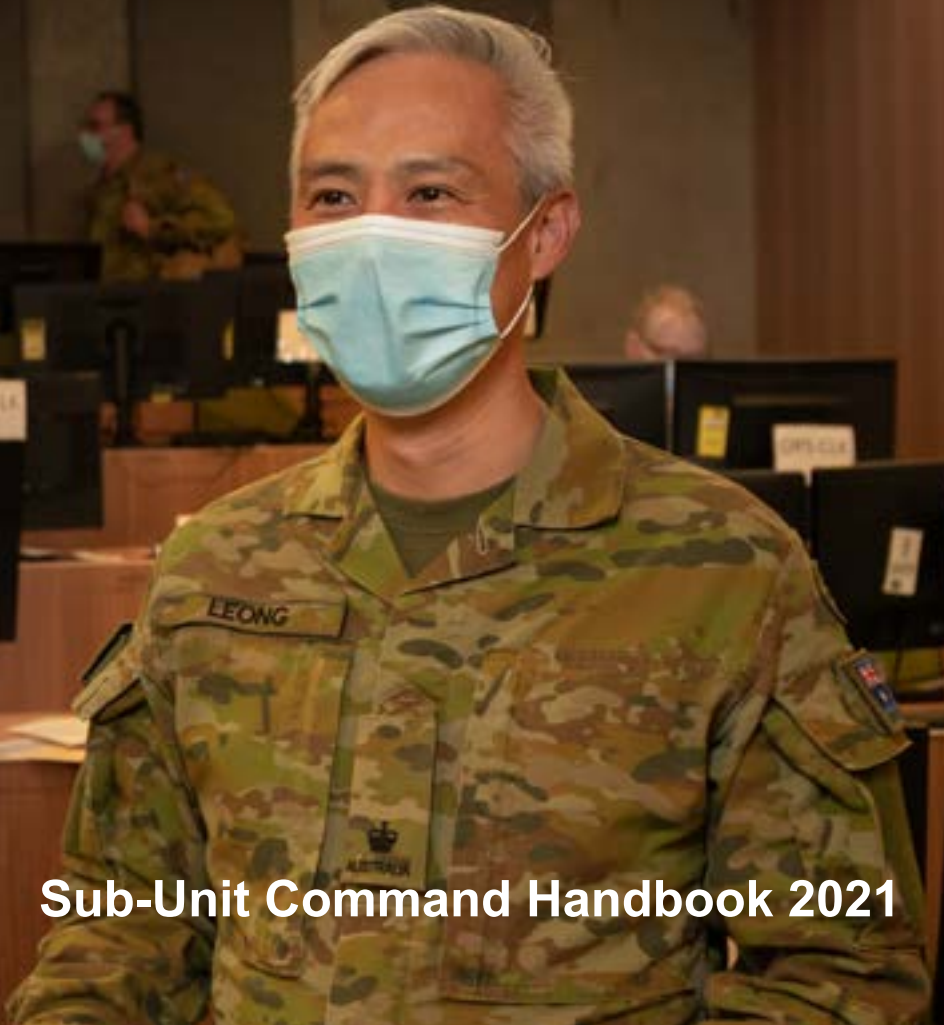




# Army



## Sub-Unit Command Handbook 2021

*Serving our Nation*

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## Disclaimer

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# Introduction

The tips and advice contained in this handbook were from observations offered by officers commanding (OCs) and sergeants-major (SMs) throughout the Australian Army over numerous years. They have given their thoughts and tips to guide the sub-unit command team in their new roles in an effort to avoid the mistakes of the past. All the tips contained in this handbook have come from experiences in barracks, on operations and in training.

As expected, many of the observations made by the OCs and the SMs are similar. These observations have been merged into tips throughout this handbook. Where the responses are unique, the handbook indicates which appointment made the observation.

In preparing this 2021 version of the handbook, currently serving OCs and SMs were asked to review the 2016 Edition of the Sub-Unit Commander's Handbook and provide feedback regarding their own experiences, tips and lessons learnt during their posting. Many of the original comments from previous versions have remained in this update, so readers should keep in mind the context in which previous comments were made. It is also important to acknowledge the context of the FORGEN cycle. Some OCs made comments relative to their experience in the FORGEN cycle during a time when the Australian Army was heavily committed to operations, whereas some OCs managed enabler units that are continually READY.

Many OCs and SMs have mentioned there is no absolute right way to fulfil a command position within a sub-unit; however, understanding what has worked for others is a great way to 'get ahead of the curve ball' and start considering plans, actions and leadership methods that are going to work for you and your team in your specific sub-unit.



## Part I: Preparation for Sub-Unit Command

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Once notified of your appointment, there are many things you can do before your posting takes effect that will make your life easier from day one. Good preparation means readying yourself to ‘hit the ground running.’ It means having a good handover, good advisors and mentors on-tap. It means being up-to-date with your AIRN and other personal administration, being physically fit and well, and having, ideally, taken a minimum of two weeks leave prior to taking command to ‘recharge’. You will need to be settled into your new home life, and sort out domestic issues so that there is little to distract you from the task at hand. Details of how you can effectively prepare are provided in this chapter.

### Determine your command style

By the time you become an OC or SM, you have had more than a decade in uniform to observe who you want to emulate and who you do not want to be, and to model your behaviour appropriately.

Remember, when you are tired and stressed you will naturally resort to your true self. It is very important to practice Authentic Leadership as your people will respond far better to a leader with Emotional Intelligence, and who makes ethically sound decisions and demonstrates professional mastery.

In the lead-up to your posting, reflect on your own style and that of previous commanders. Consciously focus on identifying the positive and negative aspects of previous OCs/SMs; what worked and what did not. Read about leadership. For example, read the leadership lessons on the AL website. Be honest with the way you naturally command, identify the values that are important to you, and determine what you want to achieve. Whatever this is, advice from one OC is, “Part of being a good leader is knowing when to follow, and the best leaders know when to assume each of the two”.

*Take time to consider the implications of command and what it involves. It may sound weird but I believe that quiet time with a book and glass of wine to consider and plan your approach to command and what your personal style is going to be based on (i.e. education / discipline / physical leadership / morality / conditioning) is important. It can be a difficult transition to sub-unit command where, as an OC, you need to be confident in yourself and ability before you start.*

*It begins with a 'drink from the fire hose'. No matter how good the handover – I had a good one – the first few weeks will still feel like trying to drink from the proverbial fire hose. No matter how well prepared you are, there is a big difference between reading about it or being briefed about it, and living it.*

Write your command philosophy in order to commit to it. Brief your philosophy to your subordinates. You would have put time and effort into writing your command philosophy on an all-corps course; however, if you do not share this work with your soldiers you are missing a golden opportunity to explain what sort of leader you are and what you expect of unit members. Share your command philosophy with your CO as well. This is a great way to show your CO the way you will manage one of their sub-units. You may even want to consider a joint command statement (OC/SM) in order to show leadership unity. Consider keeping your command philosophy as a short document with a very short list of priorities that can be easily recited and known by the unit for maximum impact. "No one reads 10 pages of fancy words and remembers it."

## **Conduct your handover in person**

Conducting a thorough handover in person is critical to be able to commence working effectively straight away. The organisational efficiencies gained by personal handovers justify the allocation of funding to do so. If you are new to your gaining location, not only will a face-to-face handover enable you to march in as prepared as possible for the job, it will also help you familiarise yourself with a new city.

An on-site handover allows the incoming member to mentally prepare for and understand the work environment, including the personalities and the day-to-day rhythm of the new unit. It allows discussion of "frustrations/realities in detail", the introduction to key personnel, a full

SCA handover and knowledge of the location and contents of records, files and historical reporting, which are important to capture early. A handover is also time to discuss "unit tempo and immediate commitments [as well as] the unit and higher formation programs" to establish time management strategies. From this moment, it is also a good idea to be carbon copied into new email correspondence to maintain the link and keep abreast of issues. An accompanying written handover is also essential as it allows the new member to refer back to items that may otherwise be forgotten. Handover information should be as thorough as possible with more than just personnel, and include a wide range of other essential information such as equipment serviceability and so on.

"Insist on decent handover notes" said one OC. "If in doubt - ask and don't die wondering."

Any good departing OC will pass on a comprehensive HOTO document covering a range of topics that will help you tackle the immediate issues as well as help shape your planning. Request a copy of the HOTO document before a face to face visit so that you have time to digest the most important factors and be prepared to ask more informed questions. It is a good idea to keep updating this HOTO documents as you progress through your posting. This will ensure the information you think of is not forgotten and will save you a lot of time at the end of your tenure. Make sure the document you handover to the next OC sets them up for success.

*A detailed HOTO is critical; without it small issues could quickly escalate.*

*Speak with the incumbent OC in his Company and see how he runs the show - listen to his successes and failures. Look at the culture and assess what lessons and 'pearls of wisdom' are passed on. Make an assessment on what is honest and what is not.*

## **Research your new job**

Conducting additional research into your new job and unit will reduce the initial workload and provide you with the underpinning knowledge needed to keep pace with your peers and subordinates. Delve into unit structure, current directives, SOPs, training programs and post

activity/exercise reports. Read key sub-unit documentation such as manning and equipment lists. If you do not already know, get to know the capabilities that you will be commanding.

