

# **The Officer/NCO Relationship**

## **Words of Wisdom and Tips for Success from Senior Officers and NCOs Including:**

GEN Creighton Abrams	Napoleon
CSM Jerry Alley	GEN George Patton
GA Omar Bradley	GEN Colin Powell
Tom Clancy	GEN Dennis Reimer
GEN Bruce Clarke	GEN Bernard Rogers
LTG John Dubia	The Sergeants Major of the Army
GEN Frederick Franks	CSM Jimmie Spencer
CSM John Gillis	GEN Donn Starry
CSM George Horvath	SGM John Stepanek
GEN Harold Johnson	MG Frederick von Steuben
LTG Claudia Kennedy	GEN Gordon Sullivan
GA George Marshall	GEN William Vessey
Bill Mauldin	GEN Carl Vuono
CSM James McKinney	GEN George Washington
GEN Jack Merritt	GEN John Wickham
GEN Edward Meyer	

**and many more**

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*Foreword to the reader:*

In this book senior commissioned and noncommissioned leaders talk to you about officer/NCO relationships, and share their knowledge and experience with you. By building on their thoughts you can increase the effectiveness of your unit and your own officer/NCO relationships. This book includes quotations from the 16th century to the present day, demonstrating how important this relationship has been, and continues to be, to military leaders.

Chapters 1 through 3 address three critical officer/NCO relationships: the Platoon Leader and the Platoon Sergeant, the Company Commander and the First Sergeant, and the Battalion Commander and the Command Sergeant Major. Though the quotations focus primarily on those relationships, the thoughts and perspectives are useful to officers and NCOs at every level. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss ways that officers and NCOs can strengthen their team, and summarize the importance of this key relationship.

The officer/NCO team forms the cornerstone of our Army. We hope that this book will help you to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the importance of this team to mission accomplishment and the Army's effectiveness.

You can get a copy of this book in Microsoft Word by contacting LTC Dean Mattson at DSN 227-1365 or (703) 697-1365, or by E-Mail to [MATTSDE@HQDA.ARMY.MIL](mailto:MATTSDE@HQDA.ARMY.MIL). Two other Information Management Support Center books are also available on disk: *The Chiefs of Staff, United States Army: On Leadership and The Profession of Arms* (General Edward C. Meyer, General John A. Wickham, General Carl E. Vuono, and General Gordon R. Sullivan); and *Command, Leadership, and Effective Staff Support: A Handbook Including Practical Ways for the Staff to Increase Support to Battalion and Company Commanders*.

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## **Foreword to the reader**

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## Platoon Leaders

A tremendous source of assistance in your learning is from your noncommissioned officers and your fellow officers.... Take advantage of that from the day that you are commissioned. It stays with you as long as you are privileged to wear the uniform.... Competence...grows from study, discipline, and plain hard work. As a young officer, you must tap one of the greatest sources of practical knowledge- the corps of noncommissioned officers that are throughout our ranks- sergeants of unmatched ability and dedication. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, pp. 71, 262

That period of time when we served as company commanders and platoon leaders at the cutting edge of the United States Army...is really the best. It's that exciting time when you're developing personally, the time when you have the opportunity to work hand-in-glove with young Soldiers, and of course, the old NCOs, who teach you at their knee or with the tip of their boot-whatever way suits best. -GEN Edward C. Meyer, *E. C. Meyer*, 1983, pp. 83-84

The care and cleaning of lieutenants is NCO business. -GEN Frederick J. Kroesen, in "For NCO's: Leadership, Hard Work and TRAINING." *ARMY*, Oct 1980, p. 24

What a hard time young officers of the army would sometimes have but for the old sergeants! I have pitied from the bottom of my heart volunteer officers whom I have seen starting out, even in the midst of war, with perfectly raw regiments, and not even one old sergeant to teach them anything. No country ought to be so cruel to its soldiers as that. -LTG John M. Schofield, 1897, *Forty-Six Years in the Army*, p. 18

A major factor for success is how you get along with others, and this permeates every rank Army-wide.... This emphasizes the need for mutual respect, mutual professional competence, and reciprocal good will- and for both sides to take into consideration that the problem requires special efforts when young officers are inexperienced.... The sergeants in your unit can be a new lieutenant's best professional friends- while both you and they observe proper military courtesy, with mutual respect for each other. -MG Aubrey S. Newman, *Follow Me II*, 1992, pp. 17, 63

[Platoon Leaders:] Look at yourself from [your Platoon Sergeant's] viewpoint and seek to be the kind of Platoon Leader that you would like to have if you were the Platoon Sergeant.... With regard to the relationship between yourself, your Platoon Sergeant, and your noncommissioned officers: if you do not have a copy of [TC 22-6, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*,

get one. This manual] identifies the place of the noncommissioned officer in the United States Army. There are chapters on leadership, authority, the officer chain of command, the NCO support channel, duties and responsibilities of the noncommissioned officer, and the relationship between noncommissioned and commissioned officers. It is specifically written for the noncommissioned officer, but you should read this manual, comprehend it....

Respect your First Sergeant. Do not hang around his office, do not lean on his desk, and do not sit in his chair. Remember, the First Sergeant is the top noncommissioned officer in your company and deserves your respect. Listen to him. He can teach you much. -MG Clay T. Buckingham, "To Second Lieutenants...and to All." *Engineer*, Spring 1981, pp. 11-12

Without NCOs we would all have to learn the hard way. What I learned from the first NCO I worked with, SFC Alfonso M. Rodriguez, has been of great value to me throughout my entire career. From him I learned a lot about soldiers, about my job, about being an officer. I cannot emphasize enough the value to me that he was a man of integrity. -COL Ward B. Nickisch, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number

Most NCOs accept, as an unwritten duty, the responsibility to instruct novice second lieutenants but they do so only when the student is willing. -COL Griffin N. Dodge, "Lessons from a Mess Sergeant Encourage Dedication, Caring." *ARMY*, Jan 1986, p. 17

Ask old soldiers, especially noncommissioned officers, concerning matters you do not understand.... Consult them about different matters. -*Officers' Manual*, 1906, pp. 34, 177

LTs need to listen to their sergeants because the sergeant has *been there*. -LTC Jim Hawkins, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number

Sergeants and lieutenants must have an understanding of each other's leadership background. There must be a shared knowledge of training background and thought process. -LTC Arthur A. Schulcz, in "Developing Leadership." *Soldiers*, Jul 1984, p. 24

When you join your organization you will find there a willing body of men who ask from you nothing more than the qualities that will command their respect, their loyalty, and their obedience.... Commissions will not make you leaders; they will merely make you officers. They will place you in a position where you can become leaders if you possess the proper attributes. -MAJ Christian Bach, address "Leadership." 1918, *Congressional Record Appendix*, Vol 88- Part 9, p. A2251

The officer/NCO relationship benefits officers at all levels, but especially junior officers. The young officer gets the benefit of 10-15 hard-earned years of experience. If we all had to climb the same promotion ladder, it would take too long to develop senior officers. But a lieutenant assigned as a platoon leader is given an experienced sergeant to help him, and all the wisdom and experience of that sergeant helps the lieutenant become an effective leader much faster than any other way. -MAJ C. I. Yamamoto, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number

What should the NCO expect of his junior officer? First, an officer is expected to be mentally awake and morally straight. He must be mindful that the needs of his men come before his own. He must have a high degree of physical and moral courage....

An officer pays his way. The cheapskate is always held in contempt. Frugality is respected, freeloading is not. Nothing angers an enlisted soldier more than to see a lieutenant slip into the messhall for a sandwich or a bowl of cereal in the morning and not pay for it. The noncommissioned officer knows that for this one of his rank would be admonished if not disciplined....

No enlisted man likes to hear an officer belittle another officer. Gossip and slander have no place among soldiers, and those engaging in these merely betray their boorish ways. An NCO knows that an officer who speaks contemptuously about his equals cannot possibly have respect for his subordinates. From experience the old soldier knows that usually this officer is trying to conceal his own inferiority and shortcomings by belittling others. The officer who talks against an enlisted man is even more despicable, because the latter is almost defenseless....

Intellectual honesty marks the good leader. As the age-old warning so aptly says, never bluff. The new officer is not expected to know everything. If you don't know a particular subject, why not admit it? It's much better to admit ignorance of a matter than to be dishonest. As someone has said, if you are honest enough to admit you don't know, you will be believed when you say you *do* know....

An officer is expected to be a man, not a griper or a whiner. Loyalty goes both upward and downward. When unpleasant tasks are handed out, the weak sister will say, "This is the Old Man's idea, not mine." An officer must be truthful to his subordinates- to their faces- and as we said earlier, not talk behind their backs. Counseling subordinates periodically and pointing out their strong points and weaknesses are important. A wise practice is to say nothing *about* a noncom that you wouldn't say *to* him. A subordinate should be the first to learn about his shortcomings, not the last. If you remember to praise in public, to punish in private, and to deal honestly, you will

gain the confidence and respect of your command. The surest way to lose an NCO forever is to belittle him before his fellows, or to chew him out in public.

During his career, an officer's subordinates will sometimes come to him for advice and guidance. He must never refuse to listen to a soldier's personal troubles.... Often a five-minute talk will solve a minor matter that if not treated immediately might mushroom....

Formally or informally, an officer will sit in judgment on many complaints and grievances of soldiers about their noncommissioned officers. All Americans seem to be inclined to side with the underdog. A word of caution: before you take action, hear both sides. A sharply honed sense of justice is an invaluable attribute. It may not make you popular, but it will make you respected....

The officer must guide his subordinates, answer their questions, and supervise them. But oversupervision indicates a basic distrust and creates undue friction. The officer must learn when it is wise to be present and when to be absent....

Three attributes are common in all good military leaders: they know and do their jobs; they see to the welfare of their men; they stand up for what is right.... The true spirit of a unit springs from a corresponding spirit in the breast of its commander- whether that command be an army or a platoon. -MAJ Herald F. Stout, "The NCO Meets His Junior Officer." *ARMY*, May 1967, pp. 66-70

During my years in the Army a good platoon sergeant always wanted his platoon leader to be the best in the Company and Battalion. The good officers listened to and learned from him or her the knowledge to be successful, and went on to be good commanders on up the line. No platoon sergeant wanted to be known as having a leader who wasn't knowledgeable, and that includes each level of NCOs at Company, Battalion, etc. The goal of a platoon sergeant is a platoon leader that he can be proud of- that he can brag about- and when this happens, any criticism of the platoon leader can be a source of heated discussion! -SMA Glen E. Morrell, letter 26 Aug 1997

As the CSM of U.S. Army Special Operations Command, one of my duties was to give a class to commanders and senior enlisted advisors in the Pre-Command Course, on the subject of officer/NCO relationships and the role of the 1SG/CSM. One of the things I would tell them includes this story:

"During the basic course for brand new lieutenants, the instructor presented them with a problem to solve. They were told that the mission was to erect a flag pole. They had one sergeant and three privates. The lieutenants were given 30 minutes to formulate a course of action, after which the instructor asked for solutions. Each lieutenant

explained in detail how the job could best be accomplished. Finally the instructor gave them the right answer: 'Sergeant, I want the flag pole here; I'll be back in two hours to inspect.'" I think that story, true or not, tells us all we need to know about officer/NCO relationships. -CSM Jimmie W. Spencer, letter 1 Sep 1997

What do we expect from you as officers, commanders, leaders? We expect of you unassailable personal integrity and the highest of morals. We expect you to maintain the highest state of personal appearance. We expect you to be fair- to be consistent- to have dignity, but not aloofness- to have compassion and understanding- to treat each soldier as an individual, with individual problems.

And we expect you to have courage- the courage of your convictions- the courage to stand up and be counted- to defend your men when they have followed your orders, even when your orders were in error- to assume the blame when you are wrong.

We expect you to stick out your chin and say, "This man is worthy of promotion, and I want him promoted." And we expect you to have even greater courage and say, "This man is not qualified and he will be promoted over my dead body!" Gentlemen, I implore you do not promote a man because he is a nice guy, because he has a wife and five kids, because he has money problems, because he has a bar bill. If he is not capable of performing the duties of his grade, do not do him and us the injustice of advancing him in grade. When he leaves you, or you leave him, he becomes someone else's problem!

Gentlemen, we expect you to have courage in the face of danger.... During your tour, opportunities will arise for you to display personal courage and leadership. Opportunities could arise from which you may emerge as heroes. A hero is an individual who is faced with an undesirable situation and employs whatever means at his disposal to make the situation tenable or to nullify or negate it.

Do not display recklessness and expose yourself and your men to unnecessary risks that will reduce their normal chances of survival. This will only shake their confidence in your judgment.

Now gentlemen, you know what we expect from you. What can you expect from us?... From most of us you can expect loyalty to your position, devotion to our cause, admiration for your honest efforts- courage to match *your* courage, guts to match *your* guts- endurance to match *your* endurance- motivation to match *your* motivation- esprit to match *your* esprit- a desire for achievement to match *your* desire for achievement. You can expect a love of God, a love of country, and a love of duty to match *your* love of God, *your* love of country, and *your* love of duty.

We won't mind the heat if you sweat with us. We won't mind the cold if you shiver with us.... And if the mission requires, we will storm the very gates of hell, right behind you!

Gentlemen, you don't accept us: we were here first. We accept you, and when we do, you'll know. We won't beat drums, wave flags, or carry you off the drill field on our shoulders. But, maybe at a company party, we'll raise a canteen cup of beer and say, "Lieutenant, you're O.K." Just like that.

Remember one thing. Very few noncommissioned officers were awarded stripes without showing somebody something, sometime, somewhere. If your platoon sergeant is mediocre, if he is slow to assume responsibility, if he shies away from you, maybe sometime not too long ago someone refused to trust him, someone failed to support his decisions, someone shot him down when he was right. Internal wounds heal slowly; internal scars fade more slowly.

Your orders appointing you as officers in the United States Army appointed you to command. No orders, no letters, no insignia of rank can appoint you as leaders.... Leaders are made, they are not born. Leadership is developed within yourselves.

You do not wear leadership on your sleeves, on your shoulders, on your caps, or on your calling cards. Be you lieutenants or generals, we're the guys you've got to convince and we'll meet you more than halfway.

You are leaders in an Army in which we have served for so many years, and you will help us defend the country we have loved for so many years. I wish you happiness, luck, and success in the exciting and challenging years that lie ahead. May God bless you all!  
-SGM John G. Stepanek, "As a Senior NCO Sees It." *Army Digest*, Aug 1967, pp. 5-6

Let your noncommissioned officers handle the problems of the platoon, but be sure they keep you informed. When the noncom has exhausted all means in trying to right these problems, step in and help. On the other hand, noncoms cannot possibly solve all the problems that arise within a platoon, so the officer must make them aware that he recognizes a problem or a deficiency and how to correct it....

Be pleasant and approachable, but forget about being a good Joe. You'll be considered a good Joe if you accomplish your mission and look to the welfare of your men....

Look...every inch an officer, not only in dress, proper haircut, spit-shined shoes, but having the stamp of a quality product.... Don't offer the image of a hotrod teenager.... I mention this because during the past few years I have seen newly commissioned officers use their first pay for a bomb with four on the floor. If you are going to be our leader we expect you to show maturity.

There are times when noncommissioned officers can accomplish a mission for the officer that seems almost impossible. We call this NCO business. It falls into many categories, but I will sum them up into four areas: shady, fishy, funny, and monkey business. Please, Lieutenant, don't get involved. If you do, sooner or later you'll get burned. For some unknown reason good, sharp, outstanding noncoms have the knack, when getting involved in this type of business- but only in order to accomplish the mission- of coming out smelling like a rose. Only when an NCO is involved for personal gain does he get burned. So it is best for the young officer to give the noncom his head when he says he can get something hopeless accomplished.

Finally, Lieutenant, I will say that you will never become wealthy in the Army. Rich, yes; wealthy, never. Rich in accomplishments, in prestige, in the respect of your subordinates. -SGM Morris J. Terrebonne, "The NCO Meets His Junior Officer." *ARMY*, May 1967, pp. 68, 66

[Platoon Leaders:] Listen to your platoon sergeant. Let him train you, but insist it is done in the proper manner. Evaluate what he says, but decide for yourself what is right. -CSM John W. Gillis, "Training Second Lieutenants." *Armor*, Jul-Aug 1981, p. 10

### Platoon Sergeants

Most company grade officers arrive in a unit to do a job for the first time. Most noncommissioned officers go through cycle after cycle of new leaders, most all of whom have new ideas for improving upon the records of their predecessors. The imbalance in experience is significant (although, obviously, first sergeants have to be first-timers at some time also), and it is the NCO who must restore it. With full awareness of the need for tact and diplomacy, he must offer advice, prevent disasters, and incorporate the officer into the team he has to lead. It is a demanding role, one for which no formal training is provided, but it should also be a very satisfying one because in the corps of Army officers, the good ones never forget the NCOs who guided them to their successful careers. -GEN Frederick J. Kroesen, "NCOs: Not Only the Backbone but the Vital Nerve System Link." *ARMY*, Sep 1992, p. 11

Every platoon sergeant in our battalion took the attitude that it was his job to make sure his lieutenant was the best platoon leader in the battalion. There was a competition among platoon sergeants as to who had the most proficient lieutenant. -GEN Donn A. Starry, "Sergeants' Business." *Military Review*, May 1978, p. 3

A platoon sergeant...has an inherent obligation to help his platoon leader become proficient at his job. This mission is important enough to be listed as one of the platoon sergeant's primary missions. This in no way negates the responsibility of the officer chain of command, but the platoon sergeant is in daily contact with the platoon leader and is in a unique position to guide and assist him. A prudent lieutenant will appreciate having a seasoned NCO assist and advise him as he learns the art of leadership. -LTC Cole C. Kingseed, "The Platoon Sergeant." *Infantry*, Jul-Aug 1993, p. 9

It is the job of the senior NCO to mold, guide, and educate the officer to the subtleties of Army life. [Do this right and there will be] fewer problems in the future. The NCO should show the officer how each job complements the other. He should be shown propriety and the unwritten laws of professional soldiers. These are things that aren't taught in any school- except the one in which the NCO lives. -CPT David M. Dacus, "Officers and NCO's: A Working Relationship That Must Endure." *Infantry*, Nov-Dec 1972, p. 24

Your knowledge and experience as a noncommissioned officer must be shared with the officer. How do you do that and still let the officer learn through experience? It isn't as hard as it seems. It requires a skill called tact.... The NCO can say to the officer, "Sir, I recommend that we attack the hill from the right because..." Now suppose the lieutenant says, "I think the left side is better,"... Right here is where the most important trait is expected to be demonstrated by the noncom: loyalty. Without complete loyalty from his noncommissioned officer the junior officer can never fully trust him. So what if the lieutenant's choice doesn't work? The officer's ideas may turn out wrong...but the officer will learn through the experience. It may be good experience merely to have him realize that your ideas or recommendations are good ones; or, most important, it may be good experience that will enable him to make a wiser choice, on his own, next time he has to decide. Whether or not the officer accepts your ideas or approves your recommendations, you must be loyal enough to do your utmost to see that his solution works. -SGM Morris J. Terrebonne, "The Junior Officer Meets His Noncom." *ARMY*, Dec 1966, pp. 70-71

A new lieutenant is a precious thing.... Don't take advantage of him, but train him, correct him when he needs it (remembering that diplomacy is part of your job description), and be ready to tell the world proudly that he's yours. If you are ashamed of him, maybe it's because you've neglected him or failed to train him properly. Do something about it. Show a genuine concern that he's learning the right way instead of the easy way. But be

careful not to undermine his authority or destroy his credibility. Remember that order and counter-order create disorder.... As the senior and most experienced NCO in the platoon, you must pass on the benefit of [your] wisdom and experience to your platoon leader as well as to the soldiers. -1SG Jeffrey J. Mellinger, "Open Letters to Three NCOs." *Infantry*, May-Jun 1989, p. 20

Treat the new young officer like a freshly forged piece of steel. A skilled craftsman, who cares about his work and takes pride in it, can hone that metal, sharpen the edges, and polish the blade into a quality, long lasting sabre that will serve the Army and its soldiers well.... Developing junior officers *is* our job. Senior officers in the unit will mentor young officers. Peers will also provide advice and guidance. However, only senior NCOs can guide them through the maze of motor sergeants, supply sergeants, first sergeants, and soldiers. -SFC Michael D. Whyte, "Developing Junior Officers *Is* Our Business." *NCO Journal*, Fall 1994, p. 11

Senior NCOs...are a special breed of soldier. Tried and true, hardened by experience, they supervise and overwatch the everyday conduct of Army business. These proud and caring professionals are tough, determined, and committed to mission accomplishment. But they are much more; they are the soul of our Army. They are the bond to the citizen soldier; they know first-hand the price of freedom in peace and war; they have compassion and an understanding of youth derived not only from formal education and training, but from their NCO roots. It is this unique and special attribute of our senior NCOs which makes them so effective in Cadet Command.

