



by Zach Batton

By and large, military leaders are not diversifying their sources for professional development.

[Once and Eagle](#), [Black Hearts](#), [Black Hawk Down](#), and [This Kind of War](#) are just a few repetitive staples in most reading/watch lists. However, many junior leaders are bored with the same “assigned” material.

For those searching for a different source for junior leader professional development, [The Bear](#) is a formidable choice. The series is loaded with common workplace situations like adjusting to new leadership as well as changing corrosive behaviors. Moreover, there are many similarities between those situations and the [Army’s Principles of Mission Command \(ADP 6-0\)](#) and [Leader Development \(FM 6-22\)](#). Though it does not take place in a military setting, *The Bear* can be a valuable tool for learning how to establish mission command and instill change within an organization.

The series follows Carmy, a well-renowned chef. He recently returned to his hometown to run his family's restaurant, The Beef, after inheriting the restaurant from his older brother. The Beef is failing both operationally and financially. Carmy aims to turn things around by creating a sustainable working environment for the staff by using procedures very similar to those found in the principles of mission command.

Mission Command and Leader Development

FM 6-22 links six of the seven Principles of Mission Command to the Army Leadership Requirements. The one principle not linked is competence. This is not due to competence not being important (it most certainly is). However, one can be competent by possessing technical capabilities, yet still fail as a leader.

The Bear demonstrates this through Carmy's attempts at establishing new practices and procedures throughout the show.

Initially, Carmy creates mutual trust and a shared understanding by instilling SOPs and fostering teamwork at his restaurant. He "designates, clarifies and deconflicts roles" by beginning each day prioritizing the tasks and providing clear intent to all, just as an Army leader would do with mission orders (FM 6-22). As the staff begins utilizing the new SOPs, they start working together like a well-oiled machine. Their progression builds upon their competence and eventually develops into a strong sense of mutual trust.

The climax of the series occurs in Episode 7, titled [Review](#). This episode illustrates that being competent in skills does not always transfer to having competence in leadership abilities. Due to a catastrophic, yet believable series of events, the newfound chemistry and trust within the staff are quickly lost partially due to Carmy's refusal to accept prudent risks. Carmy's actions during the chaos serve as a waypoint for discussions on mission command execution, specifically focusing on mental agility, interpersonal tact, and fostering teamwork.

Driving Change

In addition to *The Bear* serving as an example of how to execute mission command, it also serves as an example of how instilling proper leadership practices and techniques can help change organizational culture and eliminate counterproductive behaviors. When change is necessary, some people naturally act as roadblocks and prohibit it. They have power, influence, and familiarity within the organization. They may only comply with changes to avoid punishment. It takes more time and effort to instill a sense of commitment in these

kinds of subordinates. It also requires leaders to set a strong, positive example.

For example, The Beef's staff all commit to Carmy's new way of business, except for Richie. Richie has issues with every change that Carmy proposes. He is not happy with the menu updates, the new SOPs, or the way Carmy leads. Initially, the staff follows Richie's orders instead of Carmy's because they are also hesitant to change. It's obvious that the restaurant needs to evolve, but Richie goes out of his way to keep operations the same. He also exhibits various corrosive behaviors such as toxic slurs that would be considered harassment in today's workplace.

Despite Carmy's best efforts, Richie's behavior continues to hinder The Beef's success. However, due to multiple circumstances, Carmy can't afford to let Richie go. Although he is a nuisance in many ways, he is still a valuable member of the team. The Beef would be an optimal working environment for all if Richie would just commit to changing his ways. Many junior leaders can spot similarities between their experiences with their own subordinates and that of Carmy and Richie's working relationship. They may also find relevant and useful approaches that aid in combating counterproductive behaviors.

Conclusion

The works mentioned at the beginning of this article are important and they still hold value. However, in many cases and situations, they aren't relevant to what most junior leaders are struggling with. *The Bear* does, and it does so in a way that is easily understandable and relatable even for those who have never worked in a kitchen. To properly change counterproductive behaviors and instill commitment, it will take competent leaders who utilize mission command principles and lead by example. *The Bear* provides necessary examples of how to accomplish this. It also serves as a new and relevant source of professional development in doing so.

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