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360-DEGREE FEEDBACK: THE TIME IS NOW

BY

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360-DEGREE FEEDBACK: THE TIME IS NOW

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ABSTRACT

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The current Army Officer Evaluation System does not provide a complete evaluation. It is limited in its ability to provide the rated officer and the raters all the possible data available on the rated officer and does not provide the rated officer with the insight of peers and subordinates. A 360-Degree feedback system used in conjunction with the current system would provide this additional data. This paper examines the use of a 360-degree feedback system to improve the process of officer leadership development and selection. It examines the reasons for using a 360-degree process and why the current Officer Evaluation System fails to provide these benefits. Finally, it examines the lessons learned from the use of a 360-degree feedback system by other organizations and recommends a plan for implementing this type of system into the Army Officer Evaluation System.

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360-DEGREE FEEDBACK: THE TIME IS NOW

To our subordinates we owe everything we are or hope to be. For it is our subordinates, nor our superiors, who raise us to the dizziest of professional heights, and it is our subordinates who can and will, if we deserve it, bury us in the deepest mire of disgrace. When the chips are down and our subordinates have accepted us as their leader, we don't need any superior to tell us; we see it in their eyes and in their faces, in the barracks, on the filed, and on the battle line. And on that final day when we must be ruthlessly demanding, cruel and heartless, they will rise as one to do our bidding, knowing full well that it may be their last act in this life

– LTG (RET) Alfred Jenkins

As the Army enters the 21st Century, it faces a multitude of challenges. One of the most daunting challenges is the development and assessment of our future officer leadership. To accomplish this task, the Army must develop an officer evaluation system that provides early and continuous feedback in a structured manner to ensure officers have the necessary information to develop the attributes, skills and values required and promote only the most qualified officers.

This paper will examine the use of a 360-degree feedback system to improve the process of officer leadership development and selection. First it will define the concept of a 360-degree feedback system. Next, it will examine the reasons for using a 360-degree process and why the current Officer Evaluation System fails to provide these benefits. Finally, it will examine the lessons learned from the use of a 360-degree feedback system by

other organizations and recommend a plan for implementing this type of system into the Army Officer Evaluation System.

WHAT IS 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

For the purposes of this paper a 360-degree feedback system is a formal system of evaluation in which individuals evaluate themselves and also receive feedback from peers, subordinates, and superiors. This system is also known by other names such as multi-rater, multi-source, or full-circle feedback. Individuals are asked to respond to questions about a person's performance, abilities, or future potential. The factors evaluated can include but are not limited to a person's technical skills, leadership skills, character, and interpersonal skills. The factors evaluated are generally determined by the organization; but, in some cases, the individual may determine additional criteria to be evaluated. Feedback can come in the form of written comments, numerical ratings or a combination of both. The system is normally implemented to enable individuals to improve their ability to perform their job within an organization, but it can be used for other purposes such as performance appraisal and personnel management.

IS THE ARMY OFFICER LEADERSHIP READY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY?

Tomorrow's officer leadership will be fewer in number and face greater challenges due to a more complex operational environment, increased OPTEMPO, increased sophistication of

weapons systems and a smarter, more complex soldier. The expectations of our future leaders are high. "Army leaders must set high standards, lead by example, do what is legally and morally right, and influence other people to do the same. They must establish and sustain a climate that ensures people are treated with dignity and respect and create an environment in which people are challenged and motivated to be all they can be."[1]

The officer evaluation system of the 21st century must address these challenges. The system must assist in the development of leadership competencies required to handle these new challenges. It must be as accurate as possible in advancing the best and brightest officers because in a smaller organization selection of senior leadership becomes more critical. One of the primary reasons businesses have used developmental feedback is the increasing failure rate of their executive. One estimate is that, over the last decade, this failure rate ranges from 30 to 60 percent.[2] This estimate goes on to say,if asked about the performance of their superiors, subordinates would say that approximately 15 to 25 percent perform unsatisfactorily.[3] Can the Army of the future afford a failure rate of 15 to 25 percent?

One article by LTG (RET) Walter Ulmer cites several examples of indicators that our current system is not developing quality leadership. Soldiers surveys indicating less than half had confidence in their leaders, Army Command and General Staff

College students expressing concerns similar to those found in 1970, junior officers more frequently citing "zero defects mentality" as a major problem and civilian leaders lack of confidence in senior Army leadership reports on combat readiness are only a few of these indicators.[4] The environment is characterized by "a healthy job market for officers who leave the service, the lack of a clear military threat to the United States, the higher expectations for a "decent family life", and less tolerance among capable young people **for poor leadership climates** create a potent mixture."[5] But leader success rates can be improved by a combination of conceptual training, developmental feedback, environmental support for continuos learning, a performance appraisal system that attends to both development and selection and a system for promoting leaders based on more than written reports from superiors in the organization."[6] If we are to retain quality young officers we must address these concerns. One way to improve the leadership problem may be to implement a 360-degree assessment program.

