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The need for developing Marine Corps leaders has existed since the Marine Corps' inception in 1775. In the more recent past Marine Corps leadership development programs have existed in some form since the writing of Navy/Marine Corps (NAVMC) 2795 USMC's Users Guide to Counseling dated 21 July 1986. Since then the Marine Corps has made several attempts to formalize and improve upon this doctrine, up to and including the most recent draft of Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1500.61 Marine Corps Leadership Development (MCLD). The Marine Corps' current attempt provides a senior leader some of the tools necessary to implement an effective leadership development program. However, the program falls short partially due to its weak foundational structure, built upon previous programs that have had mediocre success.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Marine Corps Leadership Development:
Needed or needs improvement?

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Major Tommy Mannino

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Executive Summary

Title: Marine Corps Leadership Development: Needed or needs improvement?

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Thesis: The Marine Corps' most current effort in establishing an effective leadership development doctrine does not meet its organizational outcomes because; it does not focus on the tenets of a successful formal mentoring program: mustering organizational support, clarifying purpose, expectations and roles, emphasis on choice and involvement, establishment of selection and matching procedures, and continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Discussion: The need for developing Marine Corps leaders has existed since the Marine Corps' inception in 1775. In the more recent past Marine Corps leadership development programs have existed in some form since the writing of Navy/Marine Corps (NAVMC) 2795 *USMC's Users Guide to Counseling* dated 21 July 1986. Since then the Marine Corps has made several attempts to formalize and improve upon this doctrine, up to and including the most recent draft of Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1500.61 *Marine Corps Leadership Development (MCLD)*. The Marine Corps' current attempt provides a senior leader some of the tools necessary to implement an effective leadership development program. However, the program falls short partially due to its weak foundational structure, built upon previous programs that have had mediocre success.

Conclusion: It is apparent that the Marine Corps sees an institutional value in developing leaders from within considering the concerted efforts to establish an effective doctrine over the past 28 years. However, these efforts are insufficient due to a lack in foundational structure, clearly stated objectives, and the tenets of an effective leadership development program.

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inception in 1775. In the more recent past Marine Corps leadership development programs have

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Guide to Counseling* dated 21 July 1986. Since then the Marine Corps has made several attempts

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draft of Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1500.61 *Marine Corps Leadership Development (MCLD).*

The Marine Corps' current attempt provides a senior leader some of the tools necessary to

implement an effective leadership development program. However, the program falls short

partially due to its weak foundational structure, built upon previous programs that have had

mediocre success. The Marine Corps' most current effort in establishing an effective leadership

development doctrine does not meet its organizational outcomes because it does not focus on the

tenets of a successful formal mentoring program: mustering organizational support, clarifying

purpose, expectations and roles, emphasizing choice and involvement, establishing selection and

matching procedures, and continuously monitoring and evaluating outcomes.

The assessment arises from a comparison of that latest effort against the best practices of

mentorship and leadership development programs, together with a survey based upon the 2014

MCLD MCO. We begin, however, with an overview of how formal leadership development and

mentoring has evolved, both in the civilian world and within the Marine Corps, together with a

definition of terms.

Formal mentorship programs did not gain popularity till the 1970s. With few exceptions,

the majority of existing programs prior to this point were informal and naturally occurring within

the work environment.[1] Most of these informal programs were limited to training programs and

scheduled job rotations, with most of the mentoring being performed by senior management who groomed juniors with high potential for advancement.[2] Over the decades, increased competition, new technologies requiring new skills, and the changing demographics of the workforce increased the frequency of these naturally occurring relationships and may have stimulated the need to institutionalize these informal programs in order to leverage their benefits.[3]

These formal programs differ from the informal programs of the previous decades through the oversight and monitoring provided by the organization. Although these formal programs are monitored by the organization, participation is generally voluntary in nature. In the following section definitions will be provided in order to establish a foundation for further discussion along with a brief history of formal leadership development programs.

