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**GETTING STARTED:
THE USE OF ORGANIZATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO FACILITATE
THE TRANSITION OF COMMAND**

BY

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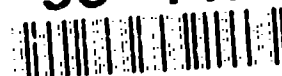
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This study discusses an organizational development (OD) process (the transition program) which can be used by a leader to manage the negative organizational effects that normally accompany a change of leadership. It also addresses the differences between the use of transition programs in large complex military organizations and smaller less complex ones. Discussion concerning the use of OD transition programs in complex military organizations are based upon a case study of the program used in one of the Army's most complex commands, the United States Army Material Command. Those for smaller organizations are based on both personal training and experience with the use of OD transition programs at both company- and battalion- level commands.

This study concludes that leaders at all levels can, with little risk, use a relatively simple OD process to reduce significantly the impact of a change of leadership on their organizations. It highlights the fact that such programs effectively inform the leader on the organization and the organization on the leader. Additionally, such programs allow the leader to understand quickly those issues requiring immediate attention and those that do not.

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

GETTING STARTED: THE USE OF ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF COMMAND

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

Every organization experiences change. Nevertheless, the management of change remains one of the most difficult tasks which organizations face. How an organization responds to change is, in large measure, conditional upon how its leadership plans and prepares the organization for its implementation. But, how do organizations normally respond to change? What factors influence the response? And, what happens when the organization's leadership itself changes?

Organizations deal with managerial transition in a variety of ways. Many simply let it happen and accept the cost as a natural part of doing business; others manage it in order to reduce the cost to the organization and to maintain stability.¹

As indicated in the above quote, a change of leadership can have negative effects on an organization. This study will address an organizational development (OD) process (a transition program) which can be used by leaders to manage a leadership change and reduce its impact on their organizations. It will also discuss the differences between the OD process used for large complex military organizations and that used for small less complex ones. Discussion concerning the use of OD transition programs in complex military organizations will be based upon a case study of the program used in one of the Army's most complex

commands, the United States Army Material Command (AMC). Those for smaller military organizations will be based on personal training and experience with the use of OD transition programs.

Because the Army has, for a number of years, worked to ensure that its future leaders were educated in management, organizational, systems, and leadership theories most of the terms used in this study should be understandable. Nevertheless, selected terms are defined in appendix 1.

WHY STUDY THE TRANSITION PROCESS?

Leadership transitions are thus volatile moments in the life cycles of organizations, occasions for renewal as well as aggression. Much hangs on how they are managed by all parties: appointing authorities, incoming and outgoing leaders and existing staff.²

The above quote provides insight into why it is important to study the transition of leadership. Ask any successful commander at any level, what is the one additional thing they wish they had and their response would probably be, "more time." Statements such as, "By the time I got my feet on the ground it was time to leave" or, "I wish I had more time, I just got things going the way I wanted them to," are often heard within the military. While such statements may apply to any position, they definitely apply to leadership positions. By understanding both how an organization responds to a change of leadership and an OD process that can be used to manipulate positively this response, it is possible for leaders to buy more time and make the period of

leadership more productive by ensuring they get started on the right track.

The study of the impact of a change of leadership on an organization is relatively new. In fact, the study of this phenomena is constantly being relooked as more and more variables (e.g., characteristics of leaders, followers, organizations and their respective environments) are considered. In spite of a general understanding of the potential impact that a change of leadership can have on an organization, one of the things that leaders and organizations generally do not do well is manage such a change.

Despite the importance of leadership, far too many transitions are not well thought through or carefully managed.³

I believe this is especially true in the military where changes of leadership are a common place occurrence. Commanders at most levels change approximately every two years. When all levels of leadership are considered, changes of leadership within the military are virtually continuous. Based on my observations over the last twenty years, I believe that the military fails to pay adequate attention to the consequences associated with a change of leadership. Although the Army has attempted to lessen the impact of leadership changes by instituting policies which address it (e.g., slating of personnel into command positions based on previous assignments within a command and adjusting command tenures), the overall assignment system does little to

address leadership transitions. Consider the following comment by a highly regarded senior Army leader,

In my case, when I went from division commander today and two days later I was Chief of Staff for Operations, Department of the Army, I had never a day in the Joint arena, did not know what "JCS" meant. I spent six months of nonproductive time for the Army trying to learn while I was in the job, and I know it hurt the performance of the job.⁴

Normally a change of leadership has an immediate impact on an organization. This is true regardless of the organization's complexity (e.g., small or Fortune 500 businesses or, in the military's case: company, battalion, or major command). Sometimes the impact is positive (the organization applauds the departure of an ineffective commander and begins to function more effectively), more often it is negative (the organization flounders, waiting for direction). Fortunately, over time the organization and its members eventually adjusts.

Over the past several decades, OD processes have been successfully used to manipulate an organization's response to a change of leadership. As will be seen, the primary purpose of transition programs is to assist the new leader, as well as the organization in effectively managing the adverse consequences of a change of leadership.

OD TRANSITION PROGRAMS

The Transition Model.⁵ When I attended the Army's Organizational Effectiveness Center and School (OEC&S), I was introduced to an OD transition process which was based on a model

developed by Mr. Mike Mitchell, an internal organizational effectiveness (OE) consultant for Kaiser Aluminum. Mr Mitchell developed this model in an attempt to reduce the amount of time (approximately six months) required for a new manager to become fully productive. The key element of this process is the transition meeting, which provides the new leader or manager a concentrated period of time to develop a management team.⁶ (Appendix 2 contains example agendas and methodologies for transition meetings.)

The transition meeting is intended to provide the new manager an opportunity to get acquainted with subordinate leaders and clarify concerns and expectations. It also allows all participants to reach a clear and shared understanding of the major priorities and goals of the organization for some defined period of time (normally the first six months), identify courses of action to achieve the goals or objectives, and examine organizational procedures to identify internal issues to improve effectiveness.⁷ Transition meetings are considered appropriate for any change of leadership. The Army's Organizational Effectiveness Staff Officer's (OESO) Handbook indicates several occasions when the Army considers the use of transition meetings most appropriate. These include when the incoming commander or manager is unknown; a break in organizational continuity is not acceptable; and there is little time available for sorting out or identifying problems.⁸

Transition Program. For this study, a transition program refers to a combination of two different OD processes. The first is the OE Four-Step Process. (The four steps of this common-sense based process are: assessment, chain of command action planning, implementation, and evaluation and follow-up.⁹) The second, involves the use of any variation of Mitchell's transition meeting. The goals and objectives of a transition program are the same as those outlined above for a transition meeting; however, the process is more inclusive and differs based on the complexity of the organization.

From my perspective, the transition meeting remains the key event in designing a transition program for smaller organizations. In larger complex organizations, the primary focus is a myriad of activities that occur before and after the transition meeting. Although the transition meeting remains important, it is a secondary event which serves to tie other transition activities together.

Sequence of Activities. Based on experience and research, I have found that the activities of any transition program, whether formal or informal, follow a sequential path which mirrors the four-step process discussed above. Although these activities are generally sequential, a tremendous amount of overlap occurs. The following discussion addresses the sequential activities of a transition program. This discussion is based on the OE Four Step Process¹⁰, which provides a methodology for implementing change within an organization.

Step 1: Assessment. The purpose of an assessment is to develop a picture of the organization's current status (organization's health) so that a determination can be made as to what activities are required to move it to a future state. Initial activities focus on the collection of background information on the unit (e.g., mission; structure; key players, both external and internal; and performance indicators). These activities continue with the identification of activities, which are being performed well and those which are not; the determination of policies, which are either effective or disruptive; and the identification of how the organization is viewed both externally and internally (the climate) by its members. A key element of the assessment process is the identification of issues, both internal and external, facing the organization.

Step 2: Analysis and Planning. The results of the assessment is subsequently analyzed and issues to be addressed developed. The analysis must identify the good, as well as the not so good, the bad, and the very bad. This allows the commander to focus the command's efforts on addressing critical issues (i.e., those with a potential to have the greatest organizational impact) first. Things that are not going well, but do not pose an immediate or major problem, can be addressed at some future date. Those that are going well can also be left alone to be challenged later. Final activities in this phase

include development of courses of action (a strategy) for resolving or addressing each issue.

Step 3: Implementation. These activities focus on the decision to act, and the implementation and management of change.

Step 4: Evaluation and Follow-up. The final activities, evaluation and follow-up, are possibly the most important and often most overlooked. The intent of the evaluation is to determine whether the actions taken to address or resolve an issue achieved the desired result. In effect, follow-up activities start the process over again and assist the leader in keeping the organization focused.

Organizational Dynamics. To appreciate why OD programs are useful, it is necessary to understand some basic facts about organizations and the dynamics working within any organization. The definition of an organization, as well as an organization's diagram (organizational chart, line diagram) provides the basis for a simple discussion of organizational dynamics.

Purpose. Organizations are formed for a specific purpose (mission). The organization's purpose binds the organization and its members together. It also provides insight into those external elements (e.g., customers, suppliers, regulators) with which the organization interfaces.