WHY IMPLEMENT A 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK SYSTEM?

In discussing leadership, MG (Ret) Perry M. Smith, a well-known speaker and author on the subject of leadership, uses 30 points during his lectures that he calls "30 Blazing Flashes of the Obvious about Leadership". His first point, know yourself,

goes right to the crux of the argument for implementing a 360-degree feedback process.

> All leaders should realize they are, in fact, five or more people. They are who they are, and who they think they are (and these are never quite the same); they are who their bosses think they are; who their peers think they are; and who their subordinates think they are. Leaders who work hard to get feedback from many sources are more likely to understand and control their various selves, and hence be better leaders.[7]

Army leadership doctrine recognizes this dynamic and encourages leaders to solicit this type of feedback to improve their leadership abilities. FM 22-100, the Army guide on military leadership states:

As a leader, you must realize you are three people: who you are, who you think you are, and who other think you are. In some cases there is a close relationship between and among the three "you's". In other cases the relationship is not close at all. Your seniors, peers and subordinates will give you honest feedback if you ask for it and are open to it. Candid feedback can help you better understand yourself. If you know yourself and try to improve, you have a foundation for knowing your job and your soldiers.[8]

This concept is also receiving support at the highest leadership level within the Army. Several senior Army leaders believe that a properly designed and implemented 360-degree system would assist in the development of officers. In two separate addresses to the Army War College Class of 1999, both the DCSOPS of the Army, LTG Thomas Burnette Jr. and the Inspector

General of the Army, LTG Larry R. Jordan stated that the feedback from an effective 360-degree program would be beneficial for the development of Army officers.[9]

More importantly in February of 1998 the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Dennis Reimer, directed the Center for Army Leadership to pilot a 360-degree assessment in operational units.[10] This assessment would use the lessons learned from two other pilot 360-degree assessment programs conducted in academic environments using CAS3 and CGSOC students. The results of the pilot program will be used to determine the feasibility of implementing a system Army-wide. This type of senior leadership support is essential in implementing a successful system. This type of support lends credence to the belief that this type of system is not only beneficial but also required to ensure we develop the best officer possible.

Initial results show that officers in operational units are also supporting this type of assessment. The results of the first brigade-level operational unit test show 100% of the leaders evaluated believed the information they received was valuable. Ninety-four percent believed the program had potential for the Army. Eighty-four percent of the officers involved (70 participants) desired their own 360-degree assessment program and seventy-four percent believed the process was valuable.[11]

WHY CHANGE THE CURRENT SYSTEM?

Before beginning this discussion, it is important to understand that this paper will not argue that the current Officer Evaluation System (OES) is completely valueless. In fact, the recommendation of this paper will be that a 360-degree feedback system should be used to augment the existing OES. The process can be improved though.

Many senior leaders believe that implementation of an effective 360-degree feedback system would be useful in selecting the future leadership of the Army. In an article reviewing Army leadership doctrine, LTG (RET) Walter Ulmer, a renowned writer and lecturer on leadership, talks about the "proximate cause of the persistent phenomenon of erratic, uneven leadership."[12] He lists three possibilities.

First is a group of senior leaders who "don't really care about creating organizational climates that focus on combat readiness and the long-term development of an officer corps in which candor, courage, competence, and commitment abound.[13] Second is a group of "well-intentioned non-leaders who cannot-by virtue of their personality, limited capacity for trust, lack of self-confidence or improper definition of success-perform at the executive level."[14] He cites as proof Army-wide surveys depicting senior leadership as "self-protecting, untrusting, and overly managerial.[15] He believes the third category is "simply the lack of finely honed skills among senior officers in diagnosing,

creating, and maintaining the necessary climate for sustained excellence."[16]

He believes the solution to the second category of officers might be "a refinement of our evaluation system through some **form of leadership assessment by the led.** This would supplant the present exclusively top-down system, which has not been sufficiently effective in weeding out non-leaders."[17] Proponents of 360-degree feedback believe that an effectively implemented 360-degree system would help in resolving the problem of all three categories. An effective system used to appraise performance would identify those officers unable or unwilling to establish the correct command climate and assist in eliminating them before they assume senior leadership positions. This system would also identify those individuals lacking the requisite skills and provide the individuals and superiors with information to form an action plan to correct these shortcomings. This would enable the organization, as well as the individual, to take corrective steps to resolve the problem(s).

