



U.S. Army Soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division, pull security during a simulated attack as part of the Joint Pacific Multinational Readiness Center rotation 22-01 at Kahuku Training Area, Hawaii, Oct. 24, 2021. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Effie Mahugh)

The Complete Leader

Study & Observations on Enhancing Leader Development in Operational Units

By Master Sgt. Phillip Fenrick & Maj. Eric Roles

Asymmetric Warfare Group

“A mule,’ said Marshal de Saxe, ‘that had made twenty campaigns under Caesar, would still be but a mule.’ Experience alone does not make a general, if nature has not endowed him with a genius for war; but this genius, again, must have been improved by practice, and profound study.”
—Gen. Jean Sarrazin, (1815, p. 226)

Experience alone does not equal leader development. However, that is the usual formula applied when developing leaders. If you’re a highly experienced and developed leader, you may at first disagree. You’ve navigated many crucibles: tough unit and Ranger training, combat training centers and deployments—all rich with leader development opportunities. Considering all that went into your development, clearly the formula

is more complex than persevering experiences. You were guided, mentored, and deliberately developed along the way—not simply on tactics and skills, but broadly, on all your leadership attributes and competencies.

Based on Asymmetric Warfare Group’s past 15 years of studying, supporting, and advising operational units on leader development, we advocate leaders at every level—from team leader to battalion command-



U.S. Army Soldiers from 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, cross country ski at the Chilean Army Mountain School in Portillo, Chile, Aug. 21, 2021. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Gregory Muenchow)

the gap resides in design and execution. Unit training is routinely focused explicitly on skills, tasks, and duty position competency.

Unit leader development plans (LDPs) typically conform to and comply with *Army Regulation 350-1: Army Training and Leader Development* (DA, 2017), but they fail to meet the spirit or intent of the *Army Leader Development Strategy* to deliberately “integrate collective and individual training with leader development” (DA, 2013, p. 13). Instead, unit LDPs are often stated in the form of a memo, like the example found in *Field Manual (FM) 6-22: Leader Development* (DA, 2015, pp. 2-9, Figure 2-2). Rarely are such leader development plans further visualized and integrated.

er—can enhance their subordinate leaders’ development by using the outcomes-based approach to envision, design, and integrate leader development into unit training and experiences (Asymmetric Warfare Group [AWG], 2013; Riccio & Diedrich, 2010; Straus et al., 2014; TRADOC, 2017; TRADOC, 2019).

The Situation: Implicit Leader Development

During a recent Army Lessons Learned forum discussing Army leader development, a company commander stated, “As a company commander, I spent almost all my time conducting gunnery, home station force-on-force training, and combat training center rotations. I received little to zero leader development as a company grade officer.” (CALL, 2020).

This commander’s perspective serves as an example of how leader development is routinely left as an implicit, expectation during unit training. The experiences the commander described were rampant within leader development opportunities. Unit training often focuses exclusively on skill and task training, with few—if any—explicit leader development outcomes. However, we can do better. With appropriate vision and design, leader development can be effectively integrated into unit training events. But first, we need to take a closer look at the gap.

The Gap: Explicit Leader Development Outcomes

The gap in unit leader development is not in doctrine. Army doctrine and regulations emphasize that design of operational experiences, unit training, and leader development must be thoroughly integrated (Center for the Army Profession and Leadership, 2020). In Army units,

Outcomes-Based Approach

Units can use the outcomes-based approach to envision, design, and integrate leader development outcomes into unit training and experiences. The outcomes-based approach is drawn from three key sources: AWG’s Adaptive Soldier Leader Training and Education methodology (AWG, 2013), “The Army University Educating Leaders to Win in a Complex World,” (Brown, 2015) and *The U.S. Army Learning Concept for Training and Education 2020-2040* (TRADOC, 2017).

First, it is important to distinguish the term “outcome” for describing leader development, rather than the terms “training objective,” “objective,” or “end-state.” Training objective is specific to mission essential tasks (MET) training (DA, 2016). Objective and end-state are specific operational terms (Department of Defense, 2021).

Outcomes are statements that emphasize the greater purposes of training and experiences, from initial design through execution and after-action reviews (AAR) and extend development beyond the event and into the greater learning continuum (TRADOC, 2017; 2019). In other words, outcomes transcend events. Hence, the term “outcome” is more fitting for designing leader development integration.

Understanding and explicitly designating leader development outcomes is the most critical step to integrating unit LDPs into training. An outcome includes training objectives with tasks, conditions, and standards but also embraces education and development. Outcomes also give the training designers freedom of action in designing the training.

