



JEANNE M. HOLM CENTER

Leadership and Management Case Studies

Activity Statement:

- Relate the appropriate leadership and management theories and principles to selected case studies.

Affective Lesson Objective:

- Value the proper use of leadership and management theories and principles.

Affective Samples of Behavior:

- Actively participate in case study discussion during the lesson.
- Explain the importance of properly applying leadership and management theories and principles.

During this lesson, you'll approach leadership and management problems using a "case study." This method of study has proven to be successful in the field of management and will give you an opportunity to systematically address and solve problems similar to those you may experience as a commissioned officer. To solve your problem, you'll be using the scientific method of problem solving. You will also need to translate the appropriate leadership theories and principles that you have learned in previous lessons into practical application.

During the lesson, your instructor will divide the class into groups and assign a case to each group. Each group member should be prepared to present the selected case to the flight during class. Review all the cases prior to class so you're familiar with the cases and can participate in the discussion. Use the "abbreviated method of problem solving" to solve your assigned case. This method may be used by groups to solve problems in conference, as well as by individuals. This method isn't foolproof, but it'll help you withhold judgment until you've considered all facets of the problem and all solutions without prejudice or bias. This is the value of any systematic method: it enables you to withhold judgment until all aspects of the problem have been logically considered. The suggested steps of the process are to establish:

- Facts
- Assumptions
- Possible Courses of Action
- Best Course of Action

Case Study #1

You're the flight commander for a Security Forces flight. There are 15 enlisted Airmen in your flight. Morale is very high; everyone seems to contribute enthusiastically to the mission. However, this morning A1C Timothy Griffin reported being sexually assaulted by another member of the flight, SSgt Richard Watson. A1C Griffin is in a relationship, but has been experiencing some stress in that relationship. After A1C Griffin drank too much at the club, SSgt Watson offered A1C Griffin a ride home. A1C Griffin reported the sexual assault happened in SSgt Watson's car. A1C Griffin also mentioned drinking a few beers along with some shots of tequila before getting the ride home. SSgt Watson's cubicle is in the same section of the building as A1C Griffin's cubicle.

What actions do you need to take? What issues do you need to anticipate?

Case Study #2

You're the squadron executive officer and 2d Lt Brown's reporting official. Lieutenant Brown, who was a physical education major in college, has been on active duty for 1 year and is assigned as an administrative officer in a tactical fighter squadron. He wanted to be an Air Force pilot, but there was no demand for pilots when he joined the Air Force.

He accepted an assignment as an Force Support officer and completed AFROTC and his technical school, hoping to be accepted for undergraduate pilot training (UPT) later. He hasn't been accepted and was notified a month ago that there probably won't be any openings in UPT for at least 1 more year. He isn't satisfied with his present assignment and, to this point, has not shown any interest in his job. He refuses to get involved in any decision making or management problems in his unit. He tells his NCOs to handle all problems and not to get him involved since he's only interested in becoming a pilot. He has also displayed this same attitude to your supervisor, the squadron commander, and a lieutenant colonel.

In addition, 2d Lt Brown feels the Air Force isn't putting his education to proper use, because his degree is in physical education. He's an exceptional athlete and was recently selected as the most valuable player on the base softball team, which he also coaches. Because of his athletic ability and the success of the team, he's very popular with many of the key personnel on base who speak very highly of him to his commander. Lieutenant Brown spends most of his off-duty time, and a considerable part of each duty day, organizing and participating in the base athletic program.

Last week, 2d Lt Brown's unit was inspected by a standardization team from higher headquarters, which identified an absence of supervision in 2d Lt Brown's area of responsibility.

The squadron commander asks you what you think should be done about the situation. How will you resolve this problem?

Case Study #3

Just 2 months out of training you were assigned to the Logistics Readiness Squadron in Minot, North Dakota. After in-processing with the unit, you sit down with your squadron commander, Major Carnage, and relay your lack of experience and uncertainty about the job. “Sir, I was open to anything the Air Force handed me,” you said to the commander, “but logistics in North Dakota wasn’t even close to being on my dream sheet. How am I going to lead if I don’t even have the skills to tell people how and what to do?” The commander replied, “As an officer you should be ready to lead anywhere and anytime you are put into a position, no matter what training you’ve had. Don’t worry about it though--you’re going to be the assistant flight commander for Bravo Flight under the eyes of Captain Vogel, the Bravo Flight Commander.”

After 7 months on the job, Captain Vogel tells you he is leaving in 2 weeks for Columbus AFB MS for Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) and will be handing the Bravo Flight reigns over to you permanently. You shudder at the thought but quickly remember what your commander had said about officers leading anytime and anywhere.

You take the job head-on, using the same techniques Capt Vogel applied to lead the flight. For some reason, the 15 personnel under your supervision randomly disregard your orders and quickly fall behind on the vehicle maintenance schedule. The commander calls you into his office one day to discuss the decline in flight morale and unit effectiveness.