Given this information one needs to ask if the current system provides the rated officer with the most comprehensive, structured feedback on his performance? One of the primary reasons for implementing a 360-degree system is to provide the individual with feedback so he can improve his performance in the future. The current system provides the rated officer with feedback from, at most, three different individuals. The two

primary individuals are the rater, normally, the officer's immediate superior, and a senior rater, normally his rater's immediate superior. In some cases a third officer, an intermediate rater, provides the officer with feedback. No other individual will provide the officer with any type of formal structured feedback during this process. Granted those two to three individuals are probably the most qualified overall because of their experience and are the ones whose opinions count the most in the assessment process but it is still a limited viewpoint. All are superiors and generally do not have the same perspective as his peers and subordinates.

By limiting structured feedback during this process, is the Army then, limiting the opportunities for this officer to improve his leadership skill? There is no other formal feedback mechanism in operational units where peers and subordinates have an opportunity to provide comments on an officer's leadership ability on a periodic basis. Leaders receive limited feedback during events' After Action Reviews (AAR). Army schools such as the U.S. Military Academy, Command and General Staff College and the Army War College are the only Army organizations that attempt to provide an officer with peer and subordinate feedback; but there is no requirement for the officer to take action on the findings. Other programs structured by the officer himself will generally provide inflated evaluations because of the perception that negative comments may be used against the peer or

subordinate. A structured 360-degree feedback system could provide the officer with this feedback for his own development.

Do the raters (rater, intermediate rater, and senior rater) have all the input they need in determining the true potential of a rated officer? The current system depends on the ability and energy of the rater to determine the true potential of this officer. The rater can receive input on an officer's performance from many sources. Most of his evaluation though is based on limited personal observation and unit evaluations such as EXEVALs, Command Inspections and other unit indicators. Other indicators of poor leadership attributes are often too late to be used in developing an officer. These come in the form of IG or Dial-the Boss complaints or unit indicators such as AWOL rates or rates of indiscipline.

All of these are important sources of information, but, again, may be limited by the ability of the rater to see everything there is about an officer on his own. Some of the critical values, skills, and attributes of an individual are sometimes undisclosed to the superior or are presented to the superior in a different light. These shortcomings are often clearly evident to peers and subordinates. Only the led know for certain the leader's moral courage, consideration for others, and commitment to unit above self. This is the indisputably crucial element in leader assessment and development systems. If, in fact, the Army treasures these values, attributes, and skills and

wants to ensure that those individuals who routinely demonstrate them are promoted, some form of input from subordinates is required.[18]

An effective 360-degree feedback mechanism would provide the rater observations he would generally not receive. This assessment could also provide the rater a forum to discuss the rated officer's individual values, skills and attributes. The current system requires raters and rated officers to agree on performance criteria within 30 days of a rating period. These are discussed periodically throughout the rating period and at the time the officer is given his performance appraisal. The tendency is to focus on the accomplishments or failures of an officer during that period and not on the qualities that make him the officer that he is or the officer he needs to become. If the Army is a value-based organization as it claims, why is there no formal requirement to discuss these qualities? A 360-degree feedback system would provide the data that could assist in that discussion

Does this current system breed officers who focus up rather than down? If the only observations used for performance appraisals are the ones of your superiors, are we developing a corps of officers that ignore those below or only use those around them for their own personal gain? If a 360-degree feedback mechanism was used, the rated officer would know that his subordinates would have the opportunity to provide his rater

with their opinion on his values, skills and attributes. This feedback mechanism would require officers to develop leadership styles that would focus on their subordinate and peer requirements as well as the requirements placed on them from above. Simply put they would have to follow the old Army axiom "Mission First, People Always" if they want to succeed.

In summary, the current system does not:

- provide the rated officer with the maximum amount of input possible with which he can improve his leadership style.
- provide the rater with all possible feedback so he can assist in the development of an officer's leadership style and fulfill his responsibilities in successfully assessing an officer's potential.
- provide a sufficient forum for the discussion of an officer's values, skills and attributes.
- encourage officers to focus on the needs of their peers and subordinates and is more likely to encourage the development of a self-serving officer instead of a selfless officer.

