

## Chief Chat Episode 5 Transcript

Hey , what's up teammates ? Welcome to the Chief chat podcast . I'm Chief master Sergeant , Eddie Diaz Command Chief at the United States Air Force Academy . I'm a student of life followership and leadership . You know , throughout my military career , I've discovered that within every organization , there are enlisted airmen and guardians with lots of experiences who are wanting to share their examples on followership and leadership with you . In this podcast , we'll delve into the dynamic world of enlisted life and the US Air and Space Force giving our enlisted members a voice . So join us as we explore the intricacies of followership , leadership , technical expertise , and the unique experience that shape the journey of our military community . Get ready for engaging discussions , personal stories and a deep dive into the heart of the enlisted experience together . Let's uncover the untold stories and valuable insights that make our military community strong . Hey , ladies and gentlemen , welcome back to Chief chat man . Do I have somebody in the booth ? That's amazing to share some perspective about followership . Today's Chief chat is gonna be great , man . Let me tell you , I have been looking forward to having this conversation since I started this job as your ya a chief . The opportunity to chat with my teammate from West Point , my battle buddy , Sergeant Major Scott Brinson . Hey , bro , welcome . Hey , glad to be here . Thanks for having me , man . I am so glad you're here . So you know what , let's jump in and discuss all things in listed leadership and followership . Uh Because , you know , honestly , I'm eager to learn about your service and how you guys accomplish your mission and your roles and responsibilities . But before we begin , I have a question for you . That's totally , completely off topic . If you could choose any other service to serve in which branch of service would you have chosen ? And why ? Great question . Uh I , so I , I think that at , at some point in our careers we've always thought about , you know , what other service would I have joined if it wouldn't have been the Air Force or the Navy or the Marine Corps ? Uh I , I'm an , a gunfighter by trade , I'm an infantryman . Uh But I , I think that there's , there's , you have to , as I get a little older , it's , it's , I probably would have stepped more , stepped into a technical field and that probably would have been in the air force . Uh So if I had to do it again and I was given the choice and the army wasn't one of those options . It would have been the United States Air Force over here and I'm not you know , hey , it's , uh , I'm a , I'm a , obviously I'm a , I'm a soldier first but , uh , at the end of the day , uh , you know , looking back it probably , I , I've always been a nav geek . Um , so it's , I've always , uh , you know , every time there's an aircraft that flies overhead , I've always been the guy that , that looks up to see what it is . So , uh , yeah , it would have been , you know , without question , it would have been the United States Air Force . Yeah . Speaking of looking up whenever there's aircraft , right , we , we actually stole from the army , the the whole concept and we spell it hu A right ? Heads up air power . So keep looking up , man . Every time you look up , you just make sure you say whoa shout out to the air force . But man , thanks for sharing that . We'd love to have you back on our team , right ? As we all know that the Air Force cloth is from the army back from September 1947 . Um You know , but we're here to talk about leadership and followership , you know , in our department of the Air Force , our senior NC OS , our master sergeants all the way up to chief are laser focused on supervising several airmen and guardians . How are your soldiers taught to make effective impactful and sound judgment decisions ? In essence , how do you make someone good at making decisions in the army ? That's a great question , how do you make someone make good decisions ? I would argue that decision making , good decision making starts early . Uh And you're , you're a , as , as a young soldier . Uh We , we teach our or as a , as a , as non commissioned officers , we teach our leaders or our soldiers to make good decisions . Like what , what does that look like ? Well , it's called leading by example , that's the best way to , to , to enforce good decision making to your soldiers and understand that uh they need to know the difference between right and wrong . Like what ? And if I'm looking up , if I'm a soldier and I'm looking up to those non commissioned officers that are in my team , my squad , my , my

