

1st MEB changes business practices to include promotions

By Staff Sgt. MEILLETIS PATTON

1st MEB

FORT POLK, La. — The 1st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade has embraced the Net Zero vision to “reduce, reuse, recycle,” and performed an unorthodox promotion ceremony as evidence of that commitment.

Lt. Col. Robert Lee McCormick’s promotion ceremony on Jan. 11 at the Warrior Community Center reduced the amount of time and tax dollars spent during traditional ceremonies by reaffirming his oath of office via live broadcast with Defense Connect Online, an Internet video conferencing system.

Using this technology, McCormick not only had his mentor, Lt. Gen. Robert P. Lennox, the United States Army’s Deputy Chief of Staff to do the honors, but also saved the Army the expense of an airline ticket.

Ceremonies in the military are performed for different reasons, and Soldiers book flights and plan trips to attend events all over the world. The military has a lineage of frequent events that require time away from the home base as well as travel expenses. McCormick said that due to the lower budget the Department of Defense has for travel, Lennox was unable to travel and be here physically.

Instead of flying across the United States from Washington D.C. for a one-day trip, Lennox enjoyed speaking at the promotion and to McCormick’s family, friends and subordinates using the video conferencing system. Lennox and McCormick recited the oath of office in the presence of the Fort Polk Commander Brig. Gen. William B. Hickman; Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Semerena; 1st MEB Commander Col. Bret Van Camp; and 1st MEB Command Sgt. Maj. Melvin E. Rutledge, along with family, friends



PUBLIC AFFAIRS/NOOIC

and subordinates from the unit.

“It was a tremendous relief,” said McCormick. “I was able to have somebody that knew me that has helped me progress in the military, perform and preside over the ceremony. We were able to see and hear (on both sides of the camera). It’s important we celebrate and continue relationships with people we cross paths with and have built lasting memories with; they have a special place in our lives though unit cohesion, motivation and hard work.”

McCormick explained why he chose Lennox over a local officer.

“I met Lieutenant General Lennox when he was a colonel and later deployed with him around 2002. I didn’t feel it was appropriate to ask others on the installation that didn’t know me, because if you don’t know someone it’s hard to talk nice about them,” said McCormick. “This was a special day so I asked my mentor.”

McCormick has been with the 1st MEB for nearly six months. He is currently the plans officer for the brigade and is slated to move into the position of deputy commander.

“It (Defense Connect Online) shows how relationships can continue in the military,” said 1st Lt. Michael J. Hurd of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st MEB. “Lieutenant General Lennox being at the event and speaking about his past experience with Lieutenant Colonel McCormick gave people a chance to see a side of him that we have not seen before.”

Finding ways to reduce spending is an accomplishment, said McCormick. The ceremony was in line with military tradition and saved tax dollars so it was a win-win situation for all involved.

Building working relationships fosters a good work environment and will always be a part of military transition and tradition.

Survey

Continued from page 8

from a leader’s perspective, they provide a totally anonymous means for your Soldiers to speak their minds ... and they do. They do so to the extent of naming individuals and expressing their views of cliques and favoritism that might be occurring within your formations. We treat Command Climate Surveys the same as the comment box by discussing the comments in an open forum as a company.

What better way to address a seemingly common perception of race and/or sex favoritism than to throw it out in the open. This “levels the bubble” with everyone and allows both leaders and subordinates to correct the issue before it escalates.

The URI is tricky because it only gives you statistical data — great for general analysis and for nerds to use in their pie charts, but as a leader, it really doesn’t allow you to focus your efforts. You don’t just need trends, you need names. After all, what is more effective: Blanket training or sitting an individual down in the commander’s office and having an “intervention” on high-risk behavior?

I vote the latter, but how do you get an individual name from the URI? We took the URI

data, sat the company down, issued out 3-by-5 inch cards, and talked through every area on the URI. The Soldiers wrote comments for each of the nine areas as we talked about in the URI, some nearly filling both sides of their cards. This method proved very effective because it allowed Soldiers to address their concerns and issues in an open, verbal forum, but also provided them a way to give candid feedback to the command team through written comments.

The other reason this method was so effective is that unlike the comment box where the individual has to take the initiative to provide the paper and put their comment in the box, we provided them with something to write

on and they were stuck sitting there anyway, so they figured they didn’t have any excuses not to provide some feedback.

This 3-by-5 inch card URI tactic turned a generic tool into a focused risk-reducing machine. Soldiers actually named who they thought were at risk in some areas (including suicidal behavior), which led to leadership awareness, counseling, referrals to the chaplain, and the best part was when we were able to link a couple of Soldiers (both struggling with separation from

their spouses) together and they were able to talk about their problems with each other, bringing the “I’m not alone” reality into their arsenal of coping mechanisms.

We identified some issues Soldiers have with their leaders and were able to address those issues with specific NCOs or all the leaders within the company to make them aware of how their actions (or lack thereof) affect Soldiers. Some of this was a lack of understanding on the Soldiers’ part and we talked about that with the company as well.

We identified areas that Soldiers were simply ignorant about (such as mass punishment for DUIs: There was a lack of understanding of how the Army leverages peer pressure to influence Soldiers’ actions) and explained the “why” behind the madness.

All of these tools are important in their own way and can help you identify trends, but only by using them to facilitate two-way communication within your organization will you maximize their potential. No matter what the assessment and feedback tool you are using is, make sure you leverage the Soldiers.

They have the knowledge, insight and ideas that you need as a leader to improve your organization.

✓ Excellent
Good
Fair
Poor