



# CompanyCommand

## *Building Combat-Ready Teams*



**To:** Company Commanders  
**From:** Company Commanders

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## Leading in Fiscally Lean Times

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The fiscal constraints on the Army are real and are not going away anytime soon. Budgets have decreased, yet we still have soldiers to train, leaders to develop, families to care for and enemies to defeat. The fiscal problem is national, but our leadership challenges are local. As commanders, we need to influence the things we can in order to achieve the most bang for the buck. This month, we share some ideas on how to reduce spending and prevent waste while still training, developing, maintaining and operating day-to-day.

### **CPT Shawn Bennett**

**CDR, Fwd. Spt. Co., 27th EN BN (CBT)(ABN)**

The MRT, also known as the “free parts warehouse,” is an outstanding way to save money. The free parts warehouse provides a list of repair parts, BII and tools that are available free to the first unit to submit a request. The list I received from the Fort Bragg MRT contains more than 26,000 lines of items available from all continental U.S. MRTs. I have used the MRT to replace nearly \$30,000 worth of BII for my company’s vehicles, and my maintenance warrant officers have resourced more than \$50,000 worth of repair parts and service kits. The MRT is a great operation and very simple to use. The only cost to the government is for shipping and the labor of civilian employees. All parts, BII and tools have been turned in as excess and in serviceable condition. A way to help this program is to turn in your own excess equipment found in containers and motor pools.

### **CPT Joyce Louden**

**Past CDR, 189th MP CO, 525th MP BN**

I second Shawn’s encouragement to turn in your excess items. For the love of the budget, open all your connexes! Dump them out and then organize, clean, refurbish and use what you have before going out and buying more. If widget A is broken one way, and widget B is broken another way, cannibalize them for parts and use them to make widgets C, D and E work before deciding, “I need to purchase a dozen new widgets.”

We can also find ways to cut spending on office supplies. Save toner by reducing the quality on your printers and by shaking and heating your old cartridges to reclaim another few hundred pages’ worth. Make your copies double-sided. Ask your battalion commander if everyone at the meeting really needs all 150 slides.

Don’t waste ammunition. Turning in unused ammo is a pain, so either forecast more accurately or do all the turn-in paperwork, but stop firing ammo in three-round bursts at the end of the day without a training purpose, just to expend it.

Frugality has never been rewarded in today’s Army. Imagine if we wrote great OER bullets like “Saved x amount of dollars through fiscal responsibility in supply, parts and command supply discipline.”

### **CPT Paolo Sica**

**Past CDR, C/2-112 IN, 56th SBCT, 28th ID**

“Spend, spend, spend; we’ll get more!” remains an unfortunate and common end-of-year exhortation in some organizations (although it is more indicative of poor planning and inefficiency than of abuse). OER bullets for fund managers proclaim “100 percent execution of annual funding program,” and “grow back” (money returned at the end of the FY) remains anathema.

Leaders must incentivize the specific behaviors they wish to elicit with systems and checks. GFEBs, one such system, is in place and may assist us in our transformative change from a spend culture to a cost culture, perhaps eventually tying costs incurred to actual benefits achieved.

What’s unmentioned amid contemporary references to “good stewardship” is the presupposition of a concern for the common good. For an Army emerging from long wars of attrition in some of the most corrupt places on earth, stewardship may be a concept worth integrating into our Army values.

### **LTC Paul Maxwell**

**Past CDR, M/3/2 ACR (Light)**

Anyone with more than 15 years of service knows what life in an Army without money is like. Parts for equipment are deferred until the new FY, individual tools in toolboxes are accounted for and users are held responsible if they are lost, and training-OPTEMPO miles are tracked to the mile. At the company level, leaders hold individuals responsible for their equipment. Army equipment, even if labeled Class IX, is not free. If a Soldier loses something through negligence, then it is his or her responsibility to replace it—not the Army’s. This was a commonly accepted practice not too long ago.