*Before taking the position as an SM it is imperative that you liaise with your OC. This liaison allows you to build a framework before you even step into the role. In my experience you should be at a point in your career where you can manage your mental and physical preparedness to a very high standard; this will allow you to focus on your soldiers while not letting your own standards fall.*

Prepare your draft command philosophy, directives and induction brief before posting in as it will keep you ahead of the workload. Most importantly, make sure this documentation is based upon your new CO's guidance so that your directives nests with your CO's. Your handover provides you with sufficient understanding of the tempo and current practices of your gaining unit and sub-unit to prepare your weekly timetable for implementation.

Although there is plenty you can do to prepare for your sub-unit command posting, there are other things for which you cannot. For example, one OC commented, "Don't stress about manning or capability issues before you have the ability to effect change. It just wastes time and effort." Before marching in, however, you can review the unit establishment and learn as much as possible about all personnel under your command. A SM said that "training provided me with all the tools; however, you are never fully prepared, and when you think you have seen it all, something new comes along."

Study the technical knowledge requirements for current tasks and this will enable you to understand who to task for what. Additionally, you will be able to "identify new professional development opportunities for staff groups". Note that in more complex organisations, you may have a greater span of responsibilities for tasking. Additionally, revisit your own basic soldier skills such as weapons drills and carriage and other specific skills relevant to your posting. This will help ensure you are able to lead by example right from the start.

Take time to understanding how the Manual of Army Employments (MAE) works for each ECN that you are in control of. This will allow you

to not only converse with them on their level but give you an indication of how to plot career progression, give advice, report effectively etc. This is conversely appropriate for being able to articulate your ECN or specialisation to those who report on you.

[http://drnet/Army/DWMA/Manual\\_of\\_Army\\_Employments/Pages/Manual-of-Army-Employment.aspx](http://drnet/Army/DWMA/Manual_of_Army_Employments/Pages/Manual-of-Army-Employment.aspx)

## **Establish relationships and gain advice**

There are a wide variety of individuals in various positions and locations that you can talk to who will help prepare you for your new role. Establish communications with the principal positions in your gaining unit, the CO, RSM, 2IC, OPSO as well as your fellow OCs. It is also important to establish communications with the senior soldiers within the new sub-unit, inclusive of subject matter experts. This will ensure "a solid start state for the year and [agreement] on the way forward". Communication with all of these individuals enables the new OC to formulate their own plan for the year and implement workable strategies from others' experience.

*I used examples of my OCs and a very good relationship I developed with two of my SSMs in shaping how I approached the job of OC. Both those soldiers continue to be both sounding boards and friends to this day, and I feel the guidance given by the senior SGT and SSMs is invaluable in developing how you approach commanding your unit.*

*The OC may have other Warrants Officers in their sub-unit, but they only have one SM. Seek information from other sources but the SM is your sounding board.*

Access trusted mentors such as previous OCs with whom you have a good rapport and other serving and retired unit and sub-unit commanders from within and outside your unit. Make the most of All Corps Maj Course (ACMC) as it will help you meet and network with many of your peers, which will assist you to foster good relationships with OCs across your location. Get to know the other OCs in the gaining unit before posting in as this can set the conditions for constructive relationships between the sub-units in addition to familiarisation with the unit's environment.



If you have previously worked in/with the unit, you may already have a “feel for the organisation”. You may also have contacts within the unit from whom you can gain further familiarisation. One member noted that they were able to converse with a number of individuals in the gaining unit that they “had worked [in] previously and requested honest appraisals of what was working and what needed addressing”. This approach has merit under certain circumstances, and it must be done with professionalism and great care to avoid undermining the current chain of command. It should be carried out with the incumbent, and the individuals with whom you speak must be sufficiently trustworthy to not relay details of any potentially sensitive issues discussed.

In certain circumstances the diggers in your sub-unit may also provide insights on the leadership required. It is too easy to forget what it is like to be near the bottom of the rank structure. You may have the opportunity to speak to soldiers about their thoughts and views on leadership, what they want from an OC and the things they expect an OC to achieve. An OC who was able to do this said, “I purposely asked outside my unit and corps so that a technical bias wasn’t in their response”. Another OC recommended OC Hours with soldiers with no other SGTs or PLCOMD present. This demonstrates transparency to and with that rank group. They can also ask you or advise you on training matters, morale etc. Additionally, look at what soldiers actually have to say within the Army Lessons Integration and Analysis System or send an RFI to [army.lessons@defence.gov.au](mailto:army.lessons@defence.gov.au) with the details of the specific information you are seeking. There is also a wealth of observations and other information such as leadership lessons publications available on the AL website.

The advice you gain from all sources will enable you to ponder the challenges sub-unit command (SUC) will pose, prepare mentally for your new role, shape realistic expectations within your sub-unit and learn from others’ experiences and tips both before and during your tenure.

## Corporate governance

One of the common problems new OCs encountered was their lack of preparation for the ‘flood’ of governance requirements, and a lack

of knowledge of applicable policies and/or legislation which is not provided on ACMC. Even though your unit HQ will be your “safety net”, a lack of experience in corporate governance particularly affects OCs of independent or remote sub-units. Use the handover and other information sources to investigate what you need to know then set about learning before you post in.

ACMC provides you with general knowledge of SUC, not experience. Furthermore, it does not give you all of the information you need. It is your responsibility to review that information and further prepare for your sub-unit command posting. For example, one OC suggested that practicing “a mock trial was essential. My first SUBSA trial was within months of taking up their appointment”. Another posted to a training establishment commented that prior understanding of the “issues and difficulties associated with trainees made their management considerably easier”. Yet another suggested that apart from preparatory reading, the gaining OC should return to look at all their past work and AARs as “they provide the real life lessons you have learned and combined with the reading, give you a solid base to start from”.

Learn about the myriad of regulatory compliance requirements a sub-unit commander has to be aware of and complete the relevant corporate governance courses such as WHS which are available on Campus. Learn systems such as AIMS, ACMS and BMS. Completing these courses, gaining access and training to relevant IT will save you time during the initial phase of your new posting. Take the time to gain access to and explore the units Objective file structure, ensure PMKeys details are correct for reporting and update your details in the Corporate Directory. You need to set a good example in these areas so that other do likewise.

*Understand your 2IC's capacity and understanding of corporate governance. You may need to mentor them initially to ensure that obligations are met.*

Protective security is an organised system of defensive measures to counter security threats and vulnerabilities and includes physical, personnel and information security (including communications security) and is a critical force protection capability. The protection of accountable communications security material is critical to the national

security of Australia. For units with communications security accounts, the commanding officer assumes the responsibility of the appointing authority for these accounts. These accounts are managed by the communications security account manager. You should be familiar with the security requirements for accountable communications security material as detailed in the Defence Communications Security Accounting and Management Manual.

## Unit welfare boards

Unit welfare boards provide a great opportunity to gain appropriate support for your members. Make sure you discuss individual welfare issues during your HOTO so that you are thoroughly prepared for your first unit welfare board. Get to know your soldiers, their issues and their desired outcomes. This will enable you to go to the UWB with an appropriate COA in mind.

An individual welfare board is a scalable option when any concern is raised. You do not have to wait for a UWB to call an IWB where the member's welfare is addressed.

## Time management

One OC advised, "Have a personal organisation system already in place, whether you use an electronic diary, a desk top diary, Outlook calendar, or some other system. There is no time to test out personal organisation systems once you are in the job. From the moment you take over you need to be able to keep track of appointments, meetings, tasks - especially due dates for all the tasks you delegate."

## Physical fitness and stamina

*It is important for a number of reasons to maintain your fitness during your time in command. The health effects, not only physically but mentally, are well documented and during the high tempo and stress often of SUC, you can avoid or skip PT either with the unit or in your own time. I would strongly warn against this as it is a great outlet. On top of which it is amazing what you learn doing PT with the soldiers and junior officers, as well as what they will tell you at times.*

The degree of physical fitness required for the job depends upon the particular demands. Some require extreme fitness/battle fitness while others require little more than to participate in PT and pass the BFA and PESA. However, to be more than physically fit for the job and outlasting your soldiers not only sets an example that subordinates can respect, it builds the physical stamina which is required for the long hours that come with SUC. Hence, make sure that you are more than fit enough before you post into SUC and retain this fitness throughout your posting.

## Publications

In terms of the experience itself, some felt there is nothing in a book which can prepare you for doing this job. However there is a plethora of reading materials available which will provide specific and general knowledge that would be beneficial. These reading materials include military documentation and a range of publications from other sources, as detailed below.

**Military documentation, policy and information.** Current sub-unit commanders most commonly noted the importance of preparing for the unit itself by reading a range of documentation at unit, brigade and Army level, including:

- **Unit level:** CO's preparedness directives and OPLAN, standing orders, SOPs, METLs, Unit Entitlement (especially with Beersheba), directives on Sharepoint/unit websites
- **Brigade:** preparedness directives, standing orders, SOPs
- **Army:** CA's preparedness directives, Army In Motion, Good Soldiering and Accelerated Warfare and understand COMD FORCOMD's priorities of OPGEN, FORTTRANS, FORMOD
- **Policy:** unacceptable behaviour, separation notices and terminations, Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office information, discipline, the administrative warning processes, ROG, and the DFDA (in particular SUBSA). Be familiar with:

- Army Dress Manual
- Discipline Officer Manual
- Summary Discipline Manual
- Superior Tribunal Manual
- DFDA Law Manual
- Overview of the Australian Military Discipline System
- The Australian Defence Force Discipline System (New Member's introduction)
- Commander's Guide to Discipline Commander's Guide to Punishment.
- **Doctrine:** refresh your knowledge of doctrine (both Joint and Army) relevant to your sub-unit through to section level so you know what to expect of yourself and others; examples include LWP-G 7-0 Training and Education, corps and unit doctrine and weapons doctrine, and logistic OCs are advised to review doctrine of the corps to be supported to ensure conversance with terminology, specialist equipment and acronyms.
- **Other military sources:** Army magazines and journals, AL's Sub-unit and unit command lessons learnt, and the US production 'The Leaders Smartbook'.

