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Reclaiming the Essence of Leadership

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Reclaiming the Essence of Leadership

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Abstract

Over the past several years, the Army has unknowingly distanced itself from the interpersonal element of leadership, creating a significant gap between the intentions of the leader and the perceptions of the led. Through its doctrine and statements, the concept of leader development expanded and therefore diluted fundamental principles such as influence and trust. As a result, the Army has lost the basic essence of leadership. To reverse this course, the Army must adopt a coaching culture. This paper recommends four separate and distinct actions, which impact the operational and institutional domains and strongly reinforce the self-developmental domain. They are: establish a unit-level coaching program, place greater emphasis on the Command Climate Survey, revise the MSAF, and re-establish the Army's Organizational Effectiveness program. Taking these steps will strengthen the personal connection aspect of leadership and improve the effectiveness of our greatest strategic advantage – our people.

Reclaiming the Essence of Leadership

As a squadron commander, I once conducted a meeting with the key leaders of a troop to discuss a proposed initiative. While not overly contentious, the troop commander and I did not entirely see eye to eye on the solution. I felt frustrated at what I believed was his obtuseness and inability to see the situation from my point of view, and I am certain my verbal and non-verbal cues indicated as much. Although one of the most respectful officers I know, his opinion on the matter was somewhat rigid, and his annoyance at my position came through as well in his mannerisms.

When the meeting was over, only the operations sergeant major and I remained in the room. I turned to him and said, "Dave and I seemed to be missing each other there. AAR me for a minute and tell me what you think was going on." The sergeant major paused for a moment and replied, "Sir, you need to go back and read Stephen Covey's chapter on seeking first to understand, then to be understood."¹ His advice hit me like a ton of bricks, and I went home that night and immediately poured into *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He was right. I had portrayed my insights as superior and inadvertently signaled to Dave that his opinion and observations did not matter. In my zeal to get the job done, I lost sight of the importance of human connection and how critical it is to trust and teamwork.

As it turns out, I am not the only one with this problem. The Center for Army Leadership (CAL) Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) examines the state of Army leadership from many angles and provides the most authoritative empirical data on the topic. Its most recent report shows that trust behaviors are far below acceptable levels. According to the 2014 report, 72% of active component leaders rate their immediate supervisor as effective or very effective at building trust, with 28% neutral or

not effective.² Although higher than the CASAL's benchmark of two-thirds, an environment where one out of every four leaders has problems engendering trust is a serious problem for a military profession. Even more concerning, only 62% of Army leaders are satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of military leadership in their current organization, which means that the remaining 38% are either neutral or display varying levels of dissatisfaction.³

It should come as no surprise, then, that the Army also displays signs of malaise in the counseling of subordinates. This has long been a basic leadership responsibility in the Army, and it represents an important aspect of a leader connecting with the led in a personal way. Unfortunately, the 2014 CASAL tells us that almost a quarter (22%) of leaders report that counseling never or almost never occurs and 21% indicate that it only occurs during rating time.⁴ The US Army is a world class landpower force, but we currently do not reflect this standard in the area of leadership.

As Jim Collins states in his book *Good to Great*, the Army must “confront the brutal facts” and understand that our leadership is not as good as we think it is.⁵

The conclusion is clear: the profession has lost the basic essence of leadership, which is about influence and trust. As unintentional as it may be, the evidence shows that the Army's tendency to widen its view of leader development has muddled the very foundation of what it means to be a leader. The evidence also shows the profession's devaluation of interpersonal connections and their critical relationship to good leadership.

This paper will argue that the solution to the Army's leadership slump is grounded in the establishment of a coaching culture. Such a culture reinforces the

notion that leadership is a personal, human endeavor and something that requires continual attention and growth. After analysis, I will offer four specific recommendations. First, units should establish their own internal coaching programs. This could take many forms, but this first step is required to improve the quality of Army leadership. Second, commanders must place greater emphasis on the Command Climate Survey and on its utility to build trust within an organization. Third, the institutional side of the Army must assist by transforming the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) into a more useful tool that measures behaviors, not compliance to leadership models. Finally, the Army must re-establish the Organizational Effectiveness (OE) program to directly assist commanders in their ability to build trust and influence within their formations.

