
LEADERSHIP: 2000 AND BEYOND

Second Edition | Volume II

OFFICERSHIP ♦ MANAGEMENT ♦ COMMUNICATIONS ♦
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT ♦ PROBLEM SOLVING ♦ COUNSELING



June 2004

LEADERSHIP: 2000 AND BEYOND

Second Edition

PREFACE

Cadets may study this second edition or the original 1993 edition to complete leadership laboratory requirements.

This two-volume text is used by CAP cadets to study the art of leadership. For details on how the leadership laboratory is implemented in the CAP Cadet Program, see CAPR 52-16, *Cadet Program Management*, available at www.cap.gov.

Nearly identical to its predecessor, the second edition maintains the fundamental goals and plan of the original 1993 edition. However, the editors have slightly modified the text by:

- ▶ Clarifying the learning objectives and revising the end-of-chapter study aids;
- ▶ Simplifying the text and focusing solely on leadership content, to include removing CAP policy guidance and promotion requirements best described in other directives;
- ▶ Updating the images depicting airpower pioneers and removing art that did not advance the text's educational goals;
- ▶ Organizing the chapters into two volumes instead of three (one volume for enlisted cadets and one for cadet officers);
- ▶ Keeping the narrative intact for the sake of consistency, except for editing the grammar and style in a few instances.

Most of the edits described above were needed because the cadet grade structure, promotion requirements, and CAP policy described in the 1993 edition have evolved since its publication. By focusing solely on *leadership*, the second edition does not reiterate perishable information already explained in other CAP publications.

Therefore, with no fundamental changes to the text's content, cadets may study either the first or second edition of *Leadership: 2000 and Beyond*. Their choice will have no adverse effect on their ability to pass achievement tests and milestone exams.

Leadership: 2000 and Beyond contains many valuable leadership insights. However, this second edition will also be its last. The next edition of the CAP cadet leadership text will be completely redesigned through a partnership with senior CAP leaders and cadet program experts, members of the USAF Air University faculty, and HQ CAP education managers. That text will continue to introduce cadets to Air Force leadership concepts.



Headquarters Civil Air Patrol
United States Air Force Auxiliary
105 S Hansell St Maxwell AFB AL 36112

Published by the *LEAD Team*
Leadership, Education, and Development

CONTENTS — Volume II

CHAPTER 8	4
CHAPTER 9	13
CHAPTER 10	24
CHAPTER 11	41
CHAPTER 12	58
CHAPTER 13	76
CHAPTER 14	88
CHAPTER 15	97

Chapters 1-7 are contained
in Volume I.

Chapter 9

INTRODUCTION

Now it is time to focus on some staff positions essential to operating a CAP unit. Administration requires much behind-the-scenes work. Without it, unit progress will be sporadic. This chapter describe what administrative work entails, how it is done, and why it is done.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES: PLANNING

Planning is the first of the five management functions mentioned in Chapter 8. It is unique because it establishes the objectives necessary to all the unit's effort. High-echelon planning is broad and general; detailed planning is done at lower echelons. Since operations are always changing, you must plan all the time. You must make plans before you can know what kind of organizing, coordinating, directing and controlling are necessary. When you manage, you will always have to plan, although the nature and scope of planning depends on your authority and with limits higher headquarters sets for you. Plans are efficient only if they attain objectives without too high a cost. Many military commanders have successfully carried out plans to seize an enemy stronghold, but failed because the operation costs too much in men and equipment. Planning efficiently goes beyond dollars, work hours, and other measurable factors; it includes individual and unit satisfaction.

Define and Analyze Your Objective. Since the nature of the mission determines what your plan will be, understand the mission objective in order to make good decisions. You must break the mission into parts and see the relationships between them. Analyze each objective to learn what you need to achieve it. Decide which specific tasks you will analyze until you decide exactly who does what. Then, establish relationships between one person doing one task and another person doing another. Finally, find the sequence of steps necessary to finish the job. Planning answers what should be done, how and where it should be done, who should do it, and with what resources—money, material, time and human. How detailed you get depends on what organizational level you are planning for. The higher the unit, the more general the planning.

Evaluate the Situation. Decide the roles of, and establish liaison with, the other parts of the unit. Decide how far you can rely on their help, how they fit into the scheme of the operation, what contribution they can make, and what are the relative priorities of these contributions.

Consider Possible Courses of Action. Get your people together, explain the objective, tell them what resources are available, and ask them to “brainstorm” for ideas (see Chapter 15 to learn more about creative thinking).