Formal Structure. Organizational diagrams normally indicate how an organization is structured to accomplish its mission. Such diagrams identify how organizational responsibilities and functions are divided. They also depict the

organization's formal power (leadership) structure and display organizational relationships, both horizontal and lateral. Those external agencies, which influence the organization, are also routinely indicated either by the functional area breakdown or a listing of liaison offices.

Informal Structure. What organizational diagrams do not portray is the informal structure that exists in every organization. For every formal organizational process, an informal one normally exists. The "old boy net" is a well known and commonly understood example of an informal structure. Informal structures play an important role in maintaining the organization as a cohesive, functioning entity. They also impact the organization as much as, if not more than, the formal structure.

Values. Organizations routinely possess a common set of beliefs and values. They establish a series of formal policies, rules or operating procedures (regulations) which govern the behavior and activities of its members. Organizations also develop policies and procedures to govern the way in which the organization deals with external agencies. As with structure, organizations routinely develop a set of informal norms "the way it really is."

Systems View. Organizations are often viewed as a system. When viewed in this manner, a change to any organizational function or element can be expected to impact, in one way or another, all other elements. Organizational dynamics

demands that both the formal and informal organizational structures assimilate and deal with the impact of any change, particularly a change of leadership. The following examples may illustrate the impact of organizational dynamics on an organization:

Example 1. When new members join an organization, they ordinarily participate in a formal organizational training program (e.g., basic training) which acquaints them with the organization's purpose, values, beliefs, structure, and rules. At the same time, the organization's informal structure works to acquaint new members with "the way things are really done." This process occurs at multiple levels, with the majority being accomplished within the individual work group.

Example 2. When a leader changes, the formal structure normally remains intact; however, subtle changes occur. These changes effect decision processes as the new leader attempts to determine or understand major issues. They also effect working relations as individuals attempt to realign their base of power. Everyone who has experienced a change of leadership understands the impact of a leadership change on the organization. The leader's personality and leadership style can have a tremendous impact on how the organization functions, particularly if it differs greatly from that of the outgoing commander. This is particularly true in the military where the commander's span of control is all encompassing.

At the same time, a leadership change provides an opportunity for organizational members to present ideas, new or old (pet rocks), for possible implementation. Leadership changes also provide an opportunity for individuals to attempt to change organizational processes or prevent pending ones from being implemented or introduced. While issues like these are being worked out, the organization may take a "wait and see" attitude (falter) to see how the power base is eventually realigned, develop an understanding of what the new leader likes or dislikes, and determine the direction in which the leader intends to take the organization.¹¹

PERSONAL BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVE ON OD

Before addressing how OD transition programs are used, I would like to provide some personal background to help readers understand my perspective on the use of OD. I offer this perspective because I contend that most military leaders believe, as I did, that such "touchy feely" procedures are not necessary and that a good leader knows instinctively what it takes to get or keep an organization functioning effectively. Based on my experiences with OD, I now believe its use can be beneficial. I also believe that the benefit of its use is dependent on both the organization's size and purpose and the leader's personality.

My interest in the transition process, which stems from my command experiences and military and civilian education, has developed over a period of approximately twenty years.

During this period, I assumed command of two company-level commands without the use of an OD transition program and both a company- and battalion-level command using such a program.

When I assumed command of my first company-level command (1974), the Army had not yet embraced organizational effectiveness (OE) theories. By the time I assumed command of my second unit (1978), the Army had organized its OEC&S; however, Organizational Effectiveness Staff Officers (OESOs) had not yet been deployed. As such, I was not aware that there were processes which could be used to get started in command. In 1980, I attended OEC&S. While there, I received extensive training in OD and OE theory, procedures and processes, as well as in management, leadership and systems theory. OEC&S also included training in the conduct of OD or OE interventions (e.g., the conduct of transition, team building, and time and stress management workshops). During this training I began to analyze my previous command experiences and weigh them against what I was being taught.

When I was informed that I would be given another command (1984), I decided to use OD (a transition program) to assist me in assuming command. I hoped its use would, as advertised, allow me to get started quickly. By the time (1989), I assumed command of a battalion, the Army had disbanded OEC&S and eliminated OESOs from its force structure. Nevertheless, instruction at the Army's Pre-Command Course (PCC) recommended the use of OD processes (e.g., development and publication of a command

philosophy and conduct of a transition meeting) to facilitate the transition of leadership. Based on my initial experience with the use of a transition program, I anticipated that the use of the processes recommended during PCC would again be beneficial.

The transition programs I used and my perception of their effectiveness are discussed in the next section of this paper. Also discussed are some of the factors which must be considered when using such procedures.

USE OF OD IN SMALL LESS COMPLEX (SMALLER) ORGANIZATIONS

Changing Command Without OD. Like most company-level commanders, I was notified that I would take command of a company with slightly more than a week's notice. In hindsight, I may have been fortunate to have been assigned as a junior platoon leader in the same company for approximately six months. As a result of my assignment, I had a good feel for the unit, which was known to be inundated with major organizational and leadership problems. I understood, or thought I did, most of the unit's strengths and weaknesses and those of its junior leaders. Additionally, I was confident that I knew the major issues requiring immediate resolution. Nevertheless, the questions I continually asked myself were, "what needs to be done first to get this unit functioning effectively?" and, "who needs to do or support it?."

When I assumed command, I had a good idea of where I wanted the unit to go and how I intended to get it there. I also knew

what I valued (liked) and disliked both professionally and personally. I had mistakenly believed that these were obvious to my subordinate leaders and the rest of the organization. Over time, and incrementally the members of my command, and those that influenced it, developed an understanding of my personality, command philosophy, and overall goals and objectives.

Although some issues were identified and resolved quickly, many lingered for months while I worked to understand their basis and as the organization adjusted to both my leadership style and major adjustments in operating procedures. By my best estimate, it took at least six months before most unit activities were being accomplished at a reasonably acceptable level, and much longer before they were functioning the way I believed they should. Unfortunately, I left command after a very short fifteen months.

By all accounts, I was a successful commander. Yet, as I prepared to give up command I could not help but feel somewhat shortchanged. Just when things were going smoothly, it was time to leave; someone else would enjoy the results of my efforts.

My second command was much different from my first. For one thing it was composed primarily of company grade officers and senior noncommissioned officers. For another, it enjoyed a good reputation and routinely accomplished its mission in an exceptional manner. Like before, I had been assigned to the unit; however, as the unit's operations officer, I occupied a key billet. My position provided me a thorough understanding of the

unit and major issues facing it. Because I had been responsible for operational matters and unit training, I had prepared a majority of the unit's operational policies and procedures. As a result, many of the unit's major policies would remain constant. Additionally, because the majority of personnel reported directly to me, they were already aware of my personality and those things I would and would not tolerate. In this case, the transition of leadership was relatively painless, although not without some surprises.

In both of the above cases, my prior assignment to the units lessened, but did not eliminate, the impact on the command of the change of leadership. Although there were expected changes in the manner in which organizational members interacted with me, my understanding of the organization and the manner in which it functioned, as well as the organization's understanding of me, provided a common starting ground. Nevertheless, it took time to get myself and the organization focused on a course of action.

Using OD. A year after I completed OEC&S, I was informed that I would be assigned to assume command of a company in a remote location. Although I remained skeptical about the value of OD, I decided to request that my new command's OESO conduct a transition workshop for me upon my arrival. I hoped this program would, as advertised, allow me to hit the ground running by helping me to identify key issues and the unit's strengths and weaknesses. I also hoped it would provide the members of my command an opportunity to understand quickly my priorities,

leadership style and command philosophy. I anticipated the use of this program would allow me to build on organizational successes and focus on overcoming, in a relatively short period of time, any identified weaknesses.

In deciding to use a transition program, I considered my training, as well as several factors. (These same considerations, along with the success I had with my initial use of an OD program, would lead me to use a similar program when I assumed command of a battalion.) For one thing, I had almost no knowledge of the unit's formal or informal structure nor of the strengths and weaknesses or abilities and shortcomings of personnel occupying leadership positions. For another, I lacked knowledge of current or potential issues facing the command and of those external organizations which impacted the unit and its mission accomplishment. A primary consideration was the expected period of each command. In one case, the tour was only twelve months; in the other, twenty four. The length of command would provide only a limited amount of time to do whatever had to be done. I wanted to avoid the delays in getting started which I had experienced with my first two commands and get started early and on the right track.

Success or Failure. Before providing my perspective on the usefulness of transition programs, I would like to provide excerpts from a letter signed by Lieutenant General (LTG) Julius Becton concerning one of the transition meetings he held when he assumed command of VII Corps,

...My specific goal was to reduce my "down time;" i.e., the period when I would be nonproductive.

What did I gain? I am convinced that the transition meeting cut my learning time at least in thirds....I learned far more than some realized about the make-up and personalities of the individual staff chiefs....

...I particularly appreciated the opportunity to be with both the staff officers and their wives. I am convinced that it reduced their "learning curve" as much as it did mine.