You begin to think about the situation and the variables at hand and say, “I’m a second lieutenant with some job knowledge, I’ve already sat down with the members of Bravo Flight and told them what I expect from them--just to let them know who’s boss. I take care of tasks they should be doing to show I care about them, I give each member as much ‘down time’ as needed; I don’t nag them about accomplishing their jobs because that would be considered micromanagement, and I even give them leeway with mistakes by not reprimanding or correcting them. I thought they would like me for being down to earth and joking around with them. What the heck am I doing wrong?”

Given this scenario, what have you been doing wrong as a leader? If you were the commander of this organization, what would you do with the Lt?

Case Study #4

You, a Captain, are a section chief in Military Personnel and 2d Lt Smith's supervisor. Lt Smith is a Force Support Officer. She has been on active duty for a year and in her present job for 10 months. She supervises 21 enlisted personnel who perform a variety of administrative tasks in support of a tactical fighter wing. She majored in business administration in college, served 3 years as an administrative specialist, and was an E-4 before being accepted for OTS. As an enlisted member, she graduated from technical school as an honor graduate and was cited on numerous occasions for outstanding performance. Her supervisors considered her a valuable asset to the unit and an expert in her area of responsibility. She's very enthusiastic about her work and plans to make the Air Force a career.

Lieutenant Smith took over her job 2 months after the unit had received a rating of "marginal" by the numbered Air Force Inspector General's evaluation team. At the end of her first week on the job, Lt Smith called her NCOIC and key supervisors together and told them that she wouldn't tolerate marginal performance, that she had previous experience in this type of work, and would be looking at the quality of their work very closely. Since that time, Lt Smith has attempted to supervise every phase of work in her office and, at times, has involved herself in even the most routine decisions. Lt Smith assigns people to certain jobs within the office, plans the work schedule, leave schedule, and does most of the counseling in the office.

In the last 6 months, Lt Smith has ordered several people to work overtime to complete routine work ahead of schedule. Each time this has happened, the NCOIC has asked the lieutenant for permission to speak to her immediate supervisor. On each occasion, the lieutenant has told the senior master sergeant he must not take these internal problems to you, because she'll take care of any problems in her section--and the NCOIC should remember who writes his EPR.

Most of the time, when Lt Smith approaches the work or break area where the workers are congregated, she notices all conversation stops and the personnel won't talk to her unless she addresses them first. After reviewing a report yesterday, Lt Smith became very impatient. She bypassed his NCOIC and took the report directly to the Airman who had typed it. While Lt Smith was berating the Airman about the typing errors, the NCOIC walked into the office and asked the Airman what the problem was. The lieutenant became flustered, told the NCOIC she was tired of doing his job for him, and shoved the report into his hands. Lt Smith then went into her office and slammed the door.

The NCOIC relayed this situation to you and asked for your help. How will you help?

Case Study #5

You hold a B.A. in radio and television and were sent to a broadcasting network of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. After a 1 month orientation in the overseas area at network headquarters, you were sent to one of the outlying stations as OIC.

Mr. Henry P. Moon is a GS-12 who has worked with the network for 10 years. As the network engineer, he's always dependable as well as an efficient manager. But he has the kind of personality that evokes either fear or deep resentment.

The previous network commander felt very strongly that the television station should have rear screen projection capability. His pet project was to procure the equipment and get it to the station. After 3 years in supply channels, the equipment package was finally shipped. Mr. Moon's branch, which had ordered the projection system, unpacked and inspected the equipment, then sent it to your outlying television station.

You had heard about the new equipment, but you weren't prepared for the package that arrived. Your studio could best be described as small, designed for minimal operations. The projector, once assembled, was carried on a stand that was too tall to clear the studio lights. The projector's minimum focal "throw" was twice the length of the largest room in his building, and, when it was turned on, the projector took so much electricity it blew every circuit breaker in the station. The screen was so large it couldn't be assembled inside the building.

It was soon apparent that this projection system was designed for a fully capable commercial television studio, and not for your station. When you considered the cost of modifying the studio to permit this expensive piece of equipment to do the job, you quickly decided it wasn't worth it.

When you attempted to return the projection package to network headquarters, you were told, in no uncertain terms by Mr. Moon, that you would keep the projector, and if you couldn't find a way to use it, you'd probably lose your job. Mr. Moon's exact words were: "Lieutenant, if you can't put a first-class piece of equipment like this to work, you probably couldn't manage a one-truck convoy." Obviously you have a problem to deal with!

What will you do?

