



By: Joe Byerly

One of the first principles of the philosophy of Mission Command is “Build Cohesive Teams Through Mutual Trust,” and I would argue that the antithesis of this is standing in front of the formation every single Friday reading off rules like we’re Moses with the Ten Commandments.

“I don’t trust you to do the right thing, so here it is...:”

“Thou shall not drink and drive”

“Thou shall not hit thy wife”

Our Soldiers deserve better than this, and we as leaders have much more to offer than the standard weekly set of commandments, which only the minority (the dreaded 1% that take up 99% of our time) ignore anyways.

Pastors of successful churches realized years ago that this approach doesn’t have any effect

on those who need to hear it, so they repackaged their weekly messages, and now those churches are growing exponentially with non-church people.

It's about time company and battalion commanders do the same!

In most cases, we only have 5-15 minutes a week to look your entire formation in the eye, and we want to waste it with rules?

Some of you are probably thinking right now, "the only reason I do this is to cover my butt in the event one of my Soldiers does something stupid over the weekend; I can say I gave them the safety brief!" Well, another principle of Mission Command is "Accept Prudent Risk," and I think this is the perfect place to exercise this.

Here are some alternatives for your next close-out formation:

- Highlight [Congressional Medal of Honor](#) recipients. Use their stories to inspire your Soldiers and drive discussion about standards (which are internal), not rules (which are external).
- Recognize a Soldier who did something exceptional during the week. In [Taking the Guidon](#), by Burgess and Allen, the authors say this (1) reinforces individual Soldier commitment (2) is meaningful to Soldiers because it shows them their commander knows their story (3) encourages the Soldier to live up to the reputation of being a strong performer.
- Keep your Soldiers informed. If you think the information from your weekly training meetings always make it down to the lowest levels, think again. Use this as an opportunity to give them a heads up of what is coming down the tracks.

- Pitch a 5-10 minute “sermon” with practical substance. In a series titled [Guard Rails](#), Andy Stanley discusses the concept of establishing personal guard rails in our lives to prevent us from straying into dangerous areas. To me, this is more powerful than telling someone “don’t drink and drive.”

Even if you think my suggestions are lacking, just do something other than the “Safety Brief”! You get less than 20 minutes a week, so try to make it more transformational, and less transactional!

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