Senior ROTC and JROTC cadets are positively influenced by these senior NCOs. Cadets sense the humanity, the honesty, and the fierce pride of these NCOs; they are drawn to them. Cadets feel comfortable with their sergeants and are willing to do what NCOs tell them almost without reservation. These same NCOs who have been instrumental to the Army's success during active service make an effective transition to the high school classroom and civilian communities. These great Americans know and understand the skills and knowledge junior officers must possess to successfully lead soldiers; they have a vested interest in training new lieutenants properly; and they do it well. Upon retirement, JROTC NCOs apply their amassed know-how to a different audience with equally positive results. It is an inspirational process to observe.... If I surveyed any population of officers or JROTC cadets and asked them to identify the military person who has had the single most positive impact on their life...the overwhelming response would be an NCO. -COL Lawrence E. Wood, "Noncommissioned Officers- The 'Backbone' of Cadet Command." 1994, p. 4-5, 2

I want to emphasize the informal teaching of officers that only you senior NCOs in your own fashion know how to do. Every officer can relate his favorite story about how his platoon sergeant started his rite of passage as a lieutenant.... When I was a new second lieutenant, I was assigned to the weapons platoon, 57 millimeter recoilless rifle and 60 millimeter mortars. I didn't know much about these weapons. I knew a mortar from a recoilless rifle, but that was it. However, I had a Sergeant Putnam-Sergeant First Class Putnam.... Putnam realized how "green" I was. He did a couple of things for me that symbolize how NCOs can teach and how officers can learn. He realized that "how I was received" by the platoon was going to be crucial. So- before I even met the platoon- he came to me that first night and said, "It would be useful for the lieutenant to know the roster of men, and here it is. Tomorrow, when I introduce the platoon to the lieutenant, it would be useful if the lieutenant knew the names." So I picked up the roster and I memorized the names. The next day, when he introduced me to the platoon, I called the names off by memory. The soldiers stood up so I could associate the names and faces, and they were impressed that I had made the effort to know them. They thought I knew enough to care, but in fact, Sergeant Putnam was teaching me to care.

The second thing Putnam realized was that I didn't know "my elbow from my ear" about the weapons. He said, "Would the lieutenant like to learn about the weapons in the platoon?" "Yes, I would." So he picked a place in the field- and why he picked that place, I didn't understand at first- he selected a muddy field that was right behind the latrine.... Why did he pick that place? Because after supper everybody in the company, including soldiers in the platoon, went into that latrine. There, looking out over the screens, they saw me in the mud taking instruction from the experienced platoon sergeant, learning their weapons as well as they knew them.

Clever, Putnam- he was teaching, and fortunately, I was listening and learning. Sharing with your fellow soldiers your knowledge, experience, and standards of excellence is the greatest legacy you can leave with them. The same is true with the officers you teach. And *we* never get too old to learn a little more. -GEN John A. Wickham, *Collected Works*, 1987, p. 145

The first time we went out with [our platoon, Platoon Sergeant Lucas] came around to my tank, saluted and said, "If the lieutenant would please sit under this tree, I will put the platoon in position, get range cards made out and so on. Then I would like the lieutenant to inspect the platoon." And I said, "Is there something that I should be doing?" And he said, "Yes, sir. Sitting right under that tree. That's what the lieutenant ought to be doing." So I did. He went out, took him an hour or so, and then he



came around, saluted and said, "Sir, it's time for inspection. And, sir, if you don't mind, whatever else you want to look for, here are the things I'd like you to add to your list." That was the first lesson- my job, his job.

He brought me a tool box another time and said, "Sir, lieutenants should become proficient at maintenance, the kind of maintenance that soldiers do." He brought me a general mechanic's tool box and said, "We're going to learn how to do that." He said, "Classes begin at motor pool at 1900." So I learned how to take tanks apart and put them back together. When I became a company commander, he came around and said, "Sir, I've come for the tool box." I said, "You gave it to me. It's my tool box." He said, "Sir, company commanders don't use a tool box."... I learned a lot about what officers and what NCOs are supposed to do from him. -GEN Donn A. Starry, "This Is a Tough Business." *Soldiers*, Oct 1985, p. 23

If you've been around the Army for any length of time, you've heard a platoon sergeant speaking of "My LT". These words can be given any number of inflections to convey any number of emotions: pride, respect, exasperation, etc. It's important for that platoon sergeant to remember that the "LT's" performance reflects not only the platoon leader's abilities but the platoon sergeant's abilities as well.

The earliest level of direct NCO/Officer relationship is at the platoon level, and it's here that foundations are laid and relationships formed which may last throughout a career. We can sum up the essence of this relationship in four "C's".

It's essential that the platoon leader and platoon sergeant begin with a *common goal*. If there is any question, the goal is simply good training, mission accomplishment, and care of the troops. Orientation toward this goal begins with genuine, mutual respect- a recognition of the training, abilities, and aspirations of each leader. It doesn't include an unhealthy preoccupation with personal rewards, evaluations, or what "the boss" is going to think. If either of you is more worried about these things than about the mission and the soldiers, resolve it immediately or get out of the leadership business. Your soldiers will recognize and "tune out" a phony in a very short time.

In order to build *cohesion*, you should be seen together often (but not always). Some important places to spend your time are: the motor pool, training, sports, unit social activities, and the dining facility. (If you want to get a true idea of how your soldiers eat, check the evening and weekend meals, not weekday lunch.) Prove to members of your platoon that you care about them as individuals and that you care for them as a team. You're not supposed to become buddies, but you must work together. Finally, ensure that the troops can't get around one of you by going to the other.

Platoon leaders and platoon sergeants must *communicate*. Good communication doesn't happen all by itself; it requires constant, conscious effort. Both sides must work at it; one person can't communicate. One of your earliest sessions will include your NCOER counseling. At this time, discuss who's responsible for what and ensure that neither can abdicate responsibilities. Set guidelines for how you will deal with routine business and how you will react to anything out of the ordinary.

Talk, talk, talk, and listen, listen, listen. Then add some more "listen." Both of you should listen to guidance and directions from above, listen to your soldiers, and to each other. Set aside time each day to discuss training, activities, and problems. Be sure to include time for brainstorming- sounding out new ideas and improvements.

As platoon sergeant, you must be constantly aware of your role as teacher to your platoon leader. In most cases, you will be older, more experienced, and more established as a leader. Your task is to convey your knowledge and experience to your lieutenant without being condescending or disrespectful. And remember- you're never so knowledgeable that you can't learn something new for yourself.

The next aspect of communicating is so important I almost give it a "C" of its own. Meanwhile, timely *counseling* is absolutely necessary to maintain a motivated, disciplined, smooth-running platoon. Counseling- to include rewards and punishments- is integral to caring for soldiers. In fact, it's as important as good training and good equipment. You and your platoon leader will work together to establish realistic, recognizable standards. Then, you must correct soldiers who fall short, recognize those who meet the standards, and reward those who exceed them. It's not necessary for you to sit together during the counseling session, but you must counsel and you must communicate the results to each other.

As an NCO your professionalism should present a constant *challenge* to your platoon leader and to the soldiers assigned to you. Every day, you set the example in appearance, physical fitness, dependability, and attitudes. If you slip, you give someone else an excuse to slip with you. When it comes to common task, MOS competence, weapons, or general military knowledge, you must be the most proficient soldier in the platoon. If you're doing all of this, you will earn the [deep respect of the young lieutenant. Deep] respect does not come with the job; you earn it.

The final "C" I call *cover*. Be careful not to give this one the wrong connotation. Cover does *not* include covering up breeches of integrity or deliberate wrongdoing. It does mean that you create an environment in which your lieutenant can make

mistakes, learn, and grow. You begin creating this environment by demanding proper military courtesy from the platoon members towards their platoon leader.

You must understand and weigh the relative inexperience of young officers in contrast to the amount of responsibility they carry. In addition to the platoon, most lieutenants will have a number of additional responsibilities. Most young officers need help managing their time. Teach them how to prioritize, plan, and delegate. You will know that your leadership team is working well when their time is not eaten up with the routine running of the platoon.

Everyone makes mistakes. Lieutenants make their share. Your job here is two-fold. First, make sure they learn from those mistakes. If a mistake is repeated, provide firm, pointed instruction to keep it from becoming a habitual problem.

The Army has done a superb job in recent years of teaching NCOs to train soldiers. We have placed less emphasis on the vital task of teaching young officers. However, if you're new at this business, help is available. Your best source is probably your first sergeant or an experienced, trusted platoon sergeant. Also, keep your eyes open for a commander or staff officer who works well with NCOs. This indicates a good first experience and a chance for you to learn about the relationship from another angle. The 22-series of leadership publications provide another valuable source of information.

As you begin working with "your" LT, your first concern will be to provide the very best leadership possible for the platoon. But at the same time, you're training a future commander or staff officer and making an impression that will influence his/her relationship with NCOs for years to come. You have a big job, platoon sergeant; get to it. -CSM John D. Woodyard, "My LT and Me." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1993, pp. 10-11

### **Battalion and Company Commander, CSM, and 1SG Responsibilities for Training Platoon Leaders**

Company commanders need to check periodically with platoon sergeants for their perspective on how their lieutenants are doing- this input will help the commander to help the young officer become an effective leader. -CPT (MG) Daniel G. Brown, 1977, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number

The platoon sergeant is the *primary trainer* of the platoon leader, but the *responsibility* to train that second lieutenant rests with the *company commander*.... The infamous statement made by company commanders and heard by platoon sergeants for years, "Platoon Sergeant, it is your responsibility to train your new platoon leader"...is simply *not true!*... The responsibility for this

training is...that of the company commander, with the primary trainer being the platoon sergeant.... Extra help...is needed by the platoon sergeant [from the other trainers of the lieutenant]: the first sergeant, company commander, command sergeant major, and battalion commander....

How many company commanders have taken the time to observe the lieutenant and then advise the platoon sergeant of where the lieutenant needs additional training? How many have asked the platoon sergeant the lieutenant's strengths and weaknesses? How many have insured that the lieutenant knows he should get his platoon sergeant's view on particular matters before he discusses the same with the commander? How many company commanders have let the platoon sergeant know the priority placed on training that lieutenant?...

The first sergeant must take the time to talk to the second lieutenant, specifically asking how he and his platoon sergeant are getting along...*then listen*. He should do the same with the platoon sergeant...*and listen*. In his conversation, he must impress upon the lieutenant that the platoon is his- the platoon leader's- with the first sergeant's interest being only to advise and assist him in leading it. I am suggesting that this should be done on a schedule, perhaps once a month. The first sergeant who passes this off because "he does this daily" has missed my point. His specific interest at a particular time will stress the importance placed on the lieutenant and his platoon and establish communication between both, based on trust, respect, and confidence. This relationship will cause the lieutenant to seek the first sergeant's counsel and allow the first sergeant to handle his training responsibility- that being to give the lieutenant the benefit of all his experience.

The company commander should do the same. Additionally, he should hold platoon leader meetings, not platoon leader and platoon sergeant meetings. If there are specific subjects to be discussed at a meeting, he should tell the platoon leader what they are and insure the lieutenant discusses the same with the platoon sergeant before the meeting. The company commander should readily accept the lieutenant's expressed desire to discuss a particular topic that comes up during a meeting with his platoon sergeant, not demanding that a decision be made right there and then by the platoon leader. All this tells the lieutenant that he is the leader of the platoon, while reinforcing the role of the platoon sergeant with the lieutenant.

The battalion command sergeant major should brief all second lieutenants upon arrival into the command. He has been there and seen it all, having dealt with more second lieutenants than any other enlisted soldier within the command. He is the proper individual to explain the officer/NCO relationship and the training responsibilities of the NCO in training lieutenants.

The battalion commander must be the driving force behind the training of lieutenants in the unit. All will fall into place when he causes the importance of this training to be recognized by the degree of his involvement. He should schedule his command sergeant major, a first sergeant, or his best platoon sergeant at one of his officer calls and have him address what NCOs and soldiers expect in leadership from second lieutenants. Leaders above the battalion commander can talk about the importance of training lieutenants, but the only trainer who can cause it all to happen is the battalion commander.

A few examples of the responsibilities of those trainers other than the platoon sergeant have been mentioned. There are others. Some of these are:

-The lieutenant may expect his platoon sergeant and tank commanders to immediately embrace him as *their* lieutenant, simply based on his assignment as their platoon leader. It won't happen. He will have to earn their respect before they claim ownership and they refer to him as "my lieutenant." He should be trained on how to accomplish this quickly.

-Insuring the lieutenant knows that, although he must go through a learning process, he is not joining his first unit as a second lieutenant learning how to be a platoon leader. In the eyes of his NCOs and soldiers, he will join the unit as *the* platoon leader- an important difference!

-Most lieutenants join their first unit expecting to directly lead soldiers. They should know that this will not happen! Only first-line NCOs...directly lead soldiers, the lieutenants lead NCOs. His initial training should be focused on learning how to do this.

-The lieutenant should know that he will be "tested" or challenged by his NCOs and soldiers at *their* earliest convenience, and the company commander is going to throw him quickly into the breach to speed up these challenges. He should be trained to expect and handle these initial situations.

We can make this training of lieutenants easier by sending him into his platoon from a position of strength, rather than one of weakness. We can do this by insuring he knows the strengths that he has and by making sure he is trained to take advantage of them immediately upon assignment to his first unit. We also have to insure that the lieutenant understands that he has some responsibilities toward his own training. He must say to him:

"You have to remember that you have only half of what you need to lead your first platoon- your technical knowledge.

"Your NCOs and soldiers expect you to arrive full of vigor and understand your enthusiasm to become the next Patton. They don't want it any other way.

"Listen to your platoon sergeant. Let him train you, but insist it is done in the proper manner. Evaluate what he says, but decide for yourself what is right.

"Learn from your experiences, good and bad.

"Above all, remember that your NCOs and soldiers do not need a lieutenant who tries to be an NCO, nor one who tries to portray himself as just a soldier with a bar on. They need an officer!"...

If we believe that we should train the way we are going to fight, we had better start training the one officer who will always lead our NCOs and soldiers into battle- the lieutenant. It's time to get on with it. -CSM John W. Gillis, "Training Second Lieutenants." *Armor*, Jul-Aug 1981, pp. 9, 10

A tactful First Sergeant will...be a great help to a shavetail lieutenant! -COL Charles A. Romeyn, "The First Sergeant." *Cavalry Journal*, Jul 1925, p. 297

We were having stand-to at about four o'clock in the morning [and I was wandering around on my first exercise as a second lieutenant] looking for the coffee. I found it and...asked where is the cream and sugar. Over there. Well, over there was on the back end of a trailer.... What I found was a 5-pound bag of sugar. I went in and I hit rock; you know the thing had become solid rock, and I could not get it out. I was in there trying to get it, and I thought I would get the milk. Well, the milk was in one of these little evaporated milk cans back in those days, no labels on it, but the milk had gotten caked, you know how it gets caked around it, and I was shaking and could not get any out. And I did not think anybody was there; it was dark as hell. So I heard this voice, "Lieutenant Vuono, can I speak to you, sir?" and I looked up and it was the First Sergeant. And I answered, "First Sergeant, what can I do for you?" He said, "Sir, it is what I can do for you." I said, "What is up?" He said "Lieutenant Vuono, do you intend to make a career out of the Army?" I thought that was a hell of a question to ask a guy at 4:30 in the morning. I said, "Well, First Sergeant, I do not know, I have not thought much about that yet." "Well," he said, "if you do, you got to do one of two things. You got to either stop drinking coffee or quit drinking it with cream and sugar. You are just making a fool out of yourself walking around looking for the sugar and cream." To this day I drink my coffee black. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, pp. 436-437

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## Company Commander- First Sergeant

### Company Commanders and First Sergeants

The toughest job I had, and the one I remember as having more personal responsibility than any other, was being a first sergeant in combat. That was a *good* job also. -GEN John W. Vessey, "From Private to Chairman 1ST SGT Was Toughest." *Soldiers*, Sep 1983, p. 6

There is no individual of a company, scarcely excepting the captain himself, on whom more depends for its discipline, police, instruction, and general well being, than on the first sergeant. This is a grade replete with cares and with responsibility. Its duties place its incumbent in constant and direct contact with the men, exercising over them an influence the more powerful as it is immediate and personal; and all experience demonstrates that the condition of every company will improve or deteriorate nearly in proportion to the ability and worth of its first sergeant. -MG Jacob Brown, letter to the Secretary of War, 1825, *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, Vol 3, p. 111

"It's a first sergeant's responsibility to the unit to take the knowledge he has learned and pass it to the commander of the unit as well as the privates," said [1SG Miles] Retherford.... Retherford's advice is similar to that of General Omar N. Bradley who said, "When soldiers know their jobs, the first sergeant knows he's done his." -"The First Sergeant." *Sergeants' Business*, Mar-Apr 1989, p. 17

Your company will be the reflection of yourself. If you have a rotten company it will be because you are a rotten captain. -MAJ Christian Bach, address "Leadership." 1918, *Congressional Record Appendix*, Vol 88- Part 9, p. A2252

The soldier having acquired that degree of confidence of his officers as to be appointed first sergeant of the company, should consider the importance of his office; that the discipline of the company, the conduct of the men, their exactness in obeying orders, and the regularity of their manners, will in a great measure depend on his vigilance. -MG Frederick von Steuben, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, 1779, p. 145

The Captain must be sure that his wishes and ideas are carried out. Only deep loyalty will insure this. This loyalty includes the right of the First Sergeant to disagree with the Captain, argue a point, and then, even if not convinced, loyally carry out the wishes of the Captain.... Many a poor Captain has had his reputation saved and his troop kept, or made, a good troop by a fine First

Sergeant. -COL Charles A. Romeyn, "The First Sergeant." *Cavalry Journal*, Jul 1925, pp. 297, 298

In my first battery command [my] First Sergeant respectfully, but often, reminded me that he had more stripes than I had bars and years of service combined, and I would do well to use his counsel at times. -LTC Norman E. Jarock, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, p. 6-3

[When taking command of a company, the company commander and the 1SG should] develop and agree on unit goals, standards, and objectives:

-Specify and publish them. (For example, a goal of 260 for everyone on the PT test.)

-Agree on "the forbiddens: the catastrophic non-redeemables." (For example, safety, weapons and ammunition accountability, drugs, DWI, and AWOL.) You and your first sergeant must be on the same "priority frequency" to ensure fairness.

-Show your 1SG a copy of your completed OER Support Form....

Many new company commanders are head-strong and self-assured. They tend to disregard the advice of their experienced and capable 1SG. A few blunders usually bring them back to reality, but you can avoid that humiliation with common sense. Listen to your first sergeant; draw on that long experience.... Good communication also includes listening. [The 1SG] must be able to articulate to you [the company commander] both sides of a problem. He can't do that if he doesn't *hear* both sides. -BG John G. Meyer, *Company Command: The Bottom Line*, 1990, pp. 43, 36, 41

It is imperative that the company commander and the First Sergeant work as a close-knit team and that they also include the executive officer in the team. These three must stick together through thick and thin, even if they don't like each other. -SFC Paul H. Johnson, "Brigade First Sergeant." *Infantry*, Nov-Dec 1986, p. 21

The first sergeant...is about the most indispensable, certainly one of the most famous and probably the most terrifying personage in the United States Army. [He] must be tough and understanding; a genuine out-of-doors type competent to do desk work [who] knows his way around in that bewildering maze and torment known as "Army paper work."... First sergeants many times have saved the bacon of captains and lieutenants. Not alone do recruits and private soldiers learn military wisdom from the top kick. So, if they are wise, do commissioned officers. -Samuel T. Williamson, "Top-Yes, Top-Sergeant." *New York Times Magazine*, Jan 18, 1942, p. 14

Commanders and First Sergeants are not friends. Their relationship is more important than that. It is a bond based on mutual trust and respect- a bond that exists from the moment the battalion commander passes the guidon to the company commander. The First Sergeant does not think, "You, company commander, have to earn my respect"- that respect is automatically given to the commander. The Army cannot afford the time for respect to be built- the unit may have to go to combat the next day. This mutual respect is based on understanding the backgrounds of the two individuals, and their mutual dedication to the service of their country. As the company commander and First Sergeant work together, this bond can be strengthened, weakened, or broken. A weakened relationship can be repaired through honest dialogue. But once broken, this bond cannot be restored.

The command team must know each other's strengths and weaknesses, because those are the team's strengths and weaknesses. For the command team to reach a point of tangency, it must use the strengths to its greatest advantage while covering for the other's weaknesses- even if it means breaking with traditional officer/NCO roles. -CSM Jimmie W. Spencer, letter 1 Sep 1997

Good ISGs make company commanders good. -*The Battalion Commander's Handbook*, 1991, p. 21

It wasn't until I became a first sergeant that I realized how vital the union of [the company commander and the ISG] is in forming a strong company command team and setting the command's climate.... There has to be a bond between these two leaders before they can form their team. That bond building can be done by working on five elements: relationship, responsibilities, loyalty, duty, and goals.

**-Relationship-** The commander and first sergeant relationship has to be one of mutual understanding and respect. They must share experiences and ideas both good and bad. They must take each other into consideration and give honest responses. Openness leads to proper sharing between the team. Friendship is also important. Not "buddy buddy," but one of personal concern for each other and their families....

