

Army University Telework

A Case Study in Organizational Learning to Promote Rapid Culture Change

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Abstract

Army modernization requires developing the Army as an adaptive learning organization, which in turn depends on cultivating the requirements for rapid and sustainable organizational learning such as workforce development and the integration of enabling technology. Early 2020 provided a case study in rapid modernization as Army University adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by creating situational teleworking opportunities to protect the health of employees who had previously worked on Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Nearly 1,100 leaders, educators, and support staff learned to do their jobs from home to continue to meet the Army University education and training mission. Following the rapid adoption of telework, Army University created sustainable telework practices by supporting organizational learning at the individual and organizational levels. This article applies organizational learning models to uncover how the telework rollout at Army University was successful despite being abrupt, unprecedented, and incongruent with standing organizational culture. We outline the process of initial rapid change including learning and training requirements for individual and staff groups such as new vocabulary, communication plans, new technology, and new supervisor capabilities for leading hybrid or remote teams. We then discuss how Army University responded to sustain initial culture change through the process of organizational learning, to include knowledge creation, retention, and transfer at individual, group, and organizational levels.

Telework practices in Army University currently support a range of modernized learning approaches and, more broadly, the experience of Army University contributes to an understanding of how Army institutions can successfully enact organizational learning.

This article highlights how Army University responded to the forcing function of the COVID-19 pandemic to institute rapid culture change across the organization, and how a coordinated effort underpins the successful sustainment of that initial culture change through the process of organizational learning including knowledge creation, retention, and transfer at individual and organizational levels. The article considers the implementation and sustainment of a successful telework policy across Army University as a case study in organizational learning. We use findings from the Army University telework surveys to provide key evidence for both the success of the telework policy implementation and the achievement of key stages of organizational learning. This case study is part of a broader conversation of how modernization efforts like telework support the development of a learning organization.

Army University as a Learning Organization

Army University was established in 2015 with the purpose of “creating a unified university system for the Army” (Brown, 2015, p. ii). Army University is responsible for the education of tens of thousands of soldiers and Army civilian professionals, employing approximately 300 military members and over 800 Army civilian professionals. Army University blends traditional American university academic excellence with best practices and lessons learned in existing military education programs (Perkins, 2015). As a dual-hatted higher education institution and military entity, Army University was well-poised to incorporate principles of a *learning organization* in keeping with the aims of the wider Army (Gerras, 2002).

Calton et al. (2021) highlights five key dimensions for the Army as a learning organization: (1) cultivate learning support, (2) orient toward a shared future, (3) explore new perspectives, (4) synchronize capabilities, and (5) manage organizational knowledge. Learning organizations have forward-thinking leadership and cultivate collaborative learning, support a “lifelong learning” mindset, make room for innovation, and enable knowledge sharing.

One of the foundational steps to becoming a *learning organization* is to produce evidence of *organizational learning*, which involves the learning processes that occur within an organization (Tsang, 1997). As discussed in Calton et al. (2021), a learning organization is one “that continuously orients itself towards the processes or activities involved in organizational learning” (p. 1), and organizational learning is nec-



essary but not sufficient to create a learning organization. *The Army Learning Concept 2030–2040* (U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC], 2024), highlights the link between organizational learning and learning organizations: “A learning organization is one that values and rewards individual learning and that has explicit mechanisms to support organizational learning. In other words, it has processes to enable knowledge sharing and continuous organizational behavioral adaptation” (p. 17).

The focus of this article is not to specify the complicated relationship between becoming a learning organization through undergoing organizational learning but to showcase how the incorporation of principles of organizational learning through the COVID-19 pandemic and the successful telework innovation has contributed to Army University culture change and development as a learning organization.

Army University Pandemic Response

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the overwhelming majority of Army University employees worked in a government-owned building on site. The students of the Command and General Staff College were also on site. Telework, defined as “an alternate work arrangement that permits Army Civilian Professionals/Service Members to perform officially assigned duties at designated locations away from the traditional worksite, including their homes and other preapproved worksites” (Army

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University [AU] Policy Memo 5, 2022), was rare. Remote work, defined as “separate and distinct from telework, where Army Civilian Professionals and their conventional worksite are in different geographic regions” (AU Policy Memo 5, 2022), was only accepted on a case-by-case basis with overwhelming support from direct leaders. In the spring of 2020, the institution was forced to react to the transformed operational environment caused by the rapid spread of COVID-19. In March 2020, Army University sent most employees and students into a virtual or remote learning/working environment. Nearly 1,100 leaders, educators, and support staff continued to meet the Army University education and training mission from home.

