

# Strategy Research Project

## Talent Management

by

Colonel Douglas Stitt  
United States Army



United States Army War College  
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# USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Colonel Douglas Stitt  
United States Army

Dr. George Woods  
Project Adviser

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



## **ABSTRACT**

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## TALENT MANAGEMENT

All organizations now say routinely, “People are our greatest asset.” Yet few practice what they preach, let alone truly believe it.

—Peter Drucker<sup>1</sup>

The operational environment of the 21st century calls for a different kind of war. Retired British General officer Rupert Smith outlines what such a conflict may look like in his work, “*The Utility of Force*.” General Smith describes a new type of war, a war not between the forces of nation states, but a conflict of people. Smith speaks of war as “the reality in which the people in the streets and houses and fields—all the people, anywhere— are the battlefield.”<sup>2</sup> The objectives of this new war align with individuals or groups, not states.<sup>3</sup> Two important aspects of this type of war are an omnipresent media, bringing the fight home to any screen anywhere in the world. The other is the temporal characteristic of conflict, where time is almost suspended until conditions are met, vice the defeat of a static enemy.<sup>4</sup> The requirements to set these conditions may necessitate years and decades. Rupert Smith’s description of the future environment and the type of conflict conducted within this environment, in turn requires a strategy and a land force capable of operating in this milieu. In the U.S. Army War College’s lexicon the “VUCA” environment of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity is an apt description of the environmental framework for this type of war.<sup>5</sup> This “VUCA” environment and future conflict described by Rupert Smith requires a strategy and land force capable of operating in this milieu.

Recently the National Command Authority of the United States released its Defense Strategic guidance. The President of the United States’ opening commentary to the strategic guidance highlighted the need to move the military through a period of

transition while simultaneously focusing national efforts to build the strength and viability of the United States economy.<sup>6</sup> President Obama, as the Commander in Chief, directed the development of a defense enterprise which meets the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century but also aligns itself within the fiscal constraints of the struggling United States economy.

The strategic review answers President Obama's requirement by providing a defense strategy focused primarily on transitioning from the conduct of today's COIN-focused campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan and preparing for the challenges of tomorrow.<sup>7</sup> A prime factor in the Department of Defense's ability to transform also rests on its ability to "rebalance and reform, and support the national security imperative of deficit reduction through a lower level of defense spending."<sup>8</sup> The strategic document outlines the primary missions of the United States Armed Forces and caveats the requirement for a range of capabilities required to accurately and effectively understand and operate within the current strategic environment. Therefore, there is an operational necessity for agility, flexibility, and versatility within the Defense enterprise to accomplish a broad array of missions, ranging from humanitarian and disaster relief to power projection in order to conduct conventional operations.<sup>9</sup> Further underlying the strategy is the requirement for the Department of Defense to continue to cut costs and find efficiencies, including manpower, in order to create a force supportable by our nation's finances.<sup>10</sup>

The broad range of missions is compatible with the environment of future conflict described by Rupert Smith. One of the implied principles outlined in the strategy is the requirement for a smaller force, one comprised of individuals who possess a wide

sphere of talent and skills to meet these challenges. The United States Army's portion of this strategy must support the accomplishment of the overall strategy and nest with the concepts and missions outlined by the Department of Defense. The Army leadership must in turn develop a smaller and viable human force mix to meet the nation's strategic end state.

In his "*Marching Orders*", General Raymond Odierno, the Chief of Staff of the United States Army (CSA), outlined his intent to successfully operate within the complexities of the current and future environments while reducing the force within fiscal constraints placed upon the Army.<sup>11</sup> General Odierno's intent is to: 1) win the current fight; 2) develop a versatile mix of capabilities, formations, and equipment; 3) preserve our high quality All-Volunteer Force; 4) foster a continued commitment to the Army Profession; and, 5) continue to adapt our leader development programs.<sup>12</sup> He posited that vital to downsizing the force was the manner in which the United States reduces its force while retaining personnel with the qualities and capabilities earned over the past 10 years of conflict.<sup>13</sup> Retaining these quality personnel while simultaneously executing personnel cuts is a challenging proposition.

