



**STRATEGY
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MENTORING REVISITED: NEW CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

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This research seeks to promote and encourage successful mentorship for junior officers. As the Army transforms into the 21st Century, it cannot afford to continue the old leadership practices that have dominated the Army for the past 20-30 years. Ineffectual leadership attributes contribute to the lack of effectual mentoring. Reports and surveys indicate that such leadership practices have led to the high attrition rate of junior officers. The current Army senior leadership has stressed the need to provide more mentoring opportunities for its junior leaders. However, this is not happening. If this trend continues, the future leadership of the Army will be at stake, the outlook of the future Objective Force will be bleak, and the junior officer attrition rate will continue. This research offers a definition of mentoring, assesses the effectiveness of mentoring in the past, and offers constructive ways for the Army to improve its mentoring programs and training. If mentoring programs are properly carried out, the Army will contribute to the development of future generations of officers and to the future of success of Army leaders.

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PREFACE

This research of mentoring is highly relevant for our 21st Century Army leaders. Development of the Army's junior officers is crucial to ensure long-term effectiveness as we transform our Army over the next 20-30 years. Beside transforming our forces from the Legacy Force to the future Objective Force, the Army must devote time and energy to the development of training and mentoring of its junior officers. If the Army fails to provide such training, the future Objective Force may not have the strong senior leadership as the present Legacy Force. Current leaders must become proactive in supporting a well-defined and planned mentoring program.

During the writing of this paper, I must acknowledge the steadfast assistance, inspiration and motivation of my wife, Shirley; (COL) Donald Rutherford, my project advisor; Professor Jim Hanlon, of Shippensburg University; Professor Patricia Pond, Communicative Arts Director, Army War College and last but not least, Colonel William G. Pierce, my faculty advisor. All have been a tremendous source of great knowledge and inspiration as I have written the paper from the first word to its final draft. I'm indeed eternally grateful for their assistance.

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MENTORING REVISITED: NEW CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

Mentoring is a hot button issue when it comes to soldier care. In the Army, this issue has surfaced because many junior officers report that they were not being mentored nor do they have mentors. The recent exodus of a number of junior officers has prompted many leaders to re-look how the Army cares for its young officers. Army leaders looking for ways to retain junior officers have looked to the business and consulting world. "Subject matter experts," consultants and counselors are springing up all promising that if only business, corporate, and military leaders would be better mentors, their retention, recruitment, and human capital resources would improve dramatically.

"Young professionals " are actually seeking out mentors that they respect and admire. Wholeheartedly, these young professionals are looking for ways to enhance their learning, professional development, and future career opportunities. This developmental activity is also making its way into the Army culture. Many young officers are seeking out mentors, but many do not find them. The problem seems to be that while many are looking for mentors, others are trying to figure out the actual meaning of mentoring or mentorship. While one person's idea of a mentor may be that of a senior person who has made it to the top, one who provides positive input to a subordinate who he or she feels has great potential to do as he or she has done. Others feel angry and frustrated because such mentoring reminds them of the "good old boy " network that plays favorites and fosters favoritism as a way to get ahead. ¹

The Army has adopted the term mentoring and considers it synonymous with " good leadership." But it brings further confusion to the definition of the term mentoring. Some challenges faced by future Army leaders are the training and development of leaders who can fight and win on the future battlefield. One of the greatest demands and perhaps the greatest challenge facing the Army today is educating and training leaders of tomorrow --providing them with the capability to be flexible--to innovate, think, and adapt to the demands of a fast-paced, highly stressful, and rapidly changing environment.² The other great challenge to the Army is retention of junior leaders within the Armed service.

The purpose of this paper is to assist, inform, and stimulate dialogue by revisiting mentoring issues, analyzing the definition and identifying new ideas and strategies for the 21st century that can be utilized in the future. This task will be accomplished by:

- Defining mentoring or mentorship
- Analyzing how mentoring has been effective in the past

- Describing what the Army has recently done
- Exploring the new challenges and offer new strategies
- Finally, recommending a program of training and recruitment.

WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is defined in three different ways--the modern, military, and classical. All three definitions are discussed below at length.

MODERN DEFINITION

The word mentor conjures up an image of a seasoned, corporate executive conversing, with a naïve, wet-behind-the ears young recruit. The conversation would be laced with formal rules and closely guarded secrets. Back in the 70's, as I recall, mentoring had an almost heady, academic sound, reserved solely for workers in white collars whose father advised, "Get to know ol' Charlie."³ But what is mentoring, really? When the package is unwrapped and the political correctness is pulled away, what's left? A mentor is defined in the dictionary as "a trusted advisor...coach or teacher." Taking the definition in its simplest context, a mentor is someone who helps someone else learn something the learner would otherwise have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all.⁴

"The traditional use of the word *mentor* denotes a person outside one's usual chain of command—from the junior's point of view, someone who helps me understand the informal system and offers guidance on how to be successful in this crazy organization".⁵ Chip Bell, in, *Managers and Mentors*, further states that, "Not all mentors are supervisors, but all effective supervisors should be mentors".⁶ Mentoring typically focuses on one person, whereas group mentoring is training or teaching-- subjects beyond the focus of this paper. " Good leaders do a lot of things. Good leaders communicate a clear vision and articulate a precise direction. Good leaders provide performance feedback, inspire and encourage, and when necessary, discipline. Good leaders also mentor. Mentoring is the part of a leader's role that has growth as its outcome."⁷ It is an untapped resource in today's resource constrained environment.

