



The Flight Commander's Edge

Lesson Descriptions

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How to Use This Resource

This resource is designed to help give insight into the topic areas and scope of the Air University (AU) developed leadership lesson plans as well as recommended focus areas for the AU provided lesson guides in tailoring your mission-focused content. When used in conjunction with *The Flight Commander's Edge* community (<https://lms.au.af.edu/courses/1643>), it will help you create a well-designed and intentional program which is valued by your participants.

Part 1, **Bookend Lessons**, outlines the two AU recommended “bookend” lessons which serve to set-up (The Role of the Flight Commander) the structure and expectations for the AU provided course content as well as conclude the course (The Road Ahead) in such a manner as to send the students back to their units with an actionable plan toward self- and flight-improvement.

Part 2, **Leadership Lesson Plans**, outlines the scope, objectives, and recommended prerequisites of the AU generated lesson plan material. For additional information regarding the specifics of each leadership lesson refer to the individual leadership lesson plans within *The Flight Commander's Edge* community (<https://lms.au.af.edu/courses/1643/pages/lesson-plans>).

The majority of the leadership lesson plans are designed and recommended to be executed in 50 minutes. However, there are a few lessons which have a propensity to run longer depending on the experience and depth of discussion amongst the students. For these lessons the recommended execution time is 50-70 minutes as outlined in the pages below, however course directors are encouraged to tailor the length of any/all lessons to meet the needs of their units and the needs of their students.

Part 3, **Lesson Guides**, outlines the scope, recommended objectives, and lesson linkages for various suggested topics for you to use in deciding what topic areas you want to cover at your local unit course. Lesson linkages refer to other course topics which relate to or overlap with that particular topic and are provided for facilitators to help make connections for the student and reinforce ideas. For additional information regarding the specifics of each suggested lesson topic refer to the individual lesson guides within *The Flight Commander's Edge* community (<https://lms.au.af.edu/courses/1643/pages/lesson-guides>).

If you would like to know more about how *The Flight Commander's Edge* program was developed and the materials we recommend, or if you have questions, contact us at (334) 953-6309, DSN 493-6309, FlightCommandersEdge@us.af.mil, or visit *The Flight Commander's Edge* on the web at <https://lms.au.af.edu/courses/1643> (account required).

Bookend Lessons

Each course template begins and ends with a special leadership lesson. Called “bookend” lessons, these two lessons are designed to serve as the course introduction and the course wrap-up.

First Lesson – The Role of the Flight Commander

This lesson serves to introduce the *Flight Commander Leadership Course* and the role of the flight commander. Participants are introduced to the role of the flight commander from the perspectives of the Chief of Staff and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force and discuss the roles and responsibilities of command as defined in Air Force Instruction 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities*. Leveraging a pre-course interview with their squadron commanders (or equivalents), participants set goals for their flight command tenures. The lesson ends with an introduction to the lesson self-assessments which will follow at the end of each subsequent leadership lesson and the *Professional Development Plan* end-of-course assignment.

Objectives:

1. Interpret the role of the flight commander from various perspectives.
2. Understand the Air Force perspective on flight commander roles and responsibilities.
3. Develop goals for flight command based on commander's intent and mission requirements.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Key Content and Activities:

- Introductions and small-group discussion of flight commander duties
- Large group outbrief on overarching flight commander duties
- Introduction to the rest of the course, expectations, course policies, etc.
- Presents the intent and expectation of the self-assessment exercises and introduces students to their end-of-course project, the *Professional Development Plan* (PDP).

Last Lesson – The Road Ahead

This lesson serves as the capstone of the *Flight Commander Leadership Course*. Participants summarize their self-assessments and are re-introduced to their end-of-course project – the *Professional Development Plan*. The lesson begins with a brief review of the self-assessments completed at the end of each leadership lesson to identify and prioritize development needs, then transitions to how those assessments can be used for planning improvements in abilities, knowledge, and experience. At the end of the lesson, participants have two tasks remaining to earn course credit – completion of the *Professional Development Plan* and an outbrief with their squadron commanders (or equivalents). In the final activity, students complete an end-of-course critique.

Objectives:

1. Interpret self-assessment results to identify development needs.
2. Plan for self-development using an abilities-knowledge-experience approach.
3. Develop a Professional Development Plan.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Key Content and Activities:

- Introduction to self-development planning
- Small-group discussions on how to improve in selected leadership areas
- Large-group outbrief on key findings and takeaways from the course

NOTE: The final lesson is a critical piece of the experiential learning approach used throughout the suite of leadership lessons. Without this practical exercise as a capstone, behaviors may not be adequately reinforced so as to improve overall leadership performance. An optional, but highly-recommended follow-on to this lesson is the development of a formal Professional Development Plan by each student and 1:1 discussion with his/her supervisor to garner feedback and developmental support.

Leadership Lesson Plans

In addition to the two “bookend” lessons, Air University recommends 13 core leadership lessons.