Early 2020 provides a case study in rapid modernization as Army University adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by creating situational teleworking opportunities to maintain the Army University mission. Over time, Army University leaders recognized that tasks, including critical missions, were successfully accomplished, and leaders began gathering evidence to decide whether to sustain this initial culture change through practices of organizational learning. A series of surveys were developed and deployed to systematically collect feedback from Army University military and civilian employees on their experiences of telework during the COVID-19 pandemic and to evaluate the practice of telework and subsequent telework policies.

Army University Telework Surveys

The Army University telework survey was framed to determine workforce perceptions, find practices of value, and identify gaps in need of improvement under current teleworking conditions, which would then feed into an iterative process of improving organizational learning. The survey was conducted 25 April to 9 May 2022. There were 494 staff and faculty who responded to the telework survey, a response rate of 42.6%. The second survey was conducted 27 July to 11 August 2023. This time, 384 individuals took part in the Telework and Remote Work Survey, a 29.7% response rate. On both surveys, civilians responded nearly twice as often as military members, and certain suborganizations had low response rates both years due to leader nonadoption of the telework policy at the time of the surveys. However, the return rates for both surveys do indicate a good level of interest in telework and are typical return rates of previous large-scale civilian and military survey response rates collected by this team, and of email survey response rates (decreasing over time from ~38% in 2001) within the general public (Sheehan, 2001). The survey covered the topics of general satisfaction with and recommendations regarding the telework policy, resourcing issues, messaging and communication, effects of telework on employees and on the education and training of students, limitations of telework, work productivity impacts, and retention and recruitment. In addition, the second survey also targeted feedback specifically on the Army University Policy Memorandum 5,



“Telework and Remote Work” and implementation plans utilized by Army University suborganizations to provide additional clarity for organizational learning.

These surveys provided leaders with critical evidence of whether the organizational change to expand telework was received positively and whether there were gaps in practices or attitudes that could be used to address challenges to organizational change. The telework survey results reflected positive experiences and attitudes toward telework. Overall satisfaction with the telework policy was very positive, and respondents gave concrete suggestions for improving it. Ratings were also positive for questions about trust, communication, resourcing, and availability of technology. Preference to telework was rated highly by employees, with individuals indicating that telework had a positive impact on their quality of life by providing improved mood, health, available time, and family life. Critically, employees reported almost no change to their yearly evaluation after teleworking, and those that improved cited increased productivity as the cause. This finding was corroborated by supervisors, agreeing that their workers were productive at the same level or better while teleworking. Finally, employees also viewed the telework policy as an important retention and recruitment tool.

The feedback of employees and supervisors regarding telework was a critical capture for Army University leaders. Having data not only to indicate the positivity of the telework and the telework policy, as mentioned above, but also having data that was pertinent to organizational learning on the effectiveness, work output, utilization, implementation, etc., as described in future sections of this article, bolstered leader individual understanding of their organization, allowed them to advocate for and track culture change over time and justified their decisions to continue telework after the pandemic.

Army University Leaders

While employees and students clearly supported telework adoption by remaining on mission during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, Army University leadership played a key role in the successful telework rollout, milestones, and continued maintenance of the initiative.

Successful telework is a result of good leadership (Contreras et al., 2020; Silva-C. et al., 2019). From Offstein et al. (2010), “the single greatest variable in predicting telework success was rarely technology. Invariably, it was leadership” (p. 34). Leaders who are to be successful with telework must cultivate trust (Brown et al., 2016), make communication more explicit, move to shared or distributed leadership, and have a results-based approach rather than a process-based approach (managing results rather than managing time) (Peters et al., 2016; Sanders, 2022). Because many of the factors that determine the success of telework reside with leadership, individual



interviews with Army University leaders were conducted in April 2023 to more fully understand leader decision-making processes, and to successfully document key aspects of leadership goals and telework milestones. This information contributed to the selection process of a model of organizational change that highlights important milestones through which Army University leaders guided their organization.

Applying Organizational Change Models to Telework Implementation

Organizational change is notorious for being difficult to accomplish (Burnes, 2005), and if the change is seen as incongruent with the current culture of the organization, it is likely to fail (Petersen & Bartel, 2020). While the telework roll out was abrupt, unprecedented, and incongruent with current Army University culture, these “revolutionary” characteristics can support success: “Almost all successful organizations evolve through relatively long periods of incremental change punctuated by environmental shifts and revolutionary change” (Tushman & O’Reilly, 1996, p. 11). At the onset of COVID-19, Army University was forced to undergo a quick period of revolutionary change, including changes in organizational practices, strategy, communication structure, technology, and culture.

