

## Writing and Thinking

MAJ David H. Park, *Fort Leavenworth, Kansas*—I would like to reply to a single point in Major Trent Lythgoe's article, "Flight Simulation for the Brain: Why Army Officers Must Write" (*Military Review*, November-December 2011). The article stated an important and pertinent opinion concerning the status of our profession today. We must all write better as experts in our domain. The quantity and quality of our dissertation must improve continuously for the sake of our profession. There is only one point I disagree with in MAJ Lythgoe's argument.

Some in the Army have expressed disagreement with our briefing culture involving PowerPoint slides. But I must state that the assault on PowerPoint generally centers around

the culture of "cutting, pasting, and rearranging bullet statements," as discussed by MAJ Lythgoe, rather than the briefing format itself. It is possible to use the same procedure of cutting, pasting, and rearranging ideas through Microsoft Office Word, Publisher, or even Excel. Therefore, criticizing PowerPoint as a way of criticizing uninformed and unoriginal thought is a red herring. We should encourage original, critical, and creative thinking required for professional and high-quality writing. But criticizing a briefing format such as PowerPoint does our profession much injustice, and may in fact reduce our staff efficiency.

I have had friends at several echelons who criticize PowerPoint, using a similar argument. My reply is that if they had a better means to articulate their points in a briefing, using narratives, pictures, graphs,

and figures, all in one format, to please show us all. I have yet to see a better briefing format that incorporates the written narrative with visual depiction and video feeds than the Microsoft Office PowerPoint. This includes the much-vaunted Command Post of the Future that several years ago was pitched as a possible replacement for PowerPoint.

It is possible to produce a well thought-out, well-informed presentation in a PowerPoint format. To criticize PowerPoint for lack of proper analysis in staff products is akin to blaming Microsoft Office Word for one's poor grasp of spelling and grammar. As of 2011, Microsoft Office's PowerPoint remains the uncontested venue for the most complete way of briefing in today's Army, incorporating the written narrative, graphic aids, and figure displays.