Military Definition

In the Army Leadership Manual, FM 22-100, the Army defines the term and uses it extensively throughout the manual in a number of different ways. The Direct Leadership level, FM 22-100 asserts, " As a leader, you help your subordinates internalize Army values. You also assist them in developing the individual attributes, learning the skills and mastering the action

required to become leaders of character and competence themselves. You do this through the action of mentoring.”⁸ Field Manual 22-10 defines mentoring as a “the proactive development of each subordinate through observing, assessing, coaching, teaching, developmental counseling, and evaluating the results in people being treated with fairness and equal opportunity. Mentoring is an inclusive process for every one under a leader’s charge.”⁹

In essence, Army doctrine describes mentoring as the actions of good interpersonal leadership (teaching, coaching, and counseling), caring for people, and growing its own future leaders by good examples of role models, emulating what juniors ought to become. Given such definitions, why is there so much confusion?

The U.S. Army doctrine on mentoring directs that it is a component of leadership development. But according to General Shelton, former Chief of Staff of the Army, and Secretary Laurin, “It is a process of thoughtful and deliberate advice, counsel, and education designed to help in professional growth and an important step in helping provide the leaders of tomorrow.”¹⁰

In a recent Strategic Research paper entitled Leadership: More than Mission Accomplishment, Colonel Peter Varljen recommends that the Army abolish the term *mentor* and simply focus on educating leaders to develop their subordinates through effective coaching, counseling, teaching, and role modeling. He believes that if leaders performed the above actions effectively and efficiently, many of their subordinates will seek to form a professional relationship. He further states that if good, caring and positive leadership is present, it might attract volunteers and entice them into positive mentoring relationships.¹¹ In today’s resource fettered environment, one of the few abundant resources for learning and sharing is other people.

CLASSICAL DEFINITION

The word “mentor “ comes from *The Odyssey*, written by the Greek poet Homer. As Odysseus (“Ulysses,” in the Latin translation) is preparing to fight in the Trojan War, he realizes he is leaving behind his only son and heir to the throne, Telemachus. Since his son “Telie” is only of junior high age, and since war tends to last for years (the Trojan War lasted ten), Odysseus recognized that Telie needed to be coached on being “king.” He hired a trusted family friend named Mentor to be his son’s tutor. Mentor is sensitive and wise—two significant ingredients of world-class mentoring.¹²

The classical and historical word ‘mentor’ is instructive for several reasons. First, it underscores the legacy nature of mentoring. Great leaders like Odysseus strive to leave behind

a legacy of added value. Secondly, Mentor (the elder man) combines wisdom of experience with sensitivity in his attempts to convey kingship skills to young Telemachus.¹³

Mentors are challenged to convey their hard-won wisdom to another without resistance. The successful mentor is able to circumvent resistance. In summary, effective mentors are like friends in that their goal is to create a safe context for growth and development.

Mentoring can be defined as “a developmental, caring, sharing and helping relationship where one person invests time, know-how, and effort in enhancing another person’s growth, knowledge and skills, and responds to critical needs in the life of that person in ways that prepare the individual for greater productivity or achievement in the future.”¹⁴

The long-term relationship addressed in the discussion of classical mentoring is not addressed in Army doctrine. The very nature of the tour of duty within the Army, normally three years, prohibits such long-term classical mentoring. On the other hand, the Army describes mentoring as equally inclusive and accessible to everyone. The classical notion of mentoring is just the opposite.

Thus, the Army doctrine has sown more seeds of confusion and misunderstanding. If the Army has defined mentoring in FM 22-100 as teaching, counseling, caring, coaching and people-and-leader development-which is good leadership, it has made the definition even more confusing.

Defining mentoring is not a clear cut process. Many people have written about mentoring. But there does not seem to be one definition that encompasses the experience of mentoring. Since the mass exodus of junior officers within the Army, there have been increasing discussion and concern within the Army over mentoring and leadership . Would you believe what is written?

