

September/October 2003 PlatoonLeader Update  
[platoonleader.army.mil](http://platoonleader.army.mil)

**(Please help by ensuring widest possible distribution!!)**

Welcome to this months update. Our brothers and sisters on the ground continue to expertly lead their soldiers through the long, hot summer. They demonstrate on a daily basis, in situations considered chaotic by most, in places such as Mosul, Tikrit, Falluja, Baghdad, Najaf, Bagram, and Kabul, dedication to their soldiers and the mission required of them. We salute them and the troops they lead.

The PlatoonLeader Update this month looks at leadership in the context of our current ongoing operations. Everett Spain asks the question: What does it take to lead beyond your assigned span of control? How do we make the unit we exist within successful? Many of our fellow leaders in Iraq have provided us with some phenomenal insights to questions we posed that can help us all look at how we lead, train, and prepare for combat and peacekeeping operations. Chris Kolenda contributes part II of his essay on Responsibility by reminding us what responsibility REALLY means. Cool tools and discussions that have piqued our interest are provided as links. We added to this month's newsletter, the arrival message from our new Chief of Staff, General Schoomaker. He reminds us that innovation and creativity are traits that best define our leaders; that strategically and tactically we must continually adapt our force, our training, our leader development, and our structure to get inside our enemy's decision cycle. He reminds us though we may be considered the pre-eminent combat force on the planet, we must improve, and we must not become complacent in our own victories.

Finally, a request to the force: PlatoonLeader exists to share best practices across the force. Contributing to the discussion helps educate all of us as future, present, or past junior company level leaders. Many of you are currently in the throes of stability and support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of you have underneath your belt combat experience that can help save the life of a soldier in the future. Please take the opportunity to share your experiences by answering these four questions and emailing them to: [manager@platoonleader.org](mailto:manager@platoonleader.org). Anonymity will be honored if required!

1. What is/was your toughest leadership challenge? How did you handle it?
2. Will your experiences change the way you lead or train your soldiers?
3. What was most effective in preparing you for the challenges of leadership in combat?
4. If you could offer advice to those preparing to go to Iraq, what would it be?
5. What experience/event/image/etc, do you think you will most clearly remember when you're an old man/woman 50 years from now?

Fight Fiercely!!

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This Month's Update:

1. Leading Up
2. Interviews from the Front.
3. TTPs, AARs from the Front
4. Responsibility: A Hallmark of Professionalism, Part II
5. Message from the Chief of Staff
6. Cool Tools
7. Current Discussions on the Site

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### **1. Leading Up in your Unit** (Everett Spain)

"The most endangered species today is the dedicated leader" – CSM Aubrey Butts.

When we visualize a "dedicated leader", most of us immediately think of the accomplished *positional* leader who has the responsibility and legitimate authority to steer an organization and grow its people.

But does your unit run strictly by the capabilities and weaknesses of just the positional leaders such as the CO and the 1SG? What about you as a Platoon Leader or an Executive Officer? Do you provide the guidance and leadership to those in and around your unit even though they are not in your platoon or company? Do you make your larger organization a better place or do you just worry about "your lane"?

As the ADC-M of 2<sup>nd</sup> ID in Korea MG David Valcourt zeroed in on this idea of leading outside the comfort of our organizational boundaries by stating: "If you are a great battalion commander and lead a great battalion, I will give you a 'Center of Mass' rating, because that is what I expect of you. But if you do this while also making your fellow battalions, brigade, and/or division better, I will give you an 'Above Center of Mass' rating, because that is what I want you to do."

