



Soldiers with the 3rd Brigade Engineering Battalion discuss movement plans at Fort Cavazos, Texas, Oct. 23, 2024. Effective leadership and management are essential to mission success and NCOs' operational readiness in today's dynamic and high-pressure world. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Sgt. Ryan Ahmed)

Striking a Balance

Leadership Versus Management in the Modern Army

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Effective leadership and management are essential to mission success and NCOs' operational readiness in today's dynamic and high-pressure world. Although *leadership* and *management* are often used interchangeably, understanding their distinct roles is crucial. Using the terms synonymously can engender functional complications and long-term confusion over the roles of leaders and managers (Toor & Ofori, 2008).

As Soldiers face ever-evolving challenges, the ability to inspire, motivate, and guide troops toward

a common goal is paramount. However, leadership alone cannot ensure victory. Management skills such as organizing resources, planning operations, and executing strategies are equally vital.

Leadership and Management in the Army

The Army often emphasizes leadership over management in professional development, which can have significant consequences. While leadership is about inspiring and motivating troops, management focuses

on resource allocation and task execution. When an individual excels in leadership but lacks management skills, the ramifications can be profound.

A great leader possesses charisma, vision, and empathy, inspiring loyalty and building trust among subordinates. Highly effective organizations require a culture of resilience, with individuals demonstrating critical attributes of optimism, decisiveness, integrity, and open communication (Gladwell, 2000). However, without strong managerial skills, leaders may struggle to translate their vision into actionable plans, leading to delays, resource shortages, and decreased morale.

For instance, a leader who inspires troops but fails to manage logistics — like coordinating supply chains or scheduling training — can compromise mission success. As a result, the unit may face logistical obstacles, resource shortages, and disruptions in operations. The inability to access essential supplies or equipment could frustrate Soldiers, decreasing their morale and confidence in leadership.

Effective management requires strategic planning and efficient resource allocation. A skilled manager ensures operational efficiency but may struggle if they lack leadership abilities.

Consider a scenario where a logistics officer is renowned for her organizational prowess and attention to detail. She excels at coordinating supply chains, managing inventories, and ensuring timely delivery of resources to the frontline. However, she falls short of inspiring and motivating her team. Her communication style seems transactional rather than inspirational, and her focus on tasks and procedures overshadows her ability to connect with subordinates personally.

Poor Management Impacts Subordinates

Ineffective management within the Army affects mission execution and Soldiers' well-being. Poor resource allocation can compromise mission

readiness and safety. Unclear communication and inconsistent decision-making cause frustration and erode trust in leadership. High stress and burnout

from poor management impact Soldiers' mental and emotional well-being, affecting productivity and morale.

The consequences of poor management can also extend to a toxic organizational culture characterized by low morale, high turnover, and diminished trust in leadership. Soldiers rely on effective leadership and management to fulfill their duties, accomplish mission objectives, and maintain morale and motivation. When management is lacking, Soldiers may experience negative outcomes affecting their performance and effectiveness as a fighting force. Additionally, a lack of accountability and oversight may result in misconduct or negligence, further eroding morale and damaging the unit's reputation.



Soldiers with 1st Infantry Division load supplies into a vehicle May 29, 2019, at Poznan, Poland. Leaders who motivate troops but neglect logistics imperil mission success, risking resource shortages, delays, and decreased Soldier morale. (U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Caleb Minor)

When Deficient Managers Ascend

Promoting a leader with exceptional leadership qualities but deficient managerial skills can present significant challenges in the Army.

The opening lines of ADP 6-22, the doctrine written to shape military leaders, states:

“An ideal Army leader serves as a role model through strong intellect, physical presence, professional competence, and moral character.”
(Department of the Army [DA], 2019)

The publication doesn't mention managerial capability. While inspirational leadership may boost morale, a lack of management proficiency can hinder decision-making and resource allocation. This mismatch can undermine trust in leadership and erode morale.

