



The Human Dimension and the Future of Unit-Level Leader Development

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Last year, the Army debuted the new Officer Evaluation Report and the new web-based system for evaluations came online as the first major changes to the officer management system in 10 years.¹ For reasons that are outside the scope of this article, the previous evaluation system had become inflated and ineffective at identifying talent, especially at junior officer levels.² Meanwhile, the new ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership* reflects the strategic vision of GEN Odierno, GEN Dempsey, and the Army 2025 plan which places leader development as a top priority for the Army.³ These two changes are deeply connected and their effects have impacts at every level of the Army.

In order to succeed in the leader development domain, it is first critical to understand how the Army defines leadership. Leadership is defined and thoroughly explored in ADP 6-22 and ADRP 6-22. The Army's Leadership Requirements Model (Figure 1) serves as the basis for the new OER (for company grade officers) and it visually depicts the inter-connectedness of the three attributes and three competencies exhibited by leaders. Within each aspect there are subordinate skills and demonstrable actions that support leadership. If Army leadership is defined by these six attributes and competencies, then leader development is therefore defined as the inculcation, growth, and refinement of the same. Given this definition and the new OER, this paper explores two questions: What changes need to be made to unit-level leader development programs? How does this change affect Rated officers?

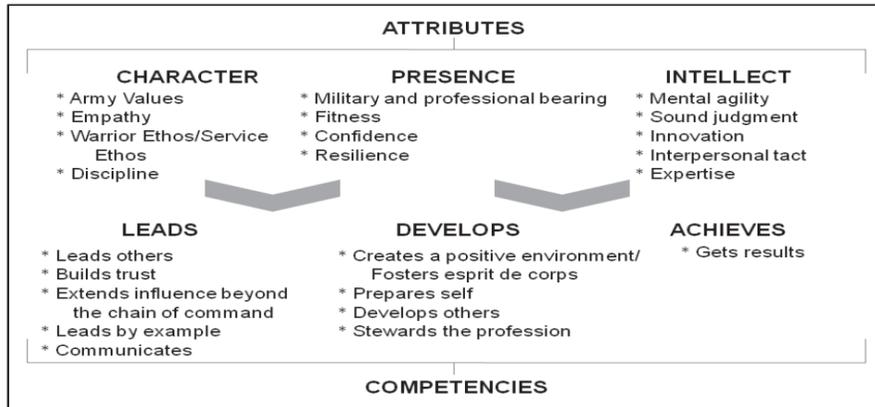


Figure 1: Leadership Requirements Model from ADP 6-22

Evaluating Our Current Leader Development Programs

The last 14 years of conflict have created thousands of leaders with invaluable deployed experiences in theaters around the world, but it has been a trade-off. After a decade of war, the 2012 CASAL Survey found “develops others” to be the core leader competency most in need of improvement.⁴ Warrior Leader Course, the Army’s baseline for professional development within the NCO corps was compressed from 1 month to 17 days.⁵ Promotion rates from CPT to MAJ and from MAJ to LTC were increased in excess of 90%.⁶ Sergeants were hurried back to units to become squad and team leaders, while countless underprepared officers were placed into critical roles throughout the Army.

In an effort to meet the demands of the era of persistent conflict, many unit commanders seem to have shifted the focus of their leader *development* programs to leader *training* programs⁷ and the subtle distinction is far more significant than it may appear. According to Mike Myatt, one of the leading experts on the subject of leader development, training “presumes the need for indoctrination on systems, processes and techniques. Moreover, training assumes that said systems, processes and techniques are the right way to do things.” He further distinguishes training from development in that training focuses on technique and content while development focuses on people and training focuses on efficiency while development focuses on effectiveness.⁸ Typical leader “development” programs (LDPs) stress topics such as the military legal system, administrative actions, flags, the medical evaluation board process, or vehicle maintenance systems.