- o There is: a serious generation gap between the baby boomers and the younger Generation X, resulting in a mass exodus of captains leaving the Army¹⁵
- o There is an ever increasing lack of trust between junior and senior officers according to Army surveys of majors attending the Command and General Staff College,¹⁶
- o There are also an ever increasing number of senior officers turning down battalion and brigade commands due to disenchantment with senior leadership and command climate.¹⁷

Such observations indicate that many senior leaders lack interpersonal skills or the moral conviction necessary to practice good and sound leadership. Are these indictments really valid? One fact that the Army cannot deny is that there is a growing disenchantment with the senior

leadership, which indicates there is a problem in the officer corps. Could it be that the Army chooses not to comprehensively evaluate the situation? Or is the leadership afraid that some one might get dismissed or fired because of the Army's zero tolerance with poor leadership? Colonel Varljen says it best: "Instead, it [the Army] concentrates solely on evaluating the product or mission accomplishment. " The cascading effect is :

- o the Army emphasizes mission accomplishment over the full spectrum of leadership competencies;
 - o thus mission accomplishment is rewarded over good leadership;
 - o leadership training and supervisor reinforcement is limited and inadequate,
 - o therefore leaders are not fully developed;
 - o comprehensive leadership is not practiced; instead the focus is getting the job done, often at the expense of the organization and people; and
 - o therefore subordinates get disillusioned, resulting in a leadership crisis."¹⁸

"In theory, the Army seems to have it right in its popular slogan: '*Mission First, People Always*'."¹⁹ But in reality, the Army chooses to put *mission first* and does not get around to *people always* as reflected in General Eric Shinseki's, Chief of Staff of the Army, introduction to Army Transformation, where he emphasizes the importance of people. Slogans notwithstanding, the predictive exodus and the lack of trust for their superiors within the Army officer's corps is evident as junior officers vote with their feet. An indicator of declining effectiveness is reflected in a *New York Times* article that cites a young officer saying, "Senior leaders will throw subordinates under the bus in a heartbeat to protect or advance their own career[s]."²⁰

General Kroesen, former CINCUSAREUR, reaffirms the point that this crisis is not new. In fact, during at least six distinct periods in Army history since World War One, a lack of confidence and trust in senior leaders caused the "best and brightest" to leave in droves.²¹ However, the Army must address the problem of junior officer attrition by identifying and discussing the alienation of junior and senior officers. The Army Training and Leader Panel Officer Study Report to the Army,²² reported:

Officers believe mentoring is important for both personal and professional development, yet a majority of officers report not having mentors. The Army's mentoring definition and doctrine needs revising. Officers would like to see a greater emphasis on mentoring, but do want formal, directed programs.²³

Echoing the sentiments of the junior officers that informal and undirected mentoring program is what's needed, many senior officers agree but have not been pro-active. The Army must revise its doctrine and re-define the word mentoring in its contextual setting so that its definition can be fully understood and viable. Understanding the relevant issues, addressing misconceptions; and facing challenges are vital to the future development of the mentoring process.

WHY A RENEWED INTEREST IN MENTORING?

Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of human development. Anthropologists and archaeologists trace its origin back to the Stone Age. When especially talented flint snappers, healers, cave artists and shamans instructed young people in the arts and knowledge needed to perpetuate their skills, thus laying the foundations for earlier civilizations; they served as mentors. Mentoring is not just a fad or inconsequential activity. It has worked from the Stone Age to the information age.

In the pages of the Odyssey, Homer assigned the name Mentor to this type of caring. Mentor was Telemachus' trusted friend, guide, teacher, adviser, and helper.²⁴ More importantly, a mentor is described as any one who has a beneficial life or style-altering effect on another person, generally as a result of personal one-on-one contact; one who offers knowledge, insight, perspective, or wisdom that is helpful to another person in a relationship which goes beyond duty or obligation²⁵

In many ways this definition is more significant because it stresses the importance of voluntary actions, one of the most important characteristics accounting for why there is a renewed interest in mentoring. Mentoring has not only gained a renewed interest today in business, and government but also in the Army for a number of reasons. Specifically, it is being used to achieve the following :

- Enhance skills and intellectual development
- Welcome and facilitate entry and advancement in the work situation
- Expand horizons and perspectives
- Acquaint the mentee with values, customs, resources and professional connections,
- Model the professional role,
- Advise, give moral support and build confidence,
- Furnish a relatively objective assessment of strengths and weaknesses,

- Define the newly emerging self and to encourage the dream.²⁶

A recent survey taken by forty Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels at the Army War College to determine their informing, relating, visioning, confronting and mentoring skills resulted in the low information, envision and relation skills. Mentoring enhances these skills and promotes professional growth for both the mentee and the mentor. This graph depicts the result of the survey and shows a need for additional training of Army officers in relation, envision, and

