



CSM Forum

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Talent management is a term used by senior leaders all around the Army. “Get the right person to the right place at the right time” is a good bumper sticker, but it is easier to talk about than to actually do. The good news is there is a realization that we must do something that goes beyond the simple development of people and assignment management. Many of us have done some semblance of talent management for years. Although talent management is a moderately common occurrence, what “right” looks like in one career management field, or even unit, may not be the same in another field, and is not always a deliberate and well-thought-out process.

Although several variables deal with talent management, leadership is the key to success. The Army expects leaders to be agile and adaptive, causing us to continually look at how and why we are doing things to remain relevant. Today’s society, Army, and Soldiers present some variables we need to take into account when considering talent management. Soldiers from previous generations could be told to do something, and they moved out smartly without requiring a great deal of explanation. Soldiers of the present generation want to feel valued and see value in what they do. Key complaints by Soldiers to the Inspector General are misutilization and poor leadership. Misutilization is inherently contrary to talent management but in reality takes on different meanings depending on whom you are speaking to about this topic. What seems like misutilization to a Soldier may not be how senior leaders see things. Taskings are part of Army life, and some duties are required and even developmental when managed properly. Leaders need to take time to manage talent to maximize the success of mission, Soldiers, and families. Actually, talent management is a line of effort responsibility for noncommissioned officers (NCOs) as prescribed in NCO Strategy 2020.



In talent management’s simplest form, leaders should consider the commander’s requirements and priorities to determine where the most impact and risk lie and focus the most talented people in those areas. Task, time, and priority management can be just as important here as talent management. Those who are unable to accomplish required missions need to be retrained and counseled appropriately after determining the cause. It is easy to forget that each person has other duties they are responsible for, and not moving responsibilities

around appropriately can cause undue stress and burn-out for our best people. Even additional duties should be taken into account. Do not limit what you consider for managing talent.

Several elements go into talent management. Capability, career goals, and needs of the Army are some of the key aspects leaders must consider. Leaders must communicate with their Soldiers to ensure Soldiers know the pros and cons to their career based on their decisions. Leaders can see if a Soldier needs to continue building on basic skills before looking for additional responsibilities or stove piping their skillsets and potentially halting their progression. Individual development plans are a great tool to assist with talent management and provide a perfect opportunity for holistic mentoring when considering professional and personal goals and ways to get there.

There is one thing that is often not understood in Career Management Field 35—senior NCOs, in particular Command Sergeant Major/Sergeant Major, must simultaneously understand intelligence and be good leaders. This must encompass the full scope of the Intelligence Warfighting Function and what every discipline brings to the fight. This takes time and experience, while putting away ego, to fill in gaps of knowledge and understanding. Far too often, senior NCOs decide they are not good at one

or the other and spend time focusing on what they view as their strength. First Sergeants need an understanding of how to oversee training for any intelligence discipline and be the senior advisor to the commander. Sergeants First Class must learn to manage missions, assess training needs, develop plans to fill mission gaps, and lead NCOs and Soldiers. All of this builds toward who will be the most talented individuals to serve in the most senior positions but requires leaders along the way to manage talent. The Office of the Chief of Military Intelligence is painstakingly rewriting the professional development models for each intelligence discipline, and the NCO Academy is organizing its training along these lines.

The Army has taken some key actions in this process by the development of the Talent Management Task Force, initiation of Assignment Interactive Module 2, and emplacement of the Marketplace, to name a few. All of these focus on officers gaining more control of managing their own careers through an assignment selection process that includes a potential agreement between an individual and unit leadership. There are no guarantees, and every valid position will be filled, but officers can attempt to match their wants with Army needs. There is a lot of discussion about this being available to the enlisted force after additional fielding.

Giving NCOs/Soldiers more control over their careers may assist with retention because they can try to obtain assignments with jobs at locations of their choice. This should increase the proficiency of individuals, as Soldiers who are more competitive for promotion will, in theory, be more lucrative for units to choose for jobs at their location. This may become unbelievably important, as today's recruits who fall under the new retirement plan will have more options throughout their career to leave the military. However, there are negatives if this process becomes available to the enlisted force, as each career management field will not work in the same way. Soldiers may choose to continue doing a specific job or remain at a location. Although stability works well for the mission and family, it may not assist the Soldier with career progression and may eliminate opportunities for other Soldiers. Serving in a mix of assignments at the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command and U.S. Army Forces Command and with Special Operations Forces builds diversity through experiences leading/working in different environments because the mission, even within the same military occupational specialty (MOS), is executed much differently at each location. Leaders will need to be engaged and look at

each circumstance to determine the best way to mentor and develop their Soldiers.

