

junior leader PROFICIENCY

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They just don't know their jobs! That's about as fundamental a statement as anyone can make concerning the professional proficiency of our junior leaders. As an infantryman, I know this is the case in my branch and feel reasonably safe in making that same assumption for the other branches as well.

The potential effect of this condition on a unit's combat readiness is apparent. Unfortunately, that effect does not present itself until a unit is tested in battle, too often with tragic results. In far too many cases we deceive ourselves by confusing physical appearance, bravado, aggressiveness, and loud noise with capable units and leaders. Only under the right conditions — and these are very few — can this relationship have any relevance.

As a battalion commander I focused on the small matters of soldiering. I don't know whether my unit was unique in this regard, but I do know that few of my leaders, commissioned or noncommissioned officers, came to the battalion equipped to see that the fine points of soldiering were taken care of to a standard that would ensure our success.

At the battalion level and below, virtually everything rests on very minor details. And if these are not properly attended to, poor performance or failure will result. When junior leaders do not understand this fact, and if they cannot identify these minor details, senior leaders

become routinely engaged in over-supervising them in common matters in an attempt to correct the oversights. Some of this is obviously inevitable, but it is normally manageable if the important details and the fundamentals have been established through the Army's school system, drilled into the students, and reinforced by the unit under professionally educated superiors.

Junior leaders make things happen in both peace and war. Corps and division orders really boil down to individual soldiers taking some action to accomplish a job, and these soldiers are almost always led, and held to a standard, by lieutenants and sergeants. But the Army's equation for developing solid junior leaders is not operating well today, and the linkage between the individuals, the service schools, and the units needs attention.

As a starting point for repairing this breakdown, the Army must expect a lot from its school system — a school, through its training, should be confident enough when it releases a young leader to the field to send with him an itemized list of the tasks that he is now fully able to do. This approach can work, however, only if the school has a good description of the tasks the Army wants the young leader to be able to do, gives him a solid, practical foundation in those tasks, and requires high standards of performance in them.

The backbone of this general philosophy for the development of junior leaders must include the following:

- Defining what junior leaders must be able to do in a troop unit and tailoring service school courses to support these needs. (The word *familiarization* should be avoided.)

- Focusing on practical application and understanding. (Most can read; *doing* is the key.)

- Graduating only those who have *mastered* the skills and making this a matter of record.

- Deciding what subject matter must be deferred to a later course and, very cautiously, considering what training the units might be able to absorb.

- Initiating continuous career professional studies that bind schooling and field service together and that are aimed at understanding the art and science of war.

The crux of the problem of producing proficient junior leaders, then, rests upon identifying the skills they must master. But what are these essential skills, and who is to decide on them?

Since this article is a personal perspective, my thoughts and opinions on the subject will obviously hold sway, and they will be focused primarily on the infantry. But I hope to suggest some ideas that relate to instilling the basic skills in junior leaders before they join their units in the field. And much of the material has application to specialties, MOSs, and career management fields other than infantry.

WHAT LEADERS MUST KNOW

There are certain "how to" requirements that, if

junior leaders understand them, will take care of their immediate problems, tasks, or missions. These "how to's" will also contribute to unit discipline and standardization, as well as a feeling on the part of the troops that their outfit is organized and knows what it is about.

There are several subject areas the service schools should be teaching and thinking about in relation to educating junior leaders for duty with a field unit.

Field Duties

Junior leaders must completely understand, for example, the skills involved in individual and small unit tactics and must be able to do and explain all of these skills to their subordinates:

- Rush, crawl, road march, go through tactical wire, throw a hand grenade, use a bayonet, use range cards, read a map, employ a claymore mine, use hand, arm, and whistle signals, and use overlays and military graphic symbols.

- The basic body firing positions for riflemen, Dragon gunners, LAW gunners, and machinegunners; the correct construction of fighting positions for M203, Dragon, TOW, mortar, machinegun, and rifle; fire team formations, squad formations, and the conditions for changing formations.

