(Photo by Master Sgt. A.J. Coyne, Virginia National Guard PAO)

Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Green, Virginia National Guard senior enlisted leader, speaks with soldiers from Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 183rd Cavalry Regiment during a visit 13 December 2013 to Camp Pendleton, North Carolina. As the eyes and ears of the adjutant general of Virginia, Green visits each of the Virginia National Guard facilities and readiness centers across the state to gauge their levels of readiness.

Mentoring, Coaching, and Counseling

Toward A Common Understanding

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There is an old joke describing how a soldier, a Marine, a sailor, and an airman each responded differently to the command to "secure the building." The soldier quickly assembled his platoon, posted a guard mount, and controlled all entrances and exits. The Marine mobilized his force, outlined the plan, engaged the building with indirect fire, assaulted on line, cleared the building, sequestered survivors, and prepared to repel counterattacks. The sailor leisurely walked in; unplugged all the coffee pots; turned off the lights, computers, and printers; locked the doors; and left. The Air Force officer immediately contacted a real estate agent and negotiated a multi-year lease with an option to buy.

Similar confusion often occurs when talking with joint and interagency colleagues about how to help junior leaders progress. As military leaders, we help others develop through various means, including offering advice, providing support, allowing mistakes, and setting the stage for career advancement. When discussing leader development with our peers in partnering organizations, we often share insights and exchange techniques. It is important to establish a common understanding of the words mentoring, coaching, and counseling to help define the role of a leader.

A leader's tool kit to develop others contains three main tools: mentoring, coaching, and counseling. These terms have different meanings between the military services and government agencies, and among leaders within a service as well. To add to this confusion, different generations of Army leaders often use the terms differently. Just what do we mean by *mentoring*, *coaching*, and *counseling*?

The meanings of these words have been evolving in military doctrine as each of the services attempts to define them. The Army took a hard look at leader development and tweaked its use of the words of mentoring, coaching, and counseling in the latest leadership doctrine (Army Doctrine Reference Publication [ADRP] 6-22, *Army Leadership*).[1] Perhaps the biggest difference in how the Army and other services and agencies view these functions is reflected in the concept of mentoring.

Mentoring

One of the challenges in discussing mentoring is that people usually use the word in ways that reflect their own environments. Army Regulation 600-100, *Army Leadership*, defines mentorship as the "voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect."[2]

ADRP 6-22 uses this definition and further expounds upon the doctrinal view of mentoring relationships. A key point highlighted in ADRP 6-22 is that "mentoring relationships are not confined to the senior-subordinate relationship. They may occur between peers and often between senior NCOs [noncommissioned officers] and junior officers."[3] This distinction expands the mentoring relationship beyond one of rank. It also focuses on the aspect of a mentor as someone with more experience helping to develop someone of less experience based on individual developmental needs. In the Army's view, a mentor is usually a person who specializes in the same occupational field as the mentee. For example, a more experienced artillery noncommissioned officer may serve as a mentor for a young artillery lieutenant. This doctrinal view shifts the emphasis of the action of mentoring from an inclusive view of a leader serving as the wise and trusted counselor for every soldier in the command to the view of a person exercising leadership as a wise and trusted counselor to an individual.

From the Army's perspective, the interactions between a mentor and mentee are at the personal level. An informal relationship reflects a personal commitment from both parties to improve the mentee. This shift in the doctrinal construct does not abrogate the responsibility of leaders to develop their subordinates but instead adds a responsibility for each leader to devote time to be a mentor to a select few. The Army's doctrinal approach to mentoring does not mandate or assign duties, nor does it establish a formal program requiring a mentor be assigned to each officer. Rather, the approach reflects the preferences of soldiers for voluntary relationships, which usually extend outside the chain of command, with experienced and trusted persons. Mentoring can be beneficial, both for the mentee and the mentor, producing positive organizational and developmental outcomes. Effective mentoring can increase retention, morale, and productivity, in addition to enhancing personal and professional development.[4] Establishing an informal professional nurturing relationship with another promotes an environment of leadership development within the Army. Such

relationships not only strengthen the individuals involved but also contribute significantly to the improvement of the profession.

Members of the current junior ranks of the armed forces bring a significantly different view of life than older generations. Soldiers entering the force today come increasingly from the "Millennial Generation." Compared to the midcareer leaders in the Army that come mainly from "Generation X" and the senior leaders who are from the "Baby Boomers," the Millennials tend to be more trusting and more team-player oriented. They "appear to be receptive to advice, willing to work hard, and extremely focused on accomplishment."[5]

With a generation in the force that welcomes advice and is motivated to work hard toward goals, mid-career Army leaders need to approach professional development in a different manner than what they experienced during their careers. Senior leaders often offer insufficient assistance in helping their subordinates understand mentoring, coaching, and counseling. For example, the *Army Leader Development Strategy 2013* speaks to assigning three- and four-star mentors for each U.S. Army War College Fellow.[6] This assignment of mentors does not comport with the doctrinal intent of mentoring being a voluntary relationship. Other Army senior leaders speak about mentoring as a commander's action, not as a voluntary personal developmental relationship. This confusion may hinder senior leaders in helping their subordinate leaders understand the informal, nurturing intent of mentoring.

