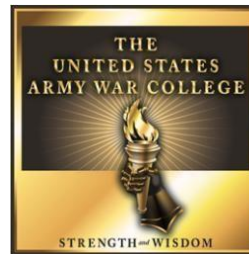


Team Leadership for Mission Command

by

Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey A. Norman
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2015

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Abstract

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Mission command represents a significant cultural shift in the leadership philosophy of the U.S. Army, yet recent studies indicate Army leaders and organizations struggle to implement its fundamental principles. Effective mission command relies heavily on teams and team building, but many Army leaders and organizations demonstrate weak team development and team leadership. This paper explores the Army's shift to mission command as a leadership philosophy; reviews recent leadership survey results to reveal areas of improvement in the exercise of mission command within the force; and considers contemporary civilian organizational behavior models, such as senior team leadership. The paper concludes by providing recommendations on ways to infuse senior team leadership methods by addressing doctrinal and training shortfalls in team building, reduce leader and team member turnover, and improve leadership feedback to harness the talents of leaders at all levels and more fully exercise mission command.

Team Leadership for Mission Command

Mission command is fundamentally a learned behavior to be imprinted into the DNA of the profession of arms.

—General Martin E. Dempsey¹

Mission command represents a significant cultural shift in the leadership philosophy of the United States (U.S.) Army, yet recent studies indicate Army leaders and organizations struggle to implement its fundamental principles. Mission command philosophy engages leaders at all levels and empowers them to make sound and timely decisions within the higher commander's intent. This philosophy involves following six key principles, the first of which is "building cohesive teams through mutual trust."² Effective mission command relies heavily on teams and team building. Yet, recent surveys indicate Army leaders and organizations struggle with key aspects of team development and team function. The most striking shortcomings are: (1) difficulty in building cohesive teams, (2) difficulty in providing feedback and coaching to subordinates as well as receiving feedback from subordinates, and (3) difficulties in involving subordinates in decision making.³ This paper begins with a summary of the Army's shift to mission command as a leadership philosophy then reviews recent leadership survey results to reveal areas of improvement in the exercise of mission command within the force. The paper continues by considering contemporary civilian organizational behavior models, such as senior team leadership, for solutions to alleviate the shortcomings identified in the surveys. The paper concludes by providing recommendations on ways to infuse senior team leadership methods by addressing doctrinal and training shortfalls in team building, reducing leader and team member turnover, and improving leadership feedback to harness the talents of leaders at all

levels and more fully exercise mission command. Exploring the Army's shift to mission command as a leadership philosophy provides important context for understanding how to better implement it in the future.

Evolution of the Mission Command Philosophy

The principles of mission command trace back to eighteenth and nineteenth century Prussia. "Prussia's military problem was to find a way to fight short, sharp wars that ended in decisive victory."⁴ The Prussians developed doctrine called the "war of movement," or "Bewegungskrieg," which relied on its subordinate commanders using "Aufstragtaktik," or "mission tactics," to exercise initiative to capitalize on fleeting battlefield opportunities.⁵ The Prussian General Staff refined and cultivated Aufstragtaktik within the Prussian officer and non-commissioned officer ranks.⁶ Field Marshall Helmuth von Moltke imprinted Aufstragtaktik on the Prussian military culture as more than just a technique for issuing orders, but as a type of leadership.⁷ The Prussians use of mission tactics directed superiors to specify the mission objectives, constraints, and resources and then demand that subordinate leaders exercise initiative within the commander's intent to capitalize on fleeting battlefield opportunities. Decentralized operations using mission tactics allowed the Prussians to overcome challenges of slow communications and avoid the degrading effects of highly centralized decision making processes.⁸

Experts point out that the Prussian, and subsequently German, militaries evolved principles of Aufstragtaktik and imprinted it into their doctrine, training, and unique martial culture. Aufstragtaktik became fundamental to the culture and ethos of the several generations of Prussian and German leaders up to the World Wars of the twentieth century.⁹ As communications technology improved with the advent of the

wireless radio in the early twentieth century, centralization of control became feasible and mission tactics faded from use within the German military. One noted expert credits the radio for killing Aufstragtaktik in the German Wehrmacht in the 1940s as Adolf Hitler increasingly centralized control of operations during World War II.¹⁰

Mission Command within the U.S. Army

The U.S. Army emerged from World War II using command and control techniques derived from business and industrial management theories that differed greatly from Aufstragtaktik. The Army employed a “managerial approach” that emphasized efficiency through centralized control.¹¹ The managerial approach thrived within the Army through Vietnam due to leaders like Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, advocating corporate management procedures from the business world.¹²

Centralization and the managerial approach dominated tactical and operational decision making due to an increased reliance on firepower and improved communications. Other developments, such as helicopter mobility, enabled senior leaders to personally circle above small tactical engagements to directly observe and influence the fight.¹³ After Vietnam, the U.S. Army reoriented on the Soviet threat in Europe and envisioned itself having to fight vastly outnumbered against a high-tech enemy where communications would likely get degraded early in any fight and the balance of firepower would likely tilt in favor of the Soviets.

