USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

STRATEGIC LEADER COMPETENCIES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE **30 MAR 2007**	2. REPORT TYPE **Strategy Research Project**	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-2006 to 00-00-2007**
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Strategic Leader Competencies for the Twenty-First Century**		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
		5b. GRANT NUMBER
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S) **Bradley Becker**		5d. PROJECT NUMBER
		5e. TASK NUMBER
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **U.S. Army War College,Carlisle Barracks,Carlisle,PA,17013-5050**		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT **Approved for public release; distribution unlimited**		
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
14. ABSTRACT **See attached.**		
15. SUBJECT TERMS		

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**		**22**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Bradley A. Becker

TITLE: Strategic Leader Competencies for the Twenty-First Century

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 01 March 2007 WORD COUNT: 5844 PAGES: 22

KEY TERMS: Interpersonal Skills, Leading Change, Visioning

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Today's strategic environment is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. It is changing more rapidly than ever before and the increased interdependence as a result of globalization, in addition to rapidly evolving threats, requires a special emphasis on specific strategic leader competencies in order to succeed in this environment. FM 22-100 identifies three strategic-leader skills: interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and technical skills. From these three primary strategic leadership skills, there is a list of twenty-one competencies that a strategic leader should posses. While all these skills and competencies play a role in successful strategic leadership, this paper will advocate that visioning, leading change, and interpersonal skills have the greatest impact on successful strategic leadership in this rapidly changing global environment.

STRATEGIC LEADER COMPETENCIES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Effective leadership is the key to achieving collective excellence. Without strong leadership, even an organization full of talented individuals will surely drift without purpose, like a ship without a rudder. It is the leader who most greatly affects the organizational climate and provides direction, motivation, and inspiration for their organization.[1] While this has always been true of leadership, today's strategic environment is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA). It is changing more rapidly than ever before and the increased interdependence as a result of globalization, in addition to rapidly evolving threats, requires a special emphasis on specific strategic leader competencies to succeed.

Recently, there has been a great deal of discussion about what skills and competencies a Twenty-First Century Army leader should posses to succeed in this rapidly changing global environment. Two of the most comprehensive studies are the *Review of Education, Training, and Assignments for Leaders* (RETAL) task force report, which was released in June of 2006, and the *Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level* study conducted in 2004. The conclusion of both reports is that the Army is not doing the best it can in developing our leaders' skills outside of the technical and tactical domains of leadership. An important observation from the RETAL task force is that the current process for developing officers to become senior leaders is uneven early in an officer's career, and that the Army does not currently leverage all of the opportunities available to develop the wide range of skills needed by our strategic leaders.[2] For example, the Army is developing strategic leaders with strong kinetic skills, but they are often lacking in non-kinetic skills, such as diplomacy, due to their underdeveloped conceptual and interpersonal skills.[3] Even worse, as pointed out in the *Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level* study, a leader's lack of conceptual and interpersonal skills often hindered their ability to optimally apply their strong technical and tactical skills.[4]

Leadership Skills for Today's Strategic Environment

The Army defines leadership as, "influencing people – by providing purpose, direction, and motivation – while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization."[5] Strategic leadership, according to the U.S. Army War College, is the process used by a leader to articulate and achieve a clearly understood vision by influencing the organizational culture and building consensus within a VUCA global environment, which is marked by opportunities and threats.[6] FM 22-100 identifies three strategic-leader skills: interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and technical skills.[7] From these three primary strategic leadership skills, there is a list of twenty-one competencies that a strategic leader should posses.[8] While all these skills and

competencies play a role in successful strategic leadership, this paper will advocate that visioning, leading change, and interpersonal skills have the greatest impact on successful strategic leadership in this rapidly changing global environment.

As the *Strategic Leadership Primer* points out, the current pace of change adds to the complexity of the environment and ultimately to greater organizational uncertainty.[9] It further states: "the organization feels the effects of change; but, without effective strategic leadership, the organization is incapable of adapting to that environment…"[10] To best adapt to this environment, this paper will first examine why the Army needs strategic leaders who have the ability and the foresight to realistically envision and shape what the future holds. Then it will examine the importance of a leader's ability to successfully lead their organizations through this rapidly changing global environment. Finally, it will show how these competencies are best enabled by a leader who has the interpersonal skills to influence and build consensus with the many diverse players in this interconnected global environment.[11] Integrated throughout this analysis are six recommendations on how the Army can better develop these leadership qualities.