Such LDPs are instructive (and sometimes draconian), but not developmental, because they emphasize systems over people. Such training focuses on only one aspect of Army leadership (Expertise) with the goal of increasing efficiency, not leadership. With a need to win wars and to do well in command, the Army and its leaders shared a preference for results at the expense of development. The previous OER gave Raters a single box to list any and every achievement, so this shift to training went unchecked.

However, the new OER specifically requires Raters to describe achievements in Develops. This change is not insignificant since nearly all decisions about promotions and selection are based heavily on OERs. Since the LRM pre-dates the new OER, this change could be viewed as unnecessary, so it is relevant to consider why the new OER is so explicit in this regard.

Creating and Sustaining Better Systems

Each doctrinal publication is reviewed and updated every few years, so this change seems to lock the Army into a temporary version of the doctrine. The Army could have easily updated doctrine without changing the OER and expected leaders to evaluate subordinate officers accordingly. In an article published in *Military Review* titled “Improving the Leader Development Experience in Army Units”, COL Douglas C. Crissman posits an excellent theory as to why leader development is different: leader development requires more than just policy – it requires buy-in, accountability, and validation.⁹ Leaders do what senior leaders check and by changing the OER, the Army has forced leaders to get at least a basic understanding of the new leadership doctrine and adjust their priorities at least slightly. This helps answer the second question in this article, because a failure to adjust would have consequences for junior officers.

COL Crissman goes on to describe the three tiers of leaders: Good leaders get stuff done, better leaders get the important stuff done, and great leaders focus on developing subordinates. Rather than simply encouraging more development, the Army has now given it a place of importance on every junior officer evaluation - it is no longer optional and every leader must do it. If all junior officers are expected to do *some* amount of leader development, the amount required for an above center of mass OER must also increase.

Usually the “important stuff” that better leaders get done is tracked on a spreadsheet or a quad-chart that is briefed weekly with red/amber/green color coding. Weapons qualification statistics, operational readiness, and personnel readiness are all examples of what typically gets reduced to a number and a color for expedient reporting. In stark contrast, leader development is rarely tracked and subordinates are left at best with vague guidance or a schedule of mandatory training events.



In the absence of specific guidance, leader development programs and strategies across the Army often lack cohesion and in my experience are left to the discretion of unit commanders who over-emphasize increasing knowledge of Army systems (to improve expertise and efficiency; and to account for decreased professional education) rather than actually fostering learning and the development of leadership. Leaders at all levels simply want to do more (get results) of what their boss checks.

Junior leader development may be an issue at the company level, but brigade and battalion commanders share much of the responsibility. While openness to new ideas is not characteristic of senior military leaders,¹⁰ this shift is necessary to meet the strategic needs of the Army and is presented solely to offer a better way of building our future leaders, not as a critique of senior leadership. Junior leaders prioritize what is important to their bosses and if zero time is spent tracking or assessing a unit-level program, then you should expect zero time spent preparing one. If MSAF 360 completion is not mandatory, then it simply will not get done. The following framework is based on the LRM and is provided as an example of how the new FM 6-22 recommends commanders to design their unit-level programs and support structures so that all commanders can more easily develop leaders and recognize (via the OER) leaders who do well in this area.

The Skills-Based Model

In May 2014, Army Training and Doctrine Command published the U.S. Army Human Dimension Concept which is relevant to the overarching topic here: our Army is our people. Within the pamphlet, TRADOC writes: “The Army must deliberately develop the competence, character, and commitment of all members of the Army” and specifically lists skills such as team building; group dynamics; verbal and non-verbal communication; and critical and creative thinking.¹¹ Along with the Army Leader Development Strategy, the Human Dimension Concept provides the guiding vision for how the Army views people and leaders. In a knowledge-based organization, people represent skills and talents that can be developed.

ADP 6-22 charges each leader to conduct development that balances the immediate, near, and long-term requirements of the unit, the soldier, and the Army.¹² The Leadership Requirements Model (LRM) is the Army’s definition of leadership, so it is the basis for the following proposed model of improving leader development. This choice is further supported because the LRM is the framework for officer evaluations and because it connects to the Human Dimension concept by sustaining the Army’s concept of “Be, Know, Do.” Be,



Know, Do is how the Army has codified what it expects of every leader, and I will use these three categories to organize my assessment of whether we are training or developing leaders and the implications of recent changes.