The transition meeting worked for me. I am convinced that the OE techniques materially facilitated my involvement in the corps activities.¹²

Like LTG Becton, I believe transition programs function as advertised. Transition meetings allowed me to develop rapidly solid impressions of my key staff and a clear understanding of the command environment. I found that the candor, or lack of it, with which the principals (subordinate leaders or managers and key operational personnel) both completed relatively simple statements and participated in other activities was not only enlightening but also provided insight into their possible strengths and weaknesses. The program also allowed me to obtain the views of organizational members on how things were going in the organization. Based on an analysis of this information, I was able to focus my attention on those issues and functions which the command believed needed attention first. This analysis also permitted me to let other functions, with which the command was comfortable (consensus), and issues, which it considered of lesser importance, to go unaddressed for the time being. The fact that the members of the command had participated in development of the issues to be addressed proved to be an added

benefit. A third advantage was that a lot of unasked questions (e.g., What does the commander like or dislike? What does the commander intend to focus on? What does the commander expect from subordinates and organizational members?) were answered both directly and indirectly. Having a cross-section of the command attend transition meetings served to ensure that the message I wished to convey to the command was done so rapidly.

Although I found the use of a formal transition program to be beneficial, there are some things about its use which must be understood. For one, its use requires a commitment and willingness to take a risk. At times, the process can be uncomfortable. The commander's ability to mirror the behavior desired (candor and honesty), stay with the process (not jump to conclusions about the health or climate of the organization or make premature commitments to fix any single issue) and follow through with the program will determine its success or failure.

It must also be remembered that the goal of transition meetings, particularly in smaller organizations, is to exchange and gather information, not solve problems. Transition meetings provide an opportunity for the commander to build consensus on potential issues, identify key players and begin to develop potential solutions to issues raised. In most cases, the commander must analyze each of the issues raised to determine their validity. Once this is done, the commander must decide upon an approach to be taken to address or resolve each issue.

A premature commitment can send the wrong message and thus be destructive. The use of OD programs also requires extensive preparation and demands self confidence. All this must be understood by the user and explained to all participants and the command or else false expectations may be raised. If this occurs, the use of OD can actually set the leader and the organization back.

Transition Activities. Prior to the formal change of command and before the transition meetings, I made an informal assessment of each unit. Discussions with the outgoing commanders provided me their views on their respective organizations and key personnel, their rationale for the manner in which they had task organized (informal structure) their commands, and their perspective of potential issues. Previous inspection and audit reports; correspondence; formal and informal discussions with personnel assigned to each unit; and discussions with personnel from higher and supported and supporting headquarters, also played a part in my assessments. These assessments were valuable because they formed a basis for understanding the information provided during transition meetings. They were equally important to my ability to both plan the transition program and analyze issues raised.

Program Development. In designing a transition program, there are several factors which must be considered and addressed. While these factors apply to some extent to programs for large

and small organizations, the following discussion will focus on programs for smaller organizations.

Number of Transition Meetings. The transition meeting is the foundation of the transition program for smaller organizations. As previously discussed, these meetings are intended to get organizations, particularly the principals, acquainted with the new leader and the leader with the organization. They provide an opportunity for both the commander and the principals to reach a general consensus on priority issues facing the organization and ways to address them.

To develop a strong foundation on which to base the management of future change, the views of a cross-section of the command should be obtained. To do this in a manageable and meaningful way may require multiple meetings which address selected portions of the command. However, the most important meeting (the primary meeting) is that between the principals and the commander.

Attendees. In addition to deciding the number of meetings, a determination must also be made concerning who should attend which meeting. This is not always a straightforward matter.

My decision on who should attend the primary meeting was based on my discussions with the outgoing commander and a review of the organization's structure. What positions are considered key and what levels of leadership or management are to be involved in the primary meeting are issues which must be

decided carefully. As an example, in my battalion-level transition program, I did not request that a Japanese employee who was responsible for management of the battalion's supplies attend the primary transition meeting. This oversight was partly caused by the way in which the organization was formally structured. This structure placed the individual under the Headquarter's Company Commander. However, in terms of responsibilities and the way in which the organization actually functioned (the informal structure), this individual actually filled a key position. My failure to involve this individual in the primary meeting had a subtle impact on the organization for some time, in spite of my attempts to rectify it. (The impact of this oversight was possibly further aggravated by the importance the Japanese culture places on avoiding a loss of face.)

Attendees to other meetings can be based on random selection; however, it is important to ensure that a cross-section of all employees (e.g., officers, NCOs, enlisted personnel, and civilian) are represented. This allows the commander to develop a true organizational perspective of the organization's climate. It ensures that issues, which may be specific to a given group and which would probably not be raised at the primary meeting, have an opportunity to be raised. Most importantly, ensuring that a cross-section of the organization attend these meetings, allows the commander's message to reach the entire command. In selecting attendees for each meeting, it is also important to ensure that discussions are not hampered by

the presence of personnel in leadership positions. This can be accomplished by holding a number of meetings of varying lengths.

Scheduling. It would seem that scheduling would be a relatively simple process; however, this is not always the case. For the greatest benefit, transition meetings should be held as close to the change of command as possible. It is also important that the primary meeting be scheduled so that the principals are able to attend. To limit interruptions and ensure schedules are adjusted, the dates of the transition program must be fixed as early as possible. It is equally important to ensure that the transition program goes as scheduled. Failure to do so will send the wrong message to the organization and make it difficult for the commander to get started on a proper course of action.

Time Required. In establishing a schedule, sufficient time must be set aside for each meeting. I found that the primary meeting requires a full day; however, the commander will actually spend only part of the day in the meeting. The time required for other transition meetings will be determined by the number of attendees at each meeting and the format used. Normally, each of these meetings will require between three and four hours.

Location. Regardless of where transition meetings are held, interruptions need to be eliminated. For the primary meeting, it is best to use a location away from the organization.

Role of the Outgoing Commander. What role if any the outgoing commander will play in the transition program needs to

be decided. The transition model presented at OEC&S indicates that it is best for the outgoing commander to play an active role in the program.¹³ This view is based on the outgoing commander's ability to provide insight into identified issues. While I believe such participation might work in a civilian organization, I do not believe it will in a military organization. In fact, I believe the outgoing commander's presence would actually serve to cut off communication. In both my programs, I used the outgoing commander as a source of information, but did not request that they participate in the transition meeting.

The Leader's Role. The most important element of the transition program is the new leader. Because transition meetings are the focal activity of a transition program for smaller organizations, the manner in which the leader opens and participates in these meetings may determine their success or failure. More importantly, the commander's actions during the transition meeting, as well as in the initial period of command sets the stage for the commander's tenure.

Implementation. Once the transition program is completed, the commander must ensure that each issue raised during the transition meeting is addressed. In some cases, no action may be required. In others, minor or major adjustments may be required to the way in which the organization does business. Regardless, each issue raised should be addressed in some fashion.

External Agencies. Although the primary emphasis of any transition program is on the internal organization, the impact of external organizations should not be ignored. The Japanese have a custom to which I was exposed when I assumed battalion command. This is a simple office call with the head of each agency (not necessarily the person the commander deals with on a daily basis) with which the organization routinely interacts. The intent of this structured meeting, which normally is scheduled for 15 minutes, is for the agency's head to wish the new commander well and express the agency's commitment to support the new commander's organization. Regardless of the forum chosen, recognition of external players is an important aspect of the transition of leadership.

Other Issues. Although the transition programs I used were similar, there were some distinct differences. The primary one was that an external consultant (the command's OESO) assisted me in the conduct of my company-level program, while I conducted my battalion-level program myself. Another difference was that for my battalion-level program, I prepared a concise statement of both my command philosophy and the goals I intended to attain while in command. I also prepared a bullet-style compilation of those things I liked and disliked.

Use of a Consultant. I found that a consultant made the use of a transition program easier. The consultant guided the organization through the process, prepared an independent assessment of the organization through interviews and the use of

surveys, and maintained the focus of the participants throughout the meetings. The consultant ensured that all attendees participated during the meetings and advised me of the impact of my actions on participants. Additionally, the consultant both assisted me in analyzing information provided as a result of transition meetings and in planning evaluation and follow-up activities.

The availability of an external consultant carries with it some additional factors to be considered. The primary one being whether or not to use a consultant. Although I found the use of a consultant to be beneficial, I subsequently learned that a transition program could be accomplished successfully without one. I found the major differences to be the amount of preparation required on my part and the fact that I became responsible for explaining the process and setting an example of open candid participation. (For smaller organizations, this point may be moot because consultants are not normally available to commanders of such military organizations. As will be seen, the use of consultants in large complex organizations is all but a requirement.)

Command Philosophy and Goals. The second major difference was the preparation of both a command philosophy and a statement of the organizational goals I wanted to accomplish by the end of my command tenure. As indicated, I also prepared an additional document which provided the command an indication of my personal likes and dislikes. I found these documents, which I

believe must be living documents (i.e., documents which are routinely refined, changed, modified or challenged), to be useful throughout my command. For the transition, they outlined the goals I had set for myself and the organization, the issues I believed important, and my perception of how I approached command. For the organization, these documents served as a point of focus, a reference for discussion, and a tool for members of my command to use to validate my approach to command.