**-Responsibilities-** These are well defined in AR 600-20. The commander is responsible for everything and the first sergeant implements. Share tasks. Do it in any manner that is comfortable for both leaders....

**-Loyalty-** This is the element that bonds the team. Loyalty to and from each other must run deep....

**-Duty-** This is professionalism at its best.... Both the company commander and first sergeant must be truly professional and set high standards....

**-Goals-** Short term goals must be established early along with the long term goals. These goals could last into the next change of command. But setting these goals does pay off....

A command team forms if a commander and first sergeant work out the five elements discussed. That team has a sense of direction and duty built on mutual trust and will assist each other in accomplishing their mission.... The team attitude will allow you both to lead your company and successfully take care of your soldiers and lead them where you want them to go. -ISG Grover L. Watters, "Five Steps to Success." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1993, p. 7

Set a time limit for the "official" portion of the [unit meetings. ISG Michael Teal] timed my portion of the meetings and I timed his. Thus, we kept all time tables. -CPT Thomas R. Siler, "NCO Development Program." *Army Trainer*, Summer 1983, p. 15

Good, capable non-commissioned officers form so strong a backbone to an organization, be it troop, company, or battery, that if the non-commissioned officers are not up to the mark of reasonably fair efficiency, there is no end of annoyance to the commander. -ILT C. W. Farber, "To Promote the Efficiency of Non-Commissioned Officers." *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Jan 1898, p. 98

### **General of the Army George C. Marshall on First Sergeants**

I placed the first sergeants on the "officer of the day" roster. They did this work surpassingly well, and I always felt a complete confidence in the state of the garrison when one of these men was on duty. They took it very seriously and there was little that went on in the garrison that they did not already know about. In line with this I made it a point...during the visit of the Corps Area Commander [to present them] personally to him. -General of the Army George C. Marshall, 1941, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol 2, p. 546

[CPT Charles Lanham wrote to GEN George] Marshall: "Your old friends- the first sergeants down here- never tire of talking of you." [GEN Marshall wrote back:] "I look back on my year at [Fort] Screven as one of the finest in my Army career, and in many ways it was very instructive. The most gratifying phase of the period was contact with an unusual group of noncommissioned officers. I think we had the finest collection of first sergeants there I have ever seen together." -General of the Army George C. Marshall, 1939, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol 2, p. 58

[When GEN George Marshall was asked in 1933] what he could spare for CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] work, he said, "Leave my post surgeon, my commissary officer, my post-exchange officer, and my adjutant, and I

will run this command with first sergeants." -Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General*, p. 276

### **Company Commanders, NCOPD, and NCOES**

NCOPD is, and has to be, officer business. Your commander must be involved in NCOPD. If you don't get the commissioned officer chain involved in taking care of the noncommissioned officer corps, you're going to get short-changed in war-fighting ability. -MG Donald R. Infante and MSG Norman J. Oliver, "The Officer and the NCO: Who Does What?" *Officers' Call*, Mar-Apr 1989, p. 5

Don't delay a soldier from attending a professional school for any reason short of war. You [company commander] and your boss didn't get to your positions by missing a key professional school. -BG John G. Meyer, *Company Command: The Bottom Line*, 1990, p. 126

A company commander takes pride in his noncommissioned officers; and, as they are an indication and a reflection of his own efficiency, he will naturally devote the greatest possible amount of time and energy to their military education and to the development of such qualities of leadership as they may possess.... Noncommissioned officers of all grades should be men...in whom the qualities of leadership have been developed to the highest possible degree along the same uniform and systematic lines as have those of their officers.... The instruction of noncommissioned officers should also be *coordinated* and *standardized*. -MAJ R. S. Bratton, "Noncommissioned Officers' Training School." *Infantry Journal*, Apr 1922, pp. 427, 426

Noncommissioned officers of all ranks must advise and encourage commanders not to defer NCOES training because a soldier is "mission essential." Professional development training is another aspect of soldier readiness rather than a degradation of combat preparedness.... Many junior soldiers dismiss career aspirations when they miss the opportunity for professional development training because of mission requirements. This is especially true when they see less qualified soldiers receive the training they were denied. -SGM Dan Murphy, "NCOES and Soldier Retention in a Smaller Army." *NCO Journal*, Spring 1991, p. 2

### **Company Commanders and Fairness**

There must be, first, that fairness which treats all men justly. I do not say alike, for you cannot treat all men

alike- that would be assuming that all men are cut from the same piece; that there is no such thing as individuality or a personal equation. You cannot treat all men alike; a punishment that would be dismissed by one man with a shrug of the shoulders is mental anguish for another. A company commander who for a given offense has a standard punishment that applies to all is either too indolent or too stupid to study the personality of his men. In his case justice is certainly blind. -MAJ Christian Bach, address "Leadership." 1918, *Congressional Record Appendix*, Vol 88- Part 9, p. A2252

[It is very important that the sergeant] be not chosen, by favor nor affection, but rather through his valor and long experience in war: Being so chosen it is a great repose to his Captaine...and all other executions shall have the better success. -A *Discourse of Military Discipline*, 1634, p. 12

The choice of non-commissioned officers is also an object of the greatest importance: The order and discipline of a regiment depends so much upon *their* behaviour, that too much care cannot be taken in preferring none to that trust but those who by their merit and good conduct are entitled to it. -MG Frederick von Steuben, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, 1779, p. 129

Formally or informally, an officer will sit in judgment on many complaints and grievances of soldiers about their noncommissioned officers. All Americans seem to be inclined to side with the underdog. A word of caution: before you take action, hear both sides. A sharply honed sense of justice is an invaluable attribute. It may not make you popular, but it will make you respected. -MAJ Herald F. Stout, "The NCO Meets His Junior Officer." *ARMY*, May 1967, p. 70

### **Company Commanders and NCOERs**

[Advice to company commanders on NCOERs]:

Write the NCOER as if it were your own.

Submit NCOERs on time. A late NCOER indicates a system failure and you're responsible for the system.

On the rare occasions when you have a late NCOER, always alert your battalion commander. Never, *never* simply forward a late NCOER without notifying him. Be prepared to "take a hit" yourself, if you deserve it.

Your system is vital. You need an effective, manageable NCOER processing and tracking system. Your entire chain of command must know the system and adhere to its guidelines.... Don't rely on higher headquarters to remind you when an NCOER is due. Make your unit leadership track *their* soldiers. In fact, keep a master tracking system in your orderly room....

Write an NCOER with concern. Writing an NCOER the day before it's due is bad practice. Write a rough draft at least 10 days before the report is due. Let it sit. Then pick it up and *rewrite* it. This practice ultimately will *save* you time and will produce more accurate NCOERs for your soldiers. Give yourself time to do it right. *And* give your boss time to do his portion....

Review all NCOERs written in your company. You'll ensure your soldiers are properly cared for and find out if any people in your unit need help in writing NCOERs. Include your 1SG in the review process. -BG John G. Meyer, *Company Command: The Bottom Line*, 1990, pp. 81-83

### Company Commanders and the CSM

[Company commanders:] *Talk with your battalion CSM....* Develop a rapport with the battalion CSM to last throughout your command tour. If you're having problems with your 1SG, seek the battalion CSM's advice. Maybe your first sergeant's okay and *you're* doing something wrong. -BG John G. Meyer, *Company Command: The Bottom Line*, 1990, p. 33

Most company/troop commanders...see the [battalion/squadron CSM] as an obstacle (and that is putting it kindly) to overcome, rather than a resource to assist them.... During my first two assignments as a command sergeant major, I tried everything I could think of to change this attitude and was frustrated. The first thing I asked my squadron commander in my third assignment was to be part of the in-briefing of every troop commander. I wanted to talk to them, eyeball to eyeball, *before* they took command.... The first thing I said to each troop commander (in the privacy of my office) was: "Captain, I am not a threat to your command. I don't command anything! My mission is to make the squadron commander the best one in the United States Army. The only way I can do that is to have the best five troops in the Army. The only way I can do that is to advise and assist you in any way I can so that *your* command is one of the best in the Army." Amazing! It was as simple as that. I was 50 percent more effective as a command sergeant major. The communication line was open and they used me. -CSM John W. Gillis, "Additional Thoughts." *Armor*, Nov-Dec 1982, p. 7

Techniques which the more effective CSMs use to avoid the appearance of short-circuiting the chain of command are:

1. They recognize and acknowledge that there is only one chain of command, and that the CSM is not in it.
2. They reinforce the chain of command by supporting unit officers in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

3. They are accessible and freely talk to subordinate unit commanders. The best CSMs often take the initiative and frequently visit the subordinate commanders.

4. They are active and effective members of the staff. They are not "hand wavers" and "pontificators." Rather, they plan and propose policies, and implement programs. The best examples are NCOEP programs in which the CSM is an active participant. -*Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Study*, Vol 2, 1986, p. J-16

CSMs don't have the authority to tell company commanders what to do, but they must be able to ask why certain events are taking place to ensure what is being done supports the battalion commander's intent for accomplishing the mission. -COL Robert B. Mangold and CSM James A. (Art) Johnson, "Duties, Responsibilities, and Authority of the Battalion Command Sergeant Major." *Military Intelligence*, Jul-Sep 1991, p. 21

A new [HHC] commander's effectiveness in cultivating a good relationship with the staff often determines his effectiveness as a leader. Accordingly, a prudent HHC commander will quickly establish a close personal relationship with the battalion executive officer and the command sergeant major. Support from the XO is important, because he can ensure that the staff sections release their personnel for mandatory training events. In addition the XO is indispensable to the HHC commander's efforts to improve unit maintenance. The CSM is essential because he can often deal more effectively with the staff noncommissioned officers than either the HHC commander or the first sergeant. (An HHC commander must not rely too much on the XO or CSM but should use them only as a last resort or when attempts to coordinate directly with the staff officers and senior NCOs have proved fruitless.) The best HHC commanders I have observed have gone to great lengths to gain the trust and support of the staff officers and section NCOs through personal visits to their offices. -COL Cole C. Kingseed, "The Battalion HHC Commander." *Infantry*, Sep-Oct 1994, p. 17

I hope a commander feels I'm an extra set of eyes, maybe with a little more experience than a junior commander may have, who can give him some suggestions that will help keep him on the same "azimuth" as our boss. -CSM David P. Taylor, "Education: One Key to NCO Development." *Field Artillery*, Dec 1988, p. 39

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## Battalion Commander- Command Sergeant Major

### Battalion Commanders and the CSM

There is nobody who wants you to succeed more than your command sergeant major, but you have to let him inside to make that happen.... He is the first individual you ought to see. I have not taken command of any job, to include having been the Chief of Staff, that the first individual I did not spend time with was my command sergeant major. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, address to Precommand Course, *Collected Works*, 1991, p. 440

Develop a good relationship with your Command Sergeant Major- one of open confidence between the two of you. Share your views; listen to what he has to say. He probably knows more about the Army than you do. He clearly knows more about soldiers than you do. And he clearly knows a lot more about how to get things done through the NCO chain than you or I do. Harness his talent in support of what you're trying to do. The whole NCO Corps in your unit will feel enthusiastic about that relationship and they'll see it as one of strength. -GEN John A. Wickham, remarks to Precommand Course, *Collected Works*, 1987, p. 335

If we are to have a strong CSM chain, individuals selected for these key positions must be much more than mere figureheads and administrative specialists. They must be vigorous, broadly experienced, and dedicated professionals who are more at home in the field with troops than at a desk in a major headquarters. They should be people who seek opportunities to get out among the troop units and who can see the problems that exist at the grass roots. Their selflessness, personal integrity, and moral courage must be unassailable. -GEN Harold K. Johnson, 1967, in "CSMs- They Must Be Much More Than Figureheads." *NCO Journal*, Summer 1995, p. 45

If you look in the written specification of what a sergeant major does, there's always [a] statement that comes first. It's a disaster. It says that he is responsible for keeping his commander informed on enlisted matters.... In other words, that says that the sergeant major is the ambassador, the minister extraordinary and plenipotentiary or whatever they say in the State Department. He sort of floats around out there and observes what's going on with soldiers and tells the old man about that. Fine, I think he can do that, but that's a very limited view of what a sergeant major is supposed to do. -GEN William E. DePuy, address TRADOC Commander's Conference, Dec 10-11, 1975

The CSM is the most experienced enlisted member of the battalion and to limit his duties and responsibilities to routine matters associated with garrison operations does

not take full advantage of his background, experience, rank, or position.

[The CSM's function in combat] must be addressed and, as with the garrison role, agreed to and *resourced*.... The CSM must have, as a minimum, a wheeled vehicle, driver, and radio with a secure net capability. If the CSM is to function effectively as an enlisted extension of the commander, he must be visible and maintain contact with soldiers during all phases of unit activity in garrison, during training, and in tactical environments. -COL Claude W. Abate and LTC Warren P. Giddings, "What Is a Sergeant Major?" USAWC Paper, 1985, pp. 29, 26, 35

Commanders must analyze all areas that need to be checked and decide how each will be checked. No commander should or has time to personally check each area. He must decide what needs to be emphasized; what needs to be checked through multiple means; what areas others such as the XO and CSM should check; and what areas the commander will personally check. -COL Donald L. Langridge, *Command, Leadership, and Effective Staff Support*, 1996, p. 68

[The CSM and I] purposely did not stay close together during [training]. We covered twice as much of what was happening by splitting up. -COL Glenn A. Smith, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, p. 1-20

A good share of a battalion commander's time is spent counseling. In time, the CSM will learn to know the commander's feelings about any given subject. The CSM may assist the commander by screening those cases in which the soldier doesn't specifically demand to see the battalion commander. The CSM will find that he will be able to resolve at least 90% of the problems that would have ended up in the battalion commander's office. -LTC John L. Lorms, "The Role and Duties of CSM." *Infantry*, Jan-Feb 1974, p. 36

Let [your CSM] do his job and your job will be much easier. -LTC Jerry H. Hogan, "Once You Assume Command, Command!" *ARMY*, Jan 1979, p. 32

The most important asset of the battalion command sergeant major is the quality of his leadership.... As the senior noncommissioned officer in the battalion the CSM commands a special respect; all noncommissioned officers look to him as their role model....

The CSM must review all plans and schedules prior to publication by the S-3. Because he is very knowledgeable of all of the battalion's commitments he can identify conflicting schedules and can provide comments concerning guidance from higher headquarters; often from a perspective unlike either the battalion S-3 or XO.



His review is necessary for all such documents to preclude generating unnecessary changes to the training schedule and plans....

The battalion command sergeant major is a critical member of the battalion. His influence and presence must be properly and effectively transmitted throughout the battalion. [I thought that] complete integration of the battalion CSM into the battalion would be more beneficial to the soldiers than limiting him to his most proficient areas of expertise. I did not want him to ignore the areas in which he was less experienced....

The CSM...must help improve the image of his unit among his contemporaries.... Because the battalion was part of a maneuver brigade, the CSM had to interface with other battalion CSMs in the brigade. Often this interface was an opportunity for the other battalions to form opinions of their sister battalion, and the impression reflected through the CSM could strongly influence those opinions. Every time the brigade commander directed some action through CSM channels, the CSMs supported competitively and would try to ensure rapid compliance. If the other battalion CSMs recognized the accomplishments of the battalion the credit was due to the CSM's ability to interact with those CSMs. Positive feedback from these CSMs had a positive effect on the troops in the maneuver units and the troops of the battalion....

CSM presence in the motor pool inspires soldiers, and helps generate interest in their work; and keeps soldiers working productively during the scarce time allocated for maintenance.... Units which have their soldiers adhering to the -10 manual checks to perform routine PMCS usually have the best maintenance programs. One method for determining the degree of maintenance discipline in a unit is to walk through the motor pool to observe if soldiers are using the -10 to perform maintenance.... The presence of the battalion commander and CSM in the motor pool during the PMCS encourages the sections to perform work more effectively, and continuous emphasis is needed to maintain this proficiency.... Once the soldier believes that the battalion CSM and battalion commander will be in the motor pool checking PMCS frequently there will be an increased effort to maintain good habits....

The battalion sponsorship program is one of the key programs which affects the battalion. Often its impact extends throughout the entire time the soldier is assigned to the unit. [The CSM should ensure that] the enlisted portion of the program...has horsepower. -LTC James R. Siket, "Duties and Roles of the Battalion Command Sergeant Major." USAWC Paper, 1987, pp. 13-14, 8, 21, 5, 9-10, 11-12, 18, 19

[The commander's charter to the CSM is the] commander's view of how that relationship should be.... Given on the first day and informally updated on a

monthly basis, it is the start of an open partnership. Although the words may change with time, and as each new team forms, the basic philosophy of command and the senior enlisted leader's role in that relationship remain the same.

Five key points provide the interlacing for the team's flexibility and strength. First, responsibilities must be clearly spelled out in order to establish focus and efficiency. They also serve to provide accountability.

Secondly, the commander must understand that his command sergeant major has been successful not being an officer, and that there exists two separate and distinct career patterns. The commander may not want to be an NCO, but neither does the command sergeant major want to be an officer.

The third point is an open dialogue. Easy to say, but hard to do. Every workday there must be a huddle of the two leaders. No matter how great one may think the team is going, daily azimuth checks are needed.

Next, be honest and talk through the bad- as well as the good- days. In most cases, both commander and command sergeant major are about the same age and time-in-service, and are going through many of the same feelings. Share them in order to form a bond of trust and honesty.

Finally, there is only one commander. He must not abdicate his authority or responsibilities. He must cooperate and delegate. The commander needs to respect the command sergeant major, for he is- like the commander- only one soldier deep. Neither must be placed in a position of failure or isolation....

Both the commander and the command sergeant major need to understand each other and how they will function together as a team. [The CDR's charter to the CSM] begins that process. But more important is what lies beyond the letter. A command will have unlimited potential if the commander and command sergeant major team takes the point and leads the unit to new levels of readiness. -LTC Herbert F. Harback, "The Command Sergeant Major." *Engineer*, Oct 1990, pp. 40, 42

The sergeant major's personal relationship to the commander depends entirely on the commander's personality. The old man may consider the sergeant major as his reliable enlisted friend and trustworthy confidant, or he may just use him as an effective tool to get things done fast and right. Either way, it doesn't really matter, as long as the sergeant major gets the message and is doing the very best job he can do. -CSM Bob L. Williams, "The Sergeant Major." *Infantry*, Sep-Oct 1969, p. 18

A good command relationship [is] built on honest communication...and being able to disagree without disrespect. -CSM Sandra Robinson, in "Walking and Talking the Talk." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1993, p. 12

When you assume command of your first battalion you will establish your *first* commander/command sergeant major (CSM) relationship. No matter how many command sergeants major you have worked *with* in the past, this is the first one that is *your* CSM. It will be a learning experience that all other former battalion commanders have gone through, and based on their comments concerning their command sergeants major, they really knew how to properly utilize a CSM only after they had changed command and reflected on their experience.

Although thousands of words can be written about the commander/CSM relationship, its foundation is frankness, integrity, and absolute trust between both parties. If these basics do not exist between you and your CSM due to *his* failure- get another CSM.

Treat your CSM as a professional. Should you have the misfortune of having one of the *very few* command sergeants major who cannot or does not perform in a professional manner, be sure to give the *position* the respect it demands, even though you are forced to relieve him. The way you handle this situation will be common knowledge within your command. If you do not separate him from the prestige of the position, you will create the probability of his becoming a "Lame Duck."

The first individual you should talk to after taking command is your CSM. You should meet with him in your office, shortly after your assumption of command reception. This meeting should be private and uninterrupted. Seek his opinions about key officer and enlisted personnel by name and position, problems within the battalion, things the battalion does well, and the relationship between your battalion and higher headquarters. His comments will be an accurate base for you to use as you seek the same information from others to evaluate the state of your battalion. His comments will be the most accurate you will hear since it is his duty to tell you the unvarnished truth. His career depends on fulfilling this duty with openness and complete candor. Others have the same duty, but it is questionable if their careers depend on such.

During the initial meeting with your CSM, have him tell you what his specific duties have been. Do not become concerned if the list is not too long. It is important for your CSM to be *free* to:

- Have time to initiate plans and implement actions and ideas to improve the battalion.
- Visit the companies daily, especially training sites.
- Check specific trouble spots that you have identified and desire his opinion or action.
- "Put out the fires" that are best handled through sergeant major channels.

Talking with your CSM and other principals in your battalion provides information for you to evaluate your battalion from within. Once you have done this, visit the brigade command sergeant major. He is an excellent

source of information concerning your battalion's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to the other battalions in the brigade. He can also provide you with an evaluation of your CSM and his performance in relation to other command sergeants major in the brigade. This visit will open the channel of communication between you and the brigade CSM and provide a sound basis for later interaction. You should communicate randomly with the brigade command sergeant major, but be selective. Do not undercut your own CSM.

*Define the CSM's position both verbally and by your actions.* Some actions and policies that will enhance the CO/CSM relationship follow.

Advise your CSM in private that there is no one between you in the chain of command. This is a basic point, but must be stated early to provide a clear understanding for both of you. Advise your staff officers, also privately, that the CSM's position is that of a special enlisted advisor to you, with direct access and accountability to you.