Vision

Visioning is the first of the most critical strategic-leader competencies because without a clear vision of where an organization is going there can be no road map or strategic plan to get it there. And while the current strategic environment makes it difficult to develop a perfect road map for the future, a good vision will develop the image of "what ought to be" so the organization can position itself for future success.[12] As pointed out in the book *Leadership That Matters*, "…visioning is not about *predicting* the future we will someday see. It is a step in *constructing* the future we want."[13] Hence, visionary leadership is perhaps the most powerful attribute a strategic leader brings to their organization.

When examining truly powerful visions that have shaped and even changed the future two immediately come to mind: *The Declaration of Independence*, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal…" and the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "…that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." The value of a vision in providing a sense of purpose, direction, and motivation for all the members of an organization cannot be understated.[14] Some might argue that during periods of great uncertainty and change, developing a vision of what the future will look like is unrealistic, and that any road map based on that vision is worthless. But as Kotter points out, "Of the remaining elements [for

successfully leading organizations through change] none is more important than a sensible vision."[15] In other words, vision is not only valuable during times of change; it is critical to an organization's success in this fast-paced globally interconnected environment.

The Visioning Process

The visioning process begins with an assessment of the organizational and operational environment, followed by a projection of likely future states of the organization, and finally the development of a desired end state.[16] It challenges leaders' creativity and intuition for they play critical roles in the process.[17] The ability to successfully vision does not require superior intelligence; rather, it requires leaders with cognitive capabilities who can think in complex ways over longer periods of time. It is about understanding the chain of cause and effect to understand the effects of actions over time, all of which is best explained by the following quote:

> The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present but a place that is created. Created first in mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to but one we are creating. The paths to it are not found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.[18]

While leaders play an important role in developing an organization's vision, it should be a collaborative effort with leaders guiding the process and others providing input. Kotter identifies six characteristics of an effective vision. First, it must be *imaginable* so that it conveys a picture of what the future might look like. Second, it must be *desirable* so that it appeals to people's long-term interests. Third, it must be *feasible* so that there are realistic and attainable goals to achieve the vision. Fourth, It must be *focused* enough to provide guidance in decision making. Fifth, it must be *flexible* enough to allow for individual initiative in response to changing conditions. And finally, it must be *communicable* so that it can be easily explained within five minutes.[19] In achieving these six characteristics, the visioning process can be a formal one that involves specific steps or future-groups, or it can be an informal interaction among key people.[20] Kotter describes successful visioning as an "exercise of both the head and the heart, it takes some time, it always involves a group of people, and it is tough to do well."[21]

The Power of Shared Vision

While strategic vision provides the visual image of the future organization and environment, it is shared visions that provide the energy and power to make that vision a reality. According to Senge, a vision is truly shared when, "you and I have a similar picture and are committed to one another having it… we are connected, bound together by a common aspiration."[22] Shared vision within an organization is powerful, and through proper collaboration

and communication strategic leaders can build that bridge from an organizational vision statement to having an organization with a shared vision.

Developing a shared vision requires leaders to collaborate and communicate throughout the process.[23] Collaboration is important because not all good ideas come from the top. More importantly, by receiving input from throughout the organization, everyone has a vested interest in achieving the vision. The second step is communication. It is critical for strategic leaders to continuously communicate the vision clearly and regularly to members of the organization to gain and maintain support, provide focus, and generate energy. Kotter recommends that leaders communicate the vision by a factor of ten, one hundred, or even one thousand.[24] Senge also recognizes the importance of leaders communicating their vision and calls that communication process *visionary leadership*.[25] The key to visionary leadership is for leaders to regularly share their vision in such a way that it encourages others to develop their own personal visions, which in turn creates the shared vision and commitment by the organization's members.

