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EXCELLENCE: ACHIEVING HIGH PERFORMANCE IN THE ARMY
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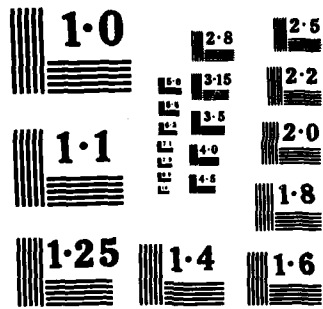
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A15690	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Excellence: Achieving High Performance in the Army Personnel System		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED STUDENT PAPER
7. AUTHOR(s) Colonel Ray Bixler		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA. 17013-5050		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) N/A
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Same		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE 9 May 1985
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 42
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE N/A
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Excellence, high performance, Army personnel system, personnel management.		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The Army personnel system is in the midst of one of the most demanding periods of change in its history. It faces significant challenges associated with modernization, manning the force and distributing soldiers to an Army which is forward deployed. These changes impinge upon the effectiveness of the personnel system and stretch its resources to their limits. When viewed from the perspective of emerging trends, it is apparent that the personnel system must be modernized to meet the challenges of the future. This study concludes that the		

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personnel system has a unique opportunity to prepare for the management environment of the next century through a multi-dimensional approach which applies the principles of high performance. The author describes the nature of the high performance concept and suggests approaches for achieving it within the Army personnel system. Key words: *beginning*

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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EXCELLENCE: ACHIEVING HIGH PERFORMANCE
IN THE ARMY PERSONNEL SYSTEM
AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Colonel Ray Bixler, AG

Mr. Charles W. Taylor
Project Adviser

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
9 May 1985

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DTIC TAB	☐
Unannounced	☐
Justification	
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Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	



DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:
Approved for public release;
distribution is unlimited.

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR(S): Ray Bixler, COL, AG

TITLE: Excellence: Achieving High Performance in the Army
Personnel System

FORMAT: Individual Study Project

DATE: 9 May 1985

PAGES: 39

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The Personnel System today is in the midst of one of the most demanding turbulent and challenging periods of change in its long history. There are significant challenges associated with managing the personnel aspects of force modernization, manning the force and distributing soldiers to an Army which is forward deployed, while simultaneously meeting Army requirements and individual needs. These changes impinge upon the effectiveness of the personnel system and stretch its resources to their limits. When seen from the perspective of emerging trends, it is apparent that the system must be modernized if it is to meet the challenges of the future. Based on a survey of contemporary literature, this study concludes that the personnel system has a unique opportunity to prepare for the management environment of the next century. While a multi-dimensional approach to improving the system is necessary, one essential factor is the application of the principles of high performance. The author describes the nature of this concept and outlines approaches for achieving high performance within the personnel system.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to examine, analyze and describe the concept of high performance as a means for achieving excellence within the Army's military personnel management system. In pursuing that objective, we will review the broad outlines of the personnel system, describe major challenges which confront the system today, and consider the potential impact on the system of emerging trends, concepts and technologies during the remainder of this century. Finally, we will examine the nature of the high performance concept and consider the means by which high performance principles can achieve organizational excellence in the Army personnel system.

SCOPE

The scope of this study is deliberately broad. It attempts to provide an encompassing perspective of a total system rather than focusing at the micro level of detail. The study is an attempt to examine a wide range of diverse factors which impinge upon the ability of the personnel system to achieve its major purposes. The study uses the single unifying theme of high performance as the sine qua non for achieving organizational excellence within the personnel arena. However, it is not intended to be a comprehensive or exhaustive analysis of that system nor is it intended to catalogue the myriad issues confronting the system today. Neither is it intended to be an attempt to predict the future, although general trends and developments are summarized. Rather, the study aims to outline the general nature and efficacy of high

performance principles to achieve excellence and to expand the potential of individuals who operate the personnel system.

The focus, therefore, is twofold: first, on the challenges currently confronting the personnel system and on the implications of future trends; and second, on an understanding of the principles and concepts of high performance within the personnel system.

METHODOLOGY

The basic methodology used in conducting this individual study was to survey and research contemporary literature, both periodicals and books, pertaining to the topics of excellence in management, leadership, high performance, personnel system issues and projections of future trends pertaining to the society in general or the Army.

The literature was analyzed to define issues which confront the personnel system, to delineate emerging trends with potential implications for the personnel system and to describe the principles and characteristics of high performance.

While there is a considerable, and constantly growing number of publications dealing with the subject of organizational and individual excellence in the civilian business and academic communities, there has been comparatively little written by military authors on the concept or its employment with the military.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The main body of this paper is organized into an introductory chapter followed by four major chapters treating various aspects of the study:

—Chapter one is the introductory chapter. It describes the purpose, scope, methodology and organization of the study.

—Chapter two elaborates upon the nature of the Army personnel system and the character of the challenges confronting it in today's environment of rapid change.

—Chapter three discusses emerging trends, concepts and technology and considers implications for the personnel system of the future.

—Chapter four explores the nature of high performance, summarizes core characteristics of excellent organizations and reviews the means for achieving excellence in the personnel system.

—Chapter five presents the study conclusions and makes appropriate recommendations for additional areas of research.

Finally, endnotes and a selected bibliography are provided.