Allow your CSM free access to you at all times. He will have information that you should know *now* and will exercise the proper judgment before interrupting whatever else you are doing to advise you. There is nothing like knowing a *hot* call is forthcoming from the brigade commander and being prepared with answers when he calls. If your CSM has a good relationship with the brigade CSM, this type of action will be routine.

Explain to your CSM that once you have made a decision, after considering his and all other recommendations, you expect him to support your decision. This, again, is basic, but it "clears the air" when restated.

Give your CSM's opinion the consideration it merits. When a company commander proposes an action and the CSM is in opposition, listen to both sides in private without making the officer/enlisted distinction. Remember that while the company commander is advocating what he believes is right for his company, the CSM is advocating what he believes is right for the battalion. The company commander is responsible for anything his unit does or does not do; therefore, consideration must be given to his command prerogative. However, the experience factor of your CSM must receive equal consideration. What is right and/or what is best should be the only criteria for your decision, not *who* presented which course of action.

Require your company commanders and staff officers to voice their complaints about your CSM to you *only*! If they desire to work out any problems with your CSM, that may be a choice of theirs. To insure differences are handled professionally, only the battalion commander is qualified to make a decision in this type of situation.

Require your CSM to meet privately with all new company commanders. This works best if done at least 2 days before they take command. However, circumstances

may not always make this feasible. This will accomplish two things. It will make your CSM more effective, and company commanders will have a better understanding of their relationship to the CSM. Some of the things about which the CSM can offer advice to the new company commander are:

- The company commander/first sergeant relationship.
- The CSM/1SG relationship.
- The CSM/company commander relationship.
- The battalion commander/company commander relationship vs the company commander/battalion staff relationship (green tab relationships).
- Insights pertaining to your methods as battalion commander.
- Utilization of the CSM, through the company 1SG to "keep the fires out."
- Availability of the CSM to the company commander.
- Insight into the senior NCO and personnel in his company.
- The strengths and weaknesses in his unit as viewed by the CSM.

Require your staff to coordinate with your CSM on matters within his realm of experience, (e.g. plans for ceremonies and change of commands). The CSM has been involved in drill and ceremonies all his life.

Listen receptively when your CSM brings officer problems or failures to your attention. He will or may have already tried to tactfully solve it and failed. When he has brought it to your attention in private, he will have met his responsibility, (e.g. an officer with an unauthorized mustache that is affecting the standards of appearance of the enlisted soldiers). He will not presume to recommend disposition. That is your responsibility. He will, however, provide sound advice, if solicited, pertaining to the development of young officers.

Make your CSM responsible for assigning incoming noncommissioned officers to the companies. He is impartial and concerned with the needs of your command. His objectivity and professionalism will guarantee that noncommissioned officer assignments will be based on the unit need, rather than personal desires.

Require your CSM to review and concur or nonconcur on all recommended judicial and nonjudicial actions taken at battalion level. He will guarantee that you have *all* the information prior to your decision.

Require your CSM to concur or nonconcur on all awards for enlisted personnel. He will give you the insight that you need to recognize the deserving and weed out the undeserving.

Require your CSM to make frequent inspections. One billet a day and one inspection of troops in formation a month is a recommended minimum requirement. His presence will provide valuable feedback and will activate the noncommissioned officer chain of command.

Require your CSM to inspect or check training daily, especially Skill Qualification Training.

Require the CSM to sit as president of your battalion's E5 Promotion Board. First sergeants should sit as other board members. This is an outstanding method of placing the responsibility for your battalion's NCO Corps where it belongs, with the senior NCOs of your battalion.

Require your CSM to participate totally in your battalion's reenlistment program. As your senior enlisted advisor, he is concerned directly with career development. To be effective in this role he must involve himself in every aspect of reenlistment.

Require your CSM to work closely with your race relations/equal opportunity NCO. Together they can solve most problems before they escalate, and they can insure that you have all the available information before *you* must take action in this area.

Consider briefing your CSM privately and immediately upon your return from a commander's call at brigade. He will then be able to get going or gain information for you on subjects you desire, prior to your commander's call.

Require your CSM to keep the brigade CSM advised. Good communications between them will *put out fires* that otherwise might escalate to brigade commander involvement. You may get the brigade CSM on your side, or he may offer advice to your CSM, either of which may *ease the pain* when it becomes of interest to the brigade commander. This is, of course, a selective process.

Continually seek feedback through your CSM from the noncommissioned officers of your unit. With his sources of information he will keep you abreast of developments that will enable you to measure your battalion in relation to others in the brigade. Your command sergeant major will also have vital information obtained through his relationship with the brigade CSM and through command sergeants major call at brigade. Have your CSM brief you after each CSM call. This gives valuable insight into your command.

Just as there are many things you must do in establishing your commander/CSM relationship, there are some things you should not do.

*Don't* routinely include your CSM in officer social functions. There are certain ones (e.g. dining ins, New Year's receptions, a unit Christmas ball, etc.) that are traditional and proper for him to attend. Remember, your CSM is the senior *enlisted member* of the command, and his credibility with the enlisted soldiers of your battalion lies in maintaining that identity. *He* knows and is proud of his enlisted status. Treat the position with the respect it demands but not in the "officer vein."

*Don't* allow intrabattalion reassignment of noncommissioned officers without the recommendation of your CSM. He will know, or be able to find out, the

real reason for a proposed reassignment. You should have this information before making your decision.

*Don't* let your CSM become desk bound! Part of the duties of a CSM as stated in AR 611-201 is to take corrective action in the name of the commander- a clear indicator that he is a doer not just an advisor. Insure that all your officers know your CSM is able to go anywhere, talk to anybody, and see everything in your battalion.

*Don't* use your CSM as an adjutant trainer, but require the adjutant to seek your CSM's advice on enlisted matters. The CSM is duty bound to *advise* and *assist* staff officers in their various areas. This is a two-way street on mutual respect and accomplishment of responsibilities of all concerned.

It is not enough that you and the CSM understand your relationship. Your staff and most particularly your subordinate commanders must also understand it. While he is first and foremost *your* CSM, he is also *their* battalion CSM. Encourage them to use his advice and counsel. A healthy open relationship between your CSM and your key officers will make them more effective. The ultimate payoff will be stronger companies and, correspondingly, a more combat ready battalion. -CSM John W. Gillis, "The Command Sergeant Major." *Armor*, Mar-Apr 1979, pp. 30-32

### The CSM's Role in Combat

A Sargeant Major...ought to be a man of great courage, for that his office is always to be in the face of the enemy. In time of battiale hee ought to be a man of singular invention, at a suddaine to perceive and prevent the situation, terror and pretence of the enemy. - *Approved Order of Martiall Discipline*, 1591, p. 5

When someone once asked me how I plan to use my sergeant major in combat, my answer boiled down to this: The same as I use him in peacetime- to show the way... I expect the sergeant major to be at or near the point of decision at critical times and provide me, as the commander, with an unbiased assessment. Every commander needs to know the morale and fighting spirit of his soldiers. No one close to the commander is better able to report on that than the sergeant major....

The sergeant major must also assess the tactical situation. Once again, this is where his experience is a key factor. He must look at reality through the filter of that experience and provide the commander with an opinion. The weight of that opinion will depend on the commander's relationship with the sergeant major, but it is always an opinion that must be considered....

At the crucial time, he must provide the shot of confidence, discipline, and backbone that makes bone-weary soldiers- and overtaxed units- get up and go. This is where the sergeant major assumes a larger-than-life

role that influences the individual soldier and inspires him to do things he thought were beyond him.

This influential role, however, is not something that simply occurs magically when that first bullet is fired. It is a perception that grows during those daily visits in peacetime, on the firing range, in the barracks, in private counseling sessions, and in the professionalism of his every word and action.

There is no substitute for the influence he exerts, which in itself is as much of a combat multiplier as a minefield or a good intelligence network. -LTG Robert L. Wetzel, "The Sergeant Major's Role- Leadership 'to Show the Way.'" *ARMY*, May 1986, pp. 72, 71

[During Operation Desert Storm] many battalion commanders commented that their command sergeants major seemed to be everywhere, talking with soldiers, smoothing problems in the logistics and maintenance efforts, and assisting the commander with control of the unit. -TRADOC Pam 525-100-2, *Leadership and Command on the Battlefield: Battalion and Company*, 1993, p. 28

### The CSM at the National Training Center

Here is a checklist for the CSM's attention *before* or *on* arrival [at the NTC]. It applies to the garrison, *not* the field: organizational setup in the dustbowl area (tent city); duty uniform standards; baggage unloading and identification (a system!); movies at night; daily police and port-o-let maintenance; authorized vehicle routes/off limits areas; pass system for PX, shoppette; MP traffic control and cantonment support; daily key NCO meetings (when/where?); established times for first call, chow, formations; guard force; controlled access to Ft. Irwin; interface with post CSM, PX manager, barber, gym operator, NCO club manager, morale support director and range control, among others; stand-down celebration (USO show, free cokes?)...

The CSM uses his influence with other NCOs on proper dress, conduct, and discipline. He absorbs himself in the training and maintenance effort. He inspects and reinspects. He double-checks the combat load the soldier will pack and carry to NTC. He eyeballs soldiers in their deployment uniforms, making sure that standards are met. The CSM talks to soldiers at every opportunity. He gauges their progress through the train-up, with emphasis on individual training.

The CSM needs to front-load himself and arrive at the NTC with the first group of soldiers. His first sergeants or senior platoon sergeants from each unit are with him. They assist him with the many chores ready to jump up and bite. He needs chiefs, indians, and decision-making authority....

Once the task force moves to the field, the CSM needs to be mobile and visit every unit he can. A radio-equipped jeep with driver is a necessity. The CSM may consider available helicopter support. The distances he travels are vast and time consuming in a jeep. The CSM must watch: NCO duties and responsibilities- *no* let down!; accountability of soldiers; Class I delivery to *all* soldiers (to include water and ice); personal appearance and hygiene; vehicle maintenance; morale and esprit; injuries and hospitalized soldiers; police of command post areas; safety.

The CSM should attend after-action reviews to find out how the units are doing. Then he should talk to his first sergeants about corrective action for deficient areas. He needs to be where the action is; that may not necessarily be the battlefield. His sixth sense should tell him where to focus his efforts: to start a fire or put one out.

Once the FTX is over, he needs to concentrate full bore on clearing the range areas within his responsibility. This is no easy job. It needs planning and full supervision. The CSM leaves on the last plane- after vehicle and property turn-in, after the majority of soldiers has departed and the task force has been green-lighted. Front-load the first sergeants. But the CSM stays until *everything* he is remotely in charge of has been thoroughly covered, discharged, and disposed of. -CSM Donald C. Cubbison, "Getting Ready for NTC: Tips for the CSM." *Army Trainer*, Winter 1983, pp. 23, 22

Of all the questions generated by leaders coming to the National Training Center, one is recurring: "How are CSMs to be used at the NTC?" According to CSM [Robert Windham, NTC Operations Center CSM], battalion and brigade CSMs coming to the NTC often are not used at a level consistent with their battlefield knowledge, experience, or capability. "Consequently, their units don't achieve maximum effectiveness during task force and brigade level operations," Windham observed. In his discussions with CSMs, Windham learned that commanders often don't review with CSMs their duties as outlined in the regulations.... "On two separate occasions, the duties of a battalion and brigade CSM were clearly defined to optimize the NCO leadership throughout the command. This had significant impact on the overall success of those units during the rotation."...

One commander used [excerpts of the CDR/CSM counseling] to create a memorandum to his staff and subordinate commanders. The memo defined the CSM's duties, responsibilities, and authority with definitive guidance on how to go about them. In his guidance, the commander highlighted several points pivotal during training as well as in combat. Consequently, staff and subordinate commanders aggressively sought advice and assistance from the CSM throughout their rotation. -

CSM Jerry T. Alley, NTC CSM, "The NTC Challenge." *NCO Journal*, Summer 1991, p. 14

### **The CSM's Role in Advising the Commander**

The Sarjant Majour Generall...is to give the Lord Generall and the marshall of the feild to understand the state of the army, that the Lord Generall thereupon may give him command and direction. -*Principles of the Art Military*, 1642, p. 7

The command sergeant major's counsel is expected to be calm, settled, and unequivocally accurate, but with an energy and enthusiasm that never wanes, even in the worst of times. -*Army National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Handbook*, 1989, p. A-17

One of [the CSM's] most effective ways for advising me was to schedule items on my calendar. If he found a weak area in the battalion that needed my attention, he advised me, through my calendar, on when and where to visit that unit or section. Invariably, he was correct in focusing me into that area. -COL Glenn A. Smith, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, p. 1-20

[Our battalion CSM] knows- by name, job, background, and problems- 90 percent of the soldiers in the battalion. The other 10 percent just got here. That gives me the capability to go to somebody I trust and say, "How are we doing?" Not only will I get a command perspective, but I will get a view of what's going on at the private's level. There is *no* other way to get that! -LTC Donald H. Volta, in "Command Sergeant Major: A New Breed of 'Old' Soldier." *Soldiers*, Mar 1981, p. 31

*The Battalion Commander's Handbook*, 1991:

Your relationship with the CSM is vital. It must be based on mutual trust and respect.... Get his views on everything new you plan to do. Solicit his expectations, and perceptions of unit strengths and weaknesses. Make sure everyone knows you trust him, so he will operate from a position of strength.... Ensure the company commanders include the CSM in the problem-solving process.

He's a doer as well as an advisor. Make him the principal resource for the leader development of your NCOs. Operate as a team, but encourage him to go his own way.... He ensures NCO business is accomplished.... In the field, ensure he has a vehicle and commo. He shares with you the responsibility for ensuring soldiers know the mission, perform to standard, and that the chain of command is responsive to soldiers... Charge him with quality control of garrison billets and facility maintenance.... Have him review all EERs and award recommendations for NCOs.

Give the CSM the lead in personnel actions, individual training/SQT, ITEP, NCOLD, enlisted assignments, First Sergeant training.... Require him to inspect individual and small unit training.... Let the CSM run training without officers for specific events. (e.g. CTT, EIB, EFMB)....

Involve the CSM in UCMJ decisions. Ensure his presence at UCMJ actions.... Have him bring good soldiers to you for informal discussions. -pp. 20, 21, 22

The CSM has access to inside information of which the battalion commander may be unaware, and vice versa. The information must be exchanged between these two personnel on a daily basis.... The CSM and commander must be "active" not "reactive" to situations which come about. Keeping each other informed will help the active side of this equation. -LTC James R. Siket, "Duties and Roles of the Battalion Command Sergeant Major." USAWC Paper, 1987, p. 15

Normally a battalion commander will consult with his battalion command sergeant major before putting orders into the chain of command. This does not mean that the CSM is in the chain of command, but it does say that the CSM must know what instructions are being issued in order for him to effectively supervise the NCO support channel. -FM 22-600-20, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1980, p. 18, signed by GEN Edward C. Meyer

Don't leave your CSM out of officer assignments. He has valuable information on officer personalities and unique subordinate unit needs. -LTC Louis V. Hightower, *Battalion Commanders Speak Out*, 1977, p. 2-5

CSMs must be the devil's advocate on policy. What effect will this directive have? Is it dumb? Harmful? Some of us interpret this advocate business as being negative. In fact, it can be negative and it has appalling effects when policies are challenged in the wrong place at the wrong time. Discretion, tact, and questioning go together. -CSM Walter W. Krueger, in *CSM: That First Challenge*, no date, p. 58

### **The Battalion Commander, the CSM, and the Staff**

Incumbent battalion commanders must take the time to formally educate their subordinates on the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the CSM. This could be a topic for discussion at an Officer Professional Development class. The company grade officers should be encouraged to seek the CSM's advice and counsel, and all junior officers should look at him as their battalion CSM. Commanders must insure that the XO and S-3 work in close coordination and cooperation with the

CSM and pay particular attention to his duties and responsibilities as outlined by the commander, to his methods, and his accomplishments. Since the commander has the mission to train the XO and S-3 for a future O5 command assignment, the effective use of the CSM should be one of his teaching points. A logical starting point may be the job description block on the CSM's EER. -COL Claude W. Abate and LTC Warren P. Giddings, "What Is a Sergeant Major?" USAWC Paper, 1985, p. 28

The command sergeant major can be a forceful personality in the battalion who can easily discourage a lieutenant or captain from seeking his advice. The battery commanders, in some cases, must be strongly encouraged by the battalion commander to seek guidance from the command sergeant major; and the CSM must be responsive to their needs when such help is requested. -LTC James R. Siket, "Duties and Roles of the Battalion Command Sergeant Major." USAWC Paper, 1987, p. 14

A good staff officer who uses [the SGM] will find he has a friend at court.... He knows the route your paperwork must follow and he knows someone at each stopping place who can help with expert advice.... In all his dealings with the staff, the sergeant major is trying to make them look good to the commander. -SGM Robert B. Begg, "Sergeant Major." *ARMY*, Jan 1966, pp. 38, 39

Anything [the SGM] can do to help [the staff] helps the commander and the command at the same time. -CSM Bob L. Williams, "The Sergeant Major." *Infantry*, Sep-Oct 1969, p. 18

The demands of leadership are the same for staff NCOs. Too many combat arms NCOs treat staff jobs as temporary positions to be tolerated until they can get reassigned to a line unit. Yet staff roles are important. Seasoned noncommissioned officers who have seen operations go wrong when a staff's planning and logistics are tested in "the real world" have a special insight that may be missed by other team members who haven't had the same experience. In addition, each member contributes specific skills and knowledge to the team. NCOs can play a vital role in making training realistic and in helping to develop plans for future exercises. If staffs fail to restock ammo, for example, or fail to take the time needed for vehicle maintenance, their commanders must fight with less ammunition and fewer vehicles....

Experienced noncommissioned officers must make it known that they are...an important part of the plans and policy process. At the same time, the staff NCO cannot afford to be discouraged if advice is not accepted. Often, soldiers will go into a shell because what they considered important input to a plan was not accepted by the staff.

They may become reluctant to provide information. This must not occur. It's up to the staff NCO to provide knowledge acquired through years of experience in the field and keep submitting that knowledge and experience into the planning stages. -CSM James C. McKinney, CSM Lyle C. Daniels, and MSG Michael Lawson, "CMTC: Training for Combat." *NCO Journal*, Summer 1991, p. 8

Experience, especially staff experience, is vital to the CSM. A soldier whose highest level of experience has been that of the first sergeant- no matter how good a first sergeant he may have been- is going to require a period of adjustment when he finds himself the commander's chief enlisted representative on the battalion staff. During the interim, while the new battalion CSM learns to shake the adversary role he played as a hard-charging first sergeant and learns how to work *with* the staff, soldiers suffer. -SMA Glen E. Morrell, in "News Call." *ARMY*, May 1984, p. 75

XO/Commanders/CSM must know and trust each other. They must speak publicly with the same voice. -*The Battalion Commander's Handbook*, 1991, p. 19

Just as the commander forms one relationship with the XO and another with the CSM, so the XO and the CSM must work closely together. -COL Charles D. Beck, *Command, Leadership, and Effective Staff Support*, 1996, p. 47

The XO and CSM must be of "One Mind" with the commander. -COL Neil L. Putz, *Command, Leadership, and Effective Staff Support*, 1996, p. 49

When the battalion commander and the CSM are TDY, as acting commander, when anything out of the ordinary happens, the first person you look for is the acting CSM. -Battalion XO, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number

**See also Battalion and Company Commander, CSM, and ISG Responsibilities for Training Platoon Leaders; Company Commanders and the CSM**

### **Integrating the New CSM**

Orientation of the new CSM is a primary factor in developing the role he will play in the unit. It is not sufficient to simply assign him a sponsor as the regulation requires. In some situations...assigning his predecessor as the sponsor may not be the best solution. Guidance with regard to exactly what the sponsor should do cannot be reduced to a check list. In fact, giving the CSM the same information as an incoming battalion CO is probably an accurate idea of how well he should be briefed.

The new CSM must be treated as the senior noncommissioned officer of the unit from the first moment of contact with your unit, and not in a half-hearted manner. Upon his arrival, there should be a ceremony to recognize both him and the retiring CSM. The new CSM will learn a great deal about the battalion's attitude toward a CSM by participating in such a ceremony. The degree of complexity of the ceremony would, of course, be variable, depending upon the situation. Recognition, though, is the key.

Following the ceremony, the new CSM should receive briefings from the noncommissioned officers he will be working with in the future. These briefings will tell the CSM about all aspects of the unit, how the battalion commander operates, and what was expected and received from the previous CSM.

