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LEADING IN COHORT COMPANIES

Faris R. Kirkland, Ph.D. (FA, USA-ret.)
Department of Military Psychiatry
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Walter Reed Army Institute of Research
Washington, D.C. 20307-5100

U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command
Ft. Detrick, MD 21701-5012

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PREFACE

This paper is one of a series of occasional, informal accounts of work in the Division of Neuropsychiatry at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. The reports generally address topics in Army preventive medicine for which implementation responsibility lies significantly outside the Medical Department. Although their contents may overlap partly with our publications in the scientific literature, most papers are based on trip reports, briefings, and consultations involving specific Army audiences. Comments to the senior author are welcome.

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19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) The purpose of this paper is to provide practical information for WCOs and junior officers assigned to company level leadership positions in New Manning System units. The research leading to these recommendations included a longitudinal survey of 12,000 soldiers, more than 800 hrs participant observation and interviews at every echelon within over 100 company-sized units. The report describes what actual leaders did, and how their peers subordinates and superiors responded. <i>Keywords:</i>			
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FOREWORD

The purpose of this paper is to provide practical information for NCOs and junior officers assigned to leadership positions in COHORT companies, batteries, and troops. To enhance its readability, I have omitted footnotes and references from the text. This preface is a summary of its scientific foundations.

The corpus of research supporting this essay is an eight-year interdisciplinary inquiry by the Department of Military Psychiatry at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research into the relationships among leadership, cohesion, and resistance to combat stress. The research team included uniformed and civilian social scientists, and combat arms soldiers. Data sources were surveys, focussed interviews, and participant-observation. The survey program reached 20,000 soldiers. More than 12,000 participated in a longitudinal study in which they responded to five surveys over a three-year period. The interview system elicited information from representatives of every echelon within 137 company-sized units. Participant-observers collected more than 800 hours of data on interpersonal relations within and across strata, and on mission performance during extended simulated combat operations. The combination of these mutually supporting research methods revealed patterns of causal relationships between leaders' behavior and levels of cohesion, commitment, and performance in their units. The findings, though derived largely from research in COHORT combat units, are applicable to all elements of the Army.

The research behind the specific findings reported in this paper was part of the New Manning System Field Evaluation sponsored by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army. This evaluation integrated four themes that have been of continuing interest to military and social scientists. The oldest theme concerns traits and behavior that make leaders effective (Blades, 1986; Hays & Thomas 1967; Nye, 1986; DA Pam 600-2, 1975; FM 22-100, 1983) In the mid-forties, social scientists began to address the second theme--relationships between the characteristics of leadership, policy and unit climate on the one hand, and the performance of soldiers and units on the other (Marshall, 1947/1978; Shils & Janowitz, 1948; Selvin, 1960; Stouffer, Deviney, Star, & Williams, 1949). Ingraham (1984) and Moskos (1970) did the basic work on a third theme--the social and psychological milieu in which soldiers function in war and peace. Recently, military writers have begun work on a fourth theme--the human dimensions of cohesion and high performance (Simonsen, Frandsen, & Hoopengardner, 1985; Malone, 1986). Scholars from several disciplines have described the kinds of leadership associated with high performance (Malone, 1983), cohesion (Henderson, 1985), and both (Jacobs, 1985; Van Creveld, 1985).

The New Manning System Field Evaluation is the most recent component of a continuing investigation that addresses all of the themes noted above. Detailed findings are reported in five technical reports issued by the Department of Military Psychiatry at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (Marlowe, 1985; 1986a; 1986b; 1986c; 1987).

Introduction

This is a report on what has worked for officers and NCOs leading COHORT soldiers at company level and below. In it I review how and why leaders have achieved success in Europe and CONUS in units that were organized in accordance with all the variants of the COHORT concept. The report describes what actual leaders did, and how their peers, subordinates and superiors responded. Though contexts and personalities vary, there has been a high level of consistency across units in different divisions in the kinds of leader behavior that have led to cohesive, confident, high-performing units. Similarly, there has been consistency in the kinds of behavior that have led to fragmented, insecure, alienated units.

There are three leadership issues addressed in this report: 1) What you can expect of your COHORT soldiers and what they expect of you, 2) Ways of meeting expectations--yours, your subordinates', and those of the Army, and 3) How to support your subordinate leaders.

Expectations

One Station Unit Training (OSUT) combines basic and advanced individual training for groups of first-term soldiers who will serve together in particular companies throughout their initial three years in the Army. The OSUT experience arouses new soldiers' interest, gets them used to cooperating with each other, and introduces them to the notion that tough training is the key to their effectiveness and survival. They understand that the COHORT concept means that they will be together throughout their enlistments, and that they may go to war together.