A powerful tool for commanders is the commander’s exception report. The ULLS-G and ULLS-S4 used to generate



*CPT Shawn Bennett has saved approximately \$80,000 for his unit by obtaining free parts through his post's materiel reutilization team.*

a report that required the company commander's signature for any item costing more than a predetermined dollar amount (usually \$100). This gave the commander visibility and the ability to veto each purchase. With the changes to the system and the fact that the ULLS-G box is now located in the FSC, that report may no longer be under the com-

pany commander's influence. The FSC commander may now have that role for the entire battalion. If that is the case, then the FSC can provide those reports to a company commander so he or she can hold subordinates' feet to the fire for their actions. In the end, no system will work if the officers and senior NCOs don't feel personally responsible for the stewardship of government funds and property.

### **CPT Kevin Rice**

**Past CDR, HHB/2-18 FA and HHB/75th Fires BDE**

The ideas aren't new. We simply need to return to old practices.

Anyone who tells you to order all of your shortages is part of the problem. Battery and company commanders need to do a real assessment of their equipment readiness. Does your equipment have to meet 10/20 standards or is FMC acceptable? Do you have to have everything on hand to complete your mission? The answer is no. I have heard of instances, however, when battery commanders have been told they will be held responsible if there are any shortages during inventories. It does not make sense. Commanders should sign their shortage memos every month as to why they are not ordering certain shortages, specifically citing the national budget deficit and being good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

The other ludicrous practice is that once brigades and battalions get dollars, they have to be "x percent executed" per quarter. If not, their budgets get cut. That makes no financial sense whatsoever! Why is it that the system punishes fiscal responsibility? This problem is above us, of course, at the national level, but we can inform our representatives in Congress of policies that punish financial stewardship in the military.

### **CompanyCommand Glossary**

**ABN:** airborne  
**ACR:** armored cavalry regiment  
**AD:** armored division  
**AIT:** advanced individual training  
**BCT:** brigade combat team  
**BDE:** brigade  
**BII:** basic issue item  
**BN:** battalion  
**CBT:** combat  
**CCTT:** close combat tactical trainer  
**CDR:** commander  
**CJCS:** Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff  
**Class IX:** repair parts and components  
**Connex:** large metal cargo container used for shipping supplies  
**CSA:** Chief of Staff of the Army  
**DA:** Department of the Army  
**EN:** engineer  
**FA:** field artillery

**FMC:** fully mission capable  
**FSC:** forward support company  
**FY:** fiscal year  
**GFEBs:** General Fund Enterprise Business System  
**HHB:** headquarters and headquarters battery  
**HHD:** headquarters and headquarters detachment  
**JRTC:** Joint Readiness Training Center  
**MP:** military police  
**MRT:** materiel reutilization team  
**OER:** officer evaluation report  
**OPTEMPO:** operational tempo  
**PLL:** prescribed load list  
**PSG:** platoon sergeant  
**SBCT:** Stryker brigade combat team  
**SMA:** Sergeant Major of the Army  
**S-6:** communications officer  
**TTP:** tactics, techniques and procedures  
**ULLS-G:** Unit Level Logistics System-Ground  
**ULLS-S4:** Unit Level Logistics System-S4 Module

## Chaplain (MAJ) Douglas Ochner

442nd Signal BN

In the past, at the close of each fiscal year, unit budgets were spent down by purchasing unneeded, “nice-to-have” things. Since that is no longer the fiscal reality we live under, a new mind-set of rewarding wise spending needs to take hold. I would like to see our elected leaders not simply make cuts but also demonstrate how to be good stewards. I don’t think that is going to happen, so grassroots efforts may be the way to go. What if companies and battalions rewarded those who squeezed blood out of turnips? I remember that when I was in Korea, the Air Force rewarded folks who found ways to save money by refurbishing or reusing equipment. The money that was saved went to quality-of-life upgrades. Maybe in our case, the money saved could be mentioned in a Soldier’s or leader’s evaluation, award, etc. I see this as an opportunity to teach and reinforce important values.

## CPT Michael Wallet

Past CDR, HHD/15th Financial Management Company

Speaking from a G-8 perspective, the only advice I give to commanders is to treat your budget as you would treat your own checkbook. You wouldn’t go to the grocery store every week and buy milk if you already had two gallons at home, so why do supply sergeants continue to regularly order supplies? Don’t think that your budget is such a drop in the bucket that it doesn’t matter if you save the government \$5,000 this year. If every company could cut back a little bit, the savings to the Army would be huge.