*I studied my job continually, both doctrinally as well as within historical and modern sources of tactical action and leadership literature that could help me to develop myself and my mind for the task.*

*Consider reading non-military leadership material as well. Personnel are our greatest asset therefore it makes sense to invest time into numerous sources of information that promotes effective leadership.*

**More officer sources.** Current sub-unit commanders recommended a wide range of other publications, both general interest and specific titles, to mentally prepare new SUC for the job. General areas of interest include basic Australian military history; military examples of Wellington, Lee and Hausser; modern management and motivation;

and perspectives on leadership provided by Shackleton and Dr Derek Ambrose. Specific titles are listed below.

- MAJGEN F.A. McLachlan, *What is Modern Military Leadership?*
- Nate Allen and Tony Burgess, *Taking the Guidon*
- Marcus Aurelius, *Mediations*
- Terry Brighton, *Hell Riders*
- David Cameron, *Gallipoli*
- Col. Dandridge M. Malone USA (Ret.), *Small Unit Leadership*
- Martin Gilbert Churchill, *The Power of Words*
- Dave Grossman, *On Killing*
- David Hackworth, *About Face*
- J. Heller, *Catch 22*
- Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
- P Hennessey, *The Junior Officers' Reading Club: Killing Time and Fighting Wars*
- Elburt Hubbard, *Message to Garcia*
- S. Jary, *18 Platoon*
- JE and HW Kaufman, *Hitler's Blitzkrieg Campaigns*
- C. M. Mullaney, *The Unforgiving Minute: A Soldier's Education*
- H. Moore and J. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once and Young*
- A. Myrer, *Once an Eagle*
- P. Ryan, *How I won the War*
- G. Allcott, *How to be a Productivity Ninja*
- R. Ashkenas and B Manville, *Harvard Business Review Leader's Handbook*
- J.P. Cotter, *Leading Change*
- B. Posner and J.M. Kouzes, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose it, Why people Demand it*



**More SM sources.** Be conversant with Defence Instructions pertaining to DFDA issues and drug and alcohol testing. They are important, as are ASOD, the Defence Law Manual, the Ceremonial manual and the Drill pam. One SM advised future SMs to be familiar with welfare policies, as the level of involvement in this aspect surprised him. Other books mentioned are provided below.

- Peter Blaber, *The Mission, the Men and Me*
- Simon Sinek, *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action*
- Simon Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't*
- Donald Rumsfeld, *Rumsfeld's Rules*
- David Marquet, *Turn the ship around*
- Brian Tracy, *Eat That Frog!: 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time*
- Colin Powell, *It Worked for Me: In Life and Leader*



## Part II: Getting Established

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*Don't try and change the world in the first week. Read PARs and, most importantly, ask your CO what they want to achieve for the unit! Then crack on.*

### **Advice for getting started**

#### **Start early**

Arrive at the unit early (some suggest at least a week) to conduct your march-in administration and organise IT systems before the remainder of the sub-unit returns. This time will allow you to finalise documentation and catch up with any changes that have occurred over the leave period. This will also allow you to familiarise yourself with all extra-regimental appointments assigned to the sub-unit position. "Coupled with governance tasks, these also need close time management and planning."

*Make sure there is a command presence of the OC on day one. Ensure that the OC is back at work a few days prior to the soldiers to be ready to receive the Sqn back from leave. Being in the Sqn from day one allows you set the tone for the rest of the year. I have heard stories from colleagues that... had to march in a few weeks late and this had an impact on... what they wanted to occur.*

#### **Manage your time**

You will need to focus for long hours, especially in the first year. Be prepared to manage your time effectively so you can also remain fit and healthy, and retain the work-life balance that will be essential to maintain your mental focus and stamina. Take time to keep fit and eat meals away from your desk to give your brain a break. "Frequent the mess. This allows you to maintain the networks."

Where possible, do not take work home. This may be more difficult in your first year when long hours may be required to keep ahead of the work load. If you do have to use a DREAMS token at home, use it wisely and sparingly. Make your home life home and your work life work; reserve weekends for family / personal time.

*The key was understanding what was required of me and, where possible, sticking to a schedule of dealing with specific subjects at specific times during the week, plus an hour a day dealing with last minute issues and atrocities. Once I had the unit functioning the way I wanted it to then the hours lessened. In the second year I am having more fun and enjoying the experience a lot more.*

## Relationships

Be honest and develop trust with your headquarters. “You need to be honest in both your self-appraisal and in reporting/talking to higher command. The job requires a foundation of trust and that is built in truth. Anything else erodes that trust and will ultimately lead to greater casualties when the time to deploy arrives. This requires a conscious decision in today’s environment – but is necessary.

Build your relationship with key staff throughout the unit. “Having a good working relationship with the key RHQ staff and other OCs has been a must. Being able to informally find solutions to problems and seek honest advice has been key in keeping harmonious working relationships.” One OC particularly noted, “Establish a working rapport with RQMS and ASM of the unit. These two individuals are vital to your success in getting your equipment ready and supported for training, including SCA management as well as getting in loan stores to the unit. Use the Chief Clerk to discuss complex admin and encourage your 2IC to establish a close working relationship to ensure that admin advice is correct and is submitted to the correct level of detail to minimise resubmits.” Make an effort to create a good relationship with the OPSO. The OC-OPSO relationships can be very effective for sorting/de-conflicting issues before the CO needs to know about them.

Never forgo PT with your troops. It is where you find out the most about them, where they will often open up about themselves and their lives. PT and ‘leadership by walking around’ early in your tenure are key to building trust with all levels of your team.

For SMs, take the time at the beginning of your tenure to get to know the NCOs and soldiers within the sub-unit. Having a sound knowledge of each individual will put you in a position to give the best advice to the OC when considering

any decisions for a member. SMs should also make the time to get to know the other SMs and the RSM. They can support you, and the RSM will give you guidance when you are stuck. Develop strong reliable relationships with them. You will come across issues that are new, overwhelming, or complex and they will be a valuable resource of experience and ability.

## Issue clear direction

“Understand the CO’s intent and work the sub-unit toward this.” Issue the ‘rules of the road’ early in the year – your command philosophy, directives and induction brief. They require an understanding of your CO’s intent and how training links into METLs, and helps you remain “endstate focused”. Get advice from your SM before finalising and delivering these. This will ensure that you and your SM are in synch and are not only seen as one command team, but both have a vested interest in enforcing directives and driving the sub-unit toward your now common goals. By doing this it will ensure that your goals are achievable, especially from the perspective of building and mentoring junior soldiers and NCOs. One OC who proffered this advice said, “Getting a good battle rhythm was key for me to establish how I was going to achieve the daily/weekly/ monthly governance requirements as well as being able to build my troops into a cycle including rest and maintenance periods.”

Some OCs advise delivering command direction to your sub-unit as soon as possible after arrival to establish your clear intent right at the start. Establishing your direction and routine for the year will set the conditions for success by immediately beginning to build the team, and negating or reducing the need to undo poor practices. Others recommend you wait for a few weeks to “get a feel for” the sub-unit and unit. “I was in the seat for up to 3 weeks before I got the entire sub-unit together for my initial direction and presentation”, commented one OC. “This proved to be a good move in the end as I was able to adjust my guidance to fit within the COs intent and get a feel for where the Sqn was at.”

*The beginning of the year is going to be extremely busy, regardless of what part of the FORGEN cycle you find yourself in. Having your command directive and philosophy sorted means you can issue it right from the get-go, and manage the expectations of your junior commanders from the outset.*

Opinions also vary regarding who the OC should brief and when. One OC issued their command directive, and allowed sufficient time for the junior commanders to read and understand it, prior to confirming it verbally. Some OCs advise you to deliver your intent to the whole company whilst others suggest you should first brief your officers and senior NCOs, and let the chain of command provide relevant detail to soldiers. No matter which way you choose to do it, “speaking to all subordinates early with my intent was very important. In an age of internet, mobile phones and endless emails the message and its importance is easily lost unless it is passed verbally.”

For the SM, it is important to set and enforce a high standard with regards to dress, bearing and discipline; you must be beyond reproach. This will give the NCOs and soldiers clear guidelines of what you expect from them. Once this standard has been set, it cannot be allowed to slip, due to the very real risk that your creditability will be lost.

SMs need to set ‘ground rules’ for subordinates by briefing all members on what is expected of them in their rank and the consequences if they don’t perform to the required standard. Remember to remain objective and to keep an open mind when dealing with any disciplinary issue. Thoroughly understand the OC’s intent and make decisions within your remit and limits as discussed with the OC.

