



“The Importance of Writing” Podcast

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The Importance of Writing

NCO Journal

Literary skills are playing an increasing role throughout the NCO Professional Development System. The NCO Journal discussed this topic with Army University Command Sgt. Maj. Teresa Duncan. Tune in...

Leader Development

Q: How does writing develop a junior NCO?

A: “I think it helps a Soldier, helps our young NCOs, by taking that momentary pause,” she said. “If you’ve read about emotional intelligence, we learn it’s the gap between our limbic system, which is our emotions, and our frontal lobe, which is our decision making/critical thinking processes. And right in-between there is that emotional piece. When we take time to write, we take time to think about what our emotions are telling us to say.”

Career Advancement

Q: How can literary skills complement an NCO’s professional growth?

A: “It helps us during the process of our advanced senior leadership courses,” she said. “Even MLC

[Master Leadership Course] is much more about writing now. And again, because we have time in those schools to think about things, to process things, we get that through our writing.”

Q: Will Soldiers encounter writing at Advanced Leadership or Senior Leadership Course?

A: “Written communication examinations are now part of all NCO leadership schools. The differences are in the amount and depth of writing required,” she said.

Writing Improvement

Q: How can a Soldier develop their writing skills?

A: “I would start out originally by just getting your writing down, being able to do that thoughtful process, that cognitive ability of taking thoughts and translating them onto paper, and make it mean something,” she said.

Duncan also mentioned that college students during their freshman year often begin with journal writing, and that writing about daily activities is a useful exercise.

Q: How can someone refine their literary skills?

A: “As we go through the higher writing processes, we should look at how we can not just take what we think, but then, support it with facts,” she said. “I think it allows us to create discussion with other personnel on what we’re writing. It helps us to improve ourselves.”

Duncan encouraged Soldiers throughout the writing process to always ask, “Why is it important for someone to want to read what I’m writing?”

“I think the biggest problem we have with not writing is because we’re afraid of what people will think, and we’re just not as self-confident in it,” she said.

Q: What sources can help someone improve their writing?

A: “We have the NCO Journal, which is a great tool for people to go in and kind of look at how to start their writing,” she said. “That’s by great NCOs who’ve written down their thoughts and then gotten assistance on how to progress that into a scholarly writing. And then another great place is the Journal of Military Learning, which is a peer-reviewed journal.”

Getting Published

Q: When NCOs are writing about something, and they want it to be meaningful, where can they publish their writing?

A: “As you’re writing, and you want to start with the NCO Journal, I would send it to a peer or mentor and have them look at it and verify if it is something people want to write about,” she said. “And then, the ultimate thing is when you get to the Journal of Military Learning. Scholarly people with doctorate degrees, go through each article and say, ‘this one isn’t quite there yet,’ but then they assign a mentor to run them through the process to get it picked up again. It’s another way of developing yourself and your learning processes.”

Beyond the Uniform

Q: Will writing skills be important after military service?

A: “Absolutely,” she said. “Ironically, as you get out there and you start writing resumes; learning how to write them, what to put in them; again, you always need to share your story. As I write my resume now, I realize I need a different type of writing skill. It’s always important to get out there and share it.”

“I love what Benjamin Franklin once said, ‘Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.’”

“So I think sharing your story of what you’ve done, not just in the Army, but outside the Army, we share with our communities. We’re the best recruiters when we share our story.”

Final Thoughts

Q: Why is writing important?

A: “We talk about sharing our story with the Army, and it’s important because who knows about the Army the best?” she asked. “And again, because we [NCOs] have that candor and authenticity. Leave it to an NCO to write about what they really think is important.”

Q: What does the future hold?

A: “It’ll be exciting to see where our NCOs will take it,” she said. “I would also suggest that when you send out drafts of doctrine; get into that, read it, and put your thoughts down. The sky’s the limit on what you can do in writing.”

“I just ask that they find a passion, and they write about it, see it through, because someone else might have the same passion, and you helping them get there is just going to be a phenomenal idea.”

“I truly ask that you get out there and write, and then run it through your teams, mentors, and get it published. It’s good to know what each other is thinking.”

Q: What motivates you to write?

A: “There’s a quote from John Dewey that goes, ‘We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience,’” she said. “I think that’s so important, and when we write, we’re reflecting on the thoughts that we have. I think that’s probably what’s most important to me.” ■

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