

—how to get your commander's or first sergeant's ... ATTENTION!

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I am often told that you NBC NCOs at the company/battalion level are ignored and therefore not able to maintain or train your soldiers. I'm told you're misutilized. But in talking with you, a pattern emerges: You're not able to get the attention of your first sergeant or commander because you face heavy competition for their time and energy. Commanders and first sergeants have pressing concerns you probably are not aware of. Let's explore this in a little more detail.

You are the NBC advisor to your unit. The most important person you advise is the *commander*. If your commander knew as much about NBC matters as you do, no advisor would be needed. This means you must educate your commander, who is not interested in generalities and should not be interested in other units' problems. Key leaders are interested in *their* problems.

If you accept the above, concern yourself with educating your key leaders so that you get a fair share of their time and energy. You're probably saying, "I've tried to talk to them, but they don't care." Maybe you're right. Maybe you've got that rare, individual leader who doesn't care—but I doubt it. Still, you must keep trying. What should you do? Try the following:

- How does NBC affect their mission accomplishment?
- How does NBC complicate their job in combat?

- How does it affect their survival?
- What will happen administratively if the task can't be performed (for example—soldiers will fail their SQT tests)?
- What's the likelihood of your commander seeing this in war?

Give them good solid solutions to these problems. It does little good to tell a first sergeant or commander that all of their soldiers are going to flunk their SQT tests or die on the battlefield. Remember, at this point you've only done one-third of your job: You have identified a large problem. Now break it down into specific, digestible parts.

For example: Soldiers in this unit cannot perform MOPP gear exchange correctly. Those who cannot will probably be battlefield casualties. Approximately one-half cannot do it, so if attacked with chemical agents in time of war, the commander will suffer 50 percent casualties. The solution: Train those who can't do the task to standard.

This is a well-defined "problem—solution" situation. Now you've got two parts well identified which, if adequately substantiated, will lead to action. But you are still not finished. You've only done two-thirds of what's required.

Now you must develop a plan that corrects the problem. Develop this plan (especially a training plan) *before* you go to the first sergeant or commander with the problem. Remember, you're fighting for time with someone who has scarce time and resources. Prepare all three portions and present them in writing. That way the first

sergeant or commander can:

- Review your work quickly and in their leisure time.
- See all three elements clearly and as a whole, and
- Be able to implement your action with minimum work on their part.

Finally, provide feedback on how it went. Don't know where to begin because there are so many things which need to be done? Try these articles and see if they help:

- "What the Trainers Think," *The Army Chemical Journal*, Spring 1987, page 19.
- "Soviets Violate Ban on Biological Weapons," *The Army Chemical Journal*, Spring 1987, page 42.
- "NBC Victory or Death," *Army Trainer*, Spring 1987, page 10.

Remember—your leaders' time is even more valuable than the individual soldier's time. Keep your demands for their time and the soldiers' training time as small as you can. Make what time you have really count toward improving the mission capability and the survivability of your unit. ●●●

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