Leadership Lesson Plans	
Preparing for Command	Mission Command in Leadership
Emotional Intelligence	Developing Others
Followership	Building and Busting Teams
New Problems, New Thinking	Leading Change
Developing Full-Range Leadership	Conflict Management
Ethical Leadership	Senior Leader Perspective
Communications in Command	

Table 1. Leadership lesson topics in which AU provided lesson plans and materials are available.

These lessons, when used, should be presented in the order shown below (or on the course templates). This is to ensure continuity. Several (not all) lessons are scaffolded in such a manner that they serve as pre-requisites for a follow-on lesson. These requirements are clearly noted below and in the lesson plans.

Preparing for Command

The *Preparing for Command* lesson addresses three of the key areas essential to prepare for flight leadership. This lesson is designed to equip students with broad knowledge and tools

necessary to help develop their command-skills prior to taking a flight commander position. The lesson centers on the *person* taking command in an organization and how to personally evaluate strengths. By understanding the skills brought to command the students will be better able to understand where they fit in the organization and where, when in command, they will lead their flight. Knowing the flight's skills and value to the organization will aid in a smooth transition from being a member of the organization to being part of the command team.

This lesson is designed for participants to have a conversation with their squadron commander about expectations of the flight commander and how the flight commander role fits in to the mission prior to this lesson.

Objectives:

1. Prepare for leadership as a flight commander.
2. Prepare for mission responsibilities as a flight commander.
3. Prepare for unknown and unknowable situations as a flight commander.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50-70 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites:

- Interview with squadron commander on expectations of the flight commander and how the flight commander fits into the mission.
- Attend the lesson on *The Role of the Flight Commander*.

Emotional Intelligence

This lesson describes the link between emotional intelligence skills and leadership. It introduces flight commanders to the essential emotional intelligence skills that matter most for success in their flights. Participants are first exposed to the role of emotions in leadership. Following this, different elements of emotional intelligence are examined. Finally, an activity will outline methods to improve the four commonly used emotional intelligence skills.

Objectives:

1. Identify the role of emotions in leadership.
2. Describe the four key skills of emotional intelligence.
3. Outline methods to improve emotional intelligence behaviors.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites: None

Followership

This lesson examines the intersection of followership and flight command. Students discover how followership skills link directly to leadership skills through exercises and activities. Building

on this sense of discovery, the lesson identifies key elements of effective followership and provides methods for students to both model and foster effective followership in their flight to enhance their squadrons. The lesson ends with a self-assessment designed to support future learning and growth.

Objectives:

1. Identify characteristics of effective followership.
2. Interpret guidelines for followership in practice.
3. Develop strategies and actions that foster effective followership.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites: None

New Problems, New Thinking

Learning and leadership are directly related. This lesson is designed to motivate new flight commanders to discover (as they move into flight 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 flight leadership?"

Objectives:

1. Identify changes in problem complexity and scope at the flight level.
2. Consider ways to address complex problems as a flight-level leader.
3. Explain effective behaviors for problem solving and decision making in command.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50-70 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites: None

Developing Full-Range Leadership

This lesson examines how to develop leadership abilities across the full-range of leadership types. Emphasizing effective leadership behaviors at both the transactional and transformational level, this lesson provides participants an opportunity to self-assess leadership behavior preferences, identify tendencies, and learn how to maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses. The lesson ends with a self-assessment designed to support future learning and growth.

This lesson serves only as an introduction to full-range leadership. Participants will develop an enhanced understanding of the full-range model in the online and resident programs for Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College.

Objectives:

1. Identify personal full-range leadership preferences using a self-assessment tool.
2. Outline the core elements of full-range leadership.
3. Describe methods to improve full-range leadership behaviors.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites: None

Ethical Leadership

One of the most powerful aspects of humanity is to be liked by others. Often, making decisions will cause people to have conflict with this. One of the hallmarks of command is to lead ethically. This entails understanding how new duties intersect with new authority and how ethical considerations permeate flight commander decision-making. Specifically targeted for developing a thoughtful ethical mindset as part of preparing for flight command, *Ethical Leadership* may be one of the most important lessons in this series.

Objectives:

1. Predict how ethical considerations will impact decision making as a flight commander.
2. Identify potential ethical challenges in an organization.
3. Demonstrate a motivated ethical mindset.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Prerequisite: None

Communications in Command

This lesson examines how communications requirements change when in a command role. The lesson begins by examining key examples of communications-in-command to help participants differentiate between communications requirements for commanders and non-commanders. Building on this distinction, the lesson identifies key skills and behaviors needed for command-level communication, and guides the participants to self-discover approaches to improve communication effectiveness. The lesson ends with a self-assessment designed to support future learning and growth.

Objectives:

1. Differentiate between communications requirements for commanders and non-commanders.
2. Describe key skills and behaviors in effective command-level communication.
3. Identify approaches to improve communication effectiveness.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites: None

Mission Command in Leadership

This lesson examines how the Army concept of mission command (MC) can be used to ensure mission accomplishment while promoting flexibility. The lesson begins by examining how leaders motivate subordinates to get the job done while preserving flexibility. This discussion promotes self-discovery of the principles of mission command. The lesson ends with an exercise which helps the participant identify tips for implementing mission command behaviors at the flight level.