- Analyze a squad or platoon sector before movement or defense, so the correct formations and terrain are used.

- Write operations and patrol orders.

- Use platoon tactical movement, including where in the movement formation soldiers and weapons are placed and why.

- Position weapons on the move or in the defense.

- Use the Battalion Training Management System at squad, platoon, and company levels.

- Establish a squad, platoon, and company defense, including tactical wire entanglements.

- Apply field hygiene for the individual and the squad, such as inspecting feet, checking water intake, full ration consumption, and shaving.

- Fire every weapon in the platoon. (A detailed understanding of marksmanship is absolutely essential, for if our soldiers are unable to shoot, everything else loses meaning. For example, trust and confidence between soldiers is inconceivable if each man knows the others are inept marksmen and cannot be relied upon to eliminate any enemy threat. This shreds the fabric of cohesion and teamwork before other positive influences ever begin to work.)

And, finally, junior leaders must learn that compassion, respect, cheerfulness, and concern for their soldiers' welfare are not signs of weakness in a leader, but are the indicators of self-confidence and a genuine regard for the dignity of those he leads.

This list could be more extensive, but these are the fundamental tactical procedures or skills that service schools

should dwell on and that all officers or NCOs should master before being placed in charge of soldiers.

Equipment

Junior leaders must understand the proper procedures for assembling, adjusting, and distributing the soldier's load using CTA 50-900 load-bearing equipment. Generally speaking, most junior leaders do not know the proper way to wear the basic field uniform items and how these items work together to produce a progressively protective system against the elements and still remain compatible with existence and fighting loads under combat conditions. Strings, straps, elastic cords, snaps, buckles, clips, eyelets, grommets, fasteners, quick releases, and velcro are routinely configured in imaginative but incorrect ways. Leaders often cannot see that things are fouled up until an item of equipment has been lost, broken, or destroyed, or until the soldier is overly fatigued or a heat or frostbite casualty because he has been "fighting his own gear."

These leaders must be totally familiar with every piece of equipment in the platoon including its capabilities, its disassembly, assembly, maintenance, troubleshooting, safety, and proper use. Generally, it is beyond the unit's capability to educate leaders correctly on all of these fine points (all critical to success once in action), especially if the unit's leaders themselves have not been appropriately educated as their careers progressed.

Few junior leaders know anything about tentage, screens, tarps, or canvas, much less the appropriate knots or tension devices used to erect and secure them. They only superficially understand the functioning, maintenance, and capabilities of weapons, communication equipment, NBC items, and medical materiel, "because," they say, "each battalion has MOSs for those areas with school-trained experts who know what they are doing." But this statement is only marginally valid, and its popular acceptance routinely leads to trouble. Automotive equipment such as vehicles, generators, and chainsaws suffer the same ailments; leaders are ignorant of their proper use, maintenance, and safety.

Junior leaders know little about accountability for military equipment and its components using the standard publications, and how to inspect for serviceability, cleanliness, and equipment records.

All this may seem terribly boring to many and wholly unworthy of officer and NCO involvement within a costly school system, but there is not a more cost effective means of improving the combat-readiness of line units than by compelling young leaders to become immersed in the practical details associated with their MOSs or specialties.

Maintenance

The great emphasis that has been placed on automotive



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maintenance during the past few years must be continued; but weapons, communications, clothing, organizational equipment, and NBC procedures require strong emphasis, too. Junior leaders generally cannot inspect anything very well. They must be taught how to inspect and what to look for — the good and bad indicators for each item of equipment, the documents that accompany each piece of equipment, what components and tools go with the equipment and their condition, the publications that are critical, and what the users must know. All of these are critical if the unit is to have functional equipment, unit discipline, and preparedness. Junior leaders must also understand the foundation of the Army maintenance system. They must:

- Know the "-10" publications for all equipment in their charge.
- Know how to conduct a PMCS (preventive maintenance checks and services).
- Know how to complete a DA Form 2404.
- Know the basic documents and records for each piece of equipment in their unit.
- Understand the various periodic checks, services, inspections, and calibrations for all equipment in the unit.
- Understand the rudiments of the company and battalion maintenance systems.

