

MARINE TALENT MARKETPLACE: AN INITIATIVE TO ENHANCE TALENT
MANAGEMENT FOR THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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2019

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 14-06-2019		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2018 – JUN 2019	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Marine Talent Marketplace: An Initiative to Enhance Talent Management for the United States Marine Corps				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Major Jason D. Graul				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This qualitative research consists of an in-depth study of talent management best practices in the corporate sector and what the other Armed Services have implemented as talent management and officer personnel reform have been top priorities for both senior political and military leaders. After establishing a best practices framework, the researcher differentiated between the other Armed Services talent management initiatives, while deciphering the unique constraints of the Department of Defense (DOD) officer personnel management system to determine what the United States Marine Corps (USMC) should adopt. This research found that the USMC is not as informed as it could be of the talent currently serving and the talents departing. Both the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army have implemented a marketplace solution to enhance talent management and their manpower assignment process. This research provides a proposed marketplace concept, Marine Talent Marketplace (MTM). MTM identifies a Marine officer's unique talents, desires, and other characteristics that would otherwise go unidentified to the higher personnel system, modernizes the manpower assignment process, and provides key decision makers a baseline towards reaching the end state of placing the right Marine, in the right place, at the right time.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Talent Management, Human Resource Development Process, Talent Marketplace, Manpower, Talent, High Potential, High Performing, Analytics, Big Data, Officer Personnel Reform, KSAO, Retention.					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	149	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

MARINE TALENT MARKETPLACE: AN INITIATIVE TO ENHANCE TALENT MANAGEMENT FOR THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS,
by Major Jason D. Graul, 149 pages.

This qualitative research consists of an in-depth study of talent management best practices in the corporate sector and what the other Armed Services have implemented as talent management and officer personnel reform have been top priorities for both senior political and military leaders. After establishing a best practices framework, the researcher differentiated between the other Armed Services talent management initiatives, while deciphering the unique constraints of the Department of Defense (DOD) officer personnel management system to determine what the United States Marine Corps (USMC) should adopt. This research found that the USMC is not as informed as it could be of the talent currently serving and the talents departing. Both the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Army have implemented a marketplace solution to enhance talent management and their manpower assignment process. This research provides a proposed marketplace concept, Marine Talent Marketplace (MTM). MTM identifies a Marine officer's unique talents, desires, and other characteristics that would otherwise go unidentified to the higher personnel system, modernizes the manpower assignment process, and provides key decision makers a baseline towards reaching the end state of placing the right Marine, in the right place, at the right time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first would like to thank Dr. Anderson. Thanks for taking me on and guiding me through this research process. Whenever I would stop in your office in search for guidance and wisdom, you provided it. I always left your office with marching orders, and reassurance on how to proceed. The sharing of fishing and old Marine Corps stories only added value to my visits. To my entire committee, I thank you for giving up your time to support me through this year. You kept me on the path when I would start to veer off and provided sound advice when I would pitch my ideas. Thanks for believing in me, reading my constant emails, and providing valuable insight to the research process.

I thank my wife, Crystal, as none of my accomplishments would be possible without her. I thank you for supporting me through this process, managing our household affairs and raising our beautiful children when I was spending countless hours away from our family. As we look back on our time in Kansas, I can honestly say this was not “the best year of our lives,” but is one of the more memorable and challenging years for our family to say the least. You were right by side taking care of me in the hospital when I had surgery and made me the happiest father with the birth of our son. We also grieved together with the passing of your father. You truly are my best friend and the love of my life. Thanks for serving right beside me in this All-Volunteer Marine Corps. I appreciate you more than you will ever know, thank you for all you do for me and our family.

To my children, I loved watching you grow this year. I will never forget the countless hours we spent together in the office as you were drawing and coloring while daddy typed away on his computer. I promise to make up all the weekends I missed tucked away in the office researching and writing to you someday. I love you dearly.

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ACRONYMS

AIM	Assignment Interactive Module
BOP	Business Operations Plan
CIP	Career Intermission Program
CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
DOD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
DOPMA	Defense Officer Personnel Management Act
EMLS	Exit and Milestone Longitudinal Survey
HR	Human Resources
HRDP	Human Resource Development Process
HQMC	Headquarters Marine Corps
KSAO	Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other characteristics
MMOA	Manpower Management Officer Assignments
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
M&RA	Manpower and Reserve Affairs
MTM	Marine Talent Marketplace
TBS	The Basic School
TMOD	Talent Management Oversight Directorate
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USMC	United States Marine Corps
VML	Vulnerable to Move List

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Talent management. Developing leaders who are competent in national-level decision-making requires broad revision of talent management among the Armed Services, including fellowships, civilian education, and assignments that increase understanding of interagency decision-making processes, as well as alliances and coalitions.

—Jim Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*

Background

The United States Marine Corps (USMC) is the Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. Over the past 243 years, Marines have fought and died to protect our Nation's freedoms in every clime and place. Marines accomplish the mission at all costs as failure is not an option when it comes to defending national security. As a warfighting organization, combat readiness and personnel continue to be top priorities. The USMC brings a countless number of capabilities to the fight, but those capabilities are nothing without the individual Marine. Even with new emerging technologies in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and robotics, it is still too early to tell how this technology will contribute to the future fight. The individual Marine, which has been referred to as talent, human resource, and even human capital in the Department of Defense (DOD) lexicon over the years remains the Marine Corps' most valuable asset.

The USMC has a multitude of complex problems to solve in the future to remain ready when the nation is least ready. With new emerging threats in the cyber domain and threat of large-scale combat operations in a multi-domain battlefield on the horizon, the Marines need to continue to recruit, train, develop, and retain the 'best and brightest'

America has to offer to solve those complex problems. Talent management and officer personnel reform have been top priorities for both senior political and military leaders over the last several years. The Marines are in the business of combat readiness, warfighting, and winning battles, not profits or shareholder concerns. Can talent management best practices and principles from Corporate America really apply to the Nation's premier warfighting organization? If the individual Marine is, in fact, the most important asset to the USMC, talent management certainly applies. Furthermore, what the Marine Corps' demands from the individual Marine versus what the Marine's needs and desires are continues to be a talent retention challenge for the Marine Corps.

A countless number of books, theses, professional journal articles, and studies exist on the importance of human resources, talent management, and the use of people analytics and big talent management data for both the private sector and military service over the last several years. According to Mark Wilcox, an internationally experienced author in the talent management field, who has worked for companies like Sony and Nestle, talent management came about in the mid-1990s.¹ Wilcox states, "The purpose of any talent management approach is to have the right people in the right place at the right time."² How to properly balance the management of both combat readiness and retaining talent during a long war with constrained budgets has sparked many debates since the turn of the 21st Century. Reform for human resources, human capital, and talent management policies have been at the forefront of DOD priorities.

In March 2004, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Vern Clark at the Navy Workforce Research and Analysis Conference is on the record for saying, "We need a 21st Century human resources strategy. That's what we need."³ The former CNO

went on to say, “It is worthwhile for us to challenge everything that we think we believe about the system, and where it's serving us well, let's go and do it. Where it's not, let's have the courage to let it go and put something better in its place.”⁴ *The Fourth Annual Navy Workforce Research and Analysis Conference: Laying the Foundation for the Navy's Human Resource Strategy* laid out a number of pilot programs and research studies working towards the goal of the “right person, right place, and right number.”⁵ In 2007, *The Seventh Annual Navy Workforce Research and Analysis Conference: The Road to a 2025 Total Force* laid the framework for the 21st Century Marine Corps.⁶ In the conference report, “Colonel Otto Rutt (USMC M&RA Manpower Plans and Policies) discussed CMC Planning Guidance that lays out priorities---personnel being number one.”⁷ Colonel Rutt went on to discuss the “5R's---Right Marine, Right Place, Right Time, Right Skill, and Right [Quality of Life] QOL---are important to success.”⁸

Furthermore, in February 2011 former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates delivered a speech to cadets at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. In his speech, Gates asks, “How can the Army break-up the institutional concrete, its bureaucratic rigidity in its assignments and promotion processes, in order to retain, challenge, and inspire its best, brightest, and most-battled tested young officers to lead the service in the future?”⁹

Tim Kane, an Air Force Academy graduate and former intelligence officer, sparked some insightful deliberations throughout the military services in recent years with his 2012 book, *Bleeding Talent*. Kane described how the Army's top talent was departing the service at alarming rates due to an outdated personnel system.¹⁰ In a subsequent book, *Total Volunteer Force*, Kane lays out guidelines to his proposed Total

Volunteer Force model that specifies talent management best practices for the military.¹¹

Kane writes, “When concerns about low retention rates of some talented military officers and soldiers arose in 2006, the term “talent management” became common in military circles. In the years since, it has become synonymous with the personnel policies in general, not just retention policies for top employees.”¹²

Former Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter put talent management initiatives into action in 2015 with the publication of the Force of the Future initiatives.¹³ Brad Carson, former undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness from 2015 to 2016 and advocate for military personnel reform, was one of the main contributors to DOD talent management initiatives.¹⁴ Carson credits David Lyle, an Army colonel with a Ph.D. in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tim Kane, and the Defense Entrepreneurs Forum for personnel reforms in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act.¹⁵ All military services have since put talent management initiatives in place to meet the intent and guidance for what works best for their respective service.

General Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), published *FRAGO 01/2016: Advance to Contact* in January 2016, where he laid out five focus areas that were vital to the Marines’ future success.¹⁶ The first focus area listed was people. Specifically, under people was, “Recruiting and retaining quality men and women of character in today’s Corps is our friendly center of gravity and our highest priority.”¹⁷ A subsection of people states, “Review manpower personnel assignment and promotion processes and First/Subsequent Term Alignment Plan (FTAP/STAP) retention, in order to reward high performing Marines by April 2016. – OPR M&RA . . . We will review our existing Service-level promotion process, as well as the First and Subsequent

Term Alignment Plan processes to ensure we are recognizing and retaining those who possess and exhibit the leadership, talent and skills for the future force.”¹⁸

In September 2016, the USMC published the Marine Corps Operating Concept (MOC), which serves as the capstone operating concept and defines a broad approach of, “how the Marine Corps will operate, fight, and win in 2025 and beyond.”¹⁹ The MOC states, “Our ability to successfully execute the concept will depend greatly on the extent to which we have: . . . Designed and implemented manpower systems, policies, and processes to attract, develop, retain, and support highly qualified Marines and civilian employees prepared for the rigors of 21st century expeditionary operations – because we are in a fight for the best and brightest talent.”²⁰

The Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC M&RA) Strategic Guidance was published in November 2016 that has an overarching theme of “Marines are the Mission.”²¹ The strategic guidance highlights the need to modernize and improve all elements with the Human Resource Development Process (HRDP) to include updating manpower information systems.²² The guidance specifically states, “We will leverage technology to redesign our assignments process, including efforts to couple Commander and Marine input to achieve [Military Occupational Specialty] MOS qualifications and skills parity . . . The end state will be a combat ready and resilient force possessing enhanced quality.”²³

In July 2018, the USMC held an innovation symposium in Quantico, Virginia. General Neller, CMC, brought in 325 participants to tackle some of the top problems facing the USMC today. One of the working groups at the symposium collaborated over the question: How can the human resource development process (HRDP) be modernized

to enhance talent management?²⁴ The HRDP is a complex and deliberate process but can be summarized in the following definition from the Military Occupational Specialty Manual.

The overarching process that makes the manpower side of combat capability through force structure, manpower, and training sub processes. It determines quantity and skills requirements of the operating force units and supporting establishment, and then attains, classifies, trains, assigns, retains, promotes, and otherwise manages an inventory of Marines to meet those requirements.²⁵

The symposium participants formulated 10 recommended solutions to the question. The majority of the solutions focused around a web-based enterprise system to integrate transparency, job assignments, training and readiness information.²⁶ Another solution called for a corporate advisory board to show best practices in the civilian sectors to see if the Marine Corps could apply any of those principles.²⁷ The DOD and Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) understand the importance of talent management and want personnel management reform as they have been discussing the issue for the past several years.

Then in August 2018, the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2019 made some of biggest changes to the officer personnel policy since the establishment of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1980.²⁸ The majority of the authorized officer personnel changes allow the service secretaries to decide what is best suited for their respective service when it comes to the new accession and promotion guidelines.²⁹

USMC Officers

Before discussing modifications to processes, the researcher provides a short synopsis for those unfamiliar with how a USMC commissioned officer receives their

primary military occupational specialty (PMOS). The PMOS an officer receives will determine the officer's career path as well as how their talents are employed. This is common to the other Armed Services throughout the DOD. Potential Marine Corps officer candidates are not guaranteed a specific MOS when they are recruited. The only exception is that of potential officer candidates that join under an aviation contract or commission as a staff judge advocate. Commissioned Marine Corps officers report to, The Basic School (TBS), a six-month-long course, as either an aviation or ground contract officer after they have completed their initial entry training. Aviation contracts receive a guarantee to go to flight training as long they successfully complete TBS and pass the rigorous medical requirements. All other ground officers receive their MOS based on needs of the Marine Corps, suitability, additional or unique considerations, and preferences.³⁰ The unique qualifications consideration is a significant improvement from years past. "Unique qualifications may include, but are not limited to, prior enlisted or civilian work experience in a specific technical field, college education in technically or academically rigorous majors, or a combination of other factors."³¹

At a designated point during TBS, USMC officers rank each of the available MOSs from combat arms to combat service support MOSs in the order they would prefer to serve in that MOS.³² Furthermore, the class is broken down into a tier system of thirds to get a quality spread across the available MOSs.³³ For example, in a TBS company with 300 Marines, the number one ranking officer in the company gets his first choice, number 100 gets his first choice, number 200 gets his first choice based on the needs of the USMC. If there is only one MOS 1802, Tank officer position available for that TBS company, then only one officer will receive that MOS. This process allows a quality

spread of officers across all MOSs to avoid all the top talent placed in only highly desired MOSs. There can be some subjective input from the staff platoon commanders as stated in the Basic School Order. The 2018 Basic School Order states, “Students submit final MOS preferences; MOS are optimized by [intended MOS] iMOS; BOC [Basic Officer Course] staff makes adjustments based on evaluation to ensure the right Marine is assigned to the right job.”³⁴ The staff can switch a Marine’s MOS from what the raw data results display if they feel the Marine is not a good fit, or trade with another platoon in order to get the best fit for the majority of the Marines. Historically, this process has worked well over the years as the preponderance of officers receive a MOS that was in their top five choices. It is in the researcher’s opinion that talent management for USMC officers begins at TBS. A talent marketplace that incorporates those known talents, unique skill sets and qualifications, testing metrics, education background, and other data could add significant value to this MOS selection process and better align officers with their MOS. Marine Corps officers then go on to receive duty station and unit assignments based on availability and needs of the USMC. Orders are issued to fill requirements, and not necessarily the most qualified person with the ideal talents for the position. ‘Blossom where you are planted,’ is an all too familiar cliché across the USMC.

It may appear that the Marine Corps already manages officer talent exceedingly well. The Marine Corps invests a notable portion of its budget into accessions and the training of Marine Corps officers. The Marines offer professional military education (PME), broadening assignment opportunities, language training, and other advanced education opportunities. The Marines have a performance evaluation system (PES), as well as a board member selection process in place for screening for both promotion and

command. The Marines also offer special pay and bonuses for certain MOSs, such as aviation incentive pay and the aviation bonus for naval aviators.³⁵ The retention of quality officers has even improved through the years with the establishment of the career designation boards.

Career Designation

CD [Career designation] is the process used to determine which company grade officers will be offered the opportunity for continued active service beyond their initial active service obligation. CD accomplishes the objectives of retaining the best qualified officers on active duty and maintaining the AC [active component] officer population in each year of commissioned service at a level that supports the promotion timing and opportunity guidelines to the rank of major as established by section 619 of reference (a) [10 U.S.C.].³⁶

Marine Corps officers are screened for career designation in six competitive categories: Combat Arms, Combat Service Support, Law, Financial Management, Aviation Ground, and Aviation. Of those qualified and eligible officers screened for career designation, fiscal year 2019 results show that each category has an 85% selection rate cap, except Aviation which is at 95%.³⁷ Even after being career designated, some officers are still separating. Even though the Marine Corps' retention strategy may not be to retain every officer who volunteers for service; some of the officers leaving may be the talent that needs retaining. While other officers that continue to serve may be the ones who need to depart. The Marine Corps needs to ensure it is retaining the top talent to continue to be successful in future conflicts.

Talent Marketplace

One talent management initiative that both the United States Army (USA) and United States Air Force (USAF) have implemented to enhance their officer assignment

process is the use of an online talent marketplace. A talent marketplace is a similar concept to that of LinkedIn where users create a profile that includes work experience, education, and other skills and talents to connect with future employers. The marketplace aims to match the individual's unique qualities and abilities with an employers' open position. Talent marketplaces vary on scope and scale respective to their individual organization. A talent marketplace for the Armed Services aims to align the individual's unique talents, desires, and aspirations with a manpower gap during the assignment process. Individual users of the marketplace can search for job openings to specific units and locations they desire. Hence, giving the job seeker more control of their career path. Details of the talent marketplaces of the USA and USAF are in the literature review and analysis of this study.

Statement of the Problem

To remain competitive with a near-peer threat in the future, the USMC needs to retain its ability to fight tonight with the most talented Marine Corps officers this nation has to offer. Achieving this requires talent management reform to meet the needs of the future force and operating environment. When beginning this study, the researcher noted the following talent management challenges for the USMC. HQMC has not clearly defined what talent management means for the Marine Corps or published a clearly defined talent management strategy. HQMC has not defined what it means to be a quality officer, the best and brightest, talent, or the difference between high potential and high performing. These are subjective terms widely used throughout the Marine Corps lexicon without any real definition but the author's own.

The Marine Corps has implemented a variety of talent management initiatives under the HRDP. However, the HRDP, combined with the myriad of information systems that operationalize it, is a broad and complex process that lacks transparency to the individual Marine. A more transparent and integrated talent management strategy and framework implemented under the HRDP would ensure the USMC is retaining the correct officers and not just meeting quotas to ensure the health of a particular MOS.

The HRDP and officer assignment process lacks a talent marketplace. Even though the Marine Corps has collected a plethora of data on Marines throughout the years, talents, competencies, and desires of the individual Marine go unidentified to the higher manpower system. If HQMC is unaware of what talents are leaving for Corporate America, because they have not identified those talents, the pool of officers we are currently creating may not be as talented as we like to think. Developing and implementing a talent marketplace could integrate talent management initiatives, enhance the manpower assignment process, and ultimately ensure retention of the best and brightest officers.

Purpose of the Study

The relevance and importance for an organization to have an effective talent management strategy and putting it into practice in order to be successful in both the civilian and military sectors has been debated at length in other research forums. The other Armed Services have implemented online talent marketplace systems to assist with the manpower assignment process, which enhance and integrate talent management for their respective Service. The Marine Corps is behind the other Armed Services when it comes to defining key talent management terms and putting systems into action.

Considering the guidance provided in the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) summary, the 2018 Department of the Navy (DON) Business Operations Plan (BOP), and the results of the USMC July 2018 innovation symposium, the purpose of this study is to determine what a talent marketplace for the USMC should consist of in order to integrate and enhance talent management. A USMC talent marketplace solution would be one that links the Marine's talents, aspirations and desires with Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) requirements, and the operating force to place the right Marine, in the right place, at the right time. The Marine Corps needs to ensure they can identify talent, place the right Marine in the right position that benefits both the Marine and the Marine Corps, and ultimately retain the most talented officers.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question: How can a talent marketplace enhance talent management for the Marine Corps?

