

Leadership Challenges Today

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Although individuals are the ones who make decisions, organizational culture can exert a strong influence on decision making and can have the most powerful influence on when and how an organization changes. This topic seeks to explore today's leadership challenges. We will also provide some updated tools for facing these challenges.

DESIRED LEARNING OUTCOMES (DLO):

1. Read and respond to sanitized IG and CDI reports used as a case study to explore challenges our leaders face including member suspension/separation and violations of our cadet protection policy.
2. Respond to a current organizational challenge that is identified by members of the National Staff; produce a course of action list (example; continuous process improvement to increasing our CAP Form 5 Pilots).
3. Read and discuss Leadership Challenges Today/Organizational Culture reading list. (see notes section)

SCHEDULED LESSON TIME: 90 minutes

Overview

Learning and leadership are directly related. This lesson is designed to motivate new commanders to discover (as they move into unit leadership) they may need to employ a new depth of thinking when faced with novel or unfamiliar experiences. As they engage with new problems, they will now need to consider the second and third order of effects of their decisions. Participants are encouraged to ask themselves: "Am I ready to learn a new way of thinking as I move into unit leadership?"

New Problems, New Thinking

Now that you are a unit leader, you will experience more leadership challenges.

As a leader, there is no way to predict the future, nor identify the types of problems or situations you will encounter.

Instead of focusing on the unknowns you will face, this lesson focuses on the "known." The *complexity* of problems you face will change and that complexity will have an effect on how you make decisions.

Challenges

There will be many "speed bumps" as you take on additional responsibilities and leadership. This list is not complete, but serves as food for thought:

- Resources – allocating both money and people to complete *complex* tasks
- Leading people – and all its associated personal and interpersonal dynamics issues which can be both *volatile* and *ambiguous* at the same time
- Working the bosses' problems – which are inherently more *complex*

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- Social issues – and the *uncertainties* associated with what is permissible (or not)
- Working with cadets and SNCOs – more *complex* relationships
- Every day brings a new challenge – *ambiguity* and *uncertainty are* the norm

The VUCA Environment

In the previous discussion, you highlighted key points about the “environment” you are now facing as commanders. That environment has a name.

The VUCA environment – volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

You will have to deal with the *ugly, wicked, complex* problems that come with being a leader.

Skills and Behaviors for New Thinking Worksheet

Developed by the eSchool of Graduate PME

We can increase our probability of success in solving complex problems and making decisions if we think differently about the skills associated with them. Skills like critical thinking and creative thinking. It also means that we need to look deeper at how we solve problems and make decisions.

You can improve markedly in these areas simply through awareness. Review the tables below for key behaviors associated with each skill and tips for future improvement.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is at the heart of problem solving and decision making. You must be good at this skill to excel at the others.

Key Behaviors	How to Improve
Identify the situation or problem	When facing a new situation, you must <i>identify the problem</i> . Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the key (or core) issue?• Are there multiple issues, and which ones drive the problem? Identify the factors involved. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is doing what?• What seems to be the reason for this happening?• What are the end results? How could they change? Define the goal associated with solving the problem. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do I want to achieve?
Compare arguments	When comparing arguments, research is key. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep an eye for unsolicited claims.• Identify the source of information (and source bias, see below).• Ensure source is valid.
Identify bias	Ensure you set aside your own personal beliefs and identify bias on the part of others. When evaluating information, ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who does this benefit?• Does the source appear to have an agenda?• Is the source omitting information that doesn't support its claim?• Is the source attempting to sway perception of a fact?
Make connections and draw conclusions	The ability to infer and draw conclusions is critical. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather as much information as possible first.• Evaluate information and make only educated guesses• Don't let emotions get in the way.
Determine relevance	Figure out what information is the most important <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate information objectively• List the data to help narrow your focus
Improve curiosity	Train yourself to foster curiosity productively <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask open-ended questions

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Creative Thinking

Creative thinking and critical thinking go together, supporting both problem solving and decision making. Creativity is inspired when there is a problem to solve.

