

Process Based Decision Making Drives Efficient, Engaged Units

To truly understand leadership, one must understand the power of having a process in charge as opposed to a person. When the process is in charge, egos have a hard time justifying their existence, solutions have a hard time showing up before the problem statement and the group has a much better chance of showing each other trust and respect. Conversely, using command directives in place of a process, the opposite becomes true. The highest rank or the loudest person is oftentimes the person that delivers the solution, input from others is minimized, and trust for the leader and amongst each other is reduced. In short, not showing respect to the process reduces the respect for the team. Furthermore, consistently using an expedited methodology also does not deliver the best results when compared to using the proper process. An example is using the Rapid Decision Making and Synchronization Process as opposed to the Military Decision Making Process. While this is not as blatant as not using a process at all, it still has similar effects. It reduces the respect given to the process, which leads to a reduction in the respect given to those on the team. This may be necessary in time constrained situation, but it does not need to happen all the time.

ADP 6-22 speaks to this issue:

All leaders are susceptible to displaying counterproductive leadership behaviors in times of stress, high operational tempo, or other chaotic conditions to achieve short-term results. Counterproductive leadership decreases followers' well-being, engagement, and undermines the organization's readiness and ability to accomplish the mission in the long term. It can have an adverse effect on the unit with cascading results, such as lowering morale, commitment, cohesion, effectiveness, readiness, and productivity. Counterproductive leadership behaviors prevent establishing a positive organizational climate and interfere with mission accomplishment, especially in highly complex operational settings.

Prolonged use of counterproductive leadership destroys unit morale, trust, and undermines the followers' commitment to the mission.

Counterproductive leadership can also decrease task performance, physical and psychological well-being, and increase negative outcomes such as depression or burnout.

As current and future leaders, Officers need to have the Personal Courage, Sense of Duty and desire to show Respect throughout the Chain of Command to ask a sometimes-difficult question: **“What process are we using to solve this problem?”** Every Officer understands that simple question knows that there should be an answer to that question. **“What Step are we on?”** is another question Officers should be able to ask and answer. Officers need to understand the second and third order effects of not using doctrinal, process based decision

making and needs to speak up when he feels there is a problem around the subject of doctrinal, process based decision making.

Process Drives Engagement

There are currently five planning methodologies in the Army in ADP 5-0. They are:

- Army design methodology. (ADM)
- The military decision-making process. (MDMP)
- Troop leading procedures. (TLP)
- Rapid decision-making and synchronization process. (RDSP)
- Army problem solving.

The Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) is the foundation for all of the Army's Decision-Making Processes. Troop Leading Procedures (TLPs), the Rapid Decision Making and Synchronization Process (RDSP) and the Army Problem Solving Model were all derived from MDMP. ADM is designed to help develop the problem statement for MDMP.

Those are the basic terms and the main benefit to all of them is to systematically pull information together from everyone on the team. This is also known as collaboration. Section 9-2 from FM 6-0, Chapter 9 speak to this concept and how MDMP facilitates it:

The higher headquarters solicits input and continuously shares information concerning future operations through planning meetings, warning orders, and other means. It shares information with subordinate and adjacent units, supporting and supported units, and unified action partners. Commanders encourage active collaboration among all organizations affected by pending operations to build a shared understanding of the situation, participate in course of action development and decision making, and resolve conflicts before publishing the plan or order.

MDMP, or any doctrinal process, does a great job of driving input and **engagement** from the team, if done correctly. This is extremely important when it comes to the areas of critical and creative thinking. The conversation systematically includes diverse viewpoints. Engagement also means that people get to make their views heard. This comes into play when it comes to Course of Action (COA) Approval. It is very easy for "the unheard" to disengage and say "this isn't my idea". However, hearing people and encouraging them to speak, will engage them in the plan because they were able to give their input. Now the Commander will have a team that has collaborated and is engaged with the Approved COA.

Engagement Drives Trust and Respect

Per ADP 6-22, "Trust is the foundation of the relationship between commanders, subordinates and partners and that all can be relied on and all are competent in performing their assigned tasks." If you are in charge, putting the process ahead of emotions, is an outstanding way to show everyone that they are important and that you trust their input. Furthermore, this aligns the team on the process being used and the step they are on. While Section 9-11 of FM 6-0 speaks to the staff's efforts during MDMP, it shows the true power of a process in uniting a team:

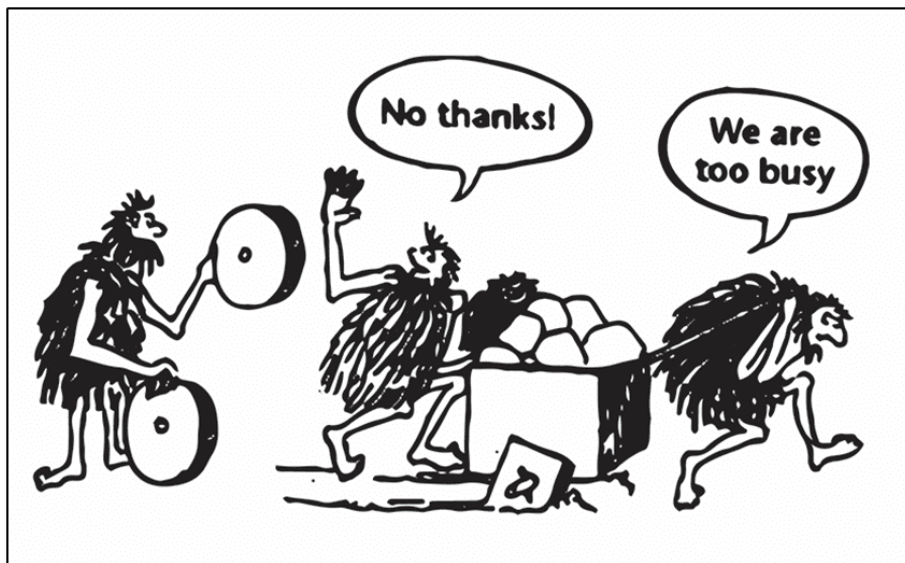
The staff's effort during the MDMP focuses on helping the commander understand the situation, make decisions, and synchronize those decisions into a fully developed plan or order. Staff activities during planning initially focus on mission analysis. The products the staff develops during mission analysis help commanders understand the situation and develop the commander's visualization. During course of action (COA) development and COA comparison, the staff provides recommendations to support the commander in selecting a COA. After the commander makes a decision, the staff prepares the plan or order that reflects the commander's intent, coordinating all necessary details.

One of the great powers of the process is that it synchronizes a team and helps them work together. It engages people into the process and it engages people with each other. When a team gets synchronized, it drives trust and respect amongst them. Conversely, when people are not synchronized and are not working as a team, there is a breakdown in trust and respect for each other. This is the precipice for larger and larger issues until a leader, any leader, can get the team back into doctrinal, process based decision making.

From the Commander's perspective, it is important to understand that clarity on the process is extremely important in gaining the trust of team. Command Direction can be a great tool in a very time constrained environment. Oftentimes, it is understood by subordinates when it is used. When it is overused, that's when the trust starts to break down. Being in command means that the Commander is under a great amount of pressure almost all of the time. That's the nature of the Army and of the position. However, the Commander must not lose sight on their command climate and the importance of synchronizing their team. This is especially true for Commanders at higher levels due to the trickle down effects of reactive decision making. We have all heard of the 1/3 – 2/3 rule. When this rule is not respected, subordinate units are going to have a hard time respecting it with their subordinate units just due to time. These units have also been shown that it is ok to command direct and not using the approved planning timeline. This leads to many units being reactive and many units losing the engagement and the trust of their subordinates because the appropriate process can not (or will not) be used.

When a discussion is had on what process is to be used, it tells everyone that process based decision making is important. This sets the Command Climate to one of being calm and efficient vs. one of being reactive and panicked. All Officers know that a process is supposed to be used. When it's not used by higher, it gives lower units a pass. This is how the lack of trust and respect at higher levels gets propagated down the chain of command. This is why Counterproductive Leadership can result in devastating situations.

Trust and Respect Drive Efficiency



This workers with the square wheels is a great example of what happens when those in charge don't take the time to ask others about their opinion. The obvious point is that they are missing out on a good idea. However, how does the guy with the round wheels feel about the mission that is at hand? He's going to be disengaged and look for other things to do. Things that could be very counterproductive to the mission and the team. Because the two "leaders" aren't using a process to make decisions, they are now inefficient and have lost the help of a teammate, who could easily be out creating problems that will ultimately fall back on the two leaders.

Section 1-12 of ADP 6-0, states, "Trust has a direct relationship on the time and resources required to accomplish the mission. Subordinates are more willing to exercise initiative when they believe their commander trusts them. They will also be more willing to exercise initiative if they believe their commander will except and support the outcome of their decisions. Likewise, commanders delegate greater authority to subordinates who have demonstrated tactical and technical competency and his judgment they trust."

If leaders have a go to question when it comes to problem-solving of: what process are we using to solve this problem? They are going to immediately improve the trust of

those around them and the efficiency of their team. This can be counterintuitive, just like the cavemen that don't have the time to stop and listen about the round wheels. However, the second and third order effects of not using a process will lead to a much more inefficient team in the long term. Leaders cannot miss this point.

Conclusion

It is incumbent upon every Officer to learn about process based decision making and to demand that the most appropriate methodology is being used in a situation. This is how the today's leader can help drive trust, respect and efficiency into today's Army and to help avoid the issues that come with choosing "readiness over respect". The opportunity to learn about these processes is given in great detail within Basic Officers Leadership Course (TLPs) and their Captains Career Courses (TLPs, MDMP and RDSP). Future leaders of our Army need to take full advantage of these opportunities because the benefits of these processes are not trivial. Leaders also need to capitalize on the use of doctrine to drive self-development after leaving their Captains Career Course. There are going to be many opportunities for an Officer to ask "What process are we using?" and "What step are we on?". The leader that has the Personal Courage to ask these questions is the one that is going to help a team make great strides towards developing mutual trust and respect and becoming a more efficient team.

References

1. ADP 6-22. Army Leadership and The Profession. July 2019.
2. ADP 5-0. The Operations Process. July 2019.
3. FM 6-0. Commander and Staff Organization and Operations. May 2014.
4. ADP 6-0. Mission Command. May 2012.