Select the Best Course of Action. During this process, you usually think in terms of suitability, feasibility, adequacy, and acceptability. To be suitable, a course of action must fit the assigned mission. To be feasible, it must be possible. To be

STATE THE REASONS FOR PLANNING.

EXPLAIN THE STEPS IN PLANNING.

Planning is similar to a journey. First you need a place to go (objective). Second, a starting place. Evaluate where you are now (note resources). Then you can figure out how to go from start to objective.

adequate it must meet established requirements. To be acceptable, it must merit approval as part of the larger plan.

Develop an Alternate Plan. Conditions often change, resources may not be available as expected, or even the specific objective may change. In certain situations there may be no time to re-plan. Your alternate plan must be as carefully selected and as fully developed as your primary plan.

Test Both Plans for Completeness. Be sure the plans explain “what, where, when, who and how.” As you ask these questions, decide whether your plan is suitable, feasible, adequate, and acceptable. Question not only the general plan, but each detail.

CORRESPONDENCE

As a cadet officer, you will write correspondence. It could be a simple formal letter to your cadet unit commander, Cadet Advisory Council, or someone outside CAP. Often you will write for (or polish the writings of) your cadet commander and other staff officers. Your duties may involve writing personnel authorizations or participation letters for cadet activities.

DESCRIBE THE FUNCTION AND FORMAT OF EACH TYPE OF CAP CORRESPONDENCE.

Letters

There are three types of Civil Air Patrol letter formats—military, business, and endorsement. After we discuss all three types, you will write examples of each

The military format letter is used primarily for communication with CAP units and military agencies. As shown in CAPR 10-1, *Preparing and Processing CAP Correspondence* you may use the CAP seal on this type of letter. In the body, individual paragraphs are numbered. Subparagraphs are lettered or numbered as shown in the regulation. Unlike a business-style letter, you may use attachments and information copies listed on a military formal letter.

An endorsement letter is actually something you type at the bottom of a military letter. The military letter requests approval and the endorsement indicates whether or not the approval has been given. It is used between or within CAP units to save time and resources. The text is single-spaced and each endorsement is numbered in sequence. Endorsement letters may have more than one page for endorsements and attachments for each endorsement.

In a business letter you are usually communicating with someone outside of CAP. A business-style letter usually contains a letterhead, a date, a body, and a signature element, as a military-style letter does. There are three acceptable letter formats: the full blocked style, the modified block style with blocked paragraphs, and the modified block style with indented paragraphs. In all three business formats paragraphs are never numbered. In CAP we use the full block style with all parts of the letter and all typing started flush with the left margin.

Personnel Authorizations

Personnel Authorizations assign specific tasks to individual. They are particularly useful if several people have been reassigned or assigned at one time; simply make a copy for each person’s personnel file, rather than make a separate CAPF 2a for each person. They can be used at all levels to appoint individuals to member-

ship on boards or committees or to make assignments. Briefly, these must be on the letterhead of the unit making the assignment. They must be numbered sequentially beginning with 1 during the calendar year. The effective date of these actions is usually the date on which they are published, unless otherwise stated in the letter. They must have a commander's signature element followed by a list of people and places where the authorization will be distributed. (See CAPR 10-1 for further details.)

Participation Letters

Participation letters verify attendance and participation at CAP activities. These letters can be short and informal. They need to state the activity, the date(s) and who attended.

PROBLEM SOLVING

This section expands on decision-making presented in Chapter 8. There are two levels of problem solving. The first one is discussed here, the second level deals with how to write the problem-solving process as a staff study report. The staff study report will appear in a later chapter.

The problem solving steps follow a logical sequence. But, do not follow this sequence blindly. Developments in one phase may cause you to reconsider a previous phase. The sequence also may vary with different types of problems and with the way you recognize the problem. The sequence is as follows:

Recognize the Problem. Creative thinking determines how successful you will be. In every problem there is a goal, an individual or group wanting to achieve the goal, and an obstacle to the goal. Always make certain you do not confuse the obstacle for the problem.

Gather Data. This process begins when you recognize the obstacle and it continues until you implement the solution. Data is classified as facts, criteria, and assumptions.

List Possible Solutions. Use creative thinking during this phase to allow yourself to visualize, perceive, and produce new ideas. Remember, the rules of brainstorming and do not pass judgment on any solution at this phase.

Test Possible Solutions. This begins with a general evaluation of the solutions. Discard solutions that are obviously unworthy and reevaluate your list until just one or two solutions are left.

