



LEADERSHIP

AND

PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

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Really great leadership ability often begins with childhood. Parents and other adults control the development of a child through situations that lead to positive reinforcement and the avoidance of failure. Self-confidence and maturity develop from exposure to situations that involve gradually increasing levels of difficulty and responsibility.

People who have had such experiences are fortunate, and they can usually be recognized by their strength in dealing with others and in handling their professional and personal lives.

But there are too few such people to fill the Army's needs for leaders. And, unfortunately, developing leaders at a later stage is more difficult. It requires the same approach, but it must be done in a shorter time with more distractions and greater pressures.

Leadership development is, in fact, one of two major problems facing a battalion commander. The other is taking care of equipment.

Just before I took command of a battalion in Europe, I had the good fortune to be exposed to General John Galvin's thoughts on how battalion and company commanders might relate these two problems—how they might use the unit preventive maintenance program to place commissioned and non-commissioned officers in situations of controlled but increasing difficulty in which they were required to lead. (Much of this is alluded to in the recently published FM 43-2, which covers organizational maintenance management.) The ideas presented here are based on my experience with this approach.

There are several reasons why a unit's preventive maintenance program is a fertile area for leadership development.

We all know the problems of organizational maintenance: Readiness rates are high, yet inspections reveal nonoperational vehicles; resources and repair parts are available in quantity, yet vehicles are down for long periods; motor stables and preventive services are conducted, yet organizational and

operator maintenance are rated poor.

Much of the problem stems from making the condition of the equipment the responsibility of the battalion executive officer, the S-4, the company executive officers, and the motor sergeants.

In private life, when a car or truck breaks down, the owner takes it to the shop and sees that the problem is corrected. And since he's paying for this service, he makes sure it is done right. The same should be true in a military unit: The readiness of a vehicle or a piece of equipment should be the responsibility of the people who "own" and use it—the platoon leader, the platoon sergeant, the section officer in charge (OIC), and the section NCO in charge (NCOIC).

Unfortunately, equipment "owners" in the Army often do not realize the extent to which they are really responsible for the care and use of that equipment. Leaders should make sure that their subordinates have safe and well-maintained equipment to operate, that they know how to operate it, and that they know where they are to go and what they are to do. Failing to do these things is a weakness in leadership, and that is the major cause of accidents, losses, and low operational readiness rates.

In using the maintenance program to develop leadership, a commander first has to examine his own attitude toward the preventive maintenance program—such things as repairs, services, forms, and relationships among support elements in a company or battalion. Scheduling, inspections, work planning, and the way preventive maintenance sessions are conducted must all contribute to the commander's control of the program. Above all else, a commander must actively participate in and control the program.

One of the major steps he can take to get active involvement in the maintenance program is to take a realistic approach to scheduling. Any schedule must be related to the unit's mission, training, and support requirements. Therefore, he should not simply enter a time on a training schedule, for example, and blindly require that everyone be there.

Motor stables should be scheduled only when required, and heavily used vehicles should receive the necessary attention daily—during, before, and after operation checks. Lightly used vehicles, like those on hand in headquarters elements, do not need this constant attention. (There is nothing worse for a soldier's attitude than having to do the same things over and over again to vehicles that do not move.)

There is no need, either, for entire units to be in a motor pool for motor stables. (This is valuable only when large numbers of people need training, when the unit has received new equipment, or when there is a sudden, heavy requirement of some kind.)

Smaller numbers of people are easier to handle and to supervise. Thus, it is easier to keep everyone busy, and a motor sergeant does not receive more DA Forms 2404 (Preventive Maintenance Inspection Worksheet) than he can handle at one time. Too often, large batches of unprocessed 2404s lie in in-boxes for extended periods awaiting parts research and ordering while the same deficiencies and shortcomings continue to show up week after week.

This approach requires that motor stables be spread

throughout the week. It is a good idea to have such sessions Monday through Thursday. This leaves Friday free for parts runs, clean-up, training, personal business, or anything the motor sergeant needs to do to run an orderly, and humane, operation.