The five priorities provided by the CSA requires leaders to execute these missions within the framework of fiscal constraints and intricacies of the twenty-first century strategic environment. General Odierno stated that the Army, "must develop leaders who are adaptable and flexible in solving complex problems."<sup>14</sup> The CSA's requirement to develop adaptable and flexible leaders, capable of operating in a complex environment and accomplishing a broad sphere of missions with a smaller force, calls for a new leadership management approach. A way to transform its current

approach is through the application of a common business practice known as “talent management.”

There is a demonstrated link between successful global corporations and their application and use of talent management practices. Incorporating aspects of talent management practices may provide the United States Army the requisite ways to retain its competitive advantage in the complex and uncertain twenty-first century security environment.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the concept of talent management as a way for the United States Army to manage its officer corps and set the conditions for success in the twenty-first century. Exploring the civilian sector first demonstrates current and successful talent management strategies and systems in place. Examination of the current United States Army officer management policies demonstrates a requirement to study the possible inclusion of several talent management concepts used in the corporate world. Thus a hybrid system is then achieved, building on current officer management principles and policies, while including some of the current use of talent management practices.

#### What is Talent Management and How Does Business Utilize This Concept?

In an ends, ways and means framework, talent management is a way successful companies and corporations maintain their competitive advantage in the global economic commons. Competitive advantage is the “what” that distinguishes one business from its competition. Competitive advantage is what businesses strive to achieve over their competitors. This section of the paper provides: a definition of talent management; the direct, senior level corporate leadership involvement in talent

management; and the necessity to connect talent management and corporate strategy in order to achieve successful business outcomes and obtain competitive advantage.

Talent management is a field within current business literature and its use throughout corporate America describes many aspects of human resource management. The meaning of talent management is subject to debate and interpretation:

A casual review of the trade and popular literature on the topic of “talent management” (TM) would certainly lead one to conclude it is a popular and growing field...Given the number of consulting firms engaging in talent management and the growing number of articles and books on the topic, one might also believe “talent management” to be a well-defined area of practice supported by extensive research and a core set of principles.<sup>15</sup>

There are many definitions for talent management, ranging from “the strategic set of integrated business processes which manage the planning, acquisition, development, retention and advancement of talent to achieve business goals and optimize performance”<sup>16</sup> to “managing the supply, demand, and flow of talent through the human capital engine.”<sup>17</sup> The processes of TM cover a gamut of functions within a business:<sup>18</sup>

- leader development
- career planning
- development of high potential employees
- performance management
- succession planning
- learning and training
- competency management
- retention

- professional development

For inclusion in this paper, a simpler definition of TM, “ensuring the right person is in the right job at the time,” sets the conditions for understanding why the concept of talent management is important in the current business environment.<sup>19</sup>

Driven by a fundamental purpose to make a profit, the business community understands the importance of the human dimension’s impact on their daily operations:

In today’s interconnected economy..., the spread of technology has made the human side of enterprise more important than ever. When companies can knock each other off with greater ease and speed..., then their enduring source of competitive advantage will be found not in goods and services, but in their collective brain power. Businesses thriving today are able to tap their human potential in the most productive manner are the ones who enjoying enduring success.<sup>20</sup>

The above comment places a premium on the ability of a corporate entity to maintain its competitive advantage through its ability to successfully leverage the human aspects of its organization. Viewing human resource management as a premium part of their corporate body, employees assume the qualities of a capital asset that can and should be "valued and developed, not a resource who should be consumed."<sup>21</sup> The business world operates in a global, "VUCA" environment similar to the United States military and must also manage its resources efficiently. Businesses face challenges similar to the United States Army in regards to people, both organizations have a requirement to recruit, retain, train, and develop their personnel. The pace and rapidity of globalization makes achieving and retaining a competitive advantage a decisive part of any business entity. Dr. Marijn Dekkers, CEO of pharmaceutical giant Bayer, stated:

What is interesting and what is changing is that among Western companies, the ability to hire, develop and retain talent in the developing economies has become a major point of competitive differentiation.<sup>22</sup>

The fundamental concept of placing the right people, in the right job, at the right time is vital to attaining differentiation and ultimate success.

