

Army, Presidential, and Corporate Strategic Transitions: The Importance of Transition Teams and the Application of Lessons Learned

**A Monograph
by
MAJ Grover R. Southerland
United States Army**



**School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

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MAJ Grover R. Southerland

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Approved by:

William M. Raymond Jr., COL, FA, Ph.D.

Monograph Director

Kevin C.M. Benson, COL, AR

Director,
School of Advanced
Military Studies

Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

Director,
Graduate Degree
Programs

Abstract

Army, Presidential, and Corporate Strategic Transitions: The Importance of Transition Teams and the Application of Lessons Learned by MAJ Grover R. Southerland, U.S. Army, 71 pages.

Strategic leader transitions constitute narrow windows of opportunity marked by high pressure, high expectations and general lack of organization awareness for many new leaders. During the transition period, an incoming leader must effectively utilize the existing time to develop a keen understanding of the organization and its environment while developing strategies for organizational success. If managed properly, transitions can enable organizational improvement in a number of ways. On the other hand, poorly managed leader transitions have significant ramifications.

The Army's transition team methodology is excellent in assisting strategic leader transitions. Without transition teams, it is unlikely that any incoming commander, regardless of experience, could develop an equivalent situational understanding or command strategy. Thus, transition teams are important for the Army because they provide essential assistance to strategic leaders although few are aware of the Army's transitional methodology. This monograph fills an existing literature gap on military transitions while reinforcing the importance of Army transition teams. Its purpose is to inform readers about Army transition teams to include its general processes and products created.

This monograph captures key aspects of the Army's methodology based upon first-hand experience by the author during the CG TRADOC Transition Team in the fall of 2005. After modeling the CG TRADOC transitional processes and products, the monograph explores the environment and lessons learned from presidential and corporate transitions in order to identify and incorporate relevant lessons into the Army transition process and develop recommendations for improved transition team operations in the future.

The methodology traces critical elements of the environment for both presidential and corporate transitions. It captures lessons learned in the form of best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls associated with each type of transition. Identification of commonalities enables comparison of the lessons learned and the refinement and improvement of the modeled processes and products. The resulting transition model provides both products and processes based upon an improved understanding of the lessons learned from strategic leader transitions in other environments. The monograph concludes with recommendations for improved future Army transition operations that include codifying the Army's transitional process and training it in the AMSP program.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Unfortunately, the landscape of all three sectors -- business, government, and social -- is littered with the results of poorly planned and managed leadership transition. Diminished careers, disillusioned boards of directors, dysfunctional management teams, bewildered constituents, and all too frequently cynical public reaction flow from an inept transition.¹

Francis Hesselbein

Serving on the recent Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Commanding General's (CG) Transition Team was informative, professionally developing and at times entertaining. During one meeting, a team leader responded to a question jokingly with "it was the best of times and it was the worst of times."² In all seriousness, transitions can result in the best or worst of times for new strategic leaders, subordinate supervisors, rank-and-file employees and stakeholders. Transitions provide an organization with an opportunity for a renewed vision, tone, and azimuth. Alternatively, if managed poorly, transitions can be painful processes where employees feel forced to justify their very existence and new leaders struggle due to a lack of understanding about their new organization resulting in poorly aligned leadership strategies. Leadership transitions are nothing new. The cultural drive toward upward mobility makes transitional periods commonplace in our society with high stakes whether in politics, business, or in the military. When presidents transition, national security and policy are at stake. In the corporate world, transitions place the bottom line of money at stake. Army transitions place all of the above in jeopardy.

The Army utilizes a transition team methodology to enable strategic leader transitions by assessing the organization and developing command strategies for the incoming commander.

¹ Francis Hesselbein, "The Challenge of Leadership Transition" *Leader to Leader* 6 (Fall 1997): 7-9. Accessed from <http://www.leadertoleader.org/leaderbooks/L2L/fall97/fh.html> on 22 Feb 2006.

² Unknown Speaker. Taken from a discussion from CG TRADOC Transition Team that occurred from 7 September 2005 through 13 October 2005 at Fort Leavenworth, KS; Fort Monroe, VA; and Crystal City, VA at TRADOC Futures Center (Forward).

