



CompanyCommand

Building Combat-Ready Teams



To: The Army Profession

From: Members of the CompanyCommand Forum

Leaders Describe How the Company Command Forum Makes a Difference

The CompanyCommand (CC) forum is a growing network of company commanders who are dedicated to the cause of exceptional leadership at the company level. Thousands of us are connecting in an ongoing conversation—sharing our hard-earned knowledge and experiences, becoming more effective and advancing our profession.

Over the last nine years, the Army's senior leaders—all past company commanders themselves—have been incredibly supportive of CC and other professional fo-

runs. They "get it" and want to maintain the grassroots, voluntary, by-and-for-the-profession nature that has made the forums so effective. Currently, the Army is seeking to expand the operating force and may draw from the generating force to make it happen. With this in mind, we recently asked members to share their real-life stories and concrete examples of how the CC forum has made a difference. What follows here is a small sample of the outpouring of feedback from leaders across the Army.

The day I stumbled across CompanyCommand, I realized I had found a gold mine. I utilized CC for EVERYTHING. My initial counselings came from there, at least their blueprints did: forms, memos, newsletter ideas (almost all of them), training ideas, SOPs, TACSOPs, policy, regulatory references, solutions to problems, points of contact and so on.

During and after deployment, I used CC to discuss my experiences in Iraq. It helped me relate to other commanders who had returned and had issues. It also helped me prepare those who were on their way over or already there. I attribute my success as a commander to CC. It was a critical tool in my development and sustainment as a leader. —*Jeremy*



During a 15-month deployment to Iraq as a platoon leader, the content of PL/CC guided me through numerous challenges that I would have struggled through on my own. When I lost Soldiers, people on the forum could relate, offer encouragement and suggest courses of action. When I struggled with relationships with my NCOs, I found leaders who could relate and offer advice. When 15 months stretched on and tested my will to endure, I could post my struggles and, without ever meeting the respondents, overcome the challenge. —*Ryan*

A little less than two years ago, I was informed I would be taking command of an HHC in a Stryker Infantry Battalion. I had limited experience regarding HHC operations and the mission set that comes with them. Luckily, I have a command group that supports me and a 1SG who will not

CPT Jeremy Banta, who commanded the 1485th Transportation Company in Iraq, credits the CC forum as "a critical tool in [his] development and sustainment as a leader."



CPT Lorilyn Woods, commander of B/1-10 ATK aviation, credits the CompanyCommand "Supply" topic with helping her start her command "on exactly the right foot."

allow failure. But I needed something more. I needed to discuss my questions and concerns with my peers. I needed to find and connect to the countless HHC commanders, past and present, and draw on their knowledge. I found that in CompanyCommand. —*Matt, from Iraq*

I had very little time to prepare for command, yet after my change-of-command inventories, I was told that I had started off on exactly the right foot. Everything I did in my inventories was an idea I got from the "Supply" topic in the forum. It saved me countless hours of research and saved me from making critical mistakes. Because I knew where to download the TMs and could figure out what components were required for each item, I was able to identify our shortages and order the missing parts. We deployed three months later with everything we needed. The forum was a one-stop shop to figure out what I needed to know and consider. —*Lorilyn, from Iraq*

The CC forum has given me a laboratory to test theories, a sounding board for ideas and a support group of peers larger than I ever could have had without it. Not only have I used things that I have seen and talked about in the forum in training for combat, I have used them in combat, with success. The stories and scenarios available in the forum have allowed me to think through situations before I faced them. Even better, I placed my platoon leaders into situations that they were able to think about prior to and during deployment. The forum saves lives on a daily basis. —*Scott*

CPT Scott Shaw (left), with 1SG Terry Sutton, used the CC forum to educate himself and his platoon leaders before and during their deployment.

In the CC forum, I can ask questions without fear of ridicule or judgment. I can voice opinions I would never share face-to-face with a field grade. I am among peers who also share my thoughts and feelings and cannot express those thoughts in other venues. In addition, company-level leaders have been through a lot of life-changing events during deployments in the last few years. Many of us deal with those issues on a routine basis. The CC forum is a link to others who know, understand and appreciate our struggles from war. Just knowing that others out there have had similar experiences and how they are moving forward is comforting and provides strength to continue to lead. —*Joan*