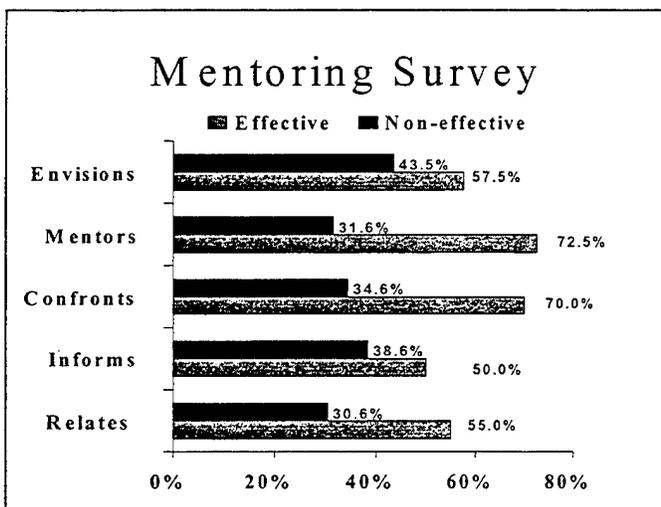


FIGURE 1: MENTORING SURVEY RESULTS

information skill development. This is why there is a need for the Army to renew its interest in mentoring and to provide adequate training and opportunities for its officers.

Let's review other reasons why there is a renewed interest in mentoring:

TIME TESTED

Mentoring is time-tested. It works. A most interesting example of mentoring at its best is in the relationship of Major General

"Fox" Conner and General Dwight Eisenhower. General Eisenhower served with a vast number of distinguished soldiers like George C. Marshall, Douglas Mac Arthur, and John J. Pershing. But he chose for a mentor some one he worked with and trusted, "Fox" Conner. How did the relationship develop? While assigned in Panama as a major, Eisenhower served as Conner's executive officer from January 1922 to September 1924. Eisenhower recalls, "General Conner discerned that I had little or no interest left in military history. I found myself invited to his quarters in the evenings and saw that he had an extraordinary library, especially in military affairs. We talked for a time and he picked out two or three historical novels."²⁷

Conner would review the books with Eisenhower and quiz him after they discussed each book. This situation repeated itself. It wasn't long until Eisenhower's interest in military affairs was rekindled. He read books and studied campaigns of Frederick the Great, Carl Van Clausen and Napoleon. After two years as Conner's executive officer, Eisenhower was convinced that his association with his mentor Conner would last long after he left Panama. During World War II, Eisenhower still confided in his former commander when problems arose concerning Allied unity. On 4 July 1942, several days after his appointment as Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, Eisenhower wrote Conner, " I cannot tell you how much I would

appreciate, at this moment, an opportunity for an hour's discussion with you on the problems that beset me...the same problem [coalition warfare] that you faced twenty-five years ago...recently I've been so frequently struck by the similarity between this situation and the one you described for me."²⁸ ²⁹ It was quite clear that Conner and Eisenhower had a lasting mentoring relationship that remained strong over decades. Years later, Eisenhower regarded Conner's advice as invaluable. As Eisenhower later wrote:

It is clear how that life with General Conner was a sort of graduate school in military affairs and the humanities, learned by the comments and discourse of a man who was experienced in his knowledge of men and their conduct. I can never adequately express my gratitude of this one gentleman, for it took years before I fully realized the value of what he had led me through. And then General Conner was gone, but in a lifetime of association with great and good men, he is the one more or less invisible figure to whom I owe this incalculable debt.³⁰

A key issue addressed in the above comments by General Eisenhower suggests that a good leader development process, a voluntary relationship, and informal mentoring encounter can have a lasting impact on the mentee's development.

Since the mid-1980's, the strategy known as mentoring has changed dramatically. Mentoring has moved from the Machine-Age model to an Information-Age model, and has brought with it new ways of helping people learn. The Machine Age model had a single focus on career advancement. This model assumed that the mentees are seeking to climb traditional organizational hierarchy. It has a tendency to clone look-alikes to generate think-alike and act-alike managers. This is similar to the classical style of mentoring, which is irrelevant in today's Army. Now, the new Information Age model of mentoring has opened up a wide range of new opportunities, seemingly endless possibilities, and significant new ways to enhance mentoring capabilities.

COST EFFECTIVE AND VOLUNTARY

It has been said that you can't hire a mentor.³¹ The reason is that mentor's payment or compensation could contaminate the mentoring relationship. It is awfully difficult for the mentor to focus exclusively on the needs of the mentee when his salary or income is involved. While mentoring can help offer solutions to the Army's retention problem, it can call upon the available talent and expertise of others to address this critical issue, without hiring additional staff members. It should be cost-effective.

One-to-one mentoring has become one of the most effective forms of instruction, as is well documented by both professional and educational research. In his article "Mentoring and Coaching Help Employees Grow," Edward Sketch articulated well the importance voluntary

mentoring relationships: “[Mentoring] is a trusting relationship. It allows people to tell the truth about themselves and their lives.” If put in place effectively, a successful mentoring program can enrich the lives of both mentor and mentee, while strengthening the bond between organization and leadership.³²

Many critics declared that, if the Army really wants a first class program, the Army has to train, educate, and re-educate the mentor. It costs money to provide a first-class mentoring program. Others proclaim “but the cost outweighs the benefits.”