Secondary Research Questions

The secondary research questions are: What has the Marine Corps implemented regarding talent management? What are the best practices of effective talent management? What have the other Armed Services in the DOD implemented regarding talent management?

Assumptions

The DOD and USMC are in a battle for talent with the private sector. The USMC is losing talented officers that could be retained. Those talents departing could one day fill a capability gap, take command or fill a strategic role for the USMC. The officers

leaving possess talents, skills, experiences, or potential that may not have been identified or utilized effectively. The USMC will remain an All-Volunteer force. The current assignment, promotion, and retention strategies will remain in effect during this study.

Definition of Key Terms

The researcher provides the following definitions to ensure uniformity and understanding of the terms throughout the study. There is no shortage of definitions of the listed terms. As previously mentioned, HQMC still needs to define what some of these terms mean to the Marine Corps.

Baby Boomer: A person born in the U.S. following the end of World War II (usually considered to be in the years from 1946 to 1964).³⁸

Big Data: In the case of HR [Human Resources], organizations have huge amounts of talent or people-related data (e.g., skills, performance ratings, age, tenure, safety record, sales performance, educational background, manager, prior roles, etc.) which can be used to better understand the organization's current composition, performance, and risk to improve the development of employees, products, and services. Big Data in HR sets to evaluate and improve practices including talent acquisition, development, retention, and overall organizational performance.³⁹

Career Planning: Career planning is the process individuals go through to clarify their future career goals and aspirations and establish strategies to achieve them.⁴⁰

Competencies: Competencies are the measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that impact the success of employees and their organizations.⁴¹

Generation Z: The generation of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁴²

High Performer: An employee who consistently demonstrates superior work performance but does not currently demonstrate a strong ability or desire for rapid advancement, career challenges and risks, and/or leadership roles.⁴³

High Potential: A High Performer employee who also consistently demonstrates superior work performance and also displays a strong potential, ability, and desire for rapid advancement into leadership roles, as well as being open to new career challenges and learning opportunities.⁴⁴

Human Capital: An organization's employees, described in terms of their training, experience, judgement, intelligence, relationships, and insight.⁴⁵

Human Resource Management: The policies, practices, and systems that influence employees' behavior, attitudes, and performance.⁴⁶

Human Resource Development Process: The overarching process that makes the manpower side of combat capability through force structure, manpower, and training sub processes. It determines quantity and skills requirements of the operating force units and supporting establishment, and then attains, classifies, trains, assigns, retains, promotes, and otherwise manages an inventory of Marines to meet those requirements. The HRDP owner is Deputy Commandant Manpower and Reserve Affairs who coordinates with Deputy Commandant Combat Development and Integration for identification and integration of force structure requirements and training.⁴⁷

Manpower Management: The means of manpower control to ensure the most efficient and economical use of available manpower.⁴⁸

Millennials: A person born in the 1980s or 1990s.⁴⁹

People Analytics: Also known as talent analytics or HR analytics, refers to the method of analytics that can help managers and executives make decisions about their employees or workforce. People analytics applies statistics, technology and expertise to large sets of talent data, which results in making better management and business decisions for an organization.⁵⁰

Talent: Talent consists of those individuals who can make a difference to organizational performance either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer-term, by demonstrating the highest levels of potential.⁵¹

Talent Management: Talent management is the process of attracting, developing, retaining, and deploying the best people.⁵²

Succession Planning: Succession planning is the process of developing the talent already existing in the organization for future deployment.⁵³

Workforce Planning: Workforce planning is the process of comparing the match between the collective talents available to an organization (supply) and the talents needed by the organization (demand) to achieve its strategic objectives.⁵⁴

Limitations

This research is limited to a one-year study, as the requirements for this thesis are to be completed by June 2019. The researcher has no prior experience in the study of human resources or talent management. The researcher has served in both the Marine Corps enlisted and officer ranks and has some bias due to witnessing talented officers leave the USMC.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this research focuses on active duty USMC commissioned officers, primarily in the ranks of Second Lieutenant (2ndLt) (0-1) to Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol) (0-5). The researcher chose this range of officers as they can be most influenced by a talent marketplace as these officers are in the key developmental ranks and the executors and decision makers at the tactical level. It is the researcher's opinion that talent management starts at TBS before an officer is assigned a MOS. Talents and special skill sets need to be identified when placing a Marine officer into a MOS that determine their career path. This chosen population of officers possess the talent that needs to be managed most in order to meet the needs of the Marine and the USMC. An effective talent management strategy and framework would apply to all components of the USMC including officer and enlisted ranks. This research will not include best practices for the enlisted ranks or recruiting talent as it would make the topic too broad. With the previous definition of talent management used as a reference point, this research will focus on employing, developing, and retaining USMC officers.

Significance of the Study

The conclusions of this study could be used to improve talent management practices across the USMC and enhance the manpower management assignment process. Those same results could ultimately improve officer morale, organizational efficiencies, and talent retention rates. The paradigm talent management strategy and framework will ensure the officer cadre or talent pool is that of quality and not just quantity. This study will also provide future research opportunities to improve USMC strategy and policies as

well as assist the Talent Management Oversight Directorate (TMOD) in focusing their research efforts.

Summary

Chapter 1 presented a background of the importance for an organization to incorporate talent management and a brief history of DOD talent management initiatives up until the most recent John S. McCain NDAA for Fiscal Year 2019. The researcher provided a list of key terms with corresponding definitions that will be used throughout the remaining chapters. This chapter included the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, as well as the primary and secondary research questions. The scope of this research included employing, developing, and retaining talent which keeps in line with placing the right Marine, in the right place, at the right time. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature relating to the purpose of the study and research questions. The researcher will identify talent management best practices in the private sector, as well as the talent management strategies and marketplaces of the other Armed Services to establish a foundational knowledge on the subject and determine what the USMC should adopt. Chapter 3 details the methodology the researcher used for the study to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 provides the analysis and answers the secondary research questions. Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and recommendations of the study and answers the primary research question.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The profession of arms is unforgiving; mistakes are paid for in blood and incompetence can lead to catastrophic defeat. When we fight, we must win. There is no alternative. The American people expect and deserve nothing less from their Marine Corps.

—General Robert B. Neller, 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps,
The Marine Corps Operating Concept

Introduction

The competition between the DOD and the civilian marketplace to attract and retain talent is at an all-time high. The other Armed Services have made vast strides in applying talent management strategies and talent marketplaces for their manpower assignment process in order to remain as competitive as possible with retaining the top talent. The purpose of this study is to determine what a talent marketplace for the USMC should consist of in order to integrate and enhance talent management. The primary research question is: How can a talent marketplace enhance talent management for the Marine Corps? The secondary research questions are: What has the Marine Corps implemented regarding talent management? What are the best practices of effective talent management? What have the other Armed Services in the DOD implemented regarding talent management?

The body of literature addressing human resources, people analytics, and talent management is vast. This chapter will focus on the literature most relevant to the purpose of this study and the research questions, organized by subject. First, a review of the literature on the Millennial generation, as the target officer population for this study are

Millennials. Next, a review of the most recognized talent management best practices and principles. This section will review the most recognized and relevant books, theses, and professional journal articles on the subject, as well as highlight case studies of well-known corporations such as Bank of America, Microsoft, and Avon. Following talent management best practices, a review of the recent legislation affecting talent management for the Armed Services. Lastly, a review of the literature concerning constraints to the Armed Services, what the other Armed Services have implemented regarding the subject, as well as programs and policies the Marine Corps already has in place.

The Millennial Generation

Numerous studies and countless debates have transpired over the generational differences between the Baby Boomer generation and Millennials. Throughout the literature review, it was difficult to find a talent management reference or study without the mention of the significant differences. It is important to note and relevant to the USMC to consider these differences in generations when considering talent management initiatives as the target population for this study are in fact, Millennials. Jacob Morgan, founder of The Future If Community, notes, “Millennials are already the largest demographic, surpassing baby boomers in 2016. By 2020, they are expected to comprise 50 percent of the workforce, and by 2025 they are expected to be 75 percent of the workforce.”¹

Lamont and Hampel from Connect the Dots Consulting describe the Millennial Generation as not assimilating into a company’s culture as past generations did and avoiding traditional career tracks.² Lamont and Hampel argue that Millennials, “. . . are interested in creating a quality of life for themselves that is not entirely focused on their

careers.”³ Furthermore, they posit that “This has forced employers to rethink the traditional career track so that they can attract and retain the top talent they need.”⁴

In 2014, LtCol Marx, USMC Federal Executive Fellow, argued for manpower change and highlighted the Millennial Generation. Marx warns that “The military should pay attention to the wants and needs of the millennial generation in order to attract and retain the most qualified individuals. The millennial generation wants to serve in the military, but the stodgy DOPMA promotion plans laid out in 1980 will not retain the most talented officers.”⁵ Marx adds, “It would be unwise and risky to assume that millennials will adjust to ancient promotion policies. The current promotion system promotes on merit but only after an officer has spent enough time in the service. It is time to change this aging promotion mindset.”⁶ Marx emphasized that the wants and needs of Millennials should be addressed, which is a major consideration of a talent marketplace system.

Major Todd Mahar in his 2013 Master of Military Studies research paper, *Millennial Challenge: Retaining the Millennials After 2016*, warns of retention issues with Millennials.⁷ Mahar, after coming off a recruiting tour, highlights how the Marine Corps has done an outstanding job with recruiting of Millennials by partnering with the J. Walter Thompson advertising firm and provides some key differences with the generations.⁸ A few key characteristics he notes are how Millennials’ desires include a balance between work and family life, as well as continuing their education.⁹ To see increased retention rates of Millennials, the author concludes with recommending the Marine Corps expand its educational incentives and add internship and sabbatical programs.¹⁰ These studies and others highlight the need for change in the workplace

when employing and retaining Millennials, as well as gaining an understanding of the primary population that is eligible to serve in the USMC. Generation Z is the generation following Millennials. There appears to be limited research on Generation Z as they are beginning to enter the workforce. The researcher references Millennials throughout the study but acknowledges the USMC will need to consider the needs of the next generation when developing talent management solutions for the future force.

Talent Management Best Practices

In this section, the researcher will highlight the most recognized talent management best practices and principles staying within the scope of the study in order to lay the framework for what a talent marketplace should consist of. Talent management best practices and principles noted here are from books written on the subject, as well as professional papers to include theses and relevant professional journal articles.

Books

In *Effective Talent Management: Aligning Strategy, People, and Performance*, Wilcox lays out which roles are strategically important and require the top talent.¹¹ Wilcox highlights the need for high potential pools, transparency, talent reviews, coaching and mentoring, and provides retention and reward examples for talent.¹² Wilcox notes that most scholars in this field of study link the birth of the phrase “talent management” back to a study by two McKinsey consultants and later a book titled, *The War for Talent*.¹³ Wilcox argues, “Two things handicap talent management success more than anything else. The first is the secrecy . . . the second is treating talent as a local

issue . . .”¹⁴ To avoid secrecy, Wilcox asserts, “Transparency requires telling a talent that they meet the criteria and are therefore considered eligible to be in the pool.”¹⁵

Concerning talent as a local issue, Wilcox thinks, “Talent should always be regarded as a company asset.”¹⁶

On the topic of retention, Wilcox argues that it comes down to risk assessment.¹⁷ “The greater the risk and impact, the more important it would be to reduce the likelihood of this happening by taking some mitigating action.”¹⁸ Wilcox also adds, “The first time the organization hears a talent was unhappy in their role should not be as they conduct an exit interview.”¹⁹ Furthermore, Wilcox enforces the notion of knowing what talent your organization consists of. “I have heard senior executives in businesses say that a high turnover is healthy and nothing to be concerned about . . . these executives have no idea which sort of person is leaving, their economic value to the organization or the scarcity and expense of finding a replacement . . . you need to understand what high performance and potential is, and who has it.”²⁰ When describing high potential talent pool, Wilcox adds, “For the pool to work it’s necessary for the organization to have a clear definition of what makes someone ‘high potential’ in relation to this segment, and also create a way of objectively assessing it.”²¹

In *Best Practices in Talent Management, How the World’s Leading Corporations Manage, Develop, and Retain Top Talent*, a publication of the Best Practice Institute, editors Goldsmith and Carter provide the necessary elements of a talent management program based on reputable case studies of fourteen top organizations who implemented talent enhancement programs.²² The organizations studied range from top names in the corporate world and government to include: Avon Products, Inc. with 42,000 employees,

Whirlpool with 70,000 employees, Bank of America with 243,000 employees, McDonald's with 400,000 employees, and the Internal Revenue Service with 79,000 employees.²³ The authors note that "The assets of an enterprise can perhaps be divided into two parts: its people, and everything else."²⁴ The Best Practice Institute developed a six-phase system to talent management that includes: Business diagnosis, Assessment, Program Design, Implementation, On-the-job support, and Evaluation.²⁵

During the Avon case study, the talent management group identified six weaknesses in their talent practices they summarized as the following adjectives: opaque, egalitarian, complex, episodic, emotional, and meaningless.²⁶ he noted six weaknesses were corrected in the initial turnaround period of twelve to eighteen months. The results were clear as they went from opaque to transparent. "Leaders now know what's required to be successful, how we'll measure that, how we'll help them, and the consequences of higher and lower performance."²⁷ From egalitarian to differentiated: "We actively differentiated levels of Avon talent and provided each level with the appropriate experience. Our highest-potential leaders understand how we feel about them, and they see a commensurate investment."²⁸ Success continued with complex processes becoming simple, episodic processes turned to a disciplined schedule, emotional talent decisions turned to facts, and accountability was applied to turn meaningless to consequential.²⁹

The case study of Microsoft's Sales Marketing and Services Group with more than 45,000 employees is valid for this study as they focused on identifying and developing high-potentials.³⁰ Microsoft developed the program, ExPo, which stands for "exceptional potential," that is a long-term leadership development experience for high-potentials.³¹ "A high-potential at Microsoft is defined as someone with the ability,

commitment, and aspiration to advance to and succeed in more senior, critical roles.”³² The authors add that, “A high-potential differs from a high performer in that a high performer may demonstrate exceptional ability, but may not demonstrate commitment and/or aspiration to advance to more senior roles or to do so in an accelerated timeframe.”³³ Furthermore, they emphasize that “High-potentials develop most quickly when they are managed by high-potentials, participate in a team of high-potentials, and manage high-potentials themselves.”³⁴ They also highlight the need for high-potentials to have a customized development plan that includes a clearly defined career aspiration statement.³⁵ The USMC officer population is comparative in size to both Avon and Microsoft’s Sales Marketing and Services Group as it has approximately 21,000 Marines.

The other case studies mentioned displayed how Bank of America developed a highly robust onboarding program to ensure new executives would succeed.³⁶ The Internal Revenue Service focused on developing a leadership competency model, modernization, and equipping leaders with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to lead change.³⁷ On next-generation talent programs, the author of the epilogue notes “few companies have any objectively measurable ways to compare individuals to the competency and behavioral requirements at the next level up.”³⁸ They emphasize to separate performance assessments at the current level of responsibility from assessments of potential to perform at higher levels.³⁹ They caution organizations from using the *Peter Principle*, where organizational leaders reward individuals with promotion.⁴⁰

The result: individuals are promoted to one level above their highest level of competence, and thus organizations are filled with people who are actually incompetent to be where they are. To avoid that problem, organizational leaders must realize that performance management is not enough; rather, a separate,

objective potential assessment must be conducted to compare individuals to the competency requirements at higher levels of responsibility.⁴¹

“The Talent Management Handbook: Making Culture a Competitive Advantage By Acquiring, Identifying, Developing, and Promoting the Best People has been recognized as the most authoritative and bestselling reference book in its category.”⁴² More than 77 professionals have contributed to the book, in which editors Lance and Dorothy Berger lay out the framework for effective talent management strategies and best practices. The editors and contributing authors discuss the differences between potential and performance, best retention factors for employees, as well as why human resource technology matters.⁴³ The authors highlight millennials, mentoring, big data, competencies, and integration.⁴⁴ The book discusses Superkeepers, and list the top 3% of employees as Superkeepers.⁴⁵ They define Superkeepers as, “those employees who greatly exceed expectations now and who are projected to continue to do so in the future.”⁴⁶ The editors highlight the need to cultivate the Superkeeper. “Their loss or absence severely inhibits organization growth because of their disproportionately powerful impact on current and future organization performance.”⁴⁷

The editors conclude that the core talent management framework required for creating a high-performance workforce consists of three elements.⁴⁸ The first element is to establish a blueprint, which consists of a talent management creed and strategy that guide the organization’s strategic and tactical talent management processes.⁴⁹ The second element listed is “a set of building blocks that translate that talent creed and strategy into assessment tools that classify employees based on their current and potential contribution to the organization . . . There are three building blocks: competency evaluation, performance appraisals, and potential assessment.”⁵⁰ The third element listed is “a talent

management system that incorporates building blocks into talent management implementation programs. The individual programs are integrated into a unified approach for making decisions regarding the people who exemplify the culture expressed in the creed, who are currently contributing the most to organizational success, and who are seen as making strong contributions in the future.”⁵¹

William J. Rothwell, PhD, Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR), Certified in Professional Learning Professional (CPLP) Fellow, and professor in the Workforce Education and Development program, Department of Learning and Performance Systems at The Pennsylvania State University, University Park campus has authored, co-authored, edited, or co-edited 300 books, book chapters, and articles including contributing to the previously mentioned two books.⁵² Rothwell authored the epilogue to *Best Practices in Talent Management, How the World’s Leading Corporations Manage, Develop, and Retain Top Talent* and co-authored a chapter in *The Talent Management Handbook*; he has established himself as an expert in the field. In *The Talent Management Handbook*, Rothwell and Zaballero describe why and how succession planning and career planning should be integrated.⁵³ The authors note that succession planning helps build depth in talent by allowing the organization’s leaders to make decisions about future talent needs and how to develop people for those needs.⁵⁴ They highlight that career planning is focused on the employee, where they make the decision about their future goals and can compare their competencies to those needed for the future.⁵⁵ “Both programs require clear descriptions of current job duties, competencies, performance requirements, future competency requirements, ways to assess promotion potential to assume higher-level responsibility, methods of developing

talent, and evaluation strategies.”⁵⁶ The author’s highlight how establishing both programs can help establish a “what’s in it for me” for the individuals while building the talent to meet future needs.⁵⁷ Furthermore, they posit that best-practice organizations do use a roadmap to integrate both programs.⁵⁸ The authors do warn that both programs are a component of and not a replacement for, “comprehensive work and workforce planning.”⁵⁹

Some key highlights from their integrating model, but not limited to include: clarify worker competencies, manage and measure performance, align future job duties and worker competencies with organizational strategy, assess individual potential for promotion, and retain talent.⁶⁰ Rothwell and Zaballero further emphasize that “to determine individual development needs, the organization’s leaders need some objective way to assess individual promotability with respect to the requirements at higher levels.”⁶¹ The authors also highlight the importance of retaining talent and note “talent retention is often the least developed of succession or talent management Strategy . . . the reality is that few organizations do as much as they could to retain talent.”⁶² The authors even suggest ways to assess the potential for promotion. The authors suggest utilizing 360-degree assessments, manager ratings with criteria, simulated challenges at assessment centers, psychological tests, portfolio assessments, internal or external rotations, and step-up assignments to name a few ways.⁶³

Multiple sources highlighted HR technology and talent management systems as just one part of the overall talent management process. It serves as a vital part and some liken it to an interdependency on the success of the entire process. Steven Hunt, PhD, SPHR, describes why HR technology matters in, *The Role of HR Technology in Talent*

*Management.*⁶⁴ Hunt describes the three things that talent management professionals need to improve business performance: expertise, credibility, and technology.⁶⁵ The author argues that “expertise and credibility are necessary to influence the organization. But they are meaningless without technology that enables the application of this expertise across the company where it is needed.”⁶⁶ The author highlights how cloud-based HR technology platforms aligned talent management processes by: “linking performance management technology, career development technology, staffing technology, and succession technology to build internal talent pipelines.”⁶⁷ Hunt posits that “to be fully effective in a highly digitalized world, talent management must be viewed through a technology-based mindset.”⁶⁸ The importance of technology directly correlates with the talent marketplace concept for this research. The expertise the technology employs is comprised of competencies which were highlighted throughout multiple sources as a key part in identifying talent throughout an organization.