The Dark Side of Mentoring

Despite all the advantages of effective mentorship in transferring knowledge, supporting development, and improving performance, a mentoring relationship can sometimes have undesired ramifications. As an advantage, mentors may serve as advocates for their mentees. A mentor, due to greater experience and a broader network of colleagues, can often open doors to opportunity for a mentee. A good word from a mentor to a senior officer can result in an inside track to a career-enhancing job for the mentee. However, such mentoring within the chain of command can have detrimental outcomes for the organization. In fact, it may be best to not develop a close, exclusive mentoring relationship with those directly under the mentor's supervision since this could easily foster a perception of favoritism or cronyism among those in the command with whom the mentor does not share as close a relationship.

Another negative aspect of mentorship results from a mentor sabotaging a mentee by providing inaccurate or irrelevant career advice. Negative organizational ramifications can develop when a conflict occurs and a formally assigned mentor engages in a bullying or a revenge-seeking behavior with a mentee. Perhaps the worst thing a mentor could do is to exploit a mentee to further the mentor's personal agenda.

Who Does Mentoring?

As we have noted, there is some confusion in the Army as to just what is mentorship. The confusion increases as we look at the other services and how they view this issue. Moreover, our increasing interaction involving leader development with other government agencies brings real potential for substantial misunderstanding.

Government agencies have attempted to establish some common definitions. For example, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) describes mentoring as a formal or informal relationship between a senior person, usually outside the chain of supervision, and a junior protégé.[7] The importance of having effective and capable mentors for the federal workforce is evident in the Federal Workplace Flexibility Act of 2004, which mandates federal agencies, in coordination with OPM, establish training for supervisors on mentoring employees.[8] This implies mentoring is a function of leaders and managers, not necessarily a voluntary relationship with subordinates.

Even between the military services, there are differences and overlaps in use of the term mentoring. For example, the Navy's policy views mentoring as formal or informal but most effective when conducted as a voluntary relationship between a subordinate and an experienced superior— not the first- or second-level supervisor.[9] The Navy program links employees with experienced professionals for career development. These experienced workers advise on the personal and professional growth of the employees by sharing the knowledge and insights they have learned through the years. The Navy mentee selects a mentor based on the mentee's developmental needs. Conversely, the mentor oversees the career development of another, usually junior, person. However, in July 2013, the chief of naval operations issued instructions that peer-to-peer

(Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Garrison-Hawaii)

An instructor provides feedback and guidance as he mentors a student during a 2008 exercise at the NCO Academy Hawaii at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

mentoring was critical to helping sailors avoid making destructive decisions involving possible sexual harassment, sexual assault, and suicide. The chief of naval operations recognized that "fellow shipmates have the greatest influence in mentoring our next generation of leaders," thereby changing the meaning and intent of mentoring.[10]

Since 2006, the U.S. Marine Corps has taken a more formal and mandatory approach to mentorship, requiring all Marines to be mentored by the Marine senior to them in the chain of command. The Marine Corps mentoring program casts a mentor as a role model, teacher, guide, and coach. The Marine Corps defines mentoring as encompassing all aspects of development in a Marine's life, not just duty performance. The importance placed on the mentorship program is reflected in the commandant's guidance that the skills and effectiveness of a leader as a mentor are to be considered when completing fitness reports.[11]

The U.S. Air Force takes an approach similar to the Marine Corps. Air Force Manual 36-2643, *Air Force Mentoring Program,* defines mentors "as advisors and guides who share knowledge, experiences, and advice in helping mentees achieve their career goals."[12] This manual indicates that the key to the mentoring process is the direct involvement of commanders, directors, and supervisors in the development of their people. The Air Force manual states that mentoring promotes a climate of inclusion.

We can see from these excerpts that OPM, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps view mentoring as a function of the direct supervisor. The Navy is attempting to come to an understanding on whether mentorship is between a subordinate and a superior or between peers. The designation of the supervisor as the mentor of all of the leader's subordinates differs significantly from Army leadership doctrine in ADRP 6-22,[13] which describes voluntary mentoring that goes beyond the chain of command. Thus, when Air Force, Marine, Navy, and Army officers discuss their responsibilities in leader development through mentoring, they will use the same word but intend different actions. More important, Army officers supervised by officers of another service

or supervising members of another service will need to clearly understand how this affects the expectations they set for leader development responsibilities. These differing perceptions present yet another challenge to building the joint, interagency team.

