

be critical of your new unit. Just assume your leadership role and start working toward improving your sponsorship program. The inbriefing is a beginning. It is the basis for most of the actions that can be formulated and carried out using an established standing operating procedure.

The first thing you will need to do during an inbriefing is to clear the air on expectations. Most soldiers want to hear what you expect of them and what they can expect of you.

Enlisted evaluation procedures and rating schemes should always be a part of the initial briefing for NCOs, because the NCOs in charge of soldiers have to be proficient in administering these reports. The Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Program starts when you assume your duties and never ends.

There are many factors that will affect the NCOs' perception of how well you will support them. You should be straightforward with all of them. But never promise them something you don't have the authority to deliver.

Noncommissioned officers must understand, too, that if they get into trouble in certain areas, they should not expect any help from you, except to seek sound legal advice. Some of these areas are drug and alcohol abuse, vio-

lation of integrity, misappropriation of government property and equipment, using rank for self gain, child neglect or abuse, failure to correct or report unsafe conditions, and committing an unsafe act that endangers the lives of soldiers, family members, or innocent civilians. It is important to set the record straight on this in the beginning.

Remember, too, that your NCOs will require enlisted evaluation reports. Once again, the counseling process must take place at the same time the responsibility for a report is fixed. You should look at the rating scheme and verify the appropriate rater and endorser for each NCO. If this is not done, too often their evaluation reports will not be submitted when they should be.

If you are highly motivated, you will have no problems when you walk into that first assignment as a battalion command sergeant major. Even if there are signs that the NCO leadership is poor, most NCOs react well to new leadership. In many cases, they are just waiting for an opportunity to respond to leadership that is geared to the betterment of the unit and to taking care of soldiers.

Too often, though, we as leaders do not have the moral courage to stand up and be responsive to our soldiers'

needs; nor do we set aside the time to let them explain their problems. You will find that the higher up you are in the chain, the less you know about the internal problems in your units. So if a soldier has the courage to walk up to your headquarters and ask to speak with you, he should be given permission to do so in complete privacy. If your subordinates know that they can present a problem to you and you will listen to them, you are on the road to success as a leader.

But after you listen, you should also follow up on those problems, acting as an arbitrator where it is necessary, correcting a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Army policy, or seeing that anything necessary is done to help solve a family problem that may be involved.

Young motivated soldiers want to be challenged to do their best. This desire to excel can be reinforced with positive leadership and mentorship.

These things, and more, are just part of the job of a battalion command sergeant major.

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# Thoughts for New Sergeants

ROY C. OWENS

The Army's noncommissioned officer corps traces its bloodline back to the Continental Army of 1775. The qualities sergeants had to have then were the same ones sergeants have to have today—honesty, sobriety, attention to every point of duty, neatness in dress,

the ability to command respect and obedience from soldiers, expertise in their jobs, and an ability to train their subordinates.

If you have just become a sergeant, you march in the footsteps of all the noncommissioned officers who have

gone before you, and the Army offers you a full life if you are a true professional. The more you strive for professional expertise, the more you contribute to the Army, your soldiers, and your own satisfaction.

Being a sergeant doesn't mean that

life will be any easier for you than it was when you were an enlisted soldier. It doesn't mean you no longer have to take orders. It doesn't mean you will have more free time.

It does mean that you will now have the responsibility for maintaining unit standards and taking care of other soldiers. This increased responsibility means that you will work even harder, accomplish more, and reap more personal satisfaction.

It also means you will have to attend meetings held by other NCOs or officers to receive guidance or missions. Then you will have to tell your soldiers about a mission and each task they must do to accomplish that mission. You will have to check their work and see that it is finished, then report the results to the NCO or officer who gave you the job.

You will still have to take orders, and you will be held responsible for the way your unit does its job. You will be responsible for offering suggestions as to how a job might be done faster or easier. And in cases where no guidance is given, you will have to figure out how to do the job on your own. When you see a job that needs to be done, you will do it. This is called initiative.

"Doing the job" involves all sorts of things. It means correcting soldiers who do not perform properly, are out of uniform, fail to salute, or are making a nuisance of themselves. It means leading your troops in combat or on a training exercise. It means leading your soldiers as they do unpleasant tasks such as cleaning latrines or conducting police call. It may also mean requiring clerk-typists to work long, hard hours so that other soldiers can receive their pay, take their leave, have the supplies they need, and have their personnel actions completed.

All of your jobs are important, because you are the key link in the entire chain of command.

Because you have additional responsibility, you are also given additional authority. That authority is of two basic types. The first is general military authority, the same authority all officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers hold. Its source



is the law, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, Army regulations, and tradition. The second type is delegated authority, that specifically delegated to you by the chain of command to do a specific task or job.

Your authority will rarely be challenged once you have earned the respect and confidence of the soldiers in your unit, because any soldier who challenges your authority also challenges the authority of the entire chain of command. And so long as you act responsibly and give orders that are clear, legal, and realistic, you can be confident that the chain of command will give you the support you need and back you up.

As a noncommissioned officer, you must study the regulations that affect you personally—uniform and barracks regulations, for example, general orders, training regulations, alert instructions, weapons control regulations, and others. If you do not know these things, you will not be able to explain them to your soldiers. Likewise, to be an effective NCO you must know not only your own job but also your soldiers' jobs so that you can train them and make sure they are doing those jobs right.

One of the first attempts to define an NCO's responsibilities came in the American Revolutionary War. Baron Frederick Wilhelm von Steuben, who

wrote *Regulations for Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, published in 1779, said that an NCO should be "completely expert in the exercise of arms and maneuvers, and possess an ability to teach." He further stated that each sergeant is "responsible for the men committed to his care; that is, for seeing that officers' orders are carried out, for teaching his men the rudiments of soldiering, seeing that they are properly dressed and responsive to discipline, and for reforming his squad in the confusion of battle." The similarity between this document and today's Army policy is very striking.

Von Steuben also said that once the American soldier understood the reason for something, he did what he was supposed to do very well. I believe that the same is true today. When one of your soldiers does not perform well, don't just assume that it's because he is not a good soldier. First, ask yourself if *you* are doing something wrong.

There are no bad units with good leadership, and there are no good units with bad leadership—at least not for long.

What will your unit be like?

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