Priorities of a new CSM in a Stryker Brigade Combat Team

Upon graduation from the Sergeants Major course (SMC), I was selected to assume responsibilities of the 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) with the 1st Armored Division located at Fort Bliss, Texas. I recently graduated from the SMC and three weeks later on the 12th July 2018, I became the senior enlisted advisor in 1-36IN. The CSM I was supposed to change out left the unit almost two months prior to my arrival. Although, the MSG that I changed out out was compete, it was clearly that the unit needed a senior enlisted advisor to continue to guide them during a busy training cycle. Right after my COR ceremony, my Battalion commander and I rushed to our Division headquarters to receive guidance from our newly Division Commander who took command that morning. Two days later, the Brigade and Battalion stuff moved to the National Training Center (NTC) to commence our Leader Training Program (LTP) to prepare us to our upcoming 19.01 NTC rotation. Ten days later we returned from LTP, just in time to prepare for an arduous Division level certification training called Iron Focus. Up to this time, I spent not even a week in garrison before I could even grasp my duties and responsibilities, but more importantly my priorities as a CSM in order to Shape, Influence, and Drive the organization. The unit finished Iron Focus on or about 12 June. Within that time, with less than a month to deploy to NTC, we set a couple of priorities.

1. Physical Training: The unit redeploy from Afghanistan around October-November 2017. After Christmas leave, the unit prepared to begin a busy training cycle that started in April with the Battalion level training called Spartan Focus and moved to its Brigade level certification training called Ready Focus back in June. The unit state regarding physical training may be considered poor due to the constant preparation for these three training events. However, within a month of leading by example and implementing guidance to 1SGs and leaders within the organization, we can say that our level physical training readings improved since July. After returning from LTP, my Commander and I took the battalion for a 4-mile run, which was mainly to build esprit de corps and teamwork. We saw that most Soldiers could not complete a mile of the run. We still have to ensure that platoon sergeants and squad leaders along with platoon leaders are implementing tough and realistic physical training. Although our unit continues to deal with tough and busy training schedules, it is imperative that senior leader like myself continue to push physical training with upmost priority.
2. Talent Management: My unit underwent an extreme change of leadership from team leaders to Brigade commander within 90 days from April to July. I currently have four new 1SGs and one seasoned HHC 1SG. I have dealt with four different operations sergeants major so far. We are attending NTC with our former Forward Support Company (FSC) 1SG. He has plenty of experience as a logistician, but I am hoping he can perform well during our NTC rotation as an Ops SGM. Talent management is crucial and key on how to align “the perfect” team in order to support our Battalion/Brigade commanders. Within my platoons and squads, we don’t have enough Sergeant First Class (SFC) or Staff Sergeants (SSG) NCOs to fulfill key positions. However, it is my responsibility to ensure I continue to place people in the proper jobs. Placing the right people in the right positions creates a tremendous impact in the organization. One thing that I understand is that at times the Army will PCS leaders and Soldiers who are poor performers. This is when leaders must ensure they take leadership seriously and continue to develop, coach, and mentor others.

In conclusion, I can honestly say that the job of the CSM within the first 60 or 90 days is to learn the unit’s strengths and weaknesses. This will allow a CSM to fully understand what priorities to set at the beginning. In my case, I needed to get my unit ready for NTC. As my time continues to move forward, I do fully understand that everything evolves around taking care of our Soldiers. From developing a solid physical training plan to placing leaders in the correct jobs. At this time, I am still developing or assessing the three things I want to accomplish in my unit once I am with my CSM time.