Okay, so the bar has been raised. It begs the question: "How does one influence an organization when you are not the positional head?" This type of non-positional influence is sometimes called "Organizational Leading Up." We believe there are four fundamentals to successfully Leading Up:

- Believe that leadership is a lifestyle, not a position. Make a list of things you would improve in your larger organization if you were "in charge". Cross out those things in which you have minimal possible influence over. Of the remaining few, pick one or two, and commit yourself to making your larger organization better in those ways.
- Actively build trust (earn the right to influence): First do your assigned jobs with excellence and beyond reproach. Remain modest, humble, and

thankful. Always work to actively build the larger organization's leadership team (the opposite of being divisive)

- Communicate, Communicate, and Communicate: Help your boss to see the benefits of your intended changes through persistent and well researched communication. Build your network - treat everyone as important and build a coalition of support through spending time with the larger organization thought leaders (one on one when possible). When you meet resistance, try to connect using their point of view along a common value that is important to them that you can also directly tie to a positive effect of your change. Ensure you are transparent with your peers and subordinates about what you are trying to influence.
- Take conscientious action in gradual stages: First become the change you wish to see - model the new behavior/priority in your own professional/personal life. Actively influence a little, evaluate, if going well, add a little more thoughtful effort. Don't be married to an idea- if it is not working, back off, there will be other opportunities for positive change tomorrow.

Other viewpoints on Leadership in a competitive environment:

What Defines Great Leadership?

“...We have all heard about these GREAT leaders. They are the ‘go-to’ guys. They ones who are willing to help out at the drop of a hat – and (oh-by-the-way) are competent to boot...”

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=37>

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## **2. Interviews from the Front.**

Interviews from company level leaders in the field:

2LT Blickhahn, 325th AIR, 82nd ABN Div: “...All operations, even a drive to buy Pepsi, must be planned and rehearsed as if a combat OP because an ambush or IED could be around the next corner. Hold standards! Don't allow complacency in the troops or line leaders....”

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/files/Newsletter%20Teases/2lt%20blickhahn%20iraq.pdf>

CPT Morgan, C/2-502 IN:”... The junior unit leaders, SLs and TLs, must step up and understand the significance of the SALT-R report. The R, for Recommendation, is critical. What is his call on the ground. His report causes me to call on everything from a single squad to reinforce to AT platoons and KWs...”

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/files/Newsletter%20Teases/cpt%20r.%20morgan%20-%20c%202-502%20in.pdf>

LT Mason: "...As long as the soldiers know that their leader has their best interests at heart they will do and accomplish all tasks on little to no guidance..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/files/Newsletter%20Teases/lt%20mason%20iraq.pdf>

LT Stuewe: "...I believe 80-90% of these people want us here and support us, but those few are making it very difficult to progress. And there is our war..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/files/Newsletter%20Teases/lt%20stuewe%20in%20iraq.pdf>

The Wise LT: "...You have to ensure your squad leaders train their team leaders - make them better leaders, put them in a position to take over for you should something happen - make them see the big picture..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=95&mode=thread&order=0>

LT Mitroka: "...Another key factor is to learn, before you come out here, who your networkers are. There are some people that have a knack for getting things and for working with people. Find out who those people are and get them going as soon as you hit ground..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/files/Newsletter%20Teases/lt%20mitroka%20q.pdf>

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### **3. TTPs, AARs from the Front**

TF 2-69 AR Convoy Ops Brief:

"...In order to put the lessons and TTPs into the proper context, we clearly articulated, from our experience, the threat they will face once they enter Iraq. For what it's worth, this is now our refined convoy SOP for the FTCP..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=96&mode=thread&order=0>

Digital Battle Command: Baptism by Fire:

"...had 13 separate map sheets in the bustle rack of my Bradley when I crossed the Line of Departure (LD) into Iraq. Each was specially cut and numbered so that my Task Force operational graphics lined up correctly on the map..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=94&mode=thread&order=0>

Attack on the 507<sup>th</sup>:

"...Once engaged in battle, the Soldiers of the 507th Maintenance Company fought hard. They fought the best they could until there was no longer a means to resist..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=88>

Company Level Leaders AAR:

"...The best LTs were those who exercised initiative within their cdr's intent, and who reported what they were doing, not asked for permission or advice..."

