



Leadership Prerequisites for Our New Army

"It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more uncertain of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new order of things. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institutions, and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new ones."

Niccolo Machiavelli, 1513

Times Are Changing

Let's paint the scene. Reductions in force, special separation benefits, variable separation incentives, and Selective Early Retirement Boards have taken their toll; the avoidance of the term "downsizing" has led to the idea of "rightsizing" in an attempt to show that all is back on track. But there is an undertone of concern, frustration, and fear. Transition "chop shops" are common, risk taking is on the decline, and hull defilade is more apt to describe one's approach to the daily routine than the maneuvers of an M1A2 tank. Redundancy is gone, local training is now a major training event, and the requirements continue to roll in with fewer resources than ever before. For most leaders, all this adds up to a critical mass disaster; but not for me!

I buy into the fact that our Army is better than ever before and will continue to improve. I understand the need for change and look forward to our new Army. It is time for the "nay sayers" to get out of

the way and for leaders who can see the future to take charge. But we will fail if we rely on our old ways of doing business. Tasks, conditions, and standards are different. Our Army needs a new generation of leadership thought. Our core values remain, but our energy needs to be outward, not inward. Leadership, not management, is needed within our new Army, and it requires flexibility and vitality.

What is behind this "chicken little/sky is falling" uproar? Perhaps we are trying to put old, square pegs of rules into the round holes of our new environment. Perhaps we need to recognize that what was, is no longer. This does not necessarily mean that the "good ole days" are gone. Those days were not as good as we make them up to be. What was nice about them, though, was that we were used to them. It felt good to be within a friendly comfort zone. But that was yesterday. Listen—it's our wake-up call. We need to change, given the changes to our Army, if we are to be what our nation demands.

"New Leader, This Is Op 1, Over"

We have all seen some corporate giants tumble in confusion as they reel in disbelief at the impact of internal downsizing events. I have had the unique opportunity to study these blue chip industries and to spend time talking about lessons learned with their leadership. Additionally, I have been part of the Army's look into organizational change. Now I find myself in the middle of that change.

My conclusion is that we are in a mine field, but we can avoid injury. All it takes is an understanding of the changes and a quick look at the errors and successes of others. First, we should seek to understand the changing Army before we try to be understood. "Listen, learn, and then lead" applies to each one of us. We need to break away from old habits that limit our vision. Enough said; here is a series of reports from my observation post.

"I Have 12 Changed Conditions To Report. Are You Prepared To Copy? Over."

SITREP 1: Powering down is not an option; it is a critical first step in mission success. As levels of staffing are removed, those who remain must be trained to fill the gap. Smaller units will demand remote control, not more control. But it is not automatic. You power down to the lowest level that can still assure success. Cross training comes into play. The more a team practices it, the more empowerment can take place. It is wrong to assume that centralized control will expedite decision making. You centralize for policy making, decentralize for execution. This means a greater use of task force structuring to accomplish the mission. "One size fits all" and "one command structure makes it simple" are not valid concepts in our new Army.

SITREP 2: Leadership training costs money and time but is not an expense; it is a necessary investment. Too often, leadership training is viewed in the "nice to have, but" category. Leadership development is a long-term process with a lag time effect. You can cut it now and no major disasters will immediately happen. The disasters will be seen in future failures. Desert Storm's victory was a result of long-term leader development, not a product of some shake and microwave bake instant recipe. Now is the time to train the leadership for the Desert Storms they will fight in 10 or 20 years.

SITREP 3: Sustainment is out; betterment is in. Continuous improvement must be the new mind-set. Sustaining the status quo is another way of stating the destined-to-fail saying, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Total quality within our new Army depends on an improvement process. We don't

want perfection, just improvement. It costs too much for perfection. It is far better to see a 1 percent improvement in 100 areas than a 100 percent improvement in one area. Additionally, every action must be scrubbed through a "value added" gauntlet and then executed with speed and zeal. Value-added thinking must be part of empowerment.

SITREP 4: All successful missions start with a vision. If you do not know where you are going, you will never get there. Vision—study it, understand it, build upon it, see it, and do it. You must begin with the end in mind. Once a vision is developed, it must be visualized—brought into focus with measurable goals. That focus must be a battlefield focus. Leaders must learn to face toward the sound of distant guns. No matter how common and garrison-duty-like a mission is, it must be taken on with combat aggressiveness and orientation. Know where you are going and translate all actions into a readiness mentality.

SITREP 5: A positive spin to recruitment and retention is critical. The new Army must be made up of winners not survivors. Our approach must be to select people to be part of the team, not select people to leave it. We will do far better to spotlight the improvements brought about by the new Army, rather than moaning the absence of old ways. We need to build on our strengths and minimize the time focused on our weaknesses. If each member of the team (be it squad size or division size) works on improving his strengths, we will be able to obtain true synergy.

Your attitude sets the boundaries for your accomplishments. We are a smaller, newer Army but still have vital missions to accomplish. How we approach them and the results of our efforts, will, in large part, be a direct reflection of our attitude. We don't have the depth anymore for anybody to

have a bad attitude. Attitudes can't be hidden. Our attitude sets our azimuth for success or failure. We can have a bad day, but our attitude, our spirit, and our feelings about ourselves and our soldiers must be solid and upbeat.

