

Part-Time-Army-Officer



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The purpose of this newsletter is to help you develop your potential, improve your effectiveness and be the best part-time Army Officer you can be. My goal is to provide helpful training tips, insights, articles, interviews and other practical information. My ultimate goal is to provide value.

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The Importance of Lifelong Learning!

By MAJ Charles Holmes

Most people think that their learning ends when they graduate from college. I've found that nothing is further from the truth. In my opinion, that's when your real education begins.

Truthfully, I didn't learn very many real-world skills in college. How about you? How many classes did you take on job interviews, finding a spouse, how to communicate, how to invest, how to balance a checkbook or how to be a

better leader? If you are anything like me, you probably didn't learn any of these important life skills in college.

Instead, you learned THEORY. And theory only gets you so far in the real world. Now, don't get me wrong here. There's nothing wrong with THEORY. And there's nothing wrong with getting a college education. But, EVALUATED REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE is the key to success in life.

Just remember that your real education begins when you take charge of your Soldiers. Although I learned many great military leadership skills in ROTC and at my Officer Basic Course, I can't say they TOTALLY prepared me to be an EFFECTIVE Platoon Leader or Officer. It taught me some of the basic fundamentals, but that's about it.

Everything I learned as a leader came from my on-the-job-experience and from mentorship from my Platoon Sergeant, my Company Commander, my Battalion Commander and my Soldiers. More importantly, I wouldn't have learned anything if I hadn't been OPEN MINDED and willing to learn.

I must admit, I wasn't the greatest Officer or Platoon Leader, especially as a young Second Lieutenant. Because I had previous enlisted experience, I thought that qualified me as "knowing it all." Boy was I wrong. Thankfully, my CO and BN Commander straightened me out and mentored me well.

If it hadn't been for a swift boot to my ass, who knows where I would be today? Since then, some ten years later, I'm happy to say I've evolved. I've matured and gained lots of life experience, real-world experience and military leadership experience.

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And if there is one thing that I've learned along the way, it's that the best and most effective military leaders are "students of their profession." In other words, great leaders commit themselves to life-long learning. They make a conscience effort to learn something new each day. They try to be a little bit better today than they were yesterday.

How do they do this? First of all, leaders are readers. The most effective officers I know read at least one book each month to improve their leadership skills. And the books aren't always military books either. Good military leaders read a variety of subjects such as leadership, communication, tactics, military history, political, self-help, personal finance and many other types of books.

You need to read a variety of topics so you are well-rounded. You need to be well versed and educated on a variety of topics, not just military tactics. You have to read a variety of topics because Officers also serve as mothers, fathers, friends, coaches, disciplinarians, leaders, tacticians, and so much more.

In addition to reading, most effective leaders spend an hour or two each week REFLECTING on their past experiences. I once heard that experience is overrated. I believe that. What's most important is EVALUATED EXPERIENCE. I think I first heard that in a John Maxwell book. The lesson still strikes home with me today.

How do you reflect? It's really a process of EVALUATING your experiences about what went right, what went wrong and what you would do differently in a similar situation. It's like having an internal After-Action-Review.

If you've never done this before, you can start by taking out a piece of paper, sitting down at your kitchen table and reviewing the past week. Write down the highlights of your week, and evaluate each topic. What went right? What went wrong? What would you do differently next time? You will be amazed at what you learn. Make a commitment to do this every week (or at least once a month) and watch yourself grow as a leader.

The third and final thing effective leaders do is SHARE WHAT THEY LEARN. There's no better way to grow as a leader, than to share what you learn with others. For example, when you learn something new, share it with a peer, your NCO, your boss, your spouse, or even a subordinate.

Tell the person you are excited about what you've learned. Next, tell them how the idea helped you and then tell them how it might be of benefit to them. At this point, let them decide whether or not they want to implement what you taught them.

I don't know about you, but I'm always open for new ideas to improve my effectiveness. If one of my peers learned something new that helped him be a better leader, I hope he would share it with me.

By implementing these three things into your everyday life, you will be a more effective leader. You will develop your potential and you will be very proud at WHO YOU BECOME.

In summary, the best leaders are very committed to life-long learning. If you want to reach your potential, you should do the same thing. You should read a new book every month. You should spend time reflecting on

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your past experiences. And you should share what you learn with others.

Good luck!

Recommended Book of the Week

How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie



About Charles Holmes

I am a part-time Army Officer in the Maryland National Guard. I'm currently a Major (unless they demoted me). I love to write, teach, train and motivate. Unfortunately, I don't always get to do that as much as I'd like to. That's why I created this newsletter.

I've got just under sixteen years in the Army. As a civilian, I am a work-at-home entrepreneur. I build websites and have authored six published books. I also have a successful eBay business. I am married to the most incredible lady on this planet, Rachel.

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