

Running head: RANK AND PERSONAL GAIN

Rank and Personal Gain  
United States Sergeant Major Academy  
SGM Stephen Darnell Tillman  
11 December 2006  
Class 57  
M04, #660

### Abstract

As leaders we are entrusted with the development and lives of our subordinates. Leaders have to make ethical decisions everyday. Problems arrive when they can't distinguish between personal and professional issues. I witness several leaders during my deployments to OIF 1 and OIF 2 having to deal with compromising situations. They had to deal with these situations because of lapses in their ethical decision making process. The problems are traced to the following areas, improper relationships, government property, and treatment of soldiers. These situations are easily fixed by applying the army values and some professionalism.

## Rank and Personal Gain

When a leader makes a poor ethical decision for personal gain their unit usually suffers in some way. When I say leaders I'm talking about officers and NCOs. If a relationship compromises, or appear to compromise, the integrity of supervisory authority or the chain of command action will be taken. The leader may have to be replaced or soldiers may start to lose faith in chain of command. The leader who chooses to have an improper relationship (especially in war) causes problems down to the lowest ranking soldier. The improper relationship can be sexual, business, or of different ranks in nature. The improper sexual relationship makes the most trouble in a unit. Soldiers view improper relationships from several perspectives.

First they see a double standard that would result in punishment for them if they did the same thing. Secondly, they always accuse the lower ranking individual of receiving special favors. In this situation, it doesn't matter whether it's true; it's the perception that's counts. Thirdly, soldiers may say, "If they can do it so can I". Finally, leaders may be putting themselves in a position to be blackmailed. I personally have had to deal with several of these situations while in Iraq as a First Sergeant. I confronted the individuals, professionally, and the situations were resolved. The damage to the soldiers' confidence in their chain of command was not so easily fixed. When leaders are put in this type of ethical dilemma they need to think about professionalism and army values. When a leader makes a choice between being a professional leader and personal gain, professionalism must be chosen. Soldiers have an innate ability to determine which of their leaders are real and who is taking advantage of their rank. We as leaders must keep the soldiers' faith or the mission will suffer. Leaders should seek to prevent inappropriate or unprofessional relationships through proper training and leadership by example. I do not know if this is a problem the army can stop. Soldiers are human and humans make errors in judgment. Senior leaders must show discipline and professionalism and set the example.

### Rank and Personal Gain

Another ethical problem in the army is stealing government property for personal gain. Soldiers with substantial rank or position are abusing the army's supply system for personal gain. When I mention abuse I'm not talking about pens or pencils. I'm talking about supply items of a more expensive nature. Whenever someone steals items from the supply system somebody suffers. A soldier or unit somewhere may be short on supplies needed to accomplish their mission in peacetime or war. Some leaders know the system so well that they can order things and make them disappear from the books.

We as taxpayers are only stealing from ourselves. This only contributes to budgeting problems and shortages. Army leaders are charge with the responsibility of accounting for and securing government property. When soldiers see their supervisors appropriate supplies or are told to appropriate supplies illegally. Their supervisors are sending the wrong message to soldiers. Soldiers stealing something small as pens or pencils could possibly lead to stealing laptops. This message could possibly lead to soldiers stealing from citizens in countries where we are fighting. This could possibly damage the army's reputation in the eyes of the host country and the American public.

Soldiers have abused government credit cards, since they have been inducted in the supply system. I know of a supply sergeant who used the company credit card to furnish her house. The sergeant also bought items for friends and family. The supply sergeant eventually was caught when the comptroller came to do an audit. The sergeant was court martial, and discharged from the military with a dishonorable discharge.

When confronted with ethical dilemmas involving government property. Leaders only need to follow the leadership principles of set the example, and be responsible for your actions. Leaders have to make the right choice or they have serious character flaws.

### Rank and Personal Gain

The next ethical issue is leader's interaction with soldiers. Leaders cannot present anything other than a professional image when dealing with their subordinates. Once the line of professionalism is crossed the line of respect will follow later. In my career, I have seen First Sergeants hold personal grudges against soldiers who they out rank by far. I have seen commanders show favoritism to soldiers.

When leaders are in positions of power like these they exercise personal responsibility. They have to view issues in terms of professional and personal. They have the power to affect a soldier career positively or negatively. Leaders are in position to promote or demote soldiers. They should not take these responsibilities lightly. It is an honor not a right to lead soldiers. Soldiers have a right to expect great leadership from their leaders. Soldiers only ask to be treated equally and fair. Soldiers respect and trust even the meanest of leaders as long as they treat everyone equally. Soldiers know we're not perfect but they expect fairness nothing more. They have joined the army to defend their country not defend themselves from their leaders.

During my tours in Iraq I have had soldiers approach me for advice because they were being coerced sexually. I have had soldiers ask for advice because they were receiving punishment for offenses other soldiers had committed but only they were going to be punished. I have seen leaders make soldiers change leave dates for their personal gain. Their leaders handled all of these situations in an unacceptable manner. They handled these situations in an unacceptable manner because they put their personal feelings before professionalism.

In conclusion I have mentioned some of the ethical problems that I think are affecting the army today. These problems are in the areas of improper relationships, government property, and equitable treatment amongst Soldiers. Leaders have to behave professionally and not personally. Adhere to the army values they can fix these ethical situations.