CHAPTER II: THE ARMY PERSONNEL SYSTEM

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we will review the role of the personnel system within the context of the total Army. We will define the broad outlines of the system as it exists today and will describe the major functions it performs. We will consider the challenges facing the system as it attempts to manage the personnel aspects of force modernization and other vital Army priorities and we will describe the impact of these actions. Finally, we will discuss briefly the need for modernizing the personnel system to facilitate the achievement of excellence.

THE PERSONNEL SYSTEM IN CONTEXT

The personnel system does not operate in a vacuum, nor is it a separate, isolated entity without linkage to the Army it was created to serve. To place the personnel system in perspective, we will briefly review the purpose of the Army, from which we must derive the purpose and mission of the personnel system.

As an instrument of national power, the US Army exists to provide for the common defense of our nation.¹ Its strategic purpose is to achieve our national interests through the deterrence of aggression, and should deterrence fail, to defeat the enemy and achieve victory on the battlefield.² This unique mission underscores the primacy of readiness and points the way to the special role of the Army personnel system.

As an instrument of national power, the Army has unique personnel requirements. Soldiers must be recruited, and then prepared by training and education

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for the eventuality of combat. The personal attributes and qualities which contribute to their success on the battlefield must be isolated, educed and nurtured. Soldiers must be assigned to units which are largely forward deployed in geographically dispersed locations, often remote from the normal community support system. Soldiers must have the opportunity for promotion, schooling and recognition of the worth of their service. Accordingly, the personnel system must provide the management mechanisms which will satisfy these unique requirements.

The mission, then, of the Army Personnel System can be viewed as essentially twofold: first, it is to support the requirements of the Army in the area of personnel management, both in time of peace and war; second, it must provide service and support to individual soldiers and their family members.

In achieving that twofold mission, the personnel system strives to place the right person on the right job at the right time, to insure individual opportunity for professional development and to capitalize on individual strengths and interests.

PERSONNEL SYSTEM DEFINED

What do we mean by the term Army Personnel System? In this study we use this term in its generic sense to describe all the personnel management systems (in reality, subsystems) which provide policy guidance, direction and procedures for managing soldiers. There are essentially three separate but similar subsystems: the officer personnel management system, warrant officer personnel management system and enlisted personnel management system.

We use this term also to refer both to the Army's organizational structure for personnel management and to the individuals who operate the system.

Essentially, management of the system is viewed from two perspectives; the Department of the Army level, or macro-level of management and from the operating echelon located at installation or division level.

Regardless of the level of management, however, the fundamental life cycle functions of the personnel system are the same. These functions include the acquisition of soldiers, their training, distribution, deployment, sustainment, development and ultimately their separation from the Army.³

THE CHALLENGE

The Army Personnel System today is in the midst of one of the most difficult, challenging and turbulent periods in its long history of service to the US Army. Potentially, it is also at one of its most important crossroads rich with opportunity for improvement.

Seldom, if ever, have so many diverse and competing pressures impinged so severely on the personnel system as they do today, nor have they so seriously threatened to jeopardize the ability of the system to function effectively in support of the Army. Therefore, let us consider the nature of the challenge facing the personnel system today.

If any words characterize the Army of the eighties, they are change and progress. We have been developing and elaborating a broad concept known as the Army of Excellence. Our priorities have clustered around manning the force with the requisite quantity and quality of soldiers to accomplish Army missions, modernizing the force and enhancing our capabilities to mobilize, deploy and to project power abroad, while simultaneously maintaining a high state of combat readiness.

We have been caught up in a great whirlwind of change called force modernization in which over 400 new systems or items of equipment have begun to be introduced into the total force inventory.⁴ Each new system and each

CHAPTER IV: EXCELLENCE AND HIGH PERFORMANCE

In their joint statement to the 99th Congress regarding the posture of the Army, John O. Marsh, Jr., Secretary of the Army and General John A. Wickham, Jr., declared that "today's Army is an Army of Excellence: Ready today, preparing for tomorrow".³³ Excellence is the topic of the day. Go into any bookstore, scan the best seller lists, listen to any management or leadership symposium and the excellence theme leaps out at you.

The impetus for this flurry of attention to excellence was, of course, the book by Peters and Waterman entitled In Search of Excellence. Their book has inspired a renewed interest in the role of leadership and management in developing successful organizations and their findings are regarded by many as a new paradigm for achieving organizational success.

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we will consider the nature of excellence and high performance, discuss the importance of the concept within the personnel system, describe characteristics of excellent organizations and suggest techniques for achieving high performance.

NATURE OF THE CONCEPT

As we have noted, excellence is a powerful and appealing ideal, one which aims to evoke the best from individuals and organizations. It appears to speak to some latent yearning in the human psyche to reach out and attain the fullest measure of potential and growth. It stimulates us to harness our

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We must begin now reexamining policy alternatives. A major question is whether or not the Army will be able to acquire a sufficient number of new soldiers who meet the qualitative standards necessary to operate and maintain the highly sophisticated equipment systems which are now being fielded. What additional types of schooling will be required to train and educate the soldiers of tomorrow?