For instance, a charismatic leader may inspire enthusiasm, but operational inefficiencies and resource misallocation can lead to disillusionment among subordinates. Soldiers may become disheartened by the gap between leadership promises and results, decreasing morale and willingness to exceed expectations.

Promoting leaders with poor managerial skills can ultimately undermine organizational effectiveness and impede mission objectives. Leaders in senior positions must possess both inspirational leadership and effective management capabilities.

Developing Managerial Attributes

Leadership development is a core component of professional military education. While the Army emphasizes integrity, decisiveness, and empathy, cultivating managerial skills is equally important. As leaders progress through the ranks, their ability to manage resources and coordinate activities becomes critical.

Developing managerial attributes involves strategic planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and problem-solving, aligning with the NCO Common Core Competencies (NCO3). For example, the *Training Management* competency emphasizes risk management and the planning, preparation, execution, and assessment of training, which is essential for NCOs managing their teams. Meanwhile, the *Program Management* competency ensures NCOs manage

crucial programs that support Soldiers, such as the Army Safety Program and Human Resource Systems.

Effective Ways to Develop Managerial Skills:

- **Strategic Planning:** Aligning with the 8-Step Training Model detailed in FM 7-0, NCOs must ensure that well-thought-out plans lead to accomplishing their unit's mission-essential tasks (DA, 2021). This strategy involves balancing resources and understanding the end state of operations. Step 1 of the training model, "Plan the Training Event," directly ties into this strategic planning by outlining how NCOs must use the mission-essential task list (METL) to achieve training goals.
- **Resource Allocation:** Step 1 of the 8-Step Training Model also includes resource allocation, where NCOs must ensure the effective management of resources such as training sites, supplies, and logistics. Proper resource management is crucial to



Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Taal, 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade, briefs Soldiers on resource management, Oct. 14, 2024. Effective management requires strategic planning and efficient resource allocation. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Raven Jones).



Staff Sgt. Joshua D. Hutchings, 2-116th Combined Arms Battalion, center, and his squad review a mission plan. Developing managerial attributes involves strategic planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and problem-solving. As leaders progress through the ranks, their ability to manage resources and coordinate activities becomes critical. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. David Campos-Contreras)

mission success and falls under the *Program Management* competency in NCOC3.

- **Decision-Making:** Effective decision-making happens in real time during training and mission execution. NCOs issuing orders (Step 4 in the training model) must assess risks and prioritize tasks, which builds into the *Leadership* competency in NCOC3, emphasizing initiative and critical thinking.
- **Problem-Solving:** Managing risk and problem-solving in challenging conditions is essential to successful leadership. Step 6 of the 8-Step Training Model focuses on execution, where NCOs must lead their teams to overcome obstacles during mission-critical tasks, mirroring the *Operations* competency in NCOC3.

Other ways to develop managerial skills include:

- **Formal Education and Training Programs:** Integrating managerial attribute development into the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development System (NCOPDS) curriculum can shape tomorrow's leaders.
- **Mentorship and Coaching:** Pairing up-and-

coming leaders with experienced mentors provides personalized guidance and support.

- **On-the-Job Experience:** Real-world challenges allow leaders to hone decision-making, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills in a dynamic, high-pressure environment.
- **Feedback and Reflection:** Seeking feedback and engaging in introspection helps leaders assess their performance and improve their managerial abilities.

Conclusion

The future of the Army lies in leaders who possess charisma, vision, strategic acumen, and organizational prowess. By recognizing the importance of developing managerial attributes alongside leadership qualities, the Army can cultivate leaders capable of meeting the challenges of the 21st-century battlefield.

The strength of our military lies not only in technological superiority but in the dedication and ingenuity of our Soldiers and leaders. As we uphold the values of duty, honor, and country, let us strive to cultivate leadership and management capabilities that will ensure the Army remains a formidable force, both now and in the future. ■

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