To better understand the factors supporting this culture change, we turn to existing frameworks for organizational change from the organizational and management science fields. Some change models, such as Kotter’s (1996) eight-step model and Buller’s (2015) 10 analytical lenses approach are viewed by some as rather prescriptive. Others, such as Lewin’s (1947) three-step model have considerably fewer steps or phases and are viewed by some as rather simplistic and not prescriptive enough.

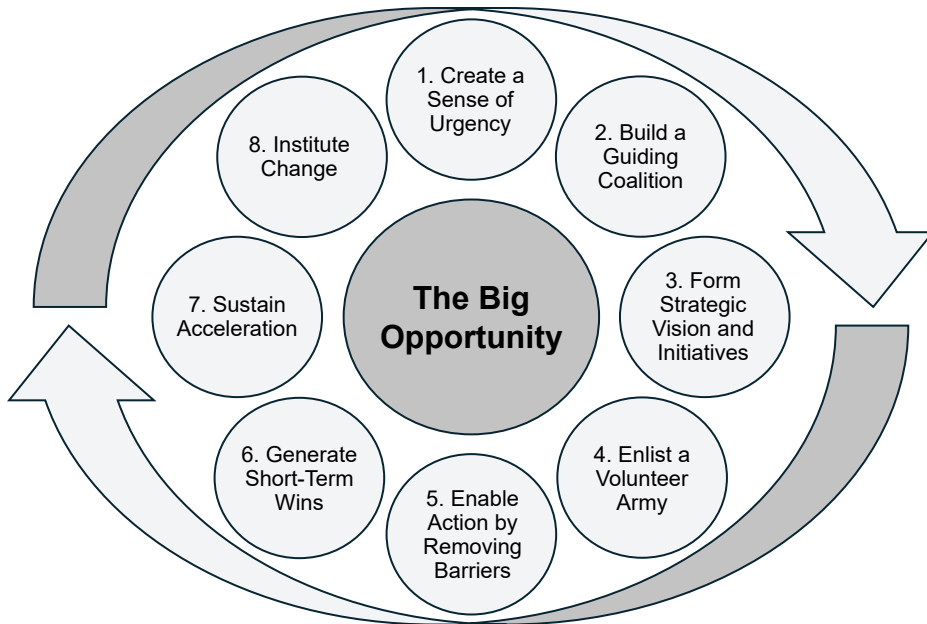
Because the change being researched in this study was initially driven by the outside environmental impact of COVID-19, the authors decided to view this change through Kotter’s eight accelerators of change. Kotter (2012) introduced eight accelerators for change as an update or addition to his earlier eight-step change model. In his more recent work, Kotter recognizes that some changes are not the result of a leader’s deliberate choice to make change, but rather their reaction to outside forces that make the change a necessity. This is what happened in 2020, with the Army University work model changing almost instantly from nearly 100% in-person to nearly 100% telework.

Kotter (2012) posits that necessary changes, which eventually result in lasting organizational culture change, are made by and through eight “accelerators.” These accelerators (see Figure 1) are the drivers of a change effort, and though they generally arrive in sequence, it is not necessary that they happen sequentially. They can begin in any order, happen simultaneously, or even iteratively throughout a change process. The accelerator model thus presents a more interactive vision of change, where



Figure 1

Kotter's (2012) Eight Accelerators of Change



Note. The eight accelerators that enable rapid change can be visualized around a central topic, goal, or change initiative, which Kotter refers to as the “big opportunity.”

several networks or suborganizations can be working through different accelerators in any sequence at any given time. Similarly, evidence gathered in the current study indicates that results tied to one accelerator can also have connections to others.

Army University Telework Adoption Through the Lens of Kotter’s Eight Accelerators

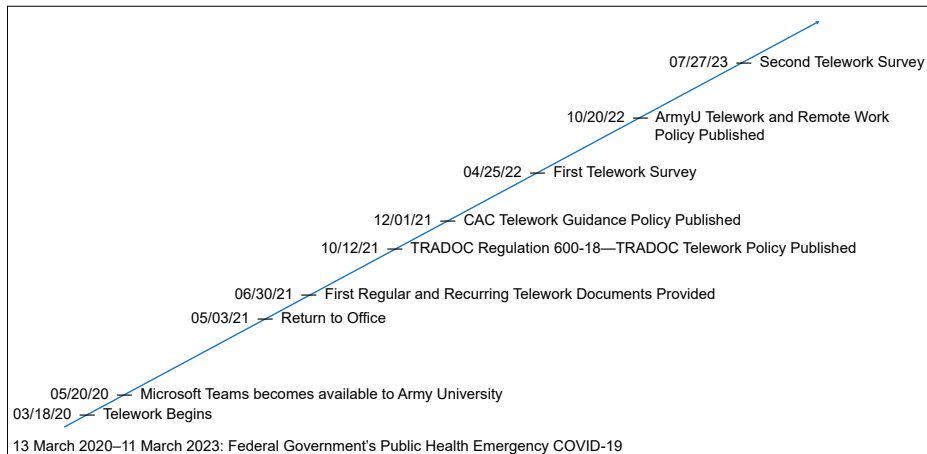
In this section, we will discuss the Army University telework adoption through the lens of Kotter’s (2012) eight accelerators.

