TRADOC Opens App Store to Host Official Army Mobile Applications

By Meghan Portillo - NCO Journal

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U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command has created its own app store to bring official Army apps to Soldiers on the go.

"Everybody has a mobile device these days," said Lt. Col. Joseph A. Harris Jr., TRADOC capability manager for mobile learning, or TCM Mobile. "They are using those devices to go and search for whatever apps that they may need at the time. So we are trying to quench that thirst and provide them with something that is official — from TRADOC and from the Army."

TCM Mobile provides centralized management and governance for the Army's mobile learning initiatives and has created the TRADOC Application Gateway, or TAG, to host unclassified, non- "for official use only" apps and interactive digital publications.

Proponent-approved information

One of the missions of TCM Mobile and the motivation behind creating the TAG is to provide Soldiers with Army-approved information.

Anybody can create an app and put it in a commercial app store such as Google Play, the Apple Store or the Windows Store. And though many of those apps are informative and helpful, a Soldier has no way of knowing if that information is doctrinally sound.

"Pick any subject matter having to do with soldiering, and have five different people teach that exact same concept. You are going to have the thoughts and processes of each of those five people vary. You don't want to have five different apps on the same thing with different spins on each one," said Matthew MacLaughlin Jr., TCM Mobile's senior mobile instructional design specialist. "What we try to do is to cut out all of the bias and give the (Army) community a mobile application that is — at its core — functional and true to the proponent information. We want to cut down to the honest-to-goodness information put forth by the proponent that we want everybody to have, and then let the NCO and the Soldier who is utilizing the information in the field put their spin on it to make it pertinent to their needs."

TCM Mobile's branding on apps in the TAG allows Soldiers to easily identify them as official Army apps. The gold border and Army emblem in the lower right corner makes them easily recognizable but still allows each app to maintain its own look.

"When a Soldier goes to the TAG, that Soldier knows that app is approved by the proponent – the school or entity within the Army that is in charge of that information," said Ken Crim, TCM Mobile deputy. "You can go to the Apple Store right now and get 11 apps on the Army physical fitness program. None of them have been approved by the Army. So you are rolling the dice. 'Am I getting good information or not?' And that is

just a physical fitness program. Do I really want a Soldier going and getting a non-proponent-approved application on fire control? Heck no. So that is why TCM Mobile was established.

"If I am a staff sergeant or a platoon sergeant in a training situation, I need to know that I'm sending my Soldiers to a source of Army-approved information. If you use unofficial information for training, that could come back to bite you. Do you really want to take that risk?"

TRADOC Application Gateway

To access the TAG, Soldiers may visit tag.army.mil (https://tag.army.mil/) and log in with their Army Knowledge Online username and password. A common access card may also be used to access the site, but it is not required. The TAG App, which allows you to download other Army apps, can be downloaded upon your first visit to the TAG with your mobile device.

There are about 90 apps on the TAG as of March 2016. Some of the most viewed include a Performance Triad app, Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention apps, resiliency resource apps and Army Comprehensive Doctrine guides. Many more apps that have been created at the Army's centers and schools are being vetted and will soon add to the TAG's numbers. Though most of them may also be found in other app stores, Harris said TCM Mobile hopes the TAG will soon become Soldiers' one-stop-shop for Army mobile applications.

"Our goal is for the TAG to become the single place a Soldier should go to find an Army- or TRADOC-approved mobile application. We think over the next couple months it will continue to mature at a fast rate, and will be a great resource for Soldiers to find useful content," said Brian Robertson, program manager.

Have an idea for an app?

If someone has a great idea for an app that would meet the needs of an Army organization, they can work with TCM Mobile to create it and get it on the TAG. They have the option of creating the app themselves, or TCM Mobile's team of developers may take on the job.

Information on the TCM Mobile website (https://www.atsc.army.mil/tadlp/mobile/faq/index.asp) explains the process of submitting apps. Before making it to the TAG, they must both be verified by the proponent and tested to determine they contain no malicious code that could damage a user's mobile device.

"If Soldiers have great ideas, they can visit our website to learn how they can get their idea or their mobile app on the TAG – and get credit for it. If you created it, we want to give you the credit for creating that app through the proponent," Harris said.

There are so many Soldiers out there with great ideas, MacLaughlin said. They may want to solve an issue within their unit by creating a mobile application, but they are not sure where to start or how to go about it. TCM Mobile hopes to work with those individuals to realize their ideas and get them on the TAG, where the entire Army can benefit.

"This has been a very big, collaborative effort across the board to not only be able to provide Soldiers with what they need and want, but to be able to do it in such a way that we are safeguarding the Soldier, safeguarding the information and safeguarding the mobile devices," Crim said.

- **TCM Mobile site:** www.atsc.army.mil/tadlp/mobile/index.asp (www.atsc.army.mil/tadlp/mobile/index.asp)
- **TAG:** tag.army.mil (https://tag.army.mil/)

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