days of the course, the students conduct all of the 24 battle drills as portions of ARTEP missions. Working from fire team through company level, the students conduct reconnaissance, ambush, and raid missions as well as exfiltrations, linkups, and reentries of friendly forward lines. The student patrols are evaluated throughout the exercise to the same standards (and on the same evaluation forms) the patrolling teams of the Ranger Department use for Ranger students.

The Light Leaders Course has had a significant effect on the 7th Infantry Division's preparations for conducting the Light Fighters Course at Fort Ord. The two courses have parallel objectives and a parallel construction. The Light Leaders Course is the foundation for training the trainers and for instilling the tactics and the abilities soldiers need to become skilled, tough, aggressive, and smart light infantrymen. The Light Fighters Course is the medium through which this knowledge and spirit is transmitted to the soldiers. The spirit of the light infantry is thus spread from the Rangers through the division's leaders and on to its soldiers. The divisions that follow the 7th in this training process should find it equally beneficial when they convert to the light infantry organization.

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Training May Not Be the Answer

CAPTAIN JACK H. CAGE

If you have ever used a training program to solve a performance problem, you may have wasted your time. Training is not always the answer. A short story will illustrate:

A young lieutenant reporting to a battalion in Germany naturally wanted to command a platoon but a command position was not available. His battalion commander assigned him instead as battalion safety officer, but made a deal with him: "Lieutenant, I have a terrible problem with accidents in the battalion. I fired the last safety officer because he couldn't reduce the accident rate. If you *can,* you'll get your platoon." The lieutenant agreed and charged out on his crusade.

During the next few days, he asked several soldiers about the previous safety officer's approach. The reports were consistent: Day after day, the officer had held classes on vehicle operation, weapon safety, and so on. In essence, the relieved officer had seen the problem as one he could solve with training; he had tried to *train* the battalion to be safe. He had given so many classes, in fact, that they had become the number one gripe in the unit. Besides that, he had deluged the battalion with posters, handouts, and wallet-sized cards with safety mottoes on them. He had even moved demolished automobiles into the area to emphasize the results of careless driving. Unfortunately, the battalion's safety record plummeted, as did the officer's standing in the battalion.

What did the new lieutenant do? After determining that the unit's soldiers *knew how* to prevent accidents, he assembled the battalion and said: "By now you've probably heard that the accident rate in our battalion is way too high. And you already know how to prevent accidents, so I won't stand up here and tell you about that. But if the accident rate decreases, I won't hold any more safety classes, and we'll hold a battalion cook-out every month the rate decreases." Interestingly enough, from then on the battalion had the lowest accident record in the division. And the lieutenant got his platoon.

This tale highlights three important aspects of human performance:

- Training is an appropriate solution to a performance problem *only* when the soldiers need more information or new skills. It is a waste of time and effort when they already have the required knowledge.
- You can use pointed questions, as this lieutenant did, to identify the extent of a performance problem and to determine whether training is needed.
- Linking incentives to soldiers'

performance can effectively modify or maintain the performance you want from them.

Perhaps we need to go back at this point and define exactly what a performance problem is. The term refers to any situation in which an individual's or a group's actual and desired performances don't match. Unfortunately, we see examples all the time. In the story about the safety officer, the desired performance of the soldiers in the battalion was much different from their actual performance, and the lieutenant's mission was to reduce that difference. There are many other examples: A commander sets a standard of 250 points on the Army Physical Readiness Test, but 30 percent of the company fail to reach it; a staff officer is assigned the mission of completing a report, but he submits the report two days late.

How do you know when you have a performance problem in your unit? First, listen to the people around you. If you hear people saying that your soldiers just aren't doing what they should be doing; that they have a lousy attitude; that the unit has too many AWOLs; or that a training program is needed to teach a specific task, these are tip-offs that something is wrong. If you follow them up, you'll probably find a performance problem lurking in the shadows.

The following questions can help you focus your analysis of the situation:

- What exactly do I want, and what am I getting now?
- Where is the discrepancy?
- When does the discrepancy show up?
- To what extent does the problem exist?
- What are the sources of my information? Are they reliable? Is the information valid?
- What's the worst thing that can happen if I do nothing? Can I live with it? (Obviously, if it isn't broken, don't fix it!)

Once you have thoroughly and accurately answered these questions, you should have a precise description of your problem. The next step is to remove that discrepancy between what is and what should be. But how do you do this?

First, people perform for a combination of two reasons. They perform because they have certain skills that enable them to do so. A soldier can prevent an accident, for example, by following a set of procedures he learned in school. But people also perform because of the incentives or rewards associated with their performance. Soldiers may have the necessary skills to prevent an accident but do not use those skills for various reasons — perhaps because they think their buddies will harass them if they follow the prescribed procedures or because they want to get back at their squad leader somehow.

CENTRAL QUESTION

The central question to ask, then, is whether they know *how* (have the skills) to perform to standard. That is, *could* they perform if their lives depended on the result? If your answer is a strong "No," then training is a necessary step toward solving your problem. If the answer is "Yes," however (they could perform if it really mattered to them), then training won't fix the problem, because something is apparently lacking in the environment in which the soldiers work. Their performance, therefore, must be tied to some incentives before it will change.

The basic idea here is rather simple — human behavior is controlled by its consequences. One type of consequence is often called a reinforcer. A reinforcer is anything that causes an increase in the behavior that preceded it. And, as most of us know, reinforcers can be either positive or negative. A positive reinforcer can be a letter of commendation, a medal, or merely an "atta boy," and each can bring about an increased frequency of a desired action.

The new safety officer of the battalion in Germany, for example, made battalion cook-outs contingent on lowering the accident rate. In this case, the prospect of attending a cook-out was rewarding or reinforcing to the soldiers. Furthermore, the lieutenant used the reward to maintain the safe performance.

A negative reinforcer, on the other hand, also increases the frequency of an action because people try to escape from it or avoid it. Our young lieutenant used this, too. He tied safety classes to safe performance — his promise to remove something painful, more safety briefings — caused the soldiers to increase their safe behavior.

Punishment can also decrease undesirable behavior. Punishment can consist of anything soldiers do not like, of course. A soldier might be punished with additional duty for driving too fast, for example; the punishment, hopefully, will cause him to stop the undesirable behavior — speeding.

The lieutenant realized that training has its limitations and that it is sometimes inappropriate. He also understood that people perform not only because they have certain skills but because their performance is linked to certain incentives. His first question was "Could they perform if their lives depended upon it?" Since in this case the answer was "Yes," all the training in the world would not have improved the safety rate. It was the change in the incentives associated with operating safely that made the soldiers' behavior matter to them. The result was a lower accident rate, and a happier lieutenant.

So, if your soldiers are not performing well in certain tasks, look before you leap on the training bandwagon. There may be other, more appropriate ways to nip your performance problems in the bud.

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