Select the Best Possible Solution. If you eliminated all but one solution, you have selected the best possible solution. If you have more than one solution, establish additional criteria (or more stringent criteria) to find the best possible solution.

Apply the Solution. Your purpose in working with a problem is to solve it. Selecting a solution alone cannot solve it; you must put it into effect, then test its effectiveness.

LIST AND EXPLAIN EACH STEP IN PROBLEM SOLVING.

You cannot solve a problem if you cannot define it.

Asking questions and listening is crucial to accomplishing many of the problem solving steps.

How you apply the solution can help or kill the solution.

You have reviewed the steps in problem solving, now look try to solve some problems. Here are three situations showing how to apply the problem-solving process just discussed. Think of how you would solve these; you may find it helpful to discuss them in leadership class:

Problem 1. You are a cadet major and the commander of a four year old CAP cadet squadron. You started the squadron and, many of the cadets are original members. They have progressed gradually until all cadet command and staff slots are filled by experienced and capable cadet officers. Cadet Jack Armstrong has recently transferred into your squadron from another CAP region. His father, a senior Air Force officer, has relocated in your squadron area. In his old unit, Jack was recently promoted to lieutenant colonel and next in line to be cadet commander. He appears capable, is enthusiastic, forceful and ambitious, and has a highly laudatory letter of recommendation from his former squadron commander. It is obvious that he expects to assume a position of leadership if he remains in your unit.

Differentiate between what people “know” and how they “feel” about a situation or solution.

You hate to lose Jack, but if you place him in a command or staff position, it will mean a job demotion for a cadet who has worked long and hard for the same position. The next nearest squadron is over fifty miles away. What do you do?

Problem 2. You are a cadet second lieutenant who transferred to this area 6 months ago. You are the cadet training officer. You are aware that an unusually low percentage of cadets pass the leadership portion of Phase II achievements. You have heard that this squadron “does its own thing,” and the commander has conveyed the idea that “if wing will just leave us alone, we’ll get along fine.” You have tried to recruit some new cadets. This evening one of them shows up.

The squadron commander appears late, makes a loud apology, sees you and your friend, and comes over to shake hands. On the way over, he spots a cadet doing something undesirable and orders the cadet to do ten push-ups.

In a brief conversation with you and your friend, the commander tells you that the achievements are not very important to him or the squadron. The togetherness activities are the main thing “keeping the kids off the streets.” The commander orders instant push-ups for two cadets he spotted talking at parade rest. Your friend leaves and says that he will see you tomorrow. You find yourself wondering about this situation. This squadron commander is very forceful and confident. What do you do to get things back on track?

Problem 3. You are the cadet commander of a large Type A encampment. So far things have not gone all that well for you or your staff. The senior member encampment commander is a “Little Hitler” and now you have just walked into the barracks to hear another cadet calling your cadet officers “maggots.”

Discussion. In Problem 1, your problem is what to do with the new cadet. Obstacles are what to do with any cadets that he may displace or what to do with Jack if you do not assign him to a command or staff position.

In problem 2, your problem is to convince the squadron commander that he needs to stress passing the achievements more. Your obstacles are the commander’s arguments and the superficial success and cohesiveness of the unit. What about the Cadet Protection Policy?

Problem 3 requires you to solve two problems at once. They may be interrelated or separate, but they must be solved. You need to get the encampment commander to change his/her leadership style. You need to counsel the individual who degraded your cadet officers. What about the Cadet Protection Policy?

STAFF STUDY REPORT

The purpose of a staff study report is to give your commander a complete solution to a problem. You present your commander with all the written material necessary to put the solution into action. Completed staff work has three results. First, it protects the commander from illogical ideas, incomplete or wordy reports and vague oral reports. Second, it frees the commander to do work at the command level. Third, it gives the staff officers a hearing for new ideas. The final test of the completeness of your staff study is: Would you as the officer receiving the report, be willing to stake your reputation on the recommended solution?

Heading. The heading consists of (1) the originating unit title, (2) the reference line, (3) the date and (4) the subject.

Body. The body of the report contains five sections: (1) Problem, (2) Factors Bearing on the Problem, (3) Discussion, (4) Conclusion, and (5) /action Recommended. These parts correspond to the phases of the problem-solving process.

Conclusion. The conclusion offers only one thing: a brief restatement of the best possible solution to the problem. In the conclusion, two things are entirely out of place: Continuation of the discussion and introduction of new material.