Objectives:

1. Explore approaches for ensuring mission accomplishment while retaining flexibility.
2. Describe the principles of mission command.
3. Identify approaches to effectively use mission command at the flight level.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites: None

Developing Others

This lesson exposes flight commanders to their role in strengthening the squadron by developing others. Participants are first exposed to their role as a “talent enabler” and the importance of developing others from an individual and Air Force perspective. Following this, different types of developmental opportunities are examined from the perspective of Air Force doctrine. Finally, a basic assessment mechanism and planning tool are introduced which can be used to design and facilitate individual development opportunities.

Objectives:

1. Understand the importance of developing others.
2. Identify types of development opportunities.
3. Facilitate the development of others from a personal, mission, and career perspective.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites:

- Professional Development (*“right side” lesson; a lesson guide is available*)

Building and Busting Teams

This lesson is designed to hone the flight commander's skills for developing and maintaining effective teams while learning to avoid the pitfalls that can prevent a team from achieving high-performance. As the military is inherently a team-driven organism, this lesson briefly reviews three areas of building effective teams: team dynamics, how to build a team, and how to sustain

and improve an existing team. Participants are introduced to the behaviors which can build, or bust, a team. The lesson ends with a self-assessment designed to support future learning and growth.

Objectives:

1. List elements of team dynamics.
2. Explain recommended methods to build an effective team.
3. Discuss ways to sustain and improve an existing team.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50-70 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites:

- Developing Others

Leading Change

Squadrons face a myriad of potential challenges. To be successful they must adapt to implications of “change.” The scope of organizational change varies dramatically across the squadrons. During this process flight commanders are both a role model and advocate for their flight members. The flight commander has a specific role as a change agent regarding organizational change: to support the organizational change culture and help shape its meaning to members of the flight. This lesson highlights some tools used to support change at the flight-level.

Objectives:

1. Identify the steps in the commonly-accepted change model used by Air Force leaders.
2. Describe the role of the flight commander in organizational change.
3. Identify methods to effectively implement change at the flight level.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50-70 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites:

- Followership
- Mission Command (*this lesson encourages localized, independent pursuit of innovative solutions to complement the commander's vision.*)

Conflict Management

Flight commanders face conflict. It is the nature of the business. Research shows that first-line supervisors and middle-level managers can spend up to 25 percent of their time dealing with conflict. Most conflicts are either *people*-focused or *issue*-focused. This lesson explores basic sources of conflict and provides insight to five recognized conflict management styles. In

addition to encouraging conversations on effective approaches to managing conflict, participants will see how if managed properly, not all conflict is bad.

Objectives:

1. Identify the two types of conflict common at the flight level.
2. Identify conflict management styles.
3. Recognize effective, and ineffective, approaches to conflict management styles.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Prerequisites: None

Senior Leader Perspective

Senior leadership is responsible for establishing and communicating the vision down the chain of command, as well as mentoring aspiring leaders on what can be expected of those in the position of flight leadership. This lesson should be tailored to the level of leadership available to speak to the students (e.g. wing commander, group commander, etc.).

As a Flight Commander you can avoid many pitfalls/mistakes common to first time flight leaders by gaining others' perspectives and learning from their experience. Senior leaders and commanders have unique insight into what is expected of a flight commander, as well as how to focus one's time and energy in order to successfully lead at the flight level.

Objectives:

1. Recognize the expectations and responsibilities inherent to the flight leadership role.
2. Discuss empowerment, intent, unit pride, etc. as it applies to flight leadership.
3. Discuss how the experiences of others can inform successful Flight Commanders.

Suggested Lesson Length: 50 minutes

Recommended Prerequisites: None

Lesson Guides

Many course lessons should be highly tailored to meet the specific guidance, resources, and mission of your unit. Air University has identified 27 recommended topic areas and provided Lesson Guides to help you structure and focus content to your unit's mission (see Table 2). Use all, any, or none of these topics as you fill-out your course schedule. Refer to the Lesson Guides within *The Flight Commander's EDGE* community (<https://lms.au.af.edu/courses/1643/pages/lesson-guides>) to see additional details regarding each topic.

Lesson Guides	
Organizational Structure and the Mission	Base Support Agencies
Organizational Heritage	Prioritization
Civil Service Force Structure	Manning
Enlisted Force Structure	Funding
Total Force Integration	Deployment
Taking Care of Families	Time and Meeting Management
Professional Development	Networking
Mentoring	Conducting and Documenting Feedback
Officer Performance Reports	Materiel Management
Enlisted Performance Reports	Working with Contractors
Civilian Appraisals	Squadron Commander Panel
Promotion Recommendation Forms	Senior Enlisted Panel
Awards and Decorations	Flight Commander Panel
Discipline, NJP, and the UCMJ	

Table 2. Locally produced lesson content topics to which AU provided lesson guides are available.