AN ADDED DIMENSION

There are five types of one-to-one learning relationships. Each involves some form of teaching. Each exhibits an important difference in the relationship of the mentee and mentor. The five instructors are designated as teacher, tutor, coach, counselor, and mentor. A teacher completely teaches the curriculum their contract calls for. A tutor provides special assistance and offers intense help as a teacher of standard curriculum. A coach works on performance focuses on skills and systemic approaches to training. A counselor advises and assists in the personal decision-making process. But a mentor provides caring, sharing and a helping relationship while focusing on meeting the mentee’s needs.³³ Mentoring offers an added dimension in that it is an amalgam of the other four learning skills. This is not to say that the other skills would not overlap, but mentoring tends to be inclusive of the other four skills. (See figure 1).

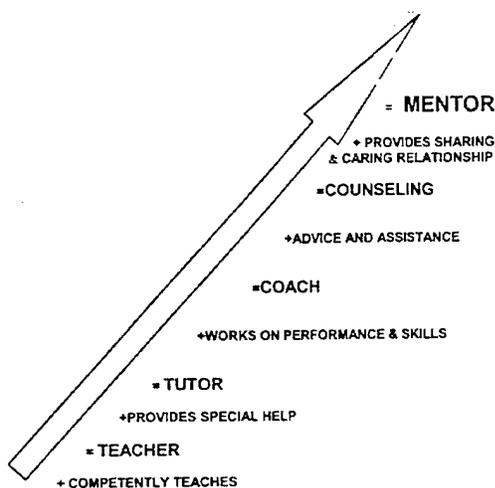


FIGURE 2 – MENTORING THE ADDED DIMENSION

The Army has not yet figured out that the distinctive aspects of mentoring focus almost exclusively on meeting the needs of the mentee. The mentor devotes himself to this unselfish effort. The key to successful mentoring is a developed relationship between the mentor and the mentee. What do mentoring partners have in common? First, they allow the individuals to address concerns about self, family and career and at the same time provide opportunities to grow, gain knowledge and skills and to address personal and professional dilemmas. Secondly, they benefit both individuals by

allowing free exchange of information. Thirdly, they occur in an organizational structure, which greatly impacts on how they unfold. Finally, these kinds of relationships are not readily available for most people in organization. They are greatly needed, but rarely occur.³⁴

AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE

Effective mentors and mentoring programs are one of many answers to the problem of the Army's workforce attrition. Mentoring can effectively retain the mentee and enhance the mentee's value to the organization while training up new persons in the organization to become productive senior managers or leaders.

Mentoring was once seen as just for the rising stars that were headed for the executive suite or to the "head shed". But now mentoring is open to the total workforce. Mentors can come in all styles and types. The life or style-altering effect of mentoring may come slowly and subtly. Consider the "good, better, best" concept; it provides the descriptive analysis of what one experiences in an on-going mentoring program. The following comments came from a mentee who participated in a formal six-months training program:

I never dreamed that I could learn so much in so little time. His insights into the nature of the organization, how it works and what rewards, will, I'm sure, make an enormous difference in my career. But it is our friendship that I will value the most.³⁵

Mentors also report interesting and sometimes surprising responses to their mentoring experience. Consider the following comments:

Mentoring has added another dimension to my leadership skills. Going the extra mile was just as interesting an expression until I was trained to function as a mentor.³⁶

Mentoring fosters a powerful, emotional, and passionate interaction enabling the mentor and mentee to experience personal, professional, and intellectual growth.

WHAT HAS THE ARMY DONE?

The Army appears to have not adequately addressed this issue of mentoring. In a recent Army Times article, General John Keene, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, noted "quality of leadership as reflected in the mentoring process has fallen off." He further stated that "We're [the Army] just not taking the time that we need to spend with our youngsters [young soldiers] and their personal growth development. We need to do more."³⁷ According to reporter Sean Naylor, his comments represent the first time a senior officer publicly acknowledged what many company and field grade officers have wanted to express for many years. The quality of

leadership, along with the mentoring process, has dropped dramatically. A former battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Hennes expressed the following discontent with the mentoring process:

Officers believe mentoring is most important for both personal and professional development. Yet, a majority of officers reported not having a mentor. The Army's mentoring definition and doctrine need revising. Officers would like to have a greater emphasis on mentoring but don't want a formal mentoring program.³⁸

He further stated the problem:

We [the Army] have too high of an expectation on having a mentor when some officers don't want a mentor. Even the leadership manual basically creates a universal expectation and that having a mentor is a necessary component to have a successful career. While having a mentor, one probably is assured a better performer but not having a mentor does or should not spell total career failure or disaster. We [the Army] have not clearly articulated some basic definition of mentoring.³⁹

He further emphasized:

