

3 TTPs You Can Learn from a Company Commander

As a Reserve Component Officer, it is very easy for me to see the overlap between the Army and the Private Sector. I can also see the need for many of the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) of the Army to be in place in the private sector, IF the owner/leader (you) desires to become more efficient. To help with this, I wanted you to know **3 TTPs You Can Learn from a Company Commander**. And to help with the anecdotes for this, I turn to my mentor and friend, Retired Colonel Jesse Galvan. I deployed with Colonel Galvan in 2009 and he still can't get rid of me!

TTP #1: Use a Standardized Decision-Making Process

There are two main doctrinal decision-making processes in the Army – the Military Decision Making Process and Troop Leading Procedures. There is also the Rapid Decision Making Process for time constrained situations. The power of using process based decision making is very underestimated. It is very easy to use position authority to make a decision. However, the side effects of this are not good at all. This type of decision making removes your staff's ability to add value and, most importantly, tells them that their opinion doesn't matter. This leads to a disengaged staff that is not committed to the decision and leads to a staff that feels like a number. This is the disengagement part. Gallup's State of the American Workplace does a great job of discussing disengagement, but here is the summary in numbers.



Using a process to make a decision, even if it's a quick process, will make a huge difference in your organization since your staff knows their input is respected, expected and valued. You can now expect the staff to do the same thing for their employees because you have now walked the walk.

TTP #2: AARs without Rebuttal

In the Army, leaders do an After-Action Review (AAR) after almost everything. This is to gain feedback from the participants of a mission, training exercise or even a schoolhouse class. It's a great opportunity to hear feedback from the "customers" and to make improvements for the next mission. However, what often happens is a soldier will make a recommendation and someone with a little more rank will jump all over that soldier to explain why that was such a dumb remark. Instantly, everyone in the room knows that the AAR is over and it's time to stop caring. Of course, this happens in the private sector as well and is extremely detrimental to employee engagement. A form of an AAR (this is not doctrinal!) that I think is extremely effective is the Start/Stop/Continue. That goes like this:

- Assign someone as the Guard. They need to stop all rebuttals!
- Assign someone as the Scribe. This allows the leader to focus on the feedback.
- Ask these three questions:
 - When it comes to improving, what should we Start to do?
 - When it comes to improving, what should we Stop doing?
 - When it comes to improving, what should we Continue doing?

Colonel Galvan does a great job of starting off his AARs. He will ask the group if there are any stupid questions. Someone will say "No.". Colonel Galvan will say "Yes there are. I've heard a ton of them. But that shouldn't prevent you from sharing your opinion." That's a leader that understands how to create an environment of continuous improvement. And a burned out, frustrated leader would do himself/herself a great benefit by setting those conditions as well.

TTP#3: Professional Growth Counseling

Coaching your team, or making sure that others are coaching their team, is not an easy thing to do. The daily "fires" knock out the desire to get proactive. As Colonel Galvan says, "Coaching is a very laborious process. It takes an investment of time and energy on behalf of the mentor and the mentee." This is extremely important to understand. It's also why I say "IF the leader desires to become more efficient." In my experience, this is a BIG if. Most leaders have come up through the ranks and are therefore not great at leading. Oftentimes, they would rather do things on their own and, oftentimes, years of labor issues have left them exhausted. But this process doesn't have to be hard. A simple one-page document with two questions will make a huge difference. These are the two questions:

- When it comes to your career, what are you trying to do?
- What can I do to help?

All you have to do is ask these questions, listen and write down the answers. Then, whatever they said for the second question – do it! And this should happen with all of the leaders in your organization. (Don't forget the Chain of Command!)

This simple process will let your whole organization know that you have a culture that supports them. This is the essence of employee engagement and is SO easy to do. (You'll

actually find that everyone just says “Remind me to (fill in their goal).” You’ll also find that they want to do the things you would like them to do in the first place.

What’s Next?

Get a quick win with The Weekly Nudge! Please note that this process is about showing your team that you want to support them and you want their feedback.

- Email your staff about The Weekly Nudge to get their thoughts. (This is a process!)
- Make a Decision: If they said they like it, then move to your employees.
- Email your employees about The Weekly Nudge to get their thoughts.
- Make a Decision: If they said they like it, then do it!

Remember, this is your first time leading an organization/department of this size and it’s ok to not have all of the answers. That’s not your job. Your job is to LEAD! To that point, I’ll leave you with a final thought from Colonel Galvan: “Young leaders are still trying to figure out who they are. But they are ultimately responsible for what does or does not happen in their organization. Taking the time to create a common understanding and showing the path to success is needed if that leader wants to get the most out of their team.”