The situation the U.S. Army faced in Europe in the 1970s resembled the situation faced by the Prussians in the previous century. The U.S. developed Air-Land Battle doctrine to fight outnumbered against the Warsaw Pact and win through rapid, decisive strikes against the enemy’s weaknesses. The Army began advancing leadership methods resembling mission command as a key element of its doctrine supporting Air-

Land Battle.¹⁴ That doctrine rested on four basic tenets: initiative, depth, agility, and synchronization. Air-Land Battle required the Army to abandon managerial approaches and centralized control and shift to employing command and control processes resembling the Auftrags-taktik of the Prussians. Thus, mission command emerged in the U.S. Army toward the end of the Cold War and evolved over the course of the subsequent three decades. In 2008, the Army formally integrated the term “mission command” into the Army’s concept of full-spectrum operations.¹⁵

Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, Mission Command, published in May 2012 describes the Army’s current approach to mission command. The doctrine defines mission command as the “exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.”¹⁶ This philosophy is guided by six principles:

1. Building cohesive teams through mutual trust,
2. Creating shared understanding,
3. Providing clear commander’s intent,
4. Exercising disciplined initiative,
5. Using mission orders, and
6. Accepting prudent risk.¹⁷

The mission command philosophy underpins how the Army seeks to execute Unified Land Operations today and in the future. This represents a significant shift from decades of centralized, managerial models of leadership within the Army.

Army mission command doctrine asserts that commanders are the central figures in mission command. One of their three primary tasks is to “develop teams, both within their own organizations and with joint, interagency, and multinational partners.”¹⁸ This task relates directly to the first principle of mission command: “building cohesive teams through mutual trust.”¹⁹ The first principle of mission command includes three component parts: team building, team cohesion, and trust. Recent studies reveal how well commanders and leaders are performing these tasks.

Recent Leadership Survey Results

In 2010, eleven experts surveyed and analyzed the leader behaviors and organizational climates in selected units after nine years of war.²⁰ The study, “Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010” followed an earlier 2004 study and provided insights by identifying the crucial behaviors for contemporary leader effectiveness and assessing leaders’ demonstration of those behaviors.²¹ The study reported generally positive conclusions regarding leadership at the division level, but several conclusions point to shortcomings regarding mission command and team building. Their findings indicate that leaders cannot adequately build teams prior to deployment; they struggle to develop their subordinates through sufficient coaching and feedback, and they lack a mechanism to provide leadership feedback to the leaders above them and receive feedback from those below them.²² Addressing these shortcomings would improve leaders’ ability to follow the first principle of mission command—building cohesive teams through mutual trust.

The study asserts that “the most commonly expressed sources of ‘frustration’ for leaders included the inability to build teams and relationships prior to deployment.”²³ Leaders below the division commander were unsatisfied with their ability to coach their

own subordinates or receive coaching from the commander.²⁴ Furthermore, “Division commanders received little or no organized feedback regarding their leadership effectiveness.”²⁵ The study also identified the top behaviors that the division commanding general (CG) should work on as seen from subordinate commanders’ and staffs’ perspectives.²⁶ Within the top five behaviors needing improvement by the CG were: “coaches and provides useful feedback to subordinates,” and “knows how and when to involve others in decision making.”²⁷ These comments highlight significant shortfalls in the doctrinally espoused requirement for effective mission command to develop and build teams, both within and outside our organizations.

Another study explored mission command behaviors in greater detail. The 2013 Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) assessed the quality of Army leadership and the effectiveness of Army leader development. The CASAL assessed ten core leader competencies, seven of which relate directly to mission command. The leadership competency “developing others” provides leaders the tool necessary to improve the members of their team and improve their team’s performance. However, since 2009, the CASAL results indicate that “developing others” is the lowest rated leadership trait with only sixty-three percent of leaders as effective or very effective in this core leader competency.²⁸ The CASAL also focused specifically on mission command. The CASAL findings provide a generally positive assessment of mission command understanding and implementation by Army leaders and organizations. However, building effective teams is the lowest rated of the six mission command behaviors. Thirty percent of the respondents gave their immediate supervisor either neutral or negative ratings for this task.²⁹

Trust is essential to develop cohesive, high-performing units.³⁰ According to the CASAL, “The two characteristics with the strongest relationships to high levels of trust are the empowerment of unit members to make decisions pertaining to the performance of their duties, and unit climates that allow and encourage learning from honest mistakes.”³¹ The CASAL study reveals that building and maintaining trust are viewed positively by more than two-thirds of survey participants, whereas teambuilding lags behind and requires additional attention.³² Thus, the first principle of mission command, “building cohesive teams through mutual trust,” encompasses the areas of team building and leader development which correlate with the weakest skills exhibited by leaders in today’s Army.