What You Can Expect of Your Soldiers

The soldiers in COHORT units are as heterogeneous as any group of young Americans. They vary widely in intelligence, strength, endurance, and reasons for joining the Army. But the research team observed three characteristics of first-termers that will be useful for you as their leader to know about-- interest in military matters, bonding among themselves, and readiness to embrace discipline.

Interest. A characteristic of first-termers is their interest in learning how to be effective soldiers. You will find it easy to get your men's attention if you have something to teach them. They will listen to you and your subordinate leaders when you talk Army to them. They study the manuals during their off-duty time, and they quiz each other. They esteem one another for their proficiency as soldiers, and they ridicule those who err when they should have known better.

Bonding. Recruits in OSUT go through stressful experiences that teach them to rely on each other. They learn what to expect of each other, and experience giving and receiving help. This leads to bonding or, as it is sometimes called, cohesion. There are consequences of this bonding that have an impact on you. COHORT soldiers develop peer group communications that enable all the members of a unit to share information and attitudes. It is important for you as their leader to understand the peer communication network, because it puts you in a goldfish bowl. All your troops will quickly hear about every screw-up or injustice which you commit, and every wise or considerate action you take, and they will share their opinions about you. There is no way you can manipulate your troops by telling different things to different ones, and hoping they do not talk to each other. By the same token, if you can only explain something to a few, you can rest assured that they will get the word to the others.

A second aspect of bonding is the concern the privates have for each other. They want each other to succeed. The bright soldiers help the slow ones to learn military skills. They protest as a body against perceived mistreatment of one or a few. On FTXs they share water and rations. The strong carry the rucks of comrades who can't make it. They volunteer to take the heavy loads from their colleagues. They do not necessarily like each other, though many do, but they live by an ethic of interdependence. They expect to need each other in combat, so each helps his comrades to be all they can be.

Discipline. We observed that privates in COHORT units take to discipline naturally. They want to do well and become effective soldiers, so they do their best to comply with instructions. They are hungry for further instruction that will help them improve their performance. One old sergeant said: "You have to be careful what you tell the first-termers to do because they take every order seriously and will carry it out even if it endangers them." Successful leaders understand that their subordinates are self-motivated. They treat that motivation with respect. They tell their soldiers what has to be done and how to do it, then stand aside and respond to questions. There is rarely a need to drive COHORT soldiers, and threats serve only to isolate the leader from his subordinates.

There is yet a further aspect of discipline in COHORT units that may surprise you. The first-termers are the primary enforcers of your orders and policies. They have a variety of ways to influence peers who do not try hard, work hard, and follow orders. They criticize fellow soldiers who are sloppy, forgetful, or wise guys: "Hey man, you always gripin' about the NCOs doggin' you out, but man, you bring it on yourself with your big mouth." More often the peer influence is positive. We frequently heard a discouraged soldier's comrades talk him out of going AWOL--partly by citing the unpleasant consequences: "Hey, Fred, like, don't mess up your life, you know?" and partly by showing their interest in and concern for him.

You will find that most of the soldiers in your COHORT unit are ready to be led. They are eager to respect and obey their leaders. They have an array of positive attitudes toward the Army and the mission. With these soldiers you can develop that ideal form of discipline in which every soldier will behave in a professional and ethical manner, and will do his utmost to accomplish the mission in the absence of orders or supervision. You can expect most soldiers in COHORT units to come believing that you expect no less of them. But they have some demanding expectations, too, and that's where you earn your pay.

What Your Soldiers Expect of You

Leading COHORT soldiers is not hard, but if you don't understand their expectations of you, you could be eternally puzzled about why you are never in synch with your unit. This is not to say that the leader has to pander to his subordinates' moods, or run a popularity contest, or be a bystander in his own unit. On the contrary, your soldiers expect you to set high standards, be rigorous in enforcing them, and be in the middle of whatever your unit is doing. Success comes from knowing your subordinates, and using leadership techniques appropriate for them. Three techniques have helped leaders of COHORT units meet their soldiers' expectations: technical know-how, respect for subordinates, and focus on the mission.

Technical Know-How. COHORT privates want to learn how to be excellent soldiers, and they expect their leaders to teach them. Because COHORT units have one training cycle that lasts three years rather than a succession of short cycles as in individual rotation units, you need to keep building your own knowledge. Your knowledge is what will enable you to keep your troops challenged, interested, and growing in proficiency throughout their three years together.