Action Recommended. In this section, you tell the reader what action should be taken. Your recommendation should be worded so your superior can react simply by signing it for action or disapproval.

Ending. Give (1) your signature, grade, title, and those of the other people responsible and (2) References to attachments.

Attachments. Furnish all the detailed material necessary to support the facts, assumptions and opinions in your report.

EXPLAIN THE FUNCTION OF A STAFF STUDY REPORT

IDENTIFY THE COMPONENTS OF A STAFF STUDY REPORT

DRILL AND CEREMONIES

A parade is made up of a formation, any number of ceremonies, and a review. The formation is simply the arrangement of cadets in an organized way. Ceremonies are events to honor persons, units, and our country. A review is the formation of cadets in a unit and marching them properly. A parade is a ceremony within itself where respect is paid to the US flag, as in reveille and retreat. In the Cadet Drill manual you will learn more about these.

Formation. Usually the normal formation for the wing during a review is the wing in-line with squadrons in mass formation. Occasionally, the wing may be formed in-line with groups in mass formation.

The interval between squadrons is 6 paces with 12 paces between groups and/or band. The color guard is positioned in the center of the formation and is considered when measuring interval. Distance is measured from the rear of the leading element to the front of the element next to the order of march.

Ceremonies. CAP members at encampments and other special functions may be asked to participate in any or all of the special military ceremonies discussed in the next chapter, such as Retreat (and Reveille), Inspection by a Reviewing Officer, Presentation of Decorations, Retirement, and Change of Command. The purpose of a ceremony is to (1) promote teamwork and pride; (2) display proficiency and state of training; and (3) accord distinctive honors to national symbols or individuals on special occasions.

DEFINE THE FOLLOWING: CEREMONY, REVIEW, AND PARADE

HEADQUARTERS
CIVIL AIR PATROL ALASKA WING
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY
16322 37TH ST ELMENDORF AFB AK 99506

6 June 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR

FROM: Cadet Advisory Council

SUBJECT: Preparing a Staff Study Report

PROBLEM

1. Clearly and concisely state the problem you are trying to solve.

FACTORS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

2. Facts. Limit your facts to only those directly relating to the problem.
3. Assumptions. Should be realistic and support your study.
4. Criteria. Give standards, requirements, or limitations you will use to test possible solutions. Ensure you can use standards to measure or test solutions.
5. Definitions. Describe or define terms that may confuse your audience.

DISCUSSION

6. This section shows the logic used in solving the problem. Introduce the problem and give some background, if necessary. Then explain your solution or possible solution.

CONCLUSION

7. State your conclusion as a workable, complete solution to the problem you described previously in "Discussion."

ACTION RECOMMENDED

8. Tell the reader the action necessary to implement the solution. This should be worked so the boss only needs to sign to make the solution happen.

Jane F. Curry

JANE F. CURRY, C/Capt, CAP
Chair

Attachments:

1. Results from cadet survey
2. Talking paper on Program X

STAFF STUDY REPORTS

For detailed guidance, see "Tongue & Quill," available at www.cap.gov.

Leaving the heading blank allows the report to seek its own level

In the "from" line, use your office symbol, if you have one

State the subject concisely

What are you trying to solve?

Differentiate between absolute facts and assumptions.

It is not a sign of weakness to list a few assumptions.

Criteria could include budgets, regulatory requirements, and qualitative measures of success.

Know your audience: define jargon, but recognize CAP leaders probably know most CAP terms.

The discussion is crucial because it shows the logic used to solve the problem. Generally, some background information is necessary to properly introduce your problem. The introduction may be one paragraph or several paragraphs, depending on the detail required.

After showing how you reasoned the problem through, state your conclusion. The conclusion must provide a complete, workable solution to the problem. It is nothing more than a brief restatement of the best possible solution(s). Never introduce new material this late in the report. Double-check: does it satisfy the problem?

The action recommended advises the reader exactly how to proceed. Word the recommendations so your boss need only sign for action.

If you have detailed information or supporting documents to offer, include them as attachments to the report.

Each ceremony is a sequence of events. Each ceremony may fit into a larger sequence of events called a parade. In ceremonies, you realize that your personal performance reflects upon the unit's efficiency. Pride in the unit comes when you feel you have a responsibility in making your unit efficient. A sense of unity is promoted by pride on your accomplishments, by pride in your unit's reputation, and by confidence in your unit companions. Everyone participating in the ceremony feels this unity of effort.

