



# CompanyCommand

*Building Combat-Ready Teams*



**To:** Company Commanders

**From:** Company Commanders

## **Do We Need Leaders or Managers?**

Once a month, members of the CompanyCommand professional forum (<http://CC.army.mil>) craft an engaging question about a relevant topic and launch it to all members via e-mail. We call it the CC Jam. Our desire is for the CC Jam to be a catalyst for thought and conversation across the Army and for us to learn and become more effective as a result. The August 2010 question was focused.

**SUBJECT: CC JAM, “Leader or Manager?”**

**We pride ourselves on being leaders, but what we really need these days are managers.**

**Agree? Disagree?**

Within minutes, Nick Macsata posted a reply: “We lead people; we manage things. Good officership requires an implicit balance of both.”

A minute later, Brian Kime added: “Perfect answer, in my opinion.”

By the end of the day, there were 30 replies, and it has continued to grow (87 replies and counting). The topic struck a chord, inciting passionate, long responses. In the conversation, members disagree with each other but do it respectfully; the tone is positive. Members often acknowledge another member’s reply and provide positive feedback to those they appreciate. They consult Army doctrine and the broader academic and managerial literature to advance our understanding of the topic. In this article, we present that conversation—honed down, and still a conversation by and for company commanders.

**Dana Riegel:** I disagree with the statement. Nick’s comment is right on. We lead people and manage things. What we really need these days are hard-core leaders who have the ability to motivate & discipline Soldiers and manage tasks.

**Aamer Sheikh:** Mission accomplishment is still the key goal, and that takes a combination of leadership and managerial skills.

**Robert Luzarraga:** Simply put, we manage resources and systems, but lead Soldiers!

**Jonathan Holm:** The Army defines *leadership* as “influ-

encing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.” Managing is an implied task, depending on what the mission is and how the organization needs to be improved. Establishing and executing good systems and battle drills in your unit command post is a way commanders manage their organization. However, no matter how good your management systems are, sometimes you need to make command decisions and lead from the front.

**John McFarlin:** This morning, I listened to a company commander talking to his Soldiers in an NPR [National Public Radio] news story as they were on their way out of Iraq. He was assured, confident and to the point, providing to his men the context of their service and sacrifice, and placing it within the framework of their whole lives and the life of the nation. That’s good work, and good on that commander. As a leader, you need to know how to manage, but the true work of a commander is leadership, and company command is that crucible in which you either find



*According to Nick Macsata (left),  
“We lead people; we manage things.”*

your stride with people and learn to lead while keeping an eye on management, or discover that you're better at staff functions. Managers are many; leaders are few.

**Michael Shepard:** As Army officers, we are required to be both leaders and managers. Our job is to accomplish the mission and care for our Soldiers. In accomplishing the mission, we must lead by inspiring and encouraging Soldiers to do the task, and we must resource them for the task. In this way, we fill both roles. At the company level, the company staff can manage the resources, allowing you to lead. When I was an XO [executive officer], my commander laid out his expectations for me: "You and 1SG run the company's affairs so that I can command." His focus here was clear—he was going to establish methods of control around and under him so that he could be a leader.

**Roman Izzo:** Management and leadership are both inherent parts of command. One certainly cannot command well without being a good leader, and without management skills one would need a lot of help. A good XO or 1SG can help out on the management front, but there is no way to pick up the slack for a bad leader in a command position.

**Brandon Thomas:** I *strongly* disagree with the statement. A component of leadership is being able to manage. This holds true especially for today's Army officers, in that we are called upon to be innovative leaders of character. A *manager*, as defined by Webster's, is a person who directs a team. So with that said, yes, we are managers, but leadership is more than that. BLUF [bottom line up front]: You cannot remove the component of "manager" from leadership and have as successful an organization as we currently have. In other words, all leaders are managers, but not all managers are leaders.

**Mike Runey:** Brandon, you pose an interesting thought, and I don't think I agree—not all leaders are managers, or at least not good managers. Management skills are different and arguably just as important. Both effective leadership and

management are essential to consistent mission accomplishment and Soldier/leader development. One without the other courts failure. I think we, as an organization, undersell management. Who wants to be called a good manager at the risk of not being a good leader? I certainly don't. But strip the title of management while keeping all its critical functions, and we have some goodness. In the end: Don't undersell management by overselling leadership.