A good company training schedule, therefore, tells each platoon or section when it should be doing organizational maintenance as part of the company plan. Concurrent activities should be encouraged according to what is needed. The scheduled period should not be limited to vehicles. It can be used for weapons cleaning, organizational clothing and equipment maintenance, or shop equipment maintenance. Anyone who does not need to be involved should be doing mission work instead.

With this approach, a commander and all of the elements of his unit know what everyone is supposed to be doing—concentrating on essential tasks. The potential for wasted time is reduced and, because the entire unit is not in the motor pool at one time, it is easier for the commander to observe, evaluate, correct, and teach.

CONTROL

The most valuable means of controlling the maintenance program and evaluating how well the officers and NCOs are supervising equipment operation and maintenance is the form 2404. That form is intended to be a means of identifying a maintenance requirement, an organized way of making notes that simplifies subsequent actions. Used correctly, it is a source of information for everyone involved—mechanic, operator, parts clerk, officer and NCO supervisor, and commander.

Often, though, as many operators will testify, the form is filled out, but it does not contribute to correcting the identified problem. In these cases, the preparation of the form has become an empty ritual.

The commander should require that a file be kept of the 2404s prepared for each vehicle. This type of file is often referred to as the "vehicle health record."

Copies of unprocessed 2404s should be placed in a manila folder after inspections are performed. Over a period of time, this collection can show a commander and his subordinate leaders whether operator maintenance is being performed before a vehicle is serviced or used. And if the file is regularly monitored, it can also show how the motor pool works to correct organizational deficiencies and how well the responsible officer and NCO push for corrective action.

The vehicle health record, accordingly, provides the basis for auditing the internal maintenance structure, assuring corrective action, and teaching leadership accountability to the officers and NCOs of the company.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Everyone involved in such a maintenance program has certain responsibilities for making it work, from the battalion commander and command sergeant major (CSM) down to



the junior NCOs at squad level.

First, the battalion commander provides guidance to the companies on conducting motor stables and preventive maintenance sessions, and directs that such sessions be included in the company training schedules. (When standard times are set throughout the battalion, scheduling and supervision are simpler—especially in such dispersed units as air defense or combat service support battalions.) Then the S-3 checks those training schedule activities to insure compliance.

It is absolutely necessary to create an atmosphere in which soldiers can be sure that scheduled activities such as motor stables will actually take place. After a while, compliance becomes automatic and requires less supervision. Such an atmosphere also leads to a less adversarial relationship between the company and the battalion headquarters.

Of course, a battalion commander must make sure all of his officers know how to use the basic maintenance and supply forms and the related management techniques. He should conduct this training himself to demonstrate the importance of the activity, to increase credibility, and to participate in learning with his younger officers.

Meanwhile, the CSM, in his role as senior enlisted trainer, should go into the companies and headquarters to watch the sergeants do their jobs, making sure the First Sergeants are also there. The motor pool is the main setting for his NCO professionalism program, and the training schedule and the 2404 file are his main tools.

An important part of this teaching process for both the battalion commander and the CSM is inspecting company operations.

For his inspection, a battalion commander walks into a motor

pool, selects a health record for one of the vehicles, and calls the “owning” officer and NCO. He reviews and critiques the 2404s for operator maintenance deficiencies on the vehicle and counsels the officer on what is needed to see that such deficiencies do not recur.

During his inspection, the commander checks standing organizational deficiencies to see whether parts are on requisition and whether reconciliations with the direct support unit are being conducted. He also checks publications, particularly the 12-series forms, looks at hand receipts, and follows up on shortages through the supply room.

The CSM also reviews the commander's file of 2404s and critiques the performance of platoon sergeants, section NCOs in charge, and squad leaders. He makes sure that the NCOs understand and support the preventive maintenance program and that they do not fail in the eyes of the platoon leaders, the company commander, or the battalion commander.

In short, starting with the 2404s as a base, the battalion commander and the CSM—with the owning lieutenants and the company commander in tow—check the entire maintenance and supply system within a company.

The battalion commander always throws the problem of checking and assuring that corrective action is taken back to the officer who owns the equipment, or the CSM throws it back to an NCO, if he is the one who owns the equipment. Thus, in a company chain of command, the junior officers and the NCOs see how to do the checking.