Leaders who have a wealth of knowledge about such things as fieldcraft, how to keep equipment working, how to use heavy weapons enjoy a kind of authority called "expert power." Expert power inspires confidence in subordinates because it is transferable to them, and because it reassures them that their leader has the knowledge and ability to handle difficult situations successfully. The most effective leaders in COHORT units have been NCOs and officers who knew a lot--either from experience or from study--about their profession. You can expect your soldiers to be insatiable learners; they expect you to be an inexhaustible teacher.

Leaders in different positions face different expectations. As always, the squad leader/section chief has the heaviest burden; he is with his soldiers continuously for three years. He is way ahead of them on day one, but they learn fast, and unless he is studying on the side they will overtake him long before day one-thousand. The research team found a good many squad leaders

and section chiefs whose soldiers had milked them dry a year into the cycle, and the sergeants' authority was becoming threadbare.

COHORT soldiers understand that most lieutenants are as new to the Army as they are. They do not expect them to know, initially, the details their squad leaders and platoon sergeants know. But they do expect their lieutenants to be fast learners. A lieutenant or NCO who joins a COHORT platoon in its third year finds himself the only trainee among a bunch of seasoned soldiers. He needs to make use of every imaginable source of knowledge--manuals, older officers, NCOs, even privates--to learn enough that his subordinates can have confidence in him. He does not compromise his authority by asking his subordinates to teach him.

First-termers expect their senior leaders--platoon sergeants, first sergeants, and company commanders--to be masters of their professions. The range of expertise the privates expect includes such matters as indirect machine gun fire, mortar gunnery, anti-tank tactics, tracking, sniping, field repair of weapons, vehicles, and communications equipment, air assault skills, urban combat--the expectations are endless. In COHORT units, with personnel stabilized for three years, it is possible to develop substantive capabilities for many types of combat, but you and your colleagues have to learn them first.

Company/battery/troop commanders are the leaders most frequently criticized by their subordinates for not having detailed knowledge of their branches. The research team found that in no case did a captain with an average knowledge of his branch have an effective, cohesive unit. In every case in which the captain was master of his specialty his unit was outstanding. Successful commanders studied whenever they had a chance, asked questions of other leaders, and experimented to broaden their understanding of tactics, maneuver, firepower, and maintenance. The best ones knew their business well enough to be able to listen to and try out their subordinates' ideas.

Respect. The foundation of your authority is not your rank, it is your competence, and your commitment to your subordinates. Part of your commitment is your respect for them. In the finest military units (and civilian organizations), superiors respect their subordinates. It is the indispensable key to success in COHORT units. First-term soldiers take soldiering seriously, they work hard at it, they think about it, and they have ideas. They expect you to treat them with respect. Respect means telling them what is going on, using their time and energy productively, and paying attention to their needs and welfare. It means entrusting your subordinates--within the limits of their expertise--with discretion in the execution of missions. It also means listening to your soldiers' problems and their ideas, and treating them as junior colleagues who are your equal in dedication to the mission.

First-term soldiers in COHORT units expect you to show your respect for the unit mission and for their efforts by upholding high standards. They do not expect you to coddle the inept or overlook misconduct. The good soldiers expect to hear about it if they make a mess of something, and they expect to be punished if they are guilty of willful misconduct. The good soldiers feel insulted if you do not punish or eliminate the "slugs"--those who do not try, or who repeatedly misbehave.

COHORT soldiers expect their leaders to be confident enough in their positions of authority to interact naturally with their subordinates. They quickly see through bluff, bravado, and harassment to the insecurities of the leader who uses them. Respect up and down the chain of command eliminates the need for rituals of subordination. Your troops will do whatever you tell them, but rituals that put distance between you and them will do just that--and you will lose your soldiers' commitment. You need not be afraid of admiring and liking your subordinates. As your confidence and competence grow, you will find that you can be friendly with your subordinates, and your authority will increase, not diminish.

Your junior enlisted personnel expect you to recognize that they are the ones who will execute your plans, accomplish your missions, and create your reputation. This expectation is usually not voiced, or even consciously held. But your acknowledgement of it through your respect for your troops is one of the most powerful ways you have to strengthen cohesion in your unit.

The Mission. First-term soldiers upon graduation from OSUT believe they are in the Army to go to war. Their attention is focussed on the mission; they see combat as dangerous and themselves as unready for it. They expect their leaders to prepare them to function effectively in battle, to be constantly improving their own knowledge and skills, and to subordinate everything to preparing for battle. As a consequence, first-term soldiers are surprised, disillusioned, and frightened by the multitude of training distractors that drain time and energy from preparing them for combat. They expect to clean their equipment and quarters, and perform a reasonable number of post support details. But they are confused to find such things as demonstrations, floor buffing, and area beautification accorded priorities comparable to those assigned combat-related activities. They are ready to sacrifice free time, family, and comfort for the mission. But when the mission is corrupted to include obviously unrelated tasks, the soldiers feel their leaders do not take the actual mission seriously, and do not respect them. They lose confidence in their leaders' integrity and sense of purpose.