- Be capable of inspecting unit tools for completeness and serviceability.
- Know Army and unit standards for serviceability, cleanliness, and reporting.

Administration

Most junior leaders have little or no understanding of the basic administrative procedures that are standard for every unit. Lieutenants, therefore, should know how to explain, conduct, or prepare the following:

- Reports of survey.
- Line-of-duty investigations.
- Cash collection vouchers.
- Bars to reenlistment.
- Duty rosters.
- Letters of reprimand.
- Sworn statements.
- Counselling statements for enlisted and NCO personnel.
- Completion of EERs and SEERs.
- Completion of OER Support Form 67-8-1.
- Headcount rosters for mess.
- Hand receipts.
- Company grade Article 15s.

They must know how to use the Army publications system and where to look to find FMs, TMs, circulars, bulletins, ARs, SBs, the AMDEF, ARTEPs, and, most important, how to extract pertinent data from these sources.

All leaders, corporal and above, should understand Army finance procedures, including pay, allowances, rations, quarters, leave, TDY, and per diem. Each should have in his possession an abbreviated reference that explains these important subjects.

UCMJ

Junior leaders must know what authority they have been given to handle difficult subordinates and which actions are appropriate to good order and discipline. In addition, they must understand the rights of the soldier, procedures of evidence, rules of search and seizure, company grade Article 15 procedures, and Chapters 5, 9, 13, and 14 in AR 635-200. How to give orders is extremely important, and what constitutes an obeyable order — on and off post and in and out of uniform — must receive thorough attention.

Miscellaneous

In addition to these categories of knowledge, there is a miscellaneous assortment of tasks junior leaders are frequently called upon to know something about or to do:

- Prepare a class, lesson plan, or demonstration.
- Direct a range properly and safely.

- Draft a unit SOP or set of instructions.
- Counsel subordinates.
- Establish and direct programs for the overweight.
- Explain to the soldiers (at their own level) how the enlisted promotion system operates.
 - Know the organizations and agencies that provide services for enlisted men during times of need and where to find them (PAC, IG, AER, ARC, for instance, and legal assistance, drug and alcohol control offices, chaplain, finance).
 - Describe fully the duties and responsibilities of the platoon sergeant and the squad leader.
 - Supervise or execute basic military formations such as inspections, guard mounts, and flag details, as outlined in FM 22-5 and 22-6.
 - Conduct PT correctly using the proper procedures, commands, and formations.
 - Know what constitutes a meaningful order, not from a legal standpoint but from an effectiveness perspective.
 - Know the responsibilities of a duty officer.
 - Analyze and conduct squad and platoon training. (Determine objectives, evaluate current status, identify weaknesses, write a program to sustain the good training and fix the weak, calculate the resources needed, and conduct post-training evaluations.)

If one catch-phrase could summarize these general matters, the most applicable would undoubtedly be *pay attention to detail*. The clear object must be *educating and understanding* — familiarization is not enough.

WHAT THE SCHOOLS MUST DO

Our military schools are the most important asset we have for preparing the present and future leaders of the Army. But they are an asset only as long as they can provide the product required, and in that connection I have several thoughts about service school attitudes and forcefulness in requiring high standards of performance and integrity. There can be no compromise in either area.

The school standards of achievement must be high but realistic. There must be a penalty for those who fail to measure up, and that penalty should be reduction or separation. If a leader returns from an Army program of instruction and takes charge of a unit without knowing the fundamentals of his business, his lack of knowledge becomes immediately clear to all his subordinates and makes a mockery of that school's program.