The Big Opportunity

The “big opportunity” that was presented to Army University as a result of the forced telework model for its employees and students in 2020 was that it could take



Figure 2
Timeline of Army University Telework Implementation



the lessons learned from that experience and make its own hybrid model for employees and students that would allow them to work through telework or in person based on organizational needs and individual desires.

Create a Sense of Urgency

The first accelerator concerns itself with establishing and “maintaining a strong sense of urgency with as many people as possible” (Kotter, 2012, p. 27). This drives people to buy into or at least “try on” change. Employees tend to do things the same way over time because it feels normal and comfortable. Because of this, creating a sense of urgency for any change effort is an accelerator that should not be overlooked. Without a sense of urgency, people who resist, or are indifferent to change, might take the position of “waiting out” the appetite for new ways of doing things. A sense of urgency to make change, “allows behavior to happen that many who have grown up in mature organizations would think unimaginable” (Kotter, 2012, p. 28).

The original sense of urgency to adopt telework at Army University was created by the COVID-19 public health emergency declared on 13 March 2020 (see Figure 2). However, the subsequent remission of the pandemic created a new source of urgency for Army University leaders. They recognized that the change forced onto the organization by the pandemic had value and returning to the pre-COVID work model of daily office presence might be a step backward. The source of urgency became focused on the rollout and implementation of regular and recurring telework to prevent a loss of momentum. Leaders needed to assume some risk, capitalize on



telework tools already in place, and build on the positive gains learned throughout 2020 to take advantage of the big opportunity that lay in front of them. In response to this urgency, the deputy provost led the charge for the telework initiative by writing an initial telework policy and circulating it among Army University leaders.

Build a Guiding Coalition

The second accelerator is crucial in change success, as it initiates the momentum and leverages the heightened sense of urgency to establish a core of people or teams that will form the initial network of supporters for change and assist in seeing the change through. To capitalize on the urgency of the telework initiative, when the pandemic ended, Army University leaders built a coalition to support changes in the work model, including leaders at Army University, Combined Arms Center (CAC), and TRADOC levels, as well as representatives of the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center who had to ensure any actions taken were not an infraction of labor laws or union guidelines. In addition to senior leaders and administration, supervisor and employee support was critical, so the deputy provost held touchpoints with Army civilian professionals and military employees and drew feedback from entities that had internally adopted regular and recurring telework.

The feedback from employees and supervisors indicated that productivity had not suffered during the pandemic period of situational telework, and some tasks had benefitted from the increase in focus and decrease in distractions such as visiting or office background noise. Many employees felt gaining back the time they usually spent commuting improved work-life balance and that the opportunity to telework could assist in the recruitment and retention of talent for the organization.

Form Strategic Vision and Initiatives

In accelerator number three, the coalition clarifies a vision and identifies strategic initiatives that can move the organization toward the vision. Key to this step is that the message and initiatives are consistent with senior leader goals but formed and carried out by the coalition. Change agents create a common understanding of the change purpose and garner support from invested stakeholders. This is important because the change initiatives could be such that a management-driven hierarchy may be ill-equipped to handle in a sufficient or timely way (Kotter, 2012).

Army University's vision was to maintain and build upon the practices acquired through teleworking during COVID by building in flexibility that supported transparency: the initial policy was permissive rather than prescriptive, would be reviewed after the first year, and empowered supervisors in suborganizations to implement telework. The approach encouraged subordinate organizations to take ownership of the policy and create individual implementation policies based on their



Table 1

Army University Telework Survey Responses Relevant for Kotter Accelerator, Form the Strategic Vision and Initiatives

Survey Items	Positive Responses	
	2022	2023
I understand the work requirements of the Army University Telework and Remote Work Policy.	N/A	99.6%
I understand the duties required of me while teleworking or working remotely.	97.6%	98.8%
My leadership clearly communicated the repercussions of failing to maintain my telework or remote work agreement.	90.8%	88.6%
My leadership clearly communicated telework or remote work expectations.	91.2%	89%

leaders, organizational requirements, and culture. Middle managers were then able to implement, resulting in all employees having a clear vision of responsibilities and requirements.

