

Officer Professional Development: A Case Study in Officer Mentorship

LTC Mark A. Melanson, MS, USA†
1LT Alison D. Winstead, MS, USA††

Introduction

One of the key responsibilities of leadership is the training and development of subordinates, and this includes mentoring. However, with the high operational tempo of today's Army, it is often difficult to find the time to set aside to mentor. This article describes one approach taken to foster technical and tactical excellence in junior officers assigned to the Health Physics Program (HPP) of the United States Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM). While the strategy discussed may not be fully exportable to all commands, it may provide some insights on how to tailor a mentoring program within other AMEDD units.

The USACHPPM is located on Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD. The USACHPPM's mission is to ensure promotion and protection of health for the Army worldwide. Located within the Directorate of Occupational Health Sciences at USACHPPM, the HPP retains the Center's expertise in health physics, or radiation protection. The program has 26 members including military, civilian, and contractor personnel. Of the six military assigned to the HPP, five are Medical Service Corps (MSC) officers holding the Area of Concentration (AOC) 72A, Nuclear Medical Science Officer: one lieutenant colonel (the Program Manager), three captains, and a first lieutenant.

With the exception of the Program Manager, all of the 72A officers are currently in their first duty assignment. This important fact underscored the urgent need for a formalized mentoring program that could address both officer fundamentals and enhanced technical training in health physics. Not surprising, the biggest challenge was developing such a program around deployments, temporary duty (TDY), and the ongoing distractions and demands of each duty day.

Officer Professional Development (OPD) Program

Since it was first established in the summer of 2000, the HPP OPD Program has greatly evolved. While it originally began as an informal "chat session" between the HPP Program Manager and his junior officers, OPD has since become a more scholarly, formalized program. Jealously guarded by the participating officers as "their time," OPD is presently composed of weekly meetings with an early start time (0700 on Thursdays) to minimize interruptions. A constantly updated schedule is managed by one of the junior officers and any scheduling conflicts are resolved on an as needed basis. These gatherings are intentionally informal, filled with good coffee, stimulating discussions, and officer camaraderie.

It is important to note that the weekly OPD sessions are held as long as at least one junior officer is available to meet with the senior officer. Those particular sessions are specifically tailored to fit the interests of the junior officer and become a personalized, one-on-one session. For example, one such meeting focused on potential future assignments for one captain; a second session dealt with strengthening another officer's officer evaluation report support form. When the senior officer is not available, the next ranking officer leads the session, thereby reinforcing the importance of the chain of command and ensuring OPD continuity. Besides, offering the junior officers this opportunity to mentor is, in and of itself, a form of mentoring.

Presently, the OPD is comprised of four types of sessions: The Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) Official Reading List, Military Topics, Health Physics Journal Club, and Guest Lectures. Ideally, since there are usually four Thursdays in each month, an attempt is made to vary the meeting format with one of each type of session. A brief description of the varied formats follows.

Army officers (who reflected upon their diverse and distinguished careers) and senior NCOs (who discussed NCO Evaluation Reports and enlisted career management and development issues). Each of these guest speakers brings his or her unique expertise, along with a fresh perspective. These gatherings also provide some variety and acquaint the junior officers with other senior officers and potential mentors. It also allows these senior officers (typically non-72As) to participate in the shared leadership responsibility of junior officer mentorship.

Field Trips

In addition to the weekly Thursday meetings, the OPD program also includes field trips. One important, recurring field trip is an annual pilgrimage to PERSCOM in Alexandria, VA, to meet with the 72A Career Activities Officer (CAO). This annual meeting includes a review of each officer's officer record brief (ORB) and microfiche and a discussion of upcoming promotion and retention boards and potential future assignments. The CAO makes any corrections to the officer's ORB on the spot, thereby keeping the records up-to-date. The senior officer attends these career counselings along with each of the junior officers to maintain familiarity with each individual officer's career and to offer any needed guidance.