Formal leadership development program definitions are loosely based on informal relationships that naturally occur such as mentoring, coaching, and counseling. These words can have separate and distinct meanings depending on the individual therefore it is important to define each of these terms for use throughout the rest of this paper. For the purpose of discussion and analysis the definitions of each of these terms were taken directly from the proposed MCO 1500.*61 MCLD* which is the Marine Corps′ future doctrine on formal leadership development and mentoring.

Mentoring- Mentor comes from Greek mythology and is the name of the wise counselor whom Odysseus chose for his son. The Marine Corps defines the mentoring process as follows:

> Mentoring is a less formal process than coaching and counseling. It is a voluntary, developmental relationship between a person of experience and lesser characterized by mutual trust and respect. Mentoring relationships have always existed in the Marine Corps, often occur outside the chain of command and can be initiated by either a senior or subordinate. Such relationships often endure beyond a single tour of duty and provide an important source of encouragement and perspective. Commanders are encouraged to assist Marines and Sailors in the process of mentorship.[4]

It is important to clearly define these terms as the responsibilities and expectations associated with each can overlap especially between mentoring and coaching which are proactive measures.

Coaching involves several steps such as; focusing intent, clarifying self-awareness, uncovering potential, and eliminating barriers among others within the coaching process.[5] The Marine Corps' definition follows:

> Coaching is a process of on-going observation and encouragement of a Marine's personal and professional growth. As an integral function of day-to-day leadership, coaching provides feedback, often on an informal basis. It also involves documented goal setting, which plays an important role in helping Marines and Sailors achieve their full potential.[6]

Mentoring and coaching are indirect grooming methods that provide junior leaders with guidance from a senior that may provide future career enhancing affects.

Finally, counseling is a process by which a senior provides feedback to a junior on his performance over a given timeframe and may include a plan for improving future performance. The Marine Corps' definition of counseling states:

> Counseling is a process of two-way communication between a senior and junior   to help achieve or maintain the highest possible level of performance. Counseling reinforces good performance, corrects deficiencies, transmits guidance/standards and provides direction to subordinate development.[7]

Counseling is retroactive unless it is performed immediately and often includes an assessment of past performance.

It is easiest to conceptualize these three definitions as they relate to time because, as can be inferred from the above definitions, some of these responsibilities overlap. For example, counselors can also be coaches and coaches can be mentors. Mentorship looks to the future and the potential within the individual for future development within the organization. Coaching focuses on present skills and on improving those skills in order to promote growth within the organization.[8] Lastly, counseling is rooted in past performance and may include a strategy for

improvement.[9] It may be incorrect to base definitions resident within formal leadership development programs on informal program definitions, regardless of their common attributes, because informal programs are oriented toward individual goals, whereas formal programs are oriented toward organizational goals.[10] It can be inferred that formal programs are closely associated with developmental relationships where the experience and skills of one person motivate another to grow and learn, a dynamic that is also most closely associated with the definition of coaching.

Given this basic understanding of how formal leadership development programs came into popularity and how certain terms are defined, one may better understand the development of formal leadership development programs in civilian industry. In turn, that history should provide a frame of reference within which to analyze current Marine Corps doctrine.

One of the first documented formal leadership development programs was developed by the Jewel Tea Company.[11] This program matched experienced senior management who would serve as a mentor to newly hired college educated professionals within the organization.[12] The correlations that were drawn between participation in formal leadership development programs and positive career advancement fueled the popularity of such programs during the 1970s and 1980s.

Formal programs gained popularity through individual organizations realizing the benefits that the informal programs provided. This realization was further stimulated through economic trends such as organizational growth in competition (mergers and acquisitions) and social trends such as affirmative action and an ever-changing work force demographic.[13] The acceleration of work force diversification created barriers to the informal program process, which increased the need for more formal institutionalized programs within organizations.

Formal leadership development and mentorship programs support equal opportunity and affirmative action by providing a diversifying workforce individual career development that could lead to general organizational advancement and executive development for program participants.[14] These formal programs not only benefit the individual employee but also provide a link between individual career goals and the goals of the organization.