During OEF VIII, I was contacted by four different lieutenants and captains who were coming into our battlespace with different units. Every single one of these officers found out who I was and what I did through MilSpace. They were able to touch base with me months before they deployed, and I was able to establish NIPR and SIPR lines of communication to share information or put them in contact with the commander in the area they were going to. More importantly, I was able to provide my perspective as the battlespace owner of what the INTSUMs and OPSUMs I was sending them were saying. When these officers arrived in my AO, they were much better prepared, and it made RIP/TOA easier. In other words, they showed up to the fight current and relevant. —*Jason*

While working with other Coalition forces, I saw that they do something that we fail to do as an Army: provide a place for leaders to interact. The Brits, for example, provide places for leaders to share their experiences and have regular events for morale and unit cohesion. Yes, we have FOB-level MWR areas, and SPAWAR has been pushed down to the squad level. But the most acceptable interaction for American Soldiers seems to be playing a video game or watching a movie in your CHU.



What is MilSpace?

Some of the CC members here refer to MilSpace. MilSpace is the online ecosystem for professional learning and development that includes CC, PL, ProReading, LeaderCast, LeaderChallenge and eventually MilSpace Tracker. Users may enter the MilSpace system by joining the PlatoonLeader and/or the CompanyCommand professional forums. Members then gain access to additional capabilities and resources like their personal area (dog tag) and the ProReading forum (<http://ProReading.army.mil>). LeaderCast is a brand new place for video clips of leaders talking about their experiences, and LeaderChallenge v3 will launch in September. The MilSpace team also takes responsibility for monthly articles in ARMY and for other projects such as the MCCC Yearbooks, the *Afghan Commander AAR Book*, the *Iraq Commander AAR Book* and *A Platoon Leader's Tour*—all possible because of a ground-swell of Army officers who are on a mission to share their knowledge, learn from others and advance our profession.

CompanyCommand is a place to connect with fellow officers who are willing to share their lessons learned for the benefit of everyone. In garrison, there are no O-clubs on many posts. There are few right-arm nights. I have been to one hail-and-farewell in the last three years. Developmental counseling does not happen because of OPTEMPO or apathy, and being counseled by a field grade who is not in my MOS doesn't help me understand my career path. CC is the only professional community left for people interested in the art and craft of being a leader. —Anonymous, from Iraq

Upon my return from Iraq as a company commander in 2004, I was looking for a way to reach out and share my experiences with others. My greatest concern was passing on relevant lessons learned that were not getting to those Soldiers currently training for deployment because of the time it takes for our organization to adapt as a whole. With CompanyCommand, I was able to contribute and connect with leaders going into training for deployment, those already in theater and those who had already been there. In terms of professional interaction with my peers, the professional experience was second to none, save my Captains Career Course at Fort Benning, Ga. —Wes, from Iraq

I am an HHC commander currently at FOB Warrior, Iraq. I have been in command for about 14 months, and every step of the way the CompanyCommand forum has been an unquestionable resource—not only for me as a commander trying to do the right thing, but also for my Soldiers, who are affected by my decisions. My unit has deployed twice in three years, and with each rotation, a vast amount of knowledge and tracking products has been lost due to leadership changes and new bans on media that units

have come to rely on. I was not lost, thanks to the enormous amount of memorandums, policy letters and products available on MilSpace. CompanyCommand has saved me more often than I can count. In addition, I used PlatoonLeader as a platoon leader in Korea. I do not know how I would have made a new platoon from scratch during the 2nd Infantry Division's transformation if I had not had this resource to help me. MilSpace has become more than just a web site. It travels with you when you're away from the flagpole and in a new unit. It is our continuity in a time of increased OPTEMPO. —Jessica, from Iraq

I have known now for about eight months that I would be deploying to Afghanistan. Only a few Soldiers in my company have experience in that theater of operations, leaving a significant knowledge gap during our preparation phase. The *Afghan Commander AAR Book* gave me and my platoon leaders an opportunity to orient our efforts effectively. We discussed it in an OPD forum and extracted all of the pertinent lessons learned. Today, two days prior to my movement, I feel that we are prepared and ready to go. —Adam

My husband and I are dual military, and both of us have deployed, my husband to Iraq while in command of a company. One thing I'll say for the forum is that it was an outlet for coping as much as it was a resource for learning. My husband thought he did everything right upon redeployment. He got debriefed, he filled out the mental health surveys, he helped his Soldiers deal with family issues, he took the classes for reintegration training, you name it. He thought everything would be perfect since he checked all the blocks. He was wrong. It caught him off guard, but he had a few episodes that made it clear to him something was wrong. He



CPT Jessica Jaccard-Gordon is currently commanding HHC, 15th BSB of the 2nd BCT, 1st Cavalry Division, in Iraq. She considers the MilSpace forums to be junior officers' "continuity in a time of increased OPTEMPO."