A number of field trips have also been made to visit senior 72A officers within the Baltimore-Washington area. (This was curtailed after 11 Sep 01, but has since resumed.) These informal courtesy calls allow the junior officers to meet other senior officers in their AOC and get an idea of future assignments that they may have later in their career. On the other hand, the senior 72As get to meet the new junior officers, describe their jobs, and share their thoughts on Army officer responsibilities. It is hoped that these meetings will serve to "break the ice" and facilitate future opportunities for mentoring between these junior and senior officers.

A final component of the field trips is touring historic sites. One such example was a trip to the Pentagon (before 11 Sep 01). Another field trip included a lecture and guided tour of the Gettysburg battlefield sponsored by a local Community College. These excursions serve to complement the military history readings with "actually being there" (In addition to getting everyone out of the office for a change of scenery). Future field trips planned

include Fort McHenry, the National Cemetery at Arlington, and the U.S. Army War College. Fortunately, all of these locations are mere day trips from Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD and are, therefore, very convenient.

Summary

Developing subordinates is a leader's inherent duty. However, finding the time to mentor in today's fast-paced Army remains an ongoing challenge. The HPP OPD program at USACHPPM is a modest attempt to effectively meet both technical and tactical development needs of junior Nuclear Medical Science Officers. Topics range from those that are purely technical in nature to exclusively military subjects. The OPD program combines scholarly reading with small group discussion and field trips. Feedback from the participating junior officers has been unanimously positive and several other junior officers outside of the HPP have made inquiries about also participating.

While implementing the OPD program has raised officer morale and esprit de corps within the HPP, it is important to note that any long-term benefits of this program may not manifest themselves for years, if at all. Perhaps, that is why mentoring is much like gardening, both age-old pursuits require an abundance of nurturing and patience.

Although the authors hold no illusions that the approach presented is a panacea for the Army's mentoring problems, we genuinely hope that some of the ideas offered here will assist others struggling to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities in today's busy Army. That being said, with minor adjustments, the format presented should be readily adaptable to fit most of the other AOCs within the AMEDD. Given the climate of the Army today and recent concerns about junior officer retention, mentoring our future leaders is even more critical than ever before. It is that simple, our junior officers deserve no less.

Finally, a long-time mentor once said nearly a quarter century ago: "You always find time for the things that are important to you and in that way you make them important." That being said, if mentorship is truly important, one will find the time to make mentoring a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Designing a Lieutenant Professional Development Program

by Captain Jonathan A. Hall and Captain Eric A. McCoy

The authors propose a systematic lieutenant professional development program that is designed to prepare a lieutenant to become fully functional within 120 days.

Over the last 3 fiscal years, the selection rates for promotion from lieutenant to captain have been high, ranging from 95 to 99 percent. First lieutenants now are promoted to captain after 24 months' time in grade and 42 months' time in service. However, are lieutenants equipped with the knowledge and skills they will need to be effective once they are promoted to captain? Furthermore, are lieutenants getting the necessary knowledge and skills from their precommissioning training? To ensure that a newly commissioned lieutenant gets the proper foundation for success in the military, an officer professional development (OPD) program tailored specifically for lieutenants can be helpful.

OPD programs can be traced back to methods used during World War II to prepare very junior officers to assume critical positions of responsibility. Many of the regimental, brigade, and battalion commanders who made history in the Pacific, Europe, and North Africa were relatively young officers who were instructed at length by their commanders in the subjects essential for battlefield survival.

The importance of an OPD program in unit training should not be underestimated. A good company-level OPD program provides a solid foundation for improving junior officers, both technically and tactically, and assists in improving unit collective and individual training. An OPD program meets two important needs. First, it allows the commander to communicate his standards for training to his principal executors—the platoon leaders. Second, it improves the capabilities of lieutenants, enabling them to do better jobs every time they train and develop the squads, sections, and teams within their platoons.

Initial Development Phase

The initial development phase of an OPD program begins the moment a newly assigned lieutenant reports to his unit. In his reception and integration counseling, the company commander should clarify critical developmental tasks that the lieutenant should accomplish within his first 4 months in the company. The company commander should annotate these tasks

on the lieutenant's Junior Officer Developmental Support Form (Department of the Army Form 67-9-1a) and review them quarterly.