Organizations quickly realized that through these formal programs they were able to meet the demands of a diversified workforce while meeting organizational goals in areas such as increased recruitment, reduced employee turnover, and increased employee production.[15] Average program length was much longer in the early developmental years of formal programs; and these early programs tended to focus on special interest groups. More modern formal programs are shorter in duration, refined, and focused on specific goals rather than general advancement.[16]

Additionally, the scopes of modern formal programs have been increased to include a wider employee demographic. Group mentoring has also gained increased popularity, which tends to promote peer relationship building among juniors and seniors that would not normally interact with one another.[17] It seems that organizations have learned that increasing the scope of participation within formal programs produces benefit, but this benefit can only be realized through a focused matching process.

This may be the reason that in more recent years there has been a shift from formal programs that focus on broad career development issues to ones that match participants based on a specific skill set or career path.[18] Over the past eight decades, then, formal leadership development and mentorship programs have evolved from programs that naturally occur to programs that have been engineered for success. These formal programs are based on broad

voluntary participation, linking of individual employee goals with those of the organization, and a focused matching process that produces measurable achievement. An examination of the individual tenets of these formal leadership development programs will highlight best practices and identify goals relevant to Marine Corps Leadership development as well.

Organizational Support[19]

Organizational support can be defined as the momentum and support provided to the leadership development program that is evident throughout the entire organization. Specific program development efforts should be linked to the strategic goals of the organization and human resource systems such as performance appraisal and awards.[20] This ensures that the program will be more widely accepted because it links individual skills or attributes with organizational goals. Formal leadership development programs that are not linked to larger organizational goals will have limited success because the formal relationships that are established are not organizationally reinforced and will atrophy due to a lack of integration.[21] Conversely, when formal relationships are viewed as an integral component in a larger organizational process the integration throughout the system reinforces the relationship through other career planning activities.[22]

Formal leadership development programs may require additional support structures such as reward systems that are separate and distinct for program participants.[23] This may involve evaluations provided by both mentors and mentees that are tracked and integrated into individual performance evaluation reports.[24] Once compiled, these reports would provide a foundation for individual rewards that could range from quantifiable pay bonuses to intangible perks.

Support for any formal leadership development program must come from the highest levels within the organization; many authors highlight this as a key to program success. In order

to motivate participation in the leadership development program, enthusiasm from the top must be clearly visible to all members of the organization.[25] When top management reserves monetary and human resource support for the program it sends a clear message that allows the program to gain traction while preventing sabotage from non-participants.[26] Overall, program success is greatly dependent on the support of the organization in terms of resources and an enthusiastic culture that is driven from the top down.

Clarify Purpose, Expectations, and Roles[27]

The program goals of the leadership development program must be clearly defined to all members participating in the initiative. Clearly defined program goals benefit the program in two ways; instructionally by providing points of comparison, and motivationally in terms of outcomes of participation.[28] Instructional benefits provide performance measures that can be correlated with changes in participant behavior and may provide quantifiable measures of program effectiveness.[29] Motivational benefits simply stimulate achievement on the part of program participants by bringing positive program outcomes to the forefront.[30]

Program participants must maintain realistic expectations of program outcomes, whether positive or negative. In order to promote realistic expectations, potential program participants should be briefed on the potential gains of participation as well as pitfalls to avoid.[31] This process should prevent lofty assumptions such as, the guarantee of success simply by participation, on the part of potential participants. Several texts note that unmet participant expectations are a leading contributor to overall program failure.

Lastly, individual participant roles and responsibilities must be clearly articulated through some type of formal communication method. Orientation seminars provide the preferred medium to ensure all program participants clearly understand their roles and responsibilities within the

program.[32] Additionally, orientations and seminars provide a medium to immediately clarify any

confusing or ambiguous reference material. The addition of specific skill training apart from

orientations and seminars should be provided to mentors in order to prepare them for their

individual role within the program.[33] The importance of clarity in program goals, expectations,

and roles is not confined to one group of participants; these goals, expectations, and roles must

be internalized by mentors and mentees alike, as well as by top management and program

administrators.