USE OF OD IN LARGE COMPLEX ORGANIZATIONS¹⁴ A CASE STUDY

I found the use of OD transition programs to be beneficial in smaller organizations. However, how useful are such programs to senior-level commanders as they assume command of complex organizations? In 1992, the leadership of AMC changed. This change of leadership was facilitated by what should be considered a text book example of a leadership transition program for a complex organization. This program is discussed below.

AMC In Transition. AMC is one of the most complex organizations in the Army. Its primary mission is to equip and sustain a trained and ready Army. AMC's activities impact every facet of the Army and provide a direct link between the Army, industry, and a host of foreign nations. I believe the responsibilities of AMC's Commanding General (CG) easily approximate those of a senior executive of a Fortune 500 Company.

On 31 January 1992, command of AMC passed from General William G. T. Tuttle to General Jimmy D. Ross. However, the

program to transition leadership did not begin with the passing of the colors. In fact, General Ross with General Tuttle's support, had initiated transition activities months before the formal change of leadership. Before addressing AMC's program, it may be beneficial to have some additional background information on both AMC and General Ross.

The Command. AMC is a complex organization with a mission vital to the Army's success. AMC accomplishes its mission through the efforts of a dedicated and professional staff of both military and Department of the Army Civilians, ten major subordinate commands and a host (approximately 126) of separate activities. Although AMC routinely performs its mission in an exceptional manner, it has, in the past, often been viewed as an overly bureaucratic and lethargic organization. In 1991, it was, like the rest of the Army, faced with a major challenge, a significant reduction (approximately 30%) in its force structure over the next several years. While operations in support of Desert Storm had delayed the inevitable, budget reductions and the impact of Defense Resource Management Decisions would ultimately require significant organizational changes. AMC had to manage these changes in a manner which preserved its ability to accomplish its mission. In assuming command of AMC, General Ross's challenge was not merely to lead AMC through a major reorganization, but to transform AMC's approach to accomplishing its mission. This would most likely require a cultural shift.

The New CG. Before assuming command of AMC, General Ross was the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics (DCSLOG). In this position, he had first hand knowledge of major issues impacting AMC and was in contact with many of the same people with whom he would deal as AMC's CG. General Ross had also served as AMC's Chief of Staff (CoS) and commanded Depot Systems Command, one of AMC's Major Subordinate Commands (MSC). General Ross's assignments within AMC provided him with thorough working knowledge of AMC. This insider knowledge, as well as General Ross's friendship with General Tuttle would be valuable in the development of a formal program for the transition of leadership. This knowledge also provided General Ross a head start in his transition to command.

Based on conversations with members of his staff, I believe General Ross has a leadership style (participatory) which facilitates the use of OD procedures. Per members of his command, General Ross likes to interact with his staff and subordinate commanders. He solicits information (comments, both positive and negative) on which to base decisions. Evidently, he does not suppress disagreement, yet expects loyalty once he selects a course of action. General Ross's staff also indicated that he consistently demonstrates a genuine concern for the well-being of both his organization and its members.

The Challenge. When General Ross was informed that he had been selected to command AMC (late August 1991), he was well aware of the tremendous challenges facing his future command.

Based on his subsequent actions, it can be assumed that he was also aware of the impact that a change of leadership could have on an organization. With these challenges in mind, General Ross initiated action to ease the impact of the change of leadership and provide him the ability to begin immediately to manage effectively the challenges facing his command.

Change Management. General Ross began his transition program by selecting a trusted agent to research and review procedures used by CEOs of private industries to manage and implement significant changes within their organizations. Although General Ross was concerned with how best to transition leadership in a way that would ensure minimal disruption to the manner in which AMC performed its mission, the trusted agent's focus was on the issue of how to manage the significant organizational change facing the command. In light of the environment in which AMC's change of leadership was to occur, the management of change was inextricably linked to the change of leadership. The results of the trusted agent's research would be useful not only in the development of the transition program but also to ensuring that it was focused on the larger challenge of transforming AMC.

The Transition Program. Although OD programs have for some time been used within the Army to ease the transition of leadership, this was the first time that an incoming CG had used such a program in AMC. This program was modeled after that used by the current Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) when he assumed

his leadership role. In the report of their activities, AMC's transition team refers to their activities as the Transition Process Model. (This should not be confused with Mr. Mitchell's model of the same name.) As will be seen, this program was designed to accomplish the same goals as a transition meeting for smaller organizations.

The transition program began with two key actions. The first was General Ross's request that General Tuttle support a program. The second was the formation of a transition team.

Support for the Program. In complex organizations, the support of the existing commander is essential. Without such support, the transition effort will probably failed. This is primarily because the assessment of the organization's overall health and determination of critical issues is far more difficult and takes much more time. Therefore, to be useful, the transition program must begin well before the formal change of command.

In contrast, the support required from the outgoing commander of a smaller organizations is limited. In fact, actions required to facilitate a transition program in such organizations can actually be accomplished after the change of command with little if any impact. This is true because the assessment of such organizations is relatively straightforward and can be conducted in a matter of days, if not hours. As indicated above, this is not the case in complex organizations.

Unobtrusive Nature. Regardless of the size of the organization, any transition activity that occurs prior to the actual change of leadership must consider the potential impact of that activity on both the existing commander and the organization. As such, it should be unobtrusive. It must be remembered that the transition program is designed to limit the impact of a change of leadership on an organization, not to exacerbate it. An incident that occurred during the 1993 transition of the Presidency, which is an open and visible program, provides an indication of how a transition program can adversely impact an organization's activities.

When Iraq challenged the no-fly zone established by the United Nations, President Bush ordered a military response. It evidentially had to be made clear to Iraq and the U.S. public, probably more so the press, that there is only one President and that U.S. foreign policy emanates from the President, not the future president.¹⁵

While this may be an exaggerated example, it should illustrate the importance of designing a transition program so that its activities do not accelerate the organization's response to the change of leadership and cause it to falter well before the change.

Role of the Commander. For smaller organizations, the new commander normally plans, prepares and conducts all transition activities. The commander also becomes responsible for analyzing information derived from the process and determining issues which require action and those which do not. Therefore, the commander plays a direct and active role in all transition activities.

This is not unlike the role (the commander is directly involved in almost every organizational function¹⁶) the commander takes in command.

As AMC's transition program will illustrate, the commander's role in complex organizations is more indirect. This again mirrors the role (the commander has little direct involvement with running of the organization¹⁷) taken by the commander in regard to the command. The transition team leader (in AMC's case the trusted agent) was directly responsible for developing the transition plan and directing and coordinating all transition activities. The team leader was also responsible for providing the team its only direct interface with the sponsor (General Ross). As such, the team leader was responsible for keeping the sponsor advised of the team's activities and obtaining the sponsor's guidance and perspective on both methodology and developing issues. Additionally, the team leader was responsible for the team's interface with AMC's CoS who had been designated by the outgoing CG to support the transition program. (AMC's CoS served as a buffer for the transition process and, along with the transition team leader, kept transition activities invisible to the command.) The sponsor provided the only interface with the outgoing CG and kept him informed of the team's activities, although not necessarily their findings.

The Transition Team. The use of a transition team is another element of the transition process that is different for complex organizations. For AMC, the transition team, which was

formed by the trusted agent at General Ross's direction, began its assessment in early October. This was almost four months prior to the anticipated date of the change of command. The transition team was initially composed of five personnel under the direction of General Ross's trusted agent. (The initial team will be referred throughout this paper as the core team.) Each of these personnel possessed managerial, analytical, visionary and organizational development skills required to facilitate and guide the leadership transition process. To be effective, this team would have to make a thorough assessment of a highly complex organization. This assessment would have to provide detailed information about the organization's structure, business practices, values, core competencies, and major or key issues requiring resolution. It would also have to identify those individuals and organizations, both internal and external to the organization, that had a significant impact on its activities. The complexity of the organization would eventually require that the core team be augmented by subject matter experts from within the command. To do this in an unobtrusive manner required not only the full support of the existing commander but also a tremendous effort by those responsible for implementing the transition program.

The Transition Plan. AMC's report on its transition program divided its program into six phases. However, transition activities indicated as occurring in one phase may actually have been initiated in an earlier one and continued in a later one.

In discussing AMC's program, the phases are provided to facilitate discussion of the activities accomplished in each phase. The approximate number of days required for activities conducted during each phase is provided for planning purposes only. The amount of time required for transition activities may vary based on the size and complexity of the organization, the size of the transition team, and the objectives of the program.