There is a direct correlation between effective talent management and the success of a business:

A 2007 study from the Hackett Group found companies that excel at managing talent post earnings that are 15 percent higher than peers. For an average *Fortune* 500 company, such an improvement in performance means hundreds of millions of dollars.<sup>23</sup>

IBM research found public companies that are more effective at talent management had higher percentages of financial outperformers than groups of similar sized companies with less effective talent management.<sup>24</sup>

Research indicates that corporations who integrate and utilize talent management have higher performance and outputs. A *Fortune* survey conducted in 2011 listed the top twenty-five companies for grooming talent. The list includes global giants such as: IBM; General Mills; Procter & Gamble; Aditya Birla, a multinational Indian conglomerate; and Colgate-Palmolive. The known success of these companies on a global scale is a direct benefit of their use of talent management.<sup>25</sup>

Talent management, putting the right people in the right place at the right time, provides a proven competitive advantage in the global corporate commons. Looking at personnel and changing the name of the human resource department to the talent management directorate is not enough. Two key components to successfully implementing and executing talent management to achieve competitive advantage and success are senior leader involvement in talent management and linking corporate strategy and talent management practices.

High priority for talent management is imperative for its effectiveness. Several top corporate executives state unequivocally that talent management starts from the top

with direct, senior level involvement. David Cote, CEO of Honeywell, shared his insights on his role in the practice of talent management: “I personally spend a great deal of time on it (talent management). For example, I review the performance of our top 200 people three times a year.”<sup>26</sup> Honeywell, a global force in products spanning the aerospace, defense, and industrial technology, is a top performer listed in recent Forbes magazine survey of the top 2000 global corporations.<sup>27</sup> A 2006 study of twenty corporate leaders of global firms with at least one billion dollars in annual revenue revealed the following:

All 20 corporate leaders interviewed for the study said that talent management is their responsibility. Of the 18 chief executive officers (CEOs) and two chief operating officers (COOs) interviewed, seven say they spend 30–50% of their working time on talent management, and a further seven executives estimate their time commitment to be about 20%, a substantial percentage, given a top executive’s crowded agenda.<sup>28</sup>

Tom Wilson, the Chief Operating Officer of the insurance giant, Allstate Corporation, also made Forbes Top 2000 list. He stated “effective talent management starts at the top and talent management is his priority.”<sup>29</sup> Jack Welch, former General Electric CEO indicated that he spent approximately 50 percent of his day on people.<sup>30</sup> Effective talent management has emphasis and leadership from the top of the organization.

Leadership involvement is a key component, but involvement alone does not provide for the successful conduct of the practice of talent management. The other key component is the link between talent management practice and business strategy.

Linking the strategy of a corporation to its talent management practices serves as the connector from corporate vision to human execution. Life itself is a human endeavor and if there is not a direct and tangible link between the human domain of an organization and its overall strategy then such a strategy may not be successful. A



direct linkage between talent management practices and corporate strategy are "not just a requirement for success but a necessity."<sup>31</sup> General Electric's corporate strategy includes their ability to "attract, recruit, develop and deploy the right people" to lead and direct those TM portions of their strategy.<sup>32</sup> Procter and Gamble sees "business decisions and talent decisions as one."<sup>33</sup> A study by the Aberdeen Group "showed that best-in-class organizations are 34 percent more likely to connect succession management strategies with organizational strategies."<sup>34</sup> The impact and effect of the linkage between talent management and strategy is important. A 2011 study entitled "Six Principles of Effective Global Talent Management", conducted by the researchers from INSEAD<sup>35</sup>, Cornell, and Cambridge universities looked at 33 top performing corporations and identified the link between corporate strategy and talent management as the number one principle these successful firms utilize to effectively implement talent management and sustain their business' competitive advantage.<sup>36</sup> Senior leadership involvement in talent management and linking talent management to strategic business planning set the conditions for an organization to attain a competitive advantage and achieve profits.