Emphasize Choice and Involvement[34]

Program participants whether mentors or mentees should perceive some decision making

control over their involvement within the program. With few exceptions, formal leadership

development programs should be voluntary in nature.[35] They should not portend negative

consequences associated with program withdrawal, nor should they impose any time restrictions

in regards to minimum program participation.[36] Nominated personnel will invariably participate

in the program, and this sense of decision promotes responsibility on the part of the incumbent

that translates into a more productive participant regardless of their role within the program.[37]

Rules and rigid structure should be minimized which will enable program participants to

find the particular implementation style that works best for them. According to Cunningham

(1993) a balance of structure and flexibility allows program participants to manipulate the

boundaries of the relationships and activities within the structure of the program. To put it

plainly, the program may outline *what* needs to be done, but the *how* is left up to the program

participants to decide.

Ownership of the program initiative by all participants seems to be a driving force in

program success. When program participants possess the ability to design and change the

program to suit the needs of the individual and organization, the effectiveness of the program increases at the grass roots level.[38] The level of program modification entrusted to participants should not be limited and could include determination of whether or not a program is needed or even wanted. This responsibility could also be extended to the matching process, which is the next tenet to be discussed.

Establish Careful Selection and Matching Procedures [39]

Selecting potential program participants and then matching participants (mentors with mentees) can be done in a number of ways. Most literature promotes identifying potential participants by nomination (peer nomination, self-nomination, or supervisor nomination.) Regardless of the method of selection, mentors who possess the requisite skills (communication, introspection, and confidence) and display motivation and commitment to the program regardless of their role make excellent candidates.[40] Mentees who are intelligent, people-oriented and driven by goals also make strong candidates.

Matching mentors and mentees is another matter entirely and when the matching is based on some type of quantifiable data program effectiveness seems to increase.[41] This data can be derived from geographical origins, personalities, goals, or work section and must be monitored after matching to verify compatibility.[42] Zey (1991) suggests making matching a self-directed exercise between program participants or at the very least allow mentors and mentees to provide input on their potential matches within the program.

Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation[43]

Continuous monitoring and process improvement is integral to the current and future success of the program initiative. Systematic inspection methods are the least preferred monitoring techniques. Suggested program monitoring techniques involve; focus groups,

interviews, and surveys in order to collect data and measure program effectiveness although these techniques may be limited by the human resources available in the organization.[44] The type of monitoring highlighted above lends credibility to the program and provides quantifiable data upon which to establish future program goals. This monitoring process like the program itself must be linked to the strategic goals of the organization to ensure the program is providing for the needs of the business and the workforce in a changing environment.[45]

During program development, monitoring, and evaluation program participants must clearly address criteria-and initiate a beta test of the program before full implementation is attempted.[46] This provides the opportunity for feedback and modifications prior to the program "going live" and may create efficiencies when the program needs to be modified in order to maintain its relevance in the future. Finally, evaluation criteria should be firmly rooted in the stated program goals and objectives and should include baseline metrics (recruitment, turnover, readiness) that will serve as a starting point from which to measure program success or failure. [47]

Given this frame of reference, one may now analyze the Marine Corps' progress in creating an effective leadership development doctrine. The United States Marine Corps has made a significant effort in this direction over the past three decades. This effort may be misguided because it lacks a well-defined and strong foundational structure. If the Marine Corps sees value and is committed to establishing a successful leadership development program with measurable effects then the doctrine established should include those elements found in successful leadership development programs.

Formal leadership development within the Marine Corps starts when a young recruit or officer begins basic training at one of the Recruit Depots or Officer Candidate School. This leadership foundation baselines each and every Marine, indoctrinating them on the expectations

of the organization they intend to serve. This basic foundation is formally reinforced at certain times throughout a Marine's career in the form of resident and non-resident Professional Military Education (PME). In order to bridge the gap in between these formal schools, a series of orders have been established to guide senior Marines as they are tasked with reinforcing the Marine Corps' ethos on leadership and preparing junior Marines for the increased responsibility associated with promotion and growth within the organization. What follows is a brief history (1983 to Present) of Marine Corps doctrine associated with formal leadership development.

