



(U.S. Army photo by Jose Rodriguez taken Aug. 19, 2019) U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Marianne E. Russell, Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, crawls under barbed wire as part of an obstacle course during the 2019 Drill Sergeant of the Year Competition at Camp Bullis, Texas, Aug. 19, 2019.

Leader Development

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If there has been one thing in my 22 years of military service I could always depend on, it would be change. Developing leaders that can adapt to and overcome *change* is the cornerstone of our military existence. During the history of our military, we have had many great leaders that have shaped and transformed the very way our Army fights and trains today. It is important that, as our military begins to embark on a new era, we continue to grow great leaders. We must develop our junior Soldiers and officers in a manner that will position them and our military for success now and in the future.

Army Regulation 600-100: Army Profession and Leadership Policy defines leader development as the deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process, grounded in Army Values, that grows Soldiers and civilians in to competent and confident leaders capable

of decisive action. As a leader of Soldiers, it will not only be a part of your daily functions to take care of your Soldiers and their well-being, but you will also have to ensure you are preparing your Soldiers for that day when they become leaders. There are some that will say leaders are born with all the attributes needed to be successful. I would agree some are born with the ability to lead but it is through *training* and *experience* that they become *effective* leaders.

It will be your job to ensure the Soldiers you are developing into leaders are given the chance to excel at every cost. You have to share your successes as well as your failures with them so that they can learn from your experiences. You must encourage your Soldiers to increase their knowledge by attending military institutional training as well as civilian education to help them

develop. Institutional training consists of schools like the Warrior Leader Course [now Basic Leader Course], the Advanced and Senior Leader Courses, just to name a few. By attending college, it adds even more credibility to your future leader not only in the military but even as a civilian when they depart the service.

To be deliberate in developing your future leader, you must have a plan laid out for them to grow and prosper. You must talk with them often in both formal and informal settings to assist them in their growth. There will be times that you will need to encourage them to do things that they don't believe they can achieve themselves.

When I was a drill sergeant, I loved training new recruits and preparing them for life in the military. That is all I wanted to do, was to train. I had a command sergeant major (CSM) that saw something in me that I didn't see myself. There was a Drill Sergeant of the Year competition coming up and he wanted me to represent the unit. I fought it tooth and nail, but like I said before, as a leader you have to see the potential in your Soldiers, the potential that they may not see in themselves. I went to that board and won at the battalion, brigade, and installation levels. The CSM knew I would do well, but he also knew I needed that little push. You must see the potential in your Soldiers and push them in directions they can't see right now so we help them develop into great leaders.

The process must be continuous as well. I have continued to guide Soldiers I have served with over the years. Even after you or your Soldier has moved on, you must continue to be that mentor that pushes them to reach greater heights. Many of the roads your Soldiers will head down, you have already traversed. You can provide insight and assist them in the decisions they will need to make as they make that journey down the same roads.

I have always had those same leaders that I call upon when I need guidance on what actions I should take even now after 22 years. The ability for them to have that



(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Ryan Barnes taken April 23, 2020) U.S. Army Soldiers with the 41st Field Artillery Brigade participate in online classes as part of Basic Leader Course, Grafenwohr, Germany, April 23, 2020.



(U.S. Army photo by Terrance Bell taken July 1, 2019) U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Allen Rice, 244th Quartermaster Battalion, reassembles an M249 machine gun during Combined Arms Support Command's 2019 Drill Sergeant of the Year Competition at Fort Lee, Virginia, July 1, 2019.

reach back is crucial, in my opinion, to leader development. Remember to assist them but don't always give them the answer. Give them some things to think about and allow them to come up with their own direction or choice. You must develop your future leaders to be thinkers who aren't afraid to make decisions.

There is a saying I have heard that goes something like this, "If you give a man a fish he will eat for a day, but if you teach him how to fish he will eat for a lifetime." Teach your Soldiers what right looks like. Set the example that will continue with them throughout their career. I have been blessed to have great leaders who have taught me what right looks like during my time and they have helped me be successful. Your Soldiers and future leaders are a direct reflection of you. Give them something to be proud of so that they may continue to pass the torch on well beyond after you have left the military.

It is important that you continue to grow as well in order to produce effective leaders. You must seek self-development as well as the institutional training the Army will provide you throughout your career. I will provide you a list of books and references that have helped me throughout my career which I am certain will benefit you. Seek some of the hard jobs and assignments that will increase your knowledge and better prepare you for leading your troops. You will find it very hard to influence your Soldiers to seek self-improvement when you don't have the credentials yourself.

I love the Drill Sergeants Creed and I would not only ask you to read it, but if you have the chance, become one. In the creed, there is a passage that states, "I will lead by example, never requiring a Soldier to attempt any task I would not do myself." There isn't much that I ask my Soldiers to do I haven't done or attempted myself. When they walk into your office can you say the same? I proudly hang my college diplomas and awards in my office to show that I am not just asking you to do something, but I have done it myself and it has gotten me to where I am now.

Developing leaders is not an easy task and there will be times when you feel like you don't think you can do it. Don't be discouraged or give up because we have all been there. As you grow, so too will your ability to produce leaders. It is important we continue to develop Soldiers into leaders today so the future of the Army will continue to be strong well after us all.

It is recommended you take time to read the follow-

ing: *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, *The One Minute Manager* by Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson, *Army Regulation 600-100: Army Profession and Leadership Policy*, *Army Doctrine Publications 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, *Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 350-58: Army Leader Development Program*, *DA PAM 600-25: U.S. Army Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Guide*. ■



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