

Company Command is the pinnacle of a junior Army Officer's career. It is the ultimate experience to shape and refine personal and subordinate attributes and competencies in order to accomplish the mission and take care of Soldiers. Commanders come in with grandiose ideas of how they will make their company the best the Army has seen, and not surprisingly, the feeling does not change. They spend countless hours developing training plans, managing unit readiness, and creating innovative ways to motivate their formation, but over time, Commanders in close conjunction with their First Sergeants, refine the guiding principles they use to complete their tasks.

During my command, my Team picked up a plethora of leader lessons from leaders around us, publications we read, and our own experiences. Although character and competence in our professional and personal lives were the values we strived to achieve, they did not outline **how** we would lead. Therefore, we focused on five principles we believed could make the difference between a mediocre unit and great organization with a positive command climate. Embracing collaborative planning, emotional energy, attention management, profession patience, and leader endurance as foundational pillars when assuming command will aide significantly in creating a positive command climate with efficient and intelligent leaders.

Parallel planning, typically used in conjunction with the one-thirds/two-thirds rule, is the concurrent planning between units at different echelons in order to create a shared understanding, actively participate in decision-making, and resolve conflicts prior to the publication of orders. However, the term 'parallel planning' does not adequately reflect what is required of successful units during the planning phase. It does not account for the continuous communication between higher, subordinate, and adjacent units necessary for proper planning. Although parallel planning does imply a responsibility to share information as it becomes available, it is not innate. **Collaborative planning** which includes integration and synchronization as foundational principals, ensures organizations are synched at all echelons with allies and partners that can communicate effectively, plan accordingly and provide transparency throughout the planning process. Additionally, it affords different team members the opportunity to share opinions and recommendations before decisions are made. For example, troop leading procedures dictate a warning order is disseminated immediately following the receipt of the mission to allow subordinates to begin their own planning cycle. During this step and those thereafter, collaborative planning allows subordinates to present tactical realities not currently tracked to higher headquarters and make immediate adjustments that directly impact the mission. At some point, leaders must transition from the discussion phase in order to make a decision and exercise the plan. Units that employ transparent collaborative planning exponentially increase operational capacity and subordinate trust while ultimately providing senior leadership the most relevant information and analysis during decision making.

Secondly, the personality and attitude of a formation mirrors the Command Team and consequently drives Soldier output. Although we cannot choose Soldiers in our formations like we could choose players on our grade school kickball teams, we can inspire and develop them to be contributing, invaluable members of our Team.

Emotional energy is the positive or negative energy expended during any engagement and should be used in an empathetic manner to inspire subordinates to buy in to the organization. Every day leaders engage their subordinates and set the tone of the formation. Over the course of weeks and months, the daily tone creates a pattern subordinates follow. Command Teams who espouse negative approaches and outlooks create similar tendencies in their formations resulting in less passionate and disciplined Soldiers. Oppositely, if the command team uses and promotes positive, genuine energy when engaging Soldiers and their families, Soldiers will reciprocate with sincere and disciplined actions at work and at home.

Many military leaders correlate time management efficiency with work optimization and highly covet subordinates' ability to maximize operational time. However, time management is becoming increasingly less important as technological advances increase. The internet, social media, and different communication mediums pose ever-present distractors to individual's time. The Harvard Business Review published "Manage Your Team's Attention" by Julian Birkinshaw which asserts that although time is the scarcest resource in our professional and personal lives, the ability to block distractors and focus our attention could significantly increase productivity both at work and home. **Attention management** rather than time management enables a person to optimize prioritized tasks through deliberate systems and processes despite a finite amount of time. If Soldiers reduce social media use and other distractors, they will be more efficient at task completion and feel increased initiative levels to request guidance on more complex projects promoting a healthy learning culture. Additionally, Soldiers will find they are more personable with other Soldiers during work hours and more engaged at home because their mind is not always engaged in professional responsibilities. Command Teams who promote attention management to maximize time and optimize production will see a positive culture change in their organization.

The grandiose ideas referenced earlier are an excitable feeling every Command Team gets when they take the guidon. In contrast, every Soldier in the unit feels a trepidation directly linked with the aforementioned excitement especially because different elements of the formation will inevitably be at different competencies. The average Soldier is only interested in the positive or negative direction the unit is headed and the speed it will head there. **Professional patience** is the acknowledgement of this fact and consequent subordinate development to where you want them to be operating at. Leaders must provide a clear intent while balancing prescribed and described guidance for subordinates to balance priorities. Upon assuming command of a formation, leaders should dedicate training time to prioritized focus areas each week while allocating free time as available to review smaller focus areas. Command Teams who schedule an organizational review create a mechanism to deliberately assess systems and processes and adjust as necessary while providing subordinates predictability and clear guidance on their priorities.

Most importantly, leaders across all ranks should always demonstrate engaged leadership because the alternative promotes indiscipline, reduced readiness, increased risk, and degraded operational capability. However sustaining engaged leadership and excellence over long periods of time is easier said than done. **Leader endurance** is a leader's ability to maintain a high functioning, engaged leadership ability or disciplined initiative while avoiding the breaking point. As defined by Colonel John Meyer during a leader professional development session, the breaking point is the point when someone can no longer continue to go on which can be identified through indicators such as isolation, out of characteristic behavior, frustration, and changes in discipline. The breaking point is preceded by three phases: excitement, awakening, and endurance. The excitement phase is the initial infancy of any new experience and is when Soldiers are most energetic and experiencing a huge learning curve. The awakening phase, where Soldiers are most productive, aware, and effective, begins when reality kicks in and the Soldiers realize the situation they are in. Lastly, the endurance phase is when Soldiers are tired of the redundancy of their experience and begin to become complacent which is often times associated with lack of success or perceived acknowledgement. Command Teams should focus on managing leader endurance across their formations to prevent the breaking point from surfacing. Acknowledging breaking point indicators and initiating a predetermined plan with rest, exercise, dedicated personal time, and self-development programs to manage leader and Soldier endurance should be of utmost importance to maintain a great formation.

A Command Team spends more time and shares more experiences together than most professional relationships. During that time, they confront situations that can have considerable impacts on so many levels. Depending on the environment or mission requirement, the way leaders approach problem solving can vary considerably. For that reason, these five principles are not the approved solution to command or leadership, but could be used as a start point to hone in what's best for you and your organization.