Organizational Structure and the Mission

An organization's structure and mission are interconnected. The mission describes an organization's purpose-what everyone within the organization is working toward. Changes in the mission drive changes in the structure of the organization in order to accomplish the mission more effectively. Organizational structures across wings are inherently different, supporting different missions and affecting how operations and the exchange of information occur at different bases. Understanding the mission is the first step towards recognizing the role of each organization in reaching success as an Air Force.

As a Flight Commander, it is important to know and understand your organizational structure but also the critical role your flight and squadron play in accomplishing the mission of the broader organization. You must message this "why" down to the lowest levels of the flight in order to keep your Airmen engaged and connected to the vital role they play in the mission. Additionally, a Flight Commander must recognize where he/she fits into the chain-of-command as issues may arise which require them to not only go up and down the chain but often times laterally outside of the local unit to resolve.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain your unit's (wing/equivalent) mission and how a mission promotes unity of effort.
- Describe your unit's (wing/equivalent) organizational structure and its underlying purpose.
- Define the role of your Flight and/or Squadron in fulfilling the wing's overall mission.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Organizational Heritage
- Mission Command
- Preparing for Command

Organizational Heritage

Every Air Force wing has been created in order to fulfill a certain need. Over time, shifts in technology, new practices, and emerging threats have changed the needs of the Air Force. Every member of a wing (or equivalent) shares and impacts its legacy and culture. It is important to recognize where the wing has been, the people who have shaped it, and their sacrifices which have formed its culture.

An organization's culture is driven at the CGO and NCO levels. It is vital to understand why the wing was created and what purpose it serves so that leaders, such as CGOs and NCOs, can create a culture that resonates with the members of their team while honoring those who have gone before and preparing the environment for those who will take the reins after.

Recommended Objectives:

- Recognize the role the organization has played in the past and how/why it was created.
- Explain how evolving missions and the needs of the AF have shaped the organization.
- Comprehend the Flt/CC's role and impact in driving where the organization will go in the future.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Mission Command
- Organizational Heritage and the Mission

Civil Service Force Structure

Civilians make up a major component of the total force and provide the bulk of the knowledge continuity and personnel stability within many units. It is important to understand the various types of civilian employees which one may work with and the nuances of managing a member of each type of civilian.

Flight commanders are responsible for incorporating civilians into their flight team but must recognize that managing a civil service civilian is different than managing a DoD contractor or military member. Civil servants can fall into one of several categories, such as SES, GS, AD, etc. Flight Commanders must recognize the various management options appropriate for leading civil servants such as recording performance, dealing with unions, annual awards cycle, and work hours.

Recommended Objectives:

- Recognize the difference between civil servants and contractors.
- Understand the various categories of civilians within the total force.
- Contrast the difference in the military and civil service structure and the purpose of each.
- Recognize the management options in dealing with the civilian force.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Building and Busting Teams
- Conducting and Documenting Feedback
- Civilian Appraisals
- Total Force Integration

Enlisted Force Structure

The enlisted force is comprised of a multitude of functionally and operationally specialized Airmen which make up the backbone of our Air Force. Due to the vast differences across functional and operational lines, a standardized approach to force development and career progression is paramount.

As a Flight Commander, you are responsible to appropriately assign roles and delegate responsibilities necessary to achieve your mission. The structure of the enlisted force inherently provides a framework for supervisors to set and enforce standards applicable to the various responsibilities inherent to each rank of the enlisted force. Flight Commanders should charge enlisted members with the trust and authority to operate at a level commensurate with the education, training, and experience of their respective rank.

Recommended Objectives:

- Understand the tiers, ranks, and roles within the enlisted force.
- Comprehend the general responsibilities of each rank and tier within the enlisted force.
- Understand appropriate interactions and relationships between each rank and tier within the enlisted force.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Building and Busting Teams
- Manning

- Professional Development
- Enlisted Performance Reports

Total Force Integration

The Air Force has a variety of skill-sets and expertise available to meet operational requirements. These reside in Active Duty, Reserve, Guard, Civilian and Contractor personnel. Proper integration of these resources will increase unit cohesiveness and effectiveness. The unique requirements of each member of the unit is critical to their effective employment.

Flight Commanders are responsible for managing/supervising personnel from varied sources. As such, you must understand the different capabilities/limitations from each category of the total force. The Flight Commander must also be aware of the distinct personnel requirements of the total force to successfully develop the supervisor/subordinate relationship.

Recommended Objectives:

- Recognize how Air Force total force integration is required to achieve mission success.
- Understand how law and policy guide the effective employment and management of total force personnel.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Building and Busting Teams
- Mission Command
- Organizational Structure and the Mission

Taking Care of Families

Air Force families are the backbone of foundational support for our Airmen, and an appropriate work/family life balance is crucial for every Airman. The Air Force has many programs and base services designed to support families, such as the Key Spouse Program. Organizations that give attention to and leverage these programs create a resilient environment where Airmen and families feel a sense of stability and support.