Sample 30-Day Task List

Developmental Task	Initiator	Date Complete
Complete in-processing through the battalion and company.	S1	
Complete an autobiographical sketch.	Co CDR/ Bn CDR	
Interview with battalion commanders within 72 hours of assignment.	Bn CDR	
Receive company/battalion mission-essential task list (METL) briefing.	Co CDR	
Receive briefing on the role of the NCO.	CSM	
Receive security in briefing.	S2	
Review company/battalion brigade depot policy letters.	S1	
Review company/battalion standing operating procedures.	Co CDR/S1	
Review company/battalion brigade command philosophy.	Co CDR/S1	
Review company/battalion brigade depot training guidelines.	Co CDR/S3	
Review field manual appropriate to your unit.	Co CDR	
Attend battalion/brigade depot new comers' briefing.	Co CDR	
Determine your platoon's ending chain.	Co CDR	
Receive and read letter and e-mail for CER support forms.	Co CDR	
Complete your CER support form.	Co CDR	
Conduct initial counseling of NCOs you rate.	Co CDR	
Inspect and inventory your platoon equipment.	Co CDR	
Inspect and inventory your platoon vehicles.	Co CDR	
Prepare hand receipt to user level.	Co CDR	
Conduct a PMCS on a platoon vehicle and an organic rifle.	Motor SGT	
Supervise PMCS of platoon equipment during motor tables.	Co CDR	
Size and fit your protective mask.	NBC NCO	
Meet the battalion staff.	Bn XO	
Review DA Pam 750-1, Leader's Unit Maintenance Handbook.	BMD	
Understand and implement DA and battalion equal opportunity policy.	Bn EO representative	
Review MICE and compare with your hand receipt and platoon roster.	Co CDR	
Receive a personnel, equipment, and training briefing from the platoon sergeant.	Co CDR/S3	
Visit platoon sections and receive a mission briefing from each section.	Co CDR	

After his first 30 days in the company (see list at far left), the lieutenant should be familiar with basic day-to-day unit operations. Completing these basic tasks will ensure that the lieutenant smoothly transitions into the organization and will provide the building blocks for further development. During the first and second months, the junior officer should be assessing and evaluating the platoon continually. The lieutenant's developmental tasks should focus generally on branch-immaterial tasks that improve platoon-level leadership and then more specifically on branch-specific tasks that will enhance his knowledge as a company-grade officer in his particular branch area of concentration.

Sample 60-Day Task List

Developmental Task	Evaluator	Date Complete
Read and review FHT 23-100, Training the Force, and FHT 25-101, Battle Focused Training.	Ss	
Read and review mission training plan appropriate for your unit.	Ss	
Determine your platoon's training status against the METL (MCS Tasks 04-89.01.00-12.00.72.0.032).	Co CDR	
Brief the company commander on your platoon's training status.	Co CDR	
Conduct a platoon training meeting and after action review.	Co CDR	
Serve as a reviewer for an NCO evaluation report.	Co CDR	
Inspect your platoon's barracks area.	ISG	
Conduct an in-ranks inspection.	ISG	
Inspect the storage of supplies, weapons, and equipment.	Co CDR	
Implement a program to conduct at least a 10 percent cyclic inventory of your equipment each month.	Co CDR	
Assign all equipment an operator, assistant operator, and a supervisor. (Should match subhand receipt)	Co CDR	
Inspect your platoon's maintenance records (DA Form 5986-E, deadline report).	Motor SGT	
Learn how to use and validate DA Form 2406 and the DA Form 5986-E, deadline report.	Motor SGT	
Supervise and review the maintenance of the PLL and TAMIHS records.	Motor SGT	
Brief the company commander on the equipment readiness status of your platoon.	Co CDR	
Conduct a health and welfare inspection.	ISG	
Sign on a summarized and/or company grade Article 15 proceeding.	Co CDR	
Conduct/lead physical training (PT) for your platoon.	Co CDR	
Develop load plans for your equipment.	Co CDR	
Write a memorandum.	Co CDR	
Maintain a daily status chart of personnel and equipment availability.	Co CDR	
Describe the unit procedure for serious incident reporting.	Ss	
Take the Army physical fitness test.	Co CDR	
Receive familiarization on Unit Level Logistics System -Ground (ULLS-G).	Motor SGT	
Receive familiarization on ULLS-S4.	Supply SGT	