360 DEGREE FEEDBACK LESSONS LEARNED

Although this is a relatively new and unique approach for the U.S. military, other organizations have employed 360-degree feedback for many years. "Though many companies are still using one-way, downward feedback, another Wyatt study showed a beginning trend in upward feedback. The 1992 study showed that subordinates were critiquing their superiors and peers in 12

percent of the 397 U.S. companies surveyed. By 1993, the figure was up to 26 percent."[19] IBM has used upward appraisals for over 20 years.[20] "Another survey of 280 Midwest companies indicates that 25 percent use annual upward appraisals, 18 percent are using peer appraisals, and about 12 percent are using full 360-degree appraisals."[21] In fact, for several human resource companies, the development and implementation of 360-degree feedback has developed into a profitable business.

For every example of successful implementation of 360-degree feedback system, there is an example of the use of a 360-degree feedback system that went wrong. As the Army develops a system of 360-degree feedback for the U.S Army, it needs to use this wealth of experience to develop a system that meets its needs. Research shows that the best way to develop a system is to ask 5 basic questions.

HOW WILL THE ASSESSMENT BE USED?

The most important aspect to define in developing a 360-degree feedback is to determine how the data will be used and what is it supposed to accomplish. Will the data be used purely for self-development and be seen only by the rated individual? Will superiors use the data in the mentoring of subordinates? Will the data also be used as a performance indicator in the performance appraisal process? There are varied opinions on this subject.

Many believe that feedback is most useful if it is used for self-development purposes only. A feedback system will have a much higher chance for success if the individuals in the organization accept the system and are willing to work to make it succeed. Individuals in an organization are more likely to accept use of a 360-degree feedback system if they know that it will not be tied to their performance appraisal. It is perceived as less threatening. Proponents of the pure developmental approach believe that data provided only to the individual is the least threatening.

The benefits are two-fold. First, since the data is only seen by the individual, the individual is less likely to dismiss the data as an attempt to discredit the individual in the eyes of the boss to further their own career (a commonly cited fear). He is more likely to accept the feedback and participate because of the non-threatening manner in which it is presented.

A second benefit is the reliability of the data. Studies indicate that the reliability of the data may be more accurate if used for developmental purposes. Knowing that the data will not be used in performance appraisal, respondents will not inflate input on their bosses to derive secondary benefits from their bosses raise or promotion. Additionally, peers and subordinates will be less likely to use it as a tool to further their own careers or to seek revenge on a disapproving boss or disliked peer.

On the other hand, if feedback is used only for developmental reasons, the organization may not derive the benefits it desires from the process. There is no direct incentive for individuals to take action on the feedback.[22] Individuals can discard the data without consequences. In the eyes of the individual and the organization, this may quickly become a waste of time and energy.

Tying data to performance appraisals can force individuals to take action on their deficiencies and move along a path that organizations want them to move. Superiors can now assist the subordinates in achieving success. Subordinates can identify areas that they need to improve and can use this as a gage to change their actions. Superiors can use the data to make adjustments in their organizations to improve their efficiency. If the data is only seen by the individual then none of these benefits can be achieved to the same degree. The optimum solution is a system that allows for the development of the individual in a constructive manner and also meets the needs of the organization for appraisal and advancement.

Prior to leaving this discussion, it is important to define clearly what is meant by developmental and appraisal use for the purposes of this paper. Some research describes the developmental approach as one that is not directly used to determine pay, promotions, bonuses, etc even if is seen by the individual's superior. Companies such as AT&T, Sprint and Signet Bank say that they use 360-degree feedback only for employee

development, not for salary or promotion recommendations. But as one manager asked, "How can a boss be aware of an employee's feedback and not use it in his or her performance review-and not let it affect that person's salary or advancement."[23] For the purposes of this paper any data provided to an individual's boss must be considered data used for performance appraisal. This data can also be used for developmental purposes but cannot be considered purely developmental.

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE?

The next question that must be addressed is who will participate in the assessment? Three considerations must be addressed. First, research shows the system has a greater chance for success if the system is supported from the top. If all individuals in the organization participate, it has a much greater chance of success. "It is important to gain senior management's true commitment and involvement rather than a general blessing. The most potent demonstration of managers' commitment is a willingness to also take part and receive feedback. Accepting it nondefensively and making positive changes can set a positive tone and provide a role model."[24]

It is equally as important to determine who will be the individuals that provide input. One of the questions that must be addressed in this area is whether peers will be used to provide input. Some research indicates that rated individuals view a feedback system as less threatening if their peer

competitors are not providing input. This is where program objectives must be evaluated. If peer relationships are essential to the organization's success then peer evaluations may be included. If the system will only be used as a developmental tool then peer ratings may not be perceived as threatening and may be valuable for the development of an individual.

