



by Andrew Wilhelm and Michael Hellman

In the winter of 2021, my new Platoon Sergeant and I sat down over coffee and began building our new partnership. I had seven months of Platoon Leader time under my belt and a relationship with my first PSG that we both considered highly effective. However, I understood the importance of establishing initial expectations and wanted to set our team up for success. During that initial counseling, SFC Hellman and I discussed our families, backgrounds, and goals for the Army. We spoke frankly about the Platoon's strengths and weaknesses, set joint goals, and identified an initial action plan. By the end of the session, it was evident that we would work well together and that the counseling had gone well. But, as would become his habit, SFC Hellman showed me how we could improve our session. He introduced me to the "yours, mine, ours" exercise.

The exercise is a simple one. We began by independently identifying what responsibilities we considered "mine" and which we considered our partners. Once identified, we consolidated our lists and discussed each item. The discussion included which tasks we deemed most important, what goes into executing each task, and how we could support the other as they performed their respective responsibilities. When we came across responsibilities that we had both listed in the "mine" column, we added them to the "our"

column and further discussed how we would execute those responsibilities as a team. Finally, we recorded each item on a yellow legal pad and included a copy of the final list with the session's counseling form.

By clearly defining each other's roles within the Platoon, SFC Hellman and I established clear lines of responsibility.

This clarity was beneficial for several reasons. First, it ensured that our Platoon did not waste organizational effort due to a lack of transparency. For example, after an increase in Battalion COVID cases led to the cancellation of a planned team live-fire event, the Commander tasked our Platoon with executing a short-notice M4 qualification range in its place. With only three days to plan, resource, and complete the training event, our Platoon could not afford to waste time. Thanks to our initial "yours, mine, ours" exercise, we understood where we needed to focus individually. On receipt of the mission, I knew I was responsible for developing the concept of the operation, and SFC Hellman quickly began developing medical and supply plans. Conversely, we also knew we needed to work together to validate our trainers on the program of instruction. As a result, we successfully executed our range even with a shortened planning timeline.

Further, by understanding and revisiting each other's tasks using the "yours, mine, ours" exercise, we could ensure the Platoon still completed all requirements even in the absence of the other. As a result, we could seamlessly maintain continuity of effort within the Platoon until their return.

For example, due to manning timelines within the Battalion, I had to begin the process of transitioning into the HHC Executive Officer role while my replacement as Platoon Leader was still at the Sapper Leader Course. As a result, I spent a little more than a month attempting to fill both positions. Doing so, unsurprisingly, was not an effective technique. Luckily, because SFC Hellman had a clear understanding of the specific tasks I typically executed; such as submitting training meeting slides or conducting property layouts, he could step in and ensure the Platoon continued to operate efficiently.

While the "Yours, Mine, Ours" exercise provided us with a valuable division of generic duties and tasks. We could have strengthened the activity by including the specific platoon goals identified earlier in the counseling session in our discussion. For example, we identified improving the Platoon's physical fitness as a long-term goal. Had we integrated the goals into our tasks, we could have identified the specific duties and tasks required of each to ensure the Platoon reached this goal. Additionally, the exercise could have benefited from including our two Squad Leaders. Doing so would have had to occur post-PL/PSG

counseling but could have helped to establish a common understanding of individual and shared tasks across the entire leadership team.

The “Yours, Mine, Ours” exercise is not a counseling within itself or a one-off event. If used independently, the participants would miss out on many essential touch points necessary for a successful counseling session. Additionally, it is crucial to avoid falling into an “it’s yours; therefore, it’s not mine” mindset. However, when used as part of a larger counseling strategy, the “Yours, Mine, Ours” exercise can be a valuable tool for establishing initial responsibilities, ensuring task continuity, and laying the groundwork for a successful team.

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