Leader Development and the Leader

Over the past six years, the Army has expanded its concept of leader development. Until 2011, the only doctrinal reference was contained in Army Regulation 350-1 *Army Training and Leader Development*. Since then, the lexicon of leader development has proliferated into other components of Army doctrine:

- FM 7-0 *Training for Full Spectrum Operations* (2008) became FM 7-0 *Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations* (2011), which then became ADP/ADRP 7-0 *Training Units and Developing Leaders* (2012).
- FM 6-22 *Army Leadership* (2006) became FM 6-22 *Leader Development* (2015) with the transition of the topic to ADP/ADRP 6-22 *Army Leadership* (2012).
- Introduction of the Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS) in 2013.

Additionally, the senior leadership of the Army expanded its use of the phrase *leader development* as the sexual assault / sexual harassment issues in the Army received significant public and Congressional scrutiny. In 2013, the Army Posture Statement to Congress included leader development for the first time in the main body of the remarks under the heading of “Develop Adaptive Leaders.” It included such concepts as broadening assignments, talent optimization, operating in complex and dangerous environments, and 360-degree assessments.⁶ By 2017, the Army Posture Statement discussed the contemporary “leader development” priorities of professional military education, prevention of sexual assault / sexual harassment, and building diverse teams.⁷

Particularly with the ALDS and FM 6-22, and more generally with the doctrine adjustments and senior leader messages, leader development has adopted a more expansive and inclusive meaning to include all aspects of what the Army desires of its officers and non-commissioned officers. It applies to “progressive, purposeful development assignments,” training events with challenging scenarios, task mastery, and activities that “expand knowledge.”⁸ Colloquially throughout the Army, it is not uncommon to hear an Army officer say, “we need to conduct leader development so that our platoons and companies understand how to better integrate fire support into their maneuver plans.”

But, if all of this is considered leader development, what exactly defines a leader? ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership* states that “an Army leader is anyone who by virtue of assumed role or assigned responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals.”⁹ This definition has two distinct parts to it: the status of the person

(assumed or assigned position) and his actions (inspires and influences people). However, the Army, through its doctrine and statements, currently places a disproportionate focus on just one of these elements of a leader – the assigned position of responsibility. As a result, Army commanders conduct a vast array of leader development activities, which in reality merely prepare an officer or NCO to fulfill the responsibilities of their current and future positions to “meet the challenges of the 21st Century.”¹⁰

The casualty here is the “inspiration and influence of people,” which is essential to transformational leadership. In this epitome of leadership styles, “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” as their collective system is “transformed.”¹¹ Otherwise, we are left with the lower form of leadership, which is transactional – the “carrot and stick” actions taken between a manager and employee; one gives orders, under threat, the other obeys.¹² Unfortunately, as the word *leader* becomes synonymous with one who occupies a position, the Army unknowingly reinforces the concept of transactional over the preferred transformational leadership.

The Human Element

The disappearance of the concept of human connection further highlights the decline of influence and trust as fundamental elements of leadership. Since the 1958 version of FM 22-100 *Military Leadership*, Army leadership doctrine consistently included a special section in the beginning of the publication that described “Human Behavior” (1958) or the “Human Dimension” (1999). These sections took special care to describe the essential importance to leaders of understanding the human condition – how each person’s individual personality, emotions, unique life experiences, and basic needs shape him.¹³ The 2006 version of FM 22-100 *Army Leadership* for the first time

omitted this type of chapter, or anything relating to it.¹⁴ In 2012, the Army expanded its leadership doctrine with the creation of ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership* (2012) and ADRP 6-22 *Army Leadership* (2012). While they do contain discrete passages of the human dynamic, it not highlighted as a separate section/chapter as it was in previous doctrine.