platoon , my , my company , I'm looking at them to make good decisions and that , that , that has snowball effect that get , that it rolls downhill , it gets bigger , it gets momentum and hopefully that's enforcing our soldiers to make good decisions . But it starts early to answer your question . How are my , how are my non commissioned officers teaching my soldiers to make good decisions ? And what does that look like ? Well , it starts by leading by example . Yeah , I was gonna highlight that . Like we always talk about leadership comes from just being present and by example , and that's spot on and that's about how making good sound decisions it comes from just by observation , observational leaderships . So thanks for sharing that perspective . And you know , I also want to ask , how does your service , you know , how does the army coach and mentor you enlisted to find value in what they do ? Like our airmen and Guardians are always striving for a , to find their purpose or have a sense of belonging . Uh So how does your service mentor and coach , you're enlisted to find value in what they do and how to have a voice , like literally have a voice in decisional situations that instead of just being trained in their MOS uh to do their job , to do their job . Well , I mean , it's important for everyone to know their job . Uh , you know , was I was the first or I had a , I had a white board in my office and I also had one right outside the office and I only had three words on there . It says , do your job , we all have responsibility . But uh how are we , how are we enforcing to our soldiers that there's value to what you're doing ? Uh We do that by giving them responsibility . We get , we do that by uh those , those soldiers understanding that your little chunk of the pie , your piece of the pie is important to the whole picture , right ? Uh Take one piece out of the pie . You don't have a complete system , you , you , you , you divide it of course . But at the end of the day , it's about , you know , knowing and understanding your mission , knowing and understanding that what you do for this specific mission is important . It's gonna save your battle buddy to your left and to your right , you know , maintaining your sector of fire , so to speak , doing your job , that's important to mission accomplishment . As long as the intent is clear and soldiers understand what they have to do . You know , it goes back to the first question , good decision making , you know , it , it , it , it adds up at the end of the day . So doing your job and doing it well , under good supervision , re ultimately will reach mission accomplishment for your organization . Yeah , start major , you hit on a good point there . Uh And I gotta say it spoken like a true infantry man when you bring out sectors of fire . But you know , it's a great analogy too , especially if folks understand that . Uh And you talk , we're talking about , you know , leadership through observation and , and your battle buddies to your right and to your left . Um You know , there is certainly a vast difference between task processes . You know , the , the do , as I say , mentality versus empowerment . And if there's that trust and level of commitment that your soldiers have , I it's a lot easier for , for you to empower them if you're willing to do so . But what is , what is your services growth model look like that allows you enlisted to be empowered to act . I think we kind of covered some of that . But really the focus on this one is just empowerment like I'm empowering you to go and go do , right ? So I would , I would say that , that it , you know , you , you said it initially it , it's all about trust , right ? But there's , it , it's gotta be , it's gotta be recognized the level of trust . Like you don't put your E ones and your E twos and your E threes in charge of a platoon conducting a live fire exercise . That's just not the way it is . So , but , but it's also , it's also going to , I empower my leaders and I actually empower my soldiers by trusting them . But that's , that's kinda funny because what you have to do is you have to make sure that , that , that , that soldier and that leader understands what they're doing . First of all , I think that's probably the most important thing . Uh making sure that they understand . Hey , this is , this is what I gotta do . This is the mission that I have to accomplish . How do we get there ? And that comes with supervision . Uh We make sure that our soldiers understand the mission again . It goes back to that piece of the pie and we , we trust him under good supervision , mind you to go out and accomplish the mission . So it all goes back to trust . But trust is built , trust isn't earned . Not initially , you have to build that trust and responsibility within that organization to make sure that you are reaching commander's intent and getting to the in-state . Yeah , there it is right there . Commander's

