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from AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare

If You're Doing It Right . . .

by

SSG Alan J. Marinoff
(currently serving as Weapons Squad Leader
in the Presidential Firing Platoon, Echo Company
[Honor Guard], 3d U.S. Infantry [The Old Guard])

The demands placed upon the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers have increased as the Army has gotten smaller. We are doing more, with less. Arguably, the quality of recruits has remained basically static, but we are faced with new soldiers who bring with them a myriad of personal problems to accompany the diversity we crave and cherish. From the soldier who has severe emotional traumas, to the misguided recruit who thought that the Infantry was some type of "social safety net" for his young wife and children, to the stellar private who wants nothing more than to "Be All That He Can Be," we have a full plate.

As a noncommissioned officer with many years of experience in dealing with these leadership challenges, I have found that the institutional training that I received in various NCO academies did very little to help prepare me for what I was to face. While Field Manual (FM) 22-100 (*Military Leadership*) and FM 22-101 (*Leadership Counseling*) talk indirectly about tailoring leadership and counseling

styles to fit the individual soldier, these and the other "22-series" manuals are incomplete. On a daily basis I find myself mentoring young NCOs and those would-be NCOs who have no idea what challenges may face them once they "get under the stripes." Sadly, many fine young specialists have no idea what is truly expected of them as new NCOs. I have seen too many young, inexperienced Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC) graduates stumbling for answers to soldiers' problems and the inevitable platoon sergeant interrogation question: Why didn't you know that your soldier had these problems? For these young and future leaders, I offer the following:

- If you are doing it right, the center of your universe is your team or squad.
- If you are doing it right, you are the first one in to work, and the last one to leave.
- If you are doing it right, you constantly question whether you have done your best.

NCO Notes is published by the AUSA Institute of Land Warfare. This program is an outlet for short pieces written by NCOs for NCOs. Topics can range from leadership techniques to those unwritten "how-to" ideas and procedures that make the Army work. The content represents the personal opinions of the author and not necessarily the position of the Association of the United States Army or its members. Essays of 1,000 words or less may be submitted for consideration to AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare, Attn: MSG George E. Ehling, Editor, NCO Update, PO Box 1560, Arlington, Virginia 22201.



- If you are doing it right, your soldiers trust you unquestioningly.
 - If you are doing it right, soldiers—to include soldiers from other teams, squads, platoons, etc.—seek you out for counsel and advice.
 - If you are doing it right, other NCOs seek you out for the same.
 - If you are doing it right, you spend part of your limited free time finding answers to problems that do not yet exist.
 - If you are doing it right, your soldiers call you at all hours of the day or night when they are confronted with situations that they do not know how to handle.
 - If you are doing it right, you can spot a troubled soldier before the soldier even thinks he has a problem.
 - If you are doing it right, you have become a master of Army Community Services, Army Emergency Relief, Army Family Team Building and TRICARE, as well as local city and county services such as WIC (Women, Infants and Children's Nutrition Program), CPS (Child Protective Services) and other governmental agencies.
 - If you are doing it right, your soldiers will confide in you things that they may have never told anyone else.
 - If you are doing it right, your soldiers call you even when they are on leave (emergency) just to let you know that they are OK, or they need to talk to somebody.
 - If you are doing it right, your soldiers deeply desire your praise and approval.
 - If you are doing it right, you are the subject-matter expert on *all* administrative actions that your soldier might have to deal with. Personnel Administrative Center clerks fear you!
 - If you are doing it right, you know the best places to shop for insurance.
 - If you are doing it right, your soldiers' appearance, proficiency and conduct are above reproach.
 - If you are doing it right, your soldiers are the embodiment of the Army Values.
 - If you are doing it right, your soldiers listen to your safety briefings and follow the spirit, not just the letter.
 - If you are doing it right, you know how to cut through, bypass or run over administrative and bureaucratic obstructions.
- Now, with the more mundane tasks disposed of, you can concentrate on training your soldiers for combat.