Phase I - Initial Design (30 days). This phase included the research conducted to respond to the sponsor's questions concerning the management of change and the role that leaders play in managing change. During this phase, the core team's initial task was to develop both a daily concept of operations and an overall management philosophy. As part of its management philosophy, the team established a requirement for the team leader to make a weekly progress report (verbal) to the sponsor. During this meeting, the team leader provided the sponsor a synopsis of the team's activities since the last report. This meeting was an opportunity for the team leader to obtain the sponsor's reaction to the team's activities. More importantly, it allowed the sponsor to influence the team's activities and provide the team leader immediate feedback and guidance on areas (issues) the sponsor considered of high or low value. The team leader's weekly meeting with the sponsor also allowed the team leader to discuss the methodology being used by the team and resolve potential issues with its use.

The core team's activities during this phase focused on development of an initial outline of a transition plan. This plan was to be a working document which guided the transition team's efforts and provided the framework required to manage the larger task, AMC's transformation. It would also serve as a resource document, which captured the principles which would guide AMC through its evolution.

Initially, the transition plan was to contain milestones and schedules for the transition effort. It was to provide basic background information on the command, as well as those internal and external factors which influence the command's actions and activities. Once critical issues were identified and potential courses of action for their resolution developed, the transition plan would be expanded to include these. As part of its efforts, the core team developed two key documents. These were the charter for the transition team's activities and an initial draft of the commander's strategic vision. Because of their importance these documents are discussed below.

The Charter. The charter was a written agreement (contract) between the transition team and the sponsor. AMC's charter, which could be viewed as a requirements document, established the sponsor's intent; provided a statement of the problem; and identified the products the transition team would provide the sponsor.

Because such documents are rarely produced in the military, the charter's importance may be difficult to

understand. The use of a formal transition program, as well as many other OD programs (e.g., team building) in complex organizations normally requires the use of a disinterested party, a consultant. (In AMC's case, the transition team leader and the team satisfied this requirement.) The sponsor and consultant must clearly understand what is expected as a result of the OD program to be used. The contract ensures that both parties understand the problem to be addressed and the sponsor's goal (desired outcomes). It also contains the rules to be followed, not only during the program but also for interaction between the sponsor and the consultant and the sponsor, the consultant and the organization. Additionally, the contract defines the products to be delivered to the sponsor as a result of the consultant's efforts. A written contract provides both parties clarity of purpose and a base from which to negotiate changes. In AMC's case, the charter filled this requirement.

In smaller organizations, it is equally important that the commander and the members of the command, particularly those that are to participate in the program, understand what the commander expects from each participant and as a result of the command's transition program. To be effective, the commander must be able to articulate this information to the command. (I found the best way to do this was to publish and distribute a memorandum which explained the process, the rules to be used and the desired outcome of the program.) This helps to reduce anxiety and limit unrealistic expectations.

The Strategic Vision. AMC's report on its transition program describes a strategic vision in the following way:

Strategic Vision describes the role of the organization, how the organization will be viewed and how it will perform. It is a concise statement describing the desired future state of the organization. It is what the organization hopes to be once it achieves a reorientation. It should be energizing for all levels of the command. It is the communication of the commander's mental model.¹⁸

The strategic vision developed by General Ross had to support the CSA's vision for the Army, be based upon AMC's mission, and consider the reality of the environment in which AMC was to exist.

The need to develop and publish such a vision is a relatively new OD concept. In the past, OD processes stressed the importance of developing a clear set of organizational goals or objectives. The commander's vision serves to maintain an overall focus for the commander and organization as the commander's goals and objectives are attained or modified. The development of a vision for the future should be considered as a worthwhile exercise for all organizations. (A good discussion of strategic leadership, as well as the use and purpose of a vision is contained in Thomas Gilmore's book, Making A Leadership Change, Chapter 11, "Incorporating A New Vision Into An Organization".)

Phase II - Integration of Subject Matter Experts (15 Days).

Once the core team began its assessment, it determined that an adequate assessment of the entire command would require the

assistance of subject matter experts from within the command. The sponsor approved a plan, which was supported by General Tuttle, to augment the core transition team with subject matter experts from each MSC and AMC's Headquarters. (A total of 17 personnel augmented the team, 1 from each MSC and 6 from the AMC staff and separate activities.) Because the need to retain the unobtrusive nature of the transition effort was still important, AMC's CoS was given responsibility for identifying the augmentees. Additionally, the commands and offices augmenting the core team were not told the nature of the study in which their personnel would participate.

Once subject matter experts were identified, the core team began an effort to integrate them into the transition team. This was accomplished during a two week long team-building program. A critical element of this effort was the initial meeting between the expanded team and the sponsor. This meeting was important because it set the overall tone for the transition program. In his opening remarks for the team-building program, General Ross explained the transition program's purpose, the outcome he desired and his concern for the organization's continued well-being:

...to stress our purpose to transition me back to the AMC family. Transition of me into the command. I want to make sure we do not impact or in any way disrupt the outstanding job General Tuttle is doing. Our goal is to ensure I am ready to step into command with the absolute minimal disruption in the remarkable way in which AMC does its day-to-day operations.¹⁹

During the remainder of the team-building program, the core team briefed the subject matter experts on the challenges facing the Army and AMC in the near future and the direction both were taking to meet these challenges. Nevertheless, the primary effort was on building a cohesive team. A team capable of obtaining from multiple sources information which could be analyzed to produce a composite of issues to be addressed in the short term (first 120 days), the mid term (first year) and over the long term (those activities needed to ensure that AMC remained viable in the future).

Team building activities centered on developing procedures the team would use, identifying categories of personnel to be interviewed, developing a set of interview questions and defining the design parameters for the product to be produced. Once the session was completed, the sponsor reviewed and approved the procedures to be used, the product to be provided, and the categories of personnel to be interviewed. At the conclusion of this phase, the transition team understood the importance and sensitivity of their task and were prepared to begin the next phase.

Phase III - Command Sensing (15 Days). An individual's effort to obtain a feel for a future leadership position starts when the individual is informed of selection for the position as discussions are held with the individual responsible for making the selection. As could be expected, this activity is one that most transcends the entire spectrum of the transition effort.

In AMC's case, the main effort to gather the information required to develop a sensing of the command's health and climate occurred during Phase III. Yet, General Ross most likely began his efforts as he discussed the command with the Army's senior leadership, both military and civilian. This effort was certainly integral to the core teams's initial efforts to understand the command's structure and external environment. It was an activity that continued long after the analysis of information gathered during the assessment was completed. It most likely continued through the transition meeting as General Ross assessed the responses and behaviors of participants and as he made his initial visits to all command activities.

The transition team's activities during this phase were guided by the procedures developed during Phase II. The transition team based its selection of categories of personnel to be interviewed on those they believed would have a flavor for the command. These included senior commanders, selected civilians with a grade of Senior Executive Service, Inspectors General, Public Affairs Officers, Deputy Chiefs of Staff and middle managers (i.e., civilian personnel with a grade of GS 14 and GS 15). The common questions, which transition team members used during the interviews they conducted, were intended and designed to be impersonal, open ended, and provoke thought.

Example Questions²⁰

In your view, what is the initial message that a new commander should send out?

What are the top issues facing the commander during the first 90 days?

As we right size, How can we minimize turbulence?

What is the command's image?

What is the value added by AMC Headquarters?

As part of the overall transition process, the interviews themselves were conducted in a way which maintained the unobtrusive nature of the overall transition effort.

An added goal of the sensing process was to identify stakeholders. AMC's transition team identified stakeholders as those organizations (e.g., employees, customers, labor unions) or individuals who had or might have a primary interest in a given function or policy. In Making A Leadership Change, Gilmore defines stakeholder as "...any one person or group of people who affects or is affected by the actions of the unit in question".²¹ The transition team believed the identification of stakeholders would be important as it developed strategies for change.

Phase IV - Initial Plan Development (30 Days). During this phase, the core transition team continued to refine the command's transition plan by establishing milestones for those activities to occur prior to and immediately after the change of command and finalizing the commander's strategic intent. The core team also began development of three briefings which the sponsor believed necessary to support the transition effort. Although each targeted a different audience, all presented General Ross's vision of the future AMC, the parameters that would guide

attainment of that vision, and General Ross's commitment to both the Army and AMC to meet the challenges of the future.

Briefings. The first briefing targeted selected DoD officials and the Army leadership. The intent was to provide the audience a snapshot of AMC (a picture of AMC's current status and General Ross's concept for both resolving critical issues and meeting future Army requirements). This briefing was also intended to establish the commitment, that General Ross intended to fulfill during his command tenure, to the Army leadership. Discussions conducted at the conclusion of briefings with the civilian leadership would center on business practice to be instituted; those with the military leadership would emphasize how AMC would support the Army's mission.

The second briefing targeted the MSC commanders. This briefing was to outline General Ross's command philosophy (e.g., values, principles, and leadership style). General Ross would use this briefing as a vehicle for addressing the realities of the environment that would shape the Army of the future, the challenges facing the command, the tenets for reshaping AMC, and the measures of success. The briefing was to close with common tasks to be accomplished by each commander. The overall intent was to provide subordinate commanders a bottom-line focus for the immediate future.

The final briefing would be tailored by MSC and target AMC employees. This briefing would mirror but not be as detailed as that provided to the MSC commanders. While it addressed the

challenges of the future, it also emphasized the significant accomplishments of the past.