Be - Character and Presence: The attributes (character, presence, and intellect) describe the ideal leader that the Army wants, but that does not mean that this is what the Army has. During the accessions process, background checks, academic achievement, ASVAB scores, APFT scores, medical screening, and other proxies are used as metrics for a soldier's attributes. As other pieces of literature argue,¹³ it is not accurate to assume that soldiers, let alone leaders, all enter the Army with the requisite character or presence. Moreover, it is also vital to recognize that the Army does not actively develop character or presence in leaders.¹⁴ Even ADP 6-22 states that "individuals are responsible for their own character development."¹⁵

Instead of developing these attributes, the Army most often uses them as evaluative or screening criteria. Individuals with demonstrated weaknesses in character or presence are not trusted to serve (let alone lead) which is why there is only rarely an evaluation sent forward with a "No" under Army Values that is not coupled with a civil conviction, AR 15-6 investigation, or UCMJ paperwork. Viewed together, character and presence represent the two attributes that the Army uses as baseline requirements of what a leader must be before they are entrusted to lead, not something to be developed, so this proposed model does not address them.

Know - Intellectual Capacity and Expertise: It is important to clarify that intellectual capacity is not synonymous with intelligence or knowledge. Within ADP 6-22, intellectual capacity is comprised of four skills that support leadership, as well as the expertise that is essential to being a leader and a professional. The skills associated with intellect are all distinctly different from expertise and can be developed in the same manner as the LRM's competencies and their corresponding skills.

As discussed earlier, expertise is the domain that most leader development programs focus on in order to increase efficiency and results. Consider your current or previous unit: What recurring events most often had "leader development" associated with them?

Did your list include:

- Vehicle maintenance training for leaders
- Classes on legal paperwork processing



- A briefing on new policy or system

These are common examples of leader development that I've seen in infantry, artillery, and engineer units, but they stand in stark contrast with the Army's definition of leadership. Yes, an expert body of knowledge is a part of Huntington's definition of a professional¹⁶ but leadership demands more.

The complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity of modern conflict requires far more than rote memorization and demands leaders capable of crossing the learning gap before their higher headquarters is able to tell them what to do. The difference between teaching "how to think" versus "what to think" underscores the difference between intellect and expertise. Mental agility, judgment, innovative problem solving, and tact are all skills that can be developed, but are rarely addressed in unit leader development programs.

Instead of formal development, many units seem to rely on leadership experience for development in the operational domain. However, Army researchers found that although experiential learning is not the most effective form of teaching adaptive thinking, it is the most common.¹⁷ In other words, we expect leaders to do these things, but we never show them how.

To do so, leaders should not dismiss the classroom environment. Critical thinking and decision making can all be effectively nurtured in an academic setting at very low cost.¹⁸ MAJ (Ret.) Don Vandergriff has been advocating for exactly this change. Tactical decision exercises are just basic forms of classroom methods for developing creativity and mental agility. They require few resources, but yield marked results.

Intellectual capacity also includes interpersonal tact. As a component of an attribute, these two simple words require nearly a page of explanation in ADRP 6-22 – more than any other component. If any single component were essential to a leader's ability to accomplish the mission and improve the organization, interpersonal tact would be it.¹⁹ Despite this, it is almost never addressed.

One might argue that tact is not addressed because the rank hierarchy enforces respect and subordination but, tact is not just being respectful of superiors - it includes how we engage our subordinates, too. Spending time with leaders in a group setting discussing their MSAF 360 assessments is an obvious example of how to develop interpersonal tact (that does not impact a rater's assessment)²⁰, but we cannot do that if we are not even mandating such feedback.



Do - Leads, Develops, Achieves: Together, the three Competencies establish the collective actions that the Army expects a leader to do in order to be successful. Actions are demonstrable, so without question, these actions (and supporting skills) can and must be developed in order to improve leadership.