Organizational Management Theories of Team Performance

Organizational management theorists define a team as “two or more people who interrelate within defined roles to accomplish a common goal.”³³ Teams use interactive, iterative, and interdependent processes to accomplish their tasks. This differs from a work group which executes its myriad tasks with individuals performing independent and additive processes to accomplish its missions.³⁴ Applications of organizational behavior theory accept that military teams will normally be hierarchical and have an appointed leader.³⁵ Challenges with team building and leader development may stem from a misunderstanding of the linkage between the role of the commander and the role of the team. The Army continues to adhere to the primacy of the commander to the detriment of its teams. The notion that “the commander is responsible for everything his unit does or fails to do” has rolled off the lips of generations of Army leaders.

Heroic Leader Philosophy

Organizational behavior theorists recognize this as a “pervasive human tendency to overemphasize one leader’s personality or actions to explain organizational outcomes.”³⁶ This “heroic-[Chief Executive Officer] CEO” or hero-leader philosophy centers on a single, omnipotent, and ultra-empowered senior leader who leads his or her organization using their personal intellect, skill, ambition, and vision.³⁷ General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and former Army Chief of Staff, describes the centrality of the commander in mission command:

The commander is the central figure in mission command. To the commander comes the mission for the unit; in the commander resides the authority and responsibility to act and to lead so that the mission may be accomplished. In mission command, the commander must blend the art of command with the science of control, as he, supported by the staff, integrates all joint warfighting functions. In mission command, the commander must understand the problem, envision the end state, and visualize the nature and design of the operation. The commander must also describe time, space, resources and purpose, direct the joint warfighting functions and constantly assess the process.³⁸

The fourteen or more duties and functions outlined above place a significant burden on any individual person. This tendency to vest in one leader so many responsibilities and functions matches a situation described by organizational theorist Peter Senge in his definition of a “hero-CEO” in the business world.³⁹ Senge suggests the hero-leader, or omnipotent individual, is actually a relic of a deeper cultural icon he describes as the “myth of the heroic leader.”⁴⁰ Senge asserts that the pursuit of the hero-leader to elicit transformational effects on an organization actually stifles the development of leadership capacity within the organization and proves counterproductive in the long-term.⁴¹ Senge and other organizational behavior theorists suggest that models of leadership other than the hero-CEO better match the demands

of the current and future business environment—team leadership represents one of these models.

Team Leadership Theory

Today's demands of senior leaders are quickly outdistancing the abilities of a single person and increasingly it is the senior team that makes the difference in an organization's performance. General Dempsey's challenge to commanders also contains an important caveat—commanders are supported by their staffs. This interaction and interdependence of the commander and his or her staff makes them a team by definition. An exploration of team performance theory yields insights on improving the critical areas of developing subordinates and building teams—the two weakest skills according to recent Army leadership surveys. Vast research focuses on how leaders influence individuals and much of today's current Army leadership doctrine focuses on how leaders should develop subordinates. However, an important area of emphasis for Army leaders at the organizational and strategic levels is on how to best lead teams. A relevant area of team performance theory explores the concept of team leadership. Team leadership models describe how organizations can gain competitive advantage by shaping teams' composition, processes, and leadership. Team leadership does not mean leadership-by-committee, rather the term describes how leaders lead teams.

Organizational behavior experts apply an input-process-output (IPO) model for team performance.⁴² The IPO model shows that leaders form teams that are usually “task oriented” and have opportunities to influence the inputs, processes, and outputs to capitalize on the collective talents and perspectives of the team members to accomplish a task, or set of tasks, better than any one individual. Team leadership models

acknowledge that “the actions of the leader remain central, but additional whole-team factors have a significant impact on process outcomes and team success.”⁴³ These “whole-team” factors include the four elements of: boundary spanning, decision making, communication and coordination, and norm-setting.⁴⁴ The team leadership model does not diminish the leader’s role, but it does suggest the commander may not necessarily have all the best answers. Leadership actions to influence team effectiveness have varying efficacy, and organizational management theorists suggest some leadership actions will have a greater impact on their team’s performance than others.⁴⁵