Every leader, from the tactical to strategic levels of leadership, wants people who are dedicated, motivated, and committed to accomplishing the mission no matter how difficult the conditions. In essence, we want people who are "work-horses." Based on my experience, personal vision and its association with shared vision and commitment, play a bigger role in developing work-horses than natural talent alone. Leaders often mistake what they believe is commitment by members of their organization for compliance. Compliant subordinates see the benefit of the organization's vision and will do what's expected of them to achieve it, but generally not more. However, when an individual's personal vision is in line with the organization's vision, they move from being compliant to being committed as they now feel responsible for making that vision a reality and will do everything they can to make it happen.[26]

Army Vision Recommendations

The entire discussion of a vision's importance, process, and power serves as the foundation for two key recommendations for developing people who are committed to the Army vision. Senior leaders face two significant challenges in achieving this. The first challenge is that many soldiers have never really thought seriously about their own personal goals or vision, so it is difficult for them to care deeply about their organization's vision. The second, and perhaps more difficult challenge, is to recruit soldiers based on the Army's vision, not based on promises of college tuition or learning computer skills.

To address these challenges the Army should formalize a process of *visionary leadership* that helps soldiers to articulate their own goals and vision, thus strengthening their commitment to the organization's vision. Leaders at every level play an important role in assisting subordinates to articulate their own personal goals and vision. One tool leaders can use to achieve this is a *goals book*.[27] A goals book is a very personalized tool that encourages the soldier, with a leader's assistance, to focus on their personal priorities and establish goals in such areas as personal, professional, educational, spiritual, and unit development; and then establish road maps to achieve these goals. This approach not only assists the soldier in shaping and bettering their own future, it also has the potential, as a critical element of the visioning process, to connect a soldier's personal vision to the organization's vision, thus creating a shared vision and a committed soldier. As pointed out in *Leadership That Matters*, leaders are responsible for the organization's vision. While they can't *sell* it, "leaders must create the conditions that enable others –followers- to make their own meaning."[28] Through effective communication and the use of tools such as a goals book, leaders can help soldiers make their own meaning and ultimately develop shared visions within their organizations. While developing a shared vision will always be an important leader responsibility, it could be made easier through a more effective Army recruiting campaign plan.

Since the beginning of the all-volunteer Army in the early 1970's, the Army has invested in five major recruiting campaigns, which focused mostly on individual benefits. The first was *Today's Army Wants to Join You,* followed in 1973 by *Join the People Who've Joined the Army*, which then evolved into *This is the Army*. In 1981 the Army launched its most successful recruiting campaign *Be All You Can Be,* which lasted for twenty years. It was replaced in 2001 by the *Army of One* campaign after the Army missed its recruiting goals three times after 1995.[29] While the goal of these recruiting campaigns was to motivate the target audience of eighteen to twenty-four year-olds to join the Army, these advertisements were not focused on recruiting soldiers based on the Army vision or its values that support the vision. Rather, they were focused on offering the target audience money for college and the opportunity to learn career skills.

The most recent Army recruiting campaign, *Army of One* is a perfect example of this self-centered recruiting approach. With its focus of appealing to a generational preference for individualism, the Army commercial betrays the very nature of what the Army is all about: working as a team to defend America's national interests.[30] Additionally, like the past advertisement campaigns it highlights career skills and college tuition, not the Army's vision or its associated values. According to the advertisement agency, Leo Burnett, "To sell the product,

you have to make it more attuned to their [target audience] values and lifestyles…"[31] The former Army Secretary Louis Caldera explains, "They [recruits] are going to get the ethic of selfless service, duty, honor, and country in basic training and in every unit they're assigned to."[32]

Through years of personal experience and having talked to hundreds of soldiers about their personal goals and reasons for joining the Army, I am convinced that the Army recruiting campaigns just discussed significantly influenced young people to join the Army for college tuition or learning job skills. Only a very small number of soldiers indicated they joined the Army based on its vision or values. Recruiting soldiers based on the Army vision enhances the process of connecting soldiers' personal goals to the organization's goals, which is important in today's fast-paced environment. Therefore, Army leaders need to recruit future soldiers based on the Army vision and values by emulating the Marine Corps' recruiting campaign. While the Marines recruiting advertisements have changed over the years, the message has remained constant with respect to values, "if you have what it takes, we will make you a Marine."[33]

The Army leadership appears to be moving in this direction with the new *Army Strong* campaign. This campaign emphasizes physical, emotional, and mental strength and invites America's young men and women to join a strong organization with strong values.[34] According to Army Secretary Francis J. Harvey, "We're just moving on to a new campaign which, quite frankly, I believe characterizes what the Army is all about."[35] Recruiting soldiers based on the Army's vision and values builds on this paper's earlier recommendation to use goals books to bring soldiers' personal vision in line with the Army vision, thus making the process of creating shared vision within the organization an easier one.