LDP Structure: Designating Leader Development Requirements by Echelon and Cohort

One approach to structuring a unit LDP is to designate leader attributes and competencies by leader echelons and cohorts. For example, a team leader and platoon sergeant participating in the same company live-fire exercise will have different leader development outcomes relative to their duty positions and maturity. The training may be designed to develop the team leader's abilities to lead by example and inspire confidence; simultaneously, the platoon sergeant's development is focused on leading by directive and demonstrating exceptional mental agility and judgment under duress.

It makes sense for the designation of leader requirements and developmental outcomes to occur one or two levels up. Battalion and company commanders designate outcomes for platoon leaders; and battalion sergeants major and company first sergeants designate outcomes for platoon sergeants, and so on. Most importantly, outcomes need to be designated and implemented by leaders who know their subordinates' strengths and needs.

Example: Platoon Sergeants Develop "Leads"

A key benefit to using the outcomes-based approach is simultaneous vertical development at multiple echelons. Though the platoon sergeant is the focal point in the example below, subordinates are also being developed by *gaining confidence in their leadership and building trust through shared hardship* (developmental outcomes). Simultaneously, one of the first sergeant's critical leader requirement competencies is being developed: *developing others*.

In the following example, leadership requirements are explicitly designated and incorporated into events in four key steps:

- Designate leader attributes and competencies critical to those being developed.
- Identify developmental opportunities.
- Explicitly address leader development outcomes in counseling and re-emphasize prior to events.
- Design, facilitate, and evaluate events to support specific leader development outcomes, while simultaneously achieving MET training objectives.

Designate critical leader attributes and competencies

In this example, an infantry battalion sergeant major and company first sergeant designate the core competency category "leads" as the most critical requirement for platoon sergeants. The first sergeant takes direct responsibility for developing the platoon sergeants.

Identify development opportunities

The first sergeant identifies training events in the unit training plan where *leads* can be developed. The first sergeant identifies a suitable collective task to

focus on *leads* development in the platoon sergeants: troop leading procedures (TLPs). A training and evaluation outline report is generated using the Army Training Network (ATN), which is a useful reference for event designers, trainers and evaluators. The first sergeant then considers doctrinal descriptions such as FM 6-22 (DA, 2015, p. 6-5), which also offers rubric frameworks with descriptors of *leads* behaviors that

should be referenced to determine where leaders are in their development, and where they can improve.

Other important tools available to the trainers and evaluators are the rubrics and associated behavioral descriptors found in doctrine (DA, 2015, p. 6-6, Table 6-4, Table 7-5). These references aid in establishing consistent development and assessment standards. They should also be customized by evaluators and referred to while making observations.

Address leader development outcomes in counseling

Prior to the training event—during counseling—the first sergeant makes it explicitly clear to the platoon sergeants that "leads" is their most critical leader requirement and will be a developmental focus during specific training events. They must also specifically discuss the outcome statement above, discuss this competency and why it is critical, and establish a shared understanding of definitions and developmental objectives. They should also discuss previous observations of platoon sergeants' strengths and developmental needs. The platoon sergeants must understand they are being deliberately and continuously assessed and developed.



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Rocio Lucero, an observer coach/trainer for 340th Engineer Battalion, 181st Infantry Brigade, asks Cpl. Eric Pilloni, a military police with 530th Military Police Battalion, about his role during reconnaissance and detainee training at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, July 31, 2021. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Ryan Tatum)

Design, facilitate, and evaluate events to support specific leader development outcomes

During the event, designers, trainers, and evaluators must have a shared understanding of the leader development outcome and how to implement and regulate scenario conditions, so they are achievable, yet challenging and developmental. Trainers and evaluators must know precisely where within the training event they will stimulate and observe the targeted leader requirements and associated behaviors, and they must know how they can moderate conditions within the event to maximize development. At key points during and after the event, the first sergeant should facilitate AARs supported by trainers, evaluators, and any role players or opposing forces. AARs should involve all unit participants to capitalize on learning points (DA, 2016, pp. A-4, E-4, Appendix D; DA, 2021).

The trainer's intent is to train the leaders and unit exactly at their maximum learning and performance threshold, creating conditions where platoon sergeants must apply extreme pressure but avoid creating negative effects on the unit. In other words, trainers must push and challenge the unit to the limits of their performance without breaking them or causing a sense of failure. Some failures are part of development and should serve as key learning points in AARs, where trainers reinforce developmental successes, or provide counsel and create training conditions to support development needs.

Once the training event is complete, leaders should take adequate time to reflect. The first sergeant and platoon sergeant should revisit the leader development AAR points during counseling. They must continue to identify future leader development needs and create plans to support those needs.

Conclusions: Challenges for the Way Ahead

It is important that leaders at every level—from team leader to battalion commander—enhance their subordinate leaders' development by using the outcomes-based approach to envision, design, and integrate leader development into unit training and experiences.