Should we alter the target age for recruiting to provide a larger cohort of people available for military service? How would we manage an "older Army?" What are the policy changes that would result from requiring longer terms of service before allowing soldiers to retire? How does longer service impact promotion rates, management by year group, distribution and reassignment opportunities?

Another significant implication is the opportunity these trends present to modernize and upgrade the personnel system. State-of-the-art microcomputers could revolutionize the way personnel management is accomplished. Not only is the hardware available to automate personnel functions, but the capability exists now to develop the software, if we are willing to make it a priority.

Clearly, these emerging trends are important to the Army and the personnel system. While they require considerable further analysis, we must start preparing now for the future if we are to enable the personnel system to achieve excellence.

Along with these computer networks, there is an increasing sense of individual power, self-reliance and autonomy. People want to become involved in their work and to be involved in the decision processes which affect them. They are less concerned with the competitive aspects of their environment and more desirous of a cooperative environment where their individual aspirations can be achieved while at the same time providing a service to others.³¹

This need and desire for more involvement in life decisions on the job and at home is one expression of the need for increased human contact or "high touch" which is a necessary corollary to the intrusion of high-technology in our lives.³² What is important here is that both the human and high tech dimensions must be synchronized.

In summary, these emerging changes fundamentally are altering our society. We are in a transition from an industrial to an information based society. We are relocating from the northern states to the southern and western states. Our economy is moving in the direction of bipolarity. Finally, the proliferation of the computer is altering our organizational structures and our lifestyles.

IMPLICATIONS

What are the implications of these major trends for the Army and the personnel system? Can we anticipate these developments in our society and prepare alternative plans and policies to manage them before they emerge as major issues to which we must react?

One of the most significant impacts of these emerging trends lies in the arena of manning the force. The changing face of America, the geographic relocation of the population, the declining number of youth, the bipolarization of society, and the creation of a large segment of displaced, unskilled workers are significant factors for the personnel system.

These expert systems are not all "Buck Rogers" future fantasy. Several of the systems are now being used in medical, geological and other fields. Interestingly, they have often been able to achieve consistently accurate rates of successful performance, even better than that achieved by the humans who program the system.

To illustrate the power of the expert system consider the following. "The most knowledge intensive expert system in existence is the INTERNIST/CADUCEUS system at the University of Pittsburgh".²⁷ "It is designed to diagnose medical problems, and encompasses better than 80 percent of all internal medicine, including 500 diseases and 3,500 symptoms".²⁸

Consider for a moment the potential applications of a knowledge based system within the Army personnel system! It may well be a reality in the not too distant future.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

As automation has increased, the structure of our organizations has begun to change. In many cases intermediate layers of management are being stripped away. Increasingly, organizations are becoming leaner and flatter because of the instant availability of critical information to the decision maker.

In place of traditional hierarchial organizations, networks are arising. These are informal communications links, often using the computer, which are formed between people with common interests or occupations. These networks may involve professionals working on common problems or they may be composed of people who share an avocation.²⁹ Within the Army there is an experimental network with worldwide links, called Army Forum. It serves as a mechanism for solving Army problems, as did its predecessor "Delta Force" in the late seventies.³⁰

when needed, only the necessary information will be extracted".²⁴ Of course, that day has not yet arrived, although it still is a distinct possibility.

The microcomputer is everywhere today: in homes, clubs, school and businesses of all sizes and types. They are faster, cheaper, more powerful and easier to use than in any other period. They can be used easily in any environment including the battlefield.

Concurrent with the spread of computers, there has been an explosion in software, making computer applications directly applicable to everyday life activities and decision requirements.

The Army is just now beginning to move away from reliance on the large main frame computers to the distributed data processing concepts and to realize the potential represented by the minicomputer and microcomputer hardware. However, the personnel system has not yet taken advantage of the potential which would enhance management at the operational level. What is needed now is a strategy for modernizing and automating the personnel system, not only with the hardware, but through the development of state of the art software.

Today, in computer technology we are moving beyond the current generation of computers into the fifth generation, the emerging technology of artificial intelligence. "The fifth generation will stand apart not only because of its technology but also because it is conceptually and functionally different from the first four generations the world is familiar with".²⁵

The fifth generation of computers are often called knowledge based, or expert systems because they can "combine textbook knowledge with the rules of thumb that experience teaches".²⁶ These systems can incorporate not only one individual's knowledge base but also the collective knowledge of many people, thereby enhancing its utility and efficacy.

personnel system. The impact would be felt in military pay and allowances, retirement policy, personnel strength and numerous other personnel policies and programs.

HIGH TECHNOLOGY

George Gallup, Jr., in his book Forecast 2000, analyzes the results of a poll he conducted using the Delphi technique with 1,346 national opinion leaders to ascertain their impressions of what the future would be like for our nation.

Interestingly, half of these leading opinion leaders felt that the most significant problem facing the United States in the year 2000 would be the threat of nuclear war, and more that one-third felt that overpopulation, crime and environmental issues would be of paramount importance to the country.²¹

At the same time, when he asked them to identify ways in which life in the United States would differ from today they consistently commented on the spread of automation, increasing computerization and greater use of technology. In fact, "nearly 30 percent of the opinion leaders believe that the technological improvements, with widespread use of computers and automation, will be among the most visible ways in which life in the year 2000 will differ from today".²²

The most salient feature of high technology is the proliferation of the computer. Many remarkable predictions have been made concerning the power of the computer to change society. Some have proved accurate, others have not.