I don't think we [the Army] have adequately differentiated between coaching and mentoring. For example, I believe that a first Lieutenant can coach or mentor a Second Lieutenant on job performance, but I don't think the First Lieutenant can mentor a Second Lieutenant. I believe there needs to be some difference in rank and experience for one to adequately mentor another. I believe my battery commander and 1SG should mentor my Lieutenants. I've had a few raters and senior raters who tried to mentor me but the relationship was such that I didn't accept their guidance.⁴⁰

He concludes that "Another unfortunate circumstance is that our mentoring efforts can get twisted in the rating chain. Many officers will not open up for fear of OER (officer efficiency report) retribution."⁴¹

On the hand, Major General (Retired) Lon Maggart and Colonel Jeanette S. James in an article entitled "Mentoring--A Critical Element of Leadership Development" claimed "The United States Army is recognized around the world for its exceptional leader development programs. In fact, it has no equal, we have made great strides in counseling subordinates to help improve their performance. But turbulence, budget and other policy constraints have created the need for more personal approach to taking care of soldiers."⁴² General Maggart believes that the Army's problem is not a leader problem, but a budgetary and other constraint problems. He further states, "Subordinates will need a more personal approach to military training. The Twenty-first century leader will have to set the conditions that give their subordinates the best

possible chance for success. One of the easiest ways to do this is through mentoring.”⁴³ He adds that “Because mentoring is so critical for growing future leaders, it is up to every one of us to provide the guidance and inspiration to give the tools to do in the 21st century what we did in Operation Desert Storm—overcome danger, fear and adversity with calm professionalism.”⁴⁴ This is quite a challenge.

CHALLENGES

Definitional Dilemmas

Although many researchers have attempted to provide a concise definition of mentoring or mentors, definitional diversity continues to characterize the research literature. Mentoring has different meanings to different professionals, to include the Army. Disagreement over a universal definition continues to add confusion, chaos and misunderstanding; but the absence of a universal definition promotes definitional diversity, and thus a varied approach to the task. Army officers, like other professionals, should look for a common theme that runs through a multiplicity of definitions—in the developmental world, business world, and the academic world and then come up with a working definition. While no definition of mentoring is widely accepted, the following themes may provide a foundation for advancing a definition of mentoring that is appropriate. They offer much common ground to adequately practice the mentoring process. Authors Golian and Galbriath developed this inclusive definition:

Mentoring is a process with in a contextual setting; involves a relationship of a more knowledgeable individual with a less experienced individual; provides professional networking, coaching, guiding, instructing, modeling and sponsoring; is a mental mechanism; personal, professional and psychological; is a socialization and reciprocal relationship; and provides an identity transformation for both mentor and mentee.”⁴⁵

What a smorgasbord! The definition has become more confusing as it has become more inclusive. At this point it is clear that the Army is faced with a twin challenge of developing a definition for mentoring and eliminating the definitional dilemma.

First, the Army should revise the doctrine for clarity. Second, the challenge is to derive a sensible, practical, working definition of mentoring. Unfortunately, in the last few years only little progress has been made to develop a practical and clear definition. But if this is done expeditiously, it will lay the foundation of understanding and further the leadership development and mentoring in the Army.

Diversity Issues

The Army needs to research the idea of the mentoring relationship as it relates to the issue of gender, race, and culture. If the Army is to be all-inclusive in its efforts to provide equal opportunity, it needs to address such crucial issues. If mentoring is about growth and development within an individual's personal, professional, social and psychological world, the Army must do its part to ensure the continual development of its entire workforce. The complexity of addressing these issues may produce even more challenges. Let's review a few:

- Mentoring initiatives may become a vehicle for skirting the larger issues of discrimination based on racism, sexism, and ageism.
- Mentoring in a diverse society is ambitious and demanding; requiring knowledge, skills, openness, firmness, discipline, commitment and courage.
- Lack of commonality between the mentor and mentee and the duration and formality of the relationship may hamper the process.
- Lack of an operational definition of mentoring contributes to vagueness of the concept and complicates the notion of diversity within the mentoring process.
- The issue of cross-cultural characteristics addresses the race and gender issues. Studies have varied in determining whether cross-race and gender mentoring are effective.

General Henry H. Shelton, former Chief of Staff of the Army offers his support of gender-neutral mentoring:

But I tell you that mentoring needs to be a gender-neutral enterprise and men and women ought not be afraid to seek advice and counsel from each other, and in this regard we've both let each other down. We've got to remind leaders that mentoring isn't just about giving career advice over a few drinks at the NCO or Officer's Club. Nor is mentoring sponsorship or favoritism.⁴⁶

Mentoring is an age-old concept that readily incorporates the needs of today's ever-changing society and professional demands. It is just one of the many professional strategies for fostering human and organizational potential and development. Tomorrow's technology may change the format in which we do mentoring. However, the most important resource, the bond developed between two caring and professional human beings, will remain the same.