Respondents must be qualified to provide input. The respondent must have observed the individual for a sufficient amount of time in order to make a reliable assessment. CSA 360-development project has established a 90 day time window for all respondents. For the organization, this is viewed as sufficient time to make reliable observations as well as time enough for the rated individual to be evaluated. One study recommends that the individual serve in a position for six months before an appraisal is performed. It recommends that feedback from the person's prior workgroup serve as the bench mark for his next appraisal until a review in his new position can be completed."[25] This may vary in each organization but needs to be determined upfront to avoid unreliable input based on limited observations.

Another is the population size. Most research shows that a peer and subordinate population size of 5 or more yields the best results. The results will be more accurate if it is based on the perceptions of a larger, more diverse population. Additionally, with a larger population, one individual's evaluation will not skew the overall assessment.

The third consideration is how respondents will be selected. Normally this is done in one of three ways. Respondents can be done randomly, they can be selected by the rated individual or a combination of the both. The technique selected may significantly alter the evaluation. If individuals are allowed to pick the respondents, a more favorable evaluation may occur because individuals will normally pick respondents that are viewed as less critical. Respondents may feel the pressure to be more favorable in their responses if the rated individual has handpicked them even if their identity is protected.

WHAT WILL BE EVALUATED?

The next question is what will be evaluated? A clearly articulated set of well-understood criteria is essential. All participants must clearly understand the terms of reference for the evaluated areas. Without these clearly defined terms of reference each respondent may answer differently even if they have the same opinion.

The meaning of ratings also need to be defined. Four on a scale of five or the term "sometimes" may not mean the same to each individual. This not only skews the respondent's answers but also skews the rated individual interpretation of the evaluation. Well-defined terms of reference greatly assists all involved in providing input and using an evaluation data.

The assessment must also be based on a clearly recognized set of data that is tied to the goals of the organization for that

assessment. The organization must determine what the assessment is going to be used for and what factors need to be evaluated to assist the organization and the individual. The issue of whether the assessment will be used for developmental or appraisal purposes has already been discussed. The organization must examine each question not only to determine whether the population understands it but that it is also clearly tied to individual and organizational goals. Without this individuals will not be able to use the assessment to improve their individual performance or, if used for performance appraisal purposes, will not be able to use the results to appropriately select or reward individuals.

HOW WILL THE PROGRAM BE ADMINISTERED?

Recent analysis shows that how the system is run can also determine the success of the program. If the system used to gather the data is user friendly then the participants' view of the program has a greater chance to be positive. Establishing systems that quickly enable an individual to make an assessment or use an assessment increases the chances of successful implementation of a system. This is especially important if one individual has several assessments to make.

An important element in the administration of the system is how well the anonymity of the respondent is protected. Anonymity is absolutely essential if honest feedback is the goal. Some companies hire experts external to the company to administer the

system. Others have random systems that select individuals for input but collate the data as a respondent group to protect the individual identity. No matter what system is used it must be user friendly and protect the identity of the user.

"Without a good questionnaire and a logical and clearly communicated set of procedures, there's the danger of introducing a cumbersome, paper-intensive process. In such cases the response rate may be low and the feedback less accurate because people may not be motivated to complete the survey."[26] Implementing an unfriendly, tedious system can quickly end participant's enthusiasm and end a potentially promising process. With today's automation capabilities, administration of a 360-degree system can be relatively easy and efficient for the participants as well as the administrators. Automating results can also improve the capability of the administrator to package the data in different ways and maintain a greater degree of anonymity.

HOW WILL LEADERS PREPARE THE ORGANIZATION?

Many of the failures of a 360-degree system point to improper preparation of the organization. All members of the organization may not openly accept a 360-degree system. For many individuals this system will be perceived as threat, an invasion of privacy or just one more thing to do in an already busy day just to name a few. How the organization prepares the organization is

essential for the long-term health of the system. Three factors must be considered.