As a Flight Commander you not only have to demonstrate an appropriate balance for your Airmen, but also encourage it with meaningful communication and follow through to ensure your team maintains a proper balance. You should know the programs available to your Airmen and their families both in garrison and when members are deployed. You, along with your flight leadership team, are responsible for building and maintaining an environment in which families understand they are valued as part of the team.

Recommended Objectives:

- Demonstrate the importance of a healthy work/family life balance.
- Explain the support agencies and programs available for family members.

- Describe the Key Spouse Program and its purpose.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Base Support Agencies
- Deployment

Professional Development

Professional development is a critical need for any member of the armed forces as we seek to continually develop ourselves and our Airmen to lead and execute in a rapidly evolving global environment. Significant differences exist in Professional Development among officers, enlisted, and civilians which must be accounted for when mentoring or advising each member of your team.

As a Flight Commander, you must keep your team members aware of and current in training and educational requirements for their rank/position. You must also encourage and assist them in seeking opportunities to further themselves both personally and professionally. As an officer, Professional Development includes technical and graduate education, Professional Military Education (PME), and experience-broadening programs occurring throughout one's career. On the enlisted side, PME, educational programs such as the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), and various self-improvement programs are all considered Professional Development. For civilians, advanced academic degrees, PME, and specific certification training are all available avenues of Professional Development. As you regularly discuss your team members' goals with them, you can ensure they take advantage of the opportunities and resources available to prepare them for the next stage of their personal and professional lives.

Recommended Objectives:

- Understand the major components of the Professional Development continuum for the officer and enlisted corps and for the civil service.
- Understand the PME milestones for officers and enlisted and which of these are available for the civil service.
- Highlight the differences in Professional Development opportunities across the officer, enlisted, and civil service.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Developing Others
- Manning
- Mentoring
- Enlisted Force Structure
- Civil Service Force Structure
- Officer Performance Reports
- Enlisted Performance Reports
- Civilian Appraisals

Mentoring

Mentoring plays a pivotal role in developing individuals both personally and professionally. It is a type of relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person towards enrichment. The overall goal of the Air Force Mentorship program is to help Airmen (officer, enlisted and civilian) maximize their full potential.¹

Mentoring is an inherent responsibility of leadership. Flight Commanders in today's Air Force, through mentoring, must be able to promote a climate of inclusion that can help foster and develop the diverse strengths, perspectives, and capabilities of all their Airmen. You should focus on mentee development that gives mentees the ability to manage their own development and learning.¹ In addition, Flight Commanders should seek mentorship from more experienced leaders. For all of this, you must be familiar with the Air Force's Guiding Principles of the Mentorship program.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain the difference between mentoring, coaching, and formal feedback.
- Understand how to effectively seek mentorship and mentor Airmen.
- Recognize the characteristics of a successful mentor/mentee relationship.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Professional Development
- Developing Others
- Communication in Command
- Conducting and Documenting Feedback

Officer Performance Reports

Officer Performance Reports (OPRs) serve to do more than document a member's awards and job performance during the rating period. They are an official part of a member's record: they meet the promotion board, are used to determine in-residence PME attendance, and factor in the Air Force selection of candidates for advanced academic degrees. Further, development teams and hiring authorities often use them to determine the best fit for a particular job or assignment. A leader should devote ample care and consideration into capturing the job performance of team members in order to help set them up for future success.

As a Flight Commander, you will be charged with capturing the job performance of the CGOs on your team. You must write their annual report to effectively capture the impact of their actions in such a way that others outside of your organization can understand the action taken and how the mission was impacted. You also must write to the appropriate scope for the individual, framing their current duties while also allowing for future performance reports to show an appropriate progression of both their actions and impact.

Recommended Objectives:

- Understand the use of OPRs in personnel management (school selection, promotion, assignment selection, etc.).
- Understand how and why to write to the appropriate scope for junior officers.
- Explain the importance of proactivity in managing performance reports (due dates, duty titles, change of rater, gathering inputs, etc.).
- Discuss common challenges of stratification in writing performance reports.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Professional Development
- Conducting and Documenting Feedback
- Promotion Recommendation Forms
- Discipline, NJP, and the UCMJ

Enlisted Performance Reports

Not surprisingly, writing an EPR is much different than writing an OPR. The EPR ratings for enlisted Airmen are used to determine promotions, job and school recommendations, reenlistments, retraining, and assignments. It is vital that these ratings be accurate and impartial. The performance of an enlisted Airman is compared to his/her peers, and it is a disservice to all other Airmen and the system as a whole when performance ratings are inflated.

As a flight commander, you work closely with the members of your team and are best suited to distinguish performance of an Airman from his/her peers. Capturing the actions and impacts of enlisted Airmen is different than that of officers and must be considered in regards to the Airman's level of responsibility. An Airman's duty title should be appropriate for someone of their rank and be reflected in the actions captured on their EPR. The extent of self-improvement they have undertaken, such as completing a course or school, should also be captured in order to espouse the whole Airman concept.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain the purpose, scope, and structure of EPRs as compared to OPRs.
- Describe the role of EPRs in the promotion system for enlisted Airmen.
- Discuss important elements of the EPR forms and the key force indicators looked for on EPRs (self-improvement, school, additional duties, etc.).