In *A Competency-Driven Approach to Talent Management Optimization*, the authors define competencies and describe their purpose in the overall process.⁶⁹ “A competency is a knowledge, skill, ability, and other characteristic (e.g., traits, mindsets, attitudes) (KSAOs), or a group of KSAOs, which, when applied in the appropriate roles, helps to achieve desired results . . . Competencies help simplify the process of tying concrete examples of performance expectations to organizational or professional missions and goals.”⁷⁰ The authors posit that competencies are the foundation of talent management systems and help guide performance and development.⁷¹ The authors further describe competency models. “A competency model refers to a collection of competencies that are needed for effective job performance . . . In addition, competency

models typically include detailed information such as key behaviors and standards of proficiency across different levels of job experience or expertise.”⁷² In *Formulating Competencies*, Murray Dalziel, PhD, Dean of Merrick School of Business, University of Baltimore describes a similar definition of competencies and argues not to confuse competencies with tasks.⁷³ The author mentions the “Schippman approach,” where there can be confusion between job and people requirements.⁷⁴ “Competencies are what people bring to the role and not what the person is actually required to do in the role or what they are accountable for.”⁷⁵ To further highlight the benefits of identifying competencies, Laci Loew, *Competencies for the Future Workforce* describes how they can improve workforce planning and mitigate overall risk.⁷⁶ The author describes four different types of competencies that include: organizational, functional, job, and leadership competencies.⁷⁷ “Data and analytics about employee’s skills and knowledge are essential for employee (individually and collectively) performance risk mitigation that leadership would otherwise be blind to.” Loew argues that competency management enables a healthy talent pipeline, improves operational efficiencies and organizational performance, and integrates talent management.⁷⁸

In *Building Tomorrow’s Talent: A Practitioner’s Guide to Talent Management and Succession Planning*, Gay and Sims, who are both Senior Professionals in Human Resources with 35 years of combined experience in the field, provide practical advice, ideas, and planning tools for assessing leadership within an organization.⁷⁹ They claim, “A strong leadership pipeline includes the identification, retention, and development of leadership talent at each leadership level, including those who are not yet in leadership roles.”⁸⁰ They emphasize the need to identify high potential and high performers.⁸¹

“Most companies identify between 1% and 5% of their organization for the high potential group.”⁸² They suggest defining what high potential means for your organization and asks if there will be multiple categories of high potentials?⁸³ They go on to suggest an automated system that provides real-time data to provide more control and usability of the data to the leaders.⁸⁴ The authors discuss succession planning, and note that “There are many times that it makes more sense to identify a ‘pool’ of individuals to develop for a specific job title, rather than identifying specific successors to replace on leader.”⁸⁵ The authors also note the advantage of notifying high potentials and suggest it is a retention benefit. “These individuals are your top talent and your future leaders for the organization, so you definitely want to let them know how valued they are to increase their retention with the organization.”⁸⁶

In *One Page Talent Management*, Effron and Ort describe repeatable processes that create successful talent.⁸⁷ Mark Effron is the founder of New Talent Management Network, which is a nonprofit organization focused on increasing the profession’s impact and influence.⁸⁸ The authors are guided by the findings from the New Talent Management Network’s annual talent management report.⁸⁹ *One Page Talent Management* describes barriers to building talent, high potentials, performance management, talent reviews, competencies, as well as case studies from top companies such as American Express, PepsiCo, IBM.⁹⁰ The authors posit four barriers to building talent: creating needless complexity, adding no new value, neglecting the science, and lacking transparency and accountability.⁹¹ In discussing the importance of transparency, they define transparency, “as the amount of information shared about a process and its

results, and with whom that information is shared.”⁹² “Examples of transparency include telling leaders the results of discussions about performance and potential, sharing 360-degree feedback results openly, informing high potentials of their status, and other actions that scare the heck out of many HR and line leaders.”⁹³

The authors highlight the need to inform employees that in fact, they are high potential.⁹⁴ They warn “if you do not tell them they are high potential, . . . their next company will be happy to treat them like one. Besides, they already know (and they wonder why you have not told them!).”⁹⁵ They also highlight that employees should not be in the same role forever, as they can block succession to other positions.⁹⁶ The authors credit Allan Church, vice president of organizational and management development at PepsiCo for saying, “Organizations struggle more with moving blockers than with almost any other aspect of talent management.”⁹⁷

In *Total Volunteer Force*, Tim Kane presents some valid arguments with quantitative data and argues for 20 recommendations of reforms the Armed Services should make to improve talent management practices.⁹⁸ His recommendations are centered around the idea of restoring personnel decisions regarding promotion guidelines to the service chiefs and leaving hiring and dismissals decisions to the local commanders.⁹⁹ Kane bases his recommendations on a *Leader/Talent* employee survey conducted in 2014 and 2015.¹⁰⁰ The survey highlighted how the different Armed Services’ results were very similar, mainly due to the laws and regulations they operate under.¹⁰¹ The survey revealed that the highest scores are in the values and purpose categories, while the weakest military categories are job-matching, promotions, and compensation.¹⁰² Kane notes,

Across the board, members see promotion practices in a negative light. However, the five elements allow reformers to distinguish which practice is weakest, which in this case is “Poorly performing employees are never promoted.” That suggests that active-duty troops are more upset by seeing weak leaders promoted quickly than by seeing great leaders promoted slowly.¹⁰³

Kane posits that a central tenet of improving talent management is to give more career control to individuals.¹⁰⁴ He argues that service members with more than five years of service should be able to opt out of the promotion cycle in order to specialize in their current roles or apply for roles at their current rank.¹⁰⁵ “This would allow, for example, aviators to stay in the cockpit, cyber warriors to remain in critically understaffed positions, and combat commanders to extend their tours during wartime operations in which continuity is vital for mission success.”¹⁰⁶ Kane also suggests that service members be allowed to turn down the first assignment in a slating cycle without prejudice or repercussions and be able to apply for any assignment for which they are qualified.¹⁰⁷

Another *Total Volunteer Force* recommendation of implementing a web-based talent management system aligns directly with the primary research question. Kane highlights that “Efficient job-matching requires an information system that makes available jobs (requirements) visible with details about location, unit, role, commander, and more. Likewise, gaining commanders need deeper information about available individuals to optimize matching of faces to spaces.”¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, he adds, “Optimal job-matching (slating/detailing/assignments) can be decentralized in multiple ways without being completely localized.”¹⁰⁹ To even further expand on this subject, he adds another recommendation of expanding information transparency for job-matching.¹¹⁰ He suggests that “Commanders should be allowed to request additional information to

include LinkedIn profiles, letters of recommendation, and communications with references. Likewise, command selection and promotion boards should have broader authority to see this information as well.”¹¹¹ Other *Total Volunteer Force* recommendations include increasing tour lengths, increasing rank tenure and career lengths, allow flexible sabbatical options and more.¹¹² Kane states, “But at the end of the day, the building blocks of talent management are the same: job-matching (choice), information, and compensation.”¹¹³

Papers

The following papers reinforce some of the key talent management principles and best practices described in the previous section. Allman, Fussell, and Timmons take identifying top leaders one step further in their 2012 thesis, *High Value Talent: Identifying, Developing, And Retaining Naval Special Warfare’s Best Leaders*. During their research, they connected with over thirty of the world’s most successful companies from a variety of sectors for a glimpse into their methods and strategies concerning the retention of high potentials and were able to determine trends throughout.¹¹⁴

When we mention Top Leaders, we are referring to those members who have made it to the highest rung in their organization; this is the apex for High Potentials. In the military’s case, only High Potentials should ascend to flag rank and be Top Leaders in their services . . . While High Performers may be excellent in their current roles, to include leadership positions, not all will display potential to become Top Leaders. In contrast, High Potentials are not only leaders who perform, but also have the talent, tools, and motivation to become Top Leaders.¹¹⁵

The authors note on what high potential traits organizations are trying to identify.

While High Performers can generally be identified via metrics, traits useful for distinguishing High Potentials are more challenging to identify because they are often less tangible. However, successful organizations have developed methods that define the traits that suit their particular needs. Across nearly every sector of

the market, we found organizations targeting critical thinking, deductive reasoning, mental sharpness, thirst for knowledge, and personal accountability.¹¹⁶

In *Improving How the Air Force Develops High-Potential Officers*, Major Nolan and Dr. Overstreet conducted research to identify the difference between high potential and high performance in USAF.¹¹⁷ Nolan points out that, “While most high-potential (HiPo) employees are also high-performing, the opposite is not always true.”¹¹⁸ The authors highlight that high performance is commonly mistaken for high potential.¹¹⁹ While conducting interviews with senior Air Force leaders, they discovered that “the top three indicators of HiPo talent, as described by interview participants, were sustained performance, continuous learning, and demonstrative leadership skills.”¹²⁰ The authors posit that, “[High Potential] HiPo identification is an inexact science.”¹²¹ One recommendation the authors suggest is that the Air Force, “Establish a formal definition of high-potential officers.”¹²² They conclude that “Currently, the USAF’s definition of talent is not clear. Its personnel system requires simplicity and transparency.”¹²³

In a white paper from Development Dimensions International (DDI) titled, *Nine Best Practices For Effective Talent Management*, they describe best practices in the field based on their successful experiences in hiring, developing, and retaining exceptional talent.¹²⁴ DDI notes that the organization’s strategy and goals should drive the development of a talent management strategy.¹²⁵ DDI argues for the implementation of “Success Profiles” which includes competencies, personal attributes, knowledge, and experience.¹²⁶ They also suggest to focus on the development of high-potential leaders and individuals who create value for their organization; not all employees.¹²⁷ As they note that “Bank of America has a philosophy: Invest in the Best. Many companies do the

opposite and make a mistake by trying to spread limited resources for development equally across employees.”¹²⁸

Furthermore, DDI discusses the need for organizations to differentiate between high potentials, performance, and readiness, and understand that they are not the same thing. They emphasize, “The Global Leadership Forecast reports that only about half of the world’s organizations identify high potentials.”¹²⁹ DDI highlights that “Talent management is all about putting the right people in the right jobs.”¹³⁰ They add that organizations should focus on selection rather than development. DDI posits that “Training people to improve their judgment, learning agility, adaptability—all core requirements for most of the talent hired today—is difficult, if not impossible.”¹³¹ DDI ends with noting that software alone is not a talent management solution. Talent management software or technology is a tool that requires expertise and content backing to be successful.¹³²

In a 2006 article from McKinsey & Company titled, *Making a market in talent*, the authors describe the framework of a talent marketplace system.¹³³ When describing the very essence of a marketplace, the authors highlight that “any marketplace must define what is being traded, how it is priced, and the operating protocols and standards.”¹³⁴ The authors suggest that,

A formal talent marketplace makes employees (rather than line managers or HR professionals) responsible for managing the greater part of their careers. Second, it explodes the idea that senior managers “own” talent. In a talent marketplace, employees are “restricted free agents” (the restrictions define, for example, pay grades and terms of service). They are expected to find the best opportunities for themselves, and the market opens up a nonprice-based competition across a range of candidates and job alternatives.¹³⁵

The authors conclude that “But the real beneficiary is the company, which wins by getting far better matches between its job opportunities and its most talented people and by gaining far greater transparency into shortages and excess supplies of talent.”¹³⁶ At this point, common talent management best practices and principles have been identified. The researcher will now highlight some constraints of the DOD and what each of the Armed Services has implemented throughout the DOD.

John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019

One of Senator McCain’s last official contributions to Congress was the United States Senate Armed Service Committee Report 115—262, which contributed to the passing of the John S. McCain NDAA for Fiscal Year 2019. The report proposes some of the biggest changes to officer personnel policy since DOPMA (Public Law 96–513), which was passed in 1980.¹³⁷ The report highlights some significant findings from research over the past decade concerning DOPMA and includes several authorized changes to officer personnel management.

DOPMA places strict limitations on commissioned officer personnel management and requires all military Services to manage their officer corps in the same general manner within specific statutory constraints. DOPMA limits the number of officers who may be allowed to serve in mid-grade officer ranks, how an officer is appointed, when an officer may be promoted, how promotion decisions will be made, and when an officer should be removed from service.¹³⁸

To respond to these demographic realities, the committee recommends a number of provisions to emphasize individual merit and to provide opportunities for more individually-tailored career paths. In today’s competitive labor market, it is crucial to balance military necessity with the ability of servicemembers to have greater influence over their careers. In the vast majority of circumstances both interests can be achieved without sacrificing the unique concerns of a servicemember or the legitimate demands of a military career.¹³⁹

The John S. McCain NDAA for Fiscal Year 2019 authorizes a variety of changes to officer personnel policy especially to officer accessions. Specifically, Section 502, *Enhancement of Availability of Constructive Service Credit For Private Sector Training or Experience Upon Original Appointment as a Commissioned Officer*, authorizes the Marine Corps to give constructive service credit up to the rank of Colonel for training or experience that is directly related to the Marines' operational needs.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, Section 503, *Standardized Temporary Promotion Authority Across The Military Departments For Officers In Certain Grades With Critical Skills*, authorizes promotion to certain grades for officers with critical skills up to the rank of Colonel.¹⁴¹ Officers must meet the below criteria to qualify for such a promotion.

(1) has a skill in which the armed force concerned has a critical shortage of personnel (as determined by the Secretary of the military department concerned); and “(2) is serving in a position (as determined by the Secretary of the military department concerned) that—“(A) is designated to be held by a captain, major, lieutenant colonel, or colonel in the Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps, or lieutenant, lieutenant commander, commander, or captain in the Navy, as applicable; and “(B) requires that an officer serving in such position have the skill possessed by such officer.”¹⁴²

The number of officers who are authorized promotion under this statute is limited to 50 captains, 175 majors, 100 lieutenant colonels, and 50 colonels for the Marine Corps.¹⁴³

Section 504, *Authority for Promotion Boards to Recommend Officers of Particular Merit Be Placed Higher on A Promotion List*, highlights the need to promote certain officers ahead of scheduled timelines.¹⁴⁴

(d) A selection board convened under section 611(a) of this title shall, when authorized under section 616(g) of this title, include in its report to the Secretary concerned the names of those officers recommended by the board to be placed higher on the promotion list and the order in which the board recommends that those officers should be placed on the list.¹⁴⁵

Before this authority, officers on the promotion list had to wait their turn to be promoted throughout the year based on their date of rank. This authorization has the potential for and allows those identified officers of particular merit selected on the promotion board with a junior date of rank to be promoted ahead of those who may have had a senior date of rank.

Section 506, *Applicability to Additional Officer Grades of Authority for Continuation on Active Duty of Officers in Certain Military Specialties and Career Tracks*, changes continuation from O-4 to O-2.¹⁴⁶ Before the amendment, a Major, O-4, could serve up to 40 years, now a First Lieutenant, O-2 can serve up to 40 years under this statute. Additionally, Section 507, adds SUBCHAPTER VI—*Alternative Promotion Authority for Officers in Designated Competitive Categories*, which authorizes the Marine Corps to designate competitive categories for promotion after submitting a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and the House of Representatives.¹⁴⁷

The report on the designation of a competitive category shall set forth the following: (1) A detailed description of officer requirements for officers within the competitive category. (2) An explanation of the number of opportunities for consideration for promotion to each particular grade, and an estimate of promotion timing, within the competitive category. (3) An estimate of the size of the promotion zone for each grade within the competitive category. (4) A description of any other matters the Secretary considered in determining to designate the competitive category for purposes of this subchapter.¹⁴⁸

Section 551, *Permanent Career Intermission Program*, adds the new § 710, *Career flexibility to enhance retention of members*, to Chapter 40 of title 10, United States Code.¹⁴⁹ This authorizes all Armed Services the permanent authority to continue to utilize the Career Intermission Program (CIP). The statute allows CIP participants to leave active service for up to three years in pursuit of their “personal or professional needs” and returned to active service at the end the period.¹⁵⁰ Even though not all

changes are noted here, these authorizations incorporate talent management initiatives into the DOD and officer personnel system.

Armed Services Talent Management

One common counter argument that arises when discussing talent management between the services is how much larger the officer populations are in the other Armed Services and how service cultures differ. A valid concern, the researcher notes the force size differences here as a reference point for readers unfamiliar with the size difference. As of 28 February 2019, the Defense Manpower Data Center reported total active duty officers by service which includes warrant officer ranks as follows: Army had 91,012 officers, Air Force had 62,427 officers, Navy had 54,451 officers, and the Marine Corps had 21,441 officers.¹⁵¹ With the size differences of officer populations between the Armed Services noted and the recent changes to officer personnel management in the previous section, the RAND corporation highlights some other key areas relating to this research.

The RAND Corporation's National Defense Research Institute published a report that assists with understanding the constraints the Armed Services have with implementing talent management best practices. "The National Defense Research Institute (NDRI), a federally funded research and development center (FFRDC), conducts RAND research for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the defense agencies, the United States Marine Corps, and the United States Navy."¹⁵² In *Officer Career Management: Steps Toward Modernization in the 2018 and 2019 National Defense Authorization Acts*, the authors highlight the 2019 statutory changes and flexibilities, officer promotions, talent

management, tenure, active and reserve permeability, as well as results from the 2016 Selected Status of Forces Survey Results.¹⁵³ During their research, the authors conducted interviews with the different military departments from action officers in policy development and personnel assignment centers to deputy assistant secretaries, general officers, and senior executive service members.¹⁵⁴ Concerning the interviews, the report does not specify who the interview was with on the particular subject. The authors highlight the fact that the definition of talent and talent management varies between the different services. The authors did not constrain themselves to one definition as they note that the definition of talent can range from the general ability of an individual to what others have defined as a more personal approach that identifies an individual's unique KSAOs.¹⁵⁵ The authors also summarized some of the constraints of current legislation placed on the Armed Services concerning professional development of officers and talent management that include: "cohort management, the composition of promotion boards, and the up-or-out tenure management system."¹⁵⁶ The authors further explain how current legislation affects talent management.

