



Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey promotes a junior enlisted soldier during a visit to U.S. Army Africa last fall. Becoming a NCO is an important step in the career of a enlisted servicemember. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Lance Pounds)

By Alex Licea

Congratulations, you are now a Noncommissioned Officer. First and foremost, be proud of your accomplishment!

Earning the title of NCO is an important step in the military career of enlisted personnel regardless of their branch of service.

There is a lot of work and benchmarks that new NCOs had to accomplish on their journey to become a military leader.

Whether it was performing at a high level to earn the opportunity to attend a promotion board or the countless hours of studying to pass examinations and professional military education courses, the climb up the junior ranks comes from dedication and a strong work ethic.

Being an NCO isn't only about the pay raise (*although who doesn't love more money*) it is a lifestyle; and the title of NCO comes with a series of new responsibilities. From being accountable for several pieces of high-value equipment to being responsible for the professional development of junior servicemembers under your charge, the life of an NCO doesn't stop at the end of the duty day.

With all of those things in mind, here are five tips for you to consider as a newly minted NCO:

Building trust and trusting others



U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Daniel Gunn, the Monroeville, Alabama site NCO in charge, leads a flight of Airmen, Soldiers, and Sailors June 6, 2018 at the closing ceremony of the Innovative Readiness Training in Monroeville, Alabama. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman Cameron Lewis)

Building trust with the junior members of your organization takes time and effort.

The foundation of trust for new NCOs starts with the ability to properly train the personnel under your leadership.

No matter the service or MOS, young servicemembers will come to you, **the NCO**, seeking the skills and tools they need to accomplish any task.

Don't forget the basics and always look to expand your skill sets so you can properly train your personnel on basic military competencies and specific job-related tasks. Being confident and knowledgeable during training events and exercises will quickly garner the trust you seek among your junior members.

Along with training, make sure you take an interest in your personnel and listen to their ideas and suggestions. Show them you care and ask questions during your counseling sessions to make it more of a dialogue and less of a one-way conversation. Talk with them and not at them! This will also help you gain the trust of your subordinates.

In order to gain this trust, however, you must also be willing to trust others.

The mindset in trusting your people is key to any leadership style because it will help build meaningful relationships with the individuals you serve. If they need help along the way you will be there to coach and teach your personnel on those tasks so they improve. Do your best to not micromanage them though.

Trust is a two-way street based on mutual respect and relationship building.

Don't forget your roots



Soldiers assigned to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division walk toward their positions during exercise Strike Focus, at Orogrande Range Camp, N.M., April 8, 2019.

It is important to never forget where you came from as you become a NCO.

One of the biggest mistakes many new NCOs (and even Senior NCOs) make is forgetting that they were once junior enlisted members themselves. Don't let your new rank go to your head.

Always remember that before you were a "Sergeant" or "Petty Officer" you were a "Private" "Airman" or "Seaman." This will not only help you stay humble, but it will make you more relatable if you share your experiences of being a junior enlisted member when talking to your Soldiers, Marines, Airmen or Sailors.

Learn from your mistakes; you will make plenty of them

Just because you are now an NCO does not mean you are immune from mistakes. In fact, you will probably make more mistakes now as an NCO than you did as a junior servicemember because you are in a position of leadership. The pressure that comes with the position, along with the added motivation and determination to show others that your rank was earned will cause you to make mistakes.

Learn from all your mistakes to ensure you don't make them again. It is a never-ending journey of personal discovery and growth.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

Communication is key to becoming a successful leader no matter the industry. However, this is especially true in the military, and for NCOs it is vital to instill confidence into those in which they serve.



Sgt. Jordan Gary, a team leader with Company C, 1st Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, talks to a Soldier during a training event April 8. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Brandon Banzhaf, 24th Theater Public Affairs Support Element)

As an NCO, you are often the first conduit of information for junior members to hear and understand the commander's guidance/intent. NCOs need to be able to effectively communicate to their subordinates with accuracy and clarity to ensure the mission gets done right.

Becoming an effective communicator takes time and effort. It is not easy, and it can take years to master. Get down to the details, stay away from generalizations and always ask others to restate what your intent is so there is no miscommunication.

Now trust me when I say that this is easier said than done and it does take time. Having the ability to communicate will help you solve problems and build trust*(*see first tip*) with your junior members.

As the U.S. Army NCO Creed states: *I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers, and never leave them uninformed.*

Commit to Self-Improvement

Here is something that shouldn't be a surprise to any of us - There are no perfect people and there are certainly no perfect leaders. Leadership is not a "one sizes fits all" model. This is especially true when it comes to NCO business



Marine Cpl. Edwin Rodriguez, an aviation operations specialist with Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, provides security as part of their Corporals Course curriculum at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., March 15, 2019. Throughout the exercise, the Marines encountered mock improvised explosive devices and simulated opposing forces. Corporals Course is a leadership class designed to teach Marines the fundamentals of being a noncommissioned officer. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jacob Pruitt)

Experience and self-development are critical to helping you develop your skills and leadership traits. Don't be afraid to continue to learn. Embrace it! Continue working on your management abilities, planning habits, and listening skills. Self-improvement will not only

help you on an individual level, but it can help improve your unit/command overall.

Whether you serve 4, 8 or a 20-year military career, these five tips are just the tip of the iceberg on your journey through the NCO Corps. Hopefully they serve as your foundation as you pin on your new rank.

As you read these tips and receive advice from peers or mentors over the next few years remember to always try to do the right thing, and do the best you can do. It's old-school advice but it's effective!

About the author

I am currently on active duty as a U.S. Army Master Sergeant. I am a Public Affairs professional, father, writer, lifelong learner, love watching movies and eater of chicken wings. I enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2002 and earned my Master's Degree in Public Relations and Corporate Communications from Georgetown University in 2016.

Named the 2019 recipient of the Army Public Affairs Association MSG Marcia Triggs Award of Excellence, and the 2019 recipient of the SGM Dawn KilPatrick AUSA Scholarship. I enjoy traveling and have been all across the Middle East, Central and South America. My work has appeared on several sites such as We Are the Mighty, Bourbon and Battles, NCO Journal, From the Green Notebook and Business Insider. I am originally from Miami, Florida but currently live in El Paso, Texas. Follow me on Twitter [@alexlicea82](https://twitter.com/alexlicea82).

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