During the 1999-2012 timeframe, the Army's Leadership Requirements Model (LRM) also drifted away from the human connections vital to effective leadership. Specifically, the concept of "Interpersonal Skills," which previously occupied a central place in the LRM, was replaced by the more impersonal elements of "Presence" and "Intellect."¹⁵ Other characteristics of human connection have not disappeared entirely, but they are pushed down as sub-sets of broader concepts. For example, "Interpersonal Tact" is now a subordinate characteristic of "Intellect," and "Communicates" is under the ubiquitous leadership competency of "Leads." The trend is clear. Between 1999 and 2012, the human interpersonal element of leadership changed from a central, core principle to disaggregated and diluted sub-characteristics of a leader.

This tendency also manifests itself in how doctrine treats situational leadership (defined as when the leader adjusts her actions to fit the evolving situation at hand).¹⁶ Situational leadership receives only six lines of attention in ADP 6-22 *Army Leadership* and is completely absent in ADRP 6-22 *Army Leadership* and FM 6-22 *Leader Development*.¹⁷ The most human concept of leadership barely receives what could be called an "honorable mention" in Army doctrine.

This is in stark contrast with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) who centers its leadership doctrine on the concept of situational leadership. Director James Comey spends a great deal of time talking about how leadership is not a specific

formula, but rather a series of “contrasting pairs.”¹⁸ A leader is both “kind and tough; confident and humble.”¹⁹ This underscores the notion that leadership inherently involves human interaction. It highly depends on the situation at hand and on the emotions, desires, and needs of the led.

Further evidence of the drift away from human connections appears in the Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS). Character, competence, and commitment embody the core principles of the ALDS.²⁰ While these are commendable and desirable features of any Army officer, non-commissioned officer, or soldier, there is a glaring leadership deficiency. While it is certainly desirable for a person to have the highest moral caliber (character), to be the subject matter expert of the over-emphasized military-technical components of the profession (competence), and to be wholly devoted to winning our nation’s wars (commitment), this person may still be unable to lead another human effectively.

George Reed notes in his book, *Toxic Leadership*, that the “intentions of a leader are less important than the perceptions of the follower.”²¹ Another noted executive leadership coach calls this the intention-perception gap (or “I-P gap”) – a phrase used to describe the differential between a leader’s good intentions and the perceptions of the recipients.²² In other words, a fully-qualified leader with unquestionable character, competence, and commitment may have the best intentions and motivations, but may still fail to connect with other humans effectively. He may apply toughness in one situation, when kindness would have been more effective; over-confidence instead of humility. It may not rise to the level of toxicity, but it may nonetheless be counterproductive and erode the trust and morale of soldiers. Whether one calls this

situational leadership or emotional intelligence, its absence represents a critical defect in the ALDS and another signal that the Army profession has devalued the element of human connection in leadership.

Solution: A Coaching Culture

To reverse this trend, the Army profession must adopt a coaching culture for leadership. A coaching culture treats leadership as a skill that requires continual effort and improvement. Indeed, ADP 6-22 Army Leadership has it right when it says that “good leadership does not just happen by chance but is a developable skill.”²³ It requires that one understands where she is now, where she wants to be, and what is required to get there. Just as a golfer benefits from a coach to assess his swing and to provide guidance for further repetitions, so does a soldier improve her leadership effectiveness with someone to help discover blind spots and to engage in a recurrent dialogue on how to fix them.

Leadership development is a continual process that is deeply personal in nature. John C. Maxwell notes that “people overestimate the importance of events and underestimate the power of process. We want quick fixes.”²⁴ Likewise, Stephen R. Covey advocates for adopting a Character Ethic – basic principles that frame our personal paradigm and our basic character – which only comes about through the disciplined practice of certain personal habits.²⁵ A coaching culture embraces the idea that leadership takes effort. We cannot change leadership behavior solely through discrete leader development classes or a couple of insightful articles – as helpful as they might be. Rather, coaching “is about discovering the whole truth, facing the tough issues, and creating a liberating space for improvement.”²⁶ The good leaders in our

Army intuitively understand this, but more must be done to inculcate coaching into the fabric of our professional culture, and particularly so in our operational forces.