Several authors have commented on the "death of the printed word" and the "decline of the professions" which would result from the spread of computers.²³

Writing in 1972, Alvin Tofler stated that "the dissemination of the computer eliminates the need to preserve past records in books and other forms of publications. It will not be long before all records are fed to computers;

bottom out until the 1990's.¹⁶ Additionally, the proclivity of young men to select service in the Army is diminishing. "The percentage of service aged males who say they will join the military has fallen to its lowest point in 10 years, according to data released by the Defense Department."¹⁷

ECONOMIC CHANGES

We have already alluded to some of the economic aspects associated with transformation of society from an industrial to an information base.

In addition to the increasing levels of unemployment forecast, some authorities believe that there is the strong potential, brought about by the shift to information and knowledge occupations, for "the creation of a whole new class of poor—the computer illiterates".¹⁸ Providing assistance to the new class of poor could pose substantial demands on our government and its institutions, including the Army. An additional economic concern is that, in an information society, there is "the potential for a new generation of criminals, with the amount of money endangered [by the criminals] vastly exceeding anything we have seen in the past".¹⁹ Further, there is the "specter of widespread discontent as people are displaced from jobs that they have long held", which also portends serious implications.²⁰

Another significant prospect in the economic arena is for continuing tension between domestic and defense spending priorities. This tension will increase dramatically as the pace of force modernization accelerates and as the budget deficit grows. Given sufficient public sentiment, it is possible that the economic pressures could lead to a redefinition of our vital national interests, to a reduction in the forward deployment of forces, and to a substantial reduction of funding. Ultimately, this could result in changes in the way the Army runs and in the manner in which it is supported by the

At the same time, the face of America is altering. Not only are we relocating to the sun belt states, but simultaneously we are becoming less native born—we are experiencing a resurgence in immigration. Today, "twenty-five percent of the net population growth in the United States is from immigration".¹³

These new Americans are coming predominately from third world nations and from the largely underdeveloped countries of the southern hemisphere. They bring with them a rich, unique and diverse cultural heritage, different languages and perhaps, most significantly, a value system different from the dominant Judeo-Christian ethic both in terms of the expression of its priorities and its foundation.¹⁴ Additionally, an increasing number of new Americans are entering the political arena, particularly in the southwest and west, adding a new dimension to local legislation.

By the turn of the century, the children of these new Americans will be reaching maturity, will be looking for employment and may be considering the Army as well as other social institutions for service. Some futurists have suggested that while the recent immigrants may be assimilated into society as have other immigrants in the past, it is more likely that they will present a special challenge because of the uniqueness of their language, cultural backgrounds and differing value systems.¹⁵

Concurrent with the influx in immigrants to the United States during the remainder of this century, we will be faced by a decline in the number of young men and women in the job entry age groups. The "baby boom" generation, which now has grown up and begun moving into management and leadership positions will be followed by a shrinking pool of youth available for service in the Army or entry into occupations. This shortage of young people will lead to intensive competition by all employment sectors of the society. Most estimates indicate that the number of 18-year olds is dropping and will not

Our aim is to paint a broad picture, an overview of where we, as an institution, may be heading as we near the new century. These trends will present not only problems for the Army but opportunities as well.

MEGATRENDS

In his best selling 1982 book Megatrends, John Naisbitt describes "ten new directions transforming our lives".¹⁰ Naisbitt contends that the fundamental nature of our society is changing rapidly. No longer are we an industrially based nation; we have become an information, knowledge based society. He estimates that over 65 percent of the work force is currently employed in information related occupations today compared to 17 percent in 1950.¹¹ This transformation in our national fabric will have far reaching implications in nearly every sector of life, from life styles to lifes work. As the nature of jobs change, people in the old industrial occupations will no longer have marketable skills which can be transferred directly to the increasingly dominant information and knowledge processing functions. This will result in a substantial increase in structural unemployment in the future. The larger number of unemployed people will necessitate retraining programs and may lead to a bipolar social order, in which the educated and skilled information worker is at one extreme and the displaced industrial worker at the other.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Geographically, we are a nation on the move, relocating from the northern states with their cold weather and decaying industrial base, to the southern and western states with their warm weather and high tech industry.¹² While there is some indication that this trend may be subsiding, many industries have closed down or moved to other countries where labor is cheaper.

CHAPTER III: SOCIETAL—ARMY TRENDS

GENERAL

A wise philosopher once observed that we should "learn from yesterday, live for today and look to tomorrow". Why look to tomorrow? Someone has said that,

It's hard to predict anything, especially if it's about the future. Yet, if we do not attempt to discern the outlines of the future, we will be condemned to live with and perhaps repeat the mistakes of the past.

We need to consider the future, to discern the emerging trends and directions and to identify the new concepts and technologies which are on the horizon in the years remaining until the 21st century.

Since the Army is a microcosm of the broader society in which it functions, we will focus on that society. One professional futurist stated that we must focus on the society as a whole "because the Army can't be anything other than a mirror of the society".⁹ What happens in the society surely impacts on the Army. Conversely, what the Army does will affect the society in which it serves.