### Should the United States Army Implement Talent Management?

Corporations demonstrate that talent management provides them a competitive advantage. Is there a similar need within the United States Army to attain a competitive advantage and consider adaptation of talent management practices to manage its officer corps? In an August 1991 article in *McKinsey Quarterly*, David H. McCormick, a former Army officer, argued there was a need for the Army to change its personnel policies because in the war for talent, the U.S. military was losing. McCormick described this talent fight as "a battle to recruit and retain officers and enlisted

personnel who have the intellectual flexibility, technical abilities, and communications skills needed today.”<sup>37</sup> McCormick stated that if the United States Army did not change its human resource approach, it could lose the war on talent.<sup>38</sup>

McCormick made these statements prior to the events of 9/11 and the subsequent ten years of conflict. However, his remarks are prescient and prophetic to describe today’s environment. The defense enterprise and United States Army experienced a period of significant personnel growth, from approximately 490 thousand in 2001 to its current size of 570 thousand today. The January 2012 Department of Defense budget request stated that within the construct of the nation’s current strategic environment and fiscal realities, the Army would return to a total end-strength back of 490 thousand.<sup>39</sup> The CSA’s *Marching Orders* outlined the requirement to provide this smaller force with agile and adaptive leaders who successfully operate in the complexities of the twenty-first century environment.<sup>40</sup> The issue is whether or not the current Army system for managing its officer corps is able to accomplish this task.

According to statements from senior Department of Defense and Army leaders, the answer is a resounding no. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated this emphatically to an audience of future officers at West Point. He said, “how can the Army break-up the institutional concrete, its bureaucratic rigidity in its assignments and promotion processes, in order to retain, challenge, and inspire its best, brightest and most battle-tested young officers to lead the service in the future?”<sup>41</sup>

Secretary of the Army John McHugh echoed similar sentiments in his opening remarks to the Association of the United States Army’s annual convention in October, 2011. He discussed a recent survey of Army institutions and processes, “65 percent of

active duty General Officers rated personnel management as one of the worst performing functions in the Army. As one General noted, Human Capital management is the most important, yet the least agile system.”<sup>42</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, initiated a similar survey of Army systems and received the following feedback, “fix personnel management...need a major course correction...we need to put the person back in personnel management.”<sup>43</sup>

The feedback from senior leaders indicates a mounting frustration with the current officer personnel management system and a need for change. Talent management practices provide a potential way to meet the force requirements outlined in a current Army strategic guidance. Implementation of talent management practices into the current officer management system requires an initial overview of how the Army currently manages its officer population.

#### The Current Army Officer System

The Army Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) characterizes itself as “an evolutionary system that balances the needs of the Army with the aspirations and developmental requirements of the entire officer corps.”<sup>44</sup> A fundamental characteristic of OPMS is flexibility. The inherent flexibility enables the system to remain responsive to the needs of branches, requirements, and the individual officer. OPMS bases its requirements upon several sub-factors: strength management; the number of officer authorizations and assignments based upon current Army requirements; United States policy and code; and the budget. Strength management is the raw, numeric comparison of officer requirements compared to officers assigned.

The other half of the system is filling actual officer assignments. Assignments derive from a centralized system of requirements provided in the Army Manning

Guidance. The most recent Army Manning Guidance, published in December 2010, outlines a requirement to “establish Active Component (AC) manning priorities, manning goals and responsibilities at all levels for the accomplishment of these goals.”<sup>45</sup> The manning guidance lays out a priority of personnel fill to units, emphasizing support to those units who are deploying or are in the process of preparing to deploy. The guidance further stipulates the system assumes risk in not fully manning units, “in the Generating Force, units not designated as “Priority Missions,” and units not in designated Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) force pools.”<sup>46</sup> The ARFORGEN process is the Army’s synchronization of personnel, equipment, and unit training “through progressive levels of unit readiness over time to produce trained, ready, and cohesive units prepared for operational deployment.”<sup>47</sup> The manning guidance weights the priority of assignments to units currently involved in deployment or contingency operations at the expense of those units not projected to deploy.