Case Study #6

You're an aircraft maintenance officer who supervises the sheet metal shop in a maintenance squadron. You have 15 enlisted people assigned to your shop to perform sheet metal repair for three tactical fighter squadrons. Your NCOIC, TSgt Allen, a "fast burner," has been promoted with minimum time in grade each time she became eligible for promotion. She was recently notified she has been selected for promotion to master sergeant. TSgt Allen is single with no family responsibilities; consequently, she spends a great deal of time working overtime and on weekends. She seems to have no other interests outside of her job. It's recently come to your attention that TSgt Allen spends a great deal of her overtime rechecking the work of her subordinates. When she finds an error in someone's work, she frequently calls the worker at home and berates him/her over the telephone for what she describes as "gross negligence in the performance duty." Additionally, she has called several back to the shop after normal duty hours to reaccomplish work which she considers to be substandard. When she discovers errors in their work during normal duty hours, she makes an issue of the most minor discrepancy. The other day she brought a staff sergeant into your office, described the man's shortcomings, and asked you to recommend that the squadron commander give him an Article 15.

Since TSgt Allen's assignment to the shop 6 months ago, you've noticed the morale of the enlisted force has steadily grown worse. Requests for leave have become more frequent, and four of the NCOs have asked for transfers to other units on base. You've talked to the squadron commander twice during the last month about the effect TSgt Allen is having on the unit members. The commander told you that you should consider yourself lucky to have an aggressive, hard-driving NCO like TSgt Allen, and you could probably learn something from her. The commander told you to think about the situation for a couple of days, and if you still felt there was a problem, to have a talk with TSgt Allen.

Your couple of days are up—what will you do?

Case Study #7

You, a 2d Lt, fresh out of training, with a master of science degree in physical education, are assigned to a small base overseas as Force Support officer in charge of all base recreational facilities. Because of your academic qualifications, you were sent directly overseas on your first assignment.

Your NCOIC is TSgt Charles Harvey, an 18-year veteran of three specialties. Although TSgt Harvey has an excellent record, he has been in grade more than seven years. He is highly disgruntled about not being promoted. Lacking prior military experience, you told TSgt Harvey you were very much dependent on his help. You don't know "the ropes" and need a subordinate you can trust.

One month after the association began, the sergeant asked if he could make a suggestion. TSgt Harvey said, "I think the dependents at this base are really getting the short end of the stick. They can only use the recreational facilities on a space available basis, and some of them are older than some of the Airmen who can tell them to shove off." You said, "I'm sympathetic, Chuck, but the regulation says the recreational facilities are primarily for the people in uniform. If some of the parents of these kids would like to help them organize some activities, we could probably reserve the gym and some other facilities for a few hours a week. But I think the dependents have to be supervised, and the gym has to be available primarily for the active duty Airmen."

TSgt Harvey, the father of two teenage sons, felt he had been slapped in the face. He was sulky after the conversation. You were rather puzzled. The regulations were quite clear about priorities in use of recreational facilities, and the commander of the base was emphatically in favor of stronger supervision of dependents by parents.

Several months later you are given strong reason to believe the NCOIC is criticizing you in front of the other Airmen in the section. You begin to distrust your NCOIC.

About this time, TSgt Bob Jorgenson, a recreational supervisor, joined the section. You interview him and find he is 2 years junior in grade to TSgt Harvey. You assigned him as assistant NCOIC. After 2 weeks on the job, TSgt Jorgenson comes into your office and asks if he can speak frankly. You tell him to go ahead.

Jorgenson said, "Lieutenant, I hate to knock another NCO, especially one who outranks me, but TSgt Harvey is making critical remarks about you to the enlisted people. He calls you 'Rosie' behind your back. He says you don't know your job and probably never will, that you're a terrible leader, and he also calls you a 'second balloon.' He says this in front of the people in the section. I hate to say it, but he's more of an enemy than a subordinate."

What will you do now?

Case study #8

Three years ago, you graduated from college and were commissioned through OTS. 1st Lt Joanne James graduated college and was commissioned through AFROTC on the same date. You were called to active duty 3 weeks earlier than 1st Lt James (Incidentally, you didn't graduate from the same college nor were you acquainted before being assigned together).

You're both assigned to the 508th Logistics Readiness Squadron and work in the same section. Because you've been on active duty longer, you are senior for promotion purposes and in charge of the section. Lt James resents working for you, especially since she knows you were commissioned on the same day. She's aware that you are senior but makes a point of repeating, "There's no rank among lieutenants," whenever you attempt to assert your authority. She's especially resentful of the fact that she's been in the 508th longer than you and had expected to be put in charge of the section.

You're a distinguished graduate of the Logistics Readiness Officer course, but you lack James' experience on the job. You're a fast learner and have managed to get "up to speed" quickly as section chief. You know Lt James resents you and you've been frustrated by Lt James' obvious disrespect. Yesterday you called her into your office and advised her that there was room on the unit manning document for only one section chief. You were sympathetic about Lt James' disappointment, but insisted she do her job without showing such obvious and childish resentment. Lt James left without comment. This morning TSgt Harper, the section NCOIC, asked if he could talk to you for a few minutes. When you asked him what was on his mind, Harper said, " Lt James is acting very badly. She criticizes you in front of the unit members, she says you don't know the job, and you're just going to mess things up. We know there's friction between you two, but it's starting to affect people. Most are siding with Lt James, since she's been here longer. I'm having trouble keeping them working."

How will you deal with this situation?