intent and it doesn't matter if you're in the Navy , you're in the Coast Guard , definitely in the army or the Air Force or in the space force . Commander's intent is so key and trust and leadership and empowerment go hand in hand and it's great to hear , you know , that perspective from you . Um with regards to just trust and leadership , you know , changing gears a little bit here , Sergeant major , you know , several years ago across the services , we started hearing this phrase are enlisted are the backbone to our military . So sorry , major from your perspective , is this just a cliché or is it true ? And if it is true , can you provide an example that where either you've experienced it or witnessed it firsthand that our enlisted service members truly are the backbone of our service ? If I truly believe that we are the backbone of , of our , of our services . Um You know , there's , we , we talk about , you know , the follower , the leader and the , the the different , the different , you know , responsibilities is that each leader does have . But at the end of the day , uh you know , we are , we're ensuring that our soldiers uh are led by good non commissioned officers , first of all . So it , it kinda got a trickle down effect . Uh Again , it goes back to the mission statement , understanding the intent , uh understanding what it is that we have to do . But the non commissioned officers of , of all the service , all the services are the ones that are actually , as I say , boots on the ground , conducting the mission , making sure that our , our , our pilots are up in the air flying on good aircraft . They're , they're , they're maintained , uh those , those tracked vehicles that are in the army , those those rotary wing aircraft are maintained by good soldiers , airmen , marines , sailors . That is really important . So , but where does that start ? Well , it starts from the bottom , you know , that backbone of the army , as we say is , is , is our , is our enlisted core , all of them from the E one to the E nine . That is the true backbone of the army . We all have uh you know , as , and we were talking about it earlier . Chief . Uh we are , you're always gonna have a boss . That's just the way that , that , that the military is built . Uh But understanding your place , you know , in , in that scheme , maneuver and that task or chart uh is , is very important to understand , but it's the , the non commissioned officers , you know , getting back , circling back , the non commissioned officers are the true backbone of the army . They're the ones on the ground conducting the mission with that leader . You know , whether it's that lieutenant captain , major , lieutenant colonel or that BC T commander , the , the BC T commander . That , that O6 , that colonel is not gonna be the one on the front line fighting . It's gonna be those soldiers , you know , at echelon that are down fighting the battle and those are the non commissioned officers . Those are those select few officers that are , that are selected to , to lead those organizations . So the backbone of our , of our organizations truly are our non commissioned officers . I hope that answers the question . I kinda , I kinda circled the uh circled it up there a little bit , but uh now I will take any day the title of being the backbone of the Air force and all of our enlisted airmen in such a manner that we are the strength . We are what keeps the Air Force and the Space Force , the army , the Navy , the Coast Guard , the Marine Corps , uh stable alive and able to move forward . If I will take that title anytime any day of the week . Yeah , I'm curious to know what title we would give our officers , but I'm honored to be part of the backbone , you know , and speaking of officers and , and where we see them , the Air Force has this document titled The Enlisted Force Structure . Maybe you've heard of it uh within our ranks . We call it the little brown book . Uh This brown book is a foundational product that describes our enlisted airmen's roles and responsibilities . It even has a part in there for senior NC OS specifically on page 16 , I looked it up but I mean , I have this book memorized after 29 years of serving in our Air Force . It specifically states that senior NC Os play a unique and critical role in developing and advising officers to lead teams successfully . Sorry , major within your respective service . When does officer and enlisted relationships begin for both growth and development ? I would say immediately , you know , I , I from the time that that Second Lieutenant shows up to the organization uh uh that mentorship and that coaching and that developing starts right off the bat . And you know , you and I are very fortunate to be at service academies where , you know , we're getting those , those high school graduates who have successfully been accepted into our respective academies and they're getting

, they're going down to their , to their uh to their wings , they're going down to their , to their regiments and they are getting mentorship directly from the NC OS , those Tanc Os , those am TS as they uh as they call them here at the Air Force Academy . Um but that mentorship starts immediately between the non commissioned officer . And in this case , and , you know , in our case , in the service academies , those those uh those cadets , uh but I would argue not argue , but I would say that that that begins immediately upon that , that young officer showing up in an organization linking in with that non commissioned officer and it , it , but that , that relationship begins and it doesn't , and , and it shouldn't stop . You know , that you're , you're building that network for life , you're building that trust in the organization , you're building that trust between the officer and the non commissioned officer and it's budding . Right . It never stops . We don't want it to stop . Uh , but mentorship goes both ways . There's , there's , there's something to be said for , uh , someone who is , who's got open , who's got an open mind . And that goes to the non commissioned officer . What am I taking it away from that second lieutenant ? What did he learn at that service academy or that reserve officer training Corp uh program that he graduated or she graduated from ? I'm learning something constantly , you know , and I've always said if we're not , if we are not constantly learning , we're probably in the wrong career field and we need to move on , you know , we're always developing ourselves . But that starts with that relationship , you know , between that young officer and that non commissioned officer . Yeah . And so goes the Department of Defense and all of our services where you have an officer , an enlisted relationship that fosters at a very young period in time and both members , time and service , which then , you know , allows that NCO to be the backbone and the officer to be the brains , but together they have to work in motion in unison teammate , teammates , battle buddies , wingman shipmates , uh fellow marines , uh so on and so forth . Uh Sergeant Major Brinson , thanks for coming all the way from the United States Military Academy , but it's known as West Point to come and sit down and have a conversation with me . Thanks for having me . It's awesome to hear your perspective is the enlisted , really the backbone of our service and we both agree that absolutely , we are And there's no greater better amazing relationship than that officer and enlisted relationship that starts at a very young period in time . So again , thank you so much for being with me here today . We want to express our gratitude to our dedicated listeners and the incredible enlisted airmen and guardians who are the backbone of our services . Your commitment to followership , leadership , technical expertise and sharing your experiences is what makes our military community stronger . Remember your stories matter and your contributions are vital too . So until next time , stay resilient , stay inspired and keep making it count . This is your chief Steve . Thanks for tuning in .