**Peter Gustafson:** I agree with Mike. Not all good leaders are good managers. I knew of an officer with a lot of command experience who was an excellent leader but not a good manager, and his unit, from an administrative perspective, was disorganized. If someone is a great leader but a poor manager, that person needs a very good staff to do the management. At the company level, you really need to be able to both manage and lead to be effective.

**Walter Loyola:** How about knowing *when* to be one or the other? We should use one or the other based on what the situation calls for. The right tool for the right job, I suppose. Being a leader is often built into a person's character, and it is hard to turn that off. But some are able to step back into an analytical/management mode to work issues.

**Mastie Baker:** You make some important and valid points; however, I see the issue differently. From my perspective, leadership is a subset of management—I might add, a function of management. The classical idea of management included things we now commonly think of as leadership. Motivating people to accomplish the work was part and parcel of management. The variety of functions and activities you identify as leadership, I consider to be management in action. Henry Mintzberg, in his 2009 book *Managing*, writes, "A half a century ago (1954) Peter Drucker put management on the map. Leadership has since pushed it off the map." If leadership could talk, it would tell us that it is a tool of effective management.

**Timothy Hilke:** The Army emphasizes leadership over management. But when you break it down, the two terms can be interchanged. A manager leads, and a leader manages. Early scholars defined *management* as the ability to get things done through people. The basic functions of management are: planning, organizing, leading, controlling and motivating. As seen in this definition, leadership is a function of management. Moreover, leadership is broken down into skills: information control, understanding needs and group abilities, controlling and directing the group, utilizing resources, planning and evaluating, counseling, delegating, teaching, setting the example, and representing the group. There are people who possess leadership skills but do not possess skill sets in other management functions



*Timothy Hilke says that "the Army needs effective managers who possess leadership skills."*



and therefore cannot be effective managers. A properly framed question would be: What is the definition of *management*, and what is *leadership*? I think it is obvious that you cannot have effective management without effective leadership—or any of the other functions of management. The problem is a lack of clear definition that is agreed upon by all and the disparate emphasis on skills or traits that make up the terms. The military has created a line of demarcation between the two terms, for whatever reason. Based on the question, I agree that the Army needs effective managers who possess leadership skills.

**Walter Loyola:** Mastie, I couldn't disagree more about leadership being a subset of management. From the Army definition of leadership, which I think is excellent, it can be argued that management is a subset of leadership. One truly leads when management is combined with providing purpose through clear and concise guidance (especially the CDR's intent), motivation through personal example (eating last at the chow line, being physically fit, cleaning your own weapon, etc.), and positive character traits (integrity, loyalty, proficiency, etc.).

**Jeremy Banta:** We need leaders who manage. We all know the officer who's awesome at projects and paperwork, but crumbles in front of the troops. They are amazing managers and staff officers—just not the best leaders. We also know the amazing leaders who can rally troops to follow them into the pits of hell. The military sees these as the best leaders. When they fail, we wonder why. When officers can lead but not manage, they fail. When they can manage but not lead, they also fail. Leaders NEED to be managers. If you can't manage, then you need to be aware of that fact and surround yourself with a staff that can manage for you.

**Anthony Hammon:** The distinction that this statement implies is only theoretical. In practice, the two cannot exist separately. *Leadership* is understood to be influencing people toward a common goal, while *management* utilizes processes and systems to achieve a goal. In theory, we may discuss the importance of influencing people separately from managing processes, but that distinction quickly fades in practice. There is likely no situation in which commanders can rely solely on their ability to influence people without employing the processes necessary to accomplish a task. Nobody would follow a leader who doesn't understand how to do the job. Likewise, focusing solely on a process will not influence the people who will participate in that process. Management is not part of leadership, nor is leadership part of management. They are separate sets of skills addressing two aspects of goal achievement—people and processes. While every position will require a different balance between the two, both are always required.