Analysis. The analysis and refinement of information obtained from the transition team's sensing of the command was the primary focus of this phase. Although the core team made some preliminary analysis, the successful refinement of this raw data was a monumental team effort. During a series of work group and discussion sessions, which were conducted over a two week period, the transition team developed approximately 65 issues. These addressed both general and specific issues requiring the command's focus.

The essential and possibly most difficult effort of a transition program is the analysis of information and data. The difficulty of this task is complicated further by the complexity of the organization. Although consistency remains important, insight and common sense are required. The intent of the analysis process is to identify those issues requiring an initial focus and acknowledge those that do not.

In AMC's case, the success of this process depended upon close and continuous coordination with the sponsor, as well as the support of AMC. The sponsor provided the team leader guidance on issues to be pursued, as well as on those not to be pursued. AMC's point of contact provided the team leader a sanity check for the issues being developed.

Issue Papers. With the issues identified, the transition team began development of issue papers, the product. These

identified each critical issue and described its key elements. They also identified stakeholders for each issue and presented a strategy and recommended timetable (30, 60, 90, 180 days, first year) for their resolution. The transition team also recommended an advocate (i.e., the responsible or lead agency or office) for each issue.

Sponsor's Briefing. At the conclusion of the effort, the transition team provided the sponsor a detailed briefing on its efforts. This was a critical assessment of the command. It provided both the good and bad news, discussed the expected impact of the latest Program Budget Guidance on the command, and presented each of the fully developed issues. This briefing also provided an opportunity for direct interaction between the sponsor and the transition team.

Phase V - Plan Development (30 Days). During this phase, the core team was to pull everything together. It finalized schedules and presentations and continued to refine the critical issues.

The core team also prepared a series of questions (red bordered notes) that would be released incrementally after the change of command. The purpose of these notes was to reinforce the sponsor's program and send a clear signal of what was considered to be important to the new CG. These notes, which the sponsor approved and signed prior to the change of command, emphasize those issues to be addressed in the first 30 days.

During this phase, the sponsor met with key external players to obtain their views on AMC. The sponsor also obtained General Tuttle's thoughts on the course which the sponsor intended to follow. (The core team leader obtain the reaction of the remainder of AMC's senior leadership.) Just prior to the change of command, General Ross briefed the Secretary and Under Secretary of the Army and the CSA and Vice Chief of Staff of the Army.

The core transition team also undertook two additional tasks during this phase. The first identified those activities required in the first 120 days to facilitate the transition of leadership. The second outlined an organizational structure and the procedures required to implement the final phase of the AMC's transition program, Phase IV - Sustainment of the Commander's Intent.

The First 120 Days. These activities initially focused on efforts to reduce the negative impact of the change of leadership. Follow-on activities, which would address the organization's transition to its future state, would focus on managing change. These activities would build on the process used to address the change of leadership.

Major initial activities included: publication of the CG's strategic vision; orientation of the CG to the organization (a quick tour of each command); and a follow-on visit of each command. (The follow-on visit was to include a briefing by the

MSC commander on the MSC's response to critical issues identified during the transition meeting.)

The CG's initial briefing to AMC employees was one of the key transition-related activities to be scheduled. A second was the staff's preparation of "Smart Papers." In these papers, the staff was to address those programs and on-going activities which either required a decision by the CG or which could influence the CG's decision making process during the initial days of command. These papers were to provide the CG background information, key points and sub-issues, and the staff's estimate of the impact of the program or activity on the command. Each topic addressed was to be referenced to a specific period of time, in 30-day increments, during which the CG or AMC staff would be required to address it.

The CG's Staff Group. As previously discussed, AMC was faced with two major transitions. One, the transition of leadership; the other the major organizational transition required by the changing environment in which AMC functioned.

The process used by AMC to lessen the organizational impact of the change of leadership and allow the new CG to get the command focused on meeting future challenges, as quickly as possible, generated expectations on the part of the new CG and the organization itself. To address these and assist the new CG in maintaining the command's focus, the new CG directed that the core transition team be absorbed into the organization as a separate Staff Group.

This group was to identify methods and mechanisms for maintaining the momentum of change begun as a result of the process used to transition leadership. Although this group would oversee implementation of the initial transition plan, which centered on the transition of leadership, its primary responsibilities would include strategic planning and the continuous refinement of the command's transition plan. This plan would now be reoriented toward the management of organizational change.

General Ross did not consider existing organizational elements appropriate for this mission because their focus was on the accomplishment of specific missions and they tended to approach issues with a set methodology. What General Ross desired was an outsider's view, a creative approach, by a group disenfranchised with mission performance. This group would be responsible for sustaining the commander's intent. The key to success for this group would be its ability to:

- Maintain a role distant from other CG staff functions;

- Have direct access to the CG;

- Maintain the confidence of the CG; gain the respect of the command; and

- Be unencumbered and visionary in its approach.²²

The following extract from LTC James Looram's article "Consulting in Large Systems," provides the best explanation of this group's overall purpose,

Change in large systems takes three to five years to complete. Whereas, in a small system the client can direct that a change occur and personally monitor the process, the changes that occur in a large system are complex and cause other complex changes to occur. Many of these cannot be predicted.

The purpose of the transition management team is quite simply to manage the change process. This means planning, coordination, monitoring, adjusting, reclarifying and replanning the change process over the two to three years that changes occur.²³

From an OD standpoint, the CG's staff group was a natural extension of the management of change within AMC that began when General Ross decided to use a transition program to ease his transition into command.

The Transition Meeting. For the reasons stated above, the transition meeting does not have the same significance in complex organizations as it does in smaller ones. Nevertheless, holding a transition meeting with the principals of the command (joint or separate meetings with subordinate commanders and primary staff) will most likely be beneficial for all participants.

General Ross held an off-site transition meeting with his MSC commanders, principal staff and directors/commanders of separate activities on the day following the change of command. The format for this meeting differed significantly from that used for smaller organizations.

The primary difference was that, as a result of the transition team's efforts, critical issues had already been identified and an initial strategy for their resolution

developed. Additionally, because of his involvement in the transition process, General Ross most likely was the only active participant who fully understood the true nature of all the issues to be addressed and the realities of the challenges facing his command.

In smaller organizations, transition meetings provide the basis for both the identification of issues and the development of strategy for their resolution. In such meetings, the commander is quite often the novice participant in terms of organizational knowledge.

Regardless of the organization, the transition meeting provides the commander a vehicle to introduce a command philosophy and a vision for the organization. Such meetings also allow the commander to reveal personality traits and address how the commander intends to do business. While these were accomplished, the focus of this meeting was on the presentation of facts (e.g., the status of the command; future challenges for the Army, as well as the command; and the presentation of issues) and not on the gathering information. A related difference was that at the meeting's conclusion each subordinate commander was tasked with examining the issues, considering the commander's intent, and preparing a briefing to be given to the commander during his second visit to the command (to be scheduled within a 90 day window) which formulated a coordinated response to each issue applicable to the command.

Success or Failure. In many ways, the verdict on AMC's program may not be in yet. The primary reason for this is that AMC's program was, as indicated, focused on managing the larger organizational change required of the command. A change that will take years to realize fully.

However, from the CG's view, as expressed by the Transition Team²⁴, the initial portion of the program met the CG's expectations. Transition program efforts identified critical issues facing the command and provided the CG information needed to facilitate decisions. They also provided the CG information he needed to ensure that the courses of action being pursued by AMC, in its efforts to both restructure and meet future Army requirements, were consistent with those of the Army. In cases where this was not the case, the efforts of the transition team identified new courses of action for IMC.

CONCLUSIONS

Succession is important for two basic reasons: (1) administrative succession always leads to organizational instability, and (2) it is a phenomenon that all organizations must cope with.²⁵

By default (i.e., death, retirement, organizational policy), organizations will experience changes of leadership throughout their life cycle. This is particularly true in the military where policies (e.g., personnel development, command) generate continuous changes of leadership. Although such changes impact organizations in various ways, the impact, if not managed, will

result in a loss of productivity for varying periods of time. As addressed in this paper's introduction, the options are clear, do nothing and accept the downtime or manage the change of leadership to limit its negative effects.

The transition programs, which this paper addresses, are tools proven to be effective in managing the effects of leadership changes within organizations. The new leader's use of a transition program helps the leader, as well as the organization manage a significant event in the organization's life cycle. The use of such programs not only facilitate the change of leadership but also allow the new leader to get quickly assimilated into the organization, maintain the organization's focus and productivity, and establish a pattern of leadership that may increase the probability of the leader's success.

For the majority of military organizations and their sub-elements, which are not complex, the cost (a little time and possibly some personal discomfort) for the use of a transition program are negligible. For such programs, the new commander is the key figure and the transition meeting between the new commander and the principals the key event. The benefits to the leader and the organization, which have been discussed, are more than worth the effort.