Table 1 provides some evidence from the employee’s point of view that the effort to create a coherent vision for the telework policy was successful: the overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that they understood duty requirements and expectations while teleworking.

Enlist a Volunteer Army

The strategic vision built in the third accelerator facilitates the next—enlisting a volunteer army (i.e., a group strongly committed to pursuing the goal). “In the fourth accelerator, the guiding coalition, and others who wish to help, communicate information about the change vision and the strategic initiatives to the organization in ways that lead large numbers of people to buy into the whole flow of action” (Kotter, 2012, p. 31). This accelerator broadens the acceptance and visibility of the change effort across the organization and begins to pull others into the change agent network.

Army University leaders advertised this change in a number of ways, but one highly impactful mechanism was implementing and disseminating the results of the Army University telework surveys. The research team briefed survey results to Army University leaders, policy, and program analysts within their staffs, and provided the



Table 2

Army University Telework Survey Responses Relevant for Kotter Accelerator, Enlist a Volunteer Army

Survey Items	Positive Responses	
	2022	2023
I am satisfied with the current Army University Telework and Remote Work Policy.	78.7%	75.9%
The current Army University Telework and Remote Work policy has been fairly implemented in my unit.	N/A	72.6%

results in multiple formats so leaders could disseminate them widely, both up and down the chain of command. Army University leaders briefed results of the survey showing the impacts of telework during quarterly supervisor professional development training sessions, meetings with division chiefs, and during workforce sessions with all employees. The dissemination helped increase interest in telework and decrease misconceptions and stigma, which ultimately created leverage and momentum for the change.

Table 2 indicates that in addition to leadership support for the development and implementation of the Army University telework policy, employees are also members of the “volunteer army,” endorsing their satisfaction with the policy.

Enable Action by Removing Barriers

Once the network has grown to a sizeable force that is taking action, the fifth accelerator becomes relevant, removing barriers that would either prevent the initiative from succeeding or slowing to the point of interest loss. Any real or perceived barriers will be capitalized on by resistant fence-sitters or naysayers to continue the status quo.

At the onset of COVID, Army University removed barriers to telework and remote work by improving infrastructure and technology, providing employees with required hardware, such as laptops, and enabling widespread VPN access so employees could conduct their work securely. Licenses for collaborative software, such as Microsoft (MS) Teams, were provided to support remote meeting and teaching. Critically, employees were offered training for software such as MS Teams to ensure useability. These initial developments have continued to evolve with initiatives such as the Army “Bring Your Own Device” program enabled by the Azure Virtual Desktop, which al-



lows users to stay connected with their email, collaborative software, and shared documents, while being less dependent on government-issued equipment.

When employees returned to work after the pandemic, barriers in mentality regarding regular and recurring telework existed in the form of employee or supervisor disagreement that telework fit with Army culture. After coming out of isolation, many employees were glad to return to the office and wanted telework to be a thing of the past. Others were confused about the requirement to come back full time to the office, citing their individual productivity had not decreased during COVID. Leaders recognized that individuals needed autonomy to make the choice right for them. Supplementary information on the merits of telework and the objective data that had been collected through the surveys became more widely available. Workforce sessions became opportunities for open dialogue and for individuals to express concerns and receive guidance. They were also an opportunity to dispel myths, follow up on issues, and improve communication among employees and leaders.

An additional barrier to starting post-pandemic regular and recurring telework was the lack of relevant policies from higher-level organizations; neither Department of the Army, TRADOC, nor CAC had policies in place for long-term telework. This barrier was removed by the working draft version of the Army University telework policy clearing all administrative hurdles; it was officially published in October 2022.

While some barriers could be readily anticipated, the telework surveys provided key information about additional barriers to successful telework and whether they had been overcome. Table 3 suggests that the way the Army University telework policy was implemented addressed many typical barriers to successful telework. These include concerns about how teleworking may impact evaluations or career progression, having clear expectations, and having responsive support and training for both subordinates and supervisors.

Generate Short-Term Wins

As the change initiative gains momentum, it is critical to the success and continued forward progress to generate and celebrate short-term wins, the sixth accelerator. Generating, publicizing and celebrating short-term wins shows the organization that the change is gaining traction and provides recognition to the change network. These shared successes encourage more people to see the change as urgent, inevitable, or promising, and to volunteer to be pulled into the process.

