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Comments from North Dakota National Guard Leadership

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The Art of Caring Leadership Through Attitude

In the North Dakota National Guard, we are facing some of the most challenging times in our history due to the transformation of a reserve force to an operational force. Due to deployments, we have fewer people in critical jobs. Make no mistake, we will always get the job done and to standard, but it will take much perserverance. I believe with the right attitude daily and caring for one another personally and professionally, we have the ability to make a difference in our organization and ensure we meet our standards.

I believe that attitude is the one thing in our life that we have full control over each day, hour, minute and second. We are able to choose how we think, feel and most importantly how we treat our Families, our co-workers and everyone else around us. Eight simple letters can make a difference between winning or losing, happy and sad, or how we treat one another. These letters are the difference between existing in life or truly living it to the fullest each day. The first thing I do each day is check my ATTITUDE and choose to have a great day instead of just existing.

> **"Attitude is the foundation for a great leader versus an average leader."**

Attitude is the foundation for a great leader versus an average leader. It means being able to develop others through care and mentorship, including letting someone know what their strengths are along with being able to let them know areas for improvement. It's about being honest to yourself and others that you lead or leaders you may follow. Great leaders give direction not directions. No matter our position within the organization, we all have the ability to make decisions, have confidence in others and let them decide the "how," you just provide the "what." Give your subordinates tough problems and challenge them to wrestle with them; ALWAYS tell them the positives along with areas for improvement. The worst thing we can do is say nothing.

Many times in life, we spend a great amount of time worrying about things that never materialize. We need to control what we can control. It all circles back to attitude and changing ourselves instead of trying to change others or situations we may be in. We must go back to the core values of the military; what we are taught and most importantly, the life experiences. The professional military ethic is loyalty to the nation, the military and the unit. Duty is our obligation to do the job to the best of our abilities. Selfless Service is putting the needs and the goals of the nation, the military, and your unit and your Soldier or Airman ahead of your personal needs and interest. We need to possess courage, overcoming fears of bodily harm and do our duty while doing what's right – even when no one is looking. Candor is being frank, open, honest and sincere with Soldiers, Airmen, seniors and peers. Competence is proficiency in required professional knowledge, judgment and skills. Commitment means the dedication to carry out all unit missions and to serve the values of the unit, military and the country.

Given the challenges that we are facing in the N.D. National Guard, it is important that we focus on the mission and each other to create a culture of caring and mentorship to take the organization into the future. Do the hard, right thing and choose the right attitude to make a difference in someone's life. Imagine the power of these eight letters and the difference you can make!!

Sincerely,

Lt. Col. Rick Smith