After this counseling, the most important thing the “owning” officer or NCO can do is to be there when the equipment is prepared for servicing and to ensure, through the platoon sergeant or section NCOIC, that the operator-

correctable faults are eliminated.

Down at company level, the company commander and the first sergeant function much the way the battalion commander and the CSM do at battalion level. The company commander's chief responsibility is to provide time on the training schedule for motor stables and preventive maintenance sessions and, above all, to make sure the platoon leaders are there. He sees that motor stables are observed, that the commander's file is reviewed, and that equipment and records are checked for corrective action.

The commander must push his platoon leaders to take corrective action and must make sure the company's support structure is really supporting the maintenance program. The motor pool, unit supply room, armorer, NBC NCO, and communications NCO must be available according to the preventive services being performed. The commander should also visit the direct support unit and push it for the necessary assistance and support.

File reviews, battalion inspections, and organizational maintenance technical inspections become the base for evaluating and counseling junior officers and NCOs.

The First Sergeant is the senior enlisted trainer in the company, and this is his most important role. He precedes the company commander in the motor pool and makes sure that PMCS (preventive maintenance checks and services) activities occur and that the NCOs who should be there are there. He critiques the platoon sergeants and squad leaders or section chiefs, and makes sure the company's NCOs do not fail in the eyes of the officers.

In this maintenance-leadership program the greatest advances in officer professionalism and leadership occur at platoon level. The motor pool is a microcosm of all the most difficult leadership problems—it is a place where people and resources must be brought together to perform clearly defined tasks.

A platoon leader plans, along with his platoon sergeant, for the use of those people and resources. He resolves all conflicts in demands for people—such as duty rosters, sick call, personal business—and for equipment, and overcomes the many other obstacles he may encounter.

He also solves the support problem. He reviews the 2404s generated from previous sessions and check with the motor pool, the unit supply room, and the direct support unit to ensure that the required corrective steps are being taken.

The platoon leader—because he is in direct contact with the company commander and the company motor officer and is at the same level as the shop officers and the battalion staff—can make things happen that the vehicle operators and junior NCOs cannot.

Similarly, the platoon sergeant is the most influential in the development of the platoon's NCOs and enlisted soldiers. At the rank of staff sergeant or sergeant first class, he is usually the highest ranking person the junior NCOs and troops come in contact with every day.

For motor stables or preventive maintenance services, the platoon sergeant puts people with equipment. He teaches

soldiers how to do checks and operator services; makes sure tools, supplies, POL products, rags, and other necessities are available for an effective session; and assures that the dispatcher, the mechanics, the PLL clerks, and the unit supply people provide support

In performing these functions, the platoon sergeant is also teaching the junior NCOs the skills and obligations of leadership. The example he sets in these sessions is more important than a hundred NCO professionalism classes.

At squad or section level, a successful performance at motor stables will teach the junior NCO more about leadership than just about any other activity. The job is defined; the people are there; there are certain tasks to be performed; and there is immediate feedback that both a soldier and his supervisors can use to evaluate efforts and results.

The NCO accompanies the operator when dispatching a vehicle and assures that all operator checks are performed. He sees that the soldier knows his destination and has all the required tools and dispatch records, that the vehicle is safe and presentable, and that the vehicle leaves the motor pool on time. The NCO tells the operator to report back on completion of the mission. At that time, he assures that the mission has been accomplished, supervises the completion of after-operation checks, and sees that the vehicle is fueled and secured before allowing the soldier to quit for the day.

From the top down, then, this is a model for developing leadership through the preventive maintenance program. Scheduling and the 2404 give a commander two powerful tools for controlling the program. Each officer and NCO has a specific role in preventive maintenance activities that capitalizes on his position and authority. Each supervisor is placed in situations that help him develop his leadership ability while at the same time helping the commander improve the unit's operational readiness.

The most important aspect of this model is the potential effect of such a program on the new soldier—whether he is a private or a lieutenant. The new soldier is exposed to superiors who are actively involved in creating a positive working environment. From this exposure, he develops habits and expectations of competence, excellence, and concern for subordinates. He will then try to become that kind of officer or noncommissioned officer.

What better way to create an "Army of Excellence" than to display excellence in everything we do?



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