The United States Marine Corps (USMC) Counseling program was established in response to a study conducted in 1983 and directed by the Deputy Chief of Staff Manpower. The document serves as a user's guide to leaders who were encouraged to counsel their subordinates utilizing two-way communication in order to develop future leaders within the Marine Corps. Navy and Marine Corps (NAVMC) 2795 states that counseling should be done on a regular basis and focus on the reinforcement of good performance while correcting deficiencies noted during the period covered.[48] The intended overall organizational outcome of this program is an increase in organizational readiness through an increase in individual performance. Individual performance is enhanced through the achievement of the specific goals outlined in NAVMC 2795 and includes: maintain counseling as an integral and continuous process, develop counseling skills through a continuing education program, increase individual performance and productivity, enhance a leader's ability to improve a junior's performance, and create the ethic of effective counseling.[49] The NAVMC 2795 outlines counseling requirements, establishes timelines for counseling all ranks from Private through Colonel and recommends that some form of documentation be kept.

It is interesting to note that NAVMAC 2795 recommends the separation of counseling and performance evaluation. This recommendation stemmed from the data collected from some independent studies and a task group that focused on performance evaluation and counseling, and tied inflated evaluation reports with instances where counseling was combined with performance evaluation.[50] The NAVMC states: "While performance evaluation focuses on past performance counseling focuses on improving and maintaining future performance".[51] This point will be explored further as counseling must draw from the well of past performance in order to provide feedback intended to improve or maintain future performance.

Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1500.56 *Marine Corps Values Program* was produced in 1996 two years after a massive drawdown in the Marine Corps' force structure from 1991 to 1995. This produced what some would call a "hollow force," which may have prompted the Commandant of the Marine Corps to coordinate organizational efforts in the promotion of the Marine Corps' Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. The program provided tools for leaders that enabled promotion of the program, including small cards that were to be carried in a Marine's wallet as a reminder of the values they were expected to uphold, and videos produced by the Commandant that were meant to be used during planned counseling sessions.[52]

The 1996 program was broken down into three distinct phases; initial, reinforcement, and sustainment. Each phase of training followed a Marine from Phase I (initial) that was performed in the Recruit Depots and Officer Candidate School to Phase III (sustainment) that was the responsibility of individual fleet units.[53] One may draw distinct correlations between this program and the more recent re-awakening initiative by former Commandant of the Marine Corps General Amos. In both cases the intent was to "bridge a gap between the Marine Corps and a changing society" in order to uphold the organizational values of the Marine Corps.

In February of 2006 the Marine Corps published MCO 1500.58 *Marine Corps Mentoring Program.* The intent of the program was to improve a leader's ability to interact personally with junior Marines under the leaders command.[54] The intent of the order is development of the individual Marine in all aspects of his life. The order leverages the Core Values Program and outlines five essential skills that good mentors must maintain: self-awareness and discipline, questioning techniques, listening skills, empathy, and feedback.[55] Mentors must be team focused and guide mentees to develop strengths while strengthening weakness throughout their career to better serve the team.[56] This definition of a mentor can be easily confused with coaching. The order may produce unintended barriers to the establishment of these types of relationships as it stipulates that the good order and discipline that is the hallmark of relationships established between Marines of different ranks must be maintained between mentors and mentees.[57] The simple statement that is well known throughout the organization and rigidly adhered to may prevent the natural growth of the type of relationships the order is intended to promote. Additionally, MCO 1500.58 recommends that mentees meet with their mentors approximately every 30 days.[58] The requirement promotes an atmosphere that is artificial and places initiation of the meeting on the mentee as opposed to the mentor. This order was not meant to take the place of NAVMC 2795 or the Counseling Program, which is, according to MCO 1500.58, tied to duty performance.[59] This distinction is in direct contradiction to NAVMC 2795 as stated earlier in this paper.