Optimal leader development in operational units comes down to one thing: great training. Great training contributes to the broader continuum of development and learning and can be enhanced by establishing a shared understanding of the commander's vision and intent for leader development outcomes, as well empowering subordinates to proactively design and execute that vision. Experiences need to be designed for quality leader development, while avoiding excessive hardship, which does not necessarily increase effectiveness or quality and may hinder leader development.

There are three points that call for further research and potentially more doctrinal development. The first is the study of leader attributes and competencies among different echelons, cohorts, and branches within the Army profession, which the Army Research Institute is currently researching (Dein et al., 2019). Next, there is a need for leader development integration resources and tools. And third, there is the need to identify and describe approaches for integration of leader development into training.

In closing, the importance of regular counseling, coaching or mentorship cannot be underestimated. The Army has excellent doctrine and programs to inform coaching and mentorship. The communication that happens during counsel and mentorship is the only way to assure explicit shared understanding. ■

References

- Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG). (2013). *Preparing Soldiers and Developing Leaders for Decisive Action*. <https://portal.awg.army.mil>
- Center for Army Lessons Learned. (2020, 15 May). *Army lessons learned forum on leader development*. Virtual meeting.
- Center for the Army Profession and Leadership. (2020). *Army training and leader development strategy*. <https://capl.army.mil/additional-resources/leadership-development.php/>
- Brown, R. B. (2015). The Army University educating leaders to win in a complex world. *Military Review*, 95(4), 18-28. https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20150831_art008.pdf
- Dein, J. P., Ingurgio, V., Ratwani, K. L., Diedrich, F., & Flanagan, S. (2019). Tools and measures for NCO talent assessment. *NCO Journal*. <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/Archives/2019/July-2019/NCO-Talent-Management/>
- Department of the Army. (2013). *Army leader development strategy*. <https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/cal/ALDS5June%202013Record.pdf>
- Department of the Army. (2015). *Leader Development* (Field Manual 6-22). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/fm6_22.pdf
- Department of the Army. (2016). *Train to win in a complex world* (Field Manual 7-0). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN9860_FM%207-0%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf
- Department of the Army. (2017). *Army training and leader development* (Army Regulation 350-1). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN18487_R350_1_Admin_FINAL.pdf
- Department of the Army. (2019a). *Army leadership and the profession* (Army Doctrine Publication [ADP] 6-22). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN20039_AD6-22%20C1%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf
- Department of the Army. (2019b). *Mission command*:

Command and control of Army forces (ADP 6-0). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN19189_AD_P_6-0_FINAL_WEB_v2.pdf

Department of the Army. (2021). *Training* (FM 7-0). https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN32648-FM_7-0-000-WEB-1.pdf

Department of Defense. (2021). *DOD dictionary of military and associated terms*. <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf>

Riccio, G. & Diedrich, F. J. (2010). *An initiative in outcomes-based training and education: Implications for an integrated approach to values-based requirements*. AWG. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342752379_An_Initiative_in_Outcomes-Based_Training_and_Education_Implications_for_an_Integrated_Approach_to_Val

ues-Based Requirements

Sarrazin, J. (1815). *History of the war in Spain and Portugal, from 1807 to 1814*. Henry Colburn. <http://listserv.linguist-list.org/pipermail/ads-l/2013-January/124732.html>

Straus, S. (2014). *Innovative leader development: Evaluation of the U.S. Army asymmetric warfare adaptive leader program*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR504.html

Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). (2017). *The U.S. Army learning concept for training and education 2020-2040* (TRADOC Pamphlet 525-8-2). TRADOC. <https://adminpubs.tradoc.army.mil/pamphlets/TP525-8-2.pdf>

TRADOC. (2019). *Enlisted initial entry training policies and administration* (TRADOC Regulation 350-6). TRADOC. <https://adminpubs.tradoc.army.mil/regulations/TR350-6.pdf>

Master Sgt. Phillip Fenrick is a student at the Sergeants Major Academy (Class 72). His previous assignments include Troop Sergeants Major for the Asymmetric Warfare Group's Leadership Development Troop; rifle company, heavy weapons company, and headquarters and headquarters company first sergeant for 1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment (Airborne). Fenrick deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan multiple times and in various leadership positions. He holds a bachelor's degree in strategic studies and defense analysis from Norwich University and is currently working towards his master's degree in leadership studies at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Maj. Eric Roles currently serves as a 1st Special Forces Command Innovation Liaison to the National Command Regional. He recently served as the Troop Commander for the Asymmetric Warfare Group's Leader Development Troop. His previous assignments include the 101st Airborne Division, 75th Ranger Regiment, and 3rd Special Forces Group. He has deployed extensively to CENTCOM, AFRICOM, and EUCOM. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School.



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