Army University celebrated short-term wins by using the first year's survey data to spread awareness regarding the successful implementation and benefits of telework, and the second year's data to show the policy was written well and implemented fairly. The momentum, successes, best practices, and tactics, techniques,



Table 3

Army University Telework Survey Responses Relevant for Kotter Accelerator, Enable Action by Removing Barriers

Survey Items	Positive Responses	
	2022	2023
It is my perception that teleworking had a neutral or positive influence on my current DPMAP or evaluation rating.	99%	98.4%
It is my perception that telework or remote work has limited or will limit my promotion potential or upward mobility for my career.	5.9%	4.4%
While teleworking or remote working, my supervisor holds me accountable to the same productivity standards as when I am in the office.	95.5%	96.4%
Any issues I faced while teleworking or remote working were resolved promptly by my leadership.	83.8%	85.4%
I have been given the appropriate training to be confident supervising telework and remote employees.	89.9%	98.1%
My employees are lacking resources to be successful while teleworking or working remotely.	25.4%	1.9%
As a supervisor of teleworking or remotely working employees, I find myself having to work harder to maintain the same level of communication compared to when they are in the office.	40.7%	38.9%

and procedures of supervisors in suborganizations were solicited in both telework surveys, which were then consolidated and reported to leaders who promulgated these strategies for success to other organizations to demonstrate short-term wins.

The collaborative infrastructure put in place also generated wins by allowing individuals to attend meetings without requiring conference room reservations or large auditoriums. Removing the requirement for in-person attendance has increased inclusivity and representation and improved the speed and spread of communication throughout the organization.

During the lockdown, another short-term win became clear when inclement weather occurred, resulting in the closure of Fort Leavenworth due to treacherous driving conditions. However, because employees were largely teleworking, hundreds of instructors, Army civilian professionals, and students were able to contin-



Table 4

Army University Telework Survey Responses Relevant for Kotter Accelerator, Generate Short-Term Wins

Survey Items	Positive Responses	
	2022	2023
Weighing both positive and negative aspects above, I prefer to telework or remote work rather than work in the office every day.	64.2%	68.4%
I was provided the necessary training to be confident and capable instructing or training students online.	70%	79.2%
I have been provided with the resources my position requires to be successful in performing my duties while teleworking or working remotely.	90.6%	91.8%
As a supervisor, it is my perception that telework, or remote work has either improved or did not influence the morale of my unit.	86.5%	88.7%

ue the mission with little disturbance. Every inclement weather episode since has generated additional short-term win opportunities for both situational and regular teleworkers.

An additional large and unforeseen win came when CAC and TRADOC utilized portions of the Army University telework policy and survey results while drafting and updating their policies. Receiving buy-in and support from the higher-level organizations was a confidence builder that this policy and the program were on the right track for the organization.

Table 4 suggests that the first time the Army University survey was administered, employees were positive about key issues such as preferring to telework and performing their duties including teaching. Supervisors responding to the 2023 survey also agreed that telework did not negatively affect their team’s morale.

Sustain Acceleration

“Accelerator 7 keeps the entire system moving despite a general human tendency to let up after a win or two” (Kotter, 2012, p. 33). Senior leaders and change advocates continue to publicize the accomplishments of the initiative while still seeking opportunities to sway a diminishing number of opponents. It is an extension of generating the short-term wins in that it continues to build on all the previous accelerators and



maintain the momentum of the change effort over a long period of time, leading to the final step of instituting change.

Army University sustained acceleration by using the data to identify aspects of the policy that weren't working, make changes, and publicize them. Additionally, a four-hour training course was created by CAC and instituted with the Army Management Staff College. This course, titled *Leading Hybrid Teams*, capitalized on available best practices and successes reported, becoming a requirement for all supervisors. This course reiterates supervisory practices that are critical to maintaining an effective telework program and environment. Creating the training and expanding to all supervisors meant that even those who were uncertain about telework or unsupportive were still set up for success.

As Army University tools and policies expanded to normalize telework, the benefits of telework and remote work as a recruitment tool became clearer and more of a consideration for inclusion in future job postings to compete for top talent with other federal organizations and to attempt to recruit younger workforce generations, who have been notoriously difficult to interest in federal employment (Newhouse, 2024).

Despite the noted successes, it should be stressed that there is a continual need for action to sustain implementation. While the flexibility of the telework policy was a strength for transparency and implementation, it also provides latitude for supervisors to reduce or eliminate telework in positions where they nominally allow it. Evidence from the second Army University telework survey indicated 29 out of 384 people (7.5% of total survey respondents) provided examples indicating their positions were approved for regular and recurring telework, though they were discouraged or denied the opportunity to do so by their supervisors. This is an issue that needs follow up and continual assessment to act upon issues discovered through organizational learning, sustain the gains of the telework initiative, and ensure we do not introduce inequities in the application of telework that could have potential implications on recruitment and retention of employees.