If the schools let slight indiscretions in integrity slip by, they merely reinforce the individual's conviction that the Army condones "small lies and cribbing." This, in turn, translates at the unit level into false reporting, false documents, and white lies to cover up unreliable performance. Regardless of an individual's good and determined attitude, if he is unable to do the work the Army requires of his grade and MOS, this must become a matter of record, and action must be taken immediately to further educate, transfer, or reduce him or to separate him from the service. Tactical units must not be burdened with non-

performers who have somehow passed through the Army's school system. This includes those who cannot effectively read, write, speak, or understand our basic language.

One of the schools' most important roles must be to emphasize and explain their own institutional standards. The standards should be clear and understood by everyone who passes through the educational process; this would promote standardization between the individual, the school, and the unit. Ignorance of institutional standards is the nub of the unsatisfactory results that plague the Army from top to bottom today and that foster a confusing array of ad hoc standards that range from the unrealistically high to the almost nonexistent. This is frustrating to men and organizations, and it produces unexpected results (more often bad than good) even in the same units. Such unpredictability is the antithesis of reliability, and reliability is essential in the military services; it is the foundation for all planning and operations.

A final crucial responsibility for the military schools is sowing the seeds for a distant harvest. The business of war is best described as part art, part science. In recent years, our record has been reasonably good when judged from the scientific aspect. What is totally absent, however, is a focus upon the art of war itself — the pre-eminent subject for the soldier, and the most challenging one. A steady and deliberate approach to reading and studying the art of war must commence early, and must never cease throughout a career. Only through continuous application and thoughtful reflection on the dimensions of war will career officers be able to maintain a perspective on the requirements for waging it successfully.

Under the current system, the goal is to train the new infantry soldier in about 170 basic tasks as a prerequisite to making him a proficient infantryman. It is an excellent approach to define exactly what tasks a soldier needs to be able to perform, because this definition provides a focus and a structure for the development of training materials, doctrine, and training goals and objectives. So, a unit can expect to receive a young soldier who:

- Is disciplined.
- Is physically fit (conditioned to run, road march, do PT, and complete obstacle courses).
- Is a confident and proficient marksman with his basic weapon, and has experience in the use of all infantry weapons — machinegun, LAW, Dragon, hand grenades, claymore mine, 40mm, antitank/antipersonnel mine, 90mm recoilless rifle. (I know the 90mm recoilless rifle is no longer in the infantry battalion, but what a travesty it is to have our only versatile MOUT weapon and close-in antitank defense taken away.)

- Can properly construct fighting positions for each weapon listed above.
- Is trained to use the bayonet.
- Knows how to assemble, wear, adjust, and inspect his garrison and field uniforms and equipment.
- Is fully capable of cleaning, inspecting, and maintaining his weapon, clothing, and equipment.
- Knows and executes basic military customs and courtesies.
- Understands basic military laws, orders, and procedures.
- Can perform basic life-saving first aid.
- Is knowledgeable concerning field sanitation and hygiene.
- Has a positive attitude and wants to be in the Army.

The soldier who fits this description is the clay that must later be molded by the junior leaders in his unit. There is a distinct parallel, therefore, between what the junior leader must know and what skills a soldier should have acquired. If the leader does not know these fundamental skills, how can he possibly identify the soldier's weaknesses, remedy them, and sustain the crucial standards that are the backbone of an organization? Quite obviously, he cannot.

As a consequence, many units exist in a miasma of mediocrity, and they struggle just to get by each day and "pass" each event. It is unthinkable that these units might be called on to go into combat tomorrow. They deserve better qualified and more effective leaders.

Everyone is a victim of his own experience and quite naturally believes he has the wisdom, as a result of that experience, to set things right if only everyone else would do it his way. The foregoing commentary is, of course, *my* wisdom, and it obviously has application only under certain conditions and under the proper guidance. But I still believe that our junior leaders are not well prepared to assume their field responsibilities and that the Army, consequently, is less able than it could be.

I hope my observations stimulate our young leaders, our schools, and our units to think, change, and improve their efforts to achieve a higher level of junior leader proficiency. It is the only way we can improve our readiness and sustain our long-term combat effectiveness.



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