How you can meet your soldiers' expectations while fulfilling the requirements laid on your unit by your superiors is the subject of the next section.

Meeting Expectations--Theirs, Yours, and the Army's

Your job is to prepare your subordinates to do some difficult and dangerous things, and to get them to actually do them in combat. It is not an easy job; it becomes feasible when you and your subordinates have similar expectations. Once you know what you can expect of them and what they expect of you, you can tackle what the Army expects of you and them--your missions. In reconciling these expectations, emphasis on trust, communications and development of subordinates have proved to be useful.

Trust

The good news is that both your soldiers and you, as the representative of the expectations of the Army, seek the same objectives--a high performing, disciplined, cohesive unit that can fight and survive amid the stresses of battle. At least that is what we think the Army expects. The bad news is that the Army, as represented by higher headquarters, often acts as if it expects something else. Preparing for battle gets buried under inspections, demonstrations, and community relations projects--requirements that have high visibility or are easily measured. In the company, platoon, or squad you are limited in your capacity to control the requirements laid on your unit.

What works with COHORT soldiers is keeping the focus on preparing for combat. But you will not be able to do it all the time, and when you can't, you need to talk it through with your subordinates. And whatever you do, level with them. They will trust you until you deceive them; then you'll spend eternity trying to restore their confidence. By talking it through honestly you can bring your, their and the Army's expectations into some kind of alignment. You can present the official story, but if you don't believe it, don't pretend you do. Acknowledge their gripes: "Smitty, I hear you. It is more than the other platoons have to do." Consider their suggestions on how to handle the requirement as painlessly as possible: "Booker's idea of making it part of morning PT might make it easier." Then engage them in working out how to get it done: "What was that you said, Sam, about dividing up the tasks?" What you don't want to say is, "By God, you'll do it because I say you'll do it, and that's the end of it." It may alleviate your discomfort over having to tell your people to do something you all know is stupid, but it will isolate you from your unit. For the important things, like war, you need to be, and be seen as, a fully committed member of your unit.

The essence of leading COHORT soldiers is to be honest with them. You have to set the example in both trusting them and in being trustworthy yourself. The double payoff is that they will have faith in you, and that they will tell you the truth about what is going on in your unit. One of the biggest weaknesses of modern bureaucratic armies is a punitive attitude toward bad news

from below. This attitude, which comes from commanders being afraid the bad news will exceed their ability to cope, has resulted in most of the military catastrophes in recent history (Think about Stalingrad and El Alamein from the German perspective, the Tet battles of 1968 from the North Vietnamese perspective, the retreat from the Yalu in Korea from the U.S. perspective. In each case the senior commanders were unable to accept reports of growing enemy strength and refused to allow tactical realignments). If your subordinates cannot trust you to handle the whole story, warts and all, they'll water it down. And you will never know what is going on in your unit in time to take effective action.

Trust covers an enormous range of relationships between you and your subordinates. For example, how do you handle a soldier who claims his child is sick and his wife can't cope, and he wants to be excused from an FTX to take care of his family? Or the soldier who complains of acute back pains but nothing shows up on the X-rays? Do you repose trust in the soldier and risk looking like a chump when everyone else realizes he is getting over? Or do you play it safe and deny all such requests and complaints unless they are verified by a medical or social service agency? Here is where your knowledge of what to expect from COHORT soldiers comes in handy. First of all, because of their intense dedication to the mission, and to each other, they tend to understate rather than overstate medical, personal, or familial problems. Secondly, soldiers in COHORT units depend on each other, so one who tries to get over will encounter heavy pressure from his peers--he would be letting them down as well as you. The most effective leaders have trusted their subordinates from the first. Most of their soldiers got in the habit of being trustworthy. The few who took advantage of their leader's trust eventually got found out and had to be Mister Ultra-Clean from then on.