The culture of thinking, “You have to spend x amount of dollars or else we will not get x amount of dollars next quarter or fiscal year” still exists, but it is slowly starting to change. I received an above-center-of-mass OER with a narrative that commended me for executing only 85 percent of my budget, saving the U.S. government x amount of money.

I look forward to more effective training that probably can be done cheaper. I also look forward to working in an organization that reduces waste and preserves our nation’s wealth better.

—CPT Patrick Snyder

GFEBS was fielded to change the Army into a cost-culture organization, but it also was fielded to answer DoD’s mandate to become audit ready. GFEBS is a beast, and the system alone will not allow commands to save money. It provides them with the tools to conduct an analysis on what has been spent in the past; it’s a cost-capturing tool that enables us to see how much it costs to operate a Table VIII qualification or a deployment to the JRTC.

## CPT Micah Klein

CDR, C/58th Transportation BN

A great way to reduce waste is to prohibit “flash fires”—those range exercises in which we fire off all the ammo we drew and didn’t use in training. The reasons for expending all the ammo are that we’re afraid we won’t get as much of it next time, and our 89Bs [ammunition specialists] don’t want to take the time and effort to turn in the ammo at the ammunition supply point. Ammo costs have gone through the roof within the past two years, yet so many units continue to waste ammunition. As commanders, we need to ensure that we’re being good stewards of the taxpayers’ money, and turning in ammo is an easy way to cut costs. Will it take a little bit of extra time and effort? Yes, but it’s totally worth it.



Chaplain (MAJ) Douglas Ochner (center) views the budget crisis “as an opportunity to teach and reinforce important values.”





*CPT Michael Wallet (right) encourages commanders to treat their budgets as they would treat their own check-books. At left is then-1SG (now CSM) Johnny M. Valdez.*

### **A Current Platoon Leader**

Saving money at our level, my PSG and I have used our installation's CCTT a lot to develop our platoon's coordination. Unfortunately, we rarely can use the CCTT alone as a platoon. We know what we need to train on. In recent field training and gunnery, my PSG and I noticed that we are pulling more information from our tank commanders than we would like. We need them to push information and recommendations to us so we don't have to keep asking.

My PSG and I are working on a free way to train. We just returned from our post's golf course. Lacking the money required to lay on land or ammo (including training rounds and miles), drive our tanks out of the motor pool, schedule transportation, or order new parts, we thought it would be wise to rent golf carts and use a set of personal walkie-talkies to develop communication skills within our platoon. Maneuvering on golf carts would still provide us the opportunity to feel the coordination we need between vehicles to be effective. We shared our idea with the assistant to the manager of the golf course, and we're waiting to hear back from the manager.

### **CPT Patrick Snyder**

**Past CDR, E/5-52 AD**

The only TTP I have is to make use of digital forms and print only what I need. When I counsel subordinates, I don't feel that I need a hard copy of DA Form 4856 in front of me. I keep an electronic version up on the computer to refer to during the counseling, and then I digitally sign it and send it to the Soldier. I maintain my counseling records electronically. Our S-6 set up all of our computers with external hard drives that back up weekly, so I am comfortable with the risk of a crash. Electronic record keeping saves time, money and drawer space in my hanging files. The big thing that we can influence at the company level is command supply discipline. Have property hand-receipted down to its users, and hold soldiers accountable for maintaining the items.