OVERVIEW

In this chapter we will review major trends which many experts feel are reshaping the nature of our society. We will review our shift from an industrial base to an information society, review projected demographic changes, consider economic directions, look at new concepts of organizational structure and consider the revolution in high technology. We then will briefly consider the major implications of these trends for the personnel system.

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Fortunately, there is some evidence that these issues are beginning to receive more attention. For example, the Department of the Army recently has undertaken to design a computer-aided decision system called The Army Defense Support System which will link several data bases.⁷ In another instance, the Army has begun moving to replace paper documents in the Official Personnel Records with computer printouts.⁸

However, the need for a master action plan for modernizing the personnel system should be apparent. It is not enough to review subsystems and adopt changes piecemeal; a comprehensive strategy for modernizing the system as an entity must be pursued.

No single, unitary approach to solving the challenges of managing such a large organization as the personnel system would be appropriate. However, there is one approach which is fundamental to success in meeting the challenges of today and those which will emerge in the years ahead. That approach involves using a concept known as high performance, a recent construct which describes organizations and individuals who perform at levels of competence superior to similiar systems. In the final chapter of this study we will examine that concept in considerable detail and review ways in which it can be achieved.

At this point, however, let us turn our attention to the emerging trends, new concepts and technological developments which will impact the personnel system during the remainder of this century.

there seems to be little planning underway to upgrade the total system in an effective, timely manner.

Personnel management today remains largely a labor intensive, manual process. What little automation exists in the system is designed to be used at the macro-level, where interestingly, it is used in ways similar to logistical applications: to develop inventories, distribute soldiers, deal with line item numbers, etc.

There are few decision support systems or interactive systems at the operating level. At the operational level, personnel functions still are accomplished by large staffs consisting mainly of lower grade enlisted and civilian personnel specialists. The personnel field itself provides inadequate opportunities for long term career advancement. Consequently, personnel staff turbulence exacerbates the impact of managing change.

Further, because the personnel system is, in essence, three separate systems; each with differing policies, procedures and problems, personnel staff specialists are faced with an exceedingly difficult task of learning a system which is complex, complicated and dynamic.

At the operational level especially, the system remains paper dominated. It is a slow, cumbersome, bureaucratic process in spite of the best efforts of managers to cut through the red tape and make it function. Since the operational level is the key interface with commanders and soldiers—in other words with the consumer of its services, the system is often perceived to be lacking credibility or as being ineffective or inefficient.

These concerns, which are by no means exhaustive, must be overcome if the Army is to have the quality of personnel support necessary to manage massive change. The issues, many of which are tossed into the "too tough to handle box", must be resolved if the personnel system is to be fully capable of achieving its mission in peace and in war.

Some changes are small and manageable, but many other changes affect 50 percent or more of the total MOS strength".⁶ Each change represents an impact on the basic parameters of the personnel system which affects policy and soldiers.

At the policy level, change may be required in such matters as promotion time, tour-length, turn around time between overseas tour, military occupational specialty strength management and many others. Most significantly, it impacts on soldiers and their families. As a result of change the soldier may have to be reassigned, redeployed, redistributed, reclassified, or retrained.

Some would say, as did the noted humorist, Ogden Nash, that "there has been a lot of progress in my life, but I'm afraid its headed in the wrong direction". Progress is, of course, relative to ones goals, but in spite of the turbulence it brings, there can be no doubt that progress is being made in the Army, that it is headed in the right direction and that it is being achieved with an appropriate sense of urgency. However, as with all progress, there is a price tag; and a part of that price tag is being paid by the personnel system.

The management of this change is absolutely vital to the health of the personnel system and the Army. We are learning many lessons as we gain experience, but we must use every means available to us to increase our prowess in the management of change and to achieve high performance by those who operate the personnel system.

NEED AND OPPORTUNITY FOR MODERNIZING

A major concern in meeting these challenges is that the personnel system, which plays such a vital role in managing change, is an antiquated system. It is nearly saturated as a consequence of the accelerated rate and magnitude of force modernization. It is managing with outmoded tools and techniques, and

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piece of equipment is replete with implications for the personnel management system.

We also have started reshaping the structure of our divisions in the active force, moving from a heavy configuration to a lighter organization, and we have experimented with the tools of high technology to determine how to better organize and fight.

During recent years, an increasingly large proportion of the combat service and combat service support necessary to accomplish personnel system missions has been placed into the reserve components. At the same time, the Army has accepted a constant end-strength of 780,000 soldiers, which introduces a modicum of stability in the planning and programming arena, but precludes the growth of human resources necessary to accomplish the expanding responsibilities of the personnel system.

"The Chief of Staff's emphasis on modernization, readiness and effective use of available manpower is having a great impact on personnel management throughout the Army".⁵ These changes affect not only the aggregate number of soldiers authorized in a given unit, but they also impact upon the grades, military occupational specialty codes and other critical items of personnel management. Most importantly, they ultimately impact upon our soldiers.

IMPACT OF CHANGE

The changes being experienced by the Army today are more unprecedented in rapidity or scope than in any other major institution. The magnitude of these changes confront the personnel system with myriad problems which have stretched its capabilities to the limit.