Drugs pose complex leadership problems. Sometimes soldiers who feel powerless in the grip of the Army try to achieve autonomy, community, and a sense of effectiveness by using drugs secretly and against regulations. Successful leaders of COHORT units have countered drugs by helping soldiers feel they are autonomous, valued members of an efficient unit with an important mission. Some leaders did not even need to use urine tests or dogs. They trusted their soldiers, their soldiers policed each other, and they had little or no drug use in their units. One soldier told this story on himself:

I used to be a real junkie. Finally I got busted and was, you know, like on probation. If I got caught once more, I was out. I got some grass and was going to party. but I had this buddy--a huge black dude. He saw I had grass and he goes, "Well, I see you want to do yourself in. I'll help you." So he picks me up and I go, "Hey, what the ...?" and he goes, "I'm gonna carry your

little ass down to the CQ right now." So I go, "Hey, wait, no, no, I'll get rid of the stuff." I flushed it down the commode, and I've been straight ever since.

You have an obligation to your good soldiers to follow up any indications that some are using drugs. Their peers will know, and if you have a trusting unit, they will give you hints. The only way to keep the faith with your good soldiers when you find an entrenched drug culture in your unit is to use every means at your disposal--courts-martial, chaptering, medical boards--to eliminate the persons involved.

Where trust matters most is on the battlefield. Soldiers' lives depend on their telling you, and each other, the truth about where they went, what they saw, and what condition they and their equipment are in. Similarly, their ability to fight effectively depends on your being honest about what they are getting into. Both the AirLand battle and operations in low to mid-intensity conflicts will require small units to function autonomously for prolonged periods. The ability of your teams, squads, and platoons to persevere in isolation is a function of their trust that you will take care of them and never abandon them on the battlefield.

Thoughtful leaders recognize that trust is fragile--hard to build and easily destroyed. Often higher headquarters, by imposing an unexpected requirement, can in a single moment destroy trust a leader has nurtured for months. The key to protecting trust is candid, two-way communication.

Communication

COHORT soldiers' peer group communications do not include leaders. So leaders, from company commander through team leader, need to open up contacts with their privates. If you have subordinate leaders, you will normally pass information through them. But there are many situations in which you should talk to the privates yourself.

When something unpleasant or complex needs to be explained, you should do the explaining. The most successful leaders of COHORT units do not take it for granted that the troops will understand automatically all the requirements laid on them--especially onerous things such as repetitive weekends in the field, demonstrations for visiting dignitaries, and activities that take time away from the development of their combat proficiency.

You will usually want to talk directly with your troops when you plan to try something new. There are three issues here. First, once people have learned how to do something, they hate to abandon that skill and learn a new one. To sell your troops on any change, explain the new idea and the reasons behind it and

solicit their comments. Second, if a new idea is imposed on people they will probably not give it their best effort. But they will go all out to make history if you give them opportunities to experience the excitement of pioneering by being part-owners of your innovation. Often when you listen to them they will come to feel ownership of the idea. Finally, when your soldiers have made the effort to implement your innovation, you should express your respect by asking them to evaluate what worked and what didn't. The critique is not just window dressing. Their input will help you make your judgment about the validity of the innovation and how it could be improved.

Your soldiers will feel that you value them if you talk to them informally. You will find out what is going on in your unit, too. But talking to soldiers seems to make most leaders uneasy. Those who have taught themselves how to do it have had strong units. The hard part is breaking the ice the first time. Soldiers see through ritualistic approaches like: "Where you from, Smith?" or "How's the chow?" and will not respond. The best openers are those that demonstrate your knowledge of your soldiers and your respect for them. Talk about something that matters to the soldier. For example, "What did the doc say about your sore arm?" or "How did you prepare yourself to get a 91 on your SQT?" or "It's down to minus twenty degrees; are your feet warm enough?" or "Are you planning to have your wife come join you?" The basic message you want to convey is that you are interested in the soldier or that you and he have an interest in common--such as Army stuff, or his family. The conversation could be brief or lengthy, but it must be about something real, not just talk for talk's sake.

Leaders sometimes are reluctant to talk to anyone but their immediate subordinates; they don't want to go around their junior leaders to the privates. This is a valid concern in units in which there is fear rather than trust. In such units, if the captain talks to a private, he will not learn anything. The lieutenants and sergeants, fearing their captain, will browbeat the privates into saying, "Everything's just fine, sir," when the captain comes around. The trick is to establish a commonality of purpose and a climate of trust in which every problem in the company is a problem everyone else wants to help solve--whether it's PFC Schmerdlap's fight with his landlord or repetitive breakdowns in the HUMMVs.

Mutually supportive, trusting patterns of communication can turn up personal problems before they lead to catastrophe. If people know they can get help rather than punishment they are more likely to report their own--and others'--drinking, drug use, indebtedness, depression, etc. For example, a platoon sergeant told the research team: "One of my soldiers came and told me his roommate was drunk and planning to drive 200 miles, starting at midnight. I took the tippler's keys away until morning. No ass chewings, no recriminations--and the guy was still alive the next day. I thought he'd resent me, but he thanked me."