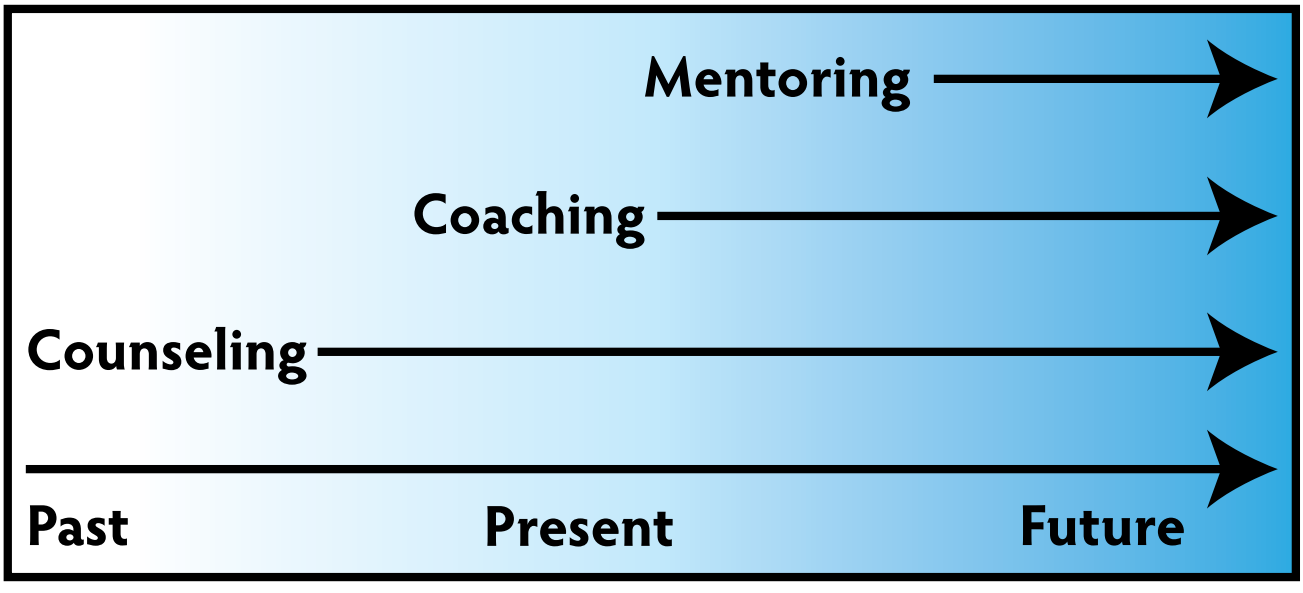
Coaching

The use of the term mentoring in the Air Force and Marine Corps may be more in line with the Army's use of the word coaching. Confusion between mentoring and coaching often arises due to the perceived overlap of functions. Florence Stone, a scholar in this field, stated that, "one of the functions of a mentor is to coach the protégé or mentee. But whereas mentoring uses many of the same techniques as coaching, mentoring involves going above and beyond."[14] A mentor, using the Army definition, will not necessarily be in a position to observe the mentee's daily performance and thus not be in a position to coach the mentee on task performance. However, the mentor should help the mentee develop a plan for professional and personal growth and to support the mentee in implementing that plan.

Army doctrine in ADRP 6-22 describes coaching as "a development technique" used by experts to improve "a skill, task, or specific behaviors."[15] From the Army's doctrinal perspective, coaching relies on teaching and guiding to bring out or enhance existing capability. This manual goes on to list several steps in the coaching process: focusing goals, clarifying self-awareness, uncovering potential, eliminating developmental barriers, developing action plans and commitment, and following up. In the Army's view, a coach helps identify short- and long-term goals, and discusses strengths and weaknesses in reaching those goals. Once again, mentoring one's subordinates could involve all or only some of those steps. The difference is that mentoring focuses on what occurs outside the chain of command. A mentor probably would not supervise job-specific skills or tasks, but should look at the long-term development of the mentee through helping with self-awareness, uncovering potential, developing action plans, and following up. One method of following up is for the mentor to provide feedback to mentees on their progress toward their goals. Here again we see what may be an overlap in actions between developmental functions.