The SM-2IC relationship can be a really strong link for the sub-unit, they will have some overlap in their roles and they need to both understand the interplay between them. The 2IC needs to know that the SM is the right hand person and primary confidante, but that shouldn’t stop the 2IC from being able to contribute meaningfully.

*Attend and be actively involved in the mess. This is particularly important on a joint base. The relationships that are nurtured in these environments may prevent issues or more importantly lead to opportunities for exploitation. It will give you a mental break from the office and enable conversation with like-minded members in a social setting.*

## Initial planning

Although many suggest to “identify the areas where you can influence and change”, they also advise to avoid making significant changes at the start. “Accept that you will not be able to do everything that you want all at once - change and progress take time if they are to be enduring.” Additionally, at the start and throughout your posting, “ensure that your enthusiasm and drive to improve do not create unsustainable workloads for your key staff.”

*Don’t rapidly change things as soon as you take up the appointment. Many things were put in place for a reason that may be unknown to you at the time. Sit back and observe first, then consider whether things need to be tweaked.*

Initial planning requires “a clear understanding of the existing establishment, personnel, mission and tasks”. To assist, have “a folder with your Sqn nominal role, the COs OPLAN, Regt PDA and other appropriate documents with you. This allows you to quickly reference back to CO’s guidance or intent when planning and executing training.”

You may initially encounter shortfalls in doctrine and SOPs. One OC’s immediate action in the absence of doctrine or SOPs was to provide written direction. “This actually enhanced mission command as I never told them ‘how’ to complete a task, I just gave them the technical and regulatory references to complete it and work within. It also reinforced my standards and expectations”. If analysis determines the need for an SOP, such as call-out for SERCAT 5 DACC tasks, written directions could then be adapted to become SOPs.

## Initial training and development

One OC advises an initial CPX or similar activity to test and adjust your staff to your expectations. “Set your CCIR. Inform your staff of your planning and TASKORD / OPORD standards. Get them planning immediately through an internal CPX to ensure that they are aligned with you from the start.” Another OC conducted a section competition at the start of the year to get to know the standard of the soldiers. “It served as a valuable tool to measure the standard of soldiers, enabling commanders to focus training to areas of weakness.”

*First, [you need] a full understanding of what your units' position in the training cycle is and the direction from your CO [of] the endstate he/she expects from your unit for that year. Secondly, get to know your soldiers and your equipment. Without that, any training and development concept you have will achieve nothing.*

*It is best to build flexibility into training. "Do not fill your training program with your own activities and do not underestimate the impact of people being absent on courses, medically restricted or on leave. It can be easy to fall into the trap of trying to do too much. When your unit HQ or formation start to task you at short notice, life can become unnecessarily difficult if you have not built flexibility into your training program."*

The SM must be involved in and guide NCOs' weekly development training. It is good for SGTs to "work shop training and discipline" with the CSM to gain exposure and better prepare them for the future.

*If you identify something that is not at the required standard or is a safety related issue, stop it and fix it immediately. This sets the standard, acceptance tolerance and attitude toward safety that you want to maintain for your entire tenure.*

## **Shape your HQ**

Shape your HQ, making it sufficiently robust to achieve the required outcomes. You can do this by getting to know the personalities and capabilities of your key staff, clearly delineating roles and establishing routine.

Get to know your key staff. Establish a professional rapport with all of your key staff. As soon as you can, also meet with your team in a social setting and get to understand who they are away from the office. This may extend to dinner with partners and developing a non-ADF conversation outside of the work environment. As one OC noted, "I found having an officers and seniors outing in an informal setting helped to build teamwork and relationships early on which flows on throughout the year".

*Meet regularly as a command team (OC, 2IC and CSM), [and] develop a common goal and distribute the same message. The command team need to be on the same page or the rest falls away. Delegate! Delegate! Delegate! Do not try and do it all yourself and trust your team to do their tasks (set goals and provide realistic guidelines with suitable resources). Provide regular feedback and encouragement.*

Establish sub-unit HQ routines. It is important that your key staff remain informed across all areas both within the sub-unit and the unit itself. Establish time management routines, back briefing and prioritise "information flow according to CCIRs" within your sub-unit to overcome the challenge of successfully remaining informed.

## **Leadership not micromanagement**

At all times, carry yourself with confidence, be patient and respectful of others, and display keenness and professionalism. Lead from the front at every opportunity. Set a good example in everything you do. Maintain a sense of humour and be "firm, fair and friendly". With your junior personnel, you can then "be 'nose in' because you are interested, 'hands off' because you do not want to micro-manage". As one advised, "let them lead and don't treat them like rubbish".

## **Standards and consistency**

Set your standards and stick by them, holding all persons accountable to the standard you set. Be consistent in administrative and disciplinary decision making.

*Standards, standards, standards – and make sure they are high ones.*

## **Develop a strong OC-SM relationship**

Developing an effective command team between the OC and SM is paramount and needs to be established from the start. Set aside time early in the appointment to share thoughts and establish a command relationship. The OC should take this opportunity to provide guidance on their individual command philosophy and style, delineate and communicate roles and responsibilities and outline their vision for the sub-unit's direction. Then there should be a joint discussion on discipline, welfare, soldier career management and the resolution of issues that may arise. A consistent approach is essential to maintain unit discipline and cohesion.



*Be very clear where you stand as the OC. Allow the SM the ability to have closed-door conversations with you and take their concerns/advice on board. Remember that you make the decision, not them. Look after soldier welfare. Speak to the SM on a daily basis - if they are not coming to you with issues, find out why and work through it. Involve the SM in your planning processes... Come across as a team.*

Advice from an OC stated “I have a list of five things I need from a SM that I like to use:

1. Help me to understand the situation (start state, current state)
2. Help me to understand where we need to go (endstate)
3. Help me to understand how best to get there (method)
4. Help me to communicate our plan, both internally and externally (execute)
5. Help me to know how we are going and whether we need to change any of the above (feedback).

The first three are linked to the creation of the OC's vision and ensuring that the vision reflects reality. The SM is crucial to this, making sure that the big ideas I arrived with actually fit the organisation I am leading. Their interaction with the unit RSM (and potentially greater time served in the unit) may mean that their understanding of the CO's intent is initially better. Once the SM has helped create the OC's vision they need to assist in communicating this vision to the team and then reinforcing that message by being at the key points of friction, interpreting the OC's intent and advising team members. While doing this they will identify whether our plan remains fit for purpose, and if not advises on what modifications are required.”

Where possible, scheduling of career development courses (ACOTC, Subject courses) should be conducted at the beginning of the year for all unit staff. This will facilitate optimisation of available staff throughout the year, notionally maintaining between 80-90% of unit staff during

any particular period. Allowances for sickness, personal leave and attendance on other courses should also be taken into consideration. Early planning will also allow OCs to maximise staff attendance at the priority unit activities, whilst still managing professional development.

## **Clear expectations**

Give clear guidance on what you as an OC expect from your SM, what you expect them to do and what is outside of their role. As a number of OCs pointed out, establish clear expectations of how the sub-unit should be regimentally and allow mission command to work; in other words, “do not get in the SM lane”. This will ensure the command chain and management chain work together effectively.

## **Open communication**

Good two-way communication is absolutely essential; the OC and SM appointments are difficult roles and must work together. They must listen to each other and the SM must be involved in decision making from the start. If you “develop the habit of talking with the SM, they will get your ideas across and enacted, and shape you when you are off course”.

Equally, the SM needs to be open and honest when in discussion with the OC behind closed doors. “SMs need to have the moral courage to respectfully say ‘No, I think that is a bad idea’ when required and back the statement up with a well-structured reason.” An SM also said that they need to be mindful that they are only offering advice to the OC, as the OC ultimately has the final say. Whatever the outcome, the OC and SM move forward as a team.

## **Work together**

It is important to not only work together but being seen to work together, participate in PT and other unit activities. “Run together. March around together. Take a leap of faith and share a little ‘sensitive stuff’ - be frank about your personal thoughts and then about your duty bound approach. Ask what they think you should do ... do not shield them from the problems in higher HQ. Demand loyalty and make sure you give it to him/her.”

*Whenever you and the OC tour the area, you need to be seen as an impregnable team with strong support in both directions.*

Both the OC and SM should get to know each other out of work hours. This will allow them to get to know each other's personalities and establish some common ground. This will make it easier for them both to be able to openly discuss and share any ideas that they may have.

## **Personal and collective goal setting**

*You will most likely not achieve absolutely everything you wanted to achieve in your time as OC, however make sure that when you leave the sub-unit, leave knowing that you have done your best and know that you have left the unit in a better state than what it was when you marched in. If all OCs take this approach we are continually improving the sub-unit*

Current OCs detailed a variety of things that worked for goal setting as well as those that did not. They are as follows:

- Be patient, wait for opportunities to drive towards unit goals or achieve a vision.
- Focus on commanding and training the sub-unit for the current and future requirements..
- Involve key staff in goal setting. They then also have ownership.
- Be as specific as you can with goal setting. Include a desired endstate (and timeframe) to all aspirational goals.
- Set realistic goals, so that they can be achieved. That said, "the challenges of tempo and changing priorities will cause friction that restricts your ability to achieve everything". Encourage personal goal setting across ranks.
- Resist the urge to change for change's sake. Change what will injure or is unsafe, otherwise observe for a set period to get a feel for your team (30-60 days at least). Nothing frustrates soldiers more than change for change sake and another good idea from the OC.