Although leader transitions at the strategic level of the Army occur regularly, a vacuum exists with regard to military literature about the subject. Although this process is not new, few possess experience or expertise in the Army's process or even recognize typical products that teams create. Like presidential transition teams, Army teams must accomplish a great deal in a short period and the fact that few possess experience or expertise in the Army's process exacerbates the challenge. This monograph fills the existing literature gap by exploring three types of strategic transitions: Presidential, Corporate and Army. No two transitions are the same for a number of reasons. However, the aim of this paper is to identify factors or ingredients that constitute lessons learned with regard to strategic transitions. The monograph models the Army's process and then examines how the "outside world" conducts transitions. It highlights common pitfalls encountered during transitional periods and also identifies best practices and recommends a blueprint for improved effectiveness through the incorporation of identified best practices and critical outcomes.

Can the Army make its process for strategic transitions more effective and efficient? The thesis of this monograph is that the transition team concept currently utilized in the Army enables early success for new strategic-level leaders but could become more effective by incorporating lessons learned from presidential and corporate transition efforts. Given the regularity of these occurrences, it seems logical that the Army could apply the lessons learned from presidential and corporate transitions to improve its transition process. However, few pay attention to emerging best practices for strategic transitions despite the regularity of leader transitions and an almost universal recognition of the importance of handling transitions effectively. Until the Presidential Transition Act of 1963, no formalized process existed to ensure a seamless transition despite the fact that the United States president changes every four or eight years. Since then, the processes and products have formalized and could provide the Army with many noteworthy practices. Corporate leaders seem to change as regularly as Army leaders. Thus, an analysis of the corporate world's transitions could also provide useful best practices for the Army.

Michael Watkin's book, *The First 90 Days* highlights five core propositions concerning transitions: effective diagnosis of the situation, reaching the break-even point quickly, building momentum, appropriate management of the transition process and standardization of transition framework.³ These provide the core for the desired outcomes of any transitional process. However, additional insight is necessary because Watkins places the onus of preparation solely on the incoming leader. This monograph does not disregard the necessity of self-preparation by leaders but focuses instead on the utilization of teams as enablers for improved leader preparation and transition.

The First 90 Days applies a "break-even point" analogy to corporate transitions. A break-even point is a point in time where cost equals revenue. In other words, it is the point in time where the associated cost of an investment is paid-off and profit can begin. Watkins discusses that the true costs associated with strategic leader transitions are due to the time required to bring a new leader "up to speed." The organization "breaks-even" when the new leader is capable of contributing more to the organization than he consumes from it while learning. Watkins argues that it is possible to decrease the amount of time to arrive at the break-even point with preparation—the embodiment and purpose of transitional efforts.⁴ The argument within this monograph supports his assessment.

³ Michael Watkins, *The First 90 Days* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003), 4-6.

⁴ Ibid., 2-3.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Literature Review

For most people in organizations, the question is not only “what happens next,” but “what happens after what happens next.” Because the fog of reality is so pervasive, constituents want not just the vision of where we're heading but also where they've been and where they are now. People want leaders to provide context.⁵

Warren Bennis

Methodology

Some critical underlying questions provided the foundation for this examination. What is a strategic transition? Do successful transition operations truly set the stage for success? How does one recognize a successful strategic transition? What are the key processes and products that contribute to a successful strategic transition? By examining alternative methods, processes and outcomes, this paper constitutes a comparative analysis with associated recommendations to improve the Army's transitional process. The monograph describes the CG TRADOC Transition Team processes and products from a first-hand perspective in order to model the Army's current transition methodology. The monograph then examines each alternative transition type (presidential and corporate) utilizing a framework that describes key attributes of the environment and lessons learned. Lessons learned for each transition type include discussion in three general areas: best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls. Analysis via this framework focuses on determining common ground and key differences between the different environments. The conclusions emerging from the analysis leads to recommendations based upon a thorough understanding of relevant best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls. The discussion of the monograph then shifts toward refining and improving the model created from the TRADOC transition experience and making recommendations for improving Army transitional efforts in the future.

⁵ Warren Bennis, "The Leadership Advantage" [Electronic version] Leader to Leader Institute, accessed from <http://www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/121/spring99/bennis.html> (7 Jan 2006).