At the conclusion of the 60-day period (see list at left), the lieutenant should have increased confidence in his abilities to lead his platoon. Evaluators should provide the lieutenant with feedback and guidance frequently to assist him in accomplishing his mission. During the third month, the lieutenant should begin to learn the functions and critical components of company operations. He should begin to develop good interaction skills with other platoon leaders, senior noncommissioned officers, and members of the battalion staff. These skills will assist him greatly in accomplishing his platoon missions and prepare him for future assignments as a senior company or battalion staff officer.

During the lieutenant's first quarterly counseling (see list on next page), the company commander should review these checklists against the Junior Officer Developmental Support Form to ensure that the lieutenant is developing skills in the areas discussed during his reception and integration counseling. The commander should review the lieutenant's strengths and weaknesses and develop plans to correct and improve his deficiencies. This will provide the basis for the lieutenant to continue his professional development into the next quarter.

Upon completing the tasks on the 120-day task list (see list at far right), the lieutenant should feel comfortable with the missions and structure of his unit and understand his role as a senior leader within his organization.

These task lists are by no means all-inclusive; commanders are encouraged to add, change, or delete tasks as their unit missions dictate or as lieutenants progress.

Implementing an OPD Program

In many units, OPD training is held on an infrequent basis, normally at battalion level. A company OPD program can pay great dividends in enhancing the professional knowledge of company-grade officers, building their confidence, and instilling unit cohesion and esprit de corps. If possible, OPD training should be held monthly or quarterly. It should not be used as a commander's call or office meeting. Subjects should be planned at least 3 months in advance. The company commander should listen to the recommendations of his lieutenants and warrant officers, along with the guidance of his battalion commander, when determining topics to be covered.

While designing the program, the company commander should develop a comprehensive outline of subjects that will be best for the unit. After determining the types of classes needed, he should assign instructors. The commander should not feel obligated to instruct personally at all of the OPDs. By assigning specific topics to his lieutenants, the commander helps them to grow professionally by allowing them to develop and present the blocks of instruction.

The subjects should be varied but applicable to the situations and operating environment of the unit. Some recommended blocks of instruction are—

- Effective military writing (especially awards and noncommissioned officer evaluation reports).
- Supply room operations.
- Unit training.
- Orderly room functions.
- Lessons learned from military history.
- Unit operations in a tactical setting.

Classes should be 1 to 2 hours long, depending on their location and subject matter. Instructors should get everyone involved by using formats such as sand-table scenarios, role-playing exercises, tactical walks, and maintenance system checks in the motor pool. The lecture method should not be the sole basis of instruction. A combination of lecture, conference, and hands-on training methods should be used, depending on the topic to be covered and the composition of the audience. Methods involving high levels of student participation are preferable.

Sample 90-Day Task List

Developmental Task	Evaluator	Date Complete
Attend battalion staff meeting.	Bn XO	
Zero and qualify with your assigned weapon.	Co CDR	
Conduct reenlistment interviews of all soldiers eligible or soon to be eligible for reenlistment.	Co CDR	
Conduct quarterly NCO counseling.	Co CDR	
Prepare an NCOER.	1SG	
Conduct or war-game a summarized Article 15.	Co CDR	
Conduct a platoon leader brief or quarterly training brief with the battalion commander.	Bn CDR	
Review job performance with your commander.	Co CDR	
Qualify for and receive a military driver's license on a HMMWV and a 5-ton cargo truck.	Motor SGT	
Initiate recommendation for an award on one of your soldiers.	Co CDR	
Write a standing operating procedure (SOP) for one of your additional duty areas.	Co CDR	
Write an operations order for a platoon-level exercise with required overlays.	Co CDR	
Attend a battalion maintenance meeting.	BMO	
*Become familiar with SARRS-1.	Class IX/ SSA OIC	
*Become familiar with SAMS-1.	Shop Office	
*Become familiar with unit direct support ammunition operations.	DAO/ Co CDR	

*Examples of tasks that are branch specific, such as those in a maintenance company or an ammunition company. Tasks that are specific to the branches of officers in the company can be substituted.