- Set structured goals with a reasonable time frame.
- Encourage personal goal setting across ranks.
- Outline measures for success against goals and set triggers for when the unit and/or individuals dip below the standard.

*Squadron goal setting was shaped by my [experiences]. What that showed me was the expectation of the 'normal' training cycle and exposure to the requirements of the Chief of Army Capability and then Preparedness Directives. This was tempered by the over-arching guidance enforced by the ACMS resource management restrictions that necessitated a study of the CMETL requirements to achieve a readiness level, and shaping what could be achieved within the scope of allocated resources.*

*My personal goal setting focused on two areas – maintaining myself physically and mentally during my tenure, and developing my officers and SNCOs, and through them my soldiers, into better soldiers ready to deploy and win. My training program took care of this for me in the main, and my results would be what would set me up for my next assignment.*

## **Overcoming deficits in SUC preparation**

### **Handover deficits**

As discussed previously, not having a handover will result in an information deficit. If this is the case you may find yourself having a number of conversations with the previous OC/SM to rectify information shortfalls of various kinds.

### **Knowledge of unit business**

If encountering unfamiliar unit business is unavoidable, the resolution lies with your subject matter experts. "Being an equipment heavy sub-unit, I felt that my knowledge of maintenance and governance was lacking. There are a lot of documents you need to be across including the Technical Integrity Management Directives, Technical Integrity Management Plans, Unit Entitlement, Unit Health Report, etc and many other systems you need to check... including servicing boards, Non-Technical Inspections, etc. I had a chat to the Artificer Sergeant Major

in the first week I was here and received a brief on maintenance in the Regiment. This was very helpful.”

*I felt prepared coming in, and whilst I am still learning (as a professional always should), nothing has come up that either I or my team has not been able to deal with effectively. My advice is, don't assume you are ready – always look to learn something new, assess yourself honestly and don't be afraid of risk.*

## **Governance**

One OC noted they had lacked the time to conduct professional reading which may otherwise have assisted in understanding the required policy. “I ended up making time on a regular basis to ensure I was all over the required policy.” To overcome a lack of required governance knowledge, another OC used a subordinate subject matter expert. Another OC ensured that they scheduled regular time to deal with issues such as extra regimental governance appointments. Personnel issues can never be scheduled, and will always take your time, no matter how familiar you are with policies and procedures.

## **Pandemic Management / Flexible Working Arrangements for new OCs**

The COVID-19 crisis has dramatically changed the way we are now required to manage personnel, many of whom worked individually from home throughout long lockdown periods. Army units faced a situation where it made sense to disperse the workforce and work from home where possible. It is important to understand where opportunities can be gained as well as understand the potential costs for dispersing personnel. COVID-19 presented opportunities to prove that quality work can be completed from home which has now set the precedence for more flexible working arrangements where appropriate.



## Part III: Routines

### Work-life balance

*To date I have found this job to be one of the best for work- life balance. I know it is not replicated across all sub-unit commands; however, I have ensured the unit adheres to the principals of the 'Reset' Phase of the FORGEN cycle, and this includes myself as the commander. In addition, delegation of tasks and responsibilities is key whilst also controlling the good ideas fairies that enter your head and those of others.*

### Routine at work

Respondents agree that due to the demands of the job, maintaining work-life balance is difficult at times, but scheduling work tasks gives you the best chance of managing personal time. "Facilitate a constant, sustainable tempo with work/life balance but with flexibility to react to temporary changes in tempo". Although work-life balance is the ideal, another commented on the realities of the position. "The job is the priority and must be completed before people can rest. Experience, ability and competence determine how much rest people can get." Others comments indicate that the condition of the sub-unit when you march in and the initial competence of your staff are also factors. Suggestions and examples of how to achieve routines that work are provided in the following paragraphs.

### Establish routine

Plan your day and week to achieve balance where possible and do the same for the sub-unit. Doing this will enable you to allocate time for emails and critical admin (e.g. before work and after knock-off parade), time to observe and participate in training as well as conduct the many other necessary tasks whilst still adhering to a reasonable knock-off time (e.g. 1700 h) each day. Never sacrifice time with your teams to

do mundane admin that can be done in your time, you only get two years and if you are always in your office doing admin you are not doing your job.

*Don't hoard old work, the world of copy and paste can be helpful but keeping files and or documents for 'just in case I need them' is a waste of limited data storage and you may find they are now outdated. Make sure you have established an effective filing system in the sub-unit and that you can track the admin.*

Establishing routines does more than enabling the member and sub-unit to achieve balance. "Routine in barracks is a critical part of the cycle. It ensures the team knows what is occurring, when and in advance".

Unnecessary changes in tempo and routine do not help the unit. Establishing routine and realistically planning will provide a good chance of giving you and your sub-unit the necessary balance.

*Develop timings for returns on planning, training programs and allocate troops to tasks to achieve these. By having a FRAGO out NLT the 20th of the month prior, and ensuring Troop weekly training programs were in for approval two weeks prior, enabled both oversight of training details as well as ensuring the soldiers were aware of what was happening, when, where and with whom. It enabled planned reduced activity periods as well as surges in activity when required that could be compensated for with EKO's etc. In short – plan.*

## Start with PT

"Force yourself to start the day with PT", suggested one. "It is not only good for your sanity but to get to know your subordinates. After all, this is the best thing about being back in a unit and not in a staff role!" Another warned, "Don't turn the computer on before you go to PT".

## Priorities

Remember that just because someone has an issue that they think is of the highest priority does not make it your highest priority. Assess the situation and judge for yourself. Don't take on their panic, anxiety, or stress; have empathy for them but do not take it on as your own.

## SERCAT 5 personnel routines

"We developed a Tuesday Night Matrix that had all the admin, training and operational requirements on it. Also on the Matrix is a list of conferences about each of the topics on a regular basis. This way I could ensure that I was having regular oversight of all key admin and governance requirements."

A SERCAT 5 member observed it is important to schedule time and tasks to manage both a civilian and Army job: "I plan my schedule each week and nominate my time that I can apply to my SERCAT 5 role."

## High tempo jobs

An OC commented on the high tempo work of some unit members on ops. Strategies for managing fatigue for personnel in high tempo positions include having these personnel working in pairs, changing their work locations, visiting them on site, and taking an interest in what they do. "Fight battles at the higher level – leave them to do their job."

## Set the example

Whilst some say that it is the SUC team's job to work longer than anyone else, others say it is also their responsibility to set the example of work-life balance for others and give them guidelines to follow.

*I ensured that my platoon commanders knew my core hours to allow them to manage their time. I provided CCIRs and the methodology to pass that information, for example Pri 3 trainee hospital admission by text message, and Pri 1/2 via mobile. During a PL COMD's first command, I made myself available 24/7 to answer questions and provide support. I provided time boundaries after that to allow them to prioritise importance and to draw from their peers for answers.*

## Diary

Maintain one diary. Whether it be Outlook, hardcopy or phone. More than one will cause you to miss vital appointments or submissions which will cause you to lose credibility and confidence.



## **Mission command**

The significance of clear command direction/communication and/or the use of mission command with its inherent delegation were seen as key to work-life balance for many of the respondents. “The commander has to be aware of what is happening at all times and have the ability to manage and make effective decisions at any time. The most effective way to do this is to delegate and then get back-briefs to confirm that the task is achievable.” Along with clear direction and delegation was the need to vary the balance at times.

## **CO has ultimate control**

Ultimately, control of work-life balance does not lie solely in your hands; however, you can influence it. One OC states to “push your CO for a set battle rhythm and single lines for directives/tasking. If you let tasks flow to your company from all over BHQ / RHQ you will never get above the admin.” “As an OC in the current climate, be prepared to hit the ground running and do not stop. Rest periods are in the program, but expect only half the [rest] time your soldiers get. Your CO will expect you to give more and get more done. There is only one way to achieve this – sacrifice personal time to get your company squared away.” In other words, “Work when work is needed, and rest when you can. Quality leadership and quality training costs, so work your balance as best you can.”



## Part IV: Ready Now and Future Ready

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### *Maintaining unit focus*

#### **Motivation versus complacency**

A number of members in the reset phase stated that maintaining motivation was a challenge. One stated that meaningful activities help maintain focus during the reset routine. Additionally you need to maintain standards: be brilliant at the basics, look professional, act and speak professionally.

*Fortunately... we have 2-3 very meaningful projects this year, which keep the members of the unit motivated. It does mean that we are flat out during "RESET", but it keeps the soldiers engaged and motivated. It is a challenge balancing the requirements and intent of "RESET" when you still have real time tasks to conduct under time pressure.*

#### **JNCO ownership of training**

"The last 10 years or so of Operations has meant that JNCOs are not used to being given freedom of action in organising and undertaking their own training". Despite trying to instil a sense of ownership at the JNCO level, "they appear to have an expectation that higher HQ will control every part of their lives and have not grasped opportunities to influence or conduct training at their level."

#### **Change operational focus**

Some commanders are used to a continuous operational cycle in "what is perceived as a 'standard' training year" rather than adapting to the relevant phase of the FORGEN cycle. "There is risk that new commanders will fall back on the way they have always conducted training and this is not necessarily in line with the intent of the FORGEN cycle" It takes effort to change this focus and to develop opportunities that will ensure soldiers are adaptive to change and are ready to implement emerging integrated systems.