Noted leadership theorists Stephen Zaccaro, Andrea Rittman, and Michelle Marks, propose a model of leader performance functions to improve team effectiveness (see figure 1).⁴⁶ Their leader performance model consists of four key functions. The first, information search and structuring, “refers to the leader’s systematic search, acquisition, evaluation, and organization of information regarding team goals and orientations . . . from both within and outside the team.”⁴⁷ The second function is information use in problem solving, which “refers to the leader’s application of acquired information to problem solving in the service of team goal attainment.”⁴⁸ This step involves the tasks needs and requirements and translates those into workable objectives for the team. The third and fourth functions are managing personnel resources and managing material resources. These performance dimensions involve “obtaining, motivating, coordinating, and monitoring the individual’s under one’s command.”⁴⁹

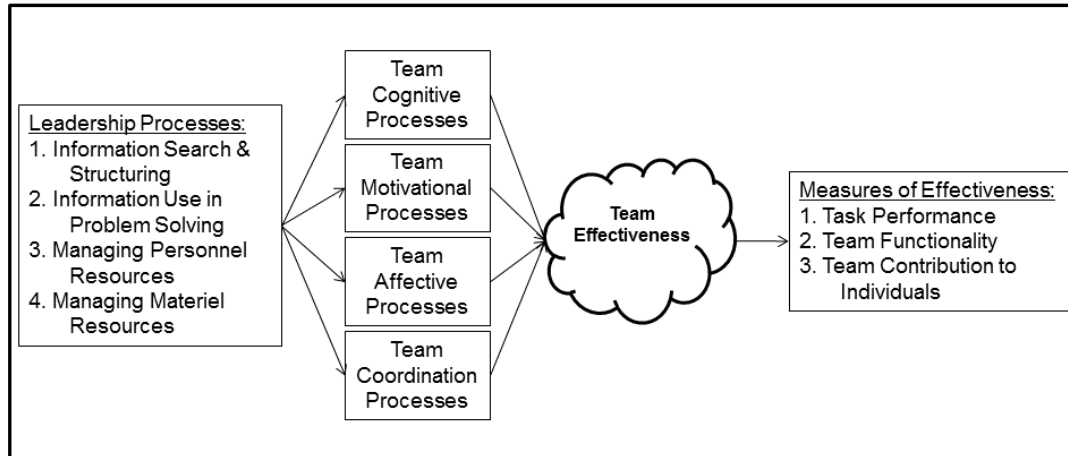


Figure 1. Team Leadership Model⁵⁰

Zaccaro, et al., show that leaders executing the four previously listed functions can positively influence four team processes and improve team effectiveness. These processes are: team cognition, team motivation, team affect, and team coordination.⁵¹ Zaccaro, et al., propose that leaders can take three actions to improve team cognitive processes. First, leaders should facilitate team members' accurate shared understanding of their environment and how they should respond, what may be referred to as "sense-making and sense-giving" in order to improve their mental models.⁵² Several leading organizational behavior theorists argue that the emergence of accurate shared mental models of requisite team strategies and interaction positively impact team coordination and performance.⁵³ This argument is consistent with Army doctrine that lists the second principle of mission command as "create shared understanding."⁵⁴ Second, leaders who facilitate participative leadership, such as "constructing team problems, deriving solutions, and planning their implementation," improved collective information processing over leaders who exercised directive leadership.⁵⁵ Third, leaders who provide performance feedback, both to the whole team, and to its individuals, enable an effective team learning process that improves team outcomes.⁵⁶

Leaders improve the effectiveness of their organizations by influencing their team's motivational processes. This intervention involves five important processes starting with planning and goal setting. Secondly, the leader facilitates the coordination of team performance strategies. The final three tasks consist of the interrelated processes of developing team members, motivating team members, and providing feedback.⁵⁷ The results of applying these five processes are an increase in team task cohesion and an improvement in the collective efficacy, or team's belief in the chances of its own success.⁵⁸

Leaders' efforts to improve team affect improve team effectiveness. Team affect includes factors related to the team's collective emotion. Consistent with Army leadership and mission command doctrine, organizational theory posits that leaders play a critical role in setting the tone for their teams. Leaders provide feedback and control, they select the right personnel for their teams and develop them individually and collectively.⁵⁹ These actions improve conflict control within the team, establish norms for emotional control, and eliminate emotional contagion which could derail the team.⁶⁰ Theorists also propose that leaders who provide clear performance goals, role assignments, and performance strategies for their teams will respond more effectively in stressful situations.⁶¹

The final process that leaders directly influence is team coordination. This occurs in three steps beginning with the leader identifying and matching team member's roles and contributions with the team's tasks. Next, the leader ensures these roles and contributions are fully integrated into the other team member's actions. Lastly, the leader regulates and standardizes these interactions as appropriate for the situation. In

dynamic team situations demanding constant adaptation, such standardization may prove counterproductive. However, in more stable situations, standardization will improve team coordination.⁶² The processes described above focus on the leaders' influence on the team and its members in order to improve effectiveness. Another important aspect of team leadership explores the reciprocal influence of the team on the leader.