To start, the operational domain is key terrain for a coaching culture, and it takes on additional importance when viewed through the lens of adult education. Malcolm Knowles, widely considered the pioneer of adult education, explored and wrote on the topic from the 1950s to the 1980s. His work on andragogy – what he calls the “art and science of helping adults learn”²⁷ – served as the foundation for contemporary continuing and adult education.²⁸ In building his theories, one of his core tenets states that for adults “the best time to learn anything is when whatever is to be learned is immediately useful to us.”²⁹

While learning in the schoolhouse does have relevance, an officer or NCO does not sense this type of immediacy while in that environment. The operational domain, however, presents a living classroom for the leader. He has active relationships with subordinates, conflicts with the chain of command, and an enduring effort to build trust with subordinates, superiors, and peers. Coaching, therefore, is inherently a function for the operational domain.

The value of coaching has seen growing popularity in the private sector over the past several years, but has “left the Army behind,” according to Lt Gen (ret) Walter Ulmer.³⁰ In 2014, Dr. Douglas MacKie conducted a controlled study on the effectiveness of executive coaching in enhancing full-range leadership development in 2014, and its findings were published by the American Psychological Association.³¹ In the study, Dr. MacKie assembled two cohorts of senior managers from an Australian multinational not-for-profit organization. One cohort received no attention, while the other cohort received

strengths-based executive coaching over a set period of time. This coaching involved a 360-degree assessment and a strengths-based personality inventory followed by multiple one-on-one coaching sessions. At the beginning and at the end of the time period, Dr. MacKie conducted multi-rater assessments of each individual in order to rate their level of transformational leadership. Every member of the coached cohort demonstrated a dramatic improvement in their transformational leadership skills over this timeframe, whereas the control cohort stagnated.³² Not only was this one of the first empirical studies on the effectiveness of executive coaching, but it “confirms the trainability of transformational leadership and emphasizes the efficacy of individual executive coaching as an effective leadership development methodology.”³³

Additionally, the Army cannot “LDP” its way to leadership growth. Events, classes, and presentations can indeed serve as important catalysts for leader development, but alone they fall short. Each person is different and must engage in a career-long process of addressing their unique strengths and weaknesses. Turning again to Maxwell, “if I need to be inspired to take steps forward, then I’ll attend an event. If I want to improve, then I’ll engage in a process and stick with it.”³⁴

In order for the Army to build a coaching culture, I make four recommendations for implementation by commanders at all levels: establish unit-level coaching, place greater emphasis on the Command Climate Survey, revise the MSAF, and re-establish the Army’s Organizational Effectiveness program. These recommendations distinctly differ from one another, which indeed reflects the multiple dimensions of the problem itself. They represent an array of solutions, from those that can be implemented immediately by tactical commanders on one end of the spectrum to those that are

intended for the senior leader and institutional levels of the Army on the other end.

Taken together, they will have a dramatic influence on how the Army exercises one of its core functions – leadership.

Recommendation 1: Establish Unit-Level Coaching

A coaching culture begins at the unit level, and the first phase of a unit-level coaching program establishes leadership buy-in and advocacy by arranging for a leadership coach for the brigade and battalion commanders and their senior enlisted counterparts. This models the recommendations of the Center for Creative Leadership that the organization have a champion who will provide energy and direction for a coaching program.³⁵ The idea here is that once the command team has experienced the value of leadership coaching firsthand, they are often “convinced that everyone should have the same experience they’ve had...”³⁶ As subordinate leaders witness their superiors engaging in this type of personal growth – especially if they experience better leadership as a result – the coaching culture is much more likely to grow.

To implement coaching, a unit may reach out to other senior officers from across the force to volunteer to serve as coaches. Army colonels, general officers, and/or senior sergeants major would then be paired with battalion and brigade leadership to begin the coaching relationship. These would not be mentors – a voluntary relationship that lasts a career or longer³⁷ – but coaches intended to serve leaders while they are in their current assignment.