## Insufficient time

A key challenge to FORGEN focus is time, including the imposition of “unscheduled directed tasks” and the need to prioritise conflicting tasks. For example, this is particularly evident when coordinating force element movements on ops/exercises and maintaining your own FORGEN cycle and integrating SERCAT 5 personnel. One OC states, “we have to provide imaginative training to our...personnel which all go to improving our capability. The challenge is always finding time to meet these demands as well as unit administration.”

*There is never enough [time] to fully train and achieve all your goals. Set against support tasks, exercises and courses for your staff, nothing is ever 100% finalised or all soldiers fully competent. Accept that you will just need to plug gaps with these problems and have to squeeze training into opportune windows within the unit schedule.*

*Whilst COY/ SQN commanders cannot influence capability delivery timelines, they should be looking to prepare the force in advance and avoid the pitfalls of not fully realising the demands of new capability (especially in terms of corporate governance and training).*

**SERCAT 5 integration.** Integrating SERCAT 5 personnel into unit business can assist SERCAT 7 personnel to focus on FORGEN requirements and the maintenance of daily business. “We conduct our training on Tuesday evenings and weekends,” said one movements OC. “This has the effect of giving SERCAT 5 members ‘real’ second jobs and the SERCAT 7 personnel feel they are being helped. Integration is very important to unit capability as on occasions there are insufficient SERCAT 7 personnel available for reasons such as deployments, tasking, sickness, leave or discharge”. An OC of a Coy of 140 SERCAT 5 soldiers and 7 SERCAT 7 soldiers stated “I have stopped any reference in correspondence or briefs to SERCAT 7 and SERCAT 5 when referring to the soldiers and officers of the Coy. There is only one Company, ours. Every time you reference that they are SERCAT 7 and we are SERCAT 5 you enable that divide.”

*I have a training officer; as training is that important, I deem it essential I have a person responsible for coordinating it. He will coord a weekly conference on Wed and draft a training FRAGO (inclusive of a training program) which I will release on a Thu/Fri. This allows my command team 72h to comprehend, prior to me verbally confirming it at orders on a Mon. Additionally; I use the ComWeb to run a unit website. On this website I upload all FRAGOs, direction, etc - it is a one-stop shop which all members of the unit can access to stay informed.*

## SERCAT 5 OC's

The principles of managing a sub-unit are the same for SERCAT 5 OCs, noting that most SERCAT 5 Majors also have civilian jobs. This can obviously be very challenging noting just how involved being a sub-unit commander can be. MAJ Aaron P. Jackson has written a comprehensive article on his experiences of fulfilling the role as the SUC of a SERCAT 5 unit B Company 10th/27th Battalion.

<https://cove.army.gov.au/article/reflecting-part-time-sub-unit-command>

## Training challenges

The FORGEN cycle in previous years has created challenges for the conduct of training, and the balancing act required “between training and maintaining sub-unit stats”. One noted the challenges of “ensuring that training aligns with METLs and higher commander’s intent, and ensuring that training activities are resourced both with the correct personnel and stores”.

## Staff development

FORGEN will have an effect on the development of well-rounded staff. If a LT is in a unit during any phase other than Ready then their experiences and training may be significantly restricted. Commanders need to invest time in finding ways to develop the LT to prepare them for the time they come back as a 2IC or OC. Similarly, soldiers need time in rank so that they gain the experience and knowledge necessary for them to, one day, be able to mentor their subordinates.

Empower JNCOs at all times. “We have lost the art of utilising the key skills this rank holds. They are the drivers that shape young recruits at Kapooka so let them lead your small teams and organise training.”

## Mentor Junior Officers

*Officers have little time in regimental appointments prior to becoming an OC. If we fail to mentor LTs and CAPTs then we will get the OCs we deserve...*

OCs have an obligation (traditional, social, moral, and even legal) to guide and mentor their junior officers.

OCs must challenge them, encourage appropriate risk taking, guide them and mentor them when they fail. There is an obligation to prepare them to assume the OC role in the future as well as their next posting. OCs should be releasing them for their courses early. This will hurt in the short term, however it is the sub-unit that will gain the benefit of the training for the remainder of their tenure.

The key difference between being a PL/TP SGT and a SM is the experience level of the COMD. In a PL/TP situation, the experience balance is well in favour of the SGT and therefore the mentoring role is encouraged. Once a SM this experience becomes critical in assisting the OC to mentor the junior officers.

## Rapid Operations Generation

### Maintain a culture of readiness

According to one OC, “It comes down to the culture of readiness that is bred into a unit. If you have a readiness culture, it will respond when required and break through the ‘notice to move’ challenges.” Other OCs support the importance of maintaining basic soldier and trade skills, AIRN, personnel management processes, equipment and governance so that your sub-unit is ready at any time. One member specifically noted the need to maintain focus on soldier welfare. “Ensure soldier welfare and their home situation is under control to

allow members to deploy without the pressures of a broken personal or family situation.”

*The last war was the last war - get ready for the next one now. Adopt a ‘total soldier’ approach.*

Readiness includes knowing your unit establishment and capabilities, inclusive of specialist composite capabilities. Be proactive to anticipate and resolve potential resource gaps, and communicate to higher headquarters the sub-unit’s realistic state of readiness.

“Just because your unit isn’t in READY does not mean you are not Ready,” commented one OC. “The FORGEN cycle does not remove the readiness requirements; rather it simply shifts the focus of training and governance to a relevant point in the FORGEN cycle. This allows units to focus on specific aspects of readiness as they move through the cycle.” If you are on top of readiness requirements, the other aspects should be easier.

A SM also suggested that soldiers should be exposed to the equipment and resources available to them on deployment while undertaking training. This will make the lead up and pre-deployment training a “smoother experience”.

### Prioritise governance requirements

A number of OCs noted that governance always ‘bites you’ when you leave it for a field exercise or deployment. It was suggested to “consider and prioritise ALL governance issues and be prepared to take a risk at not completing everything. Analyse the mission and implied tasks and focus on work to meet these... Maintain work: rest ratios and do not surge and burn out early.”

To enhance readiness and preparedness, it is important to “learn and record the experiences gained through continual deployments over the last 20 years”. This avoids the need to relearn lessons, such as certain lessons from Vietnam which “had to be re-learned in the 2000’s in the Middle East”.

## Training and development

A number of comments were made regarding training and development during a rapid operation generation cycle. There is a need to “train for conventional field deployments” from which you can adapt to deploy on other tasks. Without prompting from higher HQ, hold yourself accountable for maintaining soldiers’ skill sets to avoid skills fade. Another suggested a training focus on soldiers’ and junior leaders’ knowledge to avoid overdependence on technology. This allows technology to become an enhancement to that knowledge base, which has the added benefit of creating some redundancy in case of technology failure.

Other important factors to consider when scheduling training are as follows:

- Progression based, logical and clearly communicate the intent behind the structure
- Mission focussed, Measures of performance vs measures of effectiveness, clearly stating that MOE is a command assessment not driven by set criteria.
- Context (use DATE)
- Written COMD intent statements for large coy/sqn activities to planning staff to promote mission command and support subordinate teams ability to plan, back brief and then execute
- Clearly outline ATT and ATL to be achieved for activity:
  - \* allocated resources
  - \* design principles
  - \* key timings and dates
  - \* exploit opportunities for inter-corps training and interaction.

Remember that the JNCO and SNCO in your sub-unit may be your Warrant Officers and SNCO when or if you become CO. Furthermore, your Warrant Officers and SM may be your RSM and sub-unit SM, so you must invest in them. You may not personally benefit from your efforts but we (Army) will reap what you sew.

## Flexibility and succession

A key lesson from a number of OCs was the need to have a flexible and adaptable command team, and to set the conditions for succession. “In Army, I do not think we do a good job of training for succession; commanders need to set the conditions to allow their 1-down to step up.” This flexibility inherent in a command team also prepares junior commanders for their future role as OC.

## Managing risk

As an OC, being able to articulate and demonstrate your risk-appetite will come from many sources. In its simplest form, a documented RAS, but more broadly your everyday actions, behaviours and the way in which your subordinates observe the clarity of process behind how decisions are made and assessed. Anyone can be risk averse but leadership requires risk management. On COAC, I heard MAJGEN Krause ask “how many soldiers’ deaths will you tolerate to achieve mission success?” This forces you to not only consider risk and reward, but whether you’ve placed sufficient and reasonable effort into mitigation. It forces immediate reflection. There is no right answer, but zero is usually just as unacceptable an answer as one hundred; delusion and fatalism can have similar consequences.

There are only four things which can be done with a risk: Treat, Transfer, Tolerate or Terminate (4T). Instilling this most basic approach into subordinates allows for the whole team to be able to communicate more consistently and clearly on issues faced – particularly those which arise outside of planning and may occur on a day-to-day basis; whether on exercise or in barracks. Explicitly stating one’s risk tolerance still appears to be an uncomfortable approach for some – particularly where real consequences are being accepted in exchange for benefits. The notion that zero-detriment is the benchmark for obtaining benefit defies logic and leads to a risk aversion culture that can be equally as detrimental as one which is overly cavalier.