Leads: Leading is more than just saying "Follow me!" and charging a hill. It is a complex challenge and our pursuit of high standards without adequate development has made toxic leadership a significant problem within the Army. We cannot expect leaders to lead well if we do not show them how to do so.

Leading others requires an understanding of group dynamics and organizational psychology. Building trust is equally based on your own character and your trust in your subordinates and trust is at the core of mission command.²¹ Communication, too, is comprised of skills that can be learned such as public speaking, active listening, and negotiations. I have no idea how my battalion commander evaluated me in this area since he never saw my MSAF 360 and I cannot imagine how learning about administrative systems helped any of us become better at leading.

We can actively develop these skills in units. Business schools have entire courses devoted to these topics and yet we rarely devote any time or effort to develop them. Moreover, without requiring an MSAF 360, we fail to effectively assess our leaders. We cannot claim to be effectively developing leadership if we are not doing either.

Develops: Leaders develop their teams, their subordinates, and themselves and improve them for the future. Leaders who are devoted to developing subordinates create a learning environment within their units which fosters a desire to learn that mutually supports coaching, mentoring, and self-development. In the current system, leaders are expected to conduct quarterly performance counseling with subordinates, but little effort is made on ensuring that the discussion is of value.

We need to show junior leaders how to develop subordinates. For officers, it is not a part of pre-commissioning or the basic officer leader course.²² We are a people-based organization, so we must institutionalize the importance of developing others during the formative years of our young leaders. This will require an organizational shift to show them that if you truly want a unit to get better, you need to take time away from simply focusing on getting stuff done and invest time in developing traits of leadership.



Army has taken two simple steps to this end: 1) incorporating Develops into the OER and 2) requiring an MSAF 360. Adding develops to the OER helps give credit to leaders who invest in their subordinates while the MSAF 360 can provide leaders with the feedback necessary to begin making them more self-aware. But, the MSAF 360 will not generate a complete report if not enough responses from each group are provided and a subordinate has to harass superiors until they fill it out.

We cannot be committed to development when there is no way of ensuring that a motivated leader can get a complete MSAF 360 report. Leaders do what senior leaders check. As a CO, my own MSAF 360 was incomplete when not enough superiors filled it out. Anyone can initiate, but it takes senior leader buy-in to make development meaningful. Consider the impact of simply tracking MSAF 360 completion for key leaders in the same way we view awards and evaluations.

Achieves: There is only one way that the Army defines achievement: Getting Results. This definition may appear simple and practical, but it is at the core of toxic leadership. By definition, toxic leaders exploit their subordinates for short-term success at the detriment of long-term gains.²³ It is possible to improve results and also decrease toxic leadership.

The ability to “Get results” can be developed through an understanding of strategy and resource allocation. You don’t need to have a Ph.D. in strategy to recognize the impact of individual choices on a larger goal. That is, fundamentally, a component of strategic thinking.

Effective resource allocation demands a clear set of priorities. Renowned business author Patrick Lencioni is attributed with a quotation that is well-known in the Army: “If everything’s important, then nothing is.”²⁴ Army leaders are notorious for demanding that everything get done and being upset when subordinates did not make something a priority. This is a failure of the leader, not the subordinate, and it breeds deep frustration and resentment.

Once leaders learn to prioritize, the next step is to learn time management. Getting results requires the ability to prioritize and to manage time well which is why William Oncken Jr. and Donald L. Wass first began teaching it to business leaders 15 years ago. Their seminal work “Management Time: Who’s Got the Monkey?” has become the most widely-read article ever published by Harvard Business Review and a best-selling book. Learning to manage time leads to happier, more resilient leaders and subordinates who have more energy at work, but we do not teach it.



Mission accomplishment (Gets results) must co-exist with an extended perspective towards maintaining and building the organization's capabilities for long-term results. Training cannot take the place of development. Tracking and accounting for leader development is how to balance this, but the current OER is not a stand-alone solution since we do not formally track leader development.

