



Sgt. Maj. Michael J. Perry III (center) poses for a photo with Pvt. Timoci W. Biautubu and Lt. Gen. Kevin Vereen while touring barracks facilities at Fort Cavazos, Texas. Biautubu received a coin for his candid feedback on barracks operations. The way we interact with Soldiers reflects who we are as leaders and has the power to spread by word of mouth. (Courtesy photo by Sgt. Maj. Michael J. Perry III)

Approachable, Authentic, and Accessible

By Sgt. Maj. Michael J. Perry III

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Thirty years of service in the Army is an accomplishment I'm proud of. I want to share some insight into what I learned becoming

a mentee, mentor, and eventual leader. This article explains the ideas and systems I used to become the leader I am today.

The Three Ps

Throughout my career, I developed a leadership philosophy I called the three Ps: Passion, Personality, and People. If you're a passionate leader trying to set the best example for your Soldiers, they'll feed off it because they'll see you're excited and passionate about serving. You must also have a personality, meaning be personable and humble. This sets the tone for what Soldiers and other leaders can expect from you each day. The final P is people. A passionate servant-leader should always factor in the human cost of everything. Sometimes, leaders can fixate on mission accomplishment and lose sight of its impact on the organization, personnel, and their families.

Even now, as a sergeant major on the Army Staff, the three Ps still reside in my mind, but they morphed into the three As: Approachable, Authentic, and Accessible.

Approachable

If leaders are approachable, they can expect subordinates to come to them with problems, accomplishments, or life events. Embracing humility and a servant-leader mindset makes you more approachable. Placing rank aside, leaders must remember everyone is human and deserves courtesy and respect. From privates to general officers, being approachable makes you authentic. Every interaction with Soldiers reveals the type of leader you are and it spreads by word-of-mouth.

I strive to be as approachable as possible.

Authentic

Engage with Soldiers at all levels and be genuine. Demonstrate a passion for being a noncommissioned officer (NCO) and be humble enough to learn from those under your care. Be honest and upfront with any and all mission information. Hoarding information doesn't help develop or understand expectations, nor does it allow for leader growth. As emphasized by the NCO Creed, communication is key.

Don't assume others should feel privileged to receive information you pass on. Instead, effective leaders should feel privileged to speak and share their knowledge, experiences, and skills with future military leaders, and not the other way around.

As NCOs, our job is to train, develop, and mentor those around us to the point where they can one day take our place. Sharing knowledge and learning from our Soldiers helps create an environment that fosters engaging relationships beyond the day's mission.

Accessible

Being accessible becomes harder the further you climb up the ladder. Each position has a new sphere of influence. As team leaders, squad leaders, platoon sergeants, and, to some extent, first sergeants, Soldiers have easier access to your time and attention. In areas of higher responsibility, like brigade or battalion command sergeants major or higher staff levels, leaders may still be accessible, but obligations make it more difficult.

Leaders can use common sense when addressing Soldier situations by ensuring their concerns are heard



Sgt. Maj. Michael J. Perry talks with a Joint Base Lewis-McChord Soldier during a quality-of-life visit. Everyone deserves to be treated with courtesy and respect regardless of rank. (Courtesy photo by Sgt. Maj. Michael J. Perry III)

and then acknowledged by following up. Additionally, being approachable empowers junior leaders to take the reins when senior leaders aren't available. Creating the space or time for subordinates to approach you with problems, ideas, and observations makes you approachable. It shows you place your Soldiers' needs above your own.

Future of the NCO Corps

As the backbone of the Army, NCOs must continue to improve themselves and their Soldiers. Self-

improvement shouldn't focus on promotion but on pursuing a "master's degree" in the most important subject: being an NCO.

The NCO Creed outlines what we do and how we can lead from the front. Every position, every new duty station, and every interaction with Soldiers is a chance to apply the leadership attributes associated with NCOs. Have a passion for what you do and what you bring to your sphere of positive influence. Lead by example and create the next generation of NCOs and be Approachable, Authentic, and Accessible. ■

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