



19 Jul 18

**Subj: COMMANDER'S GUIDANCE TO THE STAFF**

1. As principal and special staff officers you must remember that you are my personal representatives and therefore your actions must always reflect my personality and be guided by my intent. Some of the hardest working Marines in the battalion are found in your staff sections and their hard work cannot go to waste. The below ideas define my intent as it relates to your staff duties and more importantly your relationships with our companies and higher headquarters.

a. Focus DOWN, glance up - Ensure the companies succeed. How you do your job will affect the battalion's combat readiness. A good staff will judge its success by the success of the companies. Your job is to gain the results that our companies seek within the bounds of battalion processes and nested with our higher headquarters constraints and limitations; to do so you will need to foster positive relationships with key leaders by teaching them to think more broadly and and by helping them extend their planning horizons. Be prepared to preserve these relationships in times of stress and uncertainty. Do this through cooperation, dedication and flexibility.

b. Get them to "yes." - staff officers may not tell a company commander "no" on any issue, only I can do that. You can provide them sound advice, explanations, context and information that will help make them all successful. While supporting our Company Commanders you must do everything in your power to support their requirements, but these requirements must be communicated to you by them in a timely manner; their concerns must be your concerns. Look for ways to achieve their endstate if you cannot provide everything that they require; ask them what their endstate is if it is unclear.

c. Communicate, communicate, communicate - information must flow in many directions within our battalion to be effective. Lateral communication between staff officers is vital; information is power and must be distributed to empower peers, subordinates and seniors alike. The staff must plan collaboratively (MCP), aggressively share information, seek feedback from everyone and ensure feedback is provided to me. If the only time the staff gets together with each other is the weekly Command & Staff meeting then something is very wrong. Learn to write well. Write like you speak. Simplify every communication as much as possible without skewing meaning or intent. Use read-aheads to ensure meetings are productive. Develop the ability to brief individuals and groups. Slides support you as the presenter, not the other way around. Keep them simple and impress your audience with your wisdom.

d. Go the extra mile - staff sections and shops never "close for lunch." There can never be a single point of failure in a staff section, so cross train. Ensure you work hard at meeting our companies' timelines, as well as those of our higher headquarters'. Our staff work must be thorough, it must account for the conceptual, functional, and detailed levels of planning at the appropriate times to influence actions the right way, early. It must be integrated effectively if we are to appreciate how "everything effects everything else" to ensure 3/3 understands its "single

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battle" and to sustain our ability to "keep the main thing the main thing." These ideas are the foundation for the decentralized command environment that allows us to operate the way we must fight on future battlefields. Everything is training, and training is everything.

e. Drink their coffee - Visit our companies on their turf and visit them often - clarify and confirm, follow-up, ask, "How are we doing?" Solicit suggestions on how we can serve them better. Your visits will increase cooperation, cohesion and mutual understanding. It will also increase the effectiveness of our internal communication, which will increase the availability of "ground truth." This in turn will assist me in better leading the battalion as a whole.

f. Higher headquarters are NOT the enemy - drink their coffee too. You may not throw stones at higher headquarters because all units live in glass houses and they are on our side; we need their support and assistance, and they need ours, but higher also has the context we need to effectively orient on our problems. Develop a professional relationship with your regimental counterparts. The better you know them and they you, the better support 3/3 will get. They can also help you get to "yes." The same applies to our adjacent battalions. 3/3 will assist adjacent battalions and squadrons when requested support is within our capability.

g. Personal follow-up, personal follow-up, personal follow-up -- if it rates an e-mail it really should be a phone call; if it was a phone call, it really should be a face-to-face visit. Staff officers must continually follow-up and confirm that the desired results are accomplished to standard. Excuses like: "I sent him an e-mail", or "I hung that document on the website/share drive" are symptomatic of a lack of concern. We all need to continually ask ourselves "What do I know? Who needs to know it? Have I told them? How will I tell them? How will they tell me?"

h. Be an information miner - all staff officers must aggressively seek information from multiple sources to include higher headquarters and adjacent battalions. Pirated information is often very timely and useful. The staff of 3/3 must develop a sense of the possible; become proactive and anticipatory in everything you do. Mental agility is the mark of all great staff officers, so anticipate requirements and friction areas. You must prevent 3/3 from ever getting caught flat-footed and unprepared.