An incredible amount of reference material is available to help instructors plan. Unit documents, branch schools, and Army training support centers all provide useful information for an OPD program. Bringing in subject matter experts, such as having the staff judge advocate brief on disciplinary actions such as Article 15s and Chapters or touring range-control facilities, can provide a unit with the answers it needs to questions posed by its junior leaders. Another source of information that should not be overlooked is the subject matter experts within the unit; its warrant officers and senior noncommissioned officers often have more than a century's worth of collective military experience.

Sample 120-Day Task List

Developmental Task	Evaluator	Date Complete
Present your personal and professional development program to the battalion commander.	Bn CDR	
Write an article on training conducted by your platoon or company for publication in the post newspaper.	Co CDR	
Supervise training and licensing of equipment operators.	Motor SGT	
Prepare and test vehicle load plans for rollouts.	Co CDR	
Successfully complete common task testing.	1SG	
Prepare a platoon defensive overlay using sector sketches.	Co CDR	
Prepare range card for crew-served weapons.	Co CDR	
Assemble and disassemble all weapons assigned to the platoon or company.	1SG Armorer	
Receive installation range certification for unit's authorized weapons.	S3	
Begin professional reading program (topics according to CSA guidance).	Co CDR	
Run a weapons range.	Co CDR	
Provide a briefing to your battalion commander on weapons range.	Bn CDR	
Observe soldier-of-the-month and promotion boards.	CSM	
Plan and conduct platoon-level field or situational training exercise.	Co CDR	

A lieutenant professional development program will provide the lieutenant with the tools to accomplish missions and the insight to make decisions in executing his duties. Vision, high standards, and perseverance are important in a professional development program. A good professional development program will expand the competencies of the lieutenant and prepare him for performance at his next duty level. The program will instill high standards of professionalism, improve communication skills, and increase technical and tactical proficiency. Furthermore, it will enhance his understanding of the military and his role as a commissioned officer.

Today's commanders have an obligation to provide quality personal and professional development opportunities for their subordinates. As promotion rates increase and time in grade for promotion decreases, it is essential that we have a well-educated and professionally developed officer corps to safeguard our most vital resource: the American soldier. **ALOG**




244TH QM BN Leadership Guide

Principles of Leadership


LEADER ADVICE

Don't change things for the sake of change. Immediate changes should be made only for situations that involve safety or troop welfare, or because they are incompatible with your values.





LEADERSHIP



DEFINITION LEADERSHIP IS THE PROCESS OF INFLUENCING OTHERS TO "WILLINGLY FOLLOW" AND ACCOMPLISH THE MISSION BY PROVIDING, PURPOSE, DIRECTION, AND MOTIVATION

PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP (FM 6-22 Army Leadership)

Principle #1 – Know Yourself and Seek Self Improvement
Develop a plan to keep your strengths and improve on your weaknesses.

Principle #2 – Be Technically Proficient
Not only do we know our duties and responsibilities, we know all those of our team members, and we look to our leaders and concern ourselves with learning their duties and responsibilities.

Principle #3 – Seek Responsibility and Take Responsibility for Your Actions
We are not satisfied with performing just our duties to the best of our abilities, we look to grow and seek further challenges, and always, when in charge, accept the consequences of our decisions, absorb the negative and pass on the praises.

Principle #4 – Make Sound and Timely Decisions
Leaders must be able to reason under the most critical condition and decide quickly what action to take.

Principle #5 – Set the Example
No aspect of leadership is more powerful. Our personal example affects people more than any amount of instruction or form of discipline. We are the role model.

Principle #6 – Know Your Personnel and Look Out for Their Well Being
Leaders must know and understand those being led. When individuals trust you, they will willingly work to help accomplish any mission.


Principle #7 – Keep Your Followers Informed
Our team members expect us to keep them informed, and where and when possible, to explain the reasons behind requirements and decisions. Information encourages initiative, improves teamwork and enhances morale.