In large complex military organizations, the implementation of an effective transition program, like that used by AMC, is more involved and not without cost. (In 1984, a highly regarded senior Army leader indicated that there are only

about fifty positions in the Army which require the use of a more complex transition program.²⁶⁾ Unlike programs for smaller organizations, the new commander plays an indirect role, the transition meeting is a secondary event, and the time required is measured in months rather than days. Other differences include the need to: obtain the outgoing commander's support for the conduct of a program; select an individual (trusted agent) to lead the transition effort along with a team capable of designing, implementing, and managing the program through its conclusion; and keep the program's conduct from interfering with the continuing performance of the organization's mission (the need to be unobtrusive). Here too, the benefits to be gained are more than worth the effort and costs.

The following paragraph from Making A Leadership Change, with which I will close, addresses the importance of a new leader making an effective connection with the organization's staff. I believe the thoughts conveyed in this paragraph apply equally to the leader's connection with the organization, regardless of the organization's complexity. The use of a transition program, even if limited to a transition meeting between the new leader and the organization's principals, will help ensure that the connection made between the leader and the organization is one which will foster organizational effectiveness.

If the new leader fails to connect effectively with existing staff, then all the skill and insight in the world will be of no avail, because the leader will have no channel into the organization through which to work change. Effective joining involves (1) focusing on and

working with the positive, healthy parts of the system while confirming the reality of the system, often by empathizing with some painful aspect of it; (2) helping people tell their stories so that they feel heard and begin to hope that the leader can help resolve some of the critical challenges; (3) acknowledging the existing structure and leadership before beginning to change it; (4) avoiding getting caught permanently in a coalition with one party or another, but rather moving to connect with the different groups and making each feel understood (Minuchin and Fisherman, 1981).²⁷

Appendix 1: Definitions

Beliefs: Assumptions or convictions held as true about some thing, concept, or person.²⁸

Command: A process used to communicate intent and provide direction to achieve results.²⁹

Culture: The learned part of the human environment; the way of life--what an individual does or refrains from doing--of a specific group³⁰; a complex of typical behavior or standardized social characteristics peculiar to a specific group, occupation, or social class.³¹

Goal: The end toward which effort is expended or ambition is directed; aim, purpose; a condition or state to be brought about through a course of action.³²

Large Complex Organization: There may not be a concrete number of personnel or sub-elements that cause an organization to be complex. Perhaps the best way to define such an organization is to provide a general description of one.

A complex organization is almost by definition out of control. Certainly, it is beyond the ability of any one person to effectively control.³³

...Sub-elements of the system are involved in different tasks and often have different time perspectives and different senses of urgency. The sub-elements operate independently of each other. Multiple, simultaneous missions are being performed. The system itself is enmeshed in a very complex and diverse environment.³⁴

For the purposes of this study, a division-sized or larger unit and any staff or agency function which meets the above description.

Leadership: The process of influencing others to perform a task through providing purpose, direction, and motivation. Leadership includes setting and defining goals and giving purpose to the organization.³⁵

Norms: Rules or laws normally based on agreed-upon beliefs and values that members of a group follow to live in harmony³⁶. Norms are the prescriptions for acceptable behavior (the oughts of behavior) determined by a group, institution, or society.³⁷

Organization: A group of people joined together for a common purpose.

Smaller Organization: An organization which does not fit the description of a large complex organization. For the purpose of this study, Brigade-level units and below. (Some brigade sized units, particularly those with a combat service and support functions may actually be considered complex.)

Transition: The change of leadership from one leader (commander) to another.

Values: Values are attitudes about the worth or importance of people, concepts, or things. They influence behavior; are used to decide between behavior³⁸ (It is important to understand that values, like beliefs and norms are commonly held by all members of a group.)

Vision: A personal concept of what the organization must be capable of doing by some future point, the target.³⁹

Appendix 2: Example Transition Meetings

There are several ways to conduct a transition meeting. The following examples outline different procedures for the conduct of transition meetings. These examples are based on articles by OESOs, which were contained in The OE Communique, a periodical no longer published by the Army.

Example 1: One Day Transition Meeting⁴⁰ (Primary Meeting with Key Personnel)

1. Introduction (15 minutes): The commander (le der) opens the meeting by describing the outcome desired from the meeting. The commander should cover the following points:

a. The purpose of the meeting. (Organizations become less effective during transitions because it takes a few months for the new commander and staff, to include subordinate commanders, to build a cohesive team. The transition meeting is designed to provide a concentrated period of time to build this team.)

b. Normally, a new commander does not understand:

- (1) The priorities of subordinates;
- (2) Major issues/problems of the subordinates or facing the organization;
- (3) The strengths/weaknesses of each sub-element/unit;
- (4) Organizational concerns during transition;
- (5) The personality of the principals; subordinates;
- (6) The subordinates' expectations of the new commander.

c. At the same time subordinates do not understand the personality of the new commander or the new commander's priorities.

d. The success of the transition meeting will depend upon the extent to which attendees participate with candor, honesty and openness and to which the above issues are addressed. Responsibility for the success of this meeting is a shared responsibility.

2. Ice Breaker (30 minutes): An icebreaker is nothing more than an activity designed to make attendees more comfortable in addressing the group. Each participant is asked to describe

themselves in terms of the following statements: (Note: The commander should start off and model the type response desired. When a consultant is used, the consultant would start off and model the desired response.)

- (a) I am:
- (b) My chief responsibility is:
- (c) The word that best describes me as a person is:
- (d) The word that best describes me on the job is:
- (e) My chief strengths as a person are:
- (f) My chief limitation as a person is:
- (g) Currently, on the job my morale is:
- (h) The way I feel about this meeting is:

3. Identification of Expectations (30 minutes): Each participant expresses what they hope to achieve and avoid during the meeting. (Someone should record the responses on chart paper and post them.)

4. Issue Identification (60 minutes): Each participant responds to the following question:

"What issues/concerns should the commander/manager be aware of to maintain or improve the effectiveness of this organization during the next six months?." (The responses should be recorded on chart paper and posted.)

5. Prioritization of Issues/Concerns (40 minutes): (Note: For this activity, the participants are separated into subgroups {i.e., a command element, a staff element, and if appropriate, a special staff element}.) Each sub-group identifies themes and prioritizes its list of issues/concerns.

6. Brief-out by Sub-group (45 minutes): Sub-groups reassemble into a large group and a spokesperson from each sub-group presents the prioritized list of issues to the new commander/manager. The new commander selects issues from each list and provides guidance to the groups for action planning. The commander:

- (a) Indicates that a specific course of action will not be committed to today;
- (b) Outlines leadership/management concerns;

(c) Comments on those issues with which the commander is familiar:

(d) Directs the group to be creative and specific in its recommended courses of action.

7. Action Planning (2 - 3 hours): Group divides into respective sub-groups and initiates action planning on those top priority issues designated by the commander/manager. Following format can be used to capture each issue:

Statement of Issue and Impact:

Issue:

Impact:

Available Resources and/or Ongoing Actions/Outcomes:

Specific Recommendations (Who, What, When) Include levels of Implementation:

8. Brief-back (30 - 45 minutes): Sub-groups reassemble into large group and a spokesperson from each sub-group briefs the action plan to commander. (Each presentations should be limited to no more than five minutes each.) The commander should:

(a) Comment on the action plans;

(b) Indicate that each action plan will be reviewed separately and a decision made on which ones to take action on;

(c) Indicated that more data may be required for a complete evaluation of the best course of action for each issue.

(d) Convey that snap judgments are normally counterproductive.

9. Goal Setting and Clarification (1 hour and 30 minutes - 2 hours): The large group separates into its sub-groups. (Note: For small groups, especially at company and possibly at battalion levels, this activity may be accomplished in a large group.)

(a) Participants think about the organizational goals they wish to accomplish in the next six to nine months. Each participant individually lists (on chart paper) the goals they seek to accomplish and ranks them priority order of most critical to improve the effectiveness of the organization first. (Note: The rationale for this individual work, which should take about 15 minutes, is to legitimize and sanction independent thought and

maximize conditions for the comprehensive discussion of the goals.)

(b) Participants are encouraged to share/discuss their goals and priorities with a partner to ensure clarification (about five minutes).

(c) Participants write their names at the top of the sheet of chart paper. Additionally, each participant selects a descriptive adjective that describes the way they felt about their current work environment at an established time frame (e.g., "How did you feel about your work environment at 09:30 hours this morning?") and writes it at the bottom of the chart paper.

(d) Each participant posts their sheet of chart paper on the wall. Participants observe each other's charts and look for common themes.

(e) Each participant discusses their goals and priorities with the large group for no more than four or five minutes. Reserve 30 seconds for a brief discussion of the descriptive adjective. (Note: The purpose of this step is for each participant to understand what each other's goals are and what emphasis each places on which goals {only questions of clarification should be raised}.)

(f) The group looks at the individual goals and consolidates them into common goals (themes). Overlaps should be eliminated and the common goals stated in as clear a way as possible.