Imagine treating leader development as a mission essential task. Imagine units rating themselves, developing training plans, and assessing progress. Imagine tracking MSAF 360 completion just like command climate surveys. Units can "Get results" in the leader development domain and that needs to happen if we are going to say that it is a priority.

Defining the Army as a Profession: UCMJ, Ethics, and the Army as a Learning Organization

The last aspect of the Leadership Requirements Model is a component of develops: Stewards of the Profession. We must all recognize that the military truly is a profession and that being a professional carries a responsibility to continually learn and improve both ourselves and our organization. Being a steward of the profession is not an inherent part of every leader's commission. It, too, must be developed through mentoring and opportunities for senior leaders to connect to their subordinates. This article is an attempt to improve our great organization, but there is far more that can be done at the unit level to improve ourselves and our leaders.

Conclusion:

In February 2015, Dr. Stephen Gerras and Dr. Leonard Wong published a paper from the Strategic Studies Institute publicly arguing that the Army has a problem with lying²⁵ and I assert that misconstruing training and leader development is a clear example of that. If our leader development does not address leadership; if we do not enforce MSAF 360 requirements; and if we do not measure, track, or even adequately support leader development, then we cannot claim to be doing it.

However, the problem is much larger than we realize because the military only promotes from within. "[D]eveloping a senior uniformed leader begins 20-plus years prior to the organization's need for the individual."²⁶ Leader development must begin at the junior officer level or we are liable to perpetuate the problems of toxic leadership. The Army cannot afford to lose dominance of the human dimension.



We can easily do a better job of nurturing leader development in our units by viewing it as a critical task and building support systems. Tracking leader development makes it a clear priority and enables us to recognize leaders who invest in their subordinates and support the Army's long-term goals.

More importantly, leaders must plan leader development in a nested manner just like METL training. The newly published FM 6-22 makes this easier, but it requires brigade and battalion commanders input to ensure that junior officers are actually matching our topics and events to the Leadership Requirements Model.

Company grade officers must understand how the Army defines leadership and to develop it in themselves and others. More importantly, they must have consistent and nested guidance from their superiors about priorities. A failure in either area will be directly reflected in their OER which can have major ramifications.

We can also improve development by simply enforcing our existing policies. Tracking MSAF 360 completion ensures compliance and is the next step forward. It does not impact OERs and motivated leaders will use the feedback to improve themselves. This is much easier than it seems and now is the right time to start doing it.

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NOTES

1. Removing the box check for company grade officers was not a major change, and may have been a step in the wrong direction based on subsequent changes.
2. COL Casey Wardynski, MAJ David S. Lyle, LTC(R) Michael J. Colarusso, *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success, Volume 7: Evaluating Talent* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, November 2014).
3. ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office [GPO], August 2012). Emphasis added by the author.
4. There are literally hundreds of articles about improving leader development in Army units. Two particularly relevant pieces are COL Douglas M. Gabram's "Leader-Development: Are We Keeping Pace?" Senior Service Fellowship Project, (USAWC, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2007); and COL Frederick M. O'Donnell's "Developing Strategic Leader Competencies in Today's Junior Officer Corps", Strategy Research Project, USAWC, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2013.