Tables 4 and 5 provide evidence that the earlier wins have been sustained or increased, and that the use of telework has started to have broader implications including affecting retention and recruitment. Telework has been integrated into generalized work practices, with supervisors using available face to face time effectively and employees agreeing that telework does not negatively impact their productivity or work ethic.

Institute Change

“Accelerator 8 helps institutionalize wins, integrating them into the hierarchy’s processes, systems, procedures, and behavior—in effect, helping to infuse changes into the culture of the organization” (Kotter, 2012, p. 33). This final accelerator is incredibly important, as it is the one that codifies the change in policy and practice



Table 5

Army University Telework Survey Responses Relevant for Kotter Accelerator, Sustain Acceleration

Survey Items	Positive Responses	
	2022	2023
Because of the ability to telework, I am more likely to recommend working at Army University.	69%	88.1%*
The teleworking policy has increased my willingness to continue working for Army University.	NA	74.6%
Because I telework or work remotely, my work ethic is that I work the same amount or harder for the organization as I did when I was in-person.	NA	99.2%
While teleworking or working remotely, I complete the same amount or more work compared to when I am in the office.	74.9%	72.4%
My leadership takes advantage of the time together in the office to effectively utilize face-to-face interaction.	NA	87.5%
My students are able to communicate with me as effectively or more effectively while I telework or remote work, compared with classroom face-to-face instruction or training.	43.7%	42.6%
My students are receiving the same quality of education or training in the online environment as when they would if they were being taught face-to-face in my classroom	41.3%	56.2%

Note. * Denotes a scale change from 5-point Likert in 2022 to True/False scale used in 2023. May appear more positive.

and turns what is new into normal organizational behavior. At this point, the big opportunity is solidified and demonstrated to be an initiative with staying power that will not fizzle out in time.

Army University has worked to institutionalize change by using findings from the telework surveys to update the telework policy and seek to publish this revision, with the support of champions for change at each echelon. There is continued support to ensure that supervisors are successful with the Leading Hybrid Teams training course. At the time of this writing, all supervisors in CAC have completed the course. The process of implementing telework at Army University is also taught as a case study during the Strategic Leadership Course at the Army Management



Table 6*Army University Telework Survey Responses Relevant for Kotter Accelerator, Institute Change*

Survey Items	Positive Responses	
	2022	2023
Please indicate your interest in future (or continued) remote employment by Army University.	NA	84.3%
Compared to last year, my instruction or training online has improved.	NA	38.8%
I see the Army University Telework and Remote Work Policy as a step in the right direction for our organization.	89.6%	86.1%
It is my perception that my leadership trusts me to telework or remote work.	88%	80.8%
I trust my leadership to telework.	90.9%	89.5%
As a supervisor, I am in support of the Army University Telework and Remote Work Policy.	86%	83.7%

Staff College to educate senior Army leaders on the possibilities and paths to culture change. Employee face-to-face sessions with the deputy provost are still occurring annually during site visits, ensuring employees have a venue to provide feedback to higher-level leaders about telework and remote work.

By making the telework policy available to all eligible employees at the very beginning of their employment, the program and requirements are now showcased as an element of the existing organizational culture. Educating employees about telework at the earliest opportunity ensures understanding and transparency. The telework surveys and results are continually briefed during new employee orientations. The telework contract and the telework training requirements are on the new employee required checklist and available on the CAC website, demonstrating permanence and leader support of the program.

Table 6 highlights some of the positive employee responses that reflect an ongoing culture change in Army University in embracing the use of telework and remote work. For example, a majority of respondents expressed an interest in remote work, and a sizeable minority of instructors agreed that the quality of online instruction is improving year on year (another 56.7% were neutral). Respondents are also generally positive about telework being good for Army University. Finally, while supervisors' feelings about telework are often a key stumbling block to long-term success, super-



visor respondents to the survey indicated they support the policy and that supervisors and their subordinates trust each other. These measures suggest not only a positive attitude toward the experience of telework but also provide support for the idea that a culture change has occurred.

Discussion

The current article presents a case study of Army University's telework policy implementation as an example of organizational learning, with the findings from two surveys providing both evidence for the success of the cultural change and specific support for key stages in change management. Beyond the scope of this article, our findings contribute to two related topics: the evaluation of telework implementation in government workplaces and the contribution of organizational learning to the goal for the Army to become a learning organization.