First, key members of the organization must be thoroughly involved in the development and implementation of the system. One study recommends involving key stakeholders up front. These key stakeholders "need to be aware of important decisions and the rationale behind them. They should provide input to such decisions and assist with the implementation."[27] If this doesn't happen those "key people either withheld their support or actively sabotaged the effort."[28] This type of involvement is "critical to ensure people's support and commitment to a fair, objective and constructive feedback process."[29]

The second factor that must be addressed is how to prepare the individuals. Most members may not be familiar with any 360-degree feed back system much less the one they are faced with. Three groups of people must receive training in order to maximize the benefits of the system. Those <u>receiving</u> feedback must be educated on the instrument to be used and, more importantly, how to interpret results and the development of an action plan based on those results. Those <u>providing</u> input must be educated on the instrument to be used and the organization's definition of the factors and ratings to be used. "The better people understand what to look for and how to record "critical incidents" (specific things the person said or did) that can be used as examples to support their ratings, the better the quality of the information

that will be collected."[30] This will establish a common baseline for all respondents and provide a forum for discussion that may improve the instrument.

Finally, coaches and appraisers must receive separate instruction on how to use the data that will be provided by the assessment. Ensuring that coaches and appraisers know how to correctly interpret results and how the data should be used is essential. Failure to train these groups may result in increased friction within the system and resistance by participants to devote the energy and dedication required to make the system work. Refresher training and training of new personnel must continue to occur to ensure consistency of effort and understanding by all participants.

The last factor is how the system will be implemented. Most research recommends a slow, deliberate, incremental approach with an evaluation after each incremental step. One study recommends that "any organization considering using 360-degree feedback in the appraisal process begin by using it for development only and then gradually make it a part of the appraisals with a pilot group. Even then, the focus should be on the goal-setting portion of the appraisal. People need to get comfortable with the idea of multi-source feedback as a developmental tool before they can accept it as a part of the formal performance management process."[31] The use of pilot programs to test the effectiveness of a program before full implementation cannot be understated.

"Organizations that successfully integrated a 360-degree feedback system into their performance management and merit systems usually do a thorough job of piloting and evaluation."[32] Whether it is to be used for developmental or appraisal purposes an incremental approach over time allows the organization to adjust to the system, evaluate it's purposes and uses, and make adjustments to the system before the participants and organization lose confidence in the system.

A 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK SYSTEM FOR THE UNITED STATES ARMY

So far this paper has established that:

- a properly constructed, administered and implemented 360-degree system can prove beneficial to the individuals of an organization and the organization as a whole.
- there is a need for the development of a feedback mechanism that provides Army leaders with honest feedback from subordinates and peers.
- there is support for a 360-degree program within the Army senior leadership and the officer corps.
- there is no current mechanism that provides this feedback to officers except in limited instances such as schools and minimally during certain training events.

Given these facts is a 360-degree feedback mechanism practical and what type of system should be implemented? The main issue involving practicality is the issue of time and cost. How much time would officers spend training and in executing

their responsibilities and is it worth the time and expense? Initial costs and time estimates for the first 360-degree pilot program in an operational Brigade show that there is minimal cost and time involved.[33] Training time (includes training time, administration and feedback) varied by position with company commander and above requiring 10-13 hours and platoon leaders requiring only 2 hours. Most of the time involved a one-time investment in training.

The cost of the initial training and equipment was $11.5 thousand and $6.5 thousand for the cost of the execution of the pilot. With improved automation and increased training within the officer school system, this cost could be reduced significantly. Depending on the system that is implemented, time could be reduced by addressing feedback from this instrument as part of an officer's required periodic counseling instead of in a separate session. Although these are only initial results from one brigade (70 officers participated in the pilot), the cost of the tested system does not seem prohibitive. Officers' responses to the test were positive as noted earlier in this paper. If the Army is serious about addressing some of the shortfalls noted earlier, cost and time does not appear to be prohibitive.

The best way to determine the type of system that might be implemented in the Army is to examine each of the five questions addressed earlier. The next section will examine each of these and make recommendations.

HOW WILL THE ASSESSMENT BE USED?

The most important aspect of this area is to determine whether the data will be used for developmental or appraisal purposes. Keep in mind that, for the purposes of this paper, any data that goes to your boss should be considered an instrument used for appraisal. It is possible for a system to achieve both developmental and appraisal objectives especially within the current Army Evaluation System. The current Officer evaluation system already incorporates developmental and appraisal objectives. The use of DA From 67-9-1 and the requirement for periodic counseling(usually every 90 days) on your performance. 360-degree feedback could be easily incorporated into this process. During periodic counseling, the results of a 360-degree feedback could be included as one more set of factors to be discussed in addition to all the other input already provided to the rater. The rater could use the data to provide a more complete picture of the officer's performance. Raters would not necessarily be required to establish separate sessions to discuss the results of the 360-degree feedback although, by doing this you improve the perception that this tool is used for developmental reasons not just appraisal purposes. It is my belief that it would not be beneficial to include the results of this appraisal in an officer's official file for consideration for a board or assignment officer. One of the objectives of the new OER was to place more responsibility on the chain of command

and less on the board for assessing who is the best and brightest. By including the 360-degree assessment data in the officer's file, data is provided that may not be interpreted correctly by the board. The rater and senior rater should be provided this data and use it as one more data element to determine the total potential of this officer for advancement and future service.

