

Company Command

Building Combat-Ready Teams

To: Company Commanders

From: Company Commanders

CC is company commanders. We are in an ongoing professional conversation about leading Soldiers and building combat-ready teams. Company Commanders connect at: <http://CompanyCommand.army.mil>

Prepare for Command

Hindsight is 20/20. So as you prepare to take command of a company, wouldn't it be great to catch a glimpse of thousands of seasoned, experienced and eagle-eyed company commanders as they look into the rearview mirror at their command time?



The Question

What was the MOST important thing you did in your preparation for command?

After listening to feedback from past and current company commanders, here are the major themes that came into view and some powerful comments that help bring them into focus.

Prepare Physically and Mentally

Paul Stanton

B/1-502nd IN, 101st ABN DIV (AASLT)

Get yourself in the best shape you've ever been in. Your first impression is made at PT. It only takes one PT session to earn your Soldiers' respect when you can run faster than all of them, do more push-ups, more pull-ups, etc. Perception is reality from your junior Soldiers. They don't see all of the work you do in your office late at night—they see you at PT and in the field—you better show them something impressive.

Rob Griggs

C/2-504th PIR, 82nd ABN DIV

To prepare mentally, I talked to many successful commanders and absorbed their thoughts, I immersed myself in my trade (reading and knowing details in key field manuals and mission training plans), and I visited with as many

NCOs as I could. After that, I was confident that I was prepared for the challenge ahead.

Know Your Soldiers and the Unit

Dave Dudas

2nd BCT, 25th ID (L)

Knowing the Soldiers that make up your soon-to-be company is most important. Soldiers determine your success; therefore, knowing who these individuals are and what makes them tick is extremely important if you wish to get the most out of each and every one of them. Waiting until the day you receive the guidon is, I would argue, too late.

Don Nowlin

B/407th FSB, 82nd ABN DIV

My point to hammer home is to get to know your people. If they see that you are taking an interest in them, they will

do everything they can to perform the mission. Soldiers are not numbers, they are not bodies. They are people. They have goals, they have aspirations, they have families, and they have lives outside of the green uniforms. Take the time to get to know them.

Maka Shibata

Det A/556th PSB, 25th ID (L)

I had a month before I took command. During that month I researched the mission of the company and battalion and how it fit in the division, talked with the battalion commander and got his priorities, and got the battalion and division's training calendar to prioritize what I wanted accomplished.

Mike Stuber

B/313th MI BN, 82nd ABN DIV

I asked the current commander if I could see what training the company had done in the past six months and what the next six months on the calendar looked like, as I would have to incorporate this training into my first few months of command. This included getting a mission essential task list assessment to see where, based on training events, he thought the company was. It established a baseline from where I started looking to make improvements once I settled into the command seat.

Be Technically and Tactically Proficient

Mark Miles

A/86th SIG BN, 11th SIG BDE

I would take every opportunity possible to get smart on the equipment that the unit uses. Being as close to an expert on the equipment as possible makes it much easier to lead and manage those systems. Once you take command, there really is not a lot of time to focus on technical competence because all of your time is taken up with personnel and training matters.

Steve Cunningham

C/2-502nd IN, 101st ABN DIV (AASLT)

In preparing for command on short notice while deployed, I simply went back to field manuals. Reviewing them helped me realize that the only difference in Iraq was the terrain and the enemy. It also prompted other ideas for conducting mounted operations and raids (cordon and searches), and it taught me that there is just too much that we do on a daily basis not to refer to doctrine to check ourselves. I'm a firm believer in using the doctrine, and I can't believe anyone would deploy without having a wide variety of materials available to them.

Cooperate With the Existing Company Leadership

Darcy Saint-Amant

B/302nd SIG BN, 21st SIG BDE

I spent a lot of that time watching the Soldiers, talking



with the previous commander, and talking with the 1SG. That 1SG just retired after a year and a half with me. He's the one who taught me the most. I focused on building a relationship with him prior to command, so that we were a strong command team from day one and forward.

J.C. Stroh

C/3-502nd IN (RSTA), 101st ABN DIV (AASLT)

Fight for maximum handover time with the outgoing commander. Design a plan for when you'll work together, train together, and share everything there is to know about the unit with each other. The outgoing commander and I attended training together (ranges, meetings, UCMJ, etc.), discussed command philosophy at length, and conducted handover of every critical area of command responsibility. This provided essential continuity for the unit and an invaluable opportunity for me to learn the key chain of command personalities.