Leading Change

If you don't like change, you will like irrelevance even less.

—General Eric Shinseki

The second critical competency for successful strategic leadership is the ability to lead change. If the Army is to remain *relevant and ready* in accordance with its vision, then we must develop strategic leaders who are capable of proactively leading their organizations in a rapidly changing environment. According to FM 22-100, "…the Army, inspired by strategic leaders, must innovate and create change."[36] However, today's leaders are faced with a tremendous challenge as they are confronted with two sources of change. The first is internal change that organizations have always faced, and the second is external change based on globalization, over which no one has complete control.[37] To effectively lead change in this chaotic global

environment, strategic leaders must understand the process for leading change, how to create an organizational culture that encourages and embraces change, and recognize their own personal preferences that can potentially hinder their ability to lead change.

The Process of Leading Change

Strategic leaders must be proactive, flexible, and adaptive, but more importantly, they must understand the process of successfully leading their organizations through this global environment. FM 22-100 lays out an eight-stage process for leading an organization through change that it borrowed from John P. Kotter, a business professor at Harvard University.[38] According to Kotter, successful change is based on one important insight: major change will not happen easily for a number of reasons.[39] Therefore, he lays out a process that strategic leaders can follow to help guide them through the many obstacles that can derail their efforts to effectively lead change.

The eight steps of this process are: establishing a sense of urgency by showing both the benefits and the necessity for change; creating a guiding coalition with enough power to lead the change; developing a vision and strategy to direct the change and achieve the vision; communicating the vision throughout the organization; empowering a broad base of people to reduce obstacles and encourage risk-taking; generating short-term wins to validate the programs and keep the vision credible; consolidating the gains made and producing more change; and finally, anchoring the change in the organizational culture to ensure that the organization remains future focused.[40] The first four steps are meant to break down the hardened status quo and pave the way for change. Steps five through seven introduce the new change to the organization, and step eight ensures that the change is imbedded in the organizational culture for long-term success.[41] Step number eight is critical for long-term success, as the wrong type of culture can be a strong force in resisting change.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture consists of the “shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize the larger institution.”[42] Unlike organizational climate, which can change easily and quickly based on a leader’s personality, culture is longer lasting and more difficult to change. Culture defines the boundaries of what is acceptable behavior, shapes how individuals approach problems, and influences the behavior of subordinates when they are faced with unique situations.[43] In today’s rapidly changing environment, an organization with a culture resistant to change is an organization that will surely fail. Most large organizations have found that innovation is the key to survival, and that continuous adaptation is what keeps them ahead

of competitors.[44] For the military, this concept of staying ahead of the competition takes on a special significance, as our choice can be clear, "adapt or die."[45] If the Army is to succeed in today's environment, strategic leaders must create an organizational culture that embraces change in innovative and adaptive ways.

The challenge in creating a culture that embraces change in innovative and adaptive ways is not in convincing our young soldiers. They get it, as demonstrated by their ability to adapt and innovate daily in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. The challenge is for our strategic leaders to change the Army culture at the upper echelons of our Institutional and Operational Army, from a culture of bureaucratic efficiency to one that embraces adaptive behavior by supporting creativity and innovation. The Army can make improvements in developing this culture by making efforts to, "push cultural changes to encourage rather than discourage the process of innovation."[46] The key is to develop a culture that encourages, fosters and rewards intellectual curiosity. While this sounds easy, shifting from a bureaucratic mindset to a more open and flexible mindset requires senior leaders to make major changes in their willingness to accept risk.

