



Australian
Air League

Australian Air League Inc.

NCO TRAINING e-HANDBOOK

(Section 3 – Becoming an NCO)



June 2013

Section 3

Becoming an NCO

You have been recommended for promotion because your Squadron Officers have confidence in you and believe you possess some of the attributes and behaviours of a good NCO. You have not been recommended for promotion because you are the most popular member of your Squadron, or because you are the oldest, or because you have been in the Squadron longer than anyone else, or because you have the most badges, or because it is your 'turn'. In all likelihood:

- You have shown potential to become a good leader.
- You have shown that you are willing to accept responsibility.
- You take pride in your uniform and wear it correctly.
- You enjoy participating in all the activities of your Squadron.
- You take pride in your Squadron.

3.1 What is an NCO

The initials 'NCO' stand for Non-Commissioned Officer. The process of becoming an effective NCO is not an easy one and being chosen for promotion is only the beginning. Once you have the rank insignia on your sleeve, you indicate that you will willingly and enthusiastically accept additional responsibilities within your Squadron. This means that you will play an important part in helping with the running of your Squadron. The Officers of your Squadron could ask you to help with such things as:

- Teaching basic drill to new members of your Squadron.
- Teaching Education classes.
- Training and taking a competition squad for a Review.
- Teaching Physical Activities.
- Helping with the administration duties of your Squadron.
- Making new members feel welcome and 'at home' in your Squadron.

3.2 NCO Training

When you first become an NCO, you will not be expected to know how to successfully complete all that you are asked to do. As you progress from rank to rank, you will gradually receive more information and be taught more skills and receive more training in several different ways such as:

- NCO Training Camps and Training Days.
- Instruction and guidance from Squadron Officers or a more experienced NCO.
- Information in the Air League Manual.
- Information in the NCO Training Handbook.
- Information in the Air League Information Book.

Becoming an effective NCO does not happen by accident or good luck. It is a gradual, progressive process and by paying attention and listening carefully. Putting what you

learn into practice, you will enjoy the wonderful experience of becoming, not just an effective, but an excellent NCO.

3.3 Leading by Example

Once you become an NCO it is important to realise that you have special leadership responsibilities. Cadets in your Squadron will look to you when they are unsure of something, need advice, don't know how to do something or how to act.

It is important to remember that those in your Squadron know you have been chosen as an NCO because you have special qualities and they will think that how you look, what you do and say and how you behave must be acceptable and correct because you are an NCO.

At all times you should:

- ✓ Wear your uniform correctly – If your shoes are dirty or you wear nail polish, Cadets will think this is acceptable.
- ✓ Be friendly and helpful – If you are moody, grumpy and unwilling to help anyone, Cadets will think this is the way they should behave.
- ✓ Be kind, courteous and polite – If you are mean, insulting or rude, Cadets will think this is acceptable.
- ✓ Show respect for others – If you are disrespectful to your Officers and other NCOs, Cadets will think that this is the way they should behave.
- ✓ Not show favouritism – If you give special treatment to your friends in your Squadron, the other Cadets will not have respect for you as an NCO.

3.4 Maintain respect

The last item on the list is very important. Most NCOs will have a special group of friends in their Squadron, usually around their own age. You should not have to give special treatment to your friends to keep their friendship. If you do, two things will happen:

- Your friends will lose respect for you as an NCO and will behave unacceptably when you need to supervise them in an activity.
- The other Cadets in your Squadron will think that you only care about your friends and they too, will lose respect for you as an NCO and will behave unacceptably when you need to supervise them in an activity.

The result will be that you lose your ability to be an effective NCO. Should such a situation develop, it is not that difficult to overcome. Seek advice from your Squadron OC and from other NCOs who have probably had to deal with the same situation. With patience and practice you will be able to develop an effective combination of leadership and friendship.

3.5 Leadership attributes

Leadership is an ever-growing topic that attracts much interest and organisations such as the Air League need leaders at all levels in order to survive and maintain effective operations. While early theories believed that leaders were 'born and not made', the current thinking suggests leaders can learn to develop behaviors that add to their natural qualities and personality. Different leaders use different styles to get the job done and to motivate their teams, but effective leaders also display a number of attributes which help them succeed in this process. Some of these leadership attributes are:

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| Loyalty | Fairness | Confidence | Force of Example |
| Consideration for Others | Determination | Energy and Drive | Esprit De Corps |
| Ability to Communicate | Courage | Decisiveness | Responsibility |
| Initiative | Integrity | Judgement | Knowledge |

Loyalty

"I don't care for your loyalty when you think I am right. The time when I want it is when you think I am wrong". (Extract from the diary of General Monash).

The loyalty about which Gen. Monash spoke was not the spectacular kind which proclaims itself, often too noisily. It was the loyalty of the kind which, when the commander says "GO" - makes you determined to get there; which, when he says "NO", makes you accept his decision without complaint, without second-guessing and trying to get what you have asked for by other means.

To 'get there' necessitates doing your job to the best of your ability and overcoming difficulties of training and administration for which you may not see the reason, accepting the fact that it is not possible to build up an organisation such as ours without encountering many 'stumbling blocks'.

