



You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks

By Master Sgt. Ryan M. Meurer

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As a junior NCO, I attended NCO Education System courses, as well as briefings given by my assignments branch manager on the importance of accepting challenging and diverse career-enhancing assignments such as drill sergeant, recruiter or observer-controller duty. To tell you the truth, for many years these recommendations went in one ear and directly out of the other. I've since realized that these types of assignments provide NCOs the unique opportunity to mold the Soldiers of tomorrow and be among the first to instill the Army Values.

In the fall of 2012 after serving 18 years in Airborne and Special Operations units, I had the desire to do something different. I was interested in becoming an inspector general NCO.

I worked with my chain of command, my branch manager, as well as the inspector general assignments manager at Human Resources Command. I was soon scheduled to attend the U.S. Army Inspector General School and was placed on assignment with Department of the Army Inspector General Agency at the Pentagon.

I soon found myself in a whole new world—an environment vastly different than what I was accustomed to during my 19 years as a logistician. I was well out of my comfort zone. I was used to waiting on a drop zone with my parachute donned for my chalk to be called or standing up in front of the company at morning formation as the first sergeant. I found myself “learning new tricks.”

After settling into my new routine, I began soaking up massive amounts of information on a plethora of pol-

icies, procedures, regulations and agencies I never knew existed. For example, before becoming an IG, I was not aware of the various Army boards that exist under the Army Review Boards Agency, the process a Department of the Army civilian must take through their local Civilian Personnel Advisory Center to file a formal grievance, or the components that make up a Whistle Blower Reprisal. The amount of information I have learned is incalculable and thanks to it, my ability to assist others in these areas has become exceptionally rewarding.

Becoming an IG NCO requires you to expand your knowledge base into areas not typically associated with your normal career field or military occupation specialty. In addition to teaching, training and mentoring junior enlisted Soldiers like drill sergeants and recruiters, you also teach, train and mentor officers, NCOs and Department of the Army civilians of all ranks. Similarly, you often provide assistance to retirees and family members which can also be quite rewarding.

Though my time as a logistician in Special Operations was extremely fulfilling and educational, I simply was not involved in any way with the various Department of the Army policies and procedures, appeal processes and regulations that I am now involved with on a daily basis as an IG NCO.

In a way, I guess you can say I was stuck in my own little bubble. The same can be said about my previous reach or sphere of influence as a senior NCO. Previously,

I was able to easily mentor those Soldiers assigned to my company and those I came in contact with around the installation. But for the most part it ended there. By accepting my new diverse assignment as an IG NCO, my sphere of influence widened and my ability to assist Soldiers and their families became greater. It was no longer just those Soldiers in my formation receiving assistance but also retirees, prospective enlistees, family members and Soldiers from commands throughout the Army.

I imagine the same can be said about duty as an observer-controller or as a drill sergeant. With assignments such as these, you not only expand your knowledge base but can obtain the ability to influence and mentor a vastly larger group of Soldiers. The drill sergeant is always getting another cycle, new units are always rotating into "the box," and new Soldiers are always calling or walking into your inspector general office.

I'll end by noting that I am extremely fortunate to have worked with members of very prestigious Special Operations organizations through a very difficult period of the United States' military history. Despite missing that part of my military career, I am truly glad I took a leap of faith to accept the advice given to me so many years ago to seize a different and career-enhancing assignment. There is no doubt in my mind that, should I be fortunate enough to be selected to become a command sergeant major that the experiences gained in this assignment will better prepare me for that next challenge. ■

Master Sgt. Ryan M. Meurer is a former first sergeant with more than 20 years of active-duty service, 19 of which were within Airborne and Special Operations units. He has multiple deployments to the U.S. Central Command area of operations including Iraq, Afghanistan, Djibouti and Qatar. He is currently serving as the NCOIC of the Assistance Division within the Department of the Army Inspector General Agency at the Pentagon.



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