Most recently, the mission of the proposed Marine Corps Leadership Development MCO is to equip leaders with the resources necessary to develop Marines for success in the future.[60] The overall organizational goal is focused on creating a more effective warfighting organization and strengthening the organizational leadership foundation resident within the Marine Corps.[61]

The intent is to achieve the overall organizational goal through strengthening unit cohesion while developing the individual Marine to his full potential. The current version of Marine Corps Leadership Development is firmly rooted in the doctrine of the past and aims at developing Marines at all levels for increased responsibility through training, mentoring, and counseling.[62] This is achieved by focusing effort on six functional areas of leadership development: fidelity, fighter, fitness, family, finances, and future.[63] Definitions of each of these six terms are quoted below directly from the source.

> Fidelity- Addresses Marine Corps and unit heritage, core values, ethics and Marine Corps leadership traits and principles.

> Fighter- Addresses professional and career development, including Professional Military Education (PME), Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)/Navy Enlisted Code (NEC)/ Navy Officer Billet Classification (NOBC) skills, Marine Corps Common Skills, interpersonal communication skills, and on-and off-duty education.

> Fitness- Addresses the chords of mind, body, spirit and social.

> Family- Addresses relationships, marriage, parenting and family readiness.

> Finances- Addresses fundamentals of personal finance to include budgeting, saving, debt management and investing.

> Future- Addresses goal-setting, time management and transitioning back to society.[64]

Commanding Officers are responsible for the designation of Key Leaders who hold particular skill sets, experiences, and certifications. These Key Leaders serve as advisors and training facilitators in the particular area of expertise.[65] Definitions are provided for terms that may be vague or open to individual interpretations such as counseling, coaching, and mentoring along with clear record keeping requirements and scheduled meeting intervals for all ranks, Private through General.[66] Unlike the doctrine of the past, the current Marine Corps Leadership Development loosely addresses program assessments and recognition of achievement within the program, and establishes a repository for best practices.[67] Lastly, the order acknowledges that

relationships that are established while participating in the MCLD often extend past a Marine's tour of duty and therefore encourages effective transition management.

The history of Marine Corps leadership doctrine is much longer than what is outlined in this paper. Formal leadership development must have support from senior leaders in order to be successful; quantitative data derived from a survey dispersed to senior Marine Corps leaders may provide valuable insight to the success or failure of formal leadership development within the organization.

The purpose of the survey was to examine if an alignment problem exists between Marine Corps Leadership doctrine and the tenets of a successful formal leadership development program. The -survey attempts to explore how Marine Corps Leadership Development is viewed by its potential participants, whether Marine Corps Leadership development is linked with the organizational goals of the Marine Corps, and what attributes would make participation in Marine Corps Leadership Development more enticing to potential participants. It was expected that the results of the survey would show that current Marine Corps Leadership doctrine does not maintain links to measurable organizational outcomes and lacks the attributes necessary to attract willing participants. The survey results confirmed this hypothesis.

<u>Methodology</u>

The focus of this survey was to utilize exploratory research techniques to analyze stakeholder perceptions of the value and utility of the MCLD. Primary data collection was accomplished by on-line survey. The survey contained ten questions. Two of the questions were demographic in nature. The remaining eight questions were designed to provide qualitative and quantitative data that aids in answering the following questions:

- Is current Marine Corps Leadership doctrine linked with measurable organizational goals?

- How is Marine Corps Leadership doctrine viewed by individuals responsible for its implementation?

- What attributes of formal leadership development programs may increase participation in MCLD?

- Could narrowing the scope of the MCLD increase its effectiveness?

Data Analysis

The composition of survey participation was limited to senior Marine Corps Majors and Lieutenant Colonels including 67% males and 33% females. Survey participants maintained an average time in service of 19 years. Marine Corps Leadership doctrine has existed in some form for almost three decades, yet 67% of survey participants reported never having participated in formal leadership development either as a mentor or mentee.

Participation in MCLD is currently mandatory for all ranks, but 88% of those polled perceived little to no career enhancing value from participation. The purpose of MCLD as quoted in the proposed MCO is; "To provide a framework for the development of leaders in order to strengthen unit cohesion and cultivate each Marines' potential".[68] This statement may reinforce why 100% of survey participants perceive that measurable Marine Corps organizational goals are not specifically linked with MCLD.