Without this rater and/or senior rater review, the impetus for an officer to take action on the results is minimal. If used for self-development only, an officer loses out on the benefit of mentoring and coaching from superiors. He can easily reject the data as inaccurate and, especially with the increased time demands on officers today, may quickly move on to the next event that the boss cares about. The likelihood that a self-developmental system would assist any of the three categories of officers discussed by LTG Ulmer earlier in this paper is minimal. If the right system is implemented that protects anonymity and provides relevant, reliable data, both developmental appraisal objectives can be attained.

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE?

The current officer evaluation system currently provides for one of the four elements of a 360-degree system. His immediate chain of command is required to provide input through periodic counseling and performance review. Use of a 360-degree system by superiors would provide an instrument to guide these periodic

counseling reviews and discuss these values that the organization deems important. Again, unless there is an indicator that there is a severe problem with the officer's character or leadership styles, only his performance is usually discussed at these counseling sessions. This would provide the rater and senior rater an opportunity to discuss the values, attributes, and skills he will be evaluated on in his OER and reinforce those qualities that the rater and the institution find essential.

The inclusion of peers and subordinates into this system is a new element though and the heart of the 360-degree process. Without their input, the system basically remains the same and the problems with Army officer leadership continues. Two factors are essential. The population must be large enough to protect the anonymity of the respondents and not allow one evaluation to skew the results, and the respondents must have enough time and experience to accurately assess the individual. In small organizations, this may not be possible. A limited system could be established based on the limiting factors of the pollution size and experience. Under no circumstances should a system be forced on an organization if the population cannot meet the proper criterion. Inaccurate, over-inflated data is worse than no data and all and will not benefit the organization or the individual. The current CSA 360-degree pilot is using a population size of two superiors, three peers and four subordinates. This number will work as long individual peer and

subordinate data is provided as one data group so the individual's identity is protected. The number should not be limited to this if it is possible to include more input. More is better in establishing an accurate database.

An assistant administrator must select respondents. Rated individuals should not be allowed to pick the individuals to respond. Human nature being what it is, this will automatically skew the results. Not only will the individual naturally pick those he thinks will give a better rating; the respondents now are identified and will be more likely to provide inflated feedback.

Research has shown individuals generally fear peer input more than subordinates input especially if the data is used for appraisal purposes. If this is a concern, an incremental approach might be used that starts with a system of subordinate, self and superior feedback and then, as the feedback system is accepted by the culture, peers assessment could be included. This may make implementation easier and increase acceptance by the officer.

Finally, individual assessment is essential. It provides an interesting comparison that is invaluable for self-development and forces the individual to take time to address his leadership style. This was the most revealing portion of the Army War College 360-degree feedback system I participated in. I was relatively sure about the ratings I would receive because I chose

the respondents. I was surprised at the difference between my assessment and the respondents. I used my assessment to evaluate whether the respondent's opinions were really over inflated and reassess my own perception of my strengths and weaknesses.

WHAT WILL BE EVALUATED?

This is the easiest question to address. Army leadership doctrine provides an officer with the performance indicators required to be successful. In the draft of FM 22-100, appendix B lists the performance indicators and their definitions.[34] This appendix lists a data set that is well defined and already understood by the officer corps. By evaluating the values, attributes, and skills required of a leader with character and competence and also evaluating the actions required to achieve purpose, direction and motivation, you reinforce Army leadership doctrine and provide an officer with a roadmap for success. This is also the same set of criteria that the officer will be evaluated on in his efficiency report.

This data set could be rated using a numerical scale for easier compilation but must include options to provide for written feedback. In one study, "both appraisees and appraisers indicated that ratings from the appraisal instrument serve as a good frame of reference regarding desired work behavior: however they felt that written comments provided additional information to support the ratings and helped them target individual work behaviors that need improvement."[35]

HOW WILL THE SYSTEM BE ADMINISTERED?

