



By CW3 Mike Philbert

Imagine a time when you went to someone's cookout out event and they had some great smelling BBQ chicken sizzling on the grill. They heavily coat the meat so everything has a nice brown color as the high flames quickly transform the appearance of the skin to look like a photo on a professional advertisement. Anticipating the flavor experience, you pile your plate and prepare to enjoy the meal. On your first bite you tear through the well-seasoned exterior to find a fleshy uncooked interior. Food poisoning does not seem appealing on a Saturday evening, so you disappointedly dump the remaining food on your plate and become highly suspicious of everything else that comes off the grill.

Half-baked leaders deliver the same high expectations, illusions, and disappointments. The Army provides a structure of morals and values that all Soldiers should consistently strive to embody. With every promotion comes elevated expectations; with newly assigned positions come more responsibilities. Many Leaders understand what the organization "expects" them to be and so they fit the mold and play the part that is required, but only when they are being observed.

The question is, how long can just “playing the part” work? The Army had a model of BE, KNOW, DO which best described the dynamics of the half-baked leader. This leader fits squarely into the KNOW, DO portion without ever truly becoming the embodiment of the values and character they exhibit during their typical 9-5 leader role. This condition quietly erodes the backbone of the organization as true character will dominate in the most critical moments such as conditions that create stress, moral dilemmas or sacrifice.

The problem with half-baked leaders is that they do an excellent job of fooling superiors and they know when and where to display their best qualities. They are usually exposed after a situation creates the conditions for their true character to emerge, and by then, it's too late to limit their impact. This may surface in a war zone, a professional conflict, fraternization opportunity, or expression of personal bias which may result in an equal opportunity violation.

I challenge you to conduct a self-assessment of yourself by pondering these questions:

- What are my motives to be a leader? What impact have I had on people or the organization, especially DOWN and ACROSS the chain of command?
- What do the Army values mean to me? Are they just a bunch of words or do I have conviction in them?
- Can I honestly say I understand and live EVERY line of the NCO creed or is it just a check the box activity?
- If I took this uniform off tomorrow would I be the same person the Army wants me to be?
- What story does my social media reveal about me? Would I use my examples as a template for my Soldiers?

As leaders we have to constantly conduct self-assessments; this is what personal

accountability is all about. We never want to be unmasked as a fraud or hypocrite as we **MUST** be examples to our Soldiers to mold them to be leaders of purpose and passion. Nothing gets done effectively, consistently, and progressively without passion; this is that burning desire that drives a well-done leader.

The grill in this metaphor is the exposure to development; this can be personal or professional. A leader should always seek opportunities to gain new perspectives through reading, seeking mentors, and feedback from subordinates. A good grill master always makes cuts in the meat to ensure what they present is the best possible product, they understand that time and intention is what creates good results. Your grill is the leadership you provide. If you seem questionable, you cannot lead as Soldiers will be careful to not consume your ideas and philosophies.

Don't be fooled by half-baked leaders, they will surely poison your organization. Self-assess and seek constant development and feedback.

CW3 Mike Philbert works in the field of cyber security and has 18 years of active service. He is a sought-after leader who is very involved in his community as the Vice President of the North Bayern Warrant Officer Association, Chairperson of the local School Advisory Council, and founder of a mentorship outreach program called Military Mentor. He started an initiative within the 2nd Cavalry Regiment called "Always Ready Mentors" aimed at reviving the art of steady state mentorship.

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