i. Don't admire problems - When a problem needs to be elevated to my level, present me potential solutions and the possible second and third order effects of each solution. Articulate the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the costs and risks. Give me sound recommendations. Have the mental discipline and confidence to understand that even though I may reject your recommendation, your work has assisted me in making the best possible decision with the information available at the time.

j. Sleep on it - e-mail can be dangerous. Remember you are my personal representative when you send something to our companies, our adjacent and supporting units, and our higher headquarters. Once you hit send, it is written in permanent ink and will probably be forwarded and shared. Remain professional and unemotional; sleep on it if necessary. When in doubt, see paragraph "g" above.

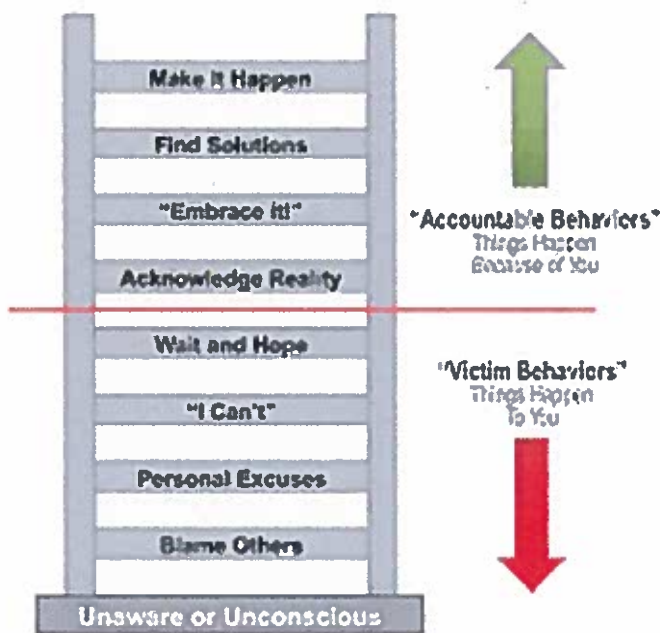
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k. Know and Maintain Your Weapon System – Be the duty expert in your MOS. Orders, publications, as well as FSMAO and CGIP AIRS checklists are your guides for healthy functional programs and a critical component to being a good and thorough staff. They will help you “focus” and measure “good enough” to ensure we always meet the standard and reduce the risk of “misplaced initiative.” Appoint checklist managers, develop and inspect desktop procedures and turnover binders, conduct spot checks and internal inspections.

1. Lead – Organize your day and prioritize tasks. Delegate the routine so that you may solve problems, conduct analysis, and place yourself at the point of friction throughout the day.

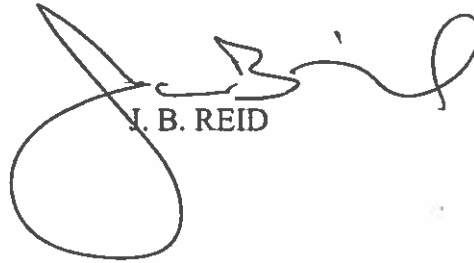
m. Loyalty to the battalion - Tell me what I need to hear, not what you think I want to hear. You must ensure I have the necessary, timely, and correct information to make the right decisions. Always consider how your recommendations will affect our Marines when they cross the line of departure and assume real risks. The mission is the mission -- the brief is never the mission, but it is still an important part of communicating the plan. “The plan is nothing, planning is everything.”

2. Attitude is important - When going about your daily duties remember be cheerful, positive and supportive. All of the above means nothing if your attitude is poor. When discussing issues with a company commander try and understand his perspective -- remember though that you may have more context though since you are the higher headquarters. Before you secure every day ask yourself this question: Who have I visited today, have I made them feel supported, and did I gain or increase their trust in the staff? How you answer that question will determine if you are meeting the mark. Live on the top half of the “Ladder of Accountability”



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3. As I stated in our command philosophy, "Be a Good Teammate," "Do What's Right, Protect Each Other," and "Be Ready Now." Success is 3/3 winning honorably in all that we are asked to do. To achieve this success we must strive daily for unity of command and harmonize our efforts to elevate the performance of the entire team.



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