The actual coaching experience would begin with an initial assessment by the coach. This could come in the form of the coachee completing a personality inventory, a 360-degree assessment, an interview, or any combination of these events. After this assessment, the coach and the coachee develop a plan to narrow the gap between the

leader's intentions and the perceptions of others. There are many methods to guide this relationship, and the Center for Army Leadership offers excellent tools for coaches to improve their interactions with coachees.³⁸ The pair subsequently conducts regular coaching sessions to assess leadership progress – in person or virtually – and a coach may recommend limited 360-degree assessments later in the process to determine the status of a targeted behavior. The coaching experience would focus heavily on the individual, her behaviors, and on continual growth to maximize her leadership effectiveness.

One of the most significant benefits of a unit-level coaching program is that it completely changes the paradigm of the Multi-Source Assessment Feedback (MSAF), the Army's version of the 360-degree assessment. Currently, the Army takes a compliance-based approach and mandates all officers to complete the assessment every 36 months.³⁹ The Army views the assessment product as the center-point of this process and coaching as a secondary effort (available upon request by the coachee).⁴⁰ However, unit-level coaching flips this paradigm around and makes coaching the primary effort, with the 360-degree assessment in support.

Current research supports this method of properly integrating 360-degree assessments into leader development. According to a Rand study on 360-degree assessments, "there was near-universal agreement among those who have had experience with 360s that properly structured coaching is essential for successful implementation."⁴¹ One interviewee in particular stated, "we think coaching will be the most critical piece for getting developmental utility."⁴² Rand's research further explains that the real value of coaching comes out with "extended conversations" with a coach,

not just a one-time event.⁴³ Army officers and NCOs appear to agree with this assessment, as only 10% of MSAF participants have requested the one-time coaching from CAL, an indicator of the lack of attractiveness of the current application of the MSAF across the force.⁴⁴

The second phase of implementation expands the coaching experience to subordinate leaders within companies, battalions, and brigades. This phase becomes more difficult due to the larger number of leaders receiving leadership coaching and the limited amount of resources available – both in time and finances. Fortunately, the Army has a ready-made program that is currently available and underutilized.⁴⁵ With the Unit360, a program administered by the Center for Army Leadership (CAL), an organization could arrange for a focused surge on MSAF assessments for leaders within two echelons of command (e.g. brigade and battalion, or battalion and company, etc) during a two- to three-month timeframe.⁴⁶ The Unit360's unique unit roll-up report would provide a consolidated, "multi-perspective 'snapshot' of the leadership trends in a unit."⁴⁷ Additionally, and more importantly, CAL leadership coaches would come into the unit and provide face-to-face coaching with the assessed leaders as part of the Unit360 experience.⁴⁸

Although not as valuable as sustained, long-term coaching, this is a step in the right direction. This type of experience would help to embed the coaching culture into leaders at all levels and drive creative solutions to sustain leadership coaching with currently available resources and manpower.

Recommendation 2: Greater Emphasis on the Command Climate Survey

The second recommendation requires the profession to place greater emphasis on the Army's Command Climate Survey, which can serve as an ideal springboard for

coaching conversations. The heart of a coaching culture lies in the drive to create alignment between the intentions of the leader and the perceptions of the led. While the MSAF and other 360-degree tools target the behaviors of a specific person, the climate survey gauges the attitudes of the group: their commitment, morale, satisfaction, work stress, confidence in the leadership, and respect for others. Thus, the climate survey better highlights the overall level of trust and confidence in a unit, which can serve as a powerful complement to the individual behaviors considered in a 360-degree assessment.

Climate surveys not only assess levels of trust, they can be a key component of building trust in an organization, which is the foundation of Army leadership and the doctrine of mission command. According to ADRP 6-0 *Mission Command*, “effective commanders demonstrate a sincere concern for their subordinates’ welfare,” which “contributes to a positive command climate more than anything else a commander does.”⁴⁹ Showing attention and responsiveness to climate surveys is one of the best ways to exhibit this behavior.

