path investment. The Prestigious Path adds a layer of specific institutional capability on top of that foundation. Their capabilities are fixed at the point of earning, they do not have a Path Points system of their own.

The full mechanical content of each Prestigious Path is documented in the Game Master's Guide. What follows is what a player needs to know: what each path is, what it requires, and what it opens.

Spymaster

Senior intelligence operatives within the Council of Lords' shadow apparatus.

Skill Requirements: Investigation 6 points. Deception 6 points. Leadership 5 points. Stealth 4 points.

Entry Conditions: Must have successfully run an intelligence operation that produced actionable results recognized by the Council's apparatus. Must have established at least one active intelligence network with two or more functioning assets.

What It Opens: Recognition within the Council of Lords' intelligence structure and the specific capabilities, information networks, shadow operations, and the institutional backing of Thaloranth's highest political authority, that senior operatives develop.

Crown Envoy

Formally credentialed representatives of the Office of the Herald, Thaloranth's diplomatic body.

Skill Requirements: Persuasion 6 points. Etiquette 6 points. History 5 points. Lore 4 points.

Entry Conditions: Must have successfully brokered a formal agreement between two organizations, noble houses, or political entities. Must hold an active diplomatic credential issued by the Office of the Herald.

What It Opens: Full standing as a credentialed diplomat of Thaloranth and the specific capabilities, negotiation, institutional authority, and the political backing of the Crown's diplomatic apparatus, that formal diplomatic service develops.

Economic Strategist

Senior operatives of the Merchants' Guild of Radia whose understanding of Vaeloranth's commercial landscape operates at the level of market-shaping rather than individual transaction.

Skill Requirements: Persuasion 5 points. Investigation 5 points. Leadership 5 points. Crafting 4 points.

Entry Conditions: Must have successfully managed a significant commercial or domain enterprise for at least one full year. Must have established recognized trade relationships with at least two guilds acknowledged by the Merchants' Guild.

What It Opens: Recognition within the Merchants' Guild's inner circle and the specific capabilities, market influence, financial networks, and the commercial intelligence of Radia's dominant trade institution, that senior guild strategists develop.

Military Leader

Commissioned officers of the Crown's military command structure who have demonstrated the capability to lead military forces at scale.

Skill Requirements: Melee Combat 5 points. Leadership 6 points. Engineering 4 points. History 4 points.

Entry Conditions: Must have commanded a military force of at least ten in a genuine engagement. Must hold a recognized military commission issued by a noble house, the Crown's military command, or an equivalent institution with recognized martial authority.

What It Opens: A recognized military commission within Thaloranth's martial structure and the specific capabilities, strategic command, military organization, and the institutional backing of the Crown's forces, that commissioned officers develop.

Earning a Prestigious Path is a character moment, not a mechanical transaction. The session in which a character is formally recognized by the Council of Lords' intelligence apparatus, credentialed by the Office of the Herald, inducted into the Merchants' Guild's inner circle, or commissioned by the Crown's military command is a session worth marking. These moments are the world telling a character who they have become.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

The Player's Guide

The complete Leadership skill framework, including the full Sub-Skill and Specialization reference, the Cohort and Follower system in full, the Follower Quick Generation tools, and the complete Prestigious Path entry requirements for all four paths documented above. Leadership is part of the broader Social skill chapter, which covers every social skill in the same depth and explains how they interact without replacing each other.

The Game Master's Guide

The mechanical capabilities that each Prestigious Path provides once earned. The GMG's Chapter Six covers all Prestigious Paths in the format the GM needs: institutional context, specific capabilities, bonuses, and guidance for running each path in play. If you are a GM whose player is pursuing one of the four leadership Prestigious Paths, this is where the complete mechanical content lives.

Legacies of Valor

The intersection of Leadership investment and domain ownership is where the leadership system reaches its greatest depth. Guild Cohorts managing domain operations, the Legacy Rule applied to domain succession, and the advanced cross-system connections between leadership networks, domain income, and Fields of Valor battlefield performance are all documented in Legacies of Valor. For campaigns that combine Leadership investment with domain ownership, and most campaigns that go deep into one will eventually encounter the other, Legacies of Valor is where the complete integrated framework lives.

The complete Leadership skill system is documented in the Legends of Thaloranth Player's Guide and Game Master's Guide, available as part of the Legends of Thaloranth Core Line at thaloranthpublishingllc.com. Legacies of Valor is available as part of the Valor Line.

Legends of Thaloranth is published by Thaloranth Publishing, Roanoke, Virginia • thaloranthpublishingllc.com

© Keith Burns and Thaloranth Publishing. All rights reserved.