It is essential for you to understand thoroughly the different military ceremonies used in Civil Air Patrol, the purposes and relationship of these ceremonies to each other, and the steps involved in each. You should concentrate on learning the sequence of events for each type of ceremony, particularly parades. This knowledge is essential for you to perform confidently any assigned role in a ceremony. After initial study, you should mentally review what will be required when filling various positions in a ceremony.

Review. A review is the formation of cadets in a group and/or wing and marching in a prescribed manner. The purpose is to inspect how well a unit drills and what condition their equipment is in. A review may be held to let a higher commander, official, or dignitary see how well a unit is trained. A review may consist of the:

- Formation of troops
- Inspection of troops (from the reviewing stand or as outlined in AFMAN 36-2203)
- March in review

Two or more groups are formed on the final line and presented to the troop commander. The adjutant, by order of the unit commander, posts on line with the staff. The unit commander may then present the cadets to the reviewing officer. Inspection of cadets may follow if the reviewing officer wants. See AFMAN 36-2203 further details regarding drill of the unit in parade and ceremonies situations.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the reasons for planning. How does it fit into the five functions of management?
2. Explain why defining and analyzing objectives is critical to planning.
3. Identify the six basic steps of planning, as discussed in this chapter.
4. Identify the three types of letter formats used in CAP. Discuss the purpose of each.
5. Explain the function of the personnel authorization.
6. Identify and discuss the six steps in the problem solving process.
7. Explain the purpose of the staff study report.
8. Identify the components of a staff study report.
9. Compare the components of the staff study report with the steps of the problem solving process. What do you notice? What does this tell you about staff study reports?
10. Define the following: review, parade, and ceremony.

SPECIAL READINGS

REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSIONALISM by Maj Gen Pete Todd From *Contrails*, Vol. 33, United States Air Force Academy

I salute the men and women of the Class of 1991 and welcome you to the Long Blue Line! As the temporary custodian of the “point position” in that formation, I feel a special warmth and kinship with you, its newest members. You’re entering an exciting and challenging new phase of your lives, and doing so at a time when the Air Force is poised for many equally exciting changes—new systems, new applications, new concepts.

However, despite all our soaring technological progress, the Air Force’s fundamental mission remains what it has always been: to remain constantly ready to contribute to the defense of our country and our national interests. Stripped to its essentials, I believe that mission also defines what the Air Force Academy is all about—to prepare you to join, contribute to, and eventually lead these efforts.

It is in this context that each of you should recognize that the Air Force is a profession, indeed a “calling,” rather than “just another job” or occupation. The hallmark of that profession is Service, with a capital “S.” By the same token, the Academy is far more than just a college or a “trade school.” In the broadest sense, it’s a leadership laboratory designed to educate, broaden, toughen and motivate you for a life of dedicated service to your country.

You’ve got a lot on your minds right now, but I think it’s important for you to grasp this essential nature of the Air Force and the Academy early. Without this perspective, the intellectual, physical, and emotional challenges you will face as a cadet in the days ahead may seem pointlessly rigorous. More important, the demands you will face later as an officer may overtax your tolerance unless your career goals are framed by the question, “What am I in for?” rather than “What’s in it for me?” What you should be “in” for is service to country, and it’s not too early to begin evaluating the Academy and yourself in that framework.

Each of you was selected on the basis of excellence, qualities of intellect, character, integrity, and leadership, which made you stand out from most of your peers. I urge each of you, in your own private way, to make a personal commitment to excellence in every aspect of your lives. Build upon and develop the qualities that won you admission to this select group. Set your personal and professional standards just a little higher than the “system” establishes for you. Whether you leave the Air force early or decide to devote your life’s energies to its mission, the important thing is to make the professionalism you will learn at the Academy the personal touchstone of your daily living.

I’ve learned lots of lessons in the nearly quarter of a century since I stood where you are, but one of the most elevating of all has been this: give me 10 dedicated professionals with a selfless willingness to service and I can accomplish more than with scores of “job holders.” We’ll never outnumber our adversaries, so we have to out think and out perform them. We simply have no room for the “summer soldier of the sunshine patriot”—in peace or wartime.

I want to emphasize, though that the dedication and commitment I'm talking about mustn't be a blind and unquestioning form of ancestor worship, with out a shred of initiative or imagination. On the contrary, the Air Force depends for its vitality on the innovation and vision of our people. In my book there's no inconsistency between selfless loyalty and a constant search for better ways to perform our mission.