**Walter Loyola:** Actually, it is in practice that the distinctions between leadership and management become evident. Telling people what to do and how to do things isn't leadership. In our profession, we put a premium on leadership because it is what will carry our units through adversity, when folks are cold (or hot), tired and hungry. It is what carried the 20th Maine [Cavalry] at Gettysburg and the 2nd [Battalion] of



*Brandon Thomas (center) believes that “all leaders are managers, but not all managers are leaders.”*

the 506th [Infantry Regiment] (and the rest of the 101st [Airborne Division]) at Bastogne. It carries us through today. What this question brought to mind for me is the importance of recognizing leadership and management skills in Soldiers, and developing them commensurately through mentorship, training/education and assignments as they progress through their careers.

**Mastie Baker:** My post seems to be arguing for management at the expense of leadership. Leadership is important. I remain convinced, however, that leadership is management in action (applied management). A car in motion does not cease to be a car.

**Patrick Snyder:** Managers don't ask people to kill or die ... leaders do. When I was coming up through the ranks I never said, “That guy is a great manager; I want to manage just like him.”



*“Managers don't ask people to kill or die,” says Patrick (PJ) Snyder, “leaders do.”*



Ari Martyn (center), serving Thanksgiving dinner with his 1SG Robert Rollheiser in southern Iraq, prefers the term commander rather than either leader or manager.

**Brandon Soltwisch:** Patrick—agreed! I think your point gets to the root of leadership—which is to inspire and influence people toward a goal. However, I also have a lot of respect for those staff officers who effectively manage. Failing to do so makes everyone’s lives miserable. A good staff is worth its weight in gold to us commanders. Our pride tells us we want to be great leaders, but deep down we realize that in order to be good officers and commanders we ALSO need to be effective managers. It is a question of timing and balance.

***“We never lost sight of the reality that people, particularly gifted commanders, are what make units succeed. The way I like to put it, leadership is the art of accomplishing more than the science of management says is possible.”***

—General Colin Powell, *My American Journey*, 1995.

**Mastie Baker:** The debate about management and leadership presumes that a dichotomy exists between the two principles—but that presumption is false. Mintzberg asked: “How would you like to be managed by someone who doesn’t lead? ... [Or] be led by someone who doesn’t manage?” The essence of effective leadership is management applied or practiced well. I am an effective leader because I know how to manage. I might attempt to lead, but, without management, my attempt is akin to a neophyte navigating without a map and compass.

**Anthony Hammon:** By reading these posts, it becomes clear that this question is largely one of semantics. One may argue that management is an all-encompassing idea of directing an organization, which includes classic concepts of leadership related to influencing people through motivation. Conversely, one may argue that leadership is the act of influencing people toward a goal and that management comprises the tools used to do so. Regardless of which of these abstract concepts is the more popular, both

can be broken down into a list of skills necessary for a commander to direct an organization toward a goal. These skills range from motivating and creating vision to implementing work systems and developing strategies. In practice, it doesn’t matter whether a particular skill belongs to leadership or management. It only matters that the skill is practiced by the commander. Rather than compare these abstract concepts, perhaps we should determine which skills are necessary to direct an organization toward its goals.

**Mastie Baker:** The common theme seems to be that regardless of which side of the fence one falls, effective leadership requires management con-

siderations/actions. It is correct that some tasks such as influencing, inspiring and transforming people are directly related to leading. So my position that leadership complements management deserves adjustment: Leadership and management are symbiotic concepts.

**Ari Martyn:** Leader vs. manager? What about one term that covers both: *commander*? We need both management and leadership. My personal view is that it’s just a semantics game. Some of what commanders do might look more like *management*, such as when I scrub my property book. Sure, I’ll let my XO/supply sergeant do the bulk of the work within intent that I have articulated, but I still dive into the weeds every now and then. And, likewise, some things look more like *leadership*—like leading an intel-driven raid in a crappy part of town. Both, though, are equally *command*. Even in the middle of a firefight, a commander both

leads and manages. I’ve seen a commander literally say, “Men, follow me” as we took a hill under fire to go support a machine-gun position that had taken 100 percent casualties. I saw the same commander do math in the sand to figure out how long he could go at the current rate of fire before he would need a resupply of mortar rounds. He asked the JTAC [joint tactical air controller] for a rundown of when we would be lacking CAS [close air support] coverage so he could know when to surge mortars and/or ask for AWT [air weapons team] or some other backfill. I later saw him run through all of his M4 [rifle] and M9 [pistol] ammo and pick up an AK [rifle] off a dead dude and continue on. Was he leading? Was he managing? You can call it whatever you want, I prefer *command*.