DOPMA and [Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act] ROPMA affect talent management in three primary ways: Similar officers move through the promotion system at the same pace, except when promoted [below the zone] BPZ. Officers are considered for promotion by promotion boards comprising officers from their service. Those officers who do not meet the thresholds of potential and performance as seen by the promotion board are subject to being separated by the up-or-out system.¹⁵⁷

When the authors interviewed the services on their respective officer talent management systems, four themes surfaced. "The definition of talent matters for the discussion. Some conflict exists between talent as a level of performance and talent as unique skills. Requirements drive talent alignment, but unit signaling may lag.

There is ongoing movement toward more individual matching, but some talents may not provide institutional benefits.”¹⁵⁸ As the researcher has not found a formal USMC definition for talent documented, the authors provide the Marine Corps’ perspective and current system.

According to Marine Corps experts, the Marine Corps defines talent as the ability to succeed in one’s tasks at the current and future ranks. The assignment process in the talent management system features face-to-face discussions between officers to be assigned and monitors who makes assignment decisions. The monitors are well versed in both the needs of an individual officer and the Marine Corps’ standard professional development model.¹⁵⁹

The Marine Corps has discussed KSAOs for years, but in a different context from that of the Army. KSAOs, based on our discussion, boil down to “MOS credibility” and the ability to succeed in one’s job. The important skill sets are those that translate into MOS requirements, rather than skills that exist outside an MOS. As a result, the Marine Corps experts highlighted that promotion board instructions that request an increase in a certain skill set are really asking for an increase in a particular MOS. The Marine Corps experts also noted that existing authorities in DOPMA and ROPMA allow the Marine Corps to manage talent effectively.¹⁶⁰

The report also highlighted the results of the 2016 Selected Status of Forces Survey, which represented all the services with responses of officers ranging from O-1 to O-6 and above.¹⁶¹ Even though the survey included more than just USMC officers, the results bring value to the research when discussing officer retention factors. One question of importance was item 163. “Item 163: *Suppose That You Have to Decide Whether to Stay on Active Duty. Which of the Following Would Be the Most Important Factor in Your Decision?*”¹⁶² Out of 32 possible responses of the most important factors for deciding to stay on active duty, the top 10 response frequencies of the survey are listed in descending order from the highest number of responses to the lowest number of responses.¹⁶³ The responses are as follows: Military retirement, family concerns, personal choice/freedoms, opportunities for career advancement, spouse/family attitudes,

pay and allowances, opportunities to be assigned to station of choice, amount of personal and family time you have, sense of accomplishment, choice of jobs.¹⁶⁴ This RAND report along with the research conducted at the Strategic Studies Institute listed next provided a valuable understanding of officer personnel management practices across the DOD.

It appears that the Army's talent management concept and strategy were based on the research of the Strategic Studies Institute. "The Strategic Studies Institute is the U.S. Army's Institute for geostrategic and national security research and analysis. The Strategic Studies Institute conducts strategic research and analysis to support the U.S. Army War College curricula, provides direct analysis for Army and Department of Defense leadership, and serves as a bridge to the wider strategic community."¹⁶⁵ Since 2007, the Strategic Studies Institute has completed a vast amount of research on officer talent management.¹⁶⁶ A number of authors have contributed but specifically Colonel Casey Wardynski, Colonel David S. Lyle, and Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Michael J. Colarusso co-authored the first six in a series of nine monographs with both Lyle and Colarusso contributing to all nine. Even though all their research is important to the subject and has contributed greatly to the DOD officer management, a few of their monographs are particularly relevant to this research and highlighted below.

The first monograph of the series, *Towards A U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused Upon Talent*, was published in 2009. The authors highlight a familiar theme across the services when referring to officer personnel management. "In other words, rather than continuously jamming round pegs into square holes and asking the pegs to adapt, the Army should develop the institutional

adaptability to place the right officers in the right jobs at the right time.”¹⁶⁷ The authors posit that “Therefore, an effective Officer Corps strategy recognizes the interdependency of accessing, developing, retaining, and employing officer talent.”¹⁶⁸ The authors offer some valuable advice on a talent marketplace system during their research on the notion of employing officer talent.

A first step towards talent management is to develop a platform where officers can communicate their talents. This platform should capture and document officer competencies such as professional certifications, membership in social, educational, professional or international networks, publications, specialized knowledge of an operating area or community of interest, project experience, and language skills, as well as interests and aptitudes for collaboration as a member of an ad hoc or virtual team. The platform must have a searchable talent management system within which organizations can readily locate officers with competencies matched to their requirements.¹⁶⁹

The authors further elaborate on job matching and the talent management system they propose.

Job matching entails both a mechanism for officers to communicate their unique skills, experiences, and attributes, and a way for senior leaders to identify them. To achieve efficient job matching, the Army must create an internal market in which consumers can demand and suppliers can provide talent. This market would inform subordinate officers of the skill sets that senior leaders demand, while senior leaders would gain increased visibility over the skill sets that junior officers possess. In keeping with the role markets play in guiding resources to their most effective use, this talent management system would increase the Army’s capacity to dominate current challenges and adapt to future requirements. It would provide the enterprise and its subordinate units with greater scope to locate and employ the increasingly diverse and specialized officer talents the Army accesses and develops. By creating such an employment model, the Army would shift its practice from adapting individuals for assignments to matching individuals against assignments. Accordingly, it can achieve greater depth in individual competencies while still achieving a multi-skilled capability.¹⁷⁰

In their sixth monograph, *Towards A U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Employing Talent*, the authors take a deeper dive into the talent management system and employment of officer’s talents.¹⁷¹ The authors highlight how, “The Army

Cannot See its Talent.”¹⁷² They distinguish how the Army tracks all kinds of information and data in an officer’s record book, but note that this is merely accounting data.¹⁷³

To manage officer talent, however, the Army needs decision support data, information that reveals what makes each officer tick. What does he value? What opportunities does he desire? What incentives will he respond to? What does he know that the Army has not taught him? Where has he been that the Army has not sent him? What does he enjoy? How does he see the future? How does he learn? In other words, what are his (or her) talents?¹⁷⁴

To test their theories, they developed a pilot program titled, “Green Pages,” for a select group of Engineer officers.¹⁷⁵

Currently, there is no market for officer talent in the Army—no way for organizational strength managers and individual officers to make efficient talent transactions. This represents a market failure—an inefficient use of resources when better results are possible. In other words, assignment transactions still occur, but there is a significant misalignment of talent supply and demand, making the Officer Corps less productive than it can be. Green Pages can rectify this, providing the Army with its first market-driven officer talent management system.¹⁷⁶



Figure 1. Green Pages Operating Concept

Source: Casey Wardynski, David S. Lyle and Michael J. Colarusso, “Towards A U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Employing Talent” (Monograph, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2010), 18, accessed 10 January 2019. <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=988>.

A simple design, “Green Pages,” was the beginning of the Army’s talent management system. The authors highlight what “Green Pages” offers.

Green Pages also allows users to: manage the information that is publicly available about them as professionals; search against every officer position in the Army inventory; contact organization personnel strength managers for more information; be found by Army organizations conducting talent searches; collaborate with fellow experts from across the Army to gather data, share files and solve problems; gain new insights from discussions with like-minded professionals in private group settings; build professional networks that can help them land the jobs they want in the places the Army wants them; and, at the organization level, post and distribute job listings to find and attract the best talent available.¹⁷⁷

In the ninth monograph in the series, *Starting Strong: Talent-Based Branching of Newly Commissioned U.S. Army Officers*, the authors highlight the importance of a talent-based approach when placing newly commissioned officers into a specific branch that focuses on their skills, knowledge, and behaviors.¹⁷⁸ In their Talent-Based Branching Operating Concept, the authors describe the model that was first piloted at West Point that includes three phases.¹⁷⁹ Phase I is Branch Education and Mentorship, which educates the cadets on the branch but also gathers information on the cadets.¹⁸⁰ The education starts with the Army’s branching website which includes branch talent storyboards, videos, and branch specific information and contacts.¹⁸¹ “Branch talent “storyboards” detail the specific native intelligences, skills, knowledge, and behaviors demanded by each of the 17 basic branches, not just for lieutenants but for all career officers.”¹⁸² Figure 2 shows an example of an engineer branch talent storyboard.



Engineer



INTELLIGENCES: Interpersonal, Logical-Mathematical, Spatial																			
SKILLS: Engineer officers must possess an innate ability to evaluate and assess problems, the resident knowledge to brainstorm possibilities, and then quickly implement solutions to solve problems facing our maneuver commanders. This requires a design mindset – the ability to develop tasks and work processes for teams and motivate those teams to reach harmoniously, efficiently, and effectively desired outcomes. Officers must thrive in the world of abstract concepts and data-based reasoning, be able to discriminate and filter information of importance, and be capable of rapid visualization; all while skillfully possessing the ability to communicate concepts verbally or in writing. Collectively, these skills make Engineer officers superb problem solvers and invaluable to our Army and Nation.																			
KNOWLEDGE: The Engineer branch strongly desires officers with academic backgrounds in the domain-specific disciplines listed below, with particular emphasis on degrees that are accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). These disciplines provide officers with a foundation in the scientific method that enhances their ability to become expert problem solvers. ➤ RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 1: ABET Engineering Majors (Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Systems, Environmental, Chemical, Nuclear, Engineering Management, Computer Science, Information Technology). ➤ RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 2: Non-ABET Engineering; Science, Technology, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. ➤ RELEVANT EDUCATION PRIORITY 3: All other disciplines. ➤ RELEVANT TRAINING/EXPERIENCE: Cadet Troop Leading Time / Leader Development Time (CTLT / CLDT) with Engineer Unit or Academic Enrichment Program in engineering or related activity (not all inclusive).																			
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TALENT PRIORITIES: 1. DOMAIN-SPECIFIC EDUCATION: Possessing an engineering degree (ABET-preferred), high performers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines. 2. PROJECT MANAGER: Able to determine requirements, develop work processes, delegate responsibilities, and lead teams to desired outcomes. 3. PROBLEM SOLVER: Able to choose between best practices and unorthodox approaches to reach a solution. Accomplishes the task. 4. INSPIRATIONAL LEADER: Motivates teams to work harmoniously and productively towards a common goal. 5. SPATIALLY INTELLIGENT: Easily perceives, understands, and operates within the multi-dimensional world.																			

Figure 2. Army Engineer Branch Storyboard

Source: Michael J. Colarusso, Kenneth G. Heckel, David S. Lyle, and William L. Skimmyhorn, “Starting Strong: Talent-Based Branching of Newly Commissioned U.S. Army Officers” (Monograph, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2016), 19, accessed 10 January 2019, <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1317>.

The results of the storyboards from all 17 branches revealed 20 common talent dimensions. These 20 common dimensions are used to build a foundation for the assessments taken later on in the process.¹⁸³ For the cadets to further learn about their own individual talents, the Army developed an online resume and self-assessment tool on

their branching website.¹⁸⁴ The cadets conduct an initial ranking of each of the 17 branches in order of preference along with a written description of why they think they would be a good fit for that branch.¹⁸⁵ Phase I also includes the cadets completing a “Talent Assessment Battery” (TAB). The TAB is a three-hour proctored test that measures both cognitive and non-cognitive skills, knowledge, and behaviors, which is also scored against their peers in the 20 common talent dimensions.¹⁸⁶ The cadets discuss their results with their mentor who can help them understand and interpret the results.¹⁸⁷ Phase I ends with a cadre member preparing a “Cadet / Candidate Talent Evaluation (CTE).”¹⁸⁸ The CTE adds some subjective input and gives the cadets a sense of what an experienced leader’s observations are across all 20 talent dimensions.¹⁸⁹

Phase II of the Talent-Based Branching Operating Concept is “Integrative Talent Assessment and Branch Recommendations.”¹⁹⁰

In Phase II, an experienced, independent team of human resource professionals reviews every cadet’s full profile (resume, TAB scores, and cadre evaluations) and provides an integrated, multi-perspective talent assessment of each. This assessment is compared to each branch’s talent demands and generates a list of “best-fit” options (typically from four to eight branches, contingent upon an individual’s talent profile).

After the cadets receive their feedback, the branch teams are simultaneously selecting from the field their best matches. Branch commandant review teams use a five-point Likert-scale recommendation on each cadet, ranging from “must select” to “do not select.”¹⁹¹ Phase II ends once the cadets and basic branches finalize their preferences and submit them to the branching board.¹⁹²

Phase III is branch assignments. This is the conclusion of the talent-based branching operating concept. Cadets receive their branch assignments by using the legacy ordinal ranking process. The higher the cadet’s ranking, the better chance they have of

receiving their first choice.¹⁹³ The authors highlight how some may argue why put all the additional education and time into talent matching instead of just testing and observation.¹⁹⁴ The authors give the following counterargument. “First, by soliciting branch preferences, the Army is signaling its desire to be transparent and to collaborate with and create a truly engaged workforce, a critical component of talent management. Perhaps more importantly, however, well-informed preferences are important predictors of individual talent potential.”¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, the authors posit the importance of officer satisfaction will pay off in the long run for the Army. “Strong matches mean that new officers are more likely to enjoy and excel in their work, thus increasing their utility over time. In other words, the three-phases of talent-based branching help ensure that a cadet’s final branch preferences are mature and useful talent predictors.”¹⁹⁶ This three-phase talent-based branching concept was piloted during the West Point classes of 2013-2015.¹⁹⁷ The authors highlight some positive results.

Across all three classes, roughly 40 percent of cadets changed their top branch preference over the year-long program. Nearly 90 percent changed at least one of their top three branch preferences and 97 percent changed at least one of their top five branch preferences. Interestingly, most of these preference changes in the top three and top five categories were the result of cadets considering new branches to which they might be better suited, rather than merely reordering their existing branch preferences.¹⁹⁸

The authors do highlight a significant challenge to overcome with cadets at West Point during talent-based branching. Mainly, that the allotted branch allocations will not always match with the cadet talent supply. The authors provide the example that it is a requirement that a minimum of 70 percent of those cadets that graduate branch into combat arms.¹⁹⁹ Some cadets may be a better fit for artillery vice aviation. These are two completely different branches. There may just not be enough branch demand or

allocations to match the talent supply.²⁰⁰ The authors conclude with the positive results they saw during their research.

The success of talent-based branching also demonstrates that talent management is not “too hard, too costly, too cumbersome, too time consuming, and too private sector.” Put simply, it works. It works because information technology now allows young professionals to post and update their resumes on professional networking sites, search for jobs using online employment websites and, at many firms, negotiate a customized compensation package that aligns with employee preferences while helping the organization beat out its talent competition. The Army is now beginning to do the same.²⁰¹

Since the initial pilot, the results stand on their own. The United States Military Academy reports that 95 percent of cadets receive one of their top three choices with Talent Based Branching.²⁰²

U.S. Army Talent Management

The USA seems to be ahead of the other Armed Services when it comes to developing and implementing talent management into the total force. They have established a Talent Management Task Force and implemented a talent management website that includes courseware, videos, and relevant published materials. The USA published their *Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond* in September 2015, and the *U.S. Army Talent Management Strategy Force 2025 and Beyond: Ready, Professional, Diverse, and Integrated* in September 2016. The concept of operations and strategy defines what talent and talent management means to the USA, displays frameworks to use, and strategic goals going forward.²⁰³ The *Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond* identifies the Army’s 20 guiding talent management principles that are grouped into five categories as shown in Figure 3.²⁰⁴

Category	Principle
Talent Management is an Investment	1. Talent Management is an Investment
Effective Talent Management Requires a Systems Approach	2. Internal Synergy
	3. Vertical Consistency
	4. Single Integrator
	5. Senior Leaders <i>Lead Change</i>
	6. Branding
	7. Tailored to Fit the Organization
	8. Balance Completeness with Simplicity
Effective Talent Management Must Balance the Needs of the Individuals with the Needs of the Organization	9. Individualism and Collectivism
	10. Identifying and Leveraging Individual Talents
	11. Diverse Career Portfolios
	12. Optimizing Tenure
	13. Validity and Transparency
Talent Management Must Ensure Job - Person Fit	14. Optimizing All Talent
	15. KSB Driven
	16. Right Person - Right Job - Right Team
	17. Enabling Organizational Agility
The Talent Management System Must Empower Employees	18. Employee Empowerment
	19. Enhanced Employee Self-Awareness
	20. Reward Desired Behavior

Figure 3. Army Talent Management Principles

Source: United States Army Combined Arms Center (CAC), *Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: CAC, September 2015), 12.

The *U.S. Army Talent Management Strategy Force 2025 and Beyond*, defines talent as “the intersection of three dimensions - skills, knowledge and behaviors that create an optimal level of individual performance, provided the individual is employed within their talent set. Every person has talent that can be cultivated or extended via proper employment and development. Talent can be shaped.”²⁰⁵ The strategy defines talent management as “a way to enhance Army readiness by maximizing the potential of the Army’s greatest asset – our people. By better understanding the talent of our

workforce and the talent needed by unit requirements, the Army can more effectively acquire, develop, employ, and retain the right talent, at the right time.”²⁰⁶

The strategy further elaborates that, “Talent management is about more than assignment satisfaction . . . Talent Management mitigates one of greatest risks posed by an uncertain operating environment - mismatch in people and requirements (either not enough or too many) and losing talented people to the wider American labor market.”²⁰⁷ The strategy lays out four strategic goals: ready, professional, diverse, and integrated.²⁰⁸ When referring to the goal of ready, “The Army has created mechanisms to capture the true demand for particular talents, has inventoried the talents available in its people, and then heavily weights talent matching as an assignment (employment) consideration. This increases overall productivity and readiness, with more of the Army’s people “in the right place, doing the right work at the right time.”²⁰⁹ The Army talent management strategy is based on four core functions of acquire, develop, employ, and retain as shown in Figure 2.”²¹⁰

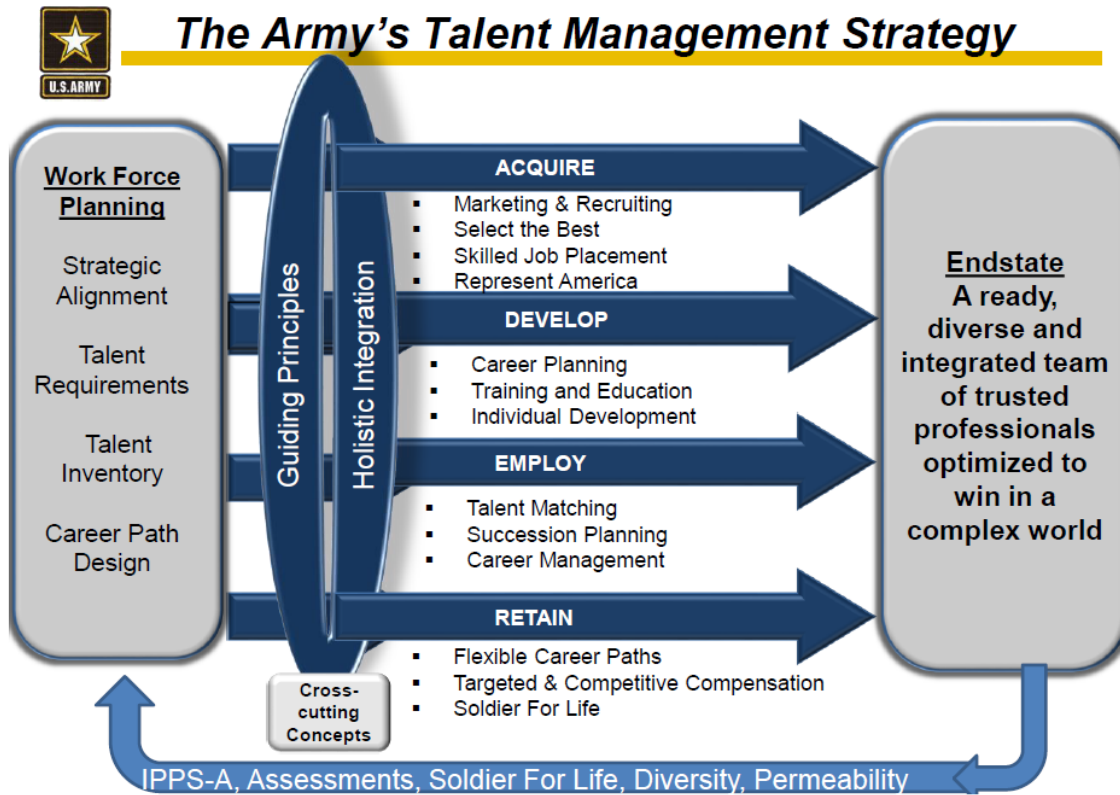


Figure 4. Talent-focused Workforce Management Framework

Source: Headquarters, Department of the Army, *U.S. Army Talent Management Strategy Force 2025 and Beyond: Ready, Professional, Diverse, and Integrated* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 20 September 2016), 9.