Extending life-long learning opportunities

Every one has some expertise in something that someone else is seeking to acquire. The mentor has the knowledge that the mentee is seeking. The challenge for the Army is to find a forum to connect and maintain the relationship between the mentor and the mentee. Since the

Army society is a transient organization, the greatest challenge is to come up with a developmental program that will be conducive to a life-long learning opportunity. Mentoring holds a promise for the development and use of technology and electronics to maintain and sustain the mentor/mentee relationship. The results of this type of development will offer at both local and world-wide levels a connectivity for the mentor and mentee.

STRATEGIES

Given the previously described attrition problem of the Army, what can the Army do to implement these programs? Consider these suggestions:

- Define the organizational meaning of mentoring.
- Assess the physical and social environment of the Army organizational needs in light of mentoring to diversity.
- Develop plans to train mentors in cross-culture, cross-gender and diversity issues.
- Review other mentoring models in the fields of education, management, and psychology to assess the commonality and the usefulness of the models for the Army environment.
- Target junior officers to volunteer for formal mentoring programs.
- Develop a Career Enhancement Program, which offers the help of a mentor, and requires the mentee to develop an individual development plan (IDP) to chart advancement.
- Develop a mentoring program inclusive of women aimed at achieving a more balanced technical and managerial workforce.
- Re-assess the Leadership Development Program and make it a separate component from mentoring.

Some organization's training strategies encourage employees to mentor one another informally as time and need arise. A survey has shown a substantial increase (200-300 percent in some cases) in the number of informal mentoring relationships. Both mentee and mentors have reported a higher incidence of situational mentoring. It is difficult to get a statistical comparison of mentoring done before and after training, since situational mentoring occurs "incidentally."⁴⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

It appears that the Army has no clear concept of how to accomplish the task of providing mentoring to its officers. Consider the following issues:

- No guidance or criteria for doing mentoring
- No indication about how information derived will be used; and
- No feedback on how mentoring fits in to the overall society.⁴⁸
- No clear cut definition of mentoring.

More importantly, mentoring should not be trivialized merely to an activity of checking the block to say that it was done. This is particularly troubling because there are so many programs, objective tools, and processes that the Army can use to provide a balance in the program, such as surveys, leadership and professional assessment tools. As long as the program lacks command emphasis, it's doubtful that mentoring will ever receive its fair share of emphasis, time or resources. However, the Army can use the following criterion for encouraging successful mentoring program:

- Encourage supportive environment
- Put officers care first and mission always
- Require face-to face assessments
- Encourage long-term organizational development
- Provide training and leadership development programs.

Mentoring must be expanded to include a multi-faceted approach that takes into account gender, race, and cultural diversity. Other dimensions, such as training and education, are difficult at best and will take time and experimentation to develop. Additionally, the Army should implement feedback which will build confidence in the subordinates. However, until a multi-dimensional approach is institutionalized, the Army cannot combat the perception that leaders are self-serving, out-of-touch, unethical, and uncaring.⁴⁹

General Edward C. Meyer, former Chief of Staff, United States Army observes:

The leader who chooses to ignore the soldier's search for individual growth may reap bitter fruit of disillusionment, discontent and listlessness. If we, instead, reach out to touch each soldier-- to meet needs and assist in working toward the goal of becoming a "whole person"--we will bridge the essential needs of the individual to find only the means of coming together into an effective unit, the means of holding together.⁵⁰

An unconvincing argument for not providing these training opportunities arises from the misconception that leader development and mentoring begin at the lowest level--the company grade level. What if the Army does not cultivate the full spectrum of mentoring skills? Then what is left to pass on to the next generation of leaders? The unfortunate fallout will be inadequate mentoring and training development programs. Admittedly, there are many examples of field grade officers doing it right; some leader and mentoring development have

taken place effectively. Unfortunately, there are many cases where leaders have done it wrong. In doing so, they have provided a disservice to their subordinate officers. Apparently because there has not been a consistent Army standard for the conduct of mentoring, junior officers have been given the *hit* and *miss* treatment at best. General Ulmer admits that:

...mentoring and coaching have long been in the Army lexicon, but routine use is a localized phenomenon, highly dependent on the interests and skills of unit leaders. There is no meaningful institutional motivation for being a good coach, yet that skill is highly prized by subordinates at every level.⁵¹

In essence, the desire for mentoring remains strong among subordinates, but senior leaders are mildly interested.

EVALUATE INDUSTRY'S TRAINING AND MENTORING PRACTICES

As an institution, the Army can be compared to a civilian institution or corporate headquarters. It is the largest civilian employer of non-governmental agencies. Even though the Army's mission differs from that of many civilian industries, the Army can learn from industry:

- Explore participation in structured experimental exercises for junior leaders and programs that provide constructive feedback from mentees and mentors in the workplace.
- Use climate surveys to articulate the organizational values, learning the strengths and weaknesses of the environment and the mentoring relationships.
- Utilize the planned training of industry and their available internet resources.
- Use multiple sources of information used by industry to provide key developmental and training opportunities.