Loyalty means loyalty to your superiors and to your subordinates alike. The Officer or NCO, who can't take it, is never respected. If you are given a task you must see it through cheerfully and willingly. Loyalty to your subordinates means taking the blame when you should, and sticking up for their rights. Never let your command down and it won't let you down.

Confidence

Confidence is product of knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired by study and experience. Without knowledge to which there is no shortcut, one attains very little in life. When one is up against a problem, one generally endeavours to get out of it by 'bluff'. You might bluff your subordinates perhaps a couple of times and get away with it – but when you are found out, your credibility will suffer, and it will be a long time before you can gain the confidence you have lost.

Consideration for Others

Selfishness is not a desirable quality for a leader. Do not expect the other cadets to do something you will not take on yourself. Do not expect them to dress differently to you; do not keep your unit standing to attention or messing about doing nothing whilst you look into this or that. When outdoors, turn them away from the sun or march them out of the wind or into the shade. If in camp, see they're fed and bedded down before you retire.

Energy or Drive

The 'don't care' attitude will not get you respect. If you see interest flagging, change into something else. By showing a personal interest in all branches of your command and by avoidance of time-wasting procedure, you will by your own enthusiasm, instill enthusiasm into your cadets, measure for measure. Do not make cadets do what you ought to do yourself - but also remember, you cannot do everything yourself, and by taking the work away from them they will lose interest. Maintain their interest by showing enthusiasm and delegating tasks.

Fairness

This means impartiality as regards selections for special tasks or promotions and the like. One cadet done an injustice can influence quite a number, and you will lose respect. This also means fairness in regard to reprimand. Be careful that the reprimand is merited and that you have correctly identified the culprit or cause of an issue.

Force of Example

You set the example and expect your subordinates to emulate you. If you are dirty and untidy, how can you expect them to do well turn out? Punctuality and personal control are most important. By personal control, we mean no outbursts of temper. If an NCO "loses their temper", it is a definite indication that their unit commands them, and not the other way round. DO NOT shout and yell at your unit. Yelling or screaming is a sign of frustration so endeavour to reduce your weakness with self-control.

Esprit De Corps (pronounced ES – PREE – D – CORE)

Broadly, this term means "The Spirit of the Unit". Every unit has a 'spirit' or 'atmosphere'. You walk into the place and there is something about it - you may feel strange or you may feel welcome, confident or nervous; anyway, something 'gets' you. It is this something that reflects the leader. A happy welcome atmosphere where you get the feeling that you are not snooping around trying to catch somebody, where nobody is ashamed of what they are doing, is the ideal sought. This all means "Esprit De Corps", or the Morale of the unit.

Determination

Determination is coupled with energy and means the ensuring the task gets completed.

Tact

Simple enough, but an act done or a word spoken, a hasty decision can appear tactless and do the leader great harm. 'Think twice before saying nothing'.

Courage

Courage is a mental quality that recognises the fear of danger or criticism, but enables a person to proceed in the face of it with calmness and firmness. In simple terms, courage is the control of fear. It is a quality of mind that gives you control over yourself, enabling you to accept responsibility and act properly in a threatening situation. An NCO must have moral as well as physical courage. Moral courage means knowing and standing for what is right in the face of popular disfavour. An NCO who has morale courage is also prepared to admit mistakes, but will enforce decisions when they are deemed correct.

Decisiveness

The leader should have the ability to make decisions promptly and to announce them in a clear forceful manner. Many situations have more than one solution. The wise leader gathers all the facts, weighs one against the other, then calmly and quickly arrives at a decision. Decisiveness is largely a matter of practice and experience

Responsibility

A clear understanding of where responsibility lies and a constant endeavour to discharge these responsibilities are the basic requirements for successful command. Responsible leaders can be relied upon to carry out activities intelligently and with willing effort to the intent of their commanders. Leaders who have a sense of responsibility will continually attempt to achieve the highest standards of performance and put the good of the Air League ahead of their own personal interests.

Initiative

Initiative is seeing what has to be done and doing it, even in the absence of orders. Cadets unite quickly behind the leader who meets new and unexpected situations with prompt action. Closely allied with initiative is resourcefulness, the ability to deal with a situation in the absence of normal means or methods. Inactivity or passive acceptance of an unsatisfactory situation, because of the lack of normal means of coping with it, is never justified.

Integrity

Integrity, the uprightness of character and soundness of moral principles, the quality of absolute truthfulness and honesty; it is an indispensable trait in a leader.

Judgement

Judgement is the quality of logically weighing facts and possible solutions and basing sound decisions upon these considerations.

Knowledge

Nothing inspires confidence and respect more quickly than demonstrating professional knowledge and ability. The individual who knows his/her job develops self confidence, at the same time gaining the confidence of others. Knowledge should not be limited to Air League knowledge only.