After the literature review included in the second half of Chapter 2, the monograph examines the Army transition methodology in Chapter 3. It centers on my personal experience participating as a member of General William Wallace's TRADOC Transition Team in the fall of 2005, which provided me with the initial ideas for this monograph. Although the author acknowledges that each transition varies, the embedded assumption is that the TRADOC transitional effort epitomizes the current model for Army transitional efforts. Thus, my process-specific recommendations for improvement focus on the process utilized in that transitional effort. Chapter 4 examines presidential transitions and transition teams. It investigates the Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan presidential transitions as case studies to understand the environment of presidential transitional efforts and discusses best practices, critical outcomes and pitfalls. Chapter 5 conducts a similar examination of corporate transitional efforts. Chapter 6 is a comparative discussion that applies best practices developed through the investigation of corporate and presidential transitional efforts and provides recommendations for improving future Army transitional efforts. Chapter 7 provides conclusions.

Critical Terms:

In order to move forward, it is appropriate to provide the reader with the author's interpretation of some critical terms used throughout the remainder of the monograph.

Transition - Merriam-Webster Online defines a transition as "a movement, development, or evolution from one form, stage, or style to another."⁶ In this paper, the "movement" is people-oriented and includes the holistic change process that occurs because of a change of leaders whether in the Army, presidents or corporate CEOs.

⁶ Merriam-Webster Online, s.v. "Transition," accessed from <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/transition> (17 Feb 2006).

Transition Team – For the purposes of this monograph, the author defines a transition team as a multi-faceted group established with a clear charter of enabling, facilitating, or assisting in a leader transition or associated change initiative.

Best Practices – Best Practices are universally recognized standards of excellence that are demonstrated when carrying out a routine process.⁷ A best practice can be a technique, methodology, strategy or process that has reliably proven to lead to a desired result. Best practices are typically evolutionary in nature beginning with methodologies that produce desirable results in specific circumstances and adapted to more generalized circumstances.

Critical Outcome - Merriam-Webster Online defines an outcome as “something that follows as a result or consequence.”⁸ Within this paper, critical outcomes are essential outputs or products that come because of a transition process.

Pitfall – A pitfall is a “hidden or not easily recognized danger or difficulty.”⁹ In this monograph, pitfalls are encompassed in the common errors or mistakes made during a leadership transition process.

Literature Review

Can the Army make its process for strategic transitions more effective and efficient? This monograph argues that the Army’s current transition team methodology is good but still has room for improvement. Although it enables early success for new strategic-level leaders, it could be more effective by incorporating relevant lessons from presidential and corporate transition efforts. The research goal was to query sources aligning with the three focus areas of this monograph: presidential, corporate, and Army strategic transitions. This literature review

⁷ American University, “What is a Best Practice,” [Electronic version] accessed from <http://www.american.edu/15pointplan/WhatIsABestPractice.html> (17 Feb 2006).

⁸ Merriam-Webster Online, s.v. “Outcome.”

⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Pitfall.”

identified the primary themes and trends in existing literature on executive transitions and transition teams. It reveals common ground, gaps and shortcomings within the field to determine opportunities for expansion on existing ideas and assesses the applicability of existing sources. The discussion adheres to a framework that identifies and discusses primary themes and supporting factors within each focus area. Next, a comparison of the themes identifies contrasts and determines similarities. Finally, the discussion shifts toward assessing the suitability of available resources and while defining the way ahead.

A great deal of information exists with respect to presidential and corporate strategic transitions. However, their focus lies primarily on the surface of the topic and largely fails to explain the steps along the glide path of a successful transition. Additionally, published information regarding military leadership transition operations appears to be almost non-existent. Although this does not come as a complete surprise, it means that resources for assessing military transition operations must be based primarily upon interviews and real-world experience. The monograph can then compare that knowledge with the basis of information found on presidential and corporate transition efforts.

Presidential Transition Themes

A large amount of information exists pertaining to presidential transitions spanning the breadth of the topic. James Pfiffner, professor at George Mason University, provided the greatest understanding of presidential transitions. A recognized expert in the field of presidential transitions, his book *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running* and essays “Presidential Transitions: Organization, People and Policy” and “Presidential Transitions and National Security Issues” provide a holistic understanding of the nuances of presidential transitions. Additional key sources for this monograph include Anthony Eksterowicz and Glenn Hastedt’s article “Modern Presidential Transitions: Problems, Pitfalls, and Lessons for Success” and Charles Jones book *Passages to the Presidency: From Campaigning to Governing*.

Collectively, these works are fundamental to the analysis conducted on presidential transitions. Through the examination of these and other works, three primary themes emerge: information pertaining to the establishment and evolution of the Presidential Transition Act of 1963, the importance of effective presidential transition efforts, and information revolving around key deliverables and critical outcomes of presidential transitional efforts.

The first theme identified pertains to the Presidential Transition