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Professional Development
- Conducting and Documenting Feedback
- Enlisted Force Structure
- Discipline, NJP, and the UCMJ

Civilian Appraisals

Motivating and recognizing team members is a key part of leading and encouraging others toward higher levels performance and service. Like military, civilians also require annual performance evaluations; additionally, civilians operate under a different recognition system than military members. While civilians are able to receive decorations similar to that of military members, they are also eligible to receive monetary awards and time off.

As a Flight Commander you should constantly be looking for ways to evaluate and recognize superior performance by all members of your team. While the approval authority for the evaluation process for your Airmen may fall within your local chain of command, the process and authority for evaluating civilians on your team must also be routed through Human Resources and it will take some additional time and effort. AFI 36-1004 outlines the Air Force Civilian Recognition Program and the process for recognizing superior civilian performance while AFI 36-1001 outlines the civilian performance program.

Recommended Objectives:

- Understand the requirements of the civilian performance program (timeline, goal setting, feedback, and appraisals).
- Understand the Air Force Civilian Incentive Awards program.
- Comprehend the process and approval authority for evaluating and rewarding Air Force civilians.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Developing Others
- Civil Service Force Structure
- Mentoring
- Conducting and Documenting Feedback

Promotion Recommendation Forms

Perhaps no official document carries as much weight with an Air Force Central Selection Board (CSB) as the Promotion Recommendation Form (PRF), appearing “right on top” of the member’s promotion package. PRFs are intended to capture the highlights of an officer’s performance through the entirety of their career. With few exceptions, PRF content must be derived from reliable information found in the member’s official record (i.e., OPRs, training reports, decorations, etc.). There are three types of PRFs: regular, narrative-only, and recommendation-only.

As a flight commander, you may be tasked with drafting PRFs. Even if you are not, you will likely undertake the first major effort to capture the important career activities of your officers in a form that remains a part of their official record (e.g., PRF inputs, OPRs, awards, etc.). You

should understand how to convey concisely the mission impact of your team members' efforts and achievements.

Recommended Objectives:

- Describe the purpose of and different types of PRFs.
- Explain how other documented records (OPRs, awards, etc.) must support and link to the content of regular and narrative-only PRFs.
- Recognize how PRF writers may use style and technique to highlight key information on regular and narrative-only PRFs.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Officer Performance Reports
- Awards and Decorations
- Developing Others

Awards and Decorations

Military members and their families make many personal and professional sacrifices to ensure the Air Force accomplishes its missions. Exceptional performance and acts of valor, courage, meritorious service, and outstanding achievement deserve special recognition. The Air Force Awards and Decorations Program is designed for commanders to do just that.

As a Flight Commander, you are likely the first step in the process of formally nominating your Airmen for a decoration or award. For enlisted Airmen, certain awards and decorations offer points toward their promotion within the Enlisted Promotion System. Knowing how and when to recognize performance can go a long way in fostering morale and providing incentive. On the other hand, missing an opportunity to recognize those on your team can have negative impacts. AFI 36-2803 outlines the process and responsibilities of writing, approving, and presenting awards and decorations to eligible recipients.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain the purpose of the Air Force Awards and Decorations Program.
- Describe the impact of certain awards and decorations in the career of Airmen.
- Understand how and when to nominate Airmen for an award or decoration.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Developing Full-Range Leadership
- Officer Performance Reports
- Promotion Recommendation Forms
- Enlisted Performance Reports
- Enlisted Force Structure

Discipline, Non-Judicial Punishment, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice

In any military organization, it is necessary to admonish certain behavior in order to maintain a certain level of military bearing and discipline. The framework of progressive discipline (from Letters of Counseling to a General Court-Martial) is designed to increase in severity in order to appropriately deal with the severity of a member's misconduct. It is important to know the available options and what actions are appropriate in order to deal with the misconduct.

As a Flight Commander, you are responsible for maintaining control of your team and reprimanding unacceptable behavior in an appropriate manner. To do this, you must know what the rights of the member are, what actions must be elevated above your level, and within what bounds you are authorized to act. It is also important to know what resources are available not only to you as the flight commander but also to the Airman being reprimanded. In this way, an Airman's rights are preserved and the situation can be handled in a reasonable, impartial, and lawful manner.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain the purpose and role of the Military Justice System.
- Describe the various steps of progressive discipline.
- Discuss the resources available to aid all parties involved in an official disciplinary situation.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Ethical Leadership
- Conflict Management
- Conducting and Documenting Feedback
- Base Support Agencies

Base Support Agencies

Accomplishing the mission cannot happen if the people needed to execute are not available or not in the right mindset to be effective. The Air Force is aware of this and has instituted a number of supporting agencies on base to be able to help resolve a wide range of problems which Airmen and their families face. Whether it is just someone to talk to (Chaplain, SARC, etc.), someone who has an expertise in a specific area (legal, finance, Military Family Life Consultant, etc.), or a medical professional (behavioral/mental health, etc.), Airmen experience many personal issues that are best handled by advocates outside of the unit or organization.