10. Briefing of Goals to Commander (30 minutes): The sub-groups reassemble into the large group and post their consolidated sub-group goals on the wall. The commander observes the goals, requests any required clarification of the goals/themes, states the commander's goals and makes a comparison of the commander's goals to that of the group. (Note: At the start of this activity, if the outgoing commander is a participant, the outgoing commander presents his or her own views of the goals for the organization, his or her major accomplishments while in command, and his or her hopes for the organization in the future. When completed, the outgoing commander exits the meeting.)

11. Concerns About the New Commander (1 hour): Participants express their concerns about the new commander; each member has the opportunity to tell the commander what they need from the commander to do their job. Each participant may indicate to the new commander things they would like to know about the commander. Each participant may conclude their comments with: "To maintain or improve my effectiveness on the

job, I need the following from you..." (Note: The statement should be directed to the new commander who will listen, take notes, and request clarification, but not make evaluations. After the last participant has made their statement, the commander will briefly discuss the needs addressed; however, no commitment should be made at this point. The commander must be clear on how the commander plans to deal with these needs {e.g., discuss these needs with each person within the next week}.)

12. Remarks by the New Commander (30 minutes): At this point, the new commander tells the participants what the commander expects from them (e.g., sound staff work, coordinated actions, integrity). The commander may also address (briefly or in some detail) the following or other issues:

- (a) Unit priorities.
- (b) Clarification of issues raised during the day.
- (c) Personal policies.
- (d) The commander's hopes and commitments.
- (e) Things that the group should know about the commander.

14. Closing (15 minutes): The commander reviews with the participants the purpose of the meeting and how well the commander believes the meeting met expectations. The commander concludes by thanking the members of the command for their participation.

Example 2: Tailored Transition Meeting⁴¹
(Primary Meeting with Principals)

1. Agenda: The following agenda can be modified based on the commander's desires. The lunch could, if desired, be a working lunch.

- a. Lunch (60 minutes): All participants.
- b. Commander's Introductory Comments (15 minutes): See example 1. (Note: Because the commander selects the topic questions, the commander must ensure that the desired outcome of the meeting is clearly articulated to the participants.)
- c. Introduction Exercise (Ice Breaker) (30 minutes): See example 1.

d. Discussion of Topic Questions (2 - 3 hours): The commander should select six to eight of the following topic questions to focus discussion by all participants on organizational issues. Each participant should respond to the questions selected. The commander should make note on the responses; however, as in any transition meeting the commander should not judge the responses or commit to any given course of action.

Topic Questions

- (1) What the new commander needs to know about me is...
- (2) My single greatest concern at this time is...
- (3) The thing that get in the way of my doing my job better are...
- (4) The changes that need to be made to help me are...
- (5) What the new commander can do to help me is...
- (6) What requires the immediate attention of the new commander is...
- (7) What the new commander needs to understand to work successfully for the (higher level commander) commanders is...
- (8) Policies, procedures and issues unique to this unit's life that the new commander should be aware of are...
- (9) What my unit/section does best is...
- (10) What my unit/section does least well is...
- (11) Support I need from the command (organization) is...
- (12) What I consider my unit's/section's top three priorities are...
- (13) What I consider the command's top three priorities are...
- (14) Goals and priorities within the command are...

(15) This command plans and anticipates...

(16) Communications within this command are...(The command's atmosphere fosters what kind of communications and how?)

(17) Within this command, we communicate...

(18) Conflict is managed...

(19) My morale and my team's morale is...

(20) What have I not asked you that I should have is...

d. Open Discussion of Work Environment Issues: As desired.

e. Commander's Discussion of Command Philosophy: As required.

2. Closing: See example 1.

**Example 3: Agenda for 4 Hour Meetings⁴²
(Cross-Section of Organization)**

1. This example is designed for battalion level commands to facilitate the conduct of three separate meetings with a cross-section of the command. (All subordinate commanders and key staff; all or a cross-section of junior officers and warrant officers not included above; all or a cross-section of senior noncommissioned officers. This meeting is designed to be run on three consecutive days (Day 1 - Commanders and Staff; Day 2 - Junior Officers; Day 3 - Senior Noncommissioned Officers).

2. Agenda:

a. Opening Remarks by Commander (15 minutes).

b. Brief Introductions (15 minutes).

c. Discussion of Topic Questions (1 hour and 30 minutes - 2 hours)

d. Open Question Session (30 minutes).

e. Closing Remarks by Commander (15 minutes).

f. Lunch.

3. Process. The commander provided each participant a memorandum which announced the meetings and their schedule, provided the meeting's purpose and guidance to participants on both required preparation and what was expected from each participant. As in example 2, the commander selects discussion questions. As before, these questions serve to focus the meeting. Discussions on each question were initiated by one of the participants who responds in turn to each of the discussion questions. From that point on, the discussion flows in either a clockwise or counterclockwise manner with each participant addressing all of the questions in turn. The following provides sample discussion questions:

a. Commanders and Staff:

- (1) The thing that my unit/section does best is...
- (2) The thing that my unit/section could improve is...
- (3) The change that would help me most is...
- (4) The programs/policies that I would like to see continued are...
- (5) The thing this unit does best...
- (6) The thing this unit could improve on is...
- (7) The top three priorities for this unit in the next six months should be...

b. Junior Officers and Warrant Officers:

- (1) What the new commander needs to know about me is...
- (2) What I need to know about the new commander is...
- (3) What I need from the commander to do my job best is...
- (4) The thing this unit does best is...
- (5) The thing this unit could improve on is...
- (6) The top three priorities in this unit for the next six months should be...

c. Senior Noncommissioned Officers:

is... (1) What the new commander needs to know about me

(2) What I need to know about my job is...

job is... (3) What the new commander needs to know about my

job is... (4) What I need from the commander to do my best

see continued are... (5) The program or policy that I would like to

see discontinued are... (6) The program or policy that I would like to

next six months should be... (7) The top three priorities in this unit for the

ENDNOTES

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²Thomas N. Gilmore, Making A Leadership Change (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1988), 14.

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⁴U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, "Vol 1: Executive Leadership Development: The Four-Star Generals," Perspectives On Leadership: Opinion and Judgement of U.S. Army Generals (Alexandria, VA, August 1991), 141.

⁵U.S. Army Organizational Effectiveness Center and School, OESO Handbook, (Fort Ord, CA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, undated): 192.

⁶Ibid., 194.

⁷Ibid., 193.

⁸Ibid., 192.

⁹Ibid., 54 - 55.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Goodstein, 231 - 240.

¹²LTC Thomas S. Mackenzie and MAJ Verley Tate, Jr., "Corps Transition Meeting," OE Communique 1 (January 1979): 59.

¹³U.S. Army Organizational Effectiveness Center and School, 193; 198.

¹⁴Colonel Larry A. Taylor, U.S. Army, Director, Commanding General Staff Group, U.S. Army Material Command, and Mr. George S. Hatch, Battelle Memorial Institute's Technical Support Team to the U.S. Army Material Command, interviewed by author, 18 December 1992; Mr. George Hatch, 31 December 1992; U.S. Army Material Command's Transition Team Report, 4 vols, Headquarters, U.S. Army Material Command (1992). (This section is based on interviews; multiple telephone conversations and a review of the AMC's Transition Team's Report.)

¹⁵Multiple reports by national news media, 10 - 19 January 1993.

¹⁶LTC James Loram, "Consulting In Large Systems," The OE Communique 2 (Spring 1980): 75.

¹⁷Ibid., 71 - 76.

¹⁸U.S. Army Material Command, Transition Team Report, vol. III, Presentations (Headquarters, U.S. Army Material Command, 28 February 1992).

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²⁰U.S. Army Material Command, Transition Team Report, vol IV, Conduct of Transition, (U.S. Army Material Command, 1992): Figure 15. 28.

²¹Gilmore, 35.

²²U.S. Army Material Command, Transition Team Report, vol. IV.

²³Loram, 82.

²⁴Colonel Larry A. Taylor, Director, Commanding General's Staff Group, "Army War College Student Paper Transition Planning and Execution," Facsimile Transmittal for Lieutenant Colonel James C. King, Student U.S. Army War College, Class 1993, 10 March 1993.

²⁵Oscar Grusky, "Administrative Succession in Formal Organizations," Social Forces 39.2 (December 1960): 105.

²⁶U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 143.

²⁷Gilmore, 130.

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²⁹Department of the Army, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels, Army Field Manual 22-103 (Washington: U.S. Department of the Army, 21 June 1987), 47.

³⁰Colliers Encyclopedia, 1986 ed., s.v. "culture".

³¹Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1965 ed., s.v. "culture".

³²Ibid., s.v. "goal".

³³Looram, 71.

³⁴Looram, 71 (qtd in Richard Bechard et al., Explorations on the Teaching and Learning of The Managing of Large System Change, Unpublished Manuscript).

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³⁶Field Manual 22-100, 24.

³⁷Fred Luthans, Organizational Behavior (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), 58.

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⁴¹Major Robert F. Radcliffe and Captain Raymond P. Drummond, "Transition Methodology - Our Most Effective Tool For Encouraging Commitment," The OE Communique 1 (Winter 1980): 64 - 70.

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