James Comey, the director of the FBI and a staunch advocate of the climate survey, is known to request a copy of a field office’s latest climate survey before he visits. Prior to arriving – typically while enroute – he will read every bit of the report. At some point during his visit to the field office, Director Comey will gather the agents and employees for an all-hands meeting. He makes a point to bring up the climate survey, addressing specific issues, responses, or trends that he noticed during his review of the results. In so doing, he sends a clear message to his organization that the director

genuinely cares about what they think, values their input, and is committed to their well-being.⁵⁰

The Army, by contrast, underutilizes the Command Climate Survey as a tool for leadership improvement, focusing instead on its usefulness in assessing the level of individual respect within an organization, particularly in identifying indicators of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The Army currently manages the Command Climate Survey as a function of Equal Opportunity (EO) instead of the Center for Army Leadership. As a result, Army leadership doctrine makes only passing references to the Command Climate Survey, and while the CASAL seeks to measure overall elements of climate, it makes no attempt to measure the efficacy of the Command Climate Survey's use across the force. Certainly, the EO community tracks the raw compliance rates of survey administration, but no releasable data exists to show that the Army has attempted to gauge what commanders do with the survey once the results are available. The profession must make better use of this valuable and effective leadership tool, which in turn will reinforce a coaching culture as leaders seek to help other leaders build trust within their formations.

Recommendation 3: Revise the MSAF

To further improve leadership growth, the Army must revise the MSAF 360-degree assessment to provide greater value to a coaching dialogue. Currently, the MSAF's structure reflects the Leadership Requirements Model (LRM), with four to seven different questions for each of the model's six attributes/competencies, for which the respondent must then provide a rating. The report produces an absolute score for each question, which implies a perfect score of 100 as the goal for each of the questions. The problem with absolute scoring methods is that one is left to judge for

himself what constitutes a good or bad score, regardless of the alignment of the leader's self-assessment to the perception of others.

Recent studies by the psychology community show that comparative ratings against a targeted behavior may well be more effective than absolute ratings.⁵¹ An example of this model for 360-degree assessments can be found in the Flippen Group, a private leadership consulting organization. Instead of posing complex questions and asking for a scale of observed actions for direct feedback, Flippen takes a different approach. Their Flippen Profile™ seeks to identify behavioral characteristics through a sizeable checklist of descriptors in which the respondent simply checks off which single-word descriptors apply to the ratee.⁵² Based on which words were endorsed and which were not, Flippen then determines overall ratings on each of twelve assessed characteristics, such as self-confidence, aggressiveness, self-control, deference, dominance, need for order, and need for change.⁵³

Even more helpfully, Flippen is able to articulate a targeted range within each characteristic based on historical data of high performing leaders. Unlike the MSAF, the Flippen Profile™ seeks not to measure an absolute rating of a competency, rather it demonstrates how the leader compares to others with the desired behaviors and performance. The result is an impactful snapshot of how the leader exercises situational leadership, which includes both the self-assessed ratings and the ratings from others.

A new methodology for the MSAF will further reinforce a coaching culture by giving our leaders a product with more utility. She will be much more motivated to seek developmental coaching or self-development activities if she has a better idea of what elements of her behavior or personality are not in line with high performing leaders.

Recommendation 4: Re-establish the Organizational Effectiveness Program

Coming out of the Vietnam War, the Army faced a number of issues in the areas of racial tensions, low morale, and the beginning of a transition to an all-volunteer force, and it quickly realized its problems “were not in the area of money and resource management. The primary problems were leadership, management, and command.”⁵⁴ Under this backdrop, a small cadre of junior officers led by then-Major Ramon “Tony” Nadal emerged in the early 1970s to suggest that recent advances in the fields of social and organizational psychology held great potential for Army leadership.⁵⁵

Nadal, who earlier served as a company commander for then-Lieutenant Colonel Harold “Hal” Moore with the 7th Cavalry in Vietnam’s Ia Drang Valley, boldly handed the Chief of Staff of the Army a personal essay on the topic during a visit to Quantico, Virginia in 1971 where Nadal was attending the Marine Corps Command and General Staff College. Intrigued, the Chief asked for a more detailed briefing at his headquarters in Washington, DC, and the Organizational Effectiveness (OE) program was born.⁵⁶