Although talent management is done primarily at the unit level, Human Resources Command (HRC) must be part of the discussion. Manning guidance dictates assignment management, but branches conduct talent management to the maximum level possible to synchronize assignments to meet the larger Army mission. Determining Soldiers eligible for drill sergeant, recruiter, nominative assignments, and more ensures only qualified individuals go to certain jobs. HRC also performs assignment management to ensure we take care of families through the Exceptional Family Member, Married Army Couples, and Joint Domicile Programs when Soldiers move. We want to get the right person to the right place at the right time, but assignment availability and balancing the needs of the force at large are realities in actual talent management. At the end of the day, making full use of the available assets for talent management requires HRC and unit leaders to work together.

Another area for talent management is broadening assignments and obtaining additional skills. This is a great way for NCOs to separate themselves from their peers. Excellence while serving in operational assignments is what gets Soldiers promoted. Broadening assignments are a great way for NCOs to demonstrate they are able to operate at a high level in any environment and hone needed skills to progress in their careers. As an example, drill sergeant is an outstanding way to develop good leadership skills while planning, coordinating, and executing training in conjunction with an MOS committee. Another discriminator for Soldiers is obtaining additional skill identifiers (ASI). An ASI will not get a Soldier promoted, but what the Soldier does with that skill in support of the mission is the positive impact. Leaders need to deliberately assist individuals in making positive decisions so that they do not undercut their potential or put themselves in positions beyond their current capability.

There is still one more important issue to discuss on this topic—we need to train leaders how to manage talent. Spotting, assessing, and developing talent is not a skill everyone has. It is hard and has nothing to do with being friends. Many senior leaders say that everyone in their organization manages talent because they have ensured it is a priority. Too many times senior leaders believe this is such a simple concept. They think it is implied or someone else is doing it, but may not periodically check

whether it is being done. What is simple to some is not simple to all and requires a little inspect versus expect to take care of those top performers in every formation.

Truthfully, every organization has people who do talent management well, while others do not do it for multiple reasons. In most instances, if talent management does not happen it is because individuals do not understand the how or why of taking the time to perform this important function. Although the focus for leader development is two levels down, senior leaders may need to go below two levels to ensure a deliberate process exists to man-

age time, tasks, and priorities and ensure we get the right people to the right place at the right time.

It will be interesting to see what opportunities will be available to enlisted Soldiers, whether managing one's own career or managing the talent of others. Leaders will need to be adaptive and engaged. The only way to ensure this happens is to have leaders at every level develop those below them and ensure talent is managed. It is good to see the Army looking at this important topic and ways to best take care of our number one asset—our people. 

Always Out Front!

Another Perspective: EAC at the Tip of the Spear

The United States Army is currently in a serious competition with our peer threats—Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. At the same time, we continue to support many unique operations across the world outside of that competition. While the Army often discusses the new focus on large-scale ground combat operations, we should not overlook the importance of the daily competition we conduct against our peer threats.

As stated in ADP 3-0, *Operations*, “The Army’s primary mission is to organize, train, and equip its forces to conduct prompt and sustained land combat to defeat enemy ground forces and seize, occupy, and defend land areas.”¹ That mission starts well before the actual conduct of large-scale ground combat operations. In many ways, our successes and struggles during combat operations will be largely determined during the Army strategic roles of shape operational environments and prevent conflict. Intelligence is at the tip of the spear during competition, and intelligence support is often driven from the top by echelons above corps (EAC). Understanding the value of EAC planning, collection and processing, analysis, and production is important for all military intelligence Soldiers from the national level all the way down to the tactical level.

During the competition phase, the most critical intelligence capabilities and task of establishing the intelligence architecture reside within EAC. EAC intelligence activities build our foundational intelligence, support strategic and operational level planning, protect our force, improve the capabilities of our allies and partners, and help prepare the tactical force as the Army transitions to large-scale ground combat operations. EAC foundational intelligence is critical to so many aspects of Army operations. However, our peer threats continually attempt to conduct deception and hinder our collection efforts. We are literally “fighting for intelligence” even before we conduct combat operations.

To win tomorrow, the intelligence warfighting function must continue to innovate and evolve. EAC intelligence organizations are fully engaged in efforts to find solutions and drive change to solve complex intelligence problems. We must be prepared for the future challenges so that the Army can deter, fight, and win on any battlefield, against any foe, now and into the future.

Endnote

1. Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 31 July 2019), 1-5.