Principle #8 – Develop A Sense of Responsibility In Your Followers
The members of a team will feel a sense of pride and responsibility when they successfully accomplish a new task given them. When we delegate responsibility to our followers, we are indicating that we trust them.


Principle #9 – Ensure Each Task is Understood, Supervised and Accomplished
Team members must know the standard. Supervising lets us know the task is understood and lets our team members know we care about mission accomplishment and about them.

Principle #10 – Build A Team
Leaders develop a team spirit that motivates team members to work with confidence and competence. Because mission accomplishment is based on teamwork, it is evident the better the team, the better the team will perform the task.

Principle #11 – Employ Your Team In Accordance With Its Capabilities
A leader must use sound judgment when employing the team. Failure is not an option. By employing the team properly, we insure mission accomplishment.



Things leaders should know & do...





- Train with a purpose. Plan, backbrief, rehearse, execute, and supervise throughout.
- Do your duty - specified and implied. (What is right, not what is easy)
- Set goals and objectives
- Be positive in your approach...in everything you do. Enthusiasm is contagious.
- Be active, not passive. Don't wait to be told...execute off of CDRs intent.
- Support each other as professionals. Peer pressure should reinforce excellence, not shame.
- Share the hardships with your soldiers.
- Communicate-Keep your soldiers, and your leaders informed.
- Reward excellence.

FM 6-22 (11-12) (1)

Army Leadership
Essentials: Content and style

(11/2008) (10)

Headquarters, Department of the Army

Things leaders should know & do...

- Be punctual, show up to work before your Soldiers, leave after they do.
- Carry paper and pen at all times.
- Always leave someone in charge.
- Be a team player but play to win.
- Visit soldiers in the hospital.
- Follow regulations. Make on the spot corrections.
- Pay your bills and live up to your personal and financial responsibilities.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Don't use drugs.
- Be careful what you say near open doors and in public.
- Leaders live in glass houses.
- Remember you represent the leader corps of the Army and you took an oath the day you pinned your bars on.




Expectations for Lieutenants

- Learn about your profession – read/know the FMs/TMs/TTPs
- Know everything about your Soldiers
- PT stud – push yourself and your subordinates to excellence
- Become an expert with all your equipment – everything is a weapon system
- Expert on assigned weapon/familiar with all weapons in your unit
- Know and live the Troop Leading Procedures
- Use every available minute to train your unit – prevent wasted time
- Learn maintenance system/process
- Relationship with PSG/NCOIC – like a good marriage
 - Learn from them and ensure they uphold the standard
- Counsel PSG/Section SGT/Squad Leader
 - Performance/Potential/Strengths/Weaknesses/Sustains/Improves
 - Use 4856 (DEVELOPMENTAL COUNSELING FORM) and NCOER as tools to assist in counseling
- Inspect/walk thru the barracks – know how your Soldiers live
- Don't party with your Soldiers – respect versus like

Expectations for Staff Officers

- Know MDMP and how you fit in
 - What do you provide? What should you provide?
- Be an expert in your area
- Don't just provide data – answer the so what? And what next?
- PT with subordinates
- Develop subordinates – even though you are not a green tab, you are a leader
- Job may not be “sexy”, but it is important to the unit - 100% and then some!
- Don't give me SA – help me get to SU

Expectations for Company CDRs

- Do thorough monthly 10% inventories personally
 - Can delegate 100% sensitive items inventories, but give written guidance
- Sub-hand receipt everything
- Counsel XO, PLs, 1SG, PSGs, etc. monthly (goal)/quarterly (minimum)
- Develop holistic PT plan – combatives/foot marches/cross fit/etc
- Training – 10 step training model; tough and realistic; prep for deployment
- Reenlistment – manage in conjunction with CO/BN Re-up – work as a team
- FRG – your program – I will provide focus and direction (resources) – you execute
- Train lieutenants to be company commanders
- Bad news does NOT get better with time – keep me and CSM informed
- Safety briefs – don't hand wave – take seriously
- Be a part of the team (quarterback)
- Don't compete with fellow commanders – work together to make battalion better
 - Lateral communications
- Leader books – not an option