

RUNNING HEAD: DOING THE RIGHT THING IS ETHICAL

Doing the Right Thing is Ethical

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Abstract

I would like to share an unethical situation involving a senior Noncommissioned Officer during a company weigh-in for the Army Physical Fitness Test at Camp Carroll, South Korea. This situation is the prime example of leaders doing the wrong right, instead of doing the right thing. We are the standard-bearer for the United States Army on and off duty. The Soldiers and the public people are watching us very closely. We should be the standard, Know the standard, and Do the standard at all time. We are leader, and always leading from the front.

As the Army moves into the 21st century, we as senior Noncommissioned Officers will be role models for the future generations of Soldiers out on the battlefield. Our ethical and moral values become that of future generations. As such, we must re-evaluate what makes us professionals and what it is that we believe in. To do that, we have to go to the dictionary, for although we all have an idea what Ethics are, we want to insure that we have the correct idea.

As Webster's states, "Ethics is first study of the general nature of moral and the specific moral choices an individual makes in relating to others. The rules or standards of conduct governing the member of a profession." As senior Noncommissioned Officers, we have a duty to mentor our subordinates in the ways of the Army. To teach them to make the right choices even when it would be easier to bend the rules or take a short cut. We need to show them what right look likes, verse the easy wrong over the hard right."

As an analogy, we can look at the old saying "If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around does it make a sound?" Now we can change that to "If we do the right thing and no one is around, will anyone know?" That's Ethics. If know one is around will we do the right thing? "The rules or standards of conduct governing the member of a profession." What are these rules? They are the rules and regulations that govern our conduct as we go about our duties.

Some, if not all are written down, while others are those inherent standards, the norms that we have had ingrained in our personalities and characters. As Sergeant Major, we have all faced this question at one time or another. We have observed our fellows peers doing the wrong thing, when they know right from wrong. How they made their decision is a direct reflection on the leaders that they were trained and mentored by.

I remember observing an unethical situation involving a senior Sergeant Major. We had weigh-in for our unit Army Physical Fitness Test. This Sergeant Major was already over weight.

The First Sergeant was weighing him on the scale. The First Sergeant reached up to make adjustment with the height measure bar on top of the Sergeant Major head. I was standing down the hallway waiting to be weighed in next. Did you know this Sergeant inched up on his tip toes while the First Sergeant was adjusting the height bar?

We as senior leaders sometimes lose focus on the fact that being promoted into positions of leadership mandates we lead from the front. We must always remember that we are leaders first and managers second. We must set the example by doing the right thing at all times. Many have advanced to these positions and are blinded by the successes of those that went before them. However, let us not forget that we are always under a microscope by those that we lead and mentor. Do not be fool into believing that they do not observe our actions.

So as we move forward into the next century, let us take the time to weigh our actions before we commit to them. Once you have committed, you have just lost control of your actions. There will always be someone there to point out our mistakes. We must live with the outcome of those actions and be judge by them. We also take into account that it's not just the Soldiers we lead that judge us by our actions.

In these times of shrinking budgets, the public and the media have us under a microscope. As you can see by what is going on in Iraq with our armed forces killing Iraqi civilian for the wrong reason. It's the public that pays the bills and they have the right to expect us to uphold the standard. We as professionals will handle ourselves in an ethical and moral way. It's for this reason that they have entrusted us with their son and daughters during our tour of duty. Therefore, we should teach them the discipline and instill the ethical and moral attitude to carry these young people into the future..

As another old saying goes, “What you put in, is what you will get out.” For the future of America, it’s on our shoulders to instill those values in the Soldiers that we lead. First, we must look within ourselves and determine if we meet that standard. Then judge ourselves to that standard. If we do not feel that we are up to it, then it’s up to us to change ourselves so that we can meet that standard. Once we meet the standard then it will be up to us to instill it into those we lead. We as Noncommissioned Officers must be the standard-bearer at all times.

We are good at correcting young Soldiers on things not to do on or off duty. However, we get out in public and do things that we preach to our Soldiers about not to do. If we are going to lead from the front, then step up to the plate and lead these young Soldiers into the future of the Army. I think that every Noncommissioned Officers should Be the standard, Know the standard and Do the standard at all times.

The Armed Forces, specifically the Army, has established a professional standard of ethics that I am proud to be part of for the last 25 years. As we move into the 21st century, we will not only be role models, we will also assist in establishing the ethical standards for future generations. I will continue to teach my Soldiers the right thing. As we strive for a higher standard, we must accept the fact that amongst us are some bad apples.

We should be careful not to over react, as in the weigh-in situation. Instead, we must find these misfits, weed them out and drive on. Our professional standards should obtain from those traditional standards that have proudly made us who we are today and balanced with the social norms in which our Soldiers come from

Conclusion

We must continue to display the highest standards to our young Soldiers and the people that support us. We still have some bad apples in the system that refuse to do the right thing. There will come a time when they will meet their maker. We are the super power of this world, and must walk and talk that way. The bottom line is that Noncommissioned lead the way.