

done within the system, if it can't be done legally and ethically, then it doesn't need to be done.

Most of all we need to teach them not to be shamed into doing something because they are trying to live up to the image of an NCO who *always, always* gets it done, right or wrong.

The atmosphere in the Army, from corps down to sections, also has a lot to do with what kinds of decisions our NCOs make daily. Units that live by the strictest of "Can Do" codes and don't allow failure or an NCO to say "no," have

I can remember in a recent assignment, being asked to find a ladder when no ladders could be found. The "NCOs Make It Happen" line was tacked on somewhere at the end of the request for me to find one. When I did find one through a buddy of mine, my boss gave me a wink and knowing smile and said, "Sarge, I don't even want to know where you got it."

NCOs living in fear rather than growing.

We must refuse to promote a mindset and philosophy that goes against the honor, honesty and commitment to high ideals the NCO Corps should stand for. We must realize, finally, that every unethical act done by one of us diminishes all of us.

We ought to work to develop an environment where NCOs can "fail," or where the mission is accomplished, but the "Can Do" attitude is replaced by the "Can Do, But Do It the Right Way" attitude.

Being the backbone of the Army means having the "backbone" to recognize that some things are "Officer Business," some things are "NCO Business," and some things are "Nobody's Business." ■

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From the Publisher...

'Magic' Standards and The East German Visitor

It's self-evident in our Army that leaders who set and enforce high standards also take the lead in the race to build and sustain combat ready units. *Spend five minutes in a unit and you will know if leaders are setting the example, establishing and enforcing high standards and holding all concerned accountable.*

Leaders in our Army measure their performance and the performance of others in terms of standards. We urge junior leaders and soldiers to "perform to standard" and "train to standard." Leaders are apt to compliment and counsel soldiers, other leaders and units by saying they performed or did not perform to standard. In fact, we talk about it so much we run the risk of forgetting that the habit of always performing to standard is a *power packed* habit.

A short anecdote illustrates the point.

In the summer of 1991, the Sergeants Major Academy hosted a German Forces Noncommissioned Officer conference. One of the conferees, a former East German Army Sergeant Major, spoke to students in the resident Sergeants Major Course.

He told us we were the first American soldiers he had met or seen in over 19 years of military service. He talked about the East German Army, his new job as a Bundeswehr Master Sergeant, and answered student questions. Most of our questions reflected our interest in hearing what a former adversary thought of us and our Army.

The final question came from a Sergeants Major Course student who asked our guest what his leaders told him about the morale and discipline of American soldiers. The former East German Sergeant Major said all East German soldiers

believed that American morale and discipline were poor and the only thing holding American soldiers in their units was the threat of severe punishment.

Then he startled all of us with the following statement.

"I see now that is not true. As I sit here in front of you, I can see you are professional. You look physically fit. You have good haircuts, neat uniforms, polished boots and excellent military bearing. Your questions are good. Your military knowledge and understanding of important things happening in the rest of the world are impressive. *I am struck by the high standards practiced by the sergeants in your armed forces. I will take these standards back with me to my place of duty in the former East and try to make them work there.*

Amazing! *In less than 45 minutes of exposure to a group of American Noncommissioned Officers, our guest abandoned 19 years of prejudice toward American soldiers.*

What happened? He came face-to-face with a corps of professionals who made it a day-to-day habit to set personal examples in matters of *character, courage, commitment, competence and candor*. The confidence and competence was evident. The confrontation produced a significant emotional event for our visitor. The result was a change of attitude; one that wiped out 19 years of accumulated half truths.

Those of us who attended that lecture, left the auditorium feeling much better about ourselves and our Army. We also came away from the experience with the born-again belief that any tool which can tear down 19 years of prejudice in less than 45 minutes is worth carrying around in a leader's rucksack.

Establish, practice and enforce high standards. Magic! ■