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=92>

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#### **4. Responsibility: A Hallmark of Professionalism, Part II (Chris Kolenda)**

A second aspect of responsibility is mission focus. Professionals and professional organizations accomplish the purposes set for them. Leaders realize that their organizations do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of a larger whole....The focus, of course, is on the purpose – the commander’s intent two or three levels up. They realize that when conditions change they need might need to modify their plans or tasks to meet the assigned purpose. The spirit trumps the letter. Unthinking obedience is antithetical to a culture of responsibility.

- Issuing Orders in our Own Name. Joyful acceptance of responsibility means issuing orders in your own name
- Picking battles. Professionals possess the judgment to pick their battles, ensuring that those battles are closely tied to key priorities.
- Taking Initiative. It is somewhat amusing to hear people complain about not being allowed to take initiative...they wait for permission – which is antithetical to the idea of initiative – and lose the opportunity.

Inculcation of Excellence in Others. Professionals leave a legacy of excellence in those with whom they serve, their organizations, and the profession as a whole.

- Leader Development. Professionals develop those around them. Leader development integrates experience, education, and feedback.
- Sharing ideas. Professionals recognize that a good idea gets a C, a good idea shared gets a B, and a good idea shared and implemented across the unit gets an A.
- Contributions to the Profession. Professionals help develop the body of expert knowledge in the profession by writing articles of relevance to improve current operations and shape the future

Read the whole article here:

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/files/Newsletter%20Teases/responsibility%20ii.pdf>

Read Part I of ‘Responsibility’ here:

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=83>

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**5. Message from the Chief of Staff:** “...Sustained engagement of our Army will be the norm, not the exception. How do we man the Army in a way that provides cohesive, high performing units in this reality of continuous engagement?”

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/article.php?sid=93&mode=thread&order=0>

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## 6. Cool Tools

Convoy Operations SOP

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/download.php?op=getit&lid=198>

Leaders Book

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/download.php?op=getit&lid=195>

Ranger Handbook

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/download.php?op=viewdownloaddetails&lid=194&tttitle=Ranger%20Handbook>

Your "Tools" Are Needed! - Please send your great ones in to share with others! A "Tool" is a file (usually Microsoft Office Word/Excel/PowerPoint/Access) that others can use to help them be better platoon leaders. Send yours in and we'll post them to the site to share with the profession! Send your tools as an email attachment to [tools@platoonleader.org](mailto:tools@platoonleader.org).

The following link shows all the current tools on the site:

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/download.php?op=alltools&ratenum=1000&ratetype=num>

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## 7. Current Discussions on the Site

Recent Discussions. Check out the following hot-discussion threads and pass along your perspectives.

If I were Chief of Staff:

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/viewtopic.php?topic=1394&forum=3&1>

New XO's and Counseling

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/viewtopic.php?topic=1377&forum=47&6>

Leadership, The Warrior's Art

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/viewtopic.php?topic=731&forum=50&10>

Leadership Styles

<http://platoonleader.army.mil/viewtopic.php?topic=1588&forum=16>

Body Army Survey. JRTC is looking for feedback from the force on Body Armor. Sound off on what you think by completing the following survey:

[http://www.squad-leader.com/load\\_survey.htm](http://www.squad-leader.com/load_survey.htm)

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Join the PL.org Moderator/Leadership Team: Come up on the net (email: [manager@platoonleader.org](mailto:manager@platoonleader.org) ) if you would like to be a discussion forum moderator or would like to provide leadership in any specific way. We are all volunteers who run the site and your leadership makes a tremendous difference.

Leadership, the Decisive Variable!

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The PlatoonLeader Team  
[www.platoonleader.org](http://www.platoonleader.org), [platoonleader.army.mil](http://platoonleader.army.mil)

We are always interested in your Feedback! Email us: [manager@platoonleader.org](mailto:manager@platoonleader.org)

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Past Newsletters:

June/July 03 Newsletter: <http://platoonleader.army.mil/files/Newsletter%20Teases/june-july%2003%20newsletter.pdf>