The prioritization arises because there are not enough officer personnel in the Army inventory to fill all of its available positions. The Department of the Army (DA) manning guidance states the “current manning environment precludes Army Human Resource Command (HRC) from manning all authorizations to the documented grade and skill.”<sup>48</sup> HRC is the Army’s executive agent for the manning guidance. The manning guidance tasks the HRC Commander to man the Army to its highest level and provide a measure of equilibrium between the needs of Soldiers, Families, and the Army.<sup>49</sup>

Army regulatory guidance for officer assignments, contained in Army Regulation 614-100, *Officer Assignments*, stresses three factors. The first factor is Army

requirements, individual availability for assignment and professional development.<sup>50</sup> The second factor is the individual's overseas tour considerations, training, and educational background.<sup>51</sup> The third factor is the officer's personal or compassionate reasons.<sup>52</sup> This same regulation further outlines that the assignment of officers exists under the auspices of OPMS and the end result of the system is "to place the right officer in the right job at the right time."<sup>53</sup> Army officer management regulations align with a core facet of talent management. Implementing some precepts of talent management, currently providing distinct competitive advantage to those organizations who utilize the concept in the corporate world, can also assist the United States Army in retaining its competitive advantage in the twenty-first century security environment.

#### How to Implement Talent Management in the United States Army

Implementing talent management practices into Army officer management requires two assumptions. The first assumption is based on the laws and policies concerning officer management and the second concerns current Information Technology (IT) support. These two assumptions are in place to provide a start point for planning purposes and underpin the implementation of talent management practices into the current Army officer personnel management construct.

The first assumption is that current legislation affecting the officer corps, specifically Chapters 32 and 36 of Title 10 United States Code, will not alter significantly and, in turn, cause noteworthy changes to current Army regulatory guidance governing officer management. These two chapters within Title 10 set career time limits, establish promotion zones, establish caps on the number of personnel allowed at each grade, and set competitive career categories. The legislative guidelines in turn create inflexibility in the system from arising from fixed, 30 year career timelines, fixed

promotion eligibility zones, capping the number of officer personnel at a specific grade and the establishment of competitive year groups.<sup>54</sup> Given the focus on the operational drawdown and necessity to retain agile and adaptive leader, there is an opportunity to investigate pursuing legislative reform. However, receiving legislative approval and amending this law prior to the initiation of the officer drawdown is unlikely. Inflexibility of the current system remains an assumption in implementing talent management practices within the Army.

The second assumption is that the Army’s ability to successfully implement any talent management system requires a sufficient information technology (IT) backbone to support and underpin its efforts. The Army is currently addressing this IT requirement through the Green Pages and the Integrated Personnel and Pay System, Army (IPPS-A). The intent of the Green Pages is to provide “the right leader, [at the] right place, [at the] right time,” underpinning the fundamental definition of talent management.<sup>55</sup> The figure below demonstrates the integration of the Green Pages into a talent management construct for Army officer management.<sup>56</sup>



Figure 1: U.S. Army Green Pages Concept

The Green Pages is a web-based program, resembling current commercial systems such as Monster.Com, LinkedIn and PLAXO. The Green Pages provides a synthesized version of current Army requirements and job descriptions as well as an in-depth look at an officer's full spectrum of capabilities, hobbies, degrees, experiences and accomplishments.<sup>57</sup> Utilizing the Green Pages provides commanders and officers the ability to go on-line and review open requirements, review supporting job description, and express their interest in filling these positions. The Integrated Personnel and Pay System, Army (IPPS-A) supports Army strength management functions, and serves as a single "one stop shop" source for personnel functions.<sup>58</sup>