Where it is feasible to do so, discussing with the SM, 2IC and PL/TP COMDs why certain risks are tolerated and why certain rewards are



being sought opens up discussion related to where the thresholds of your subordinates sit. Over time it provides a more detailed insight into where the physical, moral and intellectual limits of your team sit. It expands the dialogue around developing a collective baseline of tolerance for risk and what constitutes acceptable mitigation.

Ultimately, we manage risk every day. Every decision we make is a risk/reward trade off – whether that be making a brew or pursuing an enemy as a target of opportunity. Discussions on risk needn't be philosophical diatribes, nor should it shackle commanders to an expectation that every decision be justified. What the 4T process as a framework offers is a communication method for articulating the commander's position. It contributes to Mission Command. Ultimately, consequences from decisions remain yours; successes are owned by the team.



## Part V: Common Issues and Solutions

### ***Simplify compliance requirements***

As can be seen from previous comments, corporate governance is not always the main priority but when left it can be overwhelming to the sub-unit. This is particularly so in operational units.

### **Delegation**

Delegation allows a potentially less painful way of managing compliance requirements. "Find those [members that are] passionate or highly experienced to take on responsibility in that area... it's just about finding the right person". Another noted that although still ultimately responsible for governance compliance, it was possible to, "create compliance chains of command with identified individuals clearly responsible for tasks." Others note the importance of centralising requirements to key staff to make it easier to track. "Have a reporting program from the key staff to yourself, to ensure oversight."

*Learn what you can disregard. You will be subject to so much corporate governance and training demands that it is physically impossible to cover everything all the time. Delegate functions and then follow up at random intervals.*

### **Incorporate into battle rhythm**

It is important to incorporate compliance requirements into unit routine. Regularly visiting compliance activities throughout the year ensures there is no short-notice rush to complete requirements. Suggestions include attending to requirements during rest weeks along with admin and maintenance, or on the morning of the day in which brigade/unit sports occur. Another OC noted the importance of capturing pertinent information from sub-unit directives in 'soldier' speak, and noted "OC hours also provide opportunities to pass on requirements".

*Anticipate – schedule – document*

## Additional suggestions

Other suggestions include the following:

- Do not duplicate reporting systems across the tiers of command to avoid unnecessarily burdening your subordinates with additional RFIs and tasking.
- Establish a date in line with and before superior HQ requirements, by which compliance is to be completed, allowing subordinates to set this as a goal to be achieved.

## Make time in the day to visit soldiers

Visiting your troops is a priority and is fundamental to command. If doing so means you complete some other work out of hours, then so be it – or as one member said, “hand tasks to your OPSO and go”. Suggestions for getting out with the troops include:

- visit first thing in the morning or after PT
- have a brew with them or talk with them during a break
- set a reminder alarm and force yourself away from the office even if it is only for 20 minutes and schedule it in your diary or Outlook calendar
- plan a week in advance to integrate it into your program, particularly when there are specific training activities in progress such as locally run promotion courses
- get your SM and/or 2IC to drag you out of your office every few days for a walk around but also make sure you walk around on your own. For example, instead of heading back to the office after lunch, walk around the unit.
- get your staff to send you meeting requests for activities, lessons and so on and/or give your immediate subordinates access to your calendar so they can book you into activities of interest that get you out of the office and interacting. Encourage soldiers to request your time to observe their presentations, lessons or other special activities. Ensure

that you sit in a lesson once in a while, so that you can also provide input based on your experience.

- prioritise work load to critical, essential and routine; if it's not critical then go see the troops
- Instead of sending an email or making a phone call, grab your notebook and go for a walk to do the task in person
- use the ORs mess to your best advantage and simply turn up and have a meal with your soldiers (you get to check the standard of their rations this way, too)

*This is the hardest thing to do; however, it's the most important - just get up out of your chair and walk around the unit.*

When visiting your soldiers, practice active listening. “Actively talk and listen to the team, do not cut them short, acknowledge their comment and if it requires further action make sure that you follow-up.”

SMs need to ‘keep their finger on the pulse’ with what is happening in the sub-unit. Doing-so will allow them to provide prompt and up to date advice to the OC as required.

## Individuals you can speak with when you need to

There are a range of people that OCs can speak to when needed. They include the CO, RSM, unit 2IC, other OCs, CSM (particularly with soldier issues), peers, Padre, Bn 2IC and OPSO and the previous OC, depending on the issue at hand. As one OC noted, when the Padre visits to talk about soldier issues, they will also know when you need to talk. Additionally, OCs commented that they used mentors external to the unit. In particular, one noted that whilst establishing a unit peer group is important, “also establishing a peer group aligned to specialisation is important to provide objective opinions and shared ideas”.

*As a SM, an effective network of peers is paramount to your success, so too is a professional relationship with the RSM who will provide guidance and direction when required.*

SMs strongly recommended liaising with peers, RSM and the OC for advice. Peers, both internally and externally to the unit and from various corps, will provide a variety of experiences and backgrounds. The OC can provide guidance on what he/she expects from you. Keep in touch with your former course members, particularly Subj 1, so as to create a network that can be 'tapped into' to solve any problems that may arise.

## **Subordinates concurrently in multiple operations and training theatres**

### **Command and Control**

"When the unit splits and personnel are re-assigned from different troops to conduct different exercises or deployments, soldiers can get confused about their chain of command and to whom they report. Before this occurs, simply publishing a new ORBAT (by name and position) for that specific exercise or period can help the unit HQ and soldiers to manage command and control."

*There are two keys to this [dispersed elements] succeeding:*

- 1. Empower your junior commanders. Allow them to grow and develop their command abilities and build that trust (up and down) that they need to do the job, and*
- 2. Honesty in all facets of the deployment. If they are not ready, tell them. If they are, tell them.*

### **Importance of good communication**

Communicating clear intent and understanding the CCIR is important on operations and exercises where the OC and sub-elements may be disaggregated. "Employ mission command; make them apply the MAP

and provide CONOPS back briefs to confirm your intent." As one OC in this position noted, "if they needed a decision to be made, they were able to move within my guidelines with minimal fuss".

### **Look after the members**

Keep track of the member's movements, see them off at the airport and, particularly for single members, and be there when they come home. An OC noted "make sure these soldiers get a fair and balanced PAR that has input from both the deployed unit and home unit; this requires some work with both chains of command to ensure this occurs". Ensure appropriate recognition is given for members' effort and successes. Ensure that all members remain contactable, via either mobile phone, satellite phone or email so that their welfare and wellbeing can be monitored.

### **Look after families**

A number of members noted the importance of looking after families and understanding their needs, which may be different in different situations (ie. deployment vs exercise). Ensure that all members of the unit understand this responsibility.

Make sure you take the time to contact the partner of members that are away. Touch base with them and see if they need any assistance no matter how small. In some situations this contact and/or assistance can be significant to the member's partner.

## **Shift from operations to force generation**

### **Planning**

A SM commented on the importance of having the ability to plan 6-12 months in advance, which would need to be based upon your CO's intent and where you are in the FORGEN and deployment cycle. However, if that guidance is not available, it was suggested that you "don't sit on your hands and wait for the information to come". Another OC noted the importance of getting time to shape "planning and reporting to show accuracy in current equipment levels and assessable training levels". However, an OC whose sub-unit still has a large commitment

to operations said the new focus has required more deliberate planning (troops to task) to better manage limited personnel resources.

## Support to individuals

Several members noted a greater focus on the individual, as “priorities are now on health and welfare whenever we have the time within the training year”. Another OC commented that the operational focus has improved the way Army caters for individual needs and personal circumstances back in the barracks environment. Updated policy and procedures now allow the chain of command to better support the individual.

Take the time to acknowledge effort, it doesn’t need to be an award or an accolade each time but a simple “thanks for your help today” is enough to ensure they will go that far and even further next time. Coupled with PARs, it is a good technique that closes the positive observation feedback loop and ensures all instances of good performance are recorded. Everyone remembers when they were promoted or given an award poorly (wrong name, PMKeyS number, word blurb was poor, lack of effort was obvious) these instances result in a loss of credibility which is very difficult to regain.

## Training

Noting that foundation warfighting skills “should always be the focus”, a number of respondents commented that they now had a renewed ability to focus on these skills. “Get back to basics and shape training in a variety of settings - jungle, conventional, desert and barracks”.

*My focus is on the continual development of my soldiers so that when called upon to go and fight, they are as prepared as I can make them, not just individually but as a unit, a cohesive unit. That is what wins the fight and the ‘collective’ training needed to achieve this.*







## Part VI: Dealing with Significant Issues

### ***Freedom of action to subordinates***

*My focus is train as you fight. You have to know your subordinates' capabilities so, in all tasks; I issue comprehensive orders and let them crack on with it. By using the tools we are trained in, such as an Orders Group, Back Briefs and end of mission reporting (eg Patrol Reports, etc), the junior commander is given the framework within which they will operate, the freedom of action to achieve the assigned task and I retain an oversight of how they conduct the task to train and shape their professional development. Without doing this I can't assess their current capability, effectively train them to a better standard nor establish the trust needed for us to operate together in a physically dislocated manner when deployed. It involves an element of risk, but as the OC, you have to do so to create a unit that is combat effective.*

### **Trust**

Trust will allow your subordinates freedom of action (FOA). One member stated, "trust them to do their job. If they don't do their job, use the processes laid down in policy whether that be admin / discipline. " Another advised that they "check in quite regularly to observe the task/ training, and confirm passage of info."