As a Flight Commander, you are charged with ensuring your team is physically and mentally prepared to accomplish the mission. To lead your flight in an efficient and effective manner, you must know what support agencies are at your team's disposal in order to address the multitude of matters that will inevitably arise in the lives of your team.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain the functions of available base support agencies.
- Discuss the circumstances under which each support agency would be useful and/or necessary.
- Describe the flight leader's role in family care, Airman support, and unit inclusion.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Taking Care of Families
- Discipline, NJP, and the UCMJ

Prioritization

Prioritization is a major factor in even a single day's success in the Air Force. There will always be certain tasks which must be completed immediately and other tasks which can simply wait; knowing the difference can be challenging, especially when someone of higher rank (typically outside of the organization) stresses the importance of their task.

As a Flight Commander, you may have to adapt your personal methods of prioritizing to successfully lead your flight. It is critical to align your efforts with the Squadron Commander's priorities. You must also orchestrate this alignment across your team, and ensure your flight leadership maintains consistent messaging regarding prioritization. Prioritizing should always be informed by the demands of the mission along with considerations such as manning suspenses (performance report closeouts, awards, decorations, etc.). Amidst all this, every individual must maintain some level of personal time to avoid burn-out.

Recommended Objectives:

- Understand the need for prioritization and the distinctions between prioritizing individually versus prioritizing as a flight leader.
- Understand what factors will drive your prioritization as a flight leader.
- Recognize how to handle issues (short-notice taskers, manning emergencies, disciplinary actions, safety concerns, etc.) which might complicate a flight leader's routine priorities.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Time and Meeting Management
- Organizational Structure and the Mission
- New Problems, New Thinking

Manning

Air Force organizations are designed to achieve the characteristics outlined in AFPD 38-1 and are guided by set organizational management principles. Each organizational level has certain responsibilities they incur with regard to manpower implementation. In most organizations, the

Flight has been designated as the lowest level required to successfully accomplish the primary mission.

Manpower is one of the resources Flight Commanders must manage on a daily basis. You should understand how manpower is allocated and how to use personnel effectively. Additionally, it is important to understand how to read your Unit Manning Document (UMD) and Unit Manpower Personnel Roster (UMPR) and know the vocabulary associated with both. Flight Commanders should be familiar with Authorization and Organizational Change Requests (ACRs/OCRs), and when it is appropriate to use each.

Recommended Objectives:

- Understand how the Air Force implements manpower based on organizational principles.
- Explain the purpose and structure of a UMD and the UMPR and the associated terms.
- Recognize the purpose of ACRs/OCRs.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Organizational Structure and the Mission
- Total Force Integration
- Developing Others

Funding

Financial management is the process of determining requirements, obtaining resources, and effectively and efficiently applying those resources to meet the Air Force's direct mission and support responsibilities. Commanders are responsible for this process. Financial management also entails oversight responsibilities to include evaluation of internal controls, procedures, and protection of government assets.¹

As a Flight Commander, you will need to be familiar with the Air Force budget cycle in order to effectively manage the budgetary requirements of your flight. It is equally important for you to understand that there are multiple categories of funds, and each of these can only be used for specific purchases. You'll also need to ensure you are constantly keeping abreast of the budgetary needs of your flight, and prioritizing these requirements appropriately.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain the Air Force annual budget cycle.
- Understand different types of funds and their permitted uses.
- Comprehend the importance of budget prioritization and timely request submissions.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Prioritization
- Manning

- Materiel Management

Deployment

The Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) structure is a force generation construct that allows the Air Force to prepare and present forces on a global scale. It is designed to meet Combatant Commanders' requirements, provide Airmen deployment predictability, and maintain home station readiness. Deployments can be at the unit level or for individuals.

Flight Commanders are responsible for tracking the readiness posture of their personnel. This requires you to understand how the AEF system and individual deployments work. It is equally important for Flight Commanders to be involved in the training, health and wellness of their flight members. They are charged with ensuring their personnel are ready to support deployment taskings, maintain overall readiness posture, and are fully supported during the deployment. Being familiar with the capabilities and resources on AEF Online will allow you to enhance your personnel support.

Recommended Objectives:

- Understand the Air Expeditionary Force Program and related resources.
- Comprehend deployment types, preparation, execution, and associated challenges.
- Recognize the support requirements necessary for deployed team members.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Manning
- Mission Command
- Taking Care of Families

Time and Meeting Management

Being able to effectively manage one's time is a key skill in the life of a Flight Commander. Juggling the various duties required of this role necessitates a need to delegate authority for certain tasks in order to focus your time on other responsibilities required of you. Time is a precious resource and, like manning or money, should not be wasted or carelessly spent.