Organizational theorists demonstrate that teams can improve the effectiveness of the leader. The Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, passionately described these benefits of team leadership during his first all-hands meeting at the Pentagon on February 19, 2015:

The President, able as he is—and the people around him, able as they are—that's just one guy. He needs help. He needs our best thinking, our best ideas, [and] our best analysis. The fact that many of you have vast experience around the world, vast experience going back in, through the decades with what it takes to offer protection to our society—we need to bring that to bear to help him.⁶³

“Functionally diverse teams can help leaders interpret environmental ambiguity and reduce uncertainty.”⁶⁴ These diverse teams benefit from the ability to apply more complex representations of the organization's environment, which can improve the leader's understanding.⁶⁵ With top-management teams, similar to senior military or command staffs, junior members can more readily identify meaningful patterns in the organization's environment. Both of these team influences on the leader improve the organization's effectiveness.

Senior Leadership Teams

The previous exploration of leaders' roles in shaping and improving teams, and team's shaping and improving leaders, form the foundation for further understanding of

team leadership for mission command. Team leadership offers solutions to the shortcomings identified by the recent Army leadership surveys. Senior leadership teams are a focused application of the team leadership model and may assist strategic leaders to avoid the pitfalls identified in the surveys. Organization behavior theorists describe how senior leadership teams assist organizations and businesses seeking growth, increase horizontal integration, and respond to upstream and downstream changes.⁶⁶ Translated into military context, senior leadership teams assist commanders in dealing with branches and sequels to plans, responding dynamically to emergent situations, and creatively and constructively adjusting to opportunities or threats. Senior leadership teams assist commanders in framing or reframing problems using their varied perspectives. High-functioning senior leadership teams can develop solutions to strategic issues that cut across enterprise, functional, or unit boundaries. Teams comprised of the senior leaders responsible for implementing the solutions tend to increase their ownership of the solution and improve the chances of success.⁶⁷

A senior leadership team optimally consists of a group of subordinate leaders under the executive direction on the organization's top-level leader.⁶⁸ The teams may fulfill roles across the spectrum of functions from informational, consultative, coordinating, to decision making. The level of coordination required to perform these functions varies from merely information-sharing on the low end, to debate and collaboration in the middle, up to decision-making on the high end. The size of the senior leadership team varies depending on its role. Teams intended to fill an informational role can have many more members than a tightly bounded decision-

making team. Levels of coordination and interdependence also vary depending on the role of the team (see Figure 2).

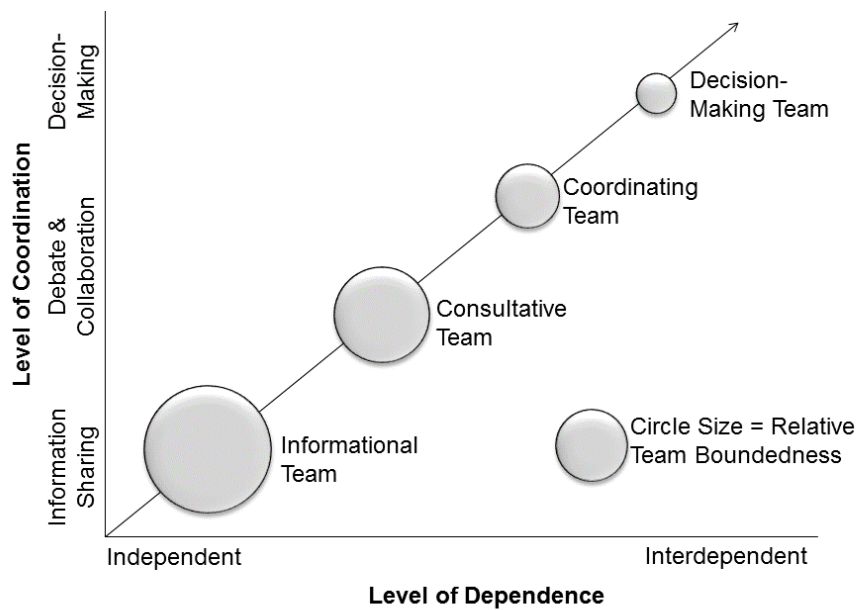


Figure 2. Senior Leadership Team Characteristics⁶⁹

Organization behavior theorists assert that senior leaders must first decide if a team is necessary to solve the issue at hand. Teams may prove particularly helpful if a leader is facing a complex situation with multiple stake holders, if assets or equities necessary to solve the problem fall outside the leader’s direct control, or if current situations demand a review of an ongoing operation or strategy. The past thirteen years of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate that mission command is executed by teams. These teams may be teams of commanders at various echelons; they may be teams comprised of commanders and their staffs; or they may be teams comprised of members from Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational organizations. Current organization behavior theorists suggest that strategic leaders most successfully establish senior leadership teams by emplacing three essential conditions and enacting

three enabling conditions (see figure 3). The essential conditions are: (1) determine if a real team is needed, (2) articulate a clear and compelling direction, and (3) get the right people on the team. These conditions may be in place prior to convening the team; however, circumstances may require the senior team to begin its work prior to finalizing the essential conditions.⁷⁰ The enabling conditions are: (1) solid team structure, (2) supportive organizational context, and (3) competent team coaching.⁷¹