The initial discussion between the battalion commander and the new CSM is perhaps the most critical of the orientation activities. To provide specific guidance on how to conduct this meeting or what to say is indeed futile, except to say that the meeting should be conceptual in nature. Because the CSM is new and the battalion CO has been in command for some time, it is perhaps best if the commander initiates the discussion by describing his perceptions of the battalion. The CO must emphasize at least one point- the value of the CSM's leadership, ideas, and experience regarding the battalion. The CO must let the CSM know, at least in concept, how he wants the CSM to operate and what authority the CSM has within the battalion. The CSM should leave the office with a good conceptual understanding of his role within the battalion. -LTC John L. Lorms, "The Role and Duties of CSM." *Infantry*, Jan-Feb 1974, pp. 35-36

One day in the 3rd ID, I visited an arms room in Aschaffenburg, Germany. I asked the young armorer if he knew CSM Ligon [CSM James Ligon, the division CSM]. His eyes opened wide and he said, "Sir, everyone knows CSM Ligon!" CSM Ligon had inspected every weapon in the division in his first 30 days in the job, along with the NCOs in the respective chain of command. We had no weapons problems from that point forward. The best way to describe him is to say, "he was everywhere all the time." -LTG Robert L. Wetzel, letter 29 Aug 1997

CSM Southern Hewitt...reported into the 2d Battalion, 42d Field Artillery as the new battalion CSM. [During our first meeting he asked me what the battalion was doing the next day, Saturday.] "CSM, it so happens we're running the Crailsheim International Marathon tomorrow morning; but, don't worry about that. Get your family settled and report for duty Monday morning"... The next morning the new CSM met us at the start line.... We ran side by side for the entire 26-plus miles.... I hadn't intended to run the whole distance. My plan was

to come up lame at the first beer tent and call it a day. The CSM called my bluff and we went the whole distance together. In later years he told me that he hadn't intended to run the whole distance either. His plan was to wait until I dropped out and follow suit just as "a courtesy." -COL Fredrick Van Horn, "Lasting First Impressions." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1994, p. 18

### **Battalion Commanders and NCOs**

[Battalion commanders:] Ask yourself a question, "Did I do everything humanly possible to develop the officers and NCOs in my battalion?" -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, p. 436

[Often during WWII, GEN Creighton Abrams, as a battalion commander,] would include leaders down through buck sergeant...in the nighttime meetings. - Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times*, p. 56

Support your NCOs, they are the primary leaders of soldiers.... Use NCO task forces to solve problems. Give them the problem, a time limit, walk out, and return later for a briefing on their solution.... Let the ISGs know you support them and need their input.... Share hardships with your soldiers. The worse the weather, the more they need you.... The influence of supply sergeants, armorers, mail clerks, administrative personnel, and cooks, on the morale and welfare of the troops is tremendous and they need to share the glory. -*The Battalion Commander's Handbook*, 1991, pp. 23, 70, 21, 33, 71

There is no better procedure for a new commander than to consult with his key NCOs before making changes in policies and standing operating procedures. They are an invaluable source of knowledge. -BG Hillman Dickinson, "From a Ground Commander to the Aviator." *U.S. Army Aviation Digest*, Oct 1974, p. 6

It reflects well on a battalion when NCOs give briefings. -COL Jerry F. Pickar, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number

The resources needed to support NCOs are as important as those needed for officers. The battalion commander needs to be aware of these requirements and make those resources available. For example, one of the companies of the 743d MI Bn consisted of detachments world-wide, and company-level commanders and higher would go TDY to visit these detachments. But the first sergeant also needs to visit his soldiers, and the commander must make sure TDY funds are allocated for that purpose. Commanders who make an effort to be sensitive to NCO requirements will have a stronger unit. -COL Donald L. Langridge, *A Treasury of NCO Quotations*, 1997, no page number

The platoon sergeant is the key leader in creating a highly professional and combat-effective force. As I prepared to assume command of a light infantry battalion, I published my concept of the tasks, conditions, and standards for all the battalion's key leaders. Much of this effort focused on the platoon sergeant, because he, along with the platoon leader, must understand and execute the battalion commander's intent two levels down. Additionally, he must always be prepared to assume the responsibilities of his platoon leader.

Some may argue that a battalion commander should concentrate on junior officer development and leave noncommissioned officer development to the battalion's command sergeant major and company first sergeants. Experience has taught me, however, that a uniform set of standards for key leaders is vital to combat readiness. Addressing the platoon sergeants on my first day of command, I outlined exactly what I would expect of them during our time together in the battalion. At the same time, I asked them to tell me what they, as the battalion's senior noncommissioned officers, expected from me as the incoming commander. -LTC Cole C. Kingseed, "The Platoon Sergeant." *Infantry*, Jul-Aug 1993, p. 8

### *Battalion Commanders Speak Out, 1977:*

Have frequent NCO calls to get their suggestions, discuss plans, policies, and other pertinent topics. -LTC Stanley G. Bonta, p. 5-7

Well-meaning officers and NCOs in the unit will interpret your orders in terms of their own capabilities, limitations, and experience. You must therefore try to strike a balance between overly specific orders (which take away all initiative on the part of subordinates) and overly general mission-type orders which could result in the failure of the battalion to achieve its objective. I found that fairly general mission-type orders with a good feedback system worked best for me. -COL Fred E. Elam, p. 7-3

[During my individual inbriefs with new NCOs I told them] that I wanted to hear bad news as fast or faster than good news. -LTC Louis V. Hightower, p. 2-13

Within all companies, selected personnel are tabbed with the additional duties of career counselor, drug and alcohol specialists, etc. I hosted periodic lunches or other meetings with these individual groups to hear what problems they were having. This simple act added credibility to their jobs and provided me with useful information. I found out that many of these young soldiers had...fine ideas that resulted in many improvements in the battalion. -LTC Louis V. Hightower, pp. 2-13, 2-14

The battalion will rise or fall based on the caliber of leadership we find at the NCO leader levels. -LTC Herbert F. Harback, "The Command Sergeant Major." *Engineer*, Oct 1990, p. 41



Once a month have your key NCOs brief the commanders and staff in their areas of responsibility. - LTC Jerry H. Hogan, "Once You Assume Command, Command!" *ARMY*, Jan 1979, p. 32

Periodically visit [the Brigade CSM] to discuss his views and ask his opinion. He can be of considerable assistance to your CSM regarding senior NCO problems. He will have valuable insight into your boss's thinking. -*The Battalion Commander's Handbook*, 1991, pp. 41-42

For [NCOs] to be effective, the commander must make it known that his NCOs share in the command of that unit. -CSM William J. H. Peters, "From the TRADOC CSM." *Army Trainer*, Spring 1985, p. 24

### **Battalion Commanders' and CSMs' Spouses**

[Battalion commanders' spouses not only have help available from] outside agencies, but I would say...draw from the command sergeant major.... You will want the kind of advice and guidance and assistance he can give-it is invaluable. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, p. 444

The concept of the family support program is tremendous. Unfortunately, in my experience, some of the programs weren't successful. Unit family members of soldiers of all ranks must be involved- must willingly participate- for the program to succeed. And the commander must be involved, take full responsibility for the program because it's *his* program.

It's a great help to the commander if his spouse takes that program and runs with it and other spouses of unit leaders are involved. But he must stay in touch, and they must go into it with open minds, open hearts, and open ears, or they'll turn off the family members of the more junior soldiers and the program will fail.

All unit family members must be valued for their contributions to the group. Again, it boils down to open communications and the true spirit of taking care of our own. -CSM James C. McKinney, "Advice to NCOs Today- Be Patient and Professional." *Field Artillery*, Oct 1993, p. 8

[In assisting spouse's groups, the job of the Bn Cdr's spouse] is to encourage, support, suggest, and above all, be available when needed.... The wife of the command sergeant major...can be invaluable in suggesting how to assist young wives in the unit. -USACGSC RB 22-2, *The Commander's "Link"*, 1983, pp. 32, 31

*Leaders' Wives Speak Out*, 1985: [Recommendations from battalion commanders' spouses]: Treat the wives with respect and caring. They expect you to have answers for them or be willing to help them find the answers. The senior NCO wives are a very important factor in this family. If you don't have their support, it is very hard to reach the young enlisted man's family. Remember the

senior NCO wives for the most part are your age. They are a great resource for information and help. -Maureen B. Kievenaar, p. 51

Establish a solid partnership with the XO's wife and the Sergeant Major's wife. Ask for their ideas, and share your plans with them before you make general announcements. Even if they choose not to help, you should keep them informed. -Linda O. Anderson, p. 10

[The friendship of the CSM's spouse] was imperative to me. -Mary Anne Shlenker, p. 26

### **Thoughts from Above Battalion Level**

In reflecting, I would talk to the other Army leaders, my vice chiefs (the first [GEN Dennis] Reimer, then [GEN] Binnie Peay, and finally [GEN] John Tilelli), and especially Sergeant Major of the Army Richard Kidd, the Army's senior enlisted soldier. -GEN Gordon R. Sullivan, *Hope Is Not a Method*, 1996, p. 229

Every afternoon, I walked a fixed route, at the same time, through the streets of my three battalions, deliberately letting myself be ambushed.... It did not take long for the soldier with a gripe, the noncom with a problem, to figure out where he could waylay the brigade commander for a private minute or two. Good NCOs and junior officers understood what I was doing. I was not breaking the chain of command. They knew that I would never agree to anything in these curbside sessions that would undermine their authority. If anything, my outdoor office hours gave them a chance to blow off steam. -GEN Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey*, 1995, p. 216

I didn't know [SMA Glen Morrell] before I selected him. But I've listened to him and I pay attention to what he has to say. You need to do the same with your command sergeants major. -GEN John A. Wickham, *Collected Works*, 1987, p. 335

You will report directly to me and there will be no one between your desk and mine. When you need to see me, you will use the private entrance to my office. The only other person who uses that entrance is the Secretary of the Army. -GEN Harold K. Johnson to the Army's first SMA, William Wooldridge, 1966, in "SMA's Role Evolves, Grows." *NCO Journal*, Summer 1995, p. 44

The Sergeant Major of the Army's job is to support and keep the Chief of Staff informed about the enlisted concerns in the Army, and let him know how soldiers are training and living at the canteen-cup level. -SMA Julius A. Gates, *The Sergeants Major of the Army*, 1995, p. 154

My responsibility [as a MACOM CSM] is the same as that of the battalion sergeant major. The only difference is that I operate at a higher organizational level. -CSM James B. Craft, "The Cutting Edge." *Army Trainer*, Fall 1985, p. 37

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## What Officers and NCOs Can Do to Strengthen the Officer/NCO Relationship

### Understand Officer and NCO Responsibilities

The complementary relationship and mutual respect between officers and NCOs are traditions in the US Army.... An important part of effective leadership is the ability of commissioned and warrant officers to work together with NCOs. To develop effective working relationships, both must know the similarities and differences in their respective roles, duties, and responsibilities....

No sharp, definitive lines separate officer and NCO responsibilities. In general, commanders set the overall policies and standards. Officers lead NCOs and help them carry out their responsibilities. Officers cannot simply say, "That's sergeants' business," nor should they do NCOs' work for them. Officers must give NCOs the guidance, resources, assistance, and supervision necessary for them to do their duties. By the same token, NCOs are responsible for assisting and advising officers in carrying out their duties. Missions demand that officers and NCOs work together and advise, assist, and learn from one another. -FM 22-100, *Military Leadership*, 1990, p. 74, signed by GEN Carl E. Vuono

#### [Officer/NCO Responsibilities:]

The officer commands, establishes policy, plans and programs the work of the Army; concentrates on collective training which will enable the unit to accomplish its mission; is primarily involved with unit operations, training, and related activities; concentrates on unit effectiveness and unit readiness; pays particular attention to the standards of performance, training, and professional development of NCOs; creates conditions-makes the time and other resources available- so the NCO can do his job.

The NCO conducts the daily business of the Army within established orders, directives, and policies; concentrates on individual and team training which develops the capability to accomplish the mission; is primarily involved with training individual soldiers and teams; concentrates on each subordinate NCO and soldier and on the small teams of the unit- to ensure that each is well trained, highly motivated, ready, and functioning; concentrates on standards of performance, training, and professional development of NCOs and enlisted personnel; gets the job done. -FM 22-100, *Military Leadership*, 1983, p. 241, signed by GEN John A. Wickham

A key element to warfighting ability is creating effective relations between the officers and sergeants in your unit.... Balance and excellence are called for in all

things a unit does. The officer and the sergeant have to make sure that their unit preserves that sense of balance. The officer will be good at some things, and the sergeant better at other things. We're made that way. The officer and NCO relationship is like a marriage. When you're married you take care of your partner. And together, you make sure all things come out right. -MG Donald R. Infante and MSG Norman J. Oliver, "The Officer and the NCO: Who Does What?" *Officers' Call*, Mar-Apr 1989, pp. 4, 6

I wanted the officers lying awake at night trying to figure out how to fight better, how to run better operations, and [not spending] their time on the things that sergeants ought to do. -GEN William E. DePuy, address TRADOC Commander's Conference, Dec 10-11, 1975

The goal of the corps of NCOs, whose duty is the day-to-day business of running the Army so the officer corps has time to command it, is to continue to improve our Army at every turn. We want to leave it better than we found it. -SMA William G. Bainbridge, "Quality, Training and Motivation." *ARMY*, Oct 1976, p. 29

Responsibilities are sometimes described as "What To's" and "How To's." The "What To's" are officer responsibilities and the "How To's" are NCO responsibilities. For example, when tasked to emplace an obstacle, unit leaders have two basic responsibilities:

*What To:* The officer describes the obstacle's intent (turn, disrupt, delay, block), general location, and possibly the type.

*How To:* The NCO does the installation, directs the soldiers, and ensures the obstacle is emplaced to standard. -CSM Roy L. Burns, "Bridge the Gap." *Engineer*, Nov 1993, p. 57

The officers and NCOs of a unit must determine the exact division of responsibilities and tasks by considering the mission, the situation, and the abilities and personalities of the leaders on that particular team. - DA Pam 600-25, *US Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*, 1987, p. 7

There is...much to be said for a reexamination of the pattern of distribution of responsibilities between officers and N.C.O.s. -LTG Sir John Winthrop Hackett, DA Pam 360-302, *Officers' Call: The Profession of Arms*, 1966, p. 38, signed by GEN Harold K. Johnson

### Support the Division of Responsibilities

Throughout my service I have been opposed to the close supervision of officers over work which was appropriate to non-commissioned officers, feeling that the job would be better done if proper confidence was reposed in the NCO.... The much higher paid officers...should have been doing planning and other advanced work of preparation. -GA George C. Marshall, 1941, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol 2, pp. 545, 546

Especially in organizations with a commissioned overstrength, there has been a tendency to permit the surplus officers to usurp the authority of the noncommissioned officers. This practice must be discontinued. In general, officers must deal with enlisted men through the appropriate noncommissioned officers. -War Department Circular 70, *Noncommissioned Officers*, 1944, p. 2, signed by GA George C. Marshall

Don't by-pass your noncommissioned officer to demonstrate how busy you're being by doing his job. - GEN Bruce C. Clarke, 1954, *Clarke of St. Vith*, p. 207

To fully develop the NCO to fulfill [his] role, a commander must place responsibility on him and permit him to assume his place in command. In doing this standards of performance need not be lowered. Honest errors must be expected and tolerated, but corrected. Senior personnel must not usurp responsibilities which provide the experience needed in developing our junior leaders. -GEN Bruce C. Clarke, in "Noncommissioned Officer Leadership." *Infantry*, Nov-Dec 1974, p. 26

My many years in the army have demonstrated that wherever confidence in NCOs is lacking and wherever they are continuously bossed by the officers, you have no real NCOs and no really combat worthy units. -Marshal of the Soviet Union G. Zhukov, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, Vol 1, 1974, p. 50

I tell NCOs when they ask how to get officers to let them do their jobs: "Whatever piece the officer gives you to do, you do it to the best of your ability, and before you know it, you'll have the whole pie." -CSM James C. McKinney, "Advice to NCOs Today- Be Patient and Professional." *Field Artillery*, Oct 1993, p. 6

The good NCO has never been short in confidence, either to perform the mission or to inform the superior that he or she was interfering with traditional NCO business. -SMA William G. Bainbridge, "We Have Met the Challenge." *ARMY*, Oct 1978, p. 27

If a selection of good sergeants and corporals be made by the officer at the head of the regiment, and if that officer

will only allow those individuals to do their duty, there is not the least doubt that they will do it. -diary entry by unknown British sergeant, Peninsular Campaign, c. 1812, *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations*, p. 214

### Understand NCO Authority

Command authority is not limited to commissioned officers.... A *commander* is any leader who directs and controls soldiers as an official part of his duties.... Enlisted members of the Army can have command authority. A tank commander, squad leader, section leader, or platoon sergeant uses command authority to direct and control. -FM 22-600-20, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1986, pp. 17, 18, signed by GEN John A. Wickham

A colonel does not command 3,000 men; a major 1,000 men; a captain 250. The colonel commands three battalions; the major four companies; the captain four platoons; the platoon commander four squads; the squad leader the largest command of all. Let us not forget it. - GEN De Maud'Huy, *A Military Testament*, from a 3d Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 3d ID letter 2 Dec 1969, in "Officer/Noncommissioned Officer Relationships." USASMA Paper, Group #13, Class #2

A sergeant in the Army, if he's a squad leader or tank commander, is a commander just like an officer. No difference whatever. It's just the smallest tactical element. -GEN William E. DePuy, address TRADOC Commander's Conference, Dec 10-11, 1975

Never forget that the noncommissioned officers comprise the first echelon of command. -MG W. A. Cunningham, memorandum "Proper Utilization of Noncommissioned Officers." 3 Sep 1963, p. 5

There is only one chain of command in our Army, and it's composed of officers *and* NCOs. -COL Dandridge M. (Mike) Malone, *Small Unit Leadership: A Commonsense Approach*, 1983, p. 52

### Understand NCO Leadership

Noncommissioned Officers.

a. *Role*. The noncommissioned officers are the leaders and instructors of their units. All basic instruction of enlisted men is given by noncommissioned officers. Observance of this fundamental greatly increases the prestige of group leaders and enhances the discipline of the group.

b. *Scope of training*. Sergeants assigned the platoons are trained as platoon leaders. Where practicable in rifle

companies, sergeants assigned to rifle platoons are also trained as leaders of mortar and light machine-gun sections. They are instructed in the tactics of composite groupings, such as the rifle platoon, reinforced by a light machine-gun section, acting as an outpost support; advance or rear party or reconnaissance detachment.

c. *Schools*. The purpose of schools is to equip noncommissioned officers with the necessary knowledge and skill to lead and instruct their units in an effective manner. They teach the tactical procedure governing the employment of small units and develop the pertinent methods of instruction.

d. *Administrative and disciplinary responsibility*. Noncommissioned officers should become accustomed to the exercise of command through the performance of administrative and disciplinary duties as well as the duties of instructors and tactical leaders. Each leader should be taught that his exercise of authority over his unit is complete and extends to all phases of the soldier's life. -FM 7-5, *Infantry Field Manual*, 1940, pp. 8-9, signed by General of the Army George C. Marshall

NCOs found that the best way to understand the commander's intent was through the bottom-up rehearsal process. Bottom-up rehearsal facilitated fine tuning of basic plans and helped in the development of contingency plans such as re-arming, chemical decontamination, and re-supply on the move.... If the senior NCOs were attuned to the commander's intent, understood what he really wanted to do, and had a good support channel working, that freed the commander to focus on the battle. -lessons learned from Desert Storm, TRADOC Pam 525-100-4, *Leadership and Command on the Battlefield: Noncommissioned Officer Corps*, 1994, pp. 8, 15

The experiences of units at the National Training Center demonstrate conclusively the need for innovative thinking and initiative. Units that are the most effective tactically at the NTC are those whose junior leaders, both officers and NCOs, demonstrate an understanding of their higher commander's intent and are not afraid to act on their own initiative. -GEN John A. Wickham, *Collected Works*, 1987, p. 305

NCOs directly supervise more than 80 percent of the soldiers in the Army. -FM 22-600-20, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1986, p. 8, signed by GEN John A. Wickham

Army noncommissioned officers...constitute about three-quarters of the Army's leadership. -COL (MG) Kenneth W. Simpson and CSM Oren L. Bevins, "NCOES Instills Professionalism at Every NCO Level." *ARMY*, Oct 1989, p. 183

The qualities for leadership are not much different for an NCO than for a commissioned officer, but the NCO's job is harder. -COL Jim I. Hunt, in "The Intangibles of Being a Good NCO." *Recruiting & Career Counseling Journal*, Oct 1977, p. 10

It is difficult to be a good noncommissioned officer. If it had been easy, they would have given it to the officer corps. -SMA William A. Connelly, *The Sergeants Major of the Army: On Leadership and the Profession of Arms*, 1996, p. 21

### **Understand and Use the NCO Support Channel**

Prior to 1977 the NCO support channel was regarded as informal. However, a 20 Dec 1976 change to AR 600-20 formalized the NCO support channel and expanded its functions. The NCO support channel is now directive in nature within established policies and orders. -FM 22-600-20, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1986, p. 23, signed by GEN John A. Wickham

The Army has but one chain of command. The NCO support channel, which AR 600-20 authorizes, parallels and reinforces it. Both are means of communication and control. For the chain of command to work most efficiently, the NCO support channel must be operating. -DA Pam 600-25, *US Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*, 1987, p. 8

The NCO support channel...is used for exchanging information; providing reports; *issuing instructions, which are directive in nature*; accomplishing routine but important activities in accordance with command policies and directives. Most often, it is used to execute established policies, procedures, and standards involving the performance, training, appearance, and conduct of enlisted personnel. *Its power rests with the chain of command*. -FM 22-600-20, *The Duties, Responsibilities and Authority of NCO's*, 1977, p. 53 [Note on the importance of the routine:] Do not assume that the routine is unimportant. On the contrary, the unit that cannot perform its everyday tasks routinely can never perform the unusual. And the unusual, as you know, is commonplace on the battlefield. -GEN William C. Westmoreland, address to SGMs, *Addresses*, Vol 4, 1969, p. 85

### **Recognize the Importance of NCOs**

I had the opportunity to address the Noncommissioned Officers Association at the end of last month in Nashville, Tennessee. They represent a source of

tremendous national strength- our Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

I talked to them about the changes the Army has been through and will go through in the future. I told them that for the United States Army the 21st Century began with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, kicking off a period of unprecedented physical and cultural change. I wanted them to understand that shifting from a threat-based force to a capabilities-based force while at the same time managing a tremendous and rapid drawdown was an exceptional challenge- and we did it right. We kept our highest priority on taking care of people and keeping the force trained and ready. And the NCOs were absolutely key to this success.