5. Ryan Riley, Josh Hatfield, Art Paddock & Jon J. Falleson, *2012 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL): Main Findings*, Technical Report 2013-1 (Leavenworth, KS: Defense Technical Information Center, April 2013), accessed 8 June 2015, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA588318>.
6. Clifford Kyle Jones, "New, Longer Warrior Leader Course to Launch with Shorter Days, Land Nav Returns," *NCO Journal* online, December 11, 2012, www.army.mil/article/92811/.
7. Wardynski et al, *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success, Volume 7: Evaluating Talent*.
8. Mike Myatt, "The #1 Reason Leader Development Fails," *Forbes.com*, December 19, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/12/19/the-1-reason-leadership-development-fails/>. Mr. Myatt is a leading expert on the subject of leader development and widely considered one of the top 10 scholars on the subject.
9. COL Douglas Crissman, "Improving the Leader Development Experience in Army Units," *Military Review*, (May-June 2013), 6-16.
10. Dr. Stephen J. Gerras and Dr. Leonard Wong, "Changing Minds In The Army: Why It Is So Difficult and What To Do About It," (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 28 October 2013).
11. TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-7, *The U.S. Army Human Dimension Concept*, (Fort Eustis, Virginia: HQ TRADOC, 21 May 2014).
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13. Phillip Lewis, Karl Kuhnert, and Robert Magannis, "Defining Military Character," *Parameters*, 17(2) (Summer 1987): 33-41.
14. COL Brian M. Michelson, "Character Development of U.S. Army Leaders: The Laissez-Faire Approach," *Military Review* (September-October 2013).
15. ADP 6-22, 3-5.
16. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Belknap Press, 1957).
17. K.A. Ericsson, "The Influence of Experience and Deliberate Practice on the Development of Superior Expert Performance," *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 687-703.
18. MAJ (Ret.) Donald Vendergriff, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War*, 2nd edition (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 26 August 2012).
19. ADRP 6-22, 5-2.
20. Hardison et al, "360-Degree Assessments: Are They the Right Tool for the U.S. Military?," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015): 62, accessed 30 October 2015, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR900/RR998/RAND_RR998.pdf.
21. ADP 6-0, C-2 *Mission Command* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 12 March 2014).
22. TRADOC Regulation 350-36: Basic Officer Leader Training Policies and Administration, (Fort Eustis, VA: HQ TRADOC, 13 January 2014), accessed 18 June 2015, <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/regs/tr350-36.pdf>.
23. Daniel Zwerdling, "Army Takes on Its Own Toxic Leaders," *NPR* online, January 6, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2014/01/06/259422776/army-takes-on-its-own-toxic-leaders>. Emphasis added by the author.
24. Patrick Lencioni is one of the most sought after business speakers in America and the author of 10 books (which have sold over 4 million copies and been translated into more than 25 languages) including *The Advantage* from which this quotation is most often cited.
25. Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras, "Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession", (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies institute and U.S. Army War College Press, February 2015).
26. *Army Leader Development Strategy* (HQDA, 2013): 3.



Appendix 1: Proposed Model for Leader Development Programs

U.S. Army Human Dimension Concept				
	Leadership Requirements Model	Skills-Based Model (Proposed by author)		
	Attributes	Skills		
Be (Physical)	Character	Army Values		
		Empathy		
		Warrior Ethos/Service Ethos		
		Discipline		
	<i>Character is evaluated during assessments (including CBT/AIT) and used to separate, but it is not developed within units.</i>			
			Presence	
				Military and Professional Bearing
				Fitness
Confidence				
<i>Presence is evaluated during assessments (including CBT/AIT) and used to separate, but it is not developed within units.</i>				
		Resilience		
		Know (Cognitive)	Intellect	
			Mental Agility	Critical Thinking, Reasoning, Logic
Sound Judgment	(Recognition Primed) Decision Making			
Innovation	Design, Systems Theory			
Interpersonal Tact	Leadership Roles			
Expertise	CURRENTLY FOCUS DEVELOPMENT HERE Ex. Legal and administrative systems Informational briefings about new policies			
Do (Social)	Competencies	Skills		
	Leads	Leads Others	Group Dynamics	
		Builds Trust	Mission Command, Fostering Initiative	
		Extends Influence Beyond the Chain of Command	Conflict Resolution, Collaborative Leadership	
		Leads by Example	Experiential Learning	
		Communicates	Public Speaking, Negotiations, Mediation, Active Listening	
		Develops	Creates a Positive environment/ Fosters Espirit de Corps	Organizational Management, Fairness, Create a learning environment, Running meetings
	Prepares Self		Self-Awareness	
	Develops Others		Assessing Subordinates, Performance Evaluations, Peer Counseling	
	Stewards of the Profession		Mentoring	
	Achieves	Gets Results	Strategy	
			Time Management	
			Solitude	
			Resource Management	