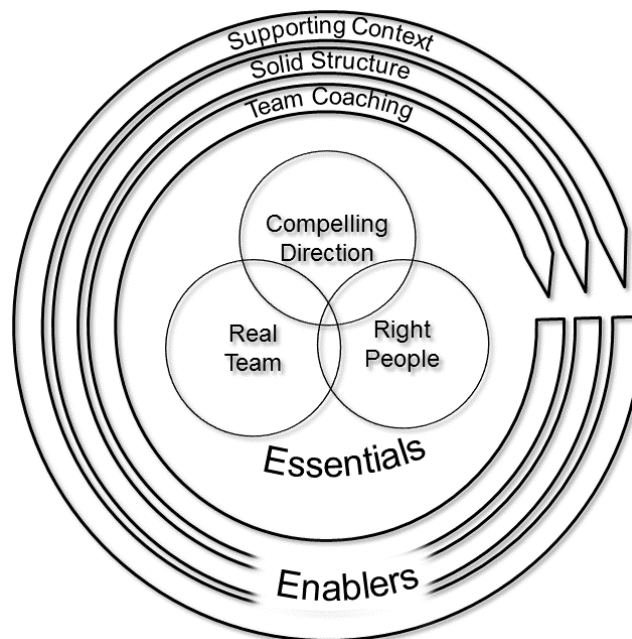


Figure 3. Senior Leadership Team Components⁷²

The first essential element, establishing a real team, sets the team building process in motion. Real teams have stability and the members do not change frequently. The real team has interdependent members rather than just individuals grouped together to perform independent functions.⁷³ The second essential element, getting the right people on the team, also sets the organization up for success. Leaders select members of the team who possess key skills and characteristics to operate in a constructive manner. Diversity can be useful in forming high-performing teams by

infusing different perspectives and areas of expertise. However, most successful senior leadership teams require their members to think and operate at an enterprise level and not simply represent the equity or functional area from which they were selected.⁷⁴ Leaders must find members with the appropriate skills and experience, signs of conceptual thinking, and demonstrated empathy and integrity.⁷⁵ The leader must ensure that derailing personalities are kept off the senior leadership team. In some instances, members may be selected based on their role as a top-level leader of a subordinate organization or due to their role as a senior manager. However, positional title must not form the sole basis for assignment to the senior leadership team. Assignment should be based on the individual's ability to contribute to success at the enterprise level rather than just advocate for a particular interest.⁷⁶

Many Army organizations already employ senior leadership teams but call them various names such as boards, bureaus, centers, cells, and working groups.⁷⁷ In an operational setting, the team that builds and briefs the daily situation update to the command represents an informational team; its team members are relatively independent, their role is primarily information sharing, and their size may be relatively large and membership not particularly exclusive. The Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers council that gathers to debate initiatives and collaborate to share ideas between units under the tutelage of the unit's Command Sergeant Major represents a more bounded group called a consultative team. This group would necessarily include fewer members than a purely informational team since debate and collaboration are required for their success and too many voices would degrade their overall efficiency and effectiveness. The brigade's logistics board consisting of the brigade and battalion

executive officers, support operations and logistics officers represents an example of a coordinating team. This bounded team represent units and equities with mutual interdependence and their debate and collaboration represent a high degree of coordination. The membership on this team is more bounded than that of the consultative and informational teams since this group will debate and coordinate technical and specialized logistics operations and too many disparate members will reduce its effectiveness. The commander's council would represent the highest level of boundedness and is an example of a decision-making team.

A decision-making team, such as a commander's council would consist of fewer than ten members under the overall leadership of the senior commander. Many brigade commanders choose to include all their subordinate battalion commanders on this team. In those cases, the members of the team are leaders of highly interdependent organizations such as combined arms (armor and infantry), artillery, cavalry, and logistics battalions. However, in these cases, members often struggle to maintain enterprise-wide perspective and normally revert to advocating for their units' interests. Organizational behavior theorists caution against forming senior leadership teams in this manner.⁷⁸ The most effective senior leadership teams are comprised of members who possess differentiated skills and backgrounds and collaborate on the team to represent and debate enterprise-level interests and not merely the interests of their departments or units.⁷⁹

For this reason, some commanders choose to build senior leadership teams such as Commanders Initiatives Groups which do not include commanders or principle staff officers responsible for subordinate organizations. These groups often provide their

leader with useful enterprise-wide analysis and perspective. However, these teams often appear like the “inner ring” described by C.S. Lewis and can prove detrimental to the affect and effectiveness of the commanders and staff left on the outside of the team.⁸⁰ Therefore, commanders and strategic leaders must skillfully manage team composition and roles for their senior leadership teams to balance the competing demands of an enterprise-wide perspective with the need to build a cohesive team with the incumbent commanders and staff leaders of the organization.