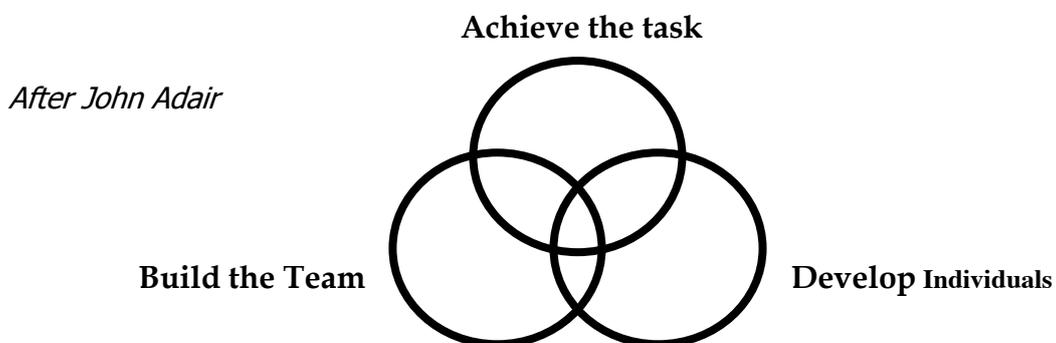
Ability to Communicate

Communication skills are essential for leaders. It is vitally important to an NCO that the message they wish to get across to their cadets is received and interpreted as they intend. NCOs should practice communicating by briefing their Sections or Flights on a regular basis. Karl Marx once said; "the leader is always the communicator".

3.6 Leadership actions

So, in summary, there is no universal solution to the training of leaders. Early theorists argued that effective leaders were born with inherent qualities and others believed that leadership skills were the product of one's environment and upbringing. However, in spite of these theoretical ideas, it is now accepted that effective leaders behave in defined ways, depending on the situation, and act on three things:

- They achieve a task or objective
- They engage and build effective teams of followers
- They develop and motivate individuals



The application of this leadership model adopts a functional approach, often referred to as Action-Centered Leadership (ACL). ACL suggests that people can learn to become effective leaders, irrespective of their personal qualities or environment, by focusing on a range of behaviours aimed at achieving the task, building the team and developing individuals. Each of these aspects is illustrated by three overlapping circles. John Adair stated that 'our effectiveness as leaders depends in our ability to influence and be influenced by the members in our team in the implementation of the task' (Adair 1988).

To accomplish the task, the leader needs to be clear about the purpose, convey it with enthusiasm and remind people of it often. Then the leader needs to understand how it fits in with the overall plan of the Organisation, have a plan to carry it out, determine the resources needed, pace the progress towards its achievement and evaluate the result.

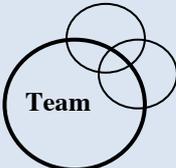
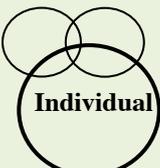
To build the team, the leader should set and maintain standards, involve the team as a whole, reduce dissent activity, communicate effectively in regular briefings and consult the team before making any decisions that affect them.

In developing individuals, the leader must enable them to get satisfaction from working on the task, feel it is challenging, give genuine control over aspects of the task delegated to them and recognise a job well done.

3.7 Maintaining a balance

An important part of developing leadership skills is learning how to maintain a balance between the three areas of task achievement, team building and individual development. More often than not, a leader would face challenges in each of the three areas, but sometimes the situation would determine where more time was needed. For example, if the team was not achieving acceptable levels of performance or missing important deadlines, the leader might become more task-focused and direct the team towards meeting their goals. However, leaders should be careful not to become overtly focused on one area for a long period and become blind to the other two. This behaviour would create an imbalance in the leader’s behaviour and create a range of potential pitfalls.

Identify the strengths and problems of focusing too much on one area:

| | Strengths | Problems |
|---|-----------|----------|
|  <p>Task</p> | | |
|  <p>Team</p> | | |
|  <p>Individual</p> | | |

3.8 Leadership actions

Think of situation, or task, at your squadron requiring leadership and answer the following questions.

| | |
|--|--|
| What was the task? | |
| What did you do to ensure the task is achieved? | |
| What did you do to build team commitment? | |
| How did you help to develop individuals? | |

3.9 Setting standards of performance

In applying action-centered leadership, one thing a leader can do is set acceptable standards of performance. Standards of performance are benchmarks to indicate what behaviour or outcome is acceptable when undertaking a task and can be measures of quantity and quality. Standards of performance aim to improve the outcomes of a team in many ways.

Examples of standards:

100% attendance

High standards of dress

Punctuality

Following the rules

Show respect for others

Cleanliness

HQ Maintenance

Return equipment

Set example

In most circumstances, the team members will look to the leader to set standards and provide direction such as:

- Defining **what** task has to be undertaken
- Explaining **why, where** and **when** the task has to be undertaken
- Describing **how** well the task has to be completed (the standard)
- Providing timely feedback on progress
- Deciding **how** the task can be improved next time

Acknowledgements

The original version of this document was written by Gp Comr Pam Price, MSA and the publication has been edited for national use with the kind permission of New South Wales Girls Group Council. Supplementary information was obtained from NSWB, Queensland and Victoria Groups.

Commissioner Tom Short

Federal Training Commissioner

June 2013