For example, each time the personnel authorization documents are produced, 75 to 85 percent of all military occupational specialty codes will change.

energies and work collectively for superordinate goals which transcend individual interests. It binds us to our fellow man in pursuit of common goals and imparts meaning and purpose to our activities.

The excellence concept was incorporated into the Army's lexicon when it became the official theme in 1983. "the year of excellence".³⁴ So powerful and evocative was this concept that it has persisted and indeed, permeates current literature as an overarching rubric for all Army endeavors. To appreciate the nature of the concept properly, we need to develop a common understanding of its meaning.

Excellence is a term long associated with positions of great honor and exaltation. It is derived from the ancient Latin word "excellencia", past participle of "excellere"—to surpass.³⁵ It is a term which describes the condition of excelling, and is perhaps best defined by its synonyms: exceed, surpass, transcend, excel. By nature, excellence is a comparative word. Its use implies that the user has either an implicit or explicit measurement standard as a point of reference. That standard describes the normative state of the condition being judged and by contrast, a criteria which defines the point of departure from the normative state.

It is a consensual word. That is, it has meaning only to the extent that other people share a common understanding of its criteria and agree upon its presence. It achieves usefulness only when it is used in a group with shared values, common goals and similiar cultural milieu.

It also is an elastic word. It can be stretched, pushed, expanded or contracted to fit many different conditions and situations. This elasticity of meaning produces a degree of ambiguity which concerns those who require absolute precision of definition. However, this element of ambiguity is more a strength than a weakness. It gives rise to an inspirational, motivational quality in the concept of excellence. An early pioneer in the study of

excellence and high performance commented that "defining excellence is analogous to defining beauty; it is essentially a value dependent response".³⁶

How does excellence relate to the concept of high performance? The phrase "high performance" was coined by Peter Vaill, "to refer to the human systems which perform at levels of excellence far beyond comparable systems".³⁷ A former Chief of Staff of the Army, General Harold K. Johnson, linked the concept of excellence and high performance when he stated "Excellence is the standard by which we measure the Army's Performance".³⁸

It is useful to think of excellence as a condition or result of the process of high performance. Thus, we view excellence as a term which compares two or more entities against an implicit or explicit shared-group standard, and judges the condition of one to surpass the other and to exceed the normative state. High performance is the process by which excellence is achieved.

IMPORTANCE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

Why is high performance of interest to the Army in general and to the personnel system in particular?

It is of interest because it relates to the purpose for which the personnel system exists: to serve the needs of the Army and to support soldiers and families. It is of interest because it can release the potential of individuals, help focus their energy and synchronize their efforts in the attainment of organizational goals.

Then too, it is of interest to the Army because high performing organizations have been shown to accomplish far more than their less successful counterparts. Such organizations increase productivity by achieving superior results in less time. A former Commander of the US Army Training and Doctrine

Command, General Don Starry, wrote in 1982 that high performing crews increased unit combat power by 12-15 percent. When these high performing crews were coupled with high performing units they increased the combat power by 25 percent, a fourfold increase.³⁹

High performance represents a significant process for enhancing the power and efficacy of organizations. It can provide a major contribution in managing change and accomplishing missions associated with the modernization now ongoing in the Army.

HIGH PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

In order to apply the concept, we need to understand the attributes associated with high performing organizations. Therefore, we will consider the characteristics of excellent organizations which have been developed by various researchers.

The pioneer researcher in the field, Vaill, identifies eight essential facets of the high performing system.⁴⁰ He describes high performing systems as having clarity of broad and intermediate objectives and a high level of energy focused on tasks which are relevant to the organizations purposes. The energy comes in part from a strong, shared sense of motivation, and is expressed in teamwork, which binds people together in pursuit of common goals. Leadership in high performing organizations is present, clear, consistent and compelling. Innovation is encouraged and focused on relevant tasks. High performing systems have a strong sense of shared identity which differentiates members of the system from non-members. The high performers are bound together in a cohesive, self-directing fashion and they eschew external controls. Finally, according to Vaill, these systems are preceived by others to be successful, or in his words, "to have jelled".⁴¹

Peters and Waterman propose a similiar list of attributes of excellent organizations in their book, In Search of Excellence. They describe high performing organizations as those which initiate action, rather than reacting or procrastinating. They remain in tune with the desires and needs of their customers. They encourage their employees to demonstrate self-control and initiative. They achieve results through the cooperative efforts of people. Their managers are involved, hands-on type people who are responsible for shaping and inculcating values. They tend to focus on matters they are most competent at and stick to those activities which best relate to their overall purposes and objectives. They adhere to a few critical core values which tend to define, discipline and guide the organization. Finally, they have austere staffs and simple organizational lines.⁴²

Two military officers also have contributed to understanding characteristics of high performing organizations. Drawing heavily on the preceding concepts, outlined by Vaill, Peters and Waterman, LTC Jim Berg, a senior organizational staff specialist, outlines characteristics of the high performing individual and unit.