Key Behaviors	How to Improve
Accept prudent risk	Accept <i>risk</i> to create solutions for problems. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take action – actively try to solve problems Encourage out of the box thinking Support idea exchange Offer professional dissent
Build mutual trust	Build <i>trust</i> in team members to support creativity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate ideas; encourage brainstorming Support flight members' initiatives Encourage innovation Share information
Exercise disciplined initiative	Put ideas to a test before declaring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt your thinking to the changing situation
Maintain operational initiative	Engage the right people at the right time – remember you have an operational mission at the same time you are encouraging creative thinking in yourself and others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather ideas from all ranks Encourage autonomy
Anticipate problems	Every day is an opportunity to problem solve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to think differently and reframe the issue Keep an “idea journal” with you to quickly write thoughts, or mind map the problem
Model personal courage	Wait for others in the flight to make suggestions first, that way you can agree to their ideas, even if same as yours. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display patience Suspend advocacy of your own idea to push someone else's concept Allow others in flight to have some influence
Prevent complacency	Continually look for new creative skills to develop in yourself and your flight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster diverse thinking
Seize opportunities	Innovation is a tool employed to seize opportunities. Take time to think about innovation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block time off in your calendar Put your idea through a test Combine different ideas to develop a solution

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Problem Solving

Key Behaviors	How to Improve
Apply Elements of Thought	The goal of problem-solving is to solve a problem. Most can be solved in various ways. Remain open to new ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define the actual <i>problem</i> and<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ What are the goals?◦ What are the barriers?• Include structure as you start to generate solutions (guidelines, parameters)• Look for solutions• Don't be satisfied with the first solution you come up with, develop further• Make a decision, then implement• Seek feedback
Identify problems	Detect and recognize the problem. Identify the nature and be sure to define it. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there actually a problem?• How can it best be defined?
Gather information	Generate a range of possible courses of action and get the supporting evidence for the problem being solved
Develop criteria	The solution should match the criterion needed to solve the problem <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will you be satisfied with a partial solution?• Consider acceptable tradeoffs
Generate possible solutions	Brainstorm and using the power of a team aids to generate various solutions to try
Analyze solutions	Select a solution that can be tested and have time for feedback and refining
Compare solutions	Evaluate a series of possible solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be sure solutions are acceptable
Review the results	To know you successfully solved the problem, you need to know the problem and the impact the chosen solution has on the identified problem.

Decision Making

Key Behaviors	How to Improve
Evaluate options based on <i>intrinsic</i> evidence Evaluate options based on <i>extrinsic</i> criteria	Understand different choices change the outcome of your decisions. This requires prediction and judgement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't be overconfident – revisit the logic of your decision

To Learn More

Critical Thinking for the Military Professional by Col W. Michael Guillot - <https://goo.gl/c4buFi>

New Problems, New Thinking Self-Assessment Worksheet

This self-assessment provides an opportunity for you to assess your own leadership skills and behaviors. These skills and behaviors are based upon the concepts addressed within this lesson. *You will use these worksheets again during the final lesson of the course.*

NOTE: Not all skills and behaviors are covered in this lesson. These reflect what an ideal flight commander should know and be able to do in this topic area.

Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 in each of the skill or behavior areas below:

5 – Needs No Improvement

3 – Average

1 – Needs Significant Improvement

Competency Reference	Skill	Behavior	Self-Assessment (1-5)
Strategic Thinking	Critical Thinking	At the team or flight level: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the situation or problem• Compare arguments• Identify bias• Make connections and draw conclusions• Determine relevance• Improve curiosity• _____• _____	
Strategic Thinking	Creative Thinking	At the team or flight level: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept prudent risk• Build mutual trust• Exercise disciplined initiative• Maintain operational initiative• Anticipate problems• Model personal courage• Prevent complacency• Seize opportunities• _____• _____	

CAP Instructor Guide
Leadership Challenges Today/Organizational Culture

Competency Reference	Skill	Behavior	Self-Assessment (1-5)
Strategic Thinking	Problem Solving	At the team or flight level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply Elements of Thought • Identify problems • Gather information • Develop criteria • Generate possible solutions • Analyze solutions • Compare solutions • Review the results • _____ • _____ 	
Strategic Thinking	Decision Making	At the team or flight level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate options based on intrinsic evidence • Evaluate options based on extrinsic criteria • _____ • _____ 	

Some tips:

- Ask your supervisors, peers, and subordinates how they perceive your behaviors in these areas. Often, we are biased toward ourselves. We tend to rate ourselves better than others perceive us. In leadership, we must strive to minimize the differential between how we think/ behave and how others perceive our behaviors.

My Notes

ASSIGNMENT

Understand that the culture we live in is viewed as the VUCA environment – volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Looking at the issues raised in this final assignment, remember to use the four behaviors (critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, decision making) as you review the assignment (CDI or IGI) to determine the actions that you will take as a commander.