The OE program took a fundamentally new approach for that time and focused on the areas of “interpersonal skills rather than technical knowledge and decision making,” placing a high premium on how a leader communicates and connects with his soldiers.⁵⁷ At the height of the program, the Organizational Effectiveness School and Center (OESC) at Fort Ord, California consisted of 34 officers, 16 enlisted soldiers, and 33 civilians, all who were engaged in various training and assessment initiatives.⁵⁸ They primarily trained and certified officers and NCOs to serve as OE Staff Officers (OESO) within commands across the Army, assisting their commanders in areas of complex systems change, performance management, team building, leadership transitions, and others.⁵⁹ The OESC recruited leaders from across the Army to receive extensive in-

house training, which resulted in an additional skill identifier (ASI) and a utilization tour as an OESO before continuing on with their respective careers.⁶⁰

The program abruptly and unexpectedly ended in 1985 for a variety of reasons. Ironically, its own internal mismanagement and the influence of early but lasting opponents to the program all played large roles in its demise.⁶¹ Not everyone embraced the transformational style of leadership espoused by the OE program, and many considered it too much “psycho-babble” for their preferred authoritarian style of leadership. Regardless of the reasons, General Bernard Rogers, a former Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) at the time, stated to John Marsh and General John Wickham (Secretary of the Army and CSA, respectfully) that the decision was “...tantamount to eating our own seed corn,” highlighting that this program also had its staunch supporters from its years of influence.⁶²

The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) currently employs a program based on the same principles and ideas. They assign a military psychologist plus two or three assistants to each division and brigade headquarters who provide advice and counsel in the areas of leadership, organizational development, human resources management, and military psychology.⁶³ The command often uses the psychologist as an outside observer to provide feedback on group dynamics and leadership behaviors after significant exercises or command and staff engagements.

This service is not just for the brigade commander, however. One IDF officer notes that perhaps the most valuable benefit of the military psychologist began when he was a company commander. The psychologist provided assistance with a version of the

360-degree assessment and was able to coach the officer. This coaching relationship continued as he rose through the ranks and became a battalion commander.⁶⁴

The time has come for the Army to re-establish the OE program. One of the more attractive elements of the concept is that it inherently focuses on the operational domain. The institution would certainly provide the foundational support, but the principle value would be its real-time integration into commands at all levels of the Army. A deeper examination of this topic should be conducted by industrial-organizational psychologists and the Center for Army Leadership for the proper application in today's Army. Based on our own Army's previous experiences with OE and the IDF's current successes, the concept deserves our urgent attention and action.

Conclusion

This paper contends that the Army has unintentionally changed our basic understanding and application of leadership, particularly in the areas of influence and trust. By watering down the human connection side of leadership, we have made it too easy for commanders to believe they are conducting leader development without actually addressing its core essence. However, by inculcating a coaching culture, the profession can reverse this behavior, strengthen the bonds of trust throughout the ranks, and ultimately produce a more effective and agile fighting force.

Some will argue that the Army already bridges the human connection gap with TRADOC's recent *Human Domain Strategy* (2015). Its emphasis on human performance, complex training, and innovative agility does deserve commendation, but the concept makes a minimal attempt to address the leadership element of mutual trust between humans.⁶⁵ Regardless, it is encouraging to see the Army underscore the

timeless and enduring role of the human being in military conflict – as soldiers, leaders, and decision-makers.

Although I present a sobering view of the state of Army leadership throughout this paper, there are reasons to be optimistic about our ability to change course. First, the Army has exceptionally committed leaders in its ranks. The CASAL reports that 94% of leaders are committed to their team or immediate work group, and I translate this to mean that the profession will respond favorably to leadership improvement efforts that make sense to them.⁶⁶

Moreover, we must remember that this is in our DNA. The Army has always been defined by its warrior ethos, and the culture surrounds itself with reminders of courage under fire and stories of those who motivated others to disregard their personal safety in order to accomplish the seemingly impossible. These cultural artifacts inherently embody the value of human connection and are a constant reminder of the influential power of one leader. Officers and NCOs at all levels are ready and willing to learn how to be that leader. We must now show them how.

Endnotes

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