Telework in Government Workplaces

The positive results from both surveys are consistent with previous research on telework, which also indicates employees' preference for telework and that telework increases work-life balance, perceived productivity, and commitment to the organization (de Vries et al., 2019; Harker Martin & MacDonnell, 2012; Mullins et al., 2022; Ramirez, 2022; Vega et al., 2015). Government-specific research on telework has been conducted by Kwon and Jeon (2018), who analyzed data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and found an increased satisfaction in telework programs linked to the 2010 Telework Enhancement Act, leadership commitment, and cultivating a performance-oriented culture. Likewise, Lewis et al. (2023) used Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey data from before and during the pandemic to suggest that those institutions that switched to frequent telework during the pandemic had decreased turnover. Data from the two Army University telework surveys suggest the benefits and challenges for Army University employees and leadership are typical of those identified in previous research: telework can be seen positively by employees (Ameen et al., 2023; Mullins et al., 2022; Ramirez, 2022) and improve retention (Lewis et al., 2023), but leadership attitudes and flexibility play a major role in whether telework adoption is successful (Adekoya et al., 2022; Contreras et al., 2020; Mullins et al., 2022; Röpke, 2023; Sanders, 2022).

Evidence from both telework surveys indicates positive findings, but the surveys were not completed by every individual within the organization. Limited response is a typical limitation of survey research and highlights the importance of using additional and convergent forms of feedback, such as leader roundtables soliciting employee feedback, monitoring of employee telework usage numbers, regular leader check ins



with both military and civilian supervisors, and maintaining a sustained effort to promulgate the telework policy to Army University suborganizations that have not yet fully instituted telework despite having the option available. Organizational learning requires the organization to accurately see itself to bring all employees onboard, systematically remove barriers, and support useful and useable innovations.

Telework Supports Organizational Learning for a Learning Organization

Given the challenges involved, the adoption and sustainment of the Army University telework policy can be seen as an important example of innovative organizational learning in support of the broader goal for the Army of being a *learning organization*.


This article has highlighted the ways in which Army University telework adoption followed key steps needed for successful organizational learning. We can also consider the complementary evidence that telework adoption has supported the dimensions of a learning organization. As described earlier, the five key dimensions of a learning organization denoted by Calton et al. (2021) revolve around themes of *innovation* and *collaboration*: (1) cultivate learning support, (2) orient toward a shared future, (3) explore new perspectives, (4) synchronize capabilities, and (5) manage organizational knowledge. Kotter's (2012) accelerator steps that supported telework adoption echo some of these dimensions, such as cultivate learning support (build a guiding coalition), orient toward a shared future (form strategic vision and initiatives), and manage organizational knowledge (institute change).

Additionally, telework adoption benefits the Army as a learning organization through its second-order effects. As mentioned in the short-term wins section, we have seen increases in meeting attendance for hybrid/online modalities of meetings. This is one example of a broad benefit Army University leverages as a distributed organization, with locations across not only the United States but also the world. Army University is also a hierarchical organization, with nested structures based on military hierarchy for both educational and administrative practices. The advent of telework has created or expanded available technology for working, managing, meeting and teaching in virtual or hybrid environments. This new infrastructure has enabled better communication and collaboration both laterally across the institution and vertically through levels of seniority. Adopting technologies such as MS Teams has not only allowed individuals in remote locations to meet more easily but has also provided greater ability to identify relevant collaborators. MS Teams has enabled the creation of worldwide working groups, communities of interest and committees with a size and diversity not possible before the pandemic. High-level meetings are accessible via MS Teams that would have previously been closed to many levels of the organization. Large-scale hybrid meetings are possible for both administration



and for the exchange of innovative ideas that would not have previously been considered. Virtual learning has increased the scale of professional military education and Army civilian educational opportunities and has offered opportunities such as speakers from remote locations who otherwise could not participate. Many of these collaborative innovations could have been possible without widespread telework and virtual instruction, but the reality is that the infrastructure required was not created or maintained until the tipping point of organization-wide telework.

Conclusions

For the Army to thrive as a learning organization, it is critical to support organizational learning opportunities. Given the success of telework adoption across Army University, we suggest that the lessons of this case study be considered in the continued drive for the Army to be a learning organization. In short, successful organizational learning underpins the successful learning organization. This case study may be used by higher-level organizations or reapplied at Army University during times of required rapid organizational learning and culture change, such as the anticipated future widespread rollout of artificial intelligence applications. However, even as we highlight the success of telework adoption, we have no evidence that Kotter's (2012) accelerator steps or any other model of organizational learning were considered or applied during telework implementation. Rather, we see the connections to key steps in successful organizational learning only in retrospect. Moving forward, it is critical for Army University and the wider Army to not leave organizational learning to chance. Successful innovation is unlikely to occur without systematic guidance and strong leadership, especially when significant culture change is required. 

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