Clearly defined purpose, roles, and expectations aid formal leadership development programs meet organizational goals while managing the expectations of program participants; 33% of survey participants perceive a clearly defined purpose, 77% perceive vaguely defined roles, and 100% perceive vaguely defined expectations. Choice in participation is one of the

central tenets of formal leadership development programs, yet the MCLD is a mandatory requirement that must be maintained at each command. According to 77% of survey participants MCLD may benefit if the proposed Marine Corps doctrine solicited participation for mentors and mentees on a voluntary or semi-voluntary basis.

The proposed Marine Corps doctrine on leadership development would be applicable to all ranks which includes over 180,000 Marines both enlisted and officer. Survey participants who responded perceive little value gained from participation in MCLD for the most senior ranks in both groups. 66% of survey participants perceive the most value gained from participation in MCLD in enlisted ranks Corporal thru Staff Sergeant and 77% in officer ranks Second Lieutenant thru Captain.

Human beings generally socialize and bond with others who maintain similar interests or like personalities. The proposed Marine Corp doctrine assigns mentors and mentees based on work section or Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). 55% of those polled feel there would be a participation increase in the MCLD if mentors and mentees were matched based on demographic information.

Businesses often ask their customers whether they would recommend their services if asked by friends and family. Word of mouth can be one of the most powerful forms of marketing and can carry beneficial or detrimental effects. A mere 11% of respondents reported they would be likely to recommend participation in formal leadership development such as MCLD to their colleagues. Drawing on the results of the survey Marine Corps Leadership doctrine seems disjointed from its intended audience and this fracture may be limiting participation and marginalizing the benefits that could be realized.

Survey Conclusions

  The first question deals with whether the proposed doctrine is specifically linked to Marine Corps organizational goals. Survey results show that the links between Marine Corps organization goals and the MCLD are vaguely linked and without specific links increases in unit cohesion and effectiveness cannot be correlated with participation in MCLD.

  The second question probed how the proposed doctrine is perceived by the people responsible for its employment. Mentorship is an integral part of the MCLD and is taught as a part of leadership curriculum throughout the Marine Corps. Most respondents in the survey have never participated in a formal leadership role as a mentor or mentee. Even more telling is that an overwhelming percentage would not be likely to recommend participation in such a program to their colleagues. These conclusions may show that this mandatory doctrine lacks the support of top leadership within each unit due to a lack of perceived value.

  The next question attempts to correlate some tenets of effective formal leadership development programs with data derived from the survey. Matching mentors with respective mentees based on demographic data that is readily available in social media and closed loop Marine Corps personnel systems could be implemented in the proposed doctrine. The matching process is a central tenet of effective formal leadership development and may lead to increased participation in MCLD according to the majority of respondents.

  It is also perceived that only a small percentage of the Marine Corps' population (enlisted and officers) have the most to gain from participation in MCLD and that the MCLD may see an increase in participants if the program was somewhat voluntary in nature. Narrowing the scope of the MCLD could focus efforts on those with the most to gain and those who are willing

participants while simultaneously reducing the administrative burden of those required to implement it.

It is understood that the respondents that took the survey represent a small fraction of the population of the organization. The majority of respondents solicited to take the survey were chosen based on their potential to take command and the number of years they have served in the organization. These actions were done intentionally in order to lend credibility to the data by leveraging senior respondent's maturity and depth of knowledge. The following section will examine the proposed doctrine and link survey data with the tenets of effective leadership development in order to formulate some recommendations intended to improve the MCLD prior to its release.

Effective formal leadership programs include five tenets which could also be coined lines of effort: organizational support, clarity of purpose, expectations, and roles, emphasis on choice and involvement, an established selection and matching process for mentors and mentees, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. It seems obvious that the Marine Corps is committed to establishing a pipeline that develops leaders formally but lacks some key aspects of successful formal leadership programs in its current doctrine. By utilizing the tenets of an effective formal leadership program and linking the data derived from the survey the following recommendations may provide a starting point that could increase the future effectiveness of MCLD.