Trust and open communications develop when there is dedication and technical competence, respect up and down the chain of command, and a sense of common purpose in the unit.

Development of Subordinates

The ultimate measure of your effectiveness as a leader is how well your subordinates perform. It does not matter how strong and skilled you are, you are still only one person. Your ability to achieve victory is the total capability of your whole unit. This is obvious, but few leaders act as if they understand it. Some are afraid to develop subordinates because it is a risky business for a leader. It is safer to do it oneself or to supervise closely every activity than it is to entrust a mission to a subordinate's discretion. You are still responsible. You may be tempted to put the development of subordinates on a back burner because by directing everything yourself you can show that your unit has instant capability. Developing your juniors takes time, and often your bosses are trying to be The First or The Fastest. When you feel the urge to do it all yourself, remember that in combat if you are incapacitated it is your subordinates who will accomplish the mission and bring you out--if you have allowed them to develop the capabilities.

The first way to develop your subordinates is to teach them everything you know, then learn some more and teach them that. But more important even than teaching is empowering. This means giving your subordinates as much authority and discretion as they are ready to handle. COHORT soldiers, because they take the mission seriously, are particularly eager to own it, to participate in working up the plan for accomplishing it. While it is gratifying for a junior soldier to be entrusted with an operation, it is rough on his leader. You have to be prepared to take the heat for your subordinates' errors as they learn from their mistakes.

Concurrently, you have to be alert for evidence that a subordinate is over his head or approaching the limits of his current stage of development. While you want to give each of your troops enough additional responsibilities to keep him challenged and interested, you do not want to pile more on him than he can handle. It does neither him, you, nor the unit any good if he feels overwhelmed and gives up. The idea is to give your soldiers and your unit experiences in which, by taking on a bit more than they think is possible, they find the resources to achieve more than they thought they could, to grow into the challenge. A group of privates said:

Sergeant Sugarman keeps giving us these missions we call mission impossible. But we've gotten through each one, and they don't look all that tough afterwards. He's been with us two years, and now we don't get upset about any assignment.

We just start working on it knowing we'll figure something out.

To design appropriate training experiences you have to be aware of the state of training and the states of mind of your units and your soldiers. Open communication with your subordinates provides this kind of awareness. In particular, you and your subordinate leaders have to be thinking along the same lines. It does you no good as a leader to have subordinates who always report they are ready for anything. They have to know you will take them seriously when they say: "If we don't get some water in the next hour we're gonna have some guys going down," or "We ought to send Smitty in with the chow truck. His feet are like hamburger."

Developing subordinates through trust, respect, and empowerment puts heavy stress on a leader. Only those with integrity and comprehensive knowledge of their field have dared to do it. Those who have tried it have reaped rewards. Their units were outstanding; they experienced support, admiration, and affection from their troops; and they felt a sense of unity and specialness among their soldiers. Those leaders enjoyed what they were doing.

Supporting Your Subordinate Leaders

Your subordinate leaders give you the means to expand your control over your unit and to increase its capabilities. They are much more than passive conduits for your orders and policies. If you can win their active commitment to the mission and teach them to exchange ideas with each other and with you, they can multiply the effects of your leadership. It is important that they share your vision of where the unit is going and how it can get there. If they are to participate effectively in the accomplishment of your mission, they have to be stockholders in it. Three aspects of leaders' interactions have proved to affect the success of COHORT units--giving power away, collegiality, and relationships between lieutenants and sergeants.

Giving Power Away

By giving power away to subordinate leaders the senior leader strengthens his control over his unit. Your junior leaders can control the unit more effectively than you can because they are more numerous, are closer to the situation, and have fewer distractions. The tendency of leaders who are new to their positions is to clutch the right to make decisions to themselves. This weakens them in two ways. First, they wear themselves out with details, and second, they make their subordinate leaders into organizational eunuchs.

Let's see how this notion, which at first looks a bit contradictory, works in practice. To begin with, the more brains there are at work on a problem the more likely it is that a workable solution will emerge. One lieutenant who led an outstanding COHORT unit said:

I need my sergeants to commit their creative abilities to accomplishing the missions that come down. The best way to get their commitment is to give them power--control over and ownership of the mission. I don't make a plan without talking it over with my NCOs. As we talk it through each one comes up with ideas, and maybe one sees a piece of the operation he feels good about and wants to take over. By listening to each other we see where coordination is necessary and work it out on the spot. Then when we execute, everybody knows what everybody else is doing, and knows how he can help if things get snarled up. We have had lots of things go wrong on ARTEPs and exercises, but we always got through because everyone responds in full knowledge and understanding of the mission and each squad's part in it.