CompanyCommand Glossary

AAR—after action review.
AIT—advanced individual training.
AO—area of operations.
AR—Army regulation.
ASB—aviation support battalion.
CC/PL—CompanyCommand and PlatoonLeader forums.
CHU—containerized housing unit.
COIN—counterinsurgency.
ESB—expeditionary signal battalion.
FM—field manual.
FRG—family readiness group.
FSC—forward support company.
HHC—headquarters and headquarters company.
INTSUM—intelligence summary.
IOBC—Infantry Officer Basic Course.
ITSB—integrated theater signal battalion.
KFOR—Kosovo Force.
MCCC—Maneuver Captain's Career Course.
MWR—morale, welfare and recreation.
NIPR—nonsecure Internet protocol router.

OEF—Operation Enduring Freedom.
OPD—officer professional development.
OPSEC—operations security.
OPSUM—operational summary.
OPTEMPO—operational tempo.
PHA—personal health assessment.
PT—physical training.
RIP/TOA—relief in place/transfer of authority.
SASO—stability and support operations.
SBCT—Stryker brigade combat team.
SIPR—secure Internet protocol router.
SOP—standard operating procedure.
SPAWAR—Internet and phone access for U.S. and Coalition forces throughout Iraq.
SSA—supply support activity.
TACSOP—tactical standard operating procedure.
TM—technical manual.
TRADOC—Training and Doctrine Command.
TTP—tactics, techniques and procedures.
UCMJ—Uniform Code of Military Justice.
XO—executive officer.

did seek mental counseling, but that didn't seem to be quite enough to make him feel better. What he needed was an outlet to tell his own story, to feel like he was valuable to the fight again, and more than anything to be heard by other Soldiers who understood where he was coming from. He got that in the CompanyCommand forum. He started volunteering more and more on the site and participating in forum discussions. The changes I saw in him, as his wife and as a fellow Soldier, were dramatic. He found strength in sharing his hard-learned lessons with young officers, and they appreciated his enthusiasm, wisdom and confidence.

I don't want to exaggerate, but the CompanyCommand forum brought my husband back to 110 percent as a Soldier. Now during those evenings in front of the TV, I don't mind at all that he's typing away on a forum topic instead of watching a "chick flick" with me—CompanyCommand keeps him participating in the fight just enough so that he doesn't feel useless back at home station. —*Anonymous*

CompanyCommand, along with *Taking the Guidon*, was the cornerstone of my two company commands. To be totally forthright, I was not self-assured enough going into command to solicit information via CC. What I did, and what helped me tremendously, was browse posts and conversations regarding whatever subject concerned me at the time. I garnered much more information than I could have ever amassed via conversations, mentor talk, peer talk and subordinate feed-

back. CC provided me tools to use and examples of practical applications to avoid pitfalls. CC is MISSION ESSENTIAL to each and every officer who desires to improve understanding in our everchanging profession of arms. —*Hammer*

My company is presently a landowner in western Abu Ghraib. I began visiting the MilSpace forums in 2000, while a sophomore at Penn State and a member of ROTC. I came to rely on the PlatoonLeader web site to prepare for



CPT W.W. (Hammer) Welch, a MacArthur Leadership Award recipient, says the CC forum was "the cornerstone" of his two company commands—C/2-126 IN and HHC/1249 EN.



CPT Paolo Sica (right), commander of C/2-112 IN, drinks chai with reconnaissance platoon leader 1LT Max Furman in Iraq. CPT Sica has been an active participant in MilSpace forums since he was an ROTC cadet and considers them “simply irreplaceable.”

IOBC and answer the myriad questions a cadet considers. In early 2003, I used PlatoonLeader to piece together a rifle platoon TACSOP for use in KFOR5A, when SASO doctrine was still a moving target and before COIN was resurrected. In 2008, I used CompanyCommand to connect with a fellow member, Brent Clemmer, who helped me develop a COIN-era Stryker Infantry Company TACSOP for use in OIF 09-11. MilSpace is simply irreplaceable by any number of privately operated web sites, given OPSEC regulations. It has no equivalent. —*Paolo, from Iraq*

During OIF III, I was deployed under a commander who was a very hard charger, to say the least. We were strung out hard—my platoon sergeant and I pulled 36-hour shifts one or two times a week just to ensure minimum manning was accomplished for our platoon’s tasks. It was a low point for me in my military career, and I needed to see that either this is the way life is in the Army, or this isn’t the way life is in the Army—there is a better way. When I joined CompanyCommand, I was immediately immersed in a better way of doing business, and the thought of being able to implement what I learned allowed me to stay focused through that deployment.