Managing this kind of change is simply impossible without the best NCOs in the world. It takes NCOs with adaptability to quickly adjust to changing missions and training challenges. It takes NCOs to maintain standards during a turbulent time. It takes NCOs with true compassion to take care of soldiers through the uncertainty of force reductions. Most important, it takes NCOs with the professional dedication to stay the course.

I wanted them to know that at the same time we have endured this period of unprecedented change, we have had many remarkable achievements. Our successes are well known: Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, Liberia, the Summer Olympics in Atlanta. In every case NCOs have been at the center of the action, on the ground leading their soldiers and leading the Army to success.

One of the major objectives of my visit was to talk about the future of the Army. They needed to know that important change will continue, and they need to be confident that the Army knows where we are going. We also know that NCOs will be even more important to our success in the future. They are an essential element of our Force XXI process. NCOs are on the ground training and leading soldiers and working with industry representatives as we experiment with information age technologies that will carry us into the next century.

While much has changed and will continue to change in the Army, we have several constants that are a source of strength today and provide bridges to our past and our future. Two of the most important are our commitment to quality soldiers and our high professional standards. NCOs are the keepers of our standards. There is no question that quality people and high professional standards gave us soldiers of exceptional capability who grew to become the outstanding NCOs throughout our force today. We will not break that chain- it's a formula that has given us the best armed forces in the world.

So very much of the future of our armed forces depends on the strength and quality of the NCO corps. Regardless of how uncertain the future may appear, we must ensure that we preserve the traditions and institutions that have brought the NCO corps and our

total force to where we are today. American NCOs are the envy of the world. No army in the world today can hope to achieve our standards of modern professionalism or capability without a competent, compassionate, dedicated, and empowered NCO corps such as ours. The United States has produced an NCO corps whose dedication to Army values and high standards makes us the best armed forces in the world. They are truly the strong "Backbone of the Army." *Soldiers Are Our Credentials*. -GEN Dennis J. Reimer, memorandum "Noncommissioned Officers Association." 18 Jul 1997, pp. 1-2

General Andrei Nikolayev, deputy chief of the Russian General Staff...was on a two-week tour of military bases in the United States. After visiting the first base and seeing our noncommissioned officers in action, he told one of his aides, "I know that these men and women wearing sergeants' uniforms are really officers in disguise." But as he went from base to base and talked with the NCOs, Nikolayev came to realize they really were not officers. He was stunned and after two weeks told [Secretary of Defense William] Perry that, "No military in the world has the quality of NCO...found in the United States." He went on to say, "That's what gives America its competitive military advantage." Our NCOs are one reason we have the best military in the world. - GEN Dennis J. Reimer, "Leadership for the 21st Century." *Military Review*, Jan-Feb 1996, p. 5

The whole Army looks to its sergeants.... America's Army has followed its sergeants to hell and back. -GEN Gordon R. Sullivan, "The Chief's View of NCO Leadership Challenges." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1994, p. 8

The health of the Army is directly related to and influenced by the health of the NCO Corps. NCO leadership has sustained the institution, made it grow and flourish. -GEN Gordon R. Sullivan, *Collected Works*, 1995, p. 109

Noncommissioned officers [are] the heart and soul of our force. They are the heart because they determine our pulse.... They are the Army's soul because they represent and demand the soldierly virtues of dedication, and discipline, and the sense of responsibility.... If you look at the history of our Army and you look at the peaks and valleys of the efficiency of our force, look at the status of the NCO corps at that particular time. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, pp. 8, 68

NCOs...are the guts of the Army. -GEN Donn A. Starry, "This Is a Tough Business." *Soldiers*, Oct 1985, p. 23

When I joined the 3d Infantry Division as a Second Lieutenant, my BC would not see me until I spent two

weeks in each section and each NCOIC "chopped off" that I was qualified. That was 50 years ago! The NCO is still the linchpin of the Army- that hasn't changed. - GEN Walter T. Kerwin, "When I Joined..." *Field Artillery*, Aug 1989, p. 10

There never has been a good Army without a good noncommissioned officer corps. -GEN Bruce C. Clarke to the first NCO Academy Class, 1949, in "On Leadership." *Soldiers*, Mar 1985, p. 28

An Army's chain of command is no stronger than its critical link- the noncommissioned officer. -MG I. D. White, in "U.S. Constabulary Builds an NCO Academy." *Armored Cavalry Journal*, May-Jun 1950, p. 36

Whether it's the first-term private that they teach the fundamentals of soldiering, or the second lieutenant they gently show the art of leadership, our NCOs provide the balance that keeps our force steady and the backbone that keeps us strong. -MG Paul E. Funk, "The NCO's Role Is Crucial in Setting the Army's Standards." *Armor*, Nov-Dec 1992, p. 3

Squad leaders, platoon sergeants, and first sergeants can make or break any Army program. -SMA Leon L. Van Autreve, "The NCO at the Apex." *ARMY*, Oct 1974, p. 17

Without competent noncommissioned officers, there can be no sure military guardianship of the republic. -Ernest F. Fisher, *Guardians of the Republic: A History of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps of the U.S. Army*, 1994, p. ix

To the guys who make the Army work. -inscription by Tom Clancy to the Army Noncommissioned Officer Corps, on the title page of a copy of *Clear and Present Danger*, 1989, presented to the US Army Sergeants Major Academy Learning Resources Center by MG Kenneth W. Simpson

### **Understand the NCO's Role in Executing the Mission**

The classical representation of the role of the noncommissioned officer has for years identified him as "the backbone of the Army," an accolade that brings to mind a vision of stalwarts who guarantee the honor, integrity, fortitude, and *esprit de corps* of the force. I would not want to alter that vision, for it is an apt portrayal of a vital role an NCO must play; nevertheless, it has long been my contention that the analogy fails to portray the far greater scope and responsibility associated with the corps of men and women who must do far more than exhibit the posture of a heroic stature.

In my view, the NCO corps provides not only a skeleton on which to hang the body but, more important, the nerve system that allows the body to function. When a finger touches hot metal, nodes of the nerve system make sure not only that the finger reacts but also that the whole hand recoils, the arm withdraws automatically, and the brain is informed so that follow-on action can be initiated. Nerves dictate the first response, quick reaction, while allowing the brain to decide whether to "send for the doctor" or "turn off the stove," or both. It is just that kind of role that the NCO corps must fulfill in any successful army.

The fundamental mission of the NCO corps is *automatic execution* of the doctrine, the customs, and the orders of a command. It is the assurance of execution that guarantees that an army can function in accord with its plans and the intentions of its commanders. -GEN Frederick J. Kroesen, "NCOs: Not Only the Backbone but the Vital Nerve System Link." *ARMY*, Sep 1992, pp. 10-11

Nothing happens in our Army unless a sergeant is involved. -GEN Crosbie E. Saint and CSM George L. Horvath, "'Sergeants' Time' Paces Readiness in USAREUR." *ARMY*, Oct 1989, p. 84

Noncommissioned officers are the best judges on the ground. Commanders should use their wisdom and know-how to improve things. -GEN Bernard W. Rogers, in *Guardians of the Republic: A History of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps of the U.S. Army*, 1994, p. 373

Officers know that military operations require a clear statement of intent. They also must realize that any task an officer assigns an NCO requires concise guidance to focus followers and direct them toward achieving the unit's shared purpose. Without clear guidance or a statement of intent, orders become riddles and NCOs are left to ponder their meaning and purpose. -MG John A. Dubia and CSM James C. McKinney, "The Officer-NCO Team: The Touchstone of Army Leadership for the 21st Century." *Field Artillery*, Jun 1994, pp. 1-2

Sergeants operate where the action is, in direct control of men who get the job done. That is why they need that rawhide toughness they are famous for, and why they have...human understanding. -MG Aubrey S. Newman, *Follow Me*, 1981, p. 103

Because [one] division commander took the time to bring his command sergeant major into the process [of implementing a new plan], he brought the rest of the division's NCOs into the plan as well. Immediately, the NCOs understood that in order for the officers of their unit to be successful, the necessary control measures had

to be in place to meet the commander's objective. From that, we leveraged every available technology, technique, procedure, and leadership skill to achieve success. [A commander's objectives can] only be obtained through two axes of advance- the NCO and officer working together. -SMA Gene C. McKinney, "Meeting Leadership Challenges as a Team." *Military Review*, Jan-Feb 1996, p. 13

In combat it's not the big stuff but the little things that give you grief. The big things you train for, but the little things are often overlooked in training. Things like weapons cleaning and maintenance, fire discipline and ammo conservation, and not sleeping because you know you'll be home in 48 hours. The little things we sometimes don't do in training exact a heavy price in combat. That's NCO business, and can make the difference between the success or failure of the mission. -CSM Jimmie W. Spencer, letter 1 Sep 1997

NCOs have to be a lot more than just support if the Army is to accomplish its mission. Vague decisions and orders, incomplete planning, overlooked logistic requirements, and a dozen other problems are laid at the doorstep of the NCO to be solved. -CSM Ralph L. Sundin, "Leadership and the NCO: Redefinition Is Needed." *ARMY*, May 1986, p. 5

### **Support NCOs in the Execution of Their Duties**

The Army's readiness depends upon the effectiveness of its leaders and their "ready" spirit. Our leaders function best when the chain of command is used properly. Thus, we must concentrate efforts on making it work; used properly, the chain of command is a lifeline; used improperly, it becomes a choker, snuffing out initiative. If the chain of command is used to kill initiative, it will also throttle the Army's effectiveness as a fighting force.

To be fully ready, the Army must maintain a chain of command which provides freedom for junior leaders- commissioned and noncommissioned- to make decisions, to lead their units and care for their men in their own way, consistent with professional standards. They must be granted the chance to operate without a senior looking over their shoulders, making decisions for them or second-guessing them.

About eight years ago, an articulate young officer wrote an article entitled "Freedom to Fail." His point was that all the immediate, minute-to-minute supervision, control and pressure from his higher commanders to keep the unit looking good on the charts discouraged junior leaders from trying new ways to make their units more effective. Despite its title, the article sought not so much the freedom to fail as the freedom to try.

It has been my observation that senior commanders are often surprised at how well their juniors operate when given appropriate freedom. When it frees junior leaders, the chain of command multiplies and enriches their effectiveness. Our readiness to fight depends upon the professional ability, experience, and self-confidence of all our leaders, but especially our junior commissioned and noncommissioned ones, and on strong and responsive bonds of support and encouragement in the chain of command. -GEN Creighton W. Abrams, "Readiness: To Fight a War, To Keep the Peace." *ARMY*, Oct 1973, p. 19

The position of respect and leadership accorded the noncommissioned officer in the chain of command depends directly on the degree of authority and responsibility that he is allowed to exercise. -AR 615-15, *Enlisted Personnel*, 1954, p. 9, signed by GEN Matthew B. Ridgway

The company officers must sustain the Noncommissioned Officers in the exercise of their authority. -*Officers' Manual*, 1906, p. 177

The officer has to be the resource obtainer, and that primarily means soldiers and dollars. The officer has to articulate to the chain of command what it takes to train and maintain the unit. -MG Donald R. Infante and MSG Norman J. Oliver, "The Officer and the NCO: Who Does What?" *Officers' Call*, Mar-Apr 1989, p. 5

During [WWI] we lost our old noncommissioned officer group. They have become officers, or they are gone. Did we appreciate them fully? We must surely do so now. It was they who helped to make our tasks so easy before the war. It is their absence that so complicates matters now.... Now is the time to commence the building of noncommissioned officers for the next war. -MAJ B. G. Chynoweth, "The Enlisted Apprentice." *Infantry Journal*, Nov 1921, p. 490

Putting stripes on a man's sleeve doesn't by itself make him a leader with assurance. The promoted private may have given signs before you made him of having the stuff a Noncom needs. But you, as the leader from whom he has received his authority, are still the man he must look to for his backing and for specific instances of the way to lead men. And some company or platoon commanders never seem to learn that their own faults of leadership are usually reflected in those of their assistants, though many Noncoms do rise above ineffectual or uncertain leadership....

A new Noncom needs some words of encouragement and advice from you- and he shouldn't have to seek them. As his leader it's your proper job to keep an extra close eye on him for a while after he is made- and more

for the purpose of finding things to explain and praise than to blame...The way to help him most by praise is to give him that praise within the hearing of his men... Nothing helps an uncertain leader more than a clearly spoken expression of appreciation. -"The Noncom." *Infantry Journal*, Sep 1945, pp. 6, 7

The chain of command must support the Army and the NCO. There are certain responsibilities every noncommissioned officer has. The NCOs know that the chain of command demands that they be knowledgeable in order to carry out those responsibilities. At the same time, the NCO looks to the chain of command for guidance and assistance in those areas in which he has no control. -CSM John M. Stephens, "Fighting the System." *Armor*, Jan-Feb 1985, p. 8

[Noncommissioned officers] should be upheld in every way so that they may impart their sense of duty and esprit de corps to the younger noncommissioned officers. -SSG Alfred Hahn, "Selection of Non-Commissioned Officers." *Infantry Journal*, Sep 1923, p. 268

### Understand the NCO's Role in Training

As leaders we have a responsibility to plan our training in sufficient detail. When I say plan training, I am not talking about a wave of a hand at some chart that looks good. I am talking about determining what the mission of the organization is and what the critical tasks are associated with your accomplishing that mission and then planning out in detail how you are going to accomplish those. That involves not just the officers, but also the noncommissioned officers.

There is no differentiation between NCO and officer when it comes to training. Leaders are responsible for the execution of training- responsible for what I call pre-execution checks. You must make sure that, tactically, every minute of training is sound, that you have thought it through, that you have the right scenario, that you have the right piece of terrain over which to run your training, that you know the tactics, techniques, and procedures that you want to accomplish. Then you do what I call the administrative preexecution checks to assure that everybody who is a leader is prepared properly to accomplish the training. Then you must work through all the minutia that causes training to be bad if you do not think it through ahead of time. Then you go out and execute that training and assess the training through an after-action review....

The NCO is...key to success in large-scale exercises. Our doctrine hinges on the correct performance of large-scale operations. Training at the NTC or in large joint exercises such as REFORGER provide added realism,

and it also enables us to practice integrating combat power at higher levels. Maneuvering battalions or brigades at Fort Irwin challenges everybody, from the soldier to the brigade commander. Not only must the NCO face the challenges posed to him personally, but he must also facilitate the officers' training by freeing them to concentrate on planning and executing the integration of combat power. Training provides the opportunity for building unit teams, but it can only happen through the work of sergeants. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, pp. 69, 25

We want noncommissioned officers to become involved early in the development of the training plan...because they are a very important part of that plan. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, "Vuono, Gates Address NCO Training, Upgrades." *Army Times*, 24 Jul 1989, p. 13

Training problems and responsibilities for training differ at every level of command. Generals assign missions and resources and provide broad goals. Colonels and lieutenant colonels decide what is to be done, allocate time, set priorities, provide support, train and coach the trainers, conduct and evaluate unit training. Captains and lieutenants decide how the training is to be done, conduct unit training, and evaluate individual training. The sergeants- the NCO chain of command- prepare, conduct, and evaluate individual training. Noncommissioned officers are thus at the heart of the Army training system, for individual training is the primary responsibility of the NCO corps. It is what I call sergeants' business....

As training responsibilities change somewhat at each level of the NCO chain, there is a difference in what training is conducted at each level. At the first sergeant, platoon sergeant level, it is much more troop-leading than skill-oriented, but, down the chain, the balance begins to shift more to pure skill training. At squad leader and fire team leader level, the emphasis is almost solely on skill training.... Good, sound training is the only thing that can keep an outfit moving- doing its job when command and control is difficult. -GEN Donn A. Starry, "Sergeants' Business." *Military Review*, May 1978, pp. 6, 7, 5

If the exercise is subsequently discussed in the officers' mess, it was probably worth while; if there is argument over it in the sergeants' mess it was a good exercise; while, if it should be mentioned in the corporals' room, it was an undoubted success. -Field Marshal Sir A. P. Wavell, "The Training of the Army for War." *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, May 1933, p. 268

We are coming back to the old-fashioned training, and I want the cadets to learn in particular what every old



sergeant is supposed to know. -Napoleon, 1809, *The Mind of Napoleon*, p. 218

### Support NCOs in Conducting Training

The...chain of command must back up the first-line leaders who conduct training. This is done in many ways: by allocating time, resources, and clear guidance based on a logical plan; by diagnosing and solving problems beforehand; by eliminating detractors; and by creating an environment supportive of good training. The efficient use of time and other training assets dictates that we must aggressively search for creative training approaches and opportunities. Our actions must display to all that there is nothing more important- and, if we do it right, nothing more interesting- than training.

The chain of command must also exhibit tolerance. Mistakes are inevitable during training. It is training, not testing. Soldiers are there to learn, not to make leaders look good. The responsibility is to teach. We must encourage an environment in which trainers have the freedom to experiment, to make mistakes, correct and learn from those experiences.

Equally important, the chain of command must develop the training leadership skills of those leaders who actually conduct training. I look to the lowest echelon with a staff to handle these important responsibilities. In most cases, that is the battalion. Echelons above battalion must set goals, clear the air of detractors, and provide support that is beyond the capabilities of battalion-sized units. The situation is simply this: the whole chain of command must work together as a team to plan, conduct, and support good training. -GEN Edward C. Meyer, "United States Army: The Chief of Staff." *Army Trainer*, Fall 1981, pp. 2-3

Commanders must determine their priorities and lay out training programs at least 90 days in advance at the brigade level. Once the commitment of time is made to companies- and it should be no less than 30 days in advance- each level of command must act to protect that commitment so that our junior officers, their NCOs, and the individual Soldier understand the task at hand.... Commanders at every level need to become "heatshields"... We must all be heat shields for our subordinates and must insist they be the same for theirs. -GEN Edward C. Meyer, *E. C. Meyer*, 1983, pp. 58, 31, 123

Commanders at all echelons [must] minimize the distractors that hinder the NCO in fulfilling his responsibility. -*Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Study*, Vol 2, 1986, p. J-5

The first line supervisor can't [train individual soldiers] by himself; he'll need assistance. This assistance is in the form of time for training, training areas, equipment, field and technical manuals, TEC lessons, and ammunition. It's the job of the officer corps to provide these assets. - MG John W. McEnery, "Who Is Responsible for Individual Training?" *Armor*, Mar-Apr 1977, pp. 6-7

Commanders must ensure that the signals they send their trainers are the right ones since commanders set the pattern of habits that trainers throughout the Army will deliberately adopt. -DA Pam 600-25, *US Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*, 1987, p. 23

### Understand the NCO's Importance in Combat

In battle after battle, when officers went down, Americans counted on a corporal or sergeant to take charge. It happened at Concord, where Minuteman NCO Amos Barrett of the Massachusetts Militia took charge after his lieutenant fell wounded. It happened at Utah Beach, where Staff Sergeant Harrison Summers led a small group of paratroopers to clear a vital beach exit. It happened at Landing Zone X-Ray in Vietnam, when Sergeant Ernie Savage assumed command of a trapped platoon- he got them out. [In Mogadishu], with Rangers pinned down under fire, SGT Bob Jackson led a relief force forward. "Those are my guys," he said, "and I've got to be helping them." -GEN Gordon R. Sullivan, "The Chief's View of NCO Leadership Challenges." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1994, p. 8

The victory in Operation Desert Storm must be remembered above all as a monument to the Army's corps of noncommissioned officers- the squad leaders, tank commanders, section chiefs, platoon sergeants, first sergeants, and command sergeants major in combat, combat support, and combat service support units- men and women who won the battle where it counted: up close and personal.... Our sergeants [translated our] vision into the tactics, techniques, and procedures that molded the youth of America into tough, disciplined soldiers who fought with ferocious resolve and yet could render humanitarian assistance with compassion. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1987, p. 381

The key to our success in Desert Storm was our superb NCO leadership. -GEN Frederick M. Franks, "Frankly Speaking." *NCO Journal*, Fall 1993, p. 8

On [the] battlefield, the difference between victory and defeat very likely will be the leadership of NCOs. -GEN John A. Wickham, *Collected Works*, 1987, p. 75