Organizational support from the top is apparent in the current doctrine, especially considering the long history and many iterations of formal leadership doctrine that has been developed by the Marine Corps over the past three decades. Unfortunately, this same enthusiasm and support may not be present in the unit leaders responsible for implementing the doctrine. This is evident in the survey responses that indicate that these leaders perceive a low return on

investment from participation and an unwillingness to promote participation to their colleagues.

This problem is merely a symptom of the disease that is plaguing the MCLD; the disease that

needs to be treated can be found in the other four lines of effort.

      The purpose of the MCLD is clearly stated in the MCO, but it is vague and cannot be

measured or tied directly to participation in formal leadership development. The purpose of the

proposed doctrine should be tied to a measurable metric such as increased retention rates in

targeted ranks. This will provide a measure of effectiveness and serve as an analysis tool that can

be used to improve future doctrine. Expectations derived from participation in the MCLD are not

clearly defined in the MCO as it is currently written. The MCLD does address recognition of

individual participants with "leadership" awards, but fails to link participation with positive or

negative career enhancing affects. It also states that Key Leaders will have responsibilities

associated with MCLD participation annotated in Section B of the fitness report, but gives no

guidance relating to specific remarks that could highlight the Key Leader's exceptional

leadership ability during performance evaluation periods. Roles do seem to be clearly outlined in

the proposed doctrine, but some type of orientation (class, seminar, or briefing) may be needed to

familiarize participants and prepare them for the role with which they are tasked within MCLD.

Each of these observations seems clearly supported by the results derived in the survey.

      Most respondents polled stated that that participation in the MCLD would improve if it

were voluntary or semi-voluntary in nature. As stated earlier most successful leadership

development programs are voluntary in nature. Program participants could be nominated by their

peers or requested by potential mentees. At that point the choice to participate is in the hands of

the person nominated and acceptance of the nomination implies a sense of responsibility.

Additionally, participants should be able to modify the doctrine to suit the needs of the individual

unit. These actions may create a sense of ownership that promotes an atmosphere of growth and maturity instead of stagnation. As the MCLD continues to build upon itself in future years, leaders who have chosen to participate either as mentors and mentees will undoubtedly be promoted through the ranks and these leaders will provide the organizational support that was lacking at the unit level.

Demographic data is readily available through Marine Corps personnel systems such as Marine On-Line and the Marine Corps Total Force System. Databases like these may provide the information needed to easily match potential mentors with respective mentees within individual units. Matching MCLD participants may enhance the bonding process that naturally occurs because the two participants will have a common foundation on which to build. Additionally, survey participants predicted that program participation might increase if mentors and mentees were matched. The additional administrative burden of matching mentors and mentees can be absorbed by reducing the scope of the MCLD to only those ranks that have the most value gained from participation; this was also reinforced by survey data.

The inspection process is an institutional cornerstone of the Marine Corps and all units within the organization regardless of mission perform inspections on pertinent programs to ensure they are maintaining high standards of readiness. The MCLD is doctrine that outlines leadership development within the organization and therefore should not be subject to a systematic inspection process that fails to produce quantifiable data that may be used to improve future doctrine. Focus groups and surveys may better serve the MCLD and future doctrine on the subject as a means of monitoring and improving formal leadership development. This type of attention will establish and maintain the relevance of the MCLD by ensuring that the organizational goals of the Marine Corps are linked with the career goals and needs of the

stakeholders who choose to participate in formal leadership development. This type of evaluation combined with a beta test can also be useful in determining whether formal leadership development is wanted or needed within the organization. Formal leadership development may be something that top senior leaders within the Marine Corps think is wanted or needed but in reality it appears to be an underutilized and underperforming effort that may be wasting resources.

It is apparent that the Marine Corps sees an institutional value in developing leaders from within, considering the concerted efforts to establish an effective doctrine over the past 28 years. However, these efforts are insufficient due to a lack in foundational structure, clearly stated objectives, and the tenets of an effective leadership development program. If the Marine Corps is committed to formal leadership development, the first step may be to ensure that this doctrine is supported and fills the needs of all stakeholders. Once the need is established, write a living doctrine; one that is adaptable to individual unit needs by utilizing the tenets stated above and ensuring its relevance through stakeholder ownership and links to measurable organizational goals.

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