The integration of the Green Pages and IPPS-A provides the major officer manager stakeholders, the officer, the unit commander, and HRC a way to merge individual desires, command requirements, and Army priorities. The full implementation of the Green Pages and IPPS-A is ongoing and the combination of these two automated systems provides the sufficient IT backbone to support implementation of talent management practices for managing Army officers. The assumptions of the current officer management system remaining inflexible and the inclusion of an IT backbone to support talent management set the conditions for implementing talent management practices within the United States Army. The involvement of senior leaders, defining the link between talent management and Army strategy and refinement of operational commitments provide the way for implementing talent management.

The involvement of senior corporate leaders, CEOs and COOs in talent management is the first step for successful talent management implementation in the business community and retention of competitive advantage. Senior leaders within the

Army must take a similarly active and involved approach to implement talent management and retain the Army's competitive advantage with its officer corps. A way for senior leaders to do this is through the conduct of talent reviews within their respective posts, camps, and stations. Flag officers in command at the Army's posts, camps, and stations can hold and conduct quarterly or semi-annual talent reviews. The intent of the senior leaders' involvement is to review the personnel within their organization for identification of assignments, requirements or professional development. The incorporation of the IT backbone provides Army senior leaders the necessary visibility on current requirements within their organization and who is available and interested in filling them. A holistic look across the spectrum of the unit enables the senior leader to review requirements and see if there is available talent within the organization to fill the requirement or if the organization must turn to external sources to fill a requirement.

The talent review is not a "murder board"<sup>59</sup> prior to an Army directed promotion, school or command board. Senior Army leaders sit as the board president and participate in promotion and selection boards but not all senior leaders participate in every board. The talent review provides a way for senior leadership to directly inject themselves into the talent management practice, and as such, set the example and prioritize talent management for their organization and the Army.

Providing the truest assessment of the talent at our posts, camps and stations may in turn provide trust, transparency, and involvement into the current assignment process. Senior leaders can share the results of these talent reviews with HRC in order to facilitate their best assessment to fill requirements and determine which individuals



should go forward for further assignments and schools. This commitment of time and effort required by Army senior leaders to this task is significant. However, senior leader involvement within successful Fortune 500 companies shows that this commitment to talent management is a must in order to retain competitive advantage.

Senior leader involvement in talent management is critical to its implementation and similar to the corporate use of talent management practices. However, senior leader involvement alone cannot successfully implement and utilize talent management. A critical, second step is defining the link between talent management practices and Army strategy. The current Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Mr. Thomas Lamont, published the *Army Human Capital Strategy* in April 2010. The document's intent is to nest within the context of current Army, Joint, and Department of Defense strategic guidance.<sup>60</sup> The *Human Capital Strategy* outlines a complex and uncertain strategic environment with four strategic assumptions required for executing the strategy: 1) Maintain the all volunteer force; 2) Focus on today's conflicts while preparing for future contingencies; 3) Capability gaps require flexibility, adaptability, agility, and sustainability; 4) Talent competition exists in the future environment.<sup>61</sup> These assumptions require monitoring and potential reassessment if conditions change. However, these strategic assumptions establish a requirement for the United States Army to monitor talent as a condition for successfully executing its Human Capital strategy.

The inclusion of talent as a strategic assumption, in order for the Army to maintain its competitive advantage, is a critical component of the link between talent management practices and the overall Army strategy. The other key linkage is the

mission of the *Human Capital* strategy to, “build and shape an all volunteer Army that best meets the Nation’s demands both today and tomorrow at best value.”<sup>62</sup> The *Human Capital Strategy* lays out the complexities of the future environment, nests within current Department of Defense and Army strategies, places talent management as a key condition to operate within that environment. The *Human Capital Strategy* mission statement dictates an Army force in era of diminished budgetary resources. The *Human Capital Strategy* serves as a connecting point between talent management practices and the overall Army strategy. The second portion of the Human Capital Strategy describes how to utilize talent management practices to accomplish the mission.