When I returned to Iraq with my own company, CompanyCommand was right there supporting my premobilization OPD goals by supplying *Taking the Guidon* for each of my officers. This seemingly simple act allowed a team to be built and common ground established for working through the deployment as a leadership team. Throughout my second deployment, I visited CompanyCommand for info on everything from maintenance SOPs to UCMJ actions and always found the information I needed or was linked up with the subject matter expert. Anyone can read the info in a regulation or field manual, but it takes someone putting it into common terms and practical applications to really get information to flow properly, which is exactly what CompanyCommand does. I see no end to my use of CompanyCommand. It has facilitated my ability to command successfully twice pre-MCCC. —*Joshua*

counselings, physical fitness issues, PHA issues and so on. This forum allows me to get outside advice in order to maintain perspective on issues. —*Russell*

The CC and PL forums allow for networking and self-sought professional development. What I enjoy about these forums is all the great outside-the-box ideas all over these web sites—suggestions and recommendations that go beyond institutional learning. The forums have allowed me to interact with peers who have gone through similar situations or who are currently on the ground (for example, in Iraq), and they are able to share their best practices and eyes-on-the-objective experiences. Both the CC and PL web sites allow access to the expertise of officers stationed all over the world with just a few clicks of the keyboard. It is truly phenomenal. —*Gloria, from Iraq*

I am still not totally sold on Internet social networking, but I do know a few things about CompanyCommand. I used it as a young lieutenant to see how and what current captains were doing. I used it as a staff officer at both the battalion and brigade combat team levels to understand what my peers needed and how I could help them better. I also used it to mourn the loss of friends who had died in battle. Most of all, I used the CC forum for answers—answers not found in any AR, FM, TM or publication; answers never taught to me by any leader or class; answers to questions such as: What do you do when a Soldier under your command dies? How do you get through a 15-month deployment when you are separated from your family? How do you keep it together as a commander when the going gets tough so you don’t let your Soldiers down? Even though I had never kept a journal, I had the privilege of maintaining a Commander’s Blog on the CC forum for about seven months while deployed in 2006–07; it was a way to vent, receive reality checks from peers and receive advice from past commanders. This made such an impression on me that I am now volunteering my time to assist in running the forum. —*Jason*



From CPT Robert DeMarquez in Afghanistan (left) to CPT George Coleman in Iraq (right), company commanders rely on the CC forum for professional development. CPT Coleman, who utilized the CC forum during 54 months of command that spanned two companies and two deployments, now interacts in CC with less experienced commanders to share what he learned.

This is how our generation communicates—with speed, immediate feedback and innovation—while still grounded in the fundamentals of doctrine and years of lessons learned. —Aaron

From checklists to lessons learned, from TTPs to administrative helps and shortcuts, nothing even comes close to providing what this site does. —Nate

The CC forum is needed because we are an Army at war and some questions just aren't covered in the field manuals. —Todd

Just today I finished my command, and I have to say that CC was *the* tool that helped me step off on the right foot with command. —Chris

The best thing this web site does is allow us as commanders to learn from each other and to form connections that we otherwise wouldn't be able to have. —Robin

As a National Guard soldier with a full-time civilian career, I must rely even more on online networking tools such as CC for professional development. —Roberto

I find solace in the fact that someone somewhere has been in my spot and is willing to help complete strangers do better. The value of having a one-stop location for this information is immeasurable. —Patrick

The MilSpace platform is far more interactive and timely than the countless professional journals. Plus, I can access these sites from anywhere in the world, and they don't take up any space in my rucksack. —Matt

I find that I use CC forum the same way my wife uses Facebook. I check it first thing in the morning and again throughout the day. —George

Dedicated professionals have always learned from and with each other. If you are a currently commissioned officer who is passionate about growing and leading combat-effective platoons or companies, join us at <http://PL.army.mil> or <http://CC.army.mil>. Encourage your FRG leaders to participate in their forum at <http://FRG.army.mil>. If you are an Army professional in a different practice, check out <https://forums.bcks.army.mil> and find your forum.

Connecting in conversation...
...becoming more effective.

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Art by Jody Harmon

Have you joined your forum?