### **Resources:**

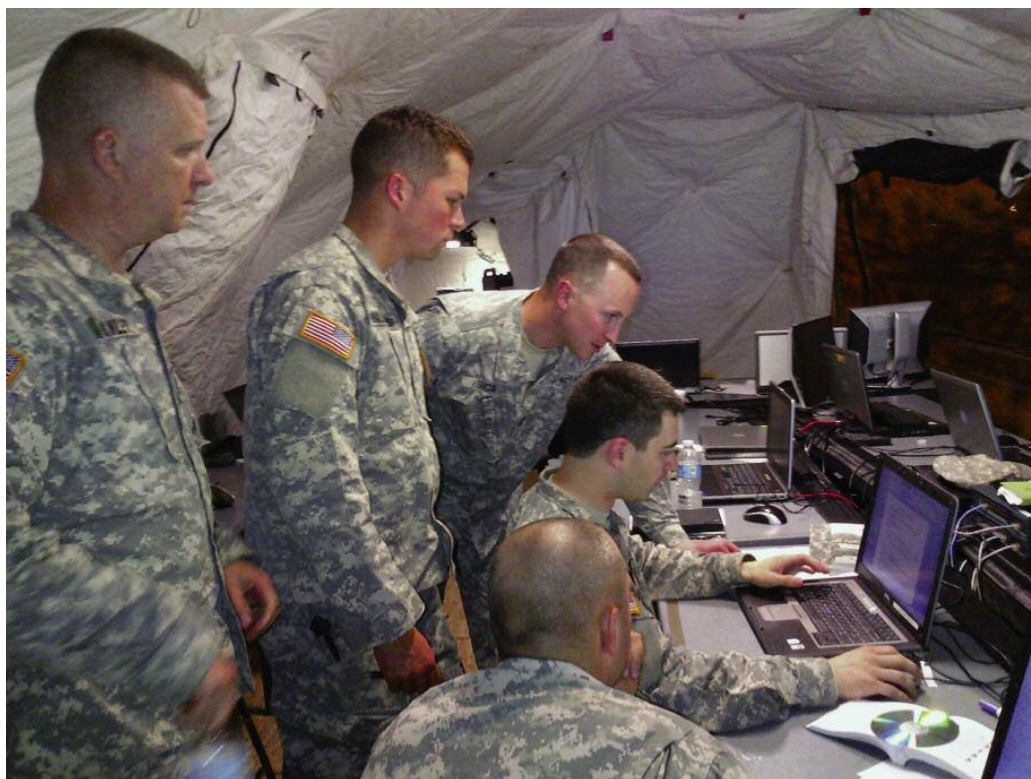
Small Unit Leader's Guide to: the Command Supply Discipline Program (CALL Handbook No. 10-19, January 2010)

The Command Supply Discipline Program and Property Accountability Knowledge Center, <https://ako.us.army.mil/suite/page/670916> (account required for some information), is a virtual one-stop location that provides the training and tools needed to invigorate a culture of stewardship throughout our formations.

The things that I cannot influence yet still concern me are the end-of-fiscal-year fiascos that I have seen over the past 15 years. Examples include: "dumpex" at the range (firing all the ammunition in order to preserve your allotment for next year), throwing away good food and destroying furniture



*CPT Joyce Loudon, shown here at the National Urban League Conference.*



*CPT Paolo Sica (center) believes that “leaders must incentivize the specific behaviors they wish to elicit” and suggests that the concept of stewardship be integrated into the Army values.*

(under orders) before we toss it into a stake bed truck. I don’t know how much of an impact these activities have on our Army’s budget, or DoD’s at large, but I would really like to see our senior leadership address this specific aspect of the yearly problem. If the CJCS, CSA, SMA and others would say, “We all know about these practices, and we need to stop them,” it would help start a culture change, which is what I think the Army (and DoD) need to become more fiscally responsible.

#### **LTC Scott Shaw**

**Former CDR, A/2-14 IN and HHC/2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Div.**

I was sitting in a brief to a four-star general recently, and he stated something that I think is very important to our group. He said (and I paraphrase) that he went through a similar cut in training funds after the Gulf War when he was a senior captain/junior major. In those days, he had more time to train what he wanted to train—low-level, junior NCO-led training—vice having to train on what others wanted. His message to us is that we need to stop looking at what’s going on in Congress and on the DA staff and instead focus on our units and on what we can do with what we have.

Personally, I look forward to less expensive training that our junior leaders can use to train our Soldiers. For too long, we have strived for more expensive training aids in the name of better and better training, spending more money (and more staff and commander effort) when the result was not much more than it could have been.

I don’t doubt that company-level efforts like clean sweeps [inventorying connexes], property accountability, BII/PLL accountability and spending accountability will help our Army. They will, but we should also understand that our se-

nior leaders are on board as well; the recycling programs, emphasis on supply and maintenance discipline, and emphasis on training management say so.

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Art by Jody Harmon

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