In order to accomplish this mission there are six fundamental questions that require constant analysis and reframing in order to achieve the end-state:<sup>63</sup>

- How do we build and sustain the best organizational structure for the Army?
- How do we best acquire the right person?
- How do we best determine the right skills?
- How do we best determine the right place?
- How do we best establish the right time?
- How do we best develop Individual, Team, and Family resiliency?

The Army’s *Human Capital Strategy* outlines the above “enduring questions” as a way for continuous development, implementation and assessment of practices. The “right person, with the right skills, at the right place at the right time,” locks in the strategic linkage between talent management practices and strategy. The *Human Capital Strategy* sets the Army strategic conditions by stating the requirement to

institute core fundamentals of talent management practices in order to meet the end-state for the Army's personnel in the context of the current environment. Senior leader involvement and the *Human Capital Strategy* provide two fundamental conditions for successful implementation practices within the Army. The opportunity of today's environment provides the final condition to implement talent management practices.

The Army has a window of opportunity available to examine and implement talent management practices within its officer management system. Increased senior level involvement and linking talent management to Army strategy is a fundamental first step to successfully implement talent management practices. The final step is to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the current operational environment. The wind of opportunity provided to implement talent management practices has the potential to significantly impact the Army officer corps. The reduction of operational officer requirements, specifically those resulting from operational officer assignments in Transition Teams, Security Force Assistance Teams, Joint Manning Document positions for headquarters staffs, as well as Advise & Assist Brigade billets, provides an opportunity to thoroughly implement talent management prior to engagement in another protracted conflict. The elimination of these unforecasted operational requirements, the removal of combat forces from Iraq and the proposed withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Afghanistan, increases the pool of available officers to move to assignments that may appeal to their personal desires, capabilities, and skill sets. Seizing the opportunity now to implement talent management, with lower operational commitments, sets the conditions for ensuring the Army possesses the correct talent when the need arises to respond to increased operational demand.

## Conclusion

Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, stated to the West Point Corps of Cadets in 2011, “when it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right.”<sup>64</sup> General Rupert Smith emphasizes that the complex, ambiguous and uncertain environment of the next war is already appearing. Today’s business world is also a complex and volatile environment, similar to that which the U.S. Army is currently in and will face in the future. Talent management is a way that successful business’ attain and retain competitive advantage. People are the key success because people achieve success, not organizations. Putting the right person, in the right place, at the right time, sets the conditions for success and provides businesses their unique competitive advantage.

Successful corporations implement talent management through direct involvement at the top, through the CEO and COO. Senior leadership involvement and time is the key, first step for successful implementation. Another key to success is linking talent management and corporate strategy. The right person, in the right job, at the right time plays a critical role in achieving the corporate strategy. The success record for talent management practices for achieving competitive advantage in the global business commons may provide a viable way for the Army to achieve competitive advantage in the twenty-first century security environment.

Current Army leaders stress a need for the United States Army to adapt new personnel practices to mold a land force that is agile and adaptive in facing the complexities of the twenty-first century security environment. Talent management practices may provide a way for the United States Army to meet those demands.

Similar to corporate America, the senior leaders within the United States Army must commit to the implementation of talent management practices and become its advocates. The Assistant Secretary of the Army took a significant step when he introduced the *Army Human Capital Strategy*, codifying talent management practices as a requirement to meet the human capital end-state. Finally, the reduction in officer commitments in support of contingency operations provides a window of opportunity to the United States Army to successfully implement talent management and fully invest in its practices prior to another protracted conflict.

## Endnotes

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 20.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7.

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<sup>19</sup> Jackson and Schuler, 235, quoted in Lewis and Heckman

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<sup>59</sup> A murder board is a preparation technique used by Army officers to prepare for media interviews, testimony or briefings. A designated group of person(s) ask questions designed to replicate the topic and potential queries that may result from conversation.



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