The Army has a dual nature; it is a hierarchical bureaucracy and a vocational profession.[47] The strategic leader's challenge is to "keep these two internal natures in proper proportion, with profession predominant over bureaucracy."[48] By nature, bureaucracies are generally counter to innovation and adaptation, as bureaucracies focus on efficiency versus effectiveness. They value repetitive situations where work is done following administrative rules and procedures, process and structure are over-valued, and subordinates are closely supervised.[49] In contrast, a culture that encourages adaptation and innovation is one that is willing to take risks and tolerate ambiguity.[50] Senior Leaders must be willing to let subordinates take prudent risks and experience failure without damaging their careers. In some cases they should even reward failure as part of the process of innovation, if we expect to create an organizational culture of innovation and creativity.

Self-awareness in Leading Change

Senior leaders' greatest challenge to leading change may not lie in understanding the processes for leading change, or even in creating an organizational culture that is receptive to change. Rather, the greatest challenge in leading change may actually be in recognizing personal limitations for adapting to change based on one's personality type. Essentially a leader needs to be self aware.

Self-awareness is an important aspect in a leader's ability to lead change. Most Army officers have taken the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment at least once in their careers; some have taken it multiple times while attending various Service Schools. The MBTI's purpose and value are to: "help you gain a greater understanding of yourself and others and the impact personality type has on your daily interactions."[51] From a self-awareness perspective, understanding your personality type can help you recognize and reduce potential blind spots. As discussed in the book *Type Talk At Work*, most people are well intentioned. They consider themselves open-minded when it comes to staying on top of our fast-changing world, but "dealing with change can be very difficult for certain personality types."[52]

According to typological theory, individuals develop preferences early in life, preferences that carry into adulthood. Additionally, "the more we practice those preferences - intentionally or unintentionally - the more we rely on them with confidence and strength."[53] Using the MBTI assessment of the U.S. Army War College class of 2007, which is statistically consistent with previous classes, the most common personality preferences among senior Army leaders are: introversion, sensing, thinking, and judging (ISTJ), followed by extraversion, sensing, thinking, and judging (ESTJ), which in total makes up about 50% of the class.[54]

The significance of these statistics on leading change is that these two personality types are the least receptive to change. According to Kroeger's research, the dominant leadership type, Thinking-Judging (TJ), is the personality type least capable of dealing with change.[55] Thinkers and Judgers, whether introverts or extraverts, prefer to control their environment, they like things orderly and well planned and have difficulty coping when things do not go as planned.[56] Their life is driven by structure, schedule, and order. While these preferences make them excellent leaders at getting things accomplished, they do not lend themselves to creating an environment for effectively leading change. As discussed earlier, to successfully lead change leaders must be willing to loosen the reigns of control, live with ambiguity, and accept levels of non-conformity. Margret Wheatley captured the essence of this challenge when she stated that in todays rapidly changing environment leaders must "…learn to tolerate unprecedented levels of 'messiness' at the edges."[57] The process of change is rarely neat or orderly and attempts to over-control it will ultimately destroy the initiative necessary to lead an organization through change.

Fortunately, personality type is not so rigid that we are incapable of using our non-preferences in particular situations, whether in accepting risk as part of leading change or just in loosening the reigns of control. To overcome unwelcome rigidity, senior leaders need to become self aware and know what their preferences are and how that affects their decision-

making. To create that self-awareness the Army should adopt a formal process to ensure that all leaders, beginning at the company-grade level, take a personality-type test like the Myers Briggs and then educate these leaders on how their personality type affects their decision-making. This will develop more self-aware leaders with fewer blind spots. The Army War College and the Center for Creative Leadership both have excellent programs that educate leaders on the meaning of their personality types. These programs could easily be offered at the Captains Career Course and Staff Colleges. Since understanding your personality type is only one component of self-awareness, this paper will now examine another aspect of leader self-awareness - 360-degree feedback.