As a Flight Commander, your time is limited and must be divided appropriately so as not to be consumed with any subset of tasks. Delegation of effort and authority will enable you to focus your time in other areas while still maintaining situational awareness on the tasks for which you are responsible. Leading a team also requires you to keep people working together towards a common goal and meetings are a way to build unity of effort. However, an inefficient or disorganized meeting will waste both your time and the time of your team.

Recommended Objectives:

- Discuss how to effectively manage your time as a Flight Commander.
- Understand delegation and the purpose and responsibilities associated with it.
- Outline considerations for conducting an effective meeting.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Prioritization
- Conflict Management

Material Management

The goal of the Air Force's Materiel Management Program is to ensure the warfighter receives the right support at the right place and the right time. Base Logistics Readiness Squadrons (LRS) play a major role in materiel management for their customers. It is important for leaders at all levels of command to be familiar with the role of the local LRS.

Materiel consists of certain equipment (engines, munitions, electronics, and weapon systems and sub-systems) that some flight commanders will have to manage daily in order to accomplish the mission effectively, staying budget-conscious and aware of life-cycles at all times. Flights such as those in Operations, Maintenance, Cyberspace, and Mission Support units will have a significant materiel footprint, while others may have a minimal footprint. Regardless of the amount of materiel for which you are responsible, you must manage it effectively, stay updated on the materiel needs of your flight, and justify funding of required items when needed.

Recommended Objectives:

- Describe the importance of accurate accountability and status of materiel in your flight.
- Explain how Life Cycle Management Program affects materiel in your flight.
- Discuss the role the local LRS plays in supporting your flight.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Mission Command
- Organizational Structure and the Mission
- Funding

Working with Contractors

Total force personnel, to include uniformed, civilian, and contractor are all on a team that provides unique mission support to the organization to which they are assigned. However, different standards do apply to the various members of this team. It is important for all government personnel to understand the rules and regulations associated with contractors.

Flight commanders are responsible for incorporating contractors into their flight team but must recognize that managing a DoD contractor is different than managing a civil servant or military

member. Not all units in the Air Force have contract personnel assigned to them; however, as part of the total force, you may work alongside them at some point. Being familiar with the “do’s” and “don’ts” of government-contractor affiliation will help you to maintain appropriate relationships with contractor employees.

Recommended Objectives:

- Explain the specific allowances afforded and limitations imposed on contract personnel.
- Comprehend what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate relationships with contract personnel.
- Understand the importance of protecting contractually sensitive information when working with contractors.

Recommended Lesson Linkages:

- Organizational Structure and the Mission
- Manning
- Funding

Senior Enlisted Panel

Leaders can learn a lot from the experiences and knowledge of others. This panel of experienced SNCOs have a plethora of familiarity and insight into the task of caring for and developing Airmen, a key responsibility of Flight Commanders.

As a Flight Commander, you are charged with the responsibility of leading and developing others and ensuring mission accomplishment. The flight leadership team bears this responsibility together and must coordinate and cooperate in order to be effective. This panel of SNCOs has perspective into what tasks are best delegated to flight SNCOs as well as how to cultivate a positive and productive flight culture. They can also provide insight into how the flight leadership team supports the efforts of the squadron leadership team.

Recommended Objectives:

- Describe the role of SNCOs and how they complement the Flight Commander.
- Discuss ways to cultivate a flight culture of openness and respect where Airmen enjoy and excel at work.
- Apply the perspective and experience of squadron SNCOs to your respective situation.

Flight Commander Panel

Leaders can learn a lot from the experiences and knowledge of others. This panel of experienced Flight Commanders has familiarity and insight into the position and how to navigate the role of leading a flight.

As a Flight Commander, you are charged with the responsibility of leading and developing others and ensuring the mission gets accomplished. There will be many challenges to overcome such as leading peers, leading NCOs (who may be older and more experienced than you), or making choices that will have cascading effects throughout the flight. By learning from the experiences of others you will be better suited to handle various situations as you execute the role of flight command.

Recommended Objectives:

- Recognize how your perspective will change as you enter the role of Flight Commander.
- Describe effective ways to leverage and support flight leadership and other SNCOs.
- Apply lessons learned from experienced Flight Commanders to your respective situation.

Squadron Commander Panel

Leaders can learn a lot from the experiences and knowledge of others. This panel of experienced squadron commanders has a wide range of insight into the Flight Commander position, how to navigate the role of leading and developing others, and how Flight Commanders can help drive the culture and direction of the squadron.

As a Flight Commander, you play a key role in integrating the efforts of individuals throughout the organization to accomplish the mission and vision of the squadron commander. This panel of squadron commanders has insight into this task from a unit-wide perspective and can provide insight into the intricacies of how the Flight Commander supports the efforts of the squadron leadership team.

Recommended Objectives:

- Discuss the role and overall purpose of the flight commander within the squadron.
- Discuss ways the flight leadership team can help set the squadron up for success.
- Apply the perspective and experience of squadron commanders to your respective situation.