Providing subordinates with training opportunities gives you time to observe and rectify issues in a safe environment and establish the trust that is required for FOA. Once you know your subordinates' strengths and weaknesses, you can step back a few paces and 'tap' a little when required; vary the controls IAW the task and the individual. "Training is the best time to let your subbies expand their independence. Exercises need to be a little more tightly controlled. I recommend getting your new subbies to plan an individual PL level exercise (away from base) and then let them run it from cradle to grave."

That said, an SM advised that "freedom of action doesn't mean that inspections and cross checking are not done. Don't expect, inspect".

## Communication

Whilst good communication is linked with trust, it is also at the heart of mission command. OCs agree that using mission command effectively allows subordinates the FOA to achieve the endstate and to learn and develop in the process. In particular, this occurs when the OC gives them clear guidance, resources and timelines and sets feedback points. It is important for subordinates to know that the OC will guide them when they ask or step in when needed. Several OCs also commented on the importance of letting subordinates implement their method even if this is not how you would operate – as long as it is safe.

Another member spoke of the importance of making subordinates think through their issues. “Ensure that you welcome questions and queries (so) that they come to you whenever they feel they need to”, but try to allow them to resolve them with minimal interference to improve their knowledge and skills. “Leave them alone as much as you can.”

SMs reinforce the necessity to frequently communicate with their SNCO on a variety of issues, as well as to ensure that tasks ‘stay on track’. This information can then be used to provide advice to the OC.

Expectation management is important when delivering PARs. “No one should be surprised by an ‘at rank score’. I found it useful to utilise the Officer PAR self-assessment tool as an email exchange between SNCOs to determine how effective they were at identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. Also, if an annual PAR is still below worn rank (which is appropriate if justified) it is also an indication of a manager’s inability to raise them to the required standard.”

*Ensure [your subordinates] know if they need guidance to seek it. Further, when they stuff up and they will... as will you... don’t crucify them the first time. Test and adjust. If it happens again, step up the issue and counsel accordingly.*

## Mentor and coach them

Remember to mentor and coach your subordinates and encourage them to do the same. After providing your direction, you need to let

your junior commanders do their job – make mission command work. Let your subordinates think and work independently and learn their mistakes, and then you can applaud their successes.

## Other matters

### Social networking

It is necessary to remind soldiers of and reinforce the DI (G) Admin 08-2 “Use of Social Media by Defence personnel”. “Keep your soldiers aware of what they can and cannot post” and “warn all members who use social media of the inherent dangers of passing inappropriate information.” An idea implemented by one OC was to use “an ABC Four Corners program to reinforce Army themes about personal security and social media”.

*Education, education, education. Your soldiers and junior officers are a different generation; they view things differently, encourage them to use it, but be politically and personally savvy! The only way this can be done is through mentoring and education.*

The example of one, can also educate the many. “Being ruthless with any offenders worked for me.” Soldiers who observe their mates undergoing DFDA action for misuse of social media, or experiencing the difficulties such as those in the following examples receive a more personal reality check.

**Example 1.** Soldiers using internet dating has caused issues within the unit with soldiers’ personal information being used against them to bribe them and linking them to Army. We as a unit have increased education on use of social media and how to protect personal information in order to minimise this. However, I don’t think we’ll be able to stop these issues completely.

**Example 2.** Social media resulted in an unacceptable behaviour complaint within the unit. One of the benefits of the investigation was that people saw the serious consequences of these actions and this set

the scene for what are, hopefully, no more failures within my sub-unit of social media faux pas.

Additional tips relating to social networking are contained within the DI(G) 08-2 and should be reinforced before stand down and long weekends and promoted through noticeboards.

*I believe the key is to educate the soldiers of the do's and don'ts of social media, both during and outside of work. I have had subordinates sending me friend requests via social media. The easiest way to stop it was to announce it in a public forum (on parade) to highlight that they were doing the wrong thing. By using the public forum it has greatly discouraged other members from doing the same thing.*

## Recognition of good performance

Like any group of people in society, your subordinates will be a mix of 'go getters' and not so motivated personnel. You must foster proactivity and productivity, of which the best means is through routine deliberate reinforcement under the existing Honours and Awards systems. Seek every opportunity to reward above average performance and it will in turn develop an influential trend. SUC leaders must have a consolidated list of available honours and awards, from OC's/CO's Awards, Bde Comd Awards, Soldiers Medallions, Australia Day Medallions, Corps Awards, Defence Commendations and biannual National Honours & Awards.

## Talent management

Target and overtly reinforce talent management. This will reinforce 'go getter' attitudes and detract from those who tend to rest on their laurels. A good means to do this is to hold a twice yearly Soldier Review Board whereby succession planning, and promotion and honours/awards recognition boards are held whereby subordinate commanders (SNCO and NCOs) are forced to objectively assess and argue for their staff in competition with other subordinates. It will also incentivise professional competition within the soldier ranks and reinforces accountability in a more socially accountable manner.

## Discipline

"Soldiers will stuff up - lead them out of it and make them learn from it". Hence, to counter the inevitable discipline issues is the need to set and maintain standards, use the SM discipline role, practise discipline procedures and keep soldiers focussed. In one battalion, a corrective training directive was instigated which gave "JNCOs more autonomy to deal with soldier issues at the lower level". The member who gave this feedback noted that it had worked very well.

*Be firm, fair and consistent. Get all the facts before making a decision that adversely impacts on a member. Don't make a judgement call until then. But don't let the decision drag out too long. Remain unbiased. Practice the SUBSA position well before you need to do it. Take time to understand the DFDA. Ensure that you accompany adverse decisions with a clear statement of reasons. Be very clear with your standards and don't let subordinates step beyond those standards, even slightly. Document everything, even minor misdemeanours.*

Additional considerations and tips for discipline are as follows:

- Discipline should be slowly 'ramped up' and applied as appropriate.
- Do not be excessive with minor infractions, unless a soldier continues to transgress.
- Use, within reason, the 'three strikes rule' as it allows your subordinates to make mistakes, and test and adjust; in other words, it allows them to learn.
- Do not forget that your goal with discipline should always be "to return the member to being an effective contributor to the unit ASAP".
- Ensure you conduct a QA prior to considering DFDA action.
- The Discipline Officer scheme is a great to discipline the troops without tying up OC with SUBSA hearings.
- praise in public and discipline in private wherever possible

All personnel within a given Sub-Unit need to be aware that difficult conversations need to be had all the time, this may be as a result of

a particular incident, or continued poor performance etc. “One of the best lessons I learnt (early on in my officer career) was ‘how to take an ass kicking’. People need to remember that those conversations are business and not personal nor an assessment of their character as a whole. There is the tendency to take all things as a personal attack which builds into the likership principle and the avoidance of conflict which only makes things worse when they aren’t addressed.”

*When a discipline issue occurs, the impact on day-to-day work is enormous as the administration overheads are large. When discipline issues arise, deal with them quickly and ensure justice is seen to be done.*

## Leadership is in the standards

The OC and SM need to set a standard for discipline from the start, setting appropriate responses to discipline matters and examples in terms of cause and effect. In applying these standards, you need to be consistent and fair above everything else. Good discipline results if you set clear standards, ensure you and your command team lead by example, and maintain and apply the standards fairly and consistently.

## The problem of Likership

Sometimes you may have to deal with more modern cultural issues such as ‘likership’, fear of correcting someone in case a complaint is made and the ‘operational affect’. One OC describes senior OR ranks as being less likely to ‘chip’ a subordinate for even minor issues for fear of either not being popular or have complaints raised against them by disgruntled subordinates.

Likership extends to new OCs and “perception is reality”, therefore if any instances are observed or reported they need to be dealt with swiftly and proportionality to address the concerns of the sub-unit. Anecdotally, if one person has reported it then all have experienced it or are aware of it, nothing is more corrosive to unit cohesion than apathy. People do not leave organisations, people leave people. Don’t be the reason someone chooses discharge over a fulfilling career.

*Making unpopular decisions is difficult but often necessary. This concept is not unique to the SUC team and will be seen at all levels of COMD.*

## Innovation

One SM advises that “the key is to not push problems to authority but push authority to problems. This requires trust that takes time to develop but a mentoring approach will assist in each soldier developing confidence in decision making.” Another SM describes how their sub-unit wanted to get experience into new PTE soldiers. “We wanted to understand how to develop a PTE from requiring supervision to an independent operator. I discussed this with a motivated SGT a couple of times. He brought up points/issues and COAs. I got him to do a dot point with the points/issue and COAs. This created discussion within coy and then a more fleshed out instruction was drafted later. This then went to unit level where a CO directive was implemented.”

*There is nothing wrong in making mistakes during training as this leads to lessons learned that are not repeated on ops. The first question I ask when there is an incident is “was a life at threat?” If not, then all matters can be scaled down and dealt with accordingly.*

## Conclusion

Remember that many have been there before you and that there is a lot of knowledge and experience out there to leverage, including mentors, CO’s, other OC/SM’s and peers. Take time to read, keep fit and prepare yourself in advance, both mentally and physically. Finally “Enjoy it because it’s over before you know it, and you will likely look back at your time as one of the most rewarding jobs you’ve ever done.”