The commander who lacks the moral courage and the professional skill to develop and maintain a thoroughly competent corps of noncommissioned officers throughout his command thereby demonstrates his inability to assume the responsibilities of leadership in combat. Such a commander forfeits the confidence and respect of his subordinates. He destroys the morale of his organization. He will surely fail in battle. It has been clearly demonstrated in this war, as in past wars, that noncommissioned officers are the backbone of the Army. Success in combat depends upon the character and qualifications of the noncommissioned officers commanding small units. They must be outstanding leaders with a high sense of duty and a strong will. They must be resourceful and willing to assume responsibility. In order to insure that our noncommissioned officers are equal to the tasks that lie ahead of them, commanders of all echelons will give their personal attention to improving the quality and prestige of those noncommissioned officers who *exercise command responsibilities*. -War Department Circular 70, *Noncommissioned Officers*, 1944, p. 1, signed by General of the Army George C. Marshall

[The 37th Tank Bn during WWII] was separated from other friendly units, and set up an all-around defensive position for the night. On one flank a tank section under the command of a sergeant was sent out to provide security. The sergeant...put one of his tanks in a haystack, pretty well camouflaged. The other he put in a barn. Neither could be seen from the road, but both had a good view of it. Then he sent one man about 150 yards forward, and gave him a field telephone and instructions to be alert for anything moving down the road.... When morning came the area was shrouded in dense fog [and] a column of German tanks came on down the road, passing the man with the field phone. He counted them as they went by, ten in all, and warned his sergeant.... The two Shermans knocked out seven of the enemy tanks, driving away the other three. "In the normal, humdrum, day-to-day training program," [GEN Creighton] Abrams would observe in telling about this incident many times in later years, "people get up and they talk about camouflage, and they talk about security, and then they talk about guarding yourself during periods of limited visibility. Well, here was a fellow who remembered, who retained, all of those things that were important on that particular day to that particular job, and he applied them." Abrams said that he had always been very grateful for that sergeant's outstanding professionalism: "I just wouldn't have wanted ten enemy tanks in the command post before breakfast." -Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times*, pp. 60-61

When once a new officer or noncommissioned officer understands just how to fight a platoon, he then understands the principles for commanding a company, a battalion, a regiment, or a division, because there is no change in basic theory whatever, up or down the scale. The one difference is simply that the distances are greater, and this changes the logistical problem. But the tactical problem remains identically the same, whatever the size of the unit. -GEN J. Lawton Collins, "Stress the Fundamentals." *Combat Forces Journal*, Nov 1952, p. 13

[NCOs] must love initiative and must hold what ground they gained to the utmost. It often happens that a sergeant or even a corporal may decide a battle by the boldness with which he seizes a bit of ground and holds it. -General of the Armies John J. Pershing, WWI, *The Story of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps*, p. 15

Noncommissioned officers have throughout the history of our Army been riding to the rescue of both the soldiers they lead and the commander they support. -MG Paul E. Funk, "The NCO's Role Is Crucial in Setting the Army's Standards." *Armor*, Nov-Dec 1992, p. 3

Combat studies of [the Korean War] showed that in every outstanding performance by an infantry company there was conspicuous participation by a number of noncommissioned officers. -Ernest F. Fisher, "Uniquely American NCO Corps Had Roots in European Armies." *ARMY*, Oct 1989, p. 191

[During the Civil War] at Seiver's Ford in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Sgt. Conrad Schmidt of the 2d U.S. Cavalry responded decisively when his superior officer, Captain Theophilus Rodenbough, was dismounted and critically wounded in a failed cavalry charge. As the incident was later described: "Dazed and bloodied, facing certain capture and probably death from his wounds, Rodenbough felt a strong arm slap across his back, a hand squarely grab the back of his belt and lift him off his feet.... In an unprecedented display of personal courage, unselfishness, and brute strength, Sgt. Conrad Schmidt singlehandedly rescued the acting Regimental Commander while under fire and carried him to safety."... For his display of intrepidity, Schmidt was awarded the Medal of Honor. -Dr. John Finnegan, "The Civil War NCO." *INSCOM Journal*, Aug-Sep 1989, p. 32

[During the Indian Wars, a cavalry detachment was besieged by Indians. On the fourth day, the commander, MAJ George Forsyth, one of the severely wounded,] knew they must starve soon, and there was no sign of relief, though another pair of scouts had been sent out

after the first two. He told the able-bodied to leave him and the other wounded and save themselves. Every man shouted a refusal. [1SG W. H. H. McCall, swore] "We've fought together," he said, "and, by God, if need be will die together." [The scouts did get through, and were rescued by the Buffalo Soldiers of the 10th Cavalry, riding 100 miles in two days.] -Fairfax Downey, *Indian-Fighting Army*, pp. 74-75

It is, indeed, singular, how a man loses or gains caste with his comrades from his behaviour, and how closely he is observed in the field. The officers, too, are commented upon and closely observed. The men are very proud of those who are brave in the field, and kind and considerate to the soldiers under them. An act of kindness done by an officer has often during the battle been the cause of his life being saved. -Rifleman Harris, 1848, in *Rank and File*, p. 145

Noncommissioned officers...are the heart of the infantry. -Marshal Maurice de Saxe, *My Reveries*, 1732, p. 215

Our soldiers can do a great deal more under pressure than people think. You'd have to see them perform in combat to believe it. -SMA George W. Dunaway, *The Sergeants Major of the Army: On Leadership and the Profession of Arms*, 1996, p. 7

### **Understand the NCO's Importance to Officer Success**

All I ask of anyone [is] do what is right. Leaders must look to their soldiers and focus on the good. No soldier wakes up in the morning and says, "Okay, how am I going to screw this up today?" Soldiers want to do good and commanders should give them that opportunity. An outstanding soldier, Command Sergeant Major Richard Cayton, the former US Forces Command (FORSCOM) sergeant major, summed up a leader's responsibility this way: "Your soldiers will walk a path and they will come to a crossroad; if you are standing at the crossroad, where you belong, you can guide your soldiers to the right path and make them successful." -GEN Dennis J. Reimer, "Leadership for the 21st Century." *Military Review*, Jan-Feb 1996, p. 6

[During the 1996 AUSA Army Ten-Miler] a young soldier ran past me and said, "Hang in there, sergeant major, you'll make it." I tell you I would've quit if it weren't for him. -GEN Dennis J. Reimer, in "Annual Meeting- an Unqualified Success." *AUSA News*, Dec 1996, p. 15

There should be no question about the importance of the NCO; unless he is well trained, highly disciplined, loyal, and a leader you can expect very little from that

organization. -GA George C. Marshall, 1941, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol 2, p. 546

Effective NCOs enable commanders to *command!* - TRADOC Pam 525-100-4, *Leadership and Command on the Battlefield: Noncommissioned Officer Corps*, 1994, p. 17

You spend half your life taking care of soldiers and all of a sudden you turn around and find out that all along *they've* been taking care of *you*. -GEN William B. Rosson, in *Top Sergeant*, 1995, p. 135

[GEN Creighton] Abrams knew a good job when he saw one, and he delighted in telling about the best leaders as he encountered them. One of his favorites was Sergeant Love, a non-commissioned officer he had known for a long time. Love was assigned to one of the tank battalions, stationed at Gelnhausen, and one day Abrams went to see him. He asked Love if he had gotten any new people as the result of a recent buildup. "Four," Love replied. "Tell me about them," said Abrams. "Well," said Love, "there's Private Henry Johnson" (or whatever his name was). "He hasn't finished high school, and he wants to drive a tank. But he can't drive a car yet, so I'm sending him to GED to get his high school equivalency. I've had him over to the house- he's about the same age as my boy. He's going to be all right." Then Love went on to tell in the same detail about each of the other three new men he had received, all without a notebook or any notes. When he had finished, Abrams asked him, "How's the discipline in your platoon?" "We've never had a delinquency," said Love. "All we've gotten are good people." The first person Abrams told about the visit when he got back was his military lawyer. "If all the sergeants in the Army were like Sergeant Love," he said, "you wouldn't have a job." -Lewis Sorley, letter 9 Jan 1997

You are dependent for your success upon the efficiency of your subordinates, your noncommissioned officers and your men. -COL Fred H. Sargent, *Hints to Newly Appointed Officers*, 1920, p. 49

Soldiers recognize dedicated leaders who believe in unit service. They will give their all to the NCO who does what is best for the unit instead of just doing what looks good to higher headquarters and the next promotion board. -DA Pam 600-25, *US Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*, 1987, p. 18

Most officers can single out one NCO as having been especially important to their success.... Never underestimate the influence of that sergeant. -"Sergeants Make It Happen." *Field Artillery*, Aug 1989, p. 25

Men rise through study, and in success they bring success to their leaders. -MAJ B. G. Chynoweth, "The Enlisted Apprentice." *Infantry Journal*, Nov 1921, p. 487

The captain may spend many hours each day with his company in instructive and administrative duties, and he may continue this line of work for months, and yet, if he is not supported by an intelligent, able, and industrious body of sergeants and corporals, the result of his efforts will not be in proportion with the time and energy expended; in fact, disappointment and discouragement will very naturally be the consequence. -ILT Gustave A. Wieser, "The Company Non-Commissioned Officer: How Can His Efficiency Be Best Promoted and His Re-Enlistment Be Secured?" *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Mar-Apr 1909, p. 219

Regardless of the kind of unit you're in, it ought to be an "elite" outfit, because its NCOs can make it one. -SMA William G. Bainbridge, *Top Sergeant*, 1995, p. 148

It is the Noncommissioned Officer who performs a majority of the leadership and training functions in today's Army. Our younger soldiers, and many officers, look to the NCO for leadership and guidance. From the earliest days of the republic, it has always been, "Go ask Sarge, he'll know what to do." -CSM Walter W. Krueger, "President/CEO of the NCOA." *INSCOM Journal*, Aug-Sep 1989, p. 18

### Think About NCOs

The subject of NCOs goes to the essence of our Army. It's a subject every officer should know as much as possible about. -"Spotlighting the NCO." *Officers' Call*, Mar-Apr 1989, p. 3

Whenever I talk to leaders, especially officers, I get their attention by questioning how much interest they really have in their enlisted soldiers. I do this by asking what the selection rates to major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel were this year. Almost every officer, even second lieutenants who don't have a prayer of being retained past their initial term of obligated service, can tell me within 2 percent the right answers.... Then I ask what the selection rate was for sergeant first class for the list [most recently released] and I get blank stares. -COL Ron Dabbieri, Chief, Combat Support Career Division, "Misplaced Compassion." *Engineer*, Jul 1990, p. 47

Let us [give NCOs] the opportunity to share the wealth of knowledge in our different schools.... Let us reinforce the backbone. -CPT Fred A. Darden, "More Time for Sergeants." *Infantry*, Dec 1960, Jan-Feb 1961, p. 24

We are very much concerned today that men should be able to rise in station according to their abilities to accomplish. In every trade or profession, we gain strength and freshness only through the free growth of the individuals....

There is no trade more susceptible of imaginative treatment than the trade of the soldier. Yet there is no trade in which the leaders make so little use of the native curiosity of the individual.... We school our officers. Do not neglect the enlisted men. Let them be educated, too, if they so desire. If we lead properly there will be many that will desire. Inspire them!...

The wise teaching that men should seek greatness in the attempt to serve the lowly appears to have been ignored. Apparently we look for greatness in imagining ourselves all to be generals.... Life is one long series of schools. One often wonders if we have not swung beyond the balance between technique and inspiration. At any rate, it is all for the officer. We waste no time demanding study from the enlisted man. He remains an apprentice.... There has not been quite enough thought given to the problems of the enlisted man.... It is so easy to think that the enlisted man and the mechanic are not of the "reading kind."... Many an officer has been surprised to find his noncommissioned officers studying military works. It is pitiful to think how little there is of literature that is really aimed at these men. Some of them have been as interested in their profession and as proud of the name of soldier as our major generals. Why not books for such as these? Books that will give them new ideas of the intricacies of their trade? Imaginative, inspiring books, that will stimulate their pride in service? Books that will give them our thoughts of themselves? It would be well worth while!... Give them all of the books they can absorb.... There have been excellent books for the noncommissioned officers and privates, on such subjects as leadership, patrolling, shooting, courtesies, traditions, and methods generally. But these are too few. They are a mere start.... The beginning is with the officer or enlisted man whose interest encourages him to write for the men.... What they teach themselves in their free moments will not only train them but will also teach them to love their profession. That devotion is what we desire....

Men elevate themselves through their thoughts... The problems which now confront us can be solved only through education.... The officer who encourages his men to think and to advance ideas will automatically strengthen and broaden himself.

Our greatest service, not only to our country but to ourselves as well, will come through continued study of our greatest asset, the enlisted man. -MAJ B. G. Chynoweth, "The Enlisted Apprentice." *Infantry Journal*, Nov 1921, pp. 486-490

Whether you're an officer or an NCO, remember who you are, where you came from, and who and what you represent. We were all privates or cadets once, and we all represent the soldier of the United States Army and the United States of America. We need to do it well! -SMA Julius A. Gates, conversation 8 Sep 1997

You are always on my mind. -briefing to new NCOs, *Company Officers Handbook*, 1948, p. 159

What the NCO works toward is not a group of soldiers who achieve and maintain standards because the sergeant is there standing over them. What the NCO wants is a group who knows that those standards are right for that team, and embraces those standards as its own.... The soldier doesn't clean his or her weapon to avoid a chewing out. The weapon gets cleaned because that's the right thing to do. The soldier doesn't make a decision out of fear of reprimand, but because his or her values, attitudes, and beliefs confirm that it's the right decision to make. That's self-discipline and it's the only kind of discipline that will stand up to the stress, chaos, and uncertainty of battle....

Clausewitz, who wrote about the "Principles of War"...linked discipline, training, and morale to esprit ("winning spirit"). "A unit," he wrote, "that maintains its cohesion under the most murderous fire; that cannot be shaken by the imaginary fears and resists well-founded ones with all its might; that, proud of its victories will not lose the strength to obey orders and its respect and trust for its officers even in defeat; whose physical power, like the muscles of an athlete, has been steeled by training in privation and effort;...that is mindful of all these duties and qualities by virtue of the single powerful idea of the honor of its arms- such a unit is imbued with the true military spirit." Take a look around you and you will see teams, sections, squads, and platoons just like those Clausewitz described. You'll find them anywhere there is an NCO who cares enough to correctly train and lead his or her soldiers.... Instead of a house or a skyscraper, NCOs build units. -CSM George D. Mock and SFC John K. D'Amato, "Building the Force: 'Skill, Will and Teamwork.'" *NCO Journal*, Summer 1991, pp. 19, 18

### Read the *NCO Journal*

Officers can gain valuable perspective on the NCO Corps and NCO concerns by reading the *NCO Journal*. NCOs need to encourage officers, especially young officers, to read them, and units need to *keep* them. -*Command, Leadership, and Effective Staff Support*, 1996, p. 165

I find the information [in the *NCO Journal*] helpful, not only in working with NCOs, but also for MY professional development. -MAJ Jeffrey Smith, "Reserve Components Need *Journal* Exposure." *NCO Journal*, Fall 1993, p. 26

The *NCO Journal*...contains very valuable material useful to soldiers of all ranks... Reading the *Journal*:

-Gives insight into the NCO viewpoint, their concerns, what affects their ability to train and operate, and solutions to problems.

-Can strengthen all NCO/Officer relationships, especially for young officers. Cadets and instructors involved with officer accession programs could also benefit from reading the *Journals*. Copying and making a reading packet of the articles would be most helpful to young officers.

-Can make unit training more effective by applying lessons learned on training *before* training.

-Can provide topics for professional development discussion and for unit professional development reading programs. I would recommend keeping several sets of *Journals* in a unit, with one being a reference copy. -MAJ M. M. Yamamoto, "*Journal* Useful Tool for Officers and NCOs." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1995, p. 27

### Understand What NCOs Expect from Officers

The American soldier is a proud one and he demands professional competence in his leaders.... *He wants a leader who is energetic and forceful*.... In battle, he wants to know that the job is going to be done right, with no unnecessary casualties.... I was always conscious of the fact that the higher in command that an officer rises, the more faith and trust his soldiers have to place in him. No soldier dares to ask the division commander whether the attack is well planned. No private asks the regimental commander if his battalions are properly supported with artillery fire. A great deal of trust is placed in the leadership of an American fighting unit by its men. To meet this trust, an American leader must be well trained, well disciplined, and professionally competent.

Perhaps most important is loyalty. On this factor alone battles are won or lost. To be really effective, loyalty must go three ways- up, down, and sideways. Loyalty to the man who is in command demands a sincere effort to do what he orders and even to carry out what you believe should be done if he has not ordered it.

Loyalty on the part of the leader, to the men whom he leads, is the only adequate repayment for their loyalty. This means an understanding ear for their needs and complaints, an honest answer to their questions and a convincing and courageous presentation of their just needs to higher authority.

Loyalty sideways is voluntary cooperation with the man on your right and your left. This is the real fiber of American teamwork. This is the principle of democracy- do for him what you expect him to do for you- that works when all else fails. -General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, "American Military Leadership." *Army Information Digest*, Feb 1953, pp. 5, 6

NCOs are willing to do almost anything. All they want to know is what's the standard, and then if you, the commander, are going to cause me to hold the soldiers accountable to that standard, are you going to back me up because some of them are not, and I'm going to need your help, commander, to get them to standard or out of the Army. -MG William G. Carter, Desert Storm, in TRADOC Pam 525-100-4, *Leadership and Command on the Battlefield: Noncommissioned Officer Corps*, 1994, p. 30

What do...soldiers expect? First, they expect their officer and their sergeant to be good at their jobs. Second, they expect both of you to have a high sense of duty. They expect more of their officers and their sergeants than themselves. They expect the officer and the sergeant to be selfless. They expect them to challenge the system. They expect you both to become a little bit more than what you really are. Third, they expect you to be courageous. We're not just talking about physical courage in combat because that is a given. We're talking about moral courage: the ability to take on the system and the ability every so often to let things go wrong and not get overly excited it. -MG Donald R. Infante and MSG Norman J. Oliver, "The Officer and the NCO: Who Does What?" *Officers' Call*, Mar-Apr 1989, p. 4

[NCOs expect] an officer to recognize problem areas before they produce problems.... In order to accomplish any given task successfully, an officer must understand the mission and the resources required to accomplish it. When given a mission, we expect the officer to know immediately if he has the resources to "get the job done." Don't misunderstand me, we don't expect the officer to understand every detail of every man's job (that is our responsibility), but we do expect him to recognize a finished product....

As an officer, you make the executive and command decisions, but let us take our men out and get the job done. Conversely, don't give us a free hand and pull the disappearing act. Make it your business to know what we are doing and why. If you do, and you approve of what and how we are "running the unit," back us up in our decisions. That is your job, we expect you to perform. It is as simple as that....

When an officer comes under fire (pressure from above or below, inside or outside of his command), we expect him to remain calm, exert firmness, and influence his subordinates, control his voice- and body, i.e., not gesture wildly or bounce off every available wall....

When officers infringe on set standards, it is obvious to the enlisted soldier. Consequently, the NCO is caught in the middle. When we try to correct our men, they point out an officer within the unit- one who is guilty of

an infraction we are trying to correct. The damage is obvious....

Officers should have courage. Many NCOs feel that some officers...are more concerned about personal efficiency reports than the morale and welfare of their men. We expect an officer to stand up for his men; many times this means standing up to his rating officer. The men watch; they understand; they know if their company commander or platoon leader will stand behind them....

Too many officers monopolize their command, unit, or activity for personal gain. Too many officers place their comfort, pleasure, and recreation before subordinates. Too many officers accept awards, but never recommend their subordinates. Officers should remember that we know who does the job- good or bad. If it is bad, we accept our share of the responsibility. If it is good, give us a little credit! By us, I mean the enlisted men and the NCOs, not just one or the other....

It is very important to remember that NCOs (and all subordinates) admire and "put-out" for an officer who is unselfish. "We" is a beautiful pronoun to us. -1SG John M. Liggett, "Officers and NCO's: A Working Relationship That Must Endure." *Infantry*, Nov-Dec 1972, pp. 26, 27

I expect my officer to break down the obstacles I encounter from other officers or else redirect my mission. In turn, keeping your officer informed is the key to ensuring your task is accomplished in support of the officer's mission. -an NCO, in "Officer-NCO Relations-an NCO Perspective." *Officers' Call*, Mar-Apr 1989, p. 7

NCOs know what to do in combat when given an unlawful order. But, in peacetime garrison and field settings, ethical problems are more subtle, if not more prevalent.... I can remember in a recent assignment, being asked to find a ladder when no ladders could be found. The "NCOs Make It Happen" line was tacked on somewhere at the end of the request for me to find one. When I did find one through a buddy of mine, my boss gave me a wink and knowing smile and said, "Sarge, I don't even want to know where you got it."....

We need to teach our young NCOs that if it can't be done within the system, if it can't be done legally and ethically, then it doesn't need to be done.... We must refuse to promote a mindset and philosophy that goes against the honor, honesty, and commitment to high ideals the NCO Corps should stand for. We must realize...that every unethical act done by one of us diminishes all of us.