High performing individuals, he states, "work smart" in the pursuit of results, skillfully manage time, and take prudent risks which offer high potential payoffs. They seek holistic fitness (mental, physical and spiritual). They possess a positive self-image and have a strong sense of self-confidence. They believe deeply in the rightness of their own purpose and they practice and visualize goals which they seek, as though they had been attained. Finally, these individuals cultivate networks which facilitate personal and professional growth.⁴³

Having thus described the high performing individual, Berg turns his attention to profiling the high performing organization. He stresses that they have a clear, shared purpose, set clear goals, are innovative and

actively seek their objectives. They listen to their employees and customers, give feedback on performance and provide strong unambiguous leadership. They centrally control only a few essential matters which relate to their purpose and they permit great latitude in the performance of all other functions. Lastly, they value their people highly as individuals.⁴⁴

The other military author, LTC W. W. Witt, in a Delta Force concept paper outlines an extensive list of indicators which define the high performing unit. His list encompasses forty separate indicators, which he arrays in broad categories dealing with the interaction between soldiers and their environment, unit, leadership and equipment.⁴⁵

THE PATTERN

From this brief survey of descriptions of high performing organizations, we can begin to discern a pattern, which seems to suggest a common core of characteristics.

High performing organizations have a clear sense of purpose. They know what they are doing and where they are headed. They provide transformational leadership which defines a vision of the future for their workers and their customers alike and which helps develop a shared sense of organizational identity and commitment. They stress teamwork while at the same time valuing individual autonomy and innovation. They have simple, austere staffs, and use networks as well as the traditional hierarchial organizational structure. They are customer oriented and responsive to customer concerns.

ACHIEVING HIGH PERFORMANCE

The challenges facing the Army today coupled with the emerging trends which will affect it during the remainder of this century, require that we

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obtain the best possible performance from our personnel organizations. This can be achieved in part through the application of high performance principles. Therefore, we will consider the five most relevant principles for the pursuit of excellence within the Army personnel system.

The first and most fundamental principle of high performance is the requirement for strong leadership. Leadership is the key to achieving high performance in the personnel system. The Secretary of the Army summarizes that imperative in this way:

No matter what the leader's rank or organizational level, each leader has the same obligation. That obligation is to inspire and develop excellence in individuals and organizations; train members toward professional competency; instill members with the spirit to win; see to their needs and well being and to set standards that will be emulated by those they lead.⁴⁶

There are those who would argue that in the personnel system management alone is sufficient. However, we believe both elements are necessary. The difference between the process of leadership and management is a legitimate academic issue, but one too often fueled by emotionalism and egotism. Pragmatically, the distinctions are of little consequence; leadership and management are simply opposite sides of the same coin. Leadership is part of management, but not all of it. Management is part of leadership, but not all of it.

The mission of leadership in the personnel system is to inspire excellence, provide vision, direction and purpose, and transform its followers. "The transforming leader taps the needs and raises the aspirations and helps shape the values and, hence, mobilize the potential of followers."⁴⁷

- o Leadership is at its best when it inspires, when it releases the vast potential in each person, when it transforms its followers. It creates the spirit, the synergy, which leads to success.

- o Leadership requires a strong, singular sense of purpose and a clear vision of the future. This sense of purpose provides the necessary structure and direction "to commingle needs and aspirations and goals in a common enterprise. . . ."⁴⁸
- o Leadership must be a living model for others to emulate. The leader must personify the four soldierly qualities: commitment, competence, candor and courage.⁴⁹
- o Leadership must believe in itself, its goals, and its followers. It must recognize the worth of individuals and cultivate mutual respect and trust.

The second principle of high performance is to establish superordinate goals. Superordinate, or overarching goals, "keep the leader and member focused on the larger issues," and "helps to sustain attention to excellence."^{50,51} Such goals provide the glue that binds an organization together and gets it moving toward common objectives.

The seven total army goals provide an excellent example of superordinate goals which serve to focus the Army.

The seven goals were derived from the desire of both the Army Secretariat and Staff to work as a team to achieve common ends and to provide coherent guidance to the Total Army. That guidance is provided by the merger of the agreed upon goals and our institutional values stated in FM 100-1: loyalty to unit and institution, selfless service, and self-responsibility. Together they form the foundation for our policies and operating procedures, and the basis of decentralization.⁵²

In the personnel system, goals such as "service to the soldier," "serving proudly" and a host of others, if given visibility, reinforced frequently and incorporated into the work environment could serve as superordinate goals.

The use of annual themes is yet another example of giving purpose, focusing attention and setting direction—1981 was "The Spirit of Victory"; 1982 "The Year of Physical Fitness"; 1983 "An Army of Excellence"; 1984 "The Year of the

Family"; and 1985 "The Year of Leadership."⁵³ The personnel system can apply the annual Army themes and develop overarching themes of its own.

The third principle of high performance is to establish objectives which support organizational goals, to set standards for performance and to provide feedback on success.

Objectives in high performing units must be clear; they must be understood by all. They provide the road map for achieving organizational goals. Each milestone, if understood and correctly accomplished, furthers the purpose of the unit and reinforces the spirit of successful performance in members.

Concurrent with establishment of objectives, standards of performance must be identified. The standards specify the desired outcomes, not merely minimum levels of performance. They help everyone to visualize the desired result. The standards must be high enough to be challenging and to result in pride upon attaining them.

Finally, successful performance must be recognized. Napoleon taught us the efficacy of pieces of colored ribbon in motivating soldiers. We know the power of praise and reward. We must use it. Performance which is not reinforced will not continue. High performance is no exception. Sincere praise from leadership and rewards for excellent performance are imperative to developing high performance.