Mike Kirkpatrick

I/3rd BN & HHT/1st BN, 2nd ACR

I went and talked to the 1SG and XO. They told me the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and what it needed. I took the supply sergeant to lunch and talked about inventories and command supply discipline. The 1SG, XO, supply SGT, and I developed a plan for the change-of-command inventory. It was smooth as silk. During the inventories, I ate lunch with the PLs and PSGs, where they told me everything they wanted the troop to achieve. They needed someone who would give them guidance and direction and the resources to train; they would do the rest.

Develop a Command Vision and Philosophy

Jay Bartholomees

HHC/3-15th IN, 3rd ID & B/3-75th RGR

First, sit down and review all of your old notes and OPDs to glean what you want your company to look like after you give up command 12-24 months later. Then, make a list of all the things that you want to do while you are in command. It can be a laundry list, but after reviewing what you wrote down, the things that are important will rise to the

top. Take those points and write your command philosophy. Have your commander, CSM, XO and S3 and future 1SG review so that they can provide input and see what is important to you before you take command. In my two commands, I have stuck to three fundamentals: Soldier discipline, leader initiative, and care for Soldiers and their families. It has been a one page document, clear and to the point.

William Stebbins Jr.

C/1-12th CAV, 1st CAV DIV & H/2-16th CAV, AOB

The most beneficial thing I did was compile a comprehensive Company Command modus operandi, which was simply a document broken down into categorical areas—as many categories as I would encounter as a company commander. I talked to as many former commanders as possible, read as widely as possible, brainstormed, and then transcribed all of my notes. I did this for over a year prior to taking command, so when the time came for me to accept the guidon, I had already digested my own thoughts, opinions, and ideas concerning how I wanted to do business.

Sebastian Pastor

B/27th EN, 20th EN BDE

The most important part for me was understanding my METL. While on staff, I began tracking the company's METL and developing my METL crosswalk, where I pulled together squad and platoon collective drills that I wanted the company to focus on. I developed a "vision" of what I wanted the company to achieve and then developed steps as to how best achieve that vision.

Learn From Seasoned Commanders and Mentors

Tony Burgess

A/2-35th IN & LRSD, 25th ID (L)

I took several commanders that I knew—guys I really looked up to—out to lunch one at a time and listened to them. I asked a few questions, but mainly just got them talking. It is amazing how much experienced commanders want to share if they are asked. It was simple, low cost and worth my while. They were pumped up about commanding Soldiers and were thrilled to share their best ideas and lessons learned. I know for a fact that I went into command much more focused and way ahead of where I otherwise would have been.

Prepare for Inventories

Chuck Rush

C Co & HHC/2-8th IN (M), 4th ID

Understand the inventory and property book process from A to Z. A properly done and professional inventory sets your command tone, establishes standards immediately, and allows you to understand what your company brings to the fight. On the other hand, a poorly conducted

inventory demonstrates that you will accept substandard performance and prevents you from seeing all of the maintenance and accountability problems that may exist in your unit. Think through how you want to conduct the inventory, become familiar with the property book down to component/BII level, and map out how you want your inventory to go. Don't let the outgoing commander dictate the schedule and conduct. This is your inventory and inspection, not his or hers.

Prepare Your Family

Ryan Coyle

O TRP & HHT/4th BN, 2nd ACR

Prepare your family for your command time. They need to understand how hard you will be working. Discuss how involved your spouse will want to be in your Family Readiness Group and have a plan for what you want to accomplish with the FRG. The support of family is key. At times, they may be the only people that appreciate you.

Angie Hines

135th CHEM CO HD, Illinois Army National Guard

The most important thing I did was surround myself with a good support structure. If I was intact, then I could be a better commander. This support structure consisted of a past commander (mentor), long-term friends, and my mom (who was the FRG leader).



If you are a current company-level commander or a commissioned officer preparing to take the guidon, we invite you to join your professional forum at <http://company-command.army.mil>. Check out the new "PREP FOR COMMAND" page to participate in ongoing discussions and see what tools are most popular as officers across the Army prepare to take the guidon. Send your comments, questions, or suggestions to cocmd.team@us.army.mil.

**Coming next month from
CompanyCommand ...**

Relinquishing Command