Counseling

ADRP 6-22 states that "counseling is central to leader development. … Counseling is the process used by leaders to guide subordinates to improve performance and develop their potential."[16] By Army doctrine, leaders should expect subordinates to be active participants and seek constructive feedback. It is clear in this portion of Army doctrine that counseling is a senior-subordinate relationship focused on performance and potential as part of a comprehensive program to develop subordinates. Army doctrine



Developmental Activities Over Time

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark A. Moore II, 2nd Brigade Combat Team PAO, 10th Mountain Division)

Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Angelo listens to a soldier and provides guidance and mentorship to two fellow 10th Mountain troops 29 September 2014 at Fort Drum, New York. Angelo was presented the Maj. Gen. Aubrey "Red" Newman Award 28 August 2014 for his demonstrated outstanding commitment to the development of soldiers. At the time of the award, he served as the first sergeant for Troop C, 1st Squadron, 89th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division.

encourages the use of standard formats to organize a counseling session.

In Army Techniques Publication 6-22.1, *The Counseling Process*, three types of counseling are delineated: performance, event, and professional growth counseling.[17] The categories are not exclusive; a counselling session may include all three. However, the focus of each category is different. Event counseling focuses on helping a subordinate with a specific situation or event and could be associated more with coaching. On the other hand, performance counseling, which focuses on reviewing a subordinate's duty performance during a specific period, could either be part of coaching or mentoring. Adding to the confusion, professional growth counseling is an aspect of mentoring, but could be a part of coaching, depending on whether the focus is on personal or organizational goals. However, in the Army, supervisors have a responsibility to conduct professional growth counseling of their subordinates. There is so much overlap and confusion in the three terms that one needs to take a bigger picture view of the intent behind each concept.

Various Perspectives

From a macro perspective, ADRP 6-22 tells us that mentoring is a developmental tool for developing professional expertise, maturity, conceptual skills, and team-building skills. It uses advice and feedback linked to the actual experience of the mentor. Coaching focuses on helping someone through a set of tasks or with general qualities. Counseling is conducted on a routine basis to improve performance and identify potential.

Using Army doctrine as a lens, we can examine the relationship between these three developmental activities through their relationship in time. Counseling looks at the past and how to improve for the future, coaching looks at the present and how to improve to a future state and is more skill focused, and mentoring looks at the future and at potential.

Another way to view these terms is in light of who is the active participant. Counseling is primarily conducted by supervisors with their subordinates. Think of raters and senior raters counseling a ratee on performance and potential as part of their evaluation process. Coaching may be performed by a superior, but more frequently will be performed by a technical expert,

(Photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Burrell, MND-B PAO)

Command Sgt. Maj. Steven Payton speaks with Cpl. Kyle Morris after the soldier was presented with a certificate of achievement 27 March 2009 for his work in helping to build life-support facilities at Joint Security Station, Zafaraniyah, Iraq. Payton is the the senior enlisted advisor for 1st Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division. Morris is an engineer assigned to the 46th Engineer Battalion.

peer, or teacher. Mentoring is probably a better fit for someone of considerable experience, outside the chain of command.

Yet another view is from the developmental interaction. Counseling focuses on demonstrated job performance, coaching focuses on performing specific tasks or skills, and mentoring focuses more on developing the capabilities and competencies required for future positions. There is overlap in the functions associated with each term, but each term has its place in leader development.

Mentor is often used in the sense of the verb *to mentor*—to give wise counsel and advice as one who is trusted. In ADRP 6-22, the Army clarifies the meaning of mentor, aligning it with the noun usage of *mentor*—a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.[18] With this emphasis in meaning, leaders should not and cannot be a mentor to all of their subordinates. This responsibility is too time consuming and important for a leader to try to do, as this relationship extends beyond the immediate supervisory role and beyond the chain of command. Taking this to extremes, the more people a leader supervises, the greater the potential that the number of mentees could run into the hundreds or even thousands over time. On the other hand, leaders have a coaching role with all their subordinates as well as the responsibility to counsel them on their performance and professional growth. Through their roles as coaches and counselors, leaders interact with subordinates and provide them a great opportunity to identify a potential mentor; this new relationship could last a career and possibly beyond.

Conclusion

When using the words mentoring, coaching, and counseling, it is important to understand one's audience and the context in which the words are used. These terms have different meanings to each service, other federal agencies, business leaders, and academics as well and may be a source of confusion among Army leaders.

Mentoring, coaching, and counseling are at the heart of leader development and are key

instruments for improving organizations. Different people may approach the functions in a dissimilar manner, but the desired results are not that different. One of the key tasks of leaders is to develop subordinates, and they should apply their knowledge and experience to develop others—both within and outside their chain of command as appropriate. Effective leaders are committed to leader development as a critical part of making their organizations better. Our challenge is to understand our various roles in developing leaders and to be able to explain them to those we work with, those we work for, and those who work for us, so that the concepts of mentoring, coaching, and counseling become more than words.

Now, how do I secure that building??

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