All of these concerns probably seem very remote to you right now; I can remember that my early horizons as a new cadet were often limited to how to get through the next formation alive! But I want to assure you that it won't be long before each of you has to confront many of these professional issues of commitment, challenge, integrity, goals, etc., head on. I hope these random thoughts from somebody who's been through it all will provide a peg on which to hang some of your own thinking. Good luck to all of you and I look forward to serving with you in the best and most professional Air Force in the world.

FEEDBACK: A UNIQUE KEY TO LEADERSHIP

By Lt Col Henry A. Staley (Edited for CAP)

We've been wringing our hands for the past decade over the decline of personal integrity and the slow slide of "professionalism" down the slope toward "occupationalism." Most of our pre-commissioning and Professional Military Education (PME) institutions devote blocks of instruction to integrity, leadership, professionalism, officership, and the like. Specific definitions are seldom forthcoming, but the emotionally soggy word "professionalism," "leadership," "integrity," and "officership," make a good press.

Written or spoken words rarely lead to significant behavioral change unless those communications are consistently supported with action. Our integrity, our professionalism, and our officership erode a little every time we see leadership pull a fast one, act inconsistently, or fail to meet that seldom defined ideal. For me, that idea conjures up a definite mental picture. I see an officer who has the strength of character to be humble and the wisdom to be reasonably suspicious of gut reactions. I see someone who sincerely values the opinions of others and considers many alternative paths to an objective. Even when time limits full consideration of all paths, I see an officer who never stops trying to find them. I see an officer who's intellectually stimulated by open debate. Above all, I see a person who's acutely aware that almost mythical isolation from reality that slowly and insidiously overtakes a leader as he or she advances in rank.

I learned long ago never to criticize without offering alternatives for improvement. Therefore, I'll introduce my suggestion by mentioning a grassroots activity that occurs in thousands of situations every day. It plays an important role in all human relationships. It's called feedback. But the type of feedback usually provided by officers brings multiple injuries to our profession every hour of the day: it's death by a thousand cuts.

We tend to create a majority of officers who become emotionally frazzled at the mere suggestion of disagreeing with anyone in the authority chain. I won't belabor this truism since you've each witnessed your share of "yes men and women"—careerists, opportunists, and manipulators. You may be one of these types yourself. In fact, we're all members of that overwhelming brotherhood and sisterhood to some extent.

Is there something wrong here? Should we resist those aspects of training and education that reinforce the “Yessir, yessir, three bags full” mentality? YES! There is something wrong here and you can sense it. Yes, I am suggesting we overcome the traditional approach.

Most staff members will slant their comments so they agree with the perceived objectives of the decision maker (leader). There may be conventional recognition of opposing viewpoints, but it will most likely be written or spoken in a less than emphatic fashion. A truly effective leader literally squeezes, begs, demands, and cajoles the staff to provide all the reasons Issue X may or may not be logical. Equal emphasis is given the position that runs counter to the decision maker’s personal viewpoint.

A truly effective leader understands the basic character of the corps—the basic need to “Yessir, yessir, three bags full” and overcomes it through personal action. A truly effective leader has the strength of character to realize that his or her intuitive judgment is usually a poor substitution for the collective wisdom of the staff. In those rare cases when intuitive judgment is best, listening to the viewpoints of the opposition will neither weaken a sound decision or strengthen a poor one. A truly effective leader’s success will hinge in no small part on frequent and meaningful reward for honest feedback. This reward can be as informal as, “Thanks for that candid and provocative viewpoint.”

An effective leader realizes that fighting for feedback really is a fight. Staff members will resist it. After all, this is a new experience. It short-circuits all of their subservience training and career survival wisdom. An effective leader must struggle doggedly against these initial reactions. In other words, a true leader must lead. There is obviously no grand design or complex conspiracy aimed at shielding leaders from bad news or contrary viewpoints, but the effect is almost the same. What I’m suggesting is really quite simple. It takes only a personal commitment to demand and reward honest feedback. The responsibility for effective or ineffective feedback rests squarely on the leader’s shoulders. Some people suggest that our pre-commissioning and PME systems should approach officership training and education from a more enlightened perspective that we should nurture a more questioning, creative, and assertive approach in our professional programs.

Instead of preaching “Yessir, yessir, three bags full” we should be teaching “Yessir, we can probably do what you ask, but the costs will be...” Until a decision maker actually decides, the staff officer should be compelled by his or her professional; integrity to render a thorough, no-punches-pulled assessment of every staff issue. Until that time comes the key to opening the lock to honest feedback waits in the pocket of every leader. The truly effective leader will reach for it.