We ought to work to develop an environment [in which] the mission is accomplished, but the "Can Do" attitude is replaced by the "Can Do, But Do It the Right Way" attitude. Being the backbone of the Army means having the "backbone" to recognize that some things are

"Officer Business," some things are "NCO Business," and some things [bending or breaking the rules] are "Nobody's Business." -MSG Jack D'Amato, "'Nobody's Business...' Creates Ethical Dilemmas." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1995, pp. 6, 7

It probably makes sense for the ranks to have separate facilities- I certainly don't want to encourage any familiarity that might breed contempt- what I think is that *they should all be served from the same pot....* In my experience the officers are served breast meat and the enlisted man's chicken is all neck. In fact, I once drew a cartoon of the two birds. One was all necks and feet- but no drumsticks. Those were on the other one, the one with all the breasts.... If the food is lousy, the officers should be the first to know. It's one thing for the captain to be told the bread's moldy- it's another thing if he has to eat it himself. -Bill Mauldin, *Mud & Guts*, 1978, p. 56

You may be able to fool those you work for; chances are you will never be able to fool those who work for you. -FM 22-600-20, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1980, p. 9, signed by GEN Edward C. Meyer

**See also Platoon Leaders**

### Respect NCOs

Pride of military distinction...is necessary in the Sergeant...without which, he will not be able to maintain that Respectability in his Station, which the nature of his Command requires; and which, in all well disciplined Armies, is very essential to the Service. -GEN George Washington, 1783, *The Writings of George Washington*, Vol 26, p. 449

[The captain must] use every possible means to keep up a proper subordination between [the noncommissioned officers] and the soldiers: For which reason he must never rudely reprimand them in presence of the men, but at all times treat them with proper respect. -MG Frederick von Steuben, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, 1779, p. 139

The more [an officer] lowers a soldier's self-esteem, the less consideration he earns for himself. [It is] more gratifying to an officer to command men whose conduct is dictated by honour than those who are only held in obedience by the fear of punishment. We may add that there is also a greater security. -Count Lancelot Turpin de Crisse, 1754, in *Command and Discipline*, pp. 141, 142

If you diminish [an NCO] in public, you're cutting off your own legs. -GEN Bruce C. Clarke, 1954, *Clarke of St. Vith*, p. 207

The normal desire of the veteran who has won his stripes by hard service is to support his officers and reduce the friction down below. Whatever is done to lessen his dignity and prestige damages morale and creates new stresses in the relations between the officer corps and the ranks [and] the military machine loses its cushion and becomes subject to increasing shock. -*The Armed Forces Officer*, 1950, p. 151, signed by Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall

For an officer to be overbearing and insulting in the treatment of enlisted men is the act of a coward. He ties the man to a tree with the ropes of discipline and then strikes him in the face, knowing full well that the man cannot strike back. -MAJ Christian Bach, address "Leadership." 1918, *Congressional Record Appendix*, Vol 88- Part 9, p. A2252

All officers, in dealing with enlisted men, will bear in mind the absolute necessity of so treating them as to preserve their self-respect. -Army Regulation in the *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Infantry of the Army of the United States*, 1917, p. 11, signed by MG Hugh L. Scott

The discipline which makes the soldier of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than to make an army. It is possible to impart instruction and give commands in such manner and in such tone of voice as to inspire in the soldier no feeling but an intense desire to obey, while the opposite manner and tone of voice can not fail to excite strong resentment and a desire to disobey. The one mode or the other of dealing with subordinates springs from a corresponding spirit in the breast of the commander. He who feels the respect which is due to others can not fail to inspire in them regard for himself, while he who feels, and hence manifests, disrespect towards others, especially his inferiors, can not fail to inspire hatred against himself. -LTG John M. Schofield, address to the United States Corps of Cadets, 1879, in *Manual for Noncommissioned Officers and Privates of Infantry of the Army of the United States*, 1917, p. 12, signed by MG Hugh L. Scott

[For the NCO] to do his job properly, he must have the respect of the troops. It is here that the attitudes of his seniors are very important. *In order to accomplish his duties properly, the NCO must have the respect and support of his seniors.* Accord your NCOs the same respect that you feel your superior officers should give you. Support your NCOs as you would expect to be supported by your company commander or your battalion commander. -*The Officer's Guide*, 1970, p. 271

You are Officers to whom men look up and on whom Officers depend. -briefing to new NCOs, *Company Officers Handbook*, 1948, p. 159

Respect given also deserves respect.... Real power comes from knowledge, not rank. -CW2 Philip Hambrick, "Back to Basics." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1993, p. 17

The only time I will look down on a soldier is when I am helping him up. -SGM Steve Sutton, in "To Live and (Almost) Die in the Army." *INSCOM Journal*, Aug-Sep 1989, p. 95

Any time you, as a leader, degrade a soldier, you have violated your contract to make subordinates winners. -MSG John McLennon, "How Do You Set Their Souls on Fire?" *NCO Journal*, Fall 1991, p. 13

### **Work to Increase the Prestige of NCOs**

A leader must seek in every possible way to build up the prestige of his junior officers and his noncommissioned officers, not to tear it down. -DA Pam 22-1, *Leadership*, 1948, p. 18, signed by General of the Army Omar N. Bradley

[Consult] with appropriate noncommissioned officers in planning the implementation of directives. The prestige of a noncommissioned officer is materially raised if he invariably has information in advance of its dissemination to the command as a whole, and if his recommendations are sought by his commander. -War Department Circular 70, *Noncommissioned Officers*, 1944, p. 2, signed by GA George C. Marshall

It has been clearly demonstrated in this war, as in past wars, that noncommissioned officers are the backbone of the Army. All unit commanders must give their personal attention to improving the quality and prestige of noncommissioned officers, especially those who exercise command responsibility. -GEN George S. Patton, 18 Nov 1944, in "Solid Chevron." *Army Trainer*, Winter 1983, p. 36

By sheer force of character, superior training, and long service this class [of noncommissioned officers] built up for itself an artificial status distinct from that of the private soldier and making more for discipline and efficiency than any other one thing.... The man who undertakes to devote his life to this line of work is entitled for his faithfulness to a higher degree of respect than the apprentice whose mind is still unmade. The man whose ability raises him above his fellows, and whose force gives him natural control over them, may be

wisely trusted to control himself. Increased respect yielded from those above and required from those below will only increase his respect for himself and his pride in his work. -Secretary of War William Taft, *Report of the Secretary of War*, 1907, pp. 79-80, 99-100

An excellent way to enhance the responsibility and prestige of the noncommissioned officers- and hence the effectiveness of the unit- is to establish noncommissioned officers' advisory councils, usually in units having over 100 enlisted men. Meeting regularly, say once a month, the councils should forward recommendations to the commanding officer on subjects of interest to the command. Questions of morale and unit efficiency should most certainly come within the purview of the councils. It is essential that all recommendations receive the attention of the major commander concerned, for failure to act on justified recommendations will defeat the whole purpose of the councils. -GEN Bruce C. Clarke, *Guidelines for the Leader and the Commander*, 1964, p. 17

The more closely the treatment accorded the sergeants approaches that given to officers, the greater prestige will these men have and the better work will they do. -COL Henry A. Finch, "Increasing the Prestige of Noncommissioned Officers." *Infantry Journal*, Jan 1920, p. 555

### **Appreciate NCOs**

Hollywood knows there's something about a sergeant. When you see a television show or a movie, the camera may focus on the officers. You know the stereotypes: the rookie lieutenant, the aggressive colonel, the intellectual general. But I guarantee you, somewhere in that presentation will be a tough old sergeant, with hashmarks up to the elbow. He stands for experience, common sense, and wisdom. He's Gary Cooper in *Sergeant York* or James Earl Jones in *Gardens of Stone*. He is Lou Gossett in *An Officer and a Gentleman*, telling candidate Mayo that the service is not about flying airplanes, it's about character.... For America, the sergeant is the Army. -GEN Gordon R. Sullivan, address "America's Noncommissioned Officer Corps- into The 21st Century." *Speech File Service*, 2nd Quarter, Fiscal Year 1994, p. 13

It is no accident that the U.S. Army NCO corps is recognized by the world's armed forces as a U.S. national strength.... Soldiers see their noncommissioned officer as someone to look up to [and] who can and will help them be winners.... The NCO also is a coach who teaches and makes winners out of those who may not have had the



opportunity to experience success before they entered the Army. The U.S. soldier...wants to be a winner, and NCOs provide a way for this to happen. -GEN Colin L. Powell and CSM Robert F. Beach, "The Strength of the NCO Corps Is a National Strategic Asset." *ARMY*, Oct 1989, pp. 47, 48, 52

The non-commissioned officer corps [is] a group of men with a dedication like you don't see anywhere else. -GEN Harold K. Johnson, *US Army Military History Institute Interview*, Vol 1, 6 Feb 1972, p. 21

In the corps of Army officers, the good ones never forget the NCOs who guided them to their successful careers. -GEN Frederick J. Kroesen, "NCOs: Not Only the Backbone but the Vital Nerve System Link." *ARMY*, Sep 1992, p. 11

It will take the hearts, hands, and heads of every soldier to build a better Army. -SMA Silas L. Copeland, "The SMA Talks to the Troops Man to Man." *Soldiers*, Dec 1971, p. 4

The word "sergeants" goes beyond their image of efficiency and toughness, and their demanding ability to get things done. They bring a special aliveness to military service.... Sergeants add spice, "tone and tint." -MG Aubrey S. Newman, *What Are Generals Made Of?*, 1987, pp. 26-27, 23

There is probably no level more loyal or more concerned with the Army's future effectiveness [than the Senior NCO]. -*Leadership for the 1970's: USAWC Study of Leadership for the Professional Soldier*, 1971, p. 58

No other grouping within the Army has received so little, worked so hard, demanded less and remained more faithful than today's noncommissioned officer corps. -"The Non-Commissioned Officer Today." *Infantry*, Jan-Feb 1974, p. 25

The best noncoms in the world are Americans; they weld the United States Army together. -COL Red Reeder, *Born at Reveille*, 1966, p. 200

The position of the non-commissioned officer is not elevated enough. -ILT C. W. Farber, "To Promote the Efficiency of Non-Commissioned Officers." *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States*, Jan 1898, p. 99

When you say someone's a sergeant, the whole world knows what you're talking about. A sergeant is tough. A sergeant is experienced. A sergeant doesn't have to play up to anybody. He isn't handicapped by wimpish personal ambition. -Michele McCormick, *Polishing Up the Brass*, 1988, p. 45

The pride of the regiment is the noncommissioned officer. -"The Non-Coms' School at Fort Andrews." *U.S. Army Recruiting News*, 15 May 1927, p. 6

Upon the hundreds and tens of hundreds of the noncommissioned officers of a modern army devolves the concrete task of actually building an army.... In a very true sense an army is constructed by its noncommissioned officers, especially the top and senior duty sergeants, who, as possibly no one will deny, constitute the foundation of the service.... An intelligent, forceful, fighting sergeant...is the one greatest agency in arousing the latent dynamic fighting force hidden in every red-blooded recruit....

Generals, colonels, and majors, for the most part, reach the privates- the bedrock of the army- only through a series of subordinates, so that the most effective and telling ideas of a more superior officer are at least partially dissipated, lost and often aborted ere they reach the all-important but inconspicuous private. In the very necessary hierarchy of rank, the sergeant or corporal stands out as the master-builder. He it is who performs the miracle of transforming an inarticulated aggregation of recruits into coordinating groups of soldiers....

The quality of the sergeant determines in a great measure the morale, the stamina, the discipline of an army. He must have, above all else, intelligence, grit, determination, vigor, health, punch, and character. If he has all this plus imagination and a burning idealism, tinctured with the glow of righteousness, he will get what is called morale and discipline across to the raw recruit....

Sergeants and corporals [are] the pillars of the army. [The] direct control and instruction, which "whips an army into shape," falls to the lot of the noncommissioned officers. They do the real work, and to them should fall a larger measure of public recognition. Don't forget the man with the chevrons when the success of the army enlists your admiration. -MAJ George F. Arps, "Science as Applied to the Selection of Noncommissioned Officers." *Infantry Journal*, Jan 1919, pp. 574-575

The non-commissioned officer...a cool, resolute man. -COL (LTG) John Sontag, *Hints for Non-Commissioned Officers on Actual Service*, 1804, p. 64

More than any other group, NCOs "made me", and I'll never forget that. -LTG Paul E. Funk, letter 8 Sep 1997

Officers [should] cherish Serjeants more than many of them do. -*Military Essayes of the Ancient Grecian, Roman, and Modern Art of War*, 1671, p. 220

NCOs make us all better officers. -LTC Terry L. Scott, in "Sarge." *Air Defense Artillery*, Jul-Aug 1989, p. 17

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### **Officer/NCO Teamwork**

One lesson is clear. Battlefield necessity is pragmatic. What works is retained. What fails is rejected. One lesson from our founding that has stood the test of time is the complementing relations and mutual respect between the American noncommissioned officer and the commissioned officer. It continues today. -FM 22-600-20, *The Duties, Responsibilities and Authority of NCO's*, 1977, p. 12

Officers and sergeants depend on one another. They work together to accomplish the mission of the unit. It is impossible for an officer to command an effective unit and accomplish the mission if the NCO doesn't insure the troops know their jobs. *Officers and NCOs must advise, assist, and learn from one another.* -FM 22-600-20, *The Army Noncommissioned Officer Guide*, 1980, p. 45, signed by GEN Edward C. Meyer

When I took command of my first battery as a lieutenant in Korea, my first sergeant was about the same age I was. The difference? He had a soldier's experience, knew the troops, and spent his time making sure we supported the guns. He taught me what an officer needed to know and was supposed to do. And, nothing changes. As Commandant of the School and CG of Fort Sill, my command sergeant major was that same noncommissioned officer, only now it was "Command Sergeant Major" Ardoin, and he continued to advise me on what my role ought to be. The point is, neither the rank nor the experience of the officer will ever supplant the unique role of the noncommissioned officer. -GEN Jack N. Merritt, "When I Took Command..." *Field Artillery*, Aug 1989, p. 23

Officer-NCO teamwork has always been the core of military leadership in our Army. The demanding responsibilities of training, maintaining, and fighting a military unit exceed the grasp of one individual. The officer and NCO must share that responsibility.... The possibilities of the information age only increase the importance of the officer-NCO leader team. The stronger the bond between officer and NCO, the greater the capacity to rapidly implement the commander's tactical decisions. -MG John A. Dubia and CSM James C. McKinney, "The Officer-NCO Team: The Touchstone of Army Leadership for the 21st Century." *Field Artillery*, Jun 1994, p. 1

The success of the U.S. Army is directly related to the quality of the professional relationships between its officers and noncommissioned officers. -MG Julius Parker, "Vantage Point." *Military Intelligence*, Jul-Sep 1989, p. 2

Between officers of all ranks and senior noncommissioned officers, the close bond between them so necessary to discipline and peak efficiency is governed by established military courtesy and based on mutual respect. I especially treasured this aspect of my military service. -MG A. S. Newman, "If the Backbone Aches, Don't Ignore It." *ARMY*, Nov 1963, p. 78

You trust someone when you feel that they are supportive of you- they keep their word, they care about you, understand you, and want to help you. It takes time to build trust. People do not trust each other until they have had time to get to know each other's motives, values, character, knowledge, and skills. Building trust between people is a slow and delicate process. If the bond of trust is injured, the wound must be quickly identified and treated by both people. The cure is for both people to communicate openly about the cause and cure of the injury. If this is not done, the bond of trust may become irreparably severed. -FM 22-100, *Military Leadership*, 1983, pp. 193-194, signed by GEN John A. Wickham

You must tell your commander the truth: the good, the bad, and the ugly. The good NCO who is listened to will always level with the commander, and then it is up to the commander to take heed or ignore it, remembering that he/she has to live with the outcome. There is a lot of material on what should be done reference leadership, but it takes intestinal fortitude to do what is right. -SMA Glen E. Morrell, letter 26 Aug 1997

Officers must understand that NCOs must work within the framework set by the officer, and get the job done. Whatever those parameters are, whether that framework is good or bad, the NCO is going to work to get the job done despite all obstacles. Those obstacles can include inadequate resources, lack of time, poor leadership- any or all of the things that cause problems in execution. By keeping in mind the effect of guidance on NCOs, officers can increase mission accomplishment and success. -CSM Jimmie W. Spencer, letter 1 Sep 1997

If you want to know how effective your officer/NCO team is, listen to how your commander or CSM introduces you. If he says, "This is my CSM," you know you have a strong team. But if he says, "This is the 101st Airborne Division's CSM," you know you're not in the same rucksack as your commander, and you need to work on your officer/NCO team. -SMA Julius A. Gates, conversation 8 Sep 1997

That unbreakable bond that develops between soldiers...is at the very heart of our profession. -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, p. 381

### Officers and NCOs Learning from Each Other

We must coach and mentor our young officers and NCOs and spend time with subordinates, talking with them face-to-face about their performance. Everyone wants feedback. We need to tell soldiers when they make mistakes and then coach them to succeed. Nothing is more important than taking the time to mentor subordinates. General William Creech, a great Air Force innovator and leader, said it best, "The first duty of any leader is to create more leaders." -GEN Dennis J. Reimer, "Leadership for the 21st Century." *Military Review*, Jan-Feb 1996, p. 8

The word "mentor" comes from the name of an ancient Greek teacher who was responsible for his student's moral, physical, and mental development. In the same context, I think that mentoring is relevant today since there is a need for us to share our knowledge, experience, and values with the less experienced members of our profession. We owe it to our subordinates and the Army to invest our time for their personal growth and professional development.

Each of us can be a mentor, whether NCO, officer, or civilian. We all have experience to give if we have the heart, the spirit, and the caring attitude to share these experiences and the lessons we derive from them. Mentoring is simply giving of your knowledge to other people. A platoon sergeant can be a mentor by taking time to share his experience with a young squad leader in order to help him or her become a better NCO. A senior NCO can help a young lieutenant with a field problem or give advice about how to deal with soldier problems and how to care for soldiers. It works at the higher ranks, too....

The Army has no formal program or checklist for mentoring. To be an effective mentor, you need the experience and wisdom of your years, and one vital quality- you have to *care*. If you really care about your profession and soldiers, then you- as a leader- will devote the time and attention to those soldiers. We can afford the time to do this in peacetime.... The payoff is increased combat readiness....

Mentoring is a key way in which we exercise leadership and strengthen Army values. Giving of ourselves by sharing our knowledge and experience is the most important legacy we can leave to those who follow. That's making history in our own time and demonstrating that "Leadership Makes The Difference." -GEN John A. Wickham, "Leadership." *Soldiers*, Jan 1986, p. 2

LTG Claudia Kennedy...remembers mentoring by senior NCOs, staff sergeants, and sergeants who always demanded better performance and emphasized teamwork. -"A Rising Star." *Soldiers*, Jul 1997, p. 26

Officers need to exercise considerable humility and understand that the NCOs they're paired with have a wealth of experience. They should be willing to draw from that. The officer has to be a receptive fellow in the process. -LTC Paul D. Eaton, in "Walking *and* Talking the Talk." *NCO Journal*, Winter 1993, p. 12

Interplay is a necessary process by which the doer and the first-line supervisor insure that tasks are being accomplished properly. This involves communication, coordination, teaching, advising, helping, and supervising. We might visualize that when we don't know how to do a task, we move into the sphere of another person, usually the first-line supervisor, for assistance. Responsibility for insuring that interplay takes place lies with both the subordinate and the senior, and is a two-way street.... Real world examples that are encountered yearly are newly commissioned officers reporting to their first platoon. They have received formal training but have little experience in the tasks they must perform. In keeping with the principle that they may not relinquish their tasks, the question is, "How do they learn their job?" In this case, two things must take place. One, the platoon sergeant must move into the platoon leader's sphere and assist by teaching and advising. The new platoon leader has an equal responsibility to go to either the platoon sergeant or commander for assistance and teaching in order to learn how to properly accomplish the task belonging in his/her sphere.... We have heard it said that the "senior NCO must train the *junior* officer"; however, *teaching and advising between officers and NCOs at all ranks is desirable, proper, and encouraged*. In addition, this principle applies between two officers or two NCOs....

Interplay is dependent upon the establishment and maintenance of rapport between individuals. It is an exercise in mutual trust, respect, and communication that must occur between leaders at all organizational levels. -FM 22-600-20, *The Duties, Responsibilities and Authority of NCO's*, 1977, pp. 43, 44

Somebody in your career helped develop [your personal and professional attributes] long before the term "mentor" was popular. Somebody down there, a sergeant or an officer or a battalion and brigade commander, coached you and taught you and inspired you to develop into the kind of officer that we selected to command our soldiers today.... There really is no greater sense of self satisfaction...than to take a young sergeant or a young lieutenant or captain and watch him or her grow.... I believe it is the greatest long-term legacy that you will leave the Army.... Throughout the ages, the most celebrated leaders in the profession of arms began their rise with the simple words, "Sergeant, show me how." -GEN Carl E. Vuono, *Collected Works*, 1991, pp. 436, 262 \*\*\*\*\*

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