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Why Should We Trust the Mother of the Company?

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Abstract

The company First Sergeant, called the Mother of the company in the German Army. When considering the role of the First Sergeant, one could easily understand why the term mother of the company is fitting for the position. The First Sergeant, the top non-commissioned officer (NCO) of the company, must uphold the standards of the company. Soldiers automatically respect and trust the First Sergeant unless he gives them a reason to feel otherwise. In this paper, I will discuss the unethical decisions made by two First Sergeants and the impact of unethical decisions on the unit.

Why Should We Trust the Mother of the Company?

Introduction

The First Sergeant (1SG) is the Senior Enlisted Advisor for a company size unit. Soldiers and officers look to the 1SG for his guidance, leadership, and to show them what right looks like. The company First Sergeant, called the Mother of the company in the German Army. When considering the 1SG's role, most Soldiers can easily understand why the term mother of the company is a fitting term. As the top non-commissioned officer (NCO) of the company, the 1SG is entrusted to uphold the standards of the company. The actions of the 1SG can have either a positive or a negative affect on the command climate and morale of the unit. When several people or a single Soldier makes unethical decisions, the entire unit can feel the effect of those decisions. If someone is caught stealing, the unit may be labeled as thieves. If several Soldiers are caught using drugs on a urinalysis, the unit is label as drug users or potheads. The point here is; when a Soldier makes an unethical decision the unit is negatively affected, but when a 1SG makes an unethical decision it is tenfold. While performing as a 1SG I had the unfortunate opportunity to see two of my fellow 1SG get relieved for their unethical decision-making.

As a 1SG in a Brigade Support Battalion (BSB), I worked with a wide demographic of Soldiers, both male and female. Every unit within the BSB had a female/male mix, but all First Sergeants were male. As First Sergeants, we were entrusted to treat every Soldier with the same respect and leadership throughout the unit. The authority and intrinsic respect given to a 1SG can give some (1SGs) a type of god-complex. They may begin to think as if they are above the law. I will discuss the

unethical choices two 1SGs working in the BSB made while serving in their positions. For privacy reason, I will refer to the two as 1SG One and 1SG Two.

1SG One

1SG One was a young 1SG in both age and rank when compared to the average 1SG. He was a hard-charging Soldier and very passionate about being a 1SG. Frocked to 1SG as a Sergeant First Class promotable, he was a junior 1SG, but performed like a senior. Lastly, I think it is important to mention that 1SG one was married with children. The unethical decisions he made was surprising considering his marital status.

In order to be effective as a 1SG, one must give 110% of their time and effort to the unit. When given so much time and effort, many times the family and marriage suffers. 1SG one, like many others before him, was experiencing marriage problem due to his job. The company on the other hand was performing extremely well, mostly due to the efforts put forth by the 1SG. Due to his marriage problems, he made his first unethical and immoral decision to have an affair on his wife. With the affair going on he had to divide his time between the unit, his family, and his mistress. Because of his selfishness, the unit and his family were the ones that suffered the most.

First Sergeant One's wife suspected that he was having an affair; therefore, she enlisted the help of the battalion chain of command. The accusation was that he was having an affair with an officer working in the Battalion Headquarters. The Battalion Commander ordered a 15-6 investigation to get to the bottom of the accusations being made. This issue had the potential to affect the career of an officer and senior enlisted member within the Battalion. The 15-6 Officer was very thorough and turned up more

information than anyone expected. The accusation of the affair with the officer was true, but in addition, another affair was taking place as well, but this time with one his Soldiers.

A Soldier on the fast track to becoming a Sergeant Major brought his career to a screeching halt based upon two unethical decisions. The first action that took place was the immediate removal from the position of 1SG. 1SG One later received a field grade article 15 from the Brigade Commander and removed him from the promotion-standing list. The results of his punishment in my opinion were nothing when compared to the state in which he left his company. The Unit eventually recovered as units do, but the scares of 1SG One's actions would remain for quite some time.

1SG Two

1SG Two was completely the opposite of 1SG one. He had more time in grade and service than any Master Sergeant or First Sergeant in the entire battalion. Prior to serving as First Sergeant, 1SG Two served in a couple of NCOIC staff positions. He received his appointment to 1SG by default. The entire Division was going through transformation and the availability of qualified Master Sergeants or even Sergeants First Class was low. When called upon to serve as a 1SG, it was merely because there was no one else to choose. It left the Battalion CSM in a position where he had to give him a shot or go without a 1SG. 1SG Two received an opportunity he most likely would have never gotten otherwise.

Upon taking over as 1SG, one could quickly see the command climate of the unit was low. He told his commander to concern himself with the officers of the unit and he would care for the enlisted. The commander, lacking leadership skills himself, agreed and instantly divided the unit. 1SG Two restructured his orderly room with all females

with the exception of one male 42L administration specialist he had to take. He quickly established an unprofessional atmosphere with his orderly room clerks whereby they all acted more like good friends than professional Soldiers. The Soldiers laughed and joked with the 1SG in ways considered disrespectful in my opinion.

The 1SG, because of his lackadaisical attitude, felt as if he could be friendlier with the female Soldiers than any leader should become with their Soldiers. He would often get “touchy-feely” in a way that often made the females in the unit uncomfortable. Finally, while deployed to Iraq, one of his Soldiers had enough. During a P.T. session, 1SG Two was assisting a female Soldier with her pull-up exercise. Normally, when assisting someone with pull-ups, the assistant will hold the feet of the person performing the exercise and push up on them while the exerciser tries to pull up. This day the 1SG decided he would assist the Soldier by grabbing her by her thighs just under her buttocks. The Soldier instantly became upset, said nothing to the 1SG, and filed a sexual harassment complaint. During an investigation, several other females in the unit came forward with allegations of inappropriate touching and unwanted sexual advances. The investigations that followed did not result in charges against the 1SG, but it was enough to have him removed from his position.

Conclusion

The actions of the two 1SGs were not only unethical, but also immoral. Adultery or attempt at it is wrong for any person, but the two 1SG did it without regard for their unit. They were only thinking of themselves and did not consider the affect it would have on their family and the unit. The company 1SG is the standard-bearer of the unit and he must “be, know, and do” the standard 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Soldiers trust

him and look to him for his wisdom, guidance, and comfort; much like a child does their mother. It takes a lot for a mother to lose the trust of her child, but a 1SG can lose the trust of all of his Soldiers by making just one unethical decision.