SITREP 6: Murphy was neither RIFed nor SERBed. There will be mistakes. Not all challenges are opportunities, some are just what they seem to be—pains that must be overcome. There is no need to beat one's breast over it; just get on with it. The old adage that "leadership comes from making the right decisions, right decisions are made through experience, and experience comes from making the wrong decisions" tells us that Murphy is part of the developmental process. The way to minimize this type of experience is to learn from the experiences of others. In fact, the new Army demands it. We have neither the time nor the resources to have each person experience all, firsthand. Experience must be gained from multiple sources. Firsthand experiences are one-dimensional and too slow. Mentoring, hot washes, and lessons learned updates are critical parts to our new Army.

SITREP 7: What got us here today will not get us where we need to be tomorrow. We must adjust ourselves to new situations with the same degree of finesse as we adjust fire. It makes sense—when we have a moving target, we need to adjust our aim. Likewise, as the Army and its missions change, we must change. We cannot assume that the techniques which were acceptable on old missions will be appropriate for new missions and structures. Relying on past formulae will find us overmanaged and under-led. No doubt there are risks in doing new things and being paradigm pioneers, but I believe there are even greater risks in doing nothing and remaining paradigm settlers. Remember,

no one wants obsolete excellence. Don't mistake the edge of a rut for the horizon.

SITREP 8: Mission is number 2. If you are a leader and you are totally focused on the mission, you will fail in the long run. Your soldiers must focus on the mission. To them, it is number 1. Your job is to focus on your soldiers. Only when you commit yourself to caring for them will they be able to totally dedicate themselves to the mission at hand. Caring means establishing, communicating, and enforcing standards. It means providing vision, focus, training resources, and the positive environment for success. You take care of the troops, and the troops will do the rest.

SITREP 9: If you are not an active part of the solution, then you are working against the success of the mission. Stated in mathematical terms, the probability of success plus the probability of failure is equal to one. Either you are a team player working with the team or you are not. There is no middle of the road in the new Army. The fluff and ability to drift in indecisiveness are gone. And that is good.

Our organizations are downsized to the extent that we can only use active team players. Passengers—those folks only along for the ride—can't be accommodated. Additionally, this new focus on teamwork requires direction, trust, and commitment. Team building begins with a determination of a direction—a vision. This, in turn, leads to a team "oneness" where trust is nurtured. Without trust, there is very limited team action. Communication is censored, and bureaucratic and turf battles ensue. Finally, there is commitment. Commitment, not authority, produces long-term results. It allows for a synergistic effect to happen as we move from independent individuals to an interdependency

where the actions of the whole are greater than the added efforts of each member.

SITREP 10: Compete to a standard not to one another. Establish the standard of excellence appropriate for the mission. Don't set it too low, guaranteeing failure, nor too high, guaranteeing long-term failure. Competition against individuals creates a win-lose proposition. It endorses failure by allowing for only one winner, with all others being marked as failures.

Likewise, placing all of the time and energy on one person does not ensure success. Superstars are too expensive and weaken any team building. It is amazing how much can be accomplished when no one person takes the spotlight. The new Army is based on a winning team, not individual winners. Our leadership must be built around this principle.

SITREP 11: Leadership is an event, not a position or a person. This means that we need to train in leadership, just like we train for an event. Through continuous improvement in our training, we will be able to successfully execute our responsibilities when our leadership time arrives. Practice, in itself, is not enough. Alone, practice makes one well practiced, not better. It is constantly improving practice that we seek to accomplish. And when is it enough? When we hit the level of excellence we have established. The actual leadership event is not the hard part; it is the training that comes before. Training requires determination, dedication, and resources. It is neither easy nor free, but it is essential. Additionally, leaders must be masters of transitions. Quick and seamless transitions are the key to winning. For the runners on a relay team, it is the handoff, not the speed on the straightaway, that sets the conditions for winning. Likewise, the way we transition provides the mark for our mission successes.

SITREP 12: Strategic leadership is possible at all levels of command. Many believe that strategic leadership is found only at the highest levels of command. I believe strategic leadership is at all levels. It is when a leader looks beyond his immediate responsibilities and can see distant missions and requirements—it is looking outside the defined "sandbox" of responsibility. In our new Army, strategic leadership development will be at all levels. It will be more complex and distant at the higher levels of command, but it will be recognized at all levels.

"End Of Message. How Copy?"

There are three types of people—those who make it happen; those who watch it happen; and those who wonder what happened. Our new Army needs only the first group. I am sure the Titanic had some great managers, but what they needed was someone trained in leadership. Let someone else arrange the deck chairs; we need visionary leaders in command. Leaders who embrace change and make it happen. The old "now what, Lieutenant?" vignette is happening now for all leader ranks. The difference is that our new Army is at stake. Don't dally; don't shed a tear or look back. It is a great new Army, so get fired up, be part of the change, and move forward.



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