U.S. Army Doctrine for Team Leadership

Army doctrine matches much of the organization theory on team leadership described above. Current Army leadership doctrine exhaustively describes the attributes and competencies expected of leaders (see Figure 4). The Army Leader Requirements Model describes the three superordinate leader attributes of character, presence, and intellect with thirteen subordinate attributes ranging from army values to expertise. Similarly, the three superordinate leader competencies of leads, develops, and achieves have ten subordinate competencies ranging from leads others to gets results.⁸¹

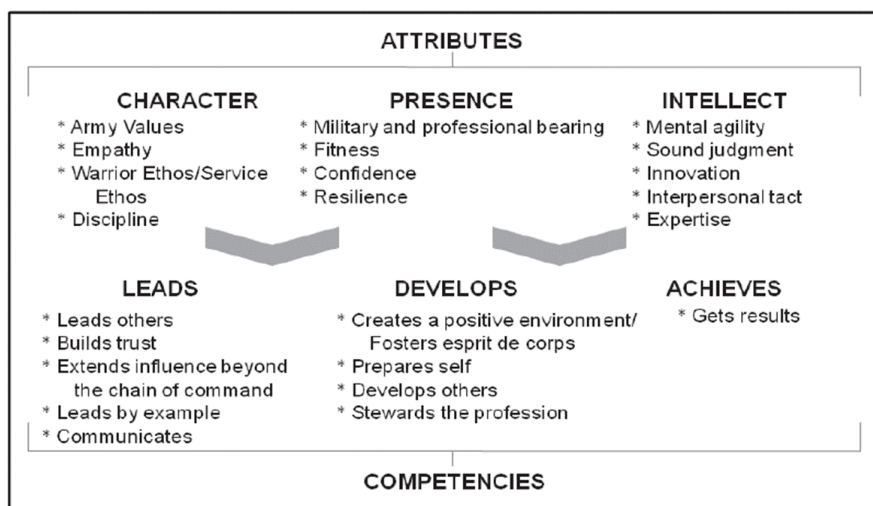


Figure 4. Army Leader Requirements Model⁸²

The attributes and competencies listed in the Army leadership model match much of the current organizational management theory describing effective leadership. However, the Army leader development model retains a biased orientation toward the dyadic, leader-member exchange relationship and does not adequately address the characteristics of effective teams,⁸³ over-emphasizing the leader and led, without providing due consideration of the team they form. This discrepancy may explain why surveys consistently identify shortfalls in team building, coaching and mentoring, and subordinates' involvement in decision making—all key elements for effective mission command. Adopting an improved description of effective teams within Army leadership doctrine, reducing rapid personnel turnover, and improving leadership feedback would enable the cultural changes to eliminate the consistent shortcomings listed above.

Recommendations

The changes required to address the problems of team leadership for mission command span several domains of the Army's change management construct known as DOTMLPF (doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities).⁸⁴

Improve Team Building Doctrine and Training

The first recommendation, improving the formal explanation of team building, focuses primarily on the domains of: doctrine, training, and leadership and education. Current doctrine espouses what leaders "should be" but lacks an adequate description for "how" leaders effectively build teams. Leadership consultants Gordon J. Curphy and Robert T. Hogan developed a diagnostic and prescriptive tool for team building they call the "Rocket Model."⁸⁵ This model elegantly distills team building into seven stages: (1) context, (2) mission, (3) talent, (4) norms, (5) buy-in, (6) power, and (7) morale. This

model matches leading organizational management theories for team building described above, but simplifies the process into an easily understood method. The Army's Command and General Staff College (CGSC) currently teaches the Rocket Model due to its effectiveness as a diagnostic and prescriptive team building method.⁸⁶ Adding the Rocket Model into ADP 6-22, Army Leadership, will enable leaders to readily find the "how to" for team building. Expanding the model's use beyond CGSC will improve team leadership and address current shortfalls in team building.