The U.S. Army has also implemented and deployed the Assignment Interactive Module 2.0 (AIM 2), which is a vast improvement from the initial “Green Pages” pilot. “Assignment Interactive Module 2.0 (AIM 2) is a web-based information system designed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the officer management process, and facilitate communication between Soldiers (e.g. officers & warrant officers with talents), Units (e.g. commanders with requirements) and the Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD).”²¹¹ AIM 2 gives officers the opportunity to provide

HQDA information about their unique knowledge, skills, and behaviors that would not otherwise be known from a review of their officer record book.

Within AIM 2, officers input previously unknown skills, talents, certifications, duty preferences, etc. into their resume.²¹² AIM 2 includes a “Manner of Performance” section, where the officer can see how they compare to their peers based on their past five officer evaluation records.²¹³ The “Marketplace” section also allows inputs from officers who are scheduled to move, and the units looking to “hire” incoming officers.²¹⁴ Officers are able to see available open assignments to them in accordance with their branch and rank, and then list each available position in order of preference.²¹⁵ Open assignments display valuable information to a mover that includes: unit/installation information, points of contact, duty description, and specific knowledge, skills and behaviors desired.²¹⁶ The hiring units that own the available positions can provide feedback to both the branch managers and the officer, as well as conduct a search of resumes and the self-professed talents that they are looking for. The units provide feedback to the officer by selecting from the list of “Very Interested, Interested, Indifferent, Not Interested.”²¹⁷ Once the unit inputs their selection to determine who is best fit for the open position, the officer gets immediate feedback in their marketplace window.²¹⁸ Army officers then communicate with their branch managers directly through the system for their request for orders. AIM 2 is a bridge to a bigger talent management system the Army is developing, Integrated Personnel and Pay System – Army (IPPS-A).

IPPS-A is, “the Army’s future online Human Resources (HR) solution that transforms our industrial age personnel systems to a 21st century talent management system.”²¹⁹ IPPS-A will capture a soldier’s unique knowledge, skills, behaviors,

experience, and readiness in which they are calling the 25 Point Soldier Talent Profile.²²⁰

The 25 Point Soldier Talent Profile will be matched with requirements and unit commander's needs in the marketplace to place the right Soldier, in the right job, at the right time.²²¹ The scheduled releases begin with the Army National Guard during Increment 2/Release 2, which will be followed by the USA active duty and reserve personnel in Increment 2/Release 3.²²² IPPS-A Increment 2/Release 2 is currently deployed and being utilized by both the Pennsylvania and Virginia National Guard.²²³

U.S. Air Force Talent Management

The USAF has a talent management strategy and marketplace system similar to the USA design. The USAF published the *Human Capital Annex to the USAF Strategic Master Plan* in May 2015.²²⁴ “The Human Capital Annex [(HCA)] is one of four annexes to the Strategic Master Plan (SMP) that translates comprehensive goals and objectives required to achieve the Air Force Strategy (entitled A Call to the Future) into tangible actions, initiatives, and priorities.”²²⁵ The USAF HCA describes how the Airmen is the most important asset and lays out objectives and tasks along with associated timelines to support talent management.²²⁶ The HCA focuses on recruiting, talent management and retention. The HCA states, “The detailed, personal management of the small subset of Airmen who possess those ever-shifting skills, special experiences, and high potential will enable the strategic agility the Air Force of the future demands.”²²⁷

Two USAF online talent management systems of value to this research are *MyVECTOR* and *Talent Marketplace*. “MyVECTOR is an enterprise solution that supports the Air Force's goal to provide a standardized process available to all Airmen for

career development and mentoring.”²²⁸ *MyVECTOR* provides mentoring, career planning, and knowledge sharing for the USAF total force.²²⁹ The importance of an effective mentorship program has been highlighted in a number of talent management resources. A subsystem of *MyVECTOR* is *Talent Marketplace*, which is the USAF version of a web-based talent management system for personnel assignments.

According to the Air Force’s Personnel Center, “Talent Marketplace is a bold attempt to improve the art and science of Air Force assignments.”²³⁰ Similar to the Army’s marketplace within AIM 2, *Talent Marketplace* allows USAF officers who are on the vulnerable to move list (VML) to search and select open positions across the globe that match their profile with open billets. A VML officer is an officer who is up for reassignment based on completion of an overseas tour, time on station, graduation from PME, command selection, or other reason.²³¹ *Talent Marketplace* allows input from the VML officer, billet owners, commanders, and USAF Personnel Center staff.²³²

Within *Talent Marketplace*, USAF VML officers update their profile, answer global and community-specific questions concerning their intent, and then search and rank their preferences of the open billets.²³³ VML officers can see which billets others have favorited and those that have not had an interest.²³⁴ VML officers also see the losing commander’s comments and rankings about themselves and comments from billet owners that bid on them.²³⁵ The commanders of those units with open billets or billet owners get a vote on the potential new officers coming to their unit. Billet owners can search for officers on the VML list, as well as see their resumes and preferences.²³⁶ The billet owner is able to see who is interested in the billet and can bid on who they think

would be the best match..²³⁷ The billet owner can bid on multiple officers and even rank order the officers they would prefer..²³⁸ The system is designed to provide the best fit for both the officer and the USAF.

U.S. Navy Talent Management

Since the USMC falls under the Department of the Navy (DON), the programs and policies listed here directly relate to this research as future budgets may determine spending for material solutions. It is worthy of noting some programs that both the United States Navy (USN) officers and USMC officers are eligible for to gain a further understanding of the broadening opportunities. The DON has a variety of programs and initiatives listed under their Sailor 2025 program. Sailor 2025 is built on a framework of three pillars: a modern personnel system; a career learning continuum, called Ready, Relevant Learning; and career readiness..²³⁹ The Navy is developing and advertising their version of talent management software called, *Detailing Marketplace*. The software module is very similar to both the USA and USAF systems concept but seems to be focused more on enlisted sailors. Detailing Marketplace will allow sailors to see available job openings that will match to their particular talent set in which they call the Sailor's "DNA."..²⁴⁰ The system will also allow Sailors to see other ratings that align with their primary rating and the overall health of each rating. This will allow sailors to cross over to a new rating if the potential for re-enlistment does not exist in their primary rating, or a better advancement opportunity exists in the new rating. A win for both the individual sailor and the Navy.

According to the Fiscal Years (FY) 2019-2021 Department of the Navy, *Business Operations Plan: Agility and Accountability*, version 1.3, the plan aligns to both the

National Defense Strategy (NDS) and to the FY 2018-2022 National Defense Business Operations Plan (NDBOP).²⁴¹ The DON BOP presents a series of milestones to achieve their talent management objectives. The DON BOP lists the word talent, 21 times throughout the 68-page document. Specifically, under milestone 1.5, *Implement Initiatives to Recruit and Retain the Best Total Force to Bolster Capabilities and Readiness*,

People are our most precious resource. Without them, there is no warfighting success. The agility, adaptability, and creativity of our Sailors, Marines, and civilians make up the only real means of victory in an age of increasing complexity and peer competition. For too long, the DON has relied on personnel management systems designed just after World War II. Not only are the effects of the Blended Retirement System upon future necessary retention unknown, so too are measures of the differentiated qualities of our people who decide to leave, stay, or return. This Plan will revolutionize the way in which we develop and retain a rich bench of leaders in the areas the DON will need most, from Seaman to Admiral, from Private to General, and from apprentice to executive.²⁴²

Milestone 1.5 of the DON BOP lists five objectives, two of which are relevant to highlight, Operations and Technology. Under Operations' objective, the DON BOP describes the problem and provides a solution.

Problem: Our legacy operating model, designed before most of our Sailors and Marines were born, results in administrative disconnects and training disruptions that leave the Fleet and Marine Operating Force less than optimally manned for combat.²⁴³

Solution: The DON will implement manpower programs and tools that increase process efficiency and improve Sailor and Marine career development through modernized recruiting efforts, streamlined processes, and training that is available whenever and wherever Sailors and Marines need it most.²⁴⁴

Begin implementation of "Detailing Marketplace" to allow Sailors to negotiate job assignments directly with gaining commands. Enhance career flexibility by leveraging Navy rating modernization and providing greater training and credentialing opportunities. Utilize the Navy Leader Development Framework to conduct a holistic look at career paths and warfighting skills. Align Navy force management to focus on talent retention and development. Modernize Marine

Corps Military Occupational Specialties. Modernize Marine Corps Manpower organizations, processes, and systems to achieve the human resources demands of Force 2025. Reform Marine Corps Special Duty Assignment Pay by accurately targeting incentives to attract qualified Marines to volunteer for hard-to-fill, critical assignments.²⁴⁵

The DON BOP provides a problem and solution listed under the technology objective as well. “Problem: Many of our current data systems for personnel management are antiquated and do not communicate with one another. Solution: The Department will modernize personnel management and training systems by standing up a core suite of integrated systems (i.e., [Commercial off-the shelf] COTS cloud-based solutions) and developing integrated systems.”²⁴⁶ A specific solution listed for the USMC was to, “Continue design, development, and deployment of Marine Corps Human Resource Management System modernization effort; move applications to the cloud and refactor/reprogram applications to make them mobile friendly.”²⁴⁷

A few DON talent management initiatives to highlight include but not limited to are the Fleet Scholar Education Program, Career Intermission Program (CIP), and the Secretary of the Navy tours with industry program (SNTWI). The Fleet Scholar Education Program allows Sailors to attend fully funded, in-residence graduate degree opportunities. The CIP allows individuals to take a sabbatical from the Navy for up to three years to pursue goals of their choosing. According to NAVADMIN 209/16, *Enhancements to Career Intermission Program*, the DON has been experimenting with sabbaticals for eight years with positive results.²⁴⁸

CIP presents a unique opportunity to support a service members desire to take a career off ramp without penalty and return to active-duty to complete a successful Navy career. Talented service members who are looking for career flexibility to manage competing personal and professional priorities are participating in CIP. The program is currently in its eighth year with 121 total participants (48 officers, 73 enlisted). While the majority of these participants are either still on or just

returning from their intermission and have not yet reached eligibility for promotion or career milestone screening, early results indicate that CIP participants are able to continue to have successful careers. Since returning from intermission and reaching eligibility, six officers screened for their next career milestone and five officers were selected for promotion. Additionally, five enlisted personnel were selected for commissioning programs and eight were selected for advancement to the next higher paygrade.²⁴⁹

According to NAVADMIN 029/19, *FY 19-20 Secretary of the Navy Tours with Industry Announcement*, the SNTWI program allows Sailors, E-6 to O-6, to work with partnering corporations for up to 12 months.²⁵⁰

The SNTWI program provides a venue for exceptional Sailors to experience innovative business practices. Navy fellows are fully immersed in company practices and will be actively engaged in projects and company operations. Past fellows were assigned to companies including VMware, Qualcomm, Apple, Inc., Boeing, Tesla, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, GE Digital, Amazon, FedEx, Northrup Grumman, Space X, LinkedIn and USAA.²⁵¹

Marine Corps officers are also eligible to take advantage of the CIP. The CIP pilot began in 2013 that only allowed 20 officers and 20 enlisted per calendar year when the program first began.²⁵² The CIP has evolved with change four and now allows for an unlimited number of participants for the program.²⁵³

USMC Talent Management

Several Marine Officers have researched this very subject and provided valuable insights for HQMC to explore. To begin, a few notable Marine Corps Gazette articles are provided here that directly relate to this research as well as theses written by Marine Corps officers relating to the subject. In a December 2014 Marine Corps Gazette article titled, *Talent Management*, Captain Lindsay Rodman argues for a talent management system.²⁵⁴ When referring to drawdowns, Rodman points out that, “The problematic result is a personnel system in which we do not know the quality of those left in the

Service, and whether we now have a force that is less talented, more talented, or on par (but smaller) than it was previously.”²⁵⁵ Rodman adds, “However the Marine Corps chooses to assess talent and capability, a combination of subjective (fitness reports) and objective (standardized tests) inputs would create the backbone of an introspective measurement of the talent composition of the Service.”²⁵⁶ Rodman concludes, “A talent management system would help assure all Marines that the system is as meritocratic as possible, helping avoid career frustration. And, if it turns out that the system is not as meritocratic as leadership would like it to be, then we will have the means of identifying those shortfalls and addressing them.”²⁵⁷

Captain David Lee presents a valid argument in his 2015 Marine Corps Gazette article, *Retaining Talent*, in which he proposes some significant personnel management changes.²⁵⁸ Lee highlights the fact that the Marine Corps does an excellent job at finding and developing talent, but needs some work when it comes to retaining that talent.²⁵⁹ Like many others before him, Lee posits that the performance evaluation system needs to be modified, the Marine Corps needs to incentivize performance, and the manpower assignment process needs to be more transparent.²⁶⁰ The author posits the following on how to incentivize performance.

Once top performers are identified, select them for key billets such as command and recruiting station commander, but send them only if they want to. If they don’t, don’t punish them. If they want to stay in a certain unit or duty station, let them stay. If they want to move, let them move. Send them to school, but only if they want to go. Clearly identify certain performance standards and metrics that will result in advanced promotion and exclusive opportunities relative to their peers. Institutionalize mentorship and foster regular and open dialogue between high potentials and key leaders to monitor their development and satisfaction. . . . They simply want a little more control over their careers and to know that their efforts will be rewarded when they go above and beyond.²⁶¹

The author's opinion on the transparency of the manpower assignment process directly relates to this research.

When it comes to assignments, we turn in a dream sheet, talk to the monitor, and hope for the best. A key tenant of an effective incentive is to clearly and directly tie it to a performance standard. For as long as the assignment and selection processes remain opaque to the masses, they will continue to sing the refrain that they feel that they do not have freedom and control over their careers..²⁶²

People analytics can be of use to the Marine Corps in relation to talent management as described by USMC Major Tremblay, author of *Marine Corps Moneyball Operationalizing Personnel Analytics to Manage the Future Force*. In the 2016 future war paper for the School of Advanced Warfighting, Tremblay describes how the current performance evaluation system is predominately a qualitative process..²⁶³ Tremblay suggests that “the Marine Corps could leverage the Marine Corps Information Management System (MCTIMS) to capture quantitative data to augment or even replace some of the categories currently evaluated solely by qualitative means.”²⁶⁴ Tremblay concludes that,

The Marine Corps may choose or be directed to adopt detailed personnel analytics in the future. Personnel analytics . . . has the potential to bring objectivity to organizational management by using metrics to challenge conventional wisdom. Such objectivity may enable future commanders, monitors, and selection boards to make more informed personnel decisions. Senior commanders, similar to general managers in baseball, could match people to requirements based on actual performance data. Marines of all ranks could make more informed decisions about where to focus their individual training and practice efforts based on comparative assessment data. Technology now allows the Marine Corps to gather and store information—a lot of information—that is like nothing the corps or our broader society has experienced..²⁶⁵

Like Tremblay, Major Stephen McNeil in an April 2019 Marine Corps Gazette article, *Data as a Weapons System: What do we prioritize?*, argues that the Marine Corps

would do well by adopting algorithm-enabled processes to assist with talent management.²⁶⁶ McNeil suggests that “The Marine Corps must accept a fundamental truth: that winning the next war will be a result of incorporating human resource technology into how we manage and retain our most talented people as much, as if not more than, acquiring highly lethal weapons systems.”²⁶⁷

The author posits, “By radically transforming recruitment, selection, and assignment procedures by moving away from intuition-based decision making in favor of unbiased, algorithm-enabled methodologies, the Marine Corps will be better positioned to field the most talented and lethal force possible.”²⁶⁸ The author also highlights how

The incorporation of algorithm-based manpower signals the end of an era: no longer will monitors, promotion or selection boards, operating on intuition, unavoidable bias, and incomplete information influence a Marine’s assignment. Instead, decisions concerning a Marine’s retention, promotion, and assignment would be computed according to an array of personnel metrics including previous fitness report assessments, career assignments and “roadmap” billets, personal preferences, and other unique attributes . . . Human resource practices have come too far for the Corps to keep throwing darts at a board. The coercive system in place, which operates with the unspoken bottom line of “execute orders or get out,” may have been necessary for a conscripted citizen military; however, it is unacceptably antiquated in a modern professional organization and is undoubtedly responsible for squandering our most talented personnel who otherwise may have served long careers..²⁶⁹

Major Stolzenberg’s research added to the knowledge of defining and determining what a “quality” Marine Corps officer is. In a 2017 thesis, *Exploring Marine Corps Officer Quality: An Analysis of Promotion to Lieutenant Colonel*, Major Stolzenberg (USMC) associates Marine officer quality characteristics by selection to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol).²⁷⁰ Stolzenberg used regression models to conduct a multivariate statistical analysis to draw his conclusions.²⁷¹ His conclusions consisted of:

The findings show that officers selected to LtCol show high scores on FITREP attributes *Mission Performance* and *Setting the Example*. Therefore, it appears

that the results achieved from assigned duties and tasks, measured by *Mission Performance*, and the bearing and manner in which officers conduct business and the perception this creates for others, as captured by *Setting the Example*, are strong predictors of high quality Marine officers.²⁷²

Stolzenberg does note that “The analysis in this thesis is subject to some limitations inherent in the study of quality officers. Quality is a nebulous term that has different meanings to different people or organizations and statistical analyses of quality may not capture the whole picture.”²⁷³ He emphasizes, “that different MOSs value different attributes in their officers. This is to be expected, as an officer’s specialty is a narrow skill set with little crossover with other MOS groups.”²⁷⁴ This is important to note since Marine Corps officers do not promote by MOS but are compared to all eligible officers across all MOSs. Stolzenberg adds,

Essentially, the Marine Corps has been promoting the “best and most qualified” officers from the general pool of officers. In fact, officers with combat service support MOSs maintain lower average fitness report scores than officers in combat arms even though these groups are compared to each other. This process can create Type I and Type II errors at the margins because there is no normalizing metric to equate the relative values across MOSs. The Marine Corps appears to be comparing apples and oranges when looking at fitness report scores.²⁷⁵

In his findings, Stolzenberg adds, “The results suggest that subjective and objective measures do complement each other when investigating officer quality.”²⁷⁶ These findings add value in determining how a talent marketplace can have both subjective and objective inputs for determining officer quality.