This process of developing the concept of an operation in conference rather than the boss conceiving it on his own and laying it on his subordinates may seem time-consuming and impractical. Initially it will be clumsy until you and your subordinates get to know each other, and until all of you get a feel for the kinds of missions you will have to tackle. Developing this kind of teamwork among leaders requires a variety of challenges in training. If you usually do the same few operations in the same training area in the same way, coordination may be a snap but nobody learns anything: "We're gonna hit the bunker complex near Hollow Gulch." "You mean the one we used for squad ARTEPs?" "Yeah, and in Exercise Foxglove III." "Well, same stuff--smoke on the left, mortars on the right, Smitty lay down a base of fire while Al goes in on the flank, right?" "Right."

This kind of repetitive exercise on familiar terrain does not develop new thinking. It fails to develop the need for and the feel of taking care of each other that is essential among you and your subordinate leaders. Under the stress of combat, thinking becomes narrowed. Every leader lapses into a kind of tunnel vision. You need to be sure that your training exercises offer enough stress, uncertainty, and isolation to force you and your immediate subordinates to know each other, depend on each other, and protect each other. Practice with your subordinate leaders telling each other your thoughts and learning what each other is thinking. When you get good at these, all of you will be able to supplement each other's tunnel vision. Trust, mutual support, and open communication pay off in dead enemy, live Americans, and accomplished missions. They are largely

responsible for the victories achieved by the Israeli Army over its more numerous adversaries, and it is the process used by U.S. Army Rangers and other elite forces.

To make your junior leaders effective you need to give them authority over the good things in their subordinates' lives--such as time off and privileges. You cannot be everywhere to praise, correct, or take care of your privates, but your junior leaders, by acting as you would, extend your power to command. For example, the most successful officers and senior NCOs gave squad and section leaders discretion over releasing men for personal business during the duty day. In the same units, junior leaders felt, and their subordinates believed, that they had some influence over punishments, awards, and promotions. This is a delicate and critical business. Only when your first-line leaders perceive that decisions on promotions and punishments are under their control will they sense your respect and have a feeling of ownership of their units.

If you have doubts about your ability to control your subordinate leaders when you have given them much of your own discretion and control, consider two points. First, you are the source of your subordinate leaders' power; this gives you decisive control. What you have given you can take back. But more importantly, you have given something valuable to them, and they will strive to support you and be worthy of the trust you have placed in them. The second point is more elusive. It is that a leader who can give power away shows he is secure in his position and that he has the courage to trust his subordinates. He thereby inspires confidence and, paradoxically, acquires substantially increased authority. His subordinate leaders strive to know his will and execute it diligently. This is your most effective quality control mechanism; it can help you get your junior leaders to adopt your philosophy of leadership.

Collegiality

When a leader and his immediate subordinates work closely together, trust each other, and depend on each other, there is a tendency toward informality and even intimacy among them. Collegial relationships within platoons and companies have developed during combat. Unfortunately, one of the old customs in peacetime armies is that leaders should maintain distance from their subordinates. Fraternization--friendly relations off duty between soldiers of different ranks--has been condemned in our Army for decades. In armies having high turnover, in armies where the leaders owe their positions to social status or other non-military criteria, and in armies with inept leaders, superiors need distance, arbitrary punitiveness, and rituals of subordination to help them maintain their ascendancy. But in COHORT units, these kinds of leader behavior weaken the trust and mutual support that make COHORT units strong and fun to lead. In COHORT units, soldiers respect their leader on the basis of what he knows, what he teaches, how he cares for his troops, and his

demonstrated potential to conduct the unit effectively in combat. In cohesive COHORT units, badges of rank are not really needed. Soldiers of different ranks are friendly, they tease each other, there is a lot of irreverent behavior, but everyone knows who is boss.

Fraternization means brotherly behavior, and soldiers of all ranks in the best COHORT units are brothers. The only people who worry about fraternization in COHORT units are leaders who doubt their authority--usually because they do not know their business and fear they will be found out. In cohesive units with effective leaders there is a lot of off-duty socializing across ranks. You hear Army talk going on while friends of different ranks drink beer or cook out or go hunting or go to the beach together. Members of COHORT units become emotionally close to each other; their relationships are more like those between members of combat units in wartime.