The key is making the system user friendly and maintaining anonymity of respondents and security of reports. Automation can provide each unit with software packages that cab be added to existing computer systems. Use of e-mail can make even more efficient. Most officers are computer literate and each unit has computer capability. The data can be compiled in 2 ways internal to the unit or by an agency external to the unit.

If run internally, the system would probably be run by the S-1. Given his already heavy load, administering this function may be too much work. Additionally, his ability to maintain the anonymity of the respondents may also be limited. If an office, preferably at installation level, could be designated to receive and compile data and then provide the data to each unit for distribution, anonymity would be easier to maintain and the additional burden of administering the program would not be placed on the S-1.

HOW WILL LEADERS PREPARE THE ORGANIZATION?

If the decision is made to implement this system Army-wide, an intensive training effort needs to be conducted. The Army routinely does chain teaching on issues that require Army-wide distribution. Recent examples include the implementation of the new OER and sexual harassment awareness. A chain teaching packet should be developed and distributed to the chain of command. The

objectives and administration of the program must be explained in detail. This would provide the first level of education.

The next step would be to incorporate this into the officer education system. A block of instruction needs to be developed to make officers aware of objectives of the system and their responsibilities as a respondent, rated officer and coach and appraiser. This could be done in conjunction with current 360-degree assessment programs currently operating in Army schools.

Finally mobile training teams, educating on the system, would visit each installation and provide more specific instruction to each officer. This is exactly the technique currently being used in the pilot for 360-degree leadership assessment in operational units. The teams can provide specific instruction and also bring back lessons learned for evaluation and make recommendations for future changes. Again this may take several years for full implementation but successful implementation, especially in large well-established organizations will take time. A culture change will need to occur and gradual implementation gives the organization and it's members' time to adjust and make corrections to the system. Since the recommended system does not require changes to the current system of promotion and assignment, this approach could be implemented gradually with disrupting the current systems. Raters and senior raters could incorporate the system as it is introduced. Like any change this

would require active support and participation from the senior leadership. They should set the example, both in word and deed.

CONCLUSION

The time to implement a 360-degree feedback system is now. The need for change to train and retain the quality officers needed in the 21st century is known. The leadership of the Army and members of the officer corps have demonstrated the support for the change. Sufficient research exists to provide information on how to approach this project. Gradual implementation over the next few years should continue using the CSA 360-degree Leadership Assessment Pilot programs as the foundation for this effort.

WORD COUNT = 7,203

ENDNOTES

[1] Department of the Army, Military Leadership, Draft FM 22-100 (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army undated),8

[2] Walter F. Ulmer Jr., "Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another Bridge Too Far?" Parameters, (Spring 1998): 11-12.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 5-6

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 12

[7] Perry M. Smith, "Learning To Lead," Marine Corps Gazette (January 1997): 34.

[8] Department of the Army, Military Leadership, FM 22-100 (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army 31 July 1990): 38

[9] The ideas in this paragraph are based on answers to questions made by the speakers participating in the Commandant's Lecture series.

[10] LTC Richard Bullis, "Army 360-Degree Leadership Assessment Pilot Programs", Fact Sheet for the Chief of Staff of the Army, Ft Leavenworth, KS, 13 October 1998.

[11] LTC Richard Bullis bullisr@leav-emh1.army.mil, "Results of Army 360 degree Leadership Development Pilot in Operational Units," electronic message to Michael Fitzgerald <fitzgeraldm@awc.carlisle.army.mil>, 5 March 1999.

[12] Walter F. Ulmer Jr., "The Army's New Senior Leadership Doctrine" Parameters, (December 1987): 12

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 13

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ulmer, "Military Leadership into the 21st Century: Another Bridge Too Far?",16.

[19] Mary N. Vinson, "The Pros and Cons of 360-Degree Feedback: Making I Work," Training and Development (April 1996): 11

[20] David Antonioni, "Designing an Effective 360-Degree Appraisal Feedback Process," Organizational Dynamics (Autumn 1996): 24

[21] Ibid.

[22] Richard Lespinger and Anntoinette D. Lucia, "360 Degree Feedback and Performance Appraisal," Training (September 1997):64

[23] Vinson, 11

[24] Scott Wimer and Kenneth M Nowack, "13 Common Mistakes Using 360-Degree Feedback," Training and Development (May 1998): 73

[25] Vinson, 12

[26] Wimer, 76

[27] Ibid., 73
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Lespinger, 66
[31] Ibid., 68
[32] Wimer, 77
[33] Bullis, 5
[34] Draft FM 22-100, B-1
[35] Antonioni, 28

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