Major Jeffery Robb focused his research on the retention of the Marine Corps’ top performing aviators with his 2016 thesis, *Future Retention of the Marine Corps’ Top Performing Aviators*.²⁷⁷ Robb focuses on talent management and the most important factors in retaining Marine Corps’ aviator weapons and tactics instructors (WTI).

Through a series of linear regression models based off of data from a 2015 Aviator Retention Survey, Robb concluded that promotion, quality of life/work-life balance, and Aviation Continuation Pay (ACP) were the top three determining factors for retention of aviators.²⁷⁸ On the subject of promotion, he recommends that HQMC begin to use below zone promotions more for the retention of WTI aviators.²⁷⁹ For the quality of life and work-life balance, the author recommends reducing the number of PCS moves, flexible scheduling, and the use of sabbaticals, where the Marine officer can leave the service entirely with the notion of being able to return later.²⁸⁰ As previously noted, the USMC is now offering the CIP to an unlimited number of participants.

Those talent management calls for action and examples are just a few of the valuable insights from Marine Corps officers' own experiences and research attempting to better the institution. Even though HQMC has not published an official talent management strategy, it has begun to put official titles and assign duties to that effect. One of the many duties of the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (ACMC) is the assignment as the talent management officer for the USMC. In 2017, the ACMC formed the Personnel Studies and Oversight (PSO) office.²⁸¹ The ACMC describes the PSO as follows:

The purpose of this office is to ensure, under the Commandant's leadership and direction, we continue to create an organization where all Marines are fully valued based on their individual excellence and commitment to warfighting, regardless of race, sex, religion, or sexual orientation. Always focused on mission readiness, we will continue to draw talent, recruit and retain the best from across society, leveraging each individual's unique strengths, and building the capabilities necessary to fight and win our nation's battles.²⁸²

The Talent Management Executive Council (TMEC) was established the following year after the PSO was formed. The following is from the July 2018 Personnel Studies and Oversight newsletter:

On March 8th, the Marine Corps kicked off the first Talent Management Executive Council (TMEC), a senior leader decision forum focused on the Corps greatest asset: our Marines, Sailors and civilians. The TMEC, led by the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, serves as the catalyst for ensuring we attract, develop and retain talented men and women. The TMEC has already provided required funds to increase conference participation for professional development, as well as supported a more streamlined process for hiring much needed talent in the Cyber community . . . Mission Statement: The Personnel Studies and Oversight (PSO) Office, in support of the Talent Management Officer of the Marine Corps, will oversee, analyze, assess and recommend changes to policy to optimize our ability to attract, retain and properly assign the talent necessary to achieve our institutional and strategic objectives.²⁸³

The Personnel Studies and Oversight Office was short lived and renamed the Talent Management Oversight Directorate (TMOD) in March 2019 during the conduct of this research. The TMOD has an updated mission statement: “Provide insight and information to inform strategic guidance; assess and recommend changes to policy and programs and oversee implementation in order to optimize our ability to attract, develop, employ, and retain the talent necessary to achieve our institutional and strategic objectives.”²⁸⁴

HQMC has begun gathering data from Marine’s experiences and opinions. MARADMIN 544/17 announced the “Exit and Milestone Longitudinal Survey (EMLS) Program,” which began in October 2017.²⁸⁵ The results and analysis of the EMLS program have not yet been released.

The EMLS Program provides an opportunity to communicate to senior leaders what factors have the greatest influence on Marines with regard to accession, retention, and exiting the Marine Corps. Further, the program provides an opportunity for Marines to communicate their satisfaction with certain aspects of the Marine Corps and the military way of life. . . . In order to better understand

the reasons Marines join the Corps, choose to stay, or leave the Corps, the EMLS Program was developed to track changes in Marines' opinions and perceptions over time.²⁸⁶

The EMLS Program is a set of surveys that will be administered during specific milestones in a Marine's career: initial accession, first and subsequent reenlistments, career designation, officer promotion, and upon exiting the Marine Corps. The EMLS Program surveys provide essential feedback and key information to better understand personnel satisfaction regarding career opportunities, leadership, performance management, diversity, and work-life programs.²⁸⁷

Summary

This chapter consisted of a review of the literature on some of the best practices of talent management in the civilian sector as well as what the other Armed Services and USMC have incorporated. Although not an all-inclusive list, the literature review focused on the purpose and scope of the study to establish an understanding of the subject for answering the research questions in the following chapters. Chapter 2 also discussed the Millennial generation as this is the target population currently serving and entering the ranks. Millennials have different beliefs and views from past generations as they have been brought up in an age where information is always readily available. Human resource strategies from the past are no longer valid going forward in the Information Age. Based on observations and the July 2018 innovation symposium, the consensus is that the Marine Corps does not have an effective talent management strategy. A one-size fits all talent management strategy does not exist. Nor does a one-size fits all talent marketplace for the DOD, as each Armed Service has its own culture, mission, and purpose.

For the USMC, talent management is commonly referred to as ensuring the right Marine, is in the right place, at the right time. The USMC cannot simply take what works for the USAF or USA and assume it will work for the Marines. Especially, since DOD

talent marketplaces are a new concept and still coming online. Technology is just one part of the overall talent management process, but a very important part. The literature review suggests that prior research calls for a talent management system and using data analytics to manage talent more efficiently. This study is needed as the USMC has not adopted such a system to date and continues with an opaque officer assignment process. This research will assist the TMOD in determining what talent management best practices should apply to the USMC in order to determine what a talent marketplace for the USMC should entail. Chapter 3 will discuss the research methodology used during this study.

¹ Jacob Morgan, “Eight Trends Shaping the Future of Talent Management Programs” in *The Talent Management Handbook, Third Edition: Creating a Sustainable Competitive Advantage by Selecting, Developing, and Promoting the Best People*, ed. Lance A. Berger and Dorothy R. Berger (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2018), 665.

² Erika Lamont and Brenda A. Hampel, “Onboarding as a Critical Component of a Talent Acquisition Strategy” in *The Talent Management Handbook, Third Edition: Creating a Sustainable Competitive Advantage by Selecting, Developing, and Promoting the Best People*, eds. Lance A. Berger and Dorothy R. Berger (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2018), 303.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Moreover, the challenges facing the military demand a modernized officer personnel system to ensure the military can harness the talent of the next generation of competent, agile leaders.

—U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services,
Report 115—262, 115th Congress, 2d Session

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine what a talent marketplace for the USMC should consist of in order to integrate and enhance talent management. The primary research question: How can a talent marketplace enhance talent management for the Marine Corps? The secondary research questions are: What has the Marine Corps implemented regarding talent management? What are the best practices of effective talent management? What have the other Armed Services in the DOD implemented regarding talent management?

Methodology

To accomplish this objective and answer the research questions, the researcher used a qualitative design to gain a holistic view of talent management. The researcher used a content analysis approach to compare both civilian and military talent management strategies, best practices, principles, and talent marketplaces to draw conclusions and recommendations. When gathering data during the literature review and establishing themes during the analysis, the researcher stayed within the scope of the research primarily focused on employing, developing, and retaining Marine Corps

officers. Even though a very important function of any talent management approach and strategy, the researcher withheld both accessions and recruiting talent from the study as it would make the research too broad for the timeframe required of this study.

The first step in the research process was understanding and discussing the importance and background of talent management in both the civilian sector and military circles by highlighting key literature on the topic in Chapter 1. As the author discovered early in the research process, talent management is an extremely broad subject and can be quite complex. Multiple challenges with officer personnel management quickly emerged with a few direct challenges the Marine Corps faces. Challenges noted include manpower data systems not informed as they could be in identifying certain talents or competencies that were departing the ranks and what talents or competencies that are currently serving. The documentation of key talent management terms and definitions was also determined to be a challenge for the Marine Corps. Another challenge for the USMC and other organizations is objectively assessing and identifying high potential officers. Most performance evaluations common to organizations are subjective, such as the Marine Corps' fitness report, which adds to the complexity of the issue.

One of the biggest challenges that stood out regarding talent management was the lack of transparency in the manpower assignment process. These issues and challenges led the researcher to the understanding and framing of the problem. This caused the researcher to narrow the topic and establish the purpose of this study focused primarily on the talent marketplace concept. The talent marketplace concept allowed the researcher to focus in on some key areas that the USMC could improve upon when considering the employment, development, and retention of talented officers.

Next, the researcher set out to identify and define key talent management principles and best practices in the military and civilian sectors. This allowed the author to gain the prerequisite knowledge on the subject and establish a foundation for what a talent marketplace for the USMC should consist of. The researcher conducted a robust literature review that included multiple top-rated talent management books, theses, white papers, journal articles, monographs, websites, strategies and frameworks across the Armed Services, as well as the talent marketplaces used for the officer assignment processes of both the USAF and USA. It was quickly apparent that there was an unlimited supply of literature in the field of human resources and talent management. This allowed the researcher to understand key terms and establish themes among the many best practices and principles available. The researcher reviewed current legislation and statutes to gather an overall understanding of what is in the realm of the possible when it comes to officer personnel management. As talent management best practice themes emerged, the researcher discarded themes that were not in the realm of the possible for Marine Corps officers. For example, aggressive promotion timelines as it would require legislative action to change. The researcher recorded the most prevalent themes for analysis that would allow Marine Corps decision makers and stakeholders to act if they so desired.

Next, the researcher conducted an analysis by way of comparing the identified talent management best practices and principles with current Marine Corps equivalent practices to identify differences. The researcher then conducted an analysis by comparing the USAF and USA marketplaces used for their respective assignment process as well as the Marine Corps' officer assignment process. This allowed the author to focus in on the

most important aspects of what a talent marketplace for the USMC should consist of. The researcher also observed fellow Marine Corps officers compared to both USAF officers and USA officers throughout the orders assignment process while attending the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. These observations added value to the qualitative nature of the study by understanding the importance and impact the assignments have on an officer's career between the different Armed Services. The observations provide valuable insight concerning talent management best practices of those using a marketplace and those without. Correspondence with Manpower Management Officer Assignments (MMOA) and the TMOD filled in the researcher's knowledge gaps in order to draw conclusions and recommendations. The researcher created this design to gain a holistic view of talent management across both corporate and military organizations and apply that to a talent marketplace concept the USMC could explore further.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology design of the study and provided an explanation of the author's research process. The in-depth literature review allowed the researcher to establish the baseline knowledge of understanding key talent management principles and best practices. This knowledge combined with observations of other officer's experiences of their assignment processes, and correspondence with stakeholders in the manpower process added value to the study. This methodology led the researcher to answer the secondary research questions during the analysis in the next chapter. Answering the secondary research questions led the researcher to draw conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

For what we found was that, to be effective, change must happen in the very guts and muscles and bones of a corporate body, and not be a mere cosmetic applied to the visible exterior.

—Louis Carter, Best Practice Institute CEO,
*Best Practices in Talent Management: How the World's Leading
Corporations Manage, Develop, and Retain Top Talent*

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine what a talent marketplace for the USMC should consist of in order to integrate and enhance talent management. The primary research question: How can a talent marketplace enhance talent management for the Marine Corps? The secondary research questions are: What has the Marine Corps implemented regarding talent management? What are the best practices of effective talent management? What have the other Armed Services in the DOD implemented regarding talent management?

This chapter, consisting of five sections, will present the analysis of the data gathered throughout this research to answer the secondary research questions. The first section consists of an analysis of Millennials' desires and aspirations that directly relate to the USMC. The second section will highlight what the Marine Corps has implemented regarding talent management. The third section contains the analysis of the corporate sectors' talent management best practices and includes a comparison of what the USMC has implemented. The fourth section contains the differences between best practices and the USMC current processes. The final section is a comparative analysis between the

talent marketplace designs of both the USAF and USA as well as a comparison to the USMC manpower assignment process.

Millennials and the USMC

Millennials are expected to comprise 75 percent of the workforce by 2025.¹ This research did not include recruitment considerations as the USMC has a superior record of attracting and recruiting talented Millennials and continues to reach their annual goals. Marx and Maher both noted that Millennials want to serve but have some key differences from past generations that senior leaders need to pay attention to.^{2,3} Marx highlights the current promotion process as a challenge to overcome, while Maher and Robb highlight the challenge of overcoming the work-life balance.^{4,5,6} Some aspects of serving in the military cannot be changed due to the governing laws and nature of the profession. The talent marketplace concept focuses on improving Millennial retention by integrating their realistic expectations. The USMC has improved in focusing on retention of Millennials with offering sabbaticals through the CIP, fellowships, and numerous opportunities to further their education. Generation Z will be serving in the officer ranks under the Millennials. As a generation who have always known and lived with technology and an unlimited supply of information, they will certainly require it. To begin answering the secondary research questions, the author highlights what the USMC has implemented regarding talent management.

What has the Marine Corps implemented regarding talent management?

The TMOD replaced the PSO in March 2019. With this new title, comes a much- anticipated change. The TMOD Communications Strategy & Operations Officer

describes what the new office is implementing. “TMOD. . . serves as the secretariat of the TMEC to move the Marine Corps ahead in developing a talent management strategy for the service for the next several years.”⁷ The author describes how the TMOD is approaching talent management for the USMC as stating, “institutional talent management consists of 3 key facets: People, Policy, and Culture. All of which are interconnected.”⁸ The author goes on to state that, “ensuring that service members are in the right place, at the right time, for the right reason, is the cornerstone of talent management and is beneficial to the individual Marine and the service as a whole.”⁹ Furthermore, “TMOD assess for gaps and needed changes to policy, protocol, and process, that affect recruiting, promotion, retention, assignment, and command selection of Marines.”¹⁰ The impact that TMOD will have on the overall HRDP, talent management, the manpower assignment process, and officer retention is yet to be determined. TMOD was finalizing their strategy and vision during this research and was not available to include due to the time constraints of this study.¹¹

As the researcher could not find a documented official Marine Corps’ definition of talent, RAND’s *Officer Career Management* report’s definition is used as a reference. The report noted that “the Marine Corps defines talent as the ability to succeed in one’s tasks at the current and future ranks.”¹² The authors also noted “the assignment process in the talent management system features face-to-face discussions between officers to be assigned and monitors who makes assignment decisions.”¹³ Even though not directly specified as the talent management system, the Marine Corps’ HRDP and underlying manpower processes consist of talent management best practices and principles. The analysis identifies some key differences in best practice areas that the USMC could

improve. The research identified at least three processes that the Marine Corps is currently doing that relate to talent management in the scope of this study. Those processes are selecting officers for career designation, selecting officers for resident education on the Commandant's Education Board, and the manpower assignment process. A fourth process of assigning a Marine officer their PMOS in TBS is presented in Chapter 5 as a recommended study for future research. An overview of these processes is presented and compared to the talent management best practices in the following section.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Marine Corps officers selected for career designation are offered to continue serving on active duty beyond their initial obligated service commitment. To be eligible for career designation, Marine officers must have obtained a minimum of 540-days of observed fitness report time after completing their PMOS school.¹⁴ HQMC accomplishes this objective through officer retention boards by selecting to retain officers who are, "the best and most fully qualified officers from each year group."¹⁵ Current selection rates are 85 percent or higher of qualified and eligible officers out of the six competitive categories.¹⁶ This process is a force shaping tool and the first step in selecting the best officers to create the officer pool necessary to fill current and future requirements. This is a valuable tool as lower performing officers will depart the active duty ranks and a large percentage of the population of eligible officers are offered to continue their active duty service. Accepting career designation is also the first action the officer must take to decide to continue serving on active duty. If they choose not to accept career designation even after selected, then they will execute their normal expiration of active service.¹⁷ If that departing Marine was a high potential

officer, the USMC suffers. If an officer does elect to accept career designation, they will eventually be screened on the Commandant's Education Board.

The USMC offers a variety of board selected education programs and fellowships through the Commandants Career Level Education Board (CCLEB) and the Commandants Professional Intermediate-Level Education Board (CPIB). Selection for CCLEB or CPIB is a way HQMC has improved education utilization as the process for selection is "exceptionally competitive."¹⁸ The results of the education board serve as a notice of orders to the officer.¹⁹ The selection results message states that the "officers may request for retirement or resignation, if eligible."²⁰ The officer is then at a crossroads to either accept school or request for resignation for refusing orders. Even though selection to one of these programs may be perceived as an investment to the USMC and in the officer; it may not be as well received by the selected officer. Some Marines may not want to attend their resident PME, as the majority may have completed the non-resident PME while serving in the operating force. This puts the competitive officer in a dilemma when it comes to retention if their career goals and aspirations do not align with attending school. The officer may perceive that their talents could be used more effectively in the operating forces. Unfortunately, the USMC may lose that exceptionally competitive Marine if they are not offered alternate options. The risk mitigation of losing that officer lies at the highest levels. The fact that HQMC is willing to lose that exceptionally competitive officer over not wanting to attend a resident school, even though it has identified an alternate who may really want to attend, adds to the complex Gordian knot of managing talent. The board selects the exceptionally competitive but then is willing to let them resign if they do not choose to attend.

Approaching this Gordian knot of managing officer's careers relies upon M&RA, MMOA and the officer assignment process to ensure we are retaining the best.

There is a tremendous amount of work and detail that goes into the Marine Corps officer assignment process, commonly referred to as assigning faces to spaces. There is an art and science to the officer assignment process.²¹ The assignment process can be related to and involves succession planning (developing), workforce planning (employing), and career planning (retaining). The following analysis of the assignment process is based on the researcher's own experiences, observations, the FY19 Road Show brief and discussions with MMOA. Under M&RA, each officer is assigned to a monitor within MMOA. Based on funding, requirements, and other factors, MMOA receives the semi-annual authorized strength report (ASR), which are billets that HQMC elects to fill.²² Out of the ASR comes the staffing goal, which is derived from the Officer Staffing Goal Model (OSGM).²³ The staffing goal is the available number of Marines that MMOA can assign to fill requirements across the total force.²⁴ According to policy, a Marine Corps officer's individual career planning is not the priority during the assignment process.

According to the Marine Corps Order 1300.8, *Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy*, USMC monitors make officer assignments based on the following priorities (listed in order of precedence): Needs of the Marine Corps, Career Progression (Operating Forces, Supporting Establishment, Seniority), Overseas Control Date (OCD), and Individual preference.²⁵ According to the order, OCD comes before individual preference when it comes to officer assignments. The order requires the monitors to follow the assignment policy when filling requirements, but state that OCD is "a

consideration” when determining assignments..²⁶ The researcher acknowledges that OCD should be a consideration as this allows peers to share the burden of requirements. However, this is a difference in best practice in relation to retention. In the 2016 Selected Status of Forces Survey question concerning the most important factors of deciding to stay on active duty, family concerns, personal choice and freedoms, opportunities to be assigned to station of choice, and choice of jobs all ranked in the top one-third of responses..²⁷ The details of the assignment process that occurred during this study will be compared to both the USA and USAF assignment process that used the marketplace in the following section.

The analysis seems to indicate that the USMC has focused more on the retention of Millennials with emphasis on quality of life programs, such as increased parental leave programs and a variety of unit and base family focused programs. The USMC now offers a type of sabbatical through the career intermission program..²⁸ The researcher was not able to obtain the number of Marine Corps officers who have used the program thus far or analysis of those that had. The USN showed initial positive results with their 48 officers who used the program over the past eight years..²⁹ The program does align with best practice as described in the following section.