Reduce Rapid Personnel Turnover

The second recommendation, reducing rapid personnel turnover, focuses primarily on the personnel domain and addresses the issue of inadequate team building across the Army. Thorough analysis by experts at the U.S. Army Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA) describe the deleterious effects of personnel turnover within the senior staffs in the Department of the Army. Within the Army Chief of Staff's office, more than half of the Lieutenant Colonels and above depart every year, and just slightly less than half of the officers in the grade of Major and below depart annually. Similarly, at the Army's Human Resources Command, ostensibly the Army's talent management organization, more than half of the Lieutenant Colonels and above depart every year, and half of the officers in the grade of Major and below depart annually.⁸⁷ These examples illustrate how current Army assignment models create rapid turnover, disrupt team stability, and prevent effective team building. OEMA analysts describe that this rapid turnover significantly hinders a key component of strategic leadership, and mission command, called time span of discretion which is "the amount of time between taking an action and receiving feedback on its impact."⁸⁸ When team members and their leaders rotate in and out of their teams frequently, few of the requisite team processes

identified by Zaccaro, et al., solidify and generate any degree of team effectiveness. Stability of the team's leaders and members is paramount for team leadership and mission command.

The OEMA developed an innovative new talent management model to address rapid turnover and correct other shortcomings with the current system.⁸⁹ Their key recommendation related to improving team building focused on lengthening assignment tenure. The OEMA's analysts assert that providing sufficient assignment tenure, especially for senior leaders, consists of the following four actions: (1) recognition that the more strategic an officer's responsibilities, the longer must be her/his assignment tenure, (2) use increased assignment tenure to deepen expertise and increase accountability, (3) reduce officer churn in Army organizations expected to achieve strategic outcomes, and (4) consciously align the tenure of officers with teammates to protect against loss of institutional knowledge.⁹⁰ Providing leaders with the time to build their teams will expand their time span of discretion and significantly improve team building outcomes.

Improve Feedback to Leaders

The final recommendation, improving feedback to leaders, focuses primarily on the leadership education and personnel domains. This recommendation addresses the lack of feedback provided to leaders and also improves involvement of subordinates in decision making. Leaders currently lack reliable and consistent feedback from peers and subordinates. The Army's Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF 360) tool offers leaders an opportunity to solicit feedback from peers and subordinates. Initiating a MSAF 360 evaluation is necessary for an officer receiving an Officer Evaluation Report according to the Army's Training and Leader Development

regulation.⁹¹ However, the current system does not provide any input to superiors evaluating an officer's performance. Additionally, individuals initiating their MSAF 360 evaluation choose the peers and subordinates providing their feedback, thereby inducing significant bias into the process. An improved peer and subordinate feedback system is needed to rectify these problems. Peer and subordinate evaluations must become part of the evaluation that a leader receives when he receives his Officer Evaluation Report. The individuals submitting peer and subordinate evaluations should be automatically generated by the new Evaluation Entry System (EES) through a query of the officer's recent ratings on subordinates. The EES should query the officer's rater and generate a list of peers for the rated officer. Other options for generating subordinate and peer evaluators could leverage existing personnel management information systems. Regardless of the system chosen, the outcome would be a mosaic of peer and subordinate feedback included in the officer's evaluation report. Legitimate concerns about disgruntled subordinates skewing the data could be addressed by filtering outlier data or by providing the rated officer an opportunity to rebut any egregious comments from peers or subordinates.

Promotion and selection boards currently assess an officer's performance and potential based on evaluations solely from superiors. Lieutenant General Walter F. Ulmer and his study team members for the "Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level - 2010" recommend a significant revision of the procedures for selection of commanders at the brigade level and higher.⁹² The team recommends including peer and subordinate feedback in the evaluations used by Command Selection List (CSL) boards in order to screen out leaders exhibiting potentially toxic behavior. Including peer

and subordinate feedback that is free from selection bias would assist members of CSL boards and the individual officers receiving the feedback. Significant institutional resistance to including peer and subordinate feedback exists across the Army. However, the potential benefits for team leadership mission command warrant the effort required to overcome the resistance. Formally including peer and subordinate evaluations would significantly improve the feedback provided to senior leaders and increase subordinate team members agency in the selection of effective team leaders.

Conclusion

Mission command represents a significant cultural shift for the U.S. Army. Excising a culture of leadership based on a centralized, managerial approach to planning and operations also requires dropping the mythology of the “hero-leader” from the Army. The realities of the Cold War in the 1970s and combat in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past decade reinforced the merits of mission command with high-performing teams and talented leaders operating adaptively within their higher commanders’ intent. Leaders who know how to build teams and develop team members shine as the exemplars of effective mission command. Army leadership doctrine provides useful insights into the leadership of team members; however, the current shortfalls in team building, coaching and mentoring, and subordinates’ involvement in decision making demand change. Infusing senior team leadership by addressing doctrinal and training shortfalls in team building, reducing leader and team member turnover, and improving leadership feedback will enable the Army to better harness the talents of leaders at all levels and more fully exercise mission command.

Endnotes

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²⁵ Ibid., 6.

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