This is not to say that there is a particular industrial model that, if implemented, will solve all the Army leadership and mentoring problems. Rather, there are practices and concepts that have been tested by corporate organizations and have been proven to be effective and have made a difference between failure and survival of the organization 's workforce.

DEVELOP A PROGRAM MODEL

A separate mentoring program should be developed by the Army. Formal mentoring programs should be offered on a mandatory basis and centrally managed. Additionally, an informal mentoring program should be offered, decentralized and tailored to meet the needs of each installation and their increasingly diverse population needs. The program should not be

confused with other Army programs, such as the leadership development, sponsorship and educational programs. The mentoring program should not be overshadowed by the leadership development issues and classified as too hard to do because of cross-gender, cross-cultural and cross-racial challenges. The program should be a component of a three-tier professional development program. Consider the model below: (See figure 2).

MENTORING MODEL

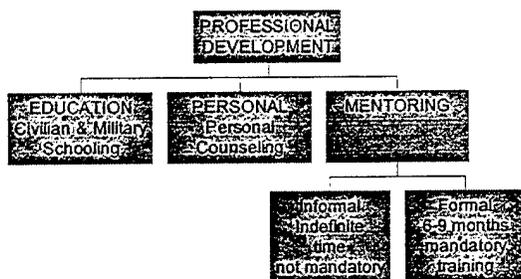


FIGURE 3 – MENTORING MODEL DEPICTING THE THREE TIERED PROGRAM

This model graphically sketches a mentoring proposal for the Army. Professional Development is the over-arching program title: Education, personal counseling, and mentoring are distinctive programs within the total structure. Note that informal and formal mentoring are subsets of the mentoring program. Formal mentoring training should be developed to educate and train mentors locally from a centralized Department of the Army Training program fund. These training events should be voluntary, a separate component of mentoring

development. They should remain outside of the mentee's chain of command.

As a part of the training model, technology should be assigned top priority. The Army should adopt a program that is exciting, challenging and resourceful like the Coast Guard's program, which uses the internet or tele-mentoring to conduct the programs. It should be available to the total force. Relationships should be another priority, offering rewards and recognition for mentors who volunteer their time to support subordinates.⁵²

THE WAY AHEAD (Conclusion)

Mentorship, more than any single skill or task, is vital to an organization's survival. When our great Army is at its peak, mentorship vitally contributes to sustaining the forces. When it's at its worst, the blame is acknowledged as a leadership crisis. What does the Army need to do to make a difference? It is very possible that the mentorship process be identified as a fundamental skill that must be taught separately and does not automatically occur because one is taught to be technically competent. Lack of mentoring stifles professional growth development. It weakens the organization.

Finally, it is command support that brings balance and emphasis to mentorship learning and enforces the highest standards for the good of the organization. As the Army and other

Armed Services learned from the climb out of the depths of the Cold War era, mentoring is essential if the Army is to achieve a balance between mission accomplishment, organizational effectiveness, and leader development. The way ahead must consist of :

- Unconditional support and prioritization of a mentorship training and implementation of doctrine that demonstrates understanding by senior Army leaders that mentorship is more than just mission accomplishment.
- Command priority and support for sequential, on-going, experience-based mentoring and leader development.
- Provision for multi-dimensional tools for counseling and evaluating the full spectrum of mentoring skills.
- Evaluation measures that hold leaders accountable for mentoring.
- Safeguards to deter future efforts to eliminate full-spectrum mentoring development as a bill payer for other Army programs.⁵³

History has shown that every time the Army, or any other corporate industry or institution fails to regard the human relational aspect of mentoring---problems occur and people will talk with their feet.

General John Wickham said it well:

One of the best indications of how we perform as professionals is the time and effort we spend on the development of our subordinates. No other pursuit can better posture us for the accomplishment of our missions and ensure the future of our Army. Making clear our expectations to our subordinates, allowing them to participate in the decision-making process, coaching, and guiding them, and focusing on the linkage between their performance and the organization's missions are fundamental aspects not only of this effort, but also of good leadership.⁵⁴

He clearly articulated the fundamental role of mentoring:

The teaching of those entrusted to our care is the most important legacy any officer can leave to the U.S. Army, in my opinion.⁵⁵

The Army's senior leaders must have the intestinal fortitude to stick through the mentorship development process over the long term. Until this occurs, the Army cannot reach its fullest potential, nor can it confidently resolve the current leadership crisis and retain quality leaders for the 21st century.

WORD COUNT: 7,954

ENDNOTES

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⁷ Ibid

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³⁷ Sean D. Naylor, "Keen Blames Leadership for Junior Officers Exodus", Army Times, 25 December 2000, 10.

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⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Lon E. Maggart and Jeanette S. James, "Mentoring-a Critical Element in Leader Development," Military Review, 79 (May/June 1999): 86

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Michael W. Galbraith and Norman H. Cohen, "Issues and Challenges Confronting Mentoring," New Direction for Adult and Continuing Education 66 (Summer 1995): 90.

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