The USMC began conducting the EMLS surveys in October 2017..³⁰ These surveys will capture valuable retention information at significant milestones in an officers’ career..³¹ These officer milestones occur after career designation selection results are released, promotion to Major or above, and when they decide to exit the Marine Corps..³² To date, no data or analysis of the surveys has been released. These surveys will capture much-needed data concerning reasons why Marines serve and why

they depart. The next section will present the analysis of talent management best practices and include a comparison of what the USMC has implemented.

What are the best practices of effective talent management?

Multiple authors agree that there is not one best talent management process or strategy for all organizations. Talent management frameworks revolve around recruiting, developing, employing, and retaining the talent, which has a direct correlation with placing the right person, at the right place, at the right time. A plethora of talent management best practice themes and principles emerged throughout the research. The researcher narrowed the list to nine best practices and principles that aligned with the purpose and scope of this study which focused on a viable talent marketplace concept that the USMC could consider. Those nine best practices identified were performance management, competencies, identifying and developing high potentials, mentoring and coaching, compensation, retention, technology, transparency, and integration. Multiple authors noted the importance of each of these practices and principles. The researcher compares the salient points for each practice to a Marine Corps equivalent practice to identify any differences. These differences will assist in answering the primary research question.

Performance management was one of the most important best practices noted which includes different forms of performance assessments and evaluations, as well as having a performance management system. Of particular importance under the umbrella of performance management was the need for objective potential assessments.^{33, 34} One specific recommendation is to separate performance assessments at the current level from the assessments for potential of higher levels.³⁵ The Marine Corps' Performance

Evaluation System (PES) has been critiqued through the years for being guilty of exactly this. As Marine Corps Order 1610.7A, *Performance Evaluation System* states “The fitness report provides the primary means for evaluating a Marine’s performance to support the Commandant’s efforts to select the best qualified personnel for promotion, career designation, retention, resident schooling, command, and duty assignments.”³⁶ One author highlights how the Marine Corps fitness report is primarily a qualitative process.³⁷ Even though the fitness report is primarily subjective, the USMC still uses it for determining potential with no standardized definition of potential but the reporting senior and reviewing officer’s own. Their idea of future potential will be based on their own experiences, which further complicates the issue when Marines with a different MOS or from different communities evaluate each other. Even though the USMC has a PES, the USMC does not have an objective assessment in place to measure potential. The researcher noted this as a difference in best practice. Identifying competencies and the use of competency modeling was another highlighted best practice throughout the study.

The researcher identified different types of competencies throughout the research, but most authors focused on competencies that the individual possesses. A common definition of competencies is the KSAOs that help an organization achieve success.³⁸ This is directly related to how some organizations define talent. Certain aspects of these KSAOs or talents can go unknown to the higher personnel system if there is no information system to capture them. For the USMC, some competencies are included in the officer’s official military personnel file such as education background, training performance metrics, and language skills to name a few. Yet, other aspects such as an officer’s unique skills, experiences, challenges, failures, interests, the way they learn,

may be left out as there is no manpower information system available for the officer to input those. Once these talents are identified, they could improve overall organizational efficiencies and effectiveness if utilized correctly during the assignment process with proper job matching. Based on the *Leader/Talent* survey noted in the literature review, job matching was as one of the weakest talent management categories noted for military officers.³⁹ The RAND *Officer Career Management* report noted how Marine Corps experts have discussed using KSAOs in the past.⁴⁰ They related KSAOs more towards the officer's MOS credibility and their ability to succeed in one's job.⁴¹ The authors of the report also note that some talents may not benefit the service.⁴² Identifying an officer's unique KSAOs is how HQMC can truly know what talents they possess even if they are never used. The lack of identifying individual competencies was a difference between best practice and the USMC. On using those competencies, the next best practice for an organization was to use some means of technology or talent management system.

Technology is a vital part of the talent management process, as it enables placing expertise across the organization where it is needed.⁴³ One author posits, "to be fully effective in a highly digitalized world, talent management must be viewed through a technology-based mindset."⁴⁴ As it is important for an organization to know what talents they possess, talent management information systems are a necessity to assist with this process. Information support systems have been shown to enhance talent management processes by using personnel analytics and algorithm-enabled methodologies.^{45, 46} Technology can specifically assist with efficient job-matching.⁴⁷ Under the Manpower Information Systems Division, the USMC utilizes a variety of web-based applications

and information support systems supported by the Manpower Information Systems Support Activity (MISSA).⁴⁸ These systems include but are not limited to the Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS), Marine OnLine (MOL), and the Operational Data Storage Enterprise (ODSE).⁴⁹ Other applications M&RA manages that are available to leaders are Command Profile and Marine Profile. According to a Command Profile Newsletter, M&RA utilizes more than 60 applications that Command Profile competes with.⁵⁰ Command Profile is an application a leader can use to receive administrative answers about Marines in their unit, while Marine Profile gives basic administrative data about a specific Marine.⁵¹ The Total Force Data Warehouse (TFDW) is another information system to highlight. “The TFDW is the Marine Corps' official system of record for USC Title 10 end strength reporting. The TFDW houses more than 30 years of historical manpower data from a variety of USMC and DoD systems . . . in one central location to provide manpower analysts with a comprehensive view of a Marine's career from "street to fleet.”⁵² “The TFDW implements IBM Cognos and [Statistical Analysis System] SAS reporting tools to facilitate data analysis, allowing you to spend more time exploring and examining the data.”⁵³ As the specific details of these enterprise systems are not discussed, they allow and provide leaders valuable insights and data analysis on Marines. However, the systems do not provide all competency information required for effective talent management, or as integrated as they could be. The DON BOP highlighted how Marine Corps’ manpower systems do not communicate with each other.

The DON BOP describes a solution to the technology problem. “Continue design, development, and deployment of Marine Corps Human Resource Management System modernization effort; move applications to the cloud and refactor/reprogram applications

to make them mobile friendly.”⁵⁴ When referring to web-based talent management, Tim Kane posits, “Each service should adopt information technologies that enable troops to enhance their profiles and signal preferences for jobs.”⁵⁵ One key system the USMC lacks is a talent marketplace, which is the purpose of this research. One feature of the talent marketplace design would allow officers to input their individual KSAOs in order to align their career planning with the Marine Corps’ requirements. Technology can also assist with identifying, developing, and retaining high potentials.

The importance of identifying, developing, and retaining high potentials and high performers was ubiquitous throughout the literature. Key highlights to note are letting high potentials know that they are just that.⁵⁶ One to five percent of an organization’s employees being identified as high potential is the standard across the literature.⁵⁷ The Marine Corps’ manpower strategy aligns with those percentages as the Marine Corps’ General officers are considered to be the high potentials as they made it to top ranks to fulfill those strategic positions. According to the FY19 Road Show brief only 3% of Marine Corps officers will ever make it to the rank of General officer.⁵⁸ To identify and assess potential, prior research conducted at the Naval Postgraduate School has shown to focus on critical thinking, deductive reasoning, mental sharpness, thirst for knowledge, and personal accountability.⁵⁹ Other authors recommend utilizing 360-degree assessments, manager ratings with criteria, simulated challenges at assessment centers, psychological tests, portfolio assessments, internal or external rotations to objectively assess for potential.⁶⁰ The researcher did not find a documented USMC definition for what a high potential officer is or how to assess for potential. This is a difference in best practice and a recommendation for future research noted in Chapter 5. As technology

continues to evolve, big data and personnel analytics can assist with predicting the performance and potential of employees. Once an organization identifies high potentials and places them into that pool, it is up to the organization to further develop and cultivate that individual. The research highlights how organizations develop those high potentials through effective mentoring and coaching throughout their careers.

Mentoring and coaching was yet another ubiquitous best practice noted throughout the research. One author emphasized how managers need to balance their coaching time between all employees as some may spend more time with low performers.⁶¹ The fact is that the high performers need a mentor or coach just as much as the employee not performing as well to assist them with their learning and growing.⁶² If they do not get the support they need from their manager, they will look elsewhere.⁶³ The Marine Corps has incorporated these processes and puts a premium on mentoring, coaching, and counseling. As recent as 2017, the USMC revamped their mentorship program with the establishment of the Marine Leader Development Program.⁶⁴ The Marine Leader Development Program supersedes the formalized, structured approach to mentoring in the past.⁶⁵ The program's design is key to success in developing and retaining our future leaders. HQMC is in line with best practice as the Commander's Intent endstate states, "Leaders have established a culture where ongoing and regular interaction and feedback assist Marines in their individual development."⁶⁶ As long as leaders understand the commander's intent and follow the guidance in the order, the high potentials and high performers will receive the correct coaching and mentoring they need to better align their career planning with the Marine Corps' requirements. Concerning

mentoring and coaching, leaders need not be afraid to tell a Marine officer where they stand as transparency is a cornerstone best practice in any talent management program.

Transparency was another ubiquitous principle noted throughout the research. Transparency relates to several aspects of an organization, but two primary ways it relates to talent management. First, transparency relates to knowing where you stand in an organization. Managers need to inform employees if they are a high potential or high performing employee or classified as something else with no plans of advancement.⁶⁷ The authors further emphasize to inform the high potential that it is not a permanent status, and will need to continue to be earned.⁶⁸ The Marine Corps could improve on telling officers where they stand amongst their peers across the total force and not just their individual unit. In order to achieve that objective, HQMC will need to define what high potentials are as well as establish benchmarks those high potentials will need to meet throughout their career to remain in that status.

Transparency is also essential for personnel to understand their career opportunities through clearly defined processes and procedures within an organization. The manpower assignment process and more specifically the billet vacancy list could certainly become more transparent. Opaque processes and billets offered are a hard sell to a high potential officer especially if it does not align with their career planning. Transparency is especially important when informing the officer of their opportunities as they decide to remain on active duty after their initial obligated service commitment. Manpower management has improved through the years by visiting the operating forces during the annual road show briefs and meeting the Marines through individual

interviews. However, the billet vacancy list still lacks a tremendous amount of detail that could easily be incorporated with implementing a marketplace. As the USMC attempts to make manpower processes more transparent, retaining the best officers is the top priority of any talent management strategy.

Retaining the best people is imperative to talent management, as it is part of the definition.⁶⁹ This is the very essence of creating a talent management strategy for your organization in the first place. If you cannot retain your best people, you will end up with an organization not as effective or efficient as it could be. This is not an option for the USMC, as we must always succeed in our task and accomplish the mission. For retention strategies to be effective, an organization must understand what makes those high potential and high performing employees decide to stay. Personal choice and freedoms, opportunities to be assigned to station of choice, opportunities for career advancement, and choice of jobs all ranked in the top one-third of responses when asked the most important decisions to remain on active duty.⁷⁰

Improving promotion opportunities directly relates to career advancement, which has been debated at length in other forums. The researcher acknowledges this as one of the main reasons the best officers depart the ranks. As most suggestions to fix the promotion process involve legislative action, the researcher focused on the remaining officer responses concerning retention. If the USMC wants to truly retain the best officers, high potentials should get their station of choice or choice of job, especially if the billet is available. After all, retention involves risk mitigation and knowing exactly what capability or talent is departing. The USMC has incorporated a variety of retention initiatives, mainly focused around bonuses for certain specialty MOSs such as aviation.

This is an important tool when considering compensation as a retention factor, but monetary gains may not apply to all.

Compensation was another critical talent management principle that has a direct relationship with retention. Tim Kane highlighted how compensation was a building block of talent management.⁷¹ A common perception is how most people relate compensation to some sort of monetary value. As it has been successful in past years by maintaining healthy personnel levels, other compensation approaches may be more important than money, especially when it comes to service to country. For Marine Corps officers and any organization, the value of the various compensation methods will depend on the individual. An officer knows when joining the service what their pay will be as they will not be making huge salaries, but they serve anyway. Some may serve for the guaranteed retirement benefits, while others joined for the culture and sense of accomplishment. Other methods of compensation such as an improved work-life balance, time spent with family, and the focus on personal goals have been emerging concepts in recent years. Regardless, officers volunteered to serve their country and the best should be compensated appropriately. The perfect balance of officer compensation to include pay and allowances, medical benefits for the officer and their families has been an ongoing debate for years. For USMC officers, time will tell if the CIP is a valuable compensation and retention tool. It is too early in the program to understand the benefits. The EMLS surveys will also add valuable information to this topic once the analysis of those surveys is complete. Those intangible items that persuade an officer to continue service will vary. An issue that will remain a challenge for decision makers for the

foreseeable future. The final and one of the most important principles of talent management is the integration of the entire process.

Integration across all the various parts of the overall manpower processes and talent management system may be one of the biggest challenges for all organizations. The objective is to integrate an officer's career planning from accession through their development, employment, and retention. Information technology systems can assist with this if they communicate with each other. For the DOD, manpower information systems have been referred to as silos that are not connected and do not communicate with each other. As an identified problem in the DON BOP, "Many of our current data systems for personnel management are antiquated and do not communicate with one another."⁷² The objectives of any talent management strategy will not be achieved until this difference in best practice is corrected. The following section summarizes the differences identified with common best practices and principles that the USMC could stand to improve.

USMC Differences with Best Practice

The analysis identified several differences with USMC current processes and the best practices and principles noted in the research. The first difference noted was that the USMC lacks official definitions for what talent, high potential, and high performers mean to the USMC. A second difference noted was that of performance evaluations such as improving the current performance evaluation system to find more of an objective assessment in identifying potential in officers. Identifying competencies or KSAOs in order to provide a more efficient and effective manpower assignment process was noted as a difference. Some form of a talent management system to capture those individual competencies is required in order to use them effectively. A possible solution which

could be in the form of a marketplace concept relates to the primary research question answered in the following chapter.

Transparency and integration were two of the most recognizable differences noted, especially in the manpower assignment process. The process could become more transparent and integrate multiple manpower information systems into one central marketplace. The final section provides a comparative analysis between the talent marketplace designs of both the USAF and USA as well as a comparison to the USMC manpower assignment process.

USA AIM 2 Marketplace and USAF Talent Marketplace

What have the other Armed Services in the DOD implemented regarding talent management? Both the USA and USAF have established detailed talent management strategies and transformed their officer assignment process as described in Chapter 2. Both services have implemented their version of a marketplace system to assist with the officer assignment process. The following will differentiate between the two systems and compare these processes to the USMC officer assignment process. The researcher had the benefit of observing both USA and USAF officers during the assignment process while attending the USA Command and General Staff College.

For the summer 2019 movers, most of the officers were required to use either the AIM 2 Marketplace or the USAF *Talent Marketplace* for their respective service. The first key difference the researcher identified about both services was the amount of input and influence the units have when it comes to ‘hiring’ officers. The networking and interview process of both the USA and USAF during the assignment process highlights the different cultures of the services. By name requests are possible for assignment in the

USMC, in which the USA and USAF have a similar system, but direct hiring to units does not typically happen for Marine Corps officers. On the subject of command authority for hiring, Kane posits that “Any commander at the rank of O-5 and above should be given final authority on who serves in his or her unit.”⁷³ The author does further clarify, “Commanders should have limited authority to directly hire, whereas most hires will be through the centrally provided slate of candidates.”⁷⁴

USA officers updated their resume within AIM 2 since this was the first time most of them used the system for the assignment process. The resume allows officers to self-profess talents, skills, and experiences not included in their officer record book that includes the following sections: civilian, travel, culture, language, education, assignments, and a list of references with points of contact information.⁷⁵ There is also a section within AIM 2 titled “My Considerations” which will list restrictions for assignments such as if the officer is enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) or Married Army Couples Program (MACP).⁷⁶ Under AIM 2, the officers’ marketplace titled “My Marketplace” will open to view available assignments once the officer has been identified as a mover, given an assignment cycle, and all job openings have been validated.⁷⁷ The assignments listed included points of contact, job description, unit and installation information, and knowledge, skills, and behaviors the unit is looking for in that position.⁷⁸

The USA officers then submitted their preferences, and the units owning those billets are able to see who is interested in their job opening in their marketplace titled “Our Marketplace.”⁷⁹ Here the units were able to view the officers resumes interested in the opening, and also search for talent with the AIM 2 system amongst the eligible mover

population..⁸⁰ The units then rank the interested officers by categorizing them in one of four categories: Very Interested, Interested, Indifferent, Not Interested..⁸¹ USA officers would then get feedback to see what units were interested in them. The officers still conducted interviews and corresponded with their career managers while awaiting their request for orders. The moving officer's career manager still is the final approval for issuing the orders. As this was the first iteration of the process, it was too early to tell the benefits. As with all new processes, the opinions of officers were mixed throughout. Two USA officers, Major Taylor and Major Gonzalez, describe their thoughts on AIM 2 and give advice to future users of the system in a post to a field grade officer blog..⁸² The authors posit that the process was similar to the previous system, but now officers have more information available to make more informed decisions when indicating preferences..⁸³ The authors highlight that the system is heading in the right direction, but still needs improvement..⁸⁴ The USAF *Talent Marketplace* has a lot of similarities with a few differences to highlight.

USAF officers can update their resume anytime within *MyVector* that includes their career experiences..⁸⁵ Different from AIM 2, USAF officers experience is divided into military, civilian, and other self-reported experience tabs..⁸⁶ There is also a section under each job that the officer is able to edit. This is where an officer can list their challenges, context, actions, and results while in that position..⁸⁷ The USAF *Talent Marketplace* allows inputs from the VML officer, units (billet owners and commanders) and USAF Personnel Center staff..⁸⁸ One key feature during the assignment cycle is how VML officers can see how many other officers are interested in the same billet and in what order they ranked it in. This is a huge improvement to the transparency of the

process. VML officers are not able to see how they rank compared to the other officers that bid on the same billet though. A few key highlights of what billet owners can see when searching for talent. Commanders and billet owners can bid on an unlimited number of officers they want to bring to their unit.⁸⁹ Prior to bidding on a VML officer, billet owners can see the VML officer's *MyVector* resume, career information, and preferences during the cycle.⁹⁰ This includes where the VML officer ranked amongst their peers at their previous position with corresponding losing commander's comments, how they rated the location desirability of the billet, and where they ranked the billet amongst their entire preference list. Billet owners are also able to view key information such as the officer career brief to include their last five evaluation ratings, duty history, and officer development plan.⁹¹ If billet owners are not satisfied with who bid on their billet, then the owner from the unit can search for talent to help find a match for their requirement.⁹² Once all bids are in, the billet owner ranks the officers in order of preference who would make the best fit for the unit.⁹³ Similar to AIM 2, VML officers will get notified when billet owners have been bid on them. Both marketplaces are now in use and add a vast amount of transparency to the assignment process. Integrating job assignments with the units as well as matching competencies align with talent management best practices. Final assignment decisions still rely on the centralized manpower system.