Several COHORT soldiers and leaders have asked, "We are so close, what if one of us is killed in combat, will the unit fall apart?" There are several parts to the answer. The first is that the loss of a friend is a searing experience--particularly for a leader who sends a soldier on the mission that costs him his life. Soldiers in COHORT units will suffer more grief over each death than would soldiers in units in which relationships were casual or ritualized. The second part of the answer is that the cohesion in COHORT units embraces all the members. Those who remain will still have each other, so they and their unit will be better able to persevere in the face of casualties than soldiers and units in which each man is dependent on only one or two friends. The third part of the answer is that there will probably be a much lower percentage of deaths among soldiers in COHORT units than in conventional units because the units will fight more effectively, and their members will make extraordinary efforts to care for wounded comrades. Cohesive, collegial units have conserved the lives of soldiers in manpower-poor countries--such as Germany in 1940-1945, and Israel in the Arab wars. They can save the lives of Americans in future wars.

Lieutenants and Sergeants

All kinds of slogans have arisen in the Army culture to define the relationships between officers and NCOs in companies: "Sergeants' business," "NCOs are the backbone of the Army," and "The officers command in the field, the sergeants command in garrison." The need for these kinds of slogans arises from the fact that, in the main, officers are young, inexperienced, highly educated and have nominal authority over all NCOs; and that sergeants are older, experienced, have less education, and are subordinate to all officers. The purpose of the slogans has been to keep the lieutenants and sergeants from each others' throats.

Slogans have not worked in COHORT units. What has worked is honesty, trust, and communication between sergeants and lieutenants. Here is how it plays out. The combat power of a unit lies in the hands of the infantry privates, tank crewmen and artillery cannoneers. Preparing them, supporting them, and putting them in favorable positions is the leaders' task. The sergeants do most of this because they know how, and they are more numerous than officers. Officers are there to provide quality control of the sergeants' behavior. The Army is constantly changing, but the sergeants were there in the Army of five, ten or fifteen years ago. The sergeants provide the wisdom of their decades of service; the lieutenant helps them apply it in the ways that are appropriate now. Few sergeants have experienced during their years of service leadership techniques such as respect, collegiality, and empowering subordinates. Lieutenants trained in these new techniques from the beginning of their military careers can help their NCOs learn these techniques--primarily by serving as models, but also by observing and counseling.

NCOs need their lieutenant to back them up, get support for them, and listen to and coordinate their ideas. The lieutenant needs his NCOs--and his privates--to teach him about the Army. The Army needs the lieutenant to keep the sergeants behaving in ways that are consonant with current Army policy. Here is where the lieutenant is crucial. He is new, he does not have a lot of ideas about how the Army worked in the past, and he brings from his schooling knowledge of the latest in Army policy. He can bring his NCOs up to date.

How to Tell How You're Doing

You can evaluate whether you are headed toward being a high performance unit by watching, listening, and asking. The primary things to watch are how your subordinate leaders and privates approach their tasks and how they interact with each other. Do they do the right things correctly, quietly, and on their own? In the field do they spontaneously act as if they are in a combat situation? Do they develop their own ways of doing things? Do they help and advise each other? Another set of things to observe--by watching and listening--is wives' attitudes toward unit activities. Do they participate? Do they make friends across rank lines? Do they seem to be involved with the unit because it is fun and/or useful to them, or do they seem to be there under compulsion?

Listening is a rich source of information. Do privates judge each other on how well they do military things? Are they generally supportive toward one another? Do the sergeants and privates treat each other with respect? Do privates ask their NCOs questions? Do the NCOs take the questions seriously? Do the sergeants and privates seem to like each other? Do the sergeants support their privates' requests? Do they urge that

their privates be rewarded/promoted? Do the sergeants help privates deal with personal and familial problems? Do the sergeants make opportunities to teach their subordinates?

Sometimes you need to ask soldiers what they think about the mission, training, logistical support, and their leaders-- including you. If they think you care, and if you have established a climate of trust in your unit, they will give you straight information. You will know you have really built trust and won your subordinates' respect when they feel they can criticize you.

The COHORT system and the soldiers turned out by OSUT give you the opportunity to develop a unit of exceptional competence and cohesiveness. The secret is to unite your unit through trust, respect, empowerment of subordinates, and focus on the mission. Some of the concepts in this paper may seem strange, others will be familiar principles that you are already applying. Our research has shown that they all have consistently produced success in COHORT units. Try those that are new to you and see if you feel comfortable with them. The best part is that leaders who have used them have not only had first-rate units, they have also found their demanding jobs became immensely gratifying. Leading in COHORT units can be challenging, rewarding, and fun. Best of luck!

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