Interpersonal Skills

> While the vast majority of Army officers demonstrate admirable leadership in OIF and elsewhere, Army leader education, training development, and selection processes, have not yet ensured that all field grade and general officers possess the interpersonal skills required to apply optimally their strong tactical and technical skills.[58]
>
> —Leadership Lessons at Division Command Level-2004

The most critical strategic-leader competency, the one that makes all the others a reality, is the strategic leader's interpersonal skills. While interpersonal skills are important at every level of leadership - direct, organizational, and strategic - the strategic level presents unique challenges. Not only are responsibilities and authorities greater at the strategic level, strategic leaders deal internally with many diverse groups and spend a significant amount of their time operating externally when interacting with outside agencies, government organizations, and even foreign governments.[59] Strategic leaders can't rely on directive leadership alone but are forced to use their ability to influence, build consensus, and negotiate. According to the *Strategic Leadership Primer*, "strategic leader interpersonal competencies include the ability to build consensus within the organization, the ability to negotiate with external agencies or organizations in an attempt to shape or influence the external environment, and the ability to communicate internally and externally."[60] While these are important competencies, they are the product of possessing strong interpersonal skills. Hence, this paper will focus on the *process* of developing interpersonal skills and make recommendations on how the Army can better develop them throughout a leader's career.

Developing Strong Interpersonal Skills

While few would argue with the importance of strategic leaders possessing these interpersonal competencies of consensus building, negotiating, and communicating, the Army does not effectively develop or assess the entire range of a leader's interpersonal skills early in their careers. The importance of interpersonal skills at the strategic level cannot be overstated. In his 2006 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee General John Abizaid highlighted the need for strong interpersonal skills in conducting Theater Security Cooperation (TSC). According to General Abizaid, TSC improves interoperability with U.S. forces, assists in professionalizing regional military forces, improves intelligence and information sharing, and "most importantly, fosters the personal relationships between U.S. military personnel and their counterparts in partner countries that are central to building the trust and confidence needed between allies when they fight as partners…"[61] Likewise, General Zinni compared his experience as the CENTCOM commander to that of being a diplomat, which most often involved interpersonal skills versus war-fighting skills.[62]

The challenge the Army faces in developing strategic leaders with strong interpersonal skills, who can effectively act as diplomats, is that there is little training or education to develop these interpersonal skills early in a leader's career. Leaders are often left on their own to develop these skills based on their own perceptions, or in some best case scenarios, a senior leader mentors them. The Army lacks a formal process to evaluate and assess leader's interpersonal skills, and how those skills affect the performance of their organization. The result is that all too often leaders with a modicum of interpersonal skills rise to the strategic level, where they undoubtedly struggle.

There are ways, however, to not only assist leaders in developing these interpersonal skills, but also to ensure that leaders without the requisite skills don't advance. We generally recognize leaders who posses strong interpersonal skills as effective team-builders who are respected not only by their superiors, but also by their peers and subordinates. To develop and promote leaders with strong interpersonal skills, the Army should replace the top-down Officer Evaluation system with one that is more holistic. To accomplish this objective, this paper will explain why the Army should develop a formal process for integrating mandatory command climate assessments into leader evaluations and develop an integrated system for behavioral development and feedback, such as the 360-degree performance feedback assessment.

Command Climate and 360-Degree Leader Feedback

FM 22-100 describes climate as the environment of units and organizations, and few would argue the importance of a positive command climate on an organization.[63] For civilian organizations a positive climate translates into increased productivity, and for a military organization a positive command climate translates into improved performance at tactical operations.[64] While overall command climate and organizational effectiveness is a collective process, the leader "exercises considerable influence on organizational climate… [and] the leadership process is a key contributor to organizational effectiveness and morale."[65] While command climate is so important to an organization's effectiveness and overall well-being, and good leadership is the key to achieving it, our current evaluation system does a poor job in linking the two.

There have been disturbing trends in command climate going all the way back to the 1970's that continue today because, "the existing climate includes persistent overtones of selfish behavior that places personal success ahead of the good of the service; looking upward to please superiors instead of looking downward to fulfill legitimate needs of subordinates…"[66] The current Officer Evaluation Reporting (OER) system is a top-down driven process where the rated officer needs only to impress his superiors to succeed. And while effective at assessing mission accomplishment, "[the OER] does not provide the Army an evaluation of an officer's ability to lead a unit or organization in a way that fosters cohesion, teamwork and long-term health of the unit."[67] In other words, individual leader performance is placed ahead of long-term organizational effectiveness and command climate. To succeed within the current system one must be a good performer who impresses the boss, but not necessarily good at taking care of people or the well being of the organization. Lieutenant General (Ret) Theodore Stroup, a former Army G-1, compares measuring a leader's individual performance and determining a unit's command climate to that of an iceberg: "It's easy to see what floats above the water and to miss the true scope of what lies below."[68] To fix these disturbing trends related to command climate, the Army should update Army Regulation 600-20, *Army Command Policy*, and the OER, to make command climate surveys part of a leaders overall evaluation process. By doing so, the Army will encourage leaders to care for the well being of their organizations and will weed-out self-serving leaders with a dearth of interpersonal skills long before they become strategic leaders.

