

The Stripes You Wear

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The Noncommissioned Officer Corps has and will always be an important part of the U.S. Army and is integral to the success of its missions and daily operation. NCOs are supposed to be the example for others to follow. Sometimes once we are selected for promotion or an increased position we forget about the simple things that made us and our formations successful. The following list is not all inclusive but it does clearly identify a few key points that all NCOs should remember regardless of their grade or position.

Your stripes are symbols of authority. This authority is an important privilege that must be exercised with good common sense and maturity. These are qualities that your superiors and the Army believe you possess and it is your responsibility to at all times demonstrate professional behavior. This will help to ensure their confidence in you, that their trust has not been misplaced. Never do anything that will discredit your rank and position.

Set the example. You must prove by your own actions that you deserve the privilege to lead your subordinates and that you are worthy of the respect and confidence of your superiors and peers. Your actions do speak louder than your words. Everything you do or don't do is the example that you display to others. Displaying a good example for others to emulate is part of your responsibility as a NCO.

Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty. Come to work and do your job, don't sit back and wait for other people. You must always remain technically and tactfully proficient. The only way to remain proficient is to stay current with policies and procedures, continue to work and always seek out knowledge. Don't wait for it to come to you. Don't be that type of leader which thinks that "now that I am a NCO, my job is sit back and watch others". If you stop working you will lose both your proficiency and relevancy.

Remember where you came from. Don't ever forget what it was like down in the trenches performing the daily tasks of an organization. You were once the Soldier performing the mundane, seemingly meaningless tasks, task which must be conducted in order to maintain an organization. If you think you are "too good" or "too valuable" to visit and talk to your subordinates, you will become detached and lose the "pulse" of your organization. Don't forget to give someone a simple thank-you for all of those little things that just seem to happen.

Be and look like a NCO. Your posture, the appearance of your uniform, your physical condition and your reaction to the incidents of military life all convey an impression to others. You must demonstrate to others by what you say and do that you are a master of your job and your emotions. Subordinates must feel they can rely on you in an emergency, that you are a competent NCO and an individual who habitually uses sound judgment when faced with a problem. You must be a leader, not simply a supervisor. Subordinates will follow a leader because they want to while they will follow a supervisor because they have to. You must draw upon your inner resources of personal character-courage, initiative, ingenuity and common sense. You must be able to instill in people a desire to follow you. Your vehicle in doing this is leadership.

Take responsibility for your actions. Demonstrating proper leadership indicates that you accept full responsibility and expect to be held accountable. This acceptance involves many things. Some of these include placing the health and well-being of your subordinates above your own, respect for their rights and empathy, the honest attempt to understand their problems. You must accept the fact that you are always on duty, 24 hours a day; that everything your unit does or fails to do is your concern. If you make an honest mistake, accept responsibility, learn from your mistakes and never allow them to be repeated.

Loyalty is first among the qualities that make a Soldier. Loyalty to our nation we take for granted, but we must also be loyal to our superiors, peers and our subordinates. True loyalty is more than obedience. It demands complete cooperation with the spirit as well as the letter of every order. So regardless of your private opinions, give your superiors your full support. Do not criticize nor tear apart their orders in your idle conversation. As you react toward your superiors, so will your subordinates. Constant griping is a form of moral sabotage. It weakens your authority and in time can eat away at the discipline of your organization.

Do routine things routinely. Continue to do those small things that everyone expects from a leader such as showing up on time, looking like a Soldier, displaying confidence and enthusiasm and accomplishing tasks that are given to you. These are all routine things that you should do routinely. Your superiors expect you do those things routinely. Once you start slipping you will lose the confidence your superiors have in you.

Make yourself important. Find something that needs to be done in your organization and do it. This is the essence of disciplined initiative which is vital to every organization. Show everyone that you can make a difference. Once you become an important member of the team, you will find that you will be the one that others come to for answers. Don't sit back and think that just because you wear stripes that you now know and have done everything.

Passion plus professionalism equals performance. Be passionate about your job, your Soldiers and their

Families. Love your job and do everything you can to be the very best each and every day. Be professional in everything that you say and do. If you are going to do something, than do it right or don't do it at all. If you are passionate and professional about your job, you will get great performance from both yourself and from others.

If you would like to learn more about this topic it is recommended that your read Field Manual 7-27.7, Noncommissioned Officer Guide and Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, Army Leadership.