



When most of us think of leadership, we think of the immediate. Our leadership focus tends to be on the task at hand, not really looking beyond the next rifle range or field training exercise. But, eventually we will move on and continue to climb the professional ladder- and so will those we lead. We might prepare them for future leader tasks (planning training or running a meeting), but what are we doing to ensure they are prepared to develop those they lead?

In a [2007 issue of ARMY magazine](#), Tony Burgess introduced the idea of “Third Generation Leadership”:

This is the idea that the investment you make in developing your Soldiers will decidedly influence successive generations of leaders. In first-generation leadership the primary focus is the immediate future—commanders are training their lieutenants to be good platoon leaders. Second-generation leadership broadens the focus to include leader development for sub-sequent service—commanders train their lieutenants to be good platoon leaders and good future commanders. In third-generation leadership, commanders not only develop lieutenants to be good commanders, they also provide them with a model of how to develop their lieutenants.

When I was a second lieutenant in 2004, my troop commander consistently beat the drum of professional development. He instilled in me the importance of professional reading, investing in subordinates, and he taught me that my actions could change the greater organization. He did this not only through role modeling, but he also imparted the why behind his actions so that I grasped their importance. Those lessons he passed onto me

were ingrained in him back in 2001 from his Squadron Commander, then LTC H.R. McMaster. I didn't appreciate the impact they would have on my leadership style until much later, when I was in command.

While in command, I found myself passing on the same lessons that Captain Louis Netherland had passed on to me six years earlier. In 2012, after I finished my company command time, I coauthored [an article](#) with my former troop commander and one of my lieutenants. I wanted to capture lessons that each commander imparted to their subordinate, through the eyes of the subordinate. We each wrote our sections without seeing what the others wrote until publication. We discovered that the lessons passed down from LTC H.R. McMaster in 2001 continued to influence the development of subordinates a decade later. This is Third Generation Leadership in action.

Are you leading with a "Third Generation Mindset"? How will those you lead today, develop those they lead tomorrow? Will your legacy end as soon as you give up command, or will it continue long after you've moved on?

Do you have a Third Generation Leadership story? If so, please share it in the comments section below!

For more on Third Generation Leadership, read:

[Third Generation Leadership](#)

[Third Generation-Redux](#)

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