**Brandon Soltwisch:** It is clear from these definitions that both management and leadership are processes by which to arrive at a given goal, objective or end state. Both are essential tools in the application of the art and science of warfare. If battle command is driven by commanders and it applies



leadership to translate decisions into actions (read: managing the orders process and execution of tactical operations), then commanders at all levels must be able to both manage and lead. Most importantly, a commander, guided by professional judgment, is required to fully understand when to manage and when to lead. To answer the question posed, I would offer that what the Army needs is commanders who fully understand how and when to exercise management and leadership during the process of battle command.

**Anthony Hammon:** Leadership may be inspiring, but management is practical. A balance of both is necessary, and neither is more important. Nobody said managing was glamorous. There is no such thing as a transformational management style. Yet the value of transactional management skills should not be discounted. No Army leader would ever be in a position to ask his Soldiers to kill the enemy without many managers getting him to that point. A commander's ability to manage the myriad tools at his disposal determines to a large degree his ability to accomplish the mission. Traditional leadership skills alone will never help him understand the complexities of synchronizing logistics, intelligence, personnel, equipment and other capabilities to create a fighting unit. Sure, a commander will have to lead Soldiers in those areas, too, but if he doesn't take an interested hands-on approach to understanding and directing those capabilities—managing them—the unit will not function.

**Brendan Sullivan:** We need officers who understand the art of leadership and the science of management. We exist to go to war. This guiding purpose continuously provides our azimuth. All of our energy and activity is focused on our ability to rapidly deploy, fight, win and return home alive. This requires us to lead *and* manage. I think leadership is a sacred responsibility and is the most dynamic element on the battlefield. Leading Soldiers and being charged with the responsibility of their professional development, and possibly their lives, is an awesome trust. However, it is also important to develop innovative approaches to our training and sustaining organizations. We will never have enough equipment or money or time, so what we do possess must be utilized wisely.

**Mastie Baker:** The challenge is to “D-Ex” [direct-exchange] the “either/or” paradigm. You know—the leader or manager, the mission or Soldiers. My recommendation is that we replace it with a new paradigm: the “and” paradigm. Now we have managing and leading, the mission and Soldiers. Thus we find the benefits in both and amalgamate them for the good of the goal we seek.

**John McFarlin:** The core imperative of a commander is to LEAD. The focus must stay on providing a moral, spiritual and ethical framework within which we accomplish the mission in the defense of our country in increasingly abstract and confusing situations. Then, from that foundation, focus on inspiring people to perform beyond their comfort level through personal example. A commander has people to handle the management functions. That's not to say that management isn't important. Yes, you need to make sure

that your people are optimized, and processes aren't wasteful. Yes, you must know the details of your unit, and keep your leader's book updated so that you can wield your unit adroitly. But it has to occupy a smaller part of your time, and you can neither ignore it nor allow it to become the main effort. What this means to me is that a false choice is presented. Lead? Manage? Both! Management is an enabler without which you are not going to be as good a leader as you could be.

*At the end of the day, there is no pat answer to the question posed. The predominant Army view seems to be that commanders must bring to bear both leadership and management skills in order to accomplish the mission and take care of Soldiers. Our responsibility is to develop ourselves (and our Soldiers) to have the character, the competence and the leadership skills required to be effective under duress and in extremely challenging situations. The Army's definition of leadership establishes the primacy of leadership—but places it in the purposeful context of accomplishing the mission and improving the organization, which require skills commonly thought of as managerial skills. This conversation caused us to see new connections in what we already know, provided insight into others' reasoning, broadened our perspective, helped us question our assumptions, and revealed gaps between our views and those of other professionals. Although a conversation like this doesn't have a “right answer,” it does cause us to think. This internal thinking process is valuable and is what creates insights for those involved (see Nancy Dixon et al., Company Command: Unleashing the Power of the Army Profession). If you are a company commander and would like to engage in these kinds of conversations, join your professional forum: <http://CC.army.mil>. Thousands of us are connecting and becoming more effective as a result.*

