

Training is one of the main three components of effective leadership development. Here, SSG Bruce Wiles points to the Ammunition Team Chief while verifying the artillery shell during the M777 Howitzer fielding on Grafenwoer Training Area, Germany, July 24, 2009. (U.S. Army photo by SPC Pastora Y. Hall.)

Growing 21st Century Leaders— A Comprehensive Leadership Development Strategy

Whitney F. Pyle

In an era of persistent conflict, the Army needs officers and noncommissioned officers who are adaptive enough to take on changing threats and understand the full spectrum of operations. As 21st century warfare is all about hybrid threats, leadership development must focus on preparing individuals to manage transitions and to be agile, adaptive, and decisive.

At the Fire Support Seminar, Fort Sill, OK, June 2–4, 2009, LTG William B. Caldwell IV, Commanding General, Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, KS/Command and General Staff College Commandant, discussed the Field Artillery's (FA's) proposed comprehensive leadership development strategy. The strategy focuses on expanding skill sets and training leaders in the right places. Referencing Army *Field Manual (FM) 3-0*, Caldwell discussed how today's

Army leaders must be competent in core proficiencies, broad, able, culturally astute, courageous, and grounded in Army Values and Warrior Ethos.

Leadership Development Themes

The FA leadership development strategy is intertwined with four themes to ensure that our Soldiers continue to be the most lethal and effective warfighters on the battlefield. The first theme, derived from *FM 3-0* and

the concept for joint operations, focuses on balancing the crosswalk of abstract attributes against concrete actions. Soldiers must be able to take theoretical situations that they have been exposed to in training and apply them to real-world circumstances in the operational environment.

Second, leadership development must provide Soldiers the ability to deal with complexity over an extended time. Because the operational environment



As 21st century warfare is all about hybrid threats, leadership development must focus on preparing individuals to manage transitions and to be agile, adaptive, and decisive.

changes, training must change to prepare Soldiers for the complexity of that environment. We must train leaders for the complexities of a hybrid campaign that not only focuses on interim solutions, but provides them with a strategy for maintaining complexity for the long term. Caldwell said that if this ideology is stressed throughout education and training, “we will develop leaders who thrive in ambiguity and complexity and can think before they plan.”

Third, Army leaders must be adept at solving complex, ill-structured

problems through design. Design is not a process, but a set of thinking tools with which our Soldiers need to be equipped. Through education, we must complement and reinforce the Army’s operational process with a rational and logical approach.

Lastly, the strategy concentrates on the shifting balance of operational and tactical art. Commanders must be able to understand the problem first before they can visualize an appropriate end state and begin planning. Our warfighters cannot solve the wrong problem—they must understand

what the problem is and then react. The contemporary operating environment requires commanders of upper echelons to instill this value in their subordinates.

Components of Leadership Development

Caldwell advised that there are three components of leadership development—education, training, and experience—that must be harmoniously instilled in our future leaders to provide them with the best opportunity for success.

Caldwell stressed how important education is in developing flexible, adaptable, and responsive leaders on the battlefield. He said, “Education is the one thing that best prepares us for the uncertainties of the future.” Soldiers must be taught *how* to think and not *what* to think. Caldwell advised that the Army needs to grow leaders to be critical and creative thinkers who are lifelong learners, always striving to expand their knowledge sets.

Today’s training must introduce future leaders to complex environments and hybrid threats. The *right* training will prepare leaders for near-term requirements as well develop their understanding for future uncertainties. Caldwell said, “It’s all about training. Training allows a person to react to the right situation at the right time.” Putting Soldiers in various hypothetical situations will foster their understanding of when a situation has changed and how to adapt in the moment.

Providing future leaders the opportunity to see cumulative effects across multiple venues allows them to broaden their experiences. Experience in dealing with different circumstances will give our leaders the confidence they need to handle any situation they may face in the future. Although it can be argued that experience may be the most



Experience in dealing with different circumstances will give our Soldiers the confidence they need to handle any situation they may face in the future. Here, U.S. Army Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, maintain a firing position during a firefight at Vehicle Patrol Base Badel, Konar Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 14, 2009. The Soldiers quickly suppressed the enemy after receiving sniper fire from a nearby ridge line. (U.S. Army photo by SSG Andrew Smith, 55th Combat Camera.)



Education is key to developing future Army leaders who are critical and creative thinkers that always strive to expand their knowledge sets. Here, PFC Daniel McAfee, left, and PVT Ishmael Dixon work math exercises while in class at the Army Preparatory School. (U.S. Army photo.)

There are three components of leadership development—education, training, and experience—that must be harmoniously instilled in our future leaders to provide them with the best opportunity for success.

important aspect of leadership development because it truly reflects a leader's abilities, Caldwell strongly advised that it does not replace education. It is imperative that leadership development provides a balance of all three components to ensure that the Army continues to produce the most effective leaders on the battlefield.

According to the FA's proposed strategy, leadership development methods must focus on the individual. To develop agile and adaptive leaders, training must implement talent management—allowing Soldiers to gather experience in various areas to discover what their

specialties are. Caldwell believes that leaders must learn how to master transitions and be developed as well-rounded warfighters. By focusing on self-development and implementing assessment processes, future leaders will learn to take ownership of continuing their growth as individual Soldiers.

In the 21st century, leadership development will continue to be a critical component to the Army's success. Caldwell concluded by saying, "Leadership development is crucial because if we can't develop the right leaders, we won't be successful. If we do this right, we'll have leaders who can

perform simultaneously. They will be effective problem solvers who can play both offense and defense." Although we are in an era of persistent conflict with the current mission requiring the most attention, the Army still needs to ensure that it fosters leadership development for the future. There needs to be a balance—training and education cannot fall to the wayside of a hectic, overextended environment. To ensure that our Army continues to be the most adaptive, effective, and lethal fighting force possible, our future leaders must be given every opportunity possible to expand their skills sets and grow as individuals.

WHITNEY F. PYLE is an editor for *Army AL&T* Magazine and supports the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center through BRTRC Technology Marketing Group. She holds a B.A. in English from Virginia Tech.