FM 22-100 states that strategic leaders must asses their strategic environment, and as part of that assessment they "must first asses themselves: their leadership style, strengths and weaknesses, and their fields of excellence."[69] Self-awareness is critical for a leader to identify

personal development needs, but as research has continually demonstrated, people are not good at assessing their own behavior. We all have bias and personal perceptions of what we are as leaders, our strengths and weaknesses. Since a "leader's self-perception is often not congruent with ratings from either followers or peers, 360-degree assessments that include self, subordinates, peers and superiors are critical to leader development."[70]

To increase self-awareness the Army should formalize 360-degree Leadership Feedback Programs (LFP), like the ones conducted at the U.S. Army War College or the Center for Creative Leadership, early in a leader's development so they gain an accurate assessment of their attributes, as well as interpersonal strengths and weaknesses. This feedback program can be done at the tactical to strategic level. Some Special Operations Units already have 360-degree feedback programs in place at the tactical level. Emulating these programs in conventional units can be done easily with little cost in time or resources. In addition to providing the individual leader valuable feedback for self-awareness and self-development, a 360-degree feedback program, if used properly, can provide senior-raters valuable insights to a rated officer's true performance. This would achieve a more holistic leader evaluation process that could replace the top-down OER, or at a minimum, incorporate the 360-degree evaluation into an officer's overall performance report. By doing so, leaders will not only have to impress their bosses, but they will also have to "gain the respect of their peers and genuinely lead, rather than drive, their subordinates."[71]

The advantages of including command climate surveys and 360-degree assessments into a leader's overall performance evaluation are tremendous. First, it will directly contribute to the command climate, effectiveness, and overall combat readiness of the organization. Second, it will help focus leaders early in their careers on what's truly important about leadership - organizational effectiveness and organizational well-being - not the leader's individual performance. Third, it will assist senior-raters in identifying self-serving leaders early in their careers so that these leaders can be trained or separated from the service. And finally, the Army will develop, not by chance but by design, strategic leaders with strong interpersonal skills who can succeed in today's global environment.

Conclusion

Of the twenty-one strategic level leader competencies there are three that this paper identifies as having the greatest impact on successful strategic leadership in today's rapidly changing globally interconnected environment: visioning, leading change, and interpersonal skills. Through visioning, strategic leaders set the long-term course for their organizations, and

through visionary leadership they build the commitment needed by the organization's members to achieve that vision. By understanding the dynamics of leading change, they continuously and successfully transform their organizations to meet and shape the rapidly changing strategic environment. Finally, successful strategic leaders use their well-developed interpersonal skills to not only build cohesive teams internally, but to successfully influence external organizations through communication, negotiation, and consensus building.

If soldiers are the heart of the Army and non-commissioned officers are the backbone, then strategic leaders are the gray-matter that brings the entire body together as a fluid, synergistic, and powerful element prepared not only to deal with the future but also to shape it. But if the Army expects to develop strategic leaders who are capable of successfully leading the Army through the future strategic environment, then the current training and leader development process needs to be more balanced in developing all the leader skill domains: technical, tactical, interpersonal and conceptual. The goal is to develop senior leaders whose conceptual and interpersonal skills are as finely tuned as their technical and tactical skills. To achieve this, the paper advocated that the Army should: strengthen the visioning process through the use of goals books and by recruiting soldiers based on the Army vision and values; develop more self-aware leaders with strong interpersonal skills by educating leaders on how personality-type affects decision making; create a culture that embraces change in innovative and adaptive ways; replace the top-down Officer Evaluation system with one that is more holistic by integrating mandatory command climate assessments into leader evaluations; and, develop an integrated system for behavioral development and feedback, such as the 360-degree performance feedback assessment.

Endnotes

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