With the sheer size of force differences in mind, the following is a description of the USMC officer assignment process from the researcher's perspective. As many more details and behind the scene work goes into the process, the described process was from the author's own experiences, research, and observations. There are positive notes

throughout, such as the annual road show, where the monitors will travel to most duty stations and conduct face to face interviews with their assigned Marines. The size of the USMC does make this part of the process a more personal experience. As the interview is the first time the two Marines are likely meeting, a marketplace would allow the monitors to review the Marine's KSAOs, experiences, and intentions prior to the interview to receive a better overall picture of the officer before they meet. This would allow time to clarify any type of questions concerning the details of an officer's resume during the interview to focus more on the officer's options and interests. The monitors do an excellent job of setting expectations during the brief, as they warn not to expect orders that day and that the vacancy list could change.⁹⁴ The interview may occur prior to the billet vacancy list even being published, which could cause a disadvantage if the billet the officer wants is not offered. Another advantage is the monitor can view the officer's official military personnel file, which has access to fitness reports and performance evaluation metrics. Monitors need to meet current and future requirements, so they consider career progression and strive to keep Marines on a competitive track for advancement.

The monitors notified the summer movers via an email with the published billet vacancy list, along with instructions of the process on how to input their preferences. The billet vacancy list is published in a spreadsheet format, which consisted of basic info about open assignments to choose from that includes three-digit monitor command code (MCC) identifiers, unit name description, minimal notes, BMOS required, as well as if the open billet was available off-cycle or an on-cycle. Marine officers input their choices of assignments using the online MAX.gov survey questionnaire during the open window

to fill out their duty station preferences. The lack of detail concerning the open billets is the biggest concern in the process. For example, a listed unit name and location describes nothing about what the actual billet entails. The officer may know the duty station and the higher unit they will be reporting to, but specific details do not exist. Only in specific cases will an officer know what the billet entails. For example, the officer knows another Marine who is serving in the position or when pilots report to positions for duty in flying status involving operational flights (DIFOP). In this case, the officer can get an understanding if that billet is best suited for his career planning or the aviator will know if their duties authorize flight operations.

After completion of the questionnaires, the monitors sort and analyze the data based on the interviews from the road show, as well as any email and phone correspondence they may have received. The monitors have a variety of other assignment considerations such as results of promotion boards and the Commandant's education boards. Results of those boards will affect retirements and resignations of officers, which further complicate the assignment process. The monitors use a variety of information and data processing systems during the assignment process, mainly WebMASS to assign a Marine their orders.⁹⁵ A lot of the programs they use do not necessarily communicate with each other, such as WebMASS and the Max.gov survey tool used to input preferences. This causes the monitors to operate within independent systems which is time consuming. The monitors are extremely busy ensuring they have filled all the required positions while attempting to align Marines with their duty station preferences. This is a lot to manage as each monitor manages approximately 1000 officers each, in which 1/3 of those officers move each year. The lack of integration of the different

systems, along with the opaqueness of the billet vacancy list calls for more of an integrated and transparent approach. The monitors, who have been on both sides of the assignment process, make the process work by “doing more with less.” Overall, in relation to the number of Marine officers they track and manage, the monitors do an outstanding job with what tools they have.

When it comes to officer personnel management, all the services manage their officers in similar ways due to the governing laws and DOD policies. Each service uses a different approach during the personnel assignment cycles though. One counterargument usually mentioned is how the USA and USAF are both much larger organizations than the USMC. Besides the sheer size difference, each has its own unique culture, mission, and core values. Even with these differences noted, the USMC can still adopt best practices and tailor them to their own unique culture.

Summary

This chapter consisted of the analysis of the data from Chapter 2, what the Marine Corps is currently doing, as well as a comparison of the marketplaces that the USA and USAF have implemented. The author answered the secondary research questions based on the analysis and the researchers own observations and experiences. The Marine Corps incorporates a variety of talent management practices and principles to some extent but still has room for improvement in a variety of areas as noted in the differences section. This understanding along with the several differences noted in talent management best practices and principles will help answer the primary research question in the next chapter. Chapter 5 will answer the primary research question and give conclusions and recommendations for decision makers as well as provide recommended future research

topics discovered during this study. The research concludes with a suggested concept of a talent marketplace designed for the USMC.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to 2017 Pentagon data, 71 percent of young Americans between 17 and 24 are ineligible to serve in the United States military. Put another way: Over 24 million of the 34 million people of that age group cannot join the armed forces—even if they wanted to.

—Thomas Spoehr and Bridget Handy, The Heritage Foundation,
*The Looming National Security Crisis: Young
Americans Unable to Serve in the Military*

Introduction

Talent management and officer personnel reform are top priorities for our nation's leaders. The guidance provided in the NDS, DON BOP, MOC and others, call for action, while the 2019 John S. McCain NDAA authorizes some of those officer personnel reforms. The manpower processes in place have worked for the Marine Corps' culture and size but could stand to improve with the results of this study. For the future USMC All-Volunteer force, antiquated personnel information systems and assignment processes may not fare well, especially when it comes to their career planning. As it is unlikely the USMC will be directly providing constructive service credit to the rank of colonel, this research focused on improving how the USMC employs, develops, and retains the officers it currently has.

The previous chapter answered the secondary research questions to allow the researcher to draw conclusions from what the analysis seems to indicate. This chapter consists of four sections. The first section provides conclusions to this study by answering the primary research question. The second section provides an overview of what a talent marketplace for the Marine Corps should consist of. The third section

contains the recommended actions for decision makers. The final section provides recommendations for future research.

Conclusions

This study set out to answer the primary research question of how can a talent marketplace enhance talent management for the Marine Corps? The analysis in the previous chapter discovered a variety of differences between the current USMC processes and the identified best practices and principles of talent management within the scope of this study. Based on the differences identified in Chapter 4, the analysis seems to indicate that a talent marketplace can enhance talent management in the following four areas that are all interrelated: competencies, manpower assignment process, integration, and transparency. The following describes how Marine Talent Marketplace (MTM), a conceptual design of a marketplace, would enhance talent management for the USMC.

MTM would identify and operationalize those individual competencies that are currently unknown to higher manpower systems. The analysis seems to indicate that the USMC already has a vast amount of information on the individual Marine, yet higher personnel systems may not have integrated the Marine's career planning with requirements or captured the true talents it possesses. By allowing the officers to input their individual KSAOs, experiences, and career planning desires into a searchable database such as MTM, this will allow HQMC and M&RA to gain more of a holistic view of those talents available. Strategic leaders would be able to search and find Marines with sought after knowledge, skills, and abilities to form future task force teams and fill individual roles. For example, a senior commander is searching for a logistics officer who speaks a specific foreign language, has experience with certain 'skills', will

be up for orders, and wants to deploy to the particular theater. Identifying competencies and individual career planning preferences will make this possible. Identifying those valued competencies in MTM is the first enhancement, the next improvement will be the manpower assignment process.

MTM will enhance the manpower assignment process. As the monitors balance the aspirations and desires of the Marines with the needs of the Marine Corps, MTM will ease the burden for all involved. Monitors will be able to provide billets, search Marine's profiles, communicate through and issue orders through the transparent and integrated marketplace. MTM will give Marines a feeling of having more control over their careers with the increased transparency in available billets and opportunities. The job-matching of aligning talents with available billets will ensure meeting the needs of the Marine Corps and Marine. MTM could allow for more unit involvement making the overall process more efficient and effective for gaining and losing commands. Unit communications concerning workforce and succession planning would go through MTM, eliminating excess phone and email communications to MMOA. Unit involvement will provide a more detailed billet vacancy listing. The improvement should include a point of contact for the unit, departing officer point of contact for turnover purposes, billet description, and standard welcome aboard information to include base or station information. Furthermore, this will streamline the monitor's process of appropriately matching faces to spaces to ensure the right Marine, is in the right place, at the right time.

MTM will certainly improve the transparency of the assignment process along with the level of detail in the available opportunities to guide Marines in their career planning. MTM will list available billets for the Marine to choose from based on their

rank, competencies, qualifications, and career timing. If an officer does not qualify for a billet for any reason, the billet will not be on the list available to that officer. All stakeholders involved do not need to waste time during the process discussing a billet the officer is not qualified to fill. MTM can also educate and inform Marines on the vast opportunities available by compiling information for broadening, joint, and education billets into the marketplace. The marketplace would allow Marines to search those opportunities outside of their PMOS in a single location vice sorting through multiple messages and different websites. The talent management process becomes integrated by adding these features into a single enterprise solution.

MTM should integrate the multiple processes and data systems into a single enterprise solution. At a minimum, pertinent information from MCTFS, an officer's master brief sheet information, and other data systems concerning a Marine's career timing, qualifications, competitiveness, should communicate with MTM. Viewer permissions of data would be set by MMOA and at the unit level. Besides the integration of different data systems, MTM should integrate the Marine's intentions and desires, with the units' desires, and manpower requirements as seen with the USA and USAF versions.

The purpose of this study was to determine what a talent marketplace for the USMC should consist of in order to integrate and enhance talent management. The research indicates the USMC future force will require a modernized talent management strategy along with a fully integrated and transparent talent management information system to match its overall all objectives. The following is a description of MTM and future applications of incorporating such a system.

Marine Talent Marketplace (MTM)

The researcher depicted a conceptual design of MTM in appendix A. The concept is a guide for initial features that MTM should include, as well as future features for designers and decision makers to consider. Considering the marketplace design in AIM 2 and the USAF *Talent Marketplace*, MTM is a combination of the features that the USMC should adopt. MTM will allow a more efficient and integrated approach to matching USMC requirements with the Marine's desires. When discussing stakeholders for MTM, MMOA and Marines identified on the mover list is just the beginning. Unit involvement with a certain level of influence on the hiring would be a consideration for M&RA, as seen with the USAF and USA marketplaces. The receiving units' billet owners would be able to see what kind of talents are up for orders instead of them contacting who they know to come to their unit. The officer's preferences will be visible to all involved along with key information the Marine wants displayed. Unit commanders, executive officers, and personnel managers can have more of an effect on the hiring process if MMOA allows. MTM would allow commanders to better align their staff with their own personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. Commands could advertise their open billets within MTM by linking a welcome video to the unit, or what life is really like on Okinawa for families. MMOA will still control the final orders approval and issuance of the orders, but the process allows more input from the officer and unit.

MTM could evolve into a much more robust talent management system that could serve as a platform for mentoring and coaching applications, submitting packages for selection boards and programs, conducting surveys, board questionnaires, and medical and dental readiness. HQMC could use MTM for board preparations as well. Board

members have limited time to prepare a Marine's brief. MTM could provide board members with a feature that prepares the brief for them by sorting and capturing the relevant details in addition to a Marine's master brief sheet information. This would allow the briefer to focus their efforts highlighting pertinent details of a Marine's career. MTM could eventually incorporate and display standing with peers across the total force before the board ever meets based on their standard annual training requirements and the reporting senior and reviewing officer profiles. Marines could upload required surveys and board questionnaires directly into MTM that would allow board members to sort and fill selection spots.

As noted throughout the research, identifying high potentials was at the top of the list. Once a Marine is designated as high potential, MTM could identify the other tangible and intangible things that matter to those Marines. If duty station choice is most important to retaining that high potential, monitors could give priority to those identified high potentials by giving them their first choice of billet if available. MTM could be used as a final quality control retention system for M&RA to offer that high potential officer a solution to continue serving before they depart.

MTM could allow a search for what officers have spent time in an adversary's region, knows the terrain, immersed in the culture, studied there, and speaks the language. This is more than foreign and regional area officer identification, as some officers may have specific studies and travel experiences before they joined or may not find them in a search by operational experience with current systems. Other uses of MTM consist of capturing key traits of individual Marines to include preferred learning styles, interests, any published writing, testing scores and results of the Myers-Briggs Type

Indicator (MBTI). A senior officer may find the officer they are searching for, who enjoys doing complex mathematical equations, writes code in his spare time, speaks the native language, knows the culture, and has a degree specific to the country or problem. This may be an extreme example, but the possibilities are endless.

Recommendations

The Marine Corps is in an excellent position to put initiatives into action. Both the USAF and USA have implemented their versions of a talent marketplace during this research. Key strategic documentation, policies, and statutes are in place to make lasting officer personnel reform a reality for the USMC. MTM described here is an integrated solution concept with endless possibilities to enhance talent management for the Marine Corps. The decision remains with the higher personnel system if they choose to adopt it or not.

Actions for Decision Makers

The first suggested action is for the decision makers at M&RA and TMOD to define and publish what talent management means to the Marine Corps. A published talent management strategy with key definitions that include talent, high potential and high performing will provide the total force with more of an objective meaning to the terms for evaluating officers, board members, and Marines. This strategy will drive the integration and final design of the MTM concept. Once the framework and strategy are complete, explore internal information systems to determine feasibility, acceptability, suitability of incorporating MTM into existing systems such as MOL. An upgraded and more modernized version of MOL with MTM as a subsystem that integrates key M&RA

functions within it may provide a more optimized solution for the future force. This would be a similar concept to what the USAF has deployed with *MyVector* and *Talent Marketplace*. The design and application of the USAF *Talent Marketplace* has the appearance of a more modernized platform that the USMC should strive for.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research identified how broad the subject of talent management is. There are numerous differences and issues this research and others have highlighted relating to USMC talent management. The following is a list of three future research studies to explore on the subject. The first subject is on high potential officers. If the Marine Corps truly adopts talent management practices, it needs to define what makes a high potential officer and how are they different from high performing officers. Even though exact details may not be known, a TFDW data pull of Marine Corps' Generals might show a common framework that made them successful. It is without a doubt they were well trained, educated, high performing officers who displayed outstanding leadership. Furthermore, they were willing to dedicate their lives serving their country. A deeper look though would perhaps identify similar items such as personality tests, learning styles, MBTI results to show how they perceive situations and make decisions. This common thread could be used as a starting point for screening officers for high potential. The second part of that research would involve how to objectively measure officers for potential along with determining benchmarks that the high potential officer would have to meet in order to remain in that status. The results of this study could modify the PES as the USMC transitions to more a more modernized personnel system.

The second recommendation for future research is a talent based MOS assignment concept for the USMC. Chapter 1 described the process of how the Marine Corps assigns an officer their PMOS. A process that has worked for the institution for years. The process has seen some improvements with the consideration of unique qualifications as a factor in determining an officer's MOS. Even though there may be some subjective input by platoon commanders to align officers with their education and experience, the MOS assignment process is primarily based on performance while attending TBS. Aligning a Marine officer's individual KSAOs with his or her MOS assigned at TBS could benefit the Marine Corps in the future. As this is a concept the USA has implemented with branch specific storyboards that list the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and talents that align with the specific branch. It may serve the USMC well to determine the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of a similar model to further enhance the MOS assignment process.

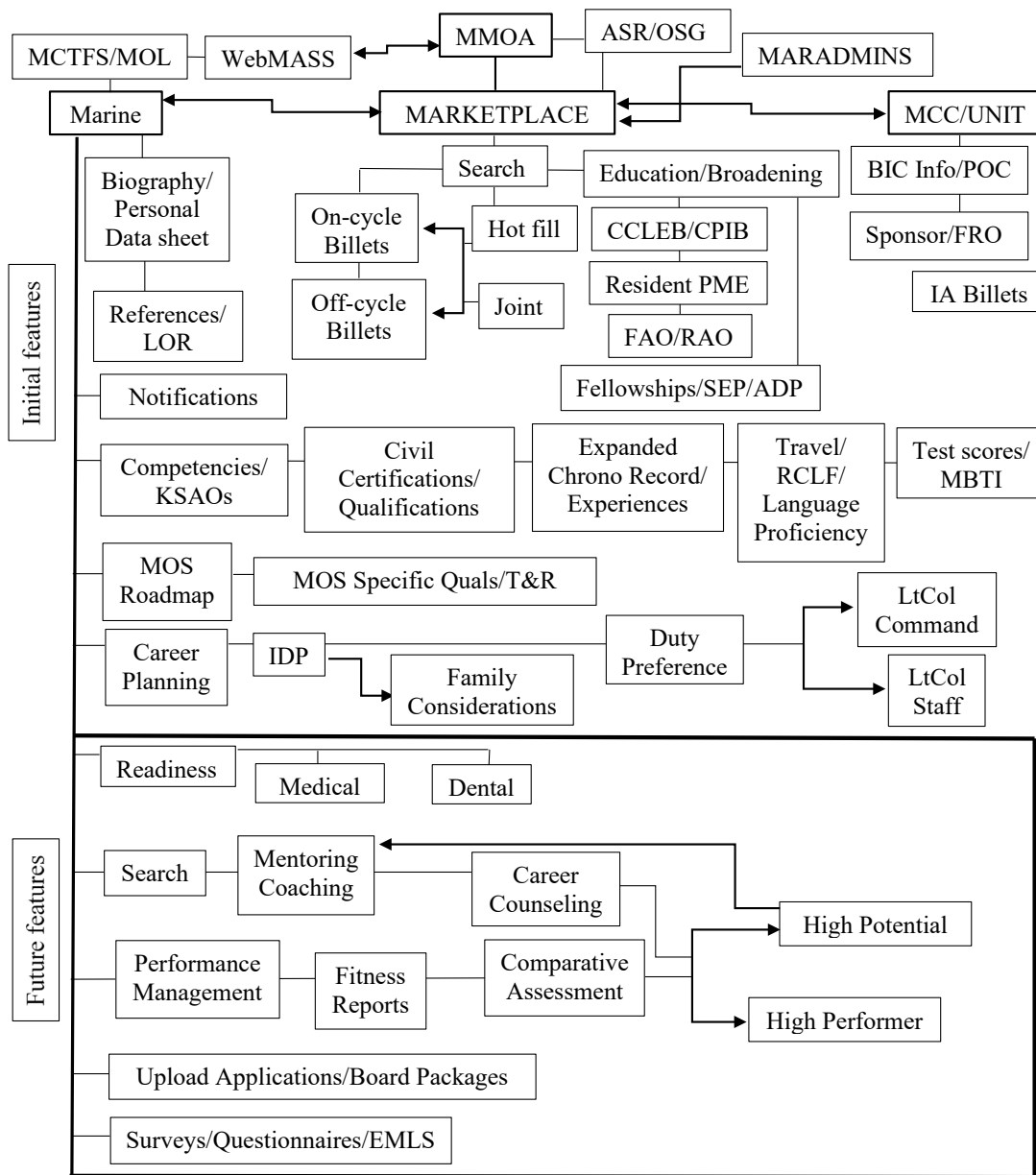
The last recommendation would be for the students in the information systems technology curriculum at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). If M&RA chooses not to pursue the MTM concept, it would give those NPS students an excellent opportunity to design a prototype MTM system. Depending on their capabilities and resources available while attending the school, the students could work with the Marine Corps information systems division to develop the marketplace. The students could have M&RA pilot the MTM during an assignment cycle for a select group of officers to further understand the value of such a system. This may save the USMC valuable design time and money if they so choose to pursue a commercial solution.

Closing Thoughts

The possibilities are endless with the MTM concept. The time to adopt a marketplace system is now in order to enhance and optimize talent management for the future force. Millennials and Generation Z that will soon be entering the officer ranks, will require a more transparent and integrated technological platform for the officer assignment process to ensure retention of the best officers. Having one platform where M&RA, the individual Marine, and the units can interact streamlines the assignment process by integrating multiple information systems. The amount of unit influence on the hiring decision will remain with M&RA as they will still have central control of issuing orders. The MTM concept will integrate the officer's career planning with fully transparent billets. Identifying competencies of the individual Marine into a searchable database will allow M&RA to match those talents with the needs and requirements of the USMC. MTM is the future enterprise system that will ensure the right Marine is in the right place at the right time.

APPENDIX A

MARINE TALENT MARKETPLACE (MTM)



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