The fourth principle is to encourage active participation by all members in all activities of the organization. A number of different terms are used to describe facets of this principle. They include quality circles, responsibility sharing, team building, and participative management. They all share the purpose of increasing employee involvement and consequently, increasing identity with and commitment to the organization and to fellow members.

The sense of shared identity creates a feeling of belonging; it bonds members, leaders and units. It is this sense of cohesion which multiplies potential and sets the organization on the path of high performance.

The fifth principle of high performance is to empower people. By this we mean to give people the power to accomplish the objectives for which they are responsible with minimum interference. Once the purpose, direction and objectives have been articulated, let them run with the ball. This permits them to gain a sense of personal satisfaction from their achievement, which is in itself a strong reinforcement to successful performance. CONCURRENTLY, ONE KEY ASPECT OF EMPOWERING FOR high performance is training. All members of excellent organizations need to understand thoroughly their own functional responsibilities and also those of other members of the unit. Training in specific responsibilities should be followed by cross training within the unit and by training on the responsibilities of higher levels of the organization also.

In these five principles just briefly outlined, we have a starting point for developing high performance in the Army personnel system. The personnel system can seek no less, for "above all else in peace and in war, people are the Army."⁵⁴

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

We have briefly examined the topic of excellence and the achievement of high performance in the army personnel system. We have seen that the personnel system today is in the midst of massive change which is associated with the ongoing force modernization effort. We have noted that the personnel system is stretched to the limits of its resources by the challenges confronting it today and that emerging trends will pose even greater challenges in the future. At the same time these emerging trends will offer the opportunity for modernizing, streamlining, and simplifying the personnel system.

To achieve excellence within the personnel system will require a multidimensional approach. It will involve modernizing the present system to develop an automated capability at the operational and the macro level. It will require willingness to analyze alternative plans, policies and procedures to meet the challenges of the future. It also will involve the application of high performance concepts within the personnel systems. "It takes a long time to bring excellence to maturity," but the time to begin is now.⁵⁵

CONCLUSIONS

There are significant challenges associated with managing the personnel aspects of force modernization, manning the force and distributing soldiers. These challenges impede the ability of the personnel system to achieve high performance. Considering the preceding examination of excellence and high performance, we believe the following conclusions are relevant to the Army personnel system.

- o The impact of the forces impinging upon the personnel system today is exacerbated by the lack of state-of-the-art automation at the operational level in the personnel system.
- o Emerging trends, concepts and technological developments pose new challenges for the personnel system and provide opportunities for modernizing the system at all levels.
- o The nature of our society is changing from an industrial base to an information base in which currently over half of all jobs are related to information or knowledge.
- o Demographic trends reflect an increasing level of immigration to this country, a decline in the available manpower pool of service aged young people and a decreasing proclivity for Army service among our youth. These trends raise serious concern for the personnel system.
- o Changes in our national economic structure may effect the Army in a number of ways, including its size, composition, equipment, and deployment. They also may impact on personnel policies such as length of service, promotion opportunities, retirement programs, assignment policy and others.
- o The proliferation of computers, their improved software and an emerging fifth generation of expert, or knowledge based systems provides an opportunity for the personnel system to prepare to meet the management challenges of the future.
- o The nature of organizational structures is changing. Structures are moving away from traditional hierarchial arrangements to systems of informal networks. At the same time, organizations

are becoming flatter by reducing intervening levels of management, as a result of the speed and flow of information.

- o The present challenges and the emerging trends underscore the need and the opportunity to develop a master strategy for modernizing the personnel system to facilitate high performance.
- o Enhancement of the Army ~~Personnel~~ system will necessitate a multi-dimensional approach which includes automation, simplification of policies and procedures, structural adjustments, and the like. However, one imperative for enhancing the system is to apply the principles of organizational high performance in the pursuit of excellence.
- o The concept of excellence and high performance has great efficacy. High performing or excellent organizations share common characteristics which gives them purpose and direction, capitalizes on strengths and participation of employees, builds teamwork and unleashes the human potential of the organization. There are numerous means for achieving high performance. These include: strong, positive leadership; clear goals and objectives; standards of performance and feedback; a sense of belonging and networking. These concepts should be codified and distributed throughout the Army.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested:

- o That a task force be established to study ways in which the personnel system can be modernized, streamlined and simplified.
- o That a master strategic personnel system plan be prepared to develop, as a minimum, alternative policies, programs and systems

to meet the challenges of the future; a program for state-of-the-art automation of the operational level and the macro level of the system (including decision support systems and personnel community networking); a program to replace hard-copy personnel records and to maximize automation of paper records and documents; and an analysis of the staffing requirements for high performing personnel systems.

- o That a high performance "white paper" or handbook be developed to establish a common understanding of the concept of high performance and to outline techniques and methods for achieving high performance.
- o That high performance training be incorporated into the Army service school's professional development courses for NCO's and officers.
- o That a task force be established to analyze the applicability of expert computer systems to personnel system functions and to develop a prototype for use in personnel management.
- o That Army personnel be encouraged to research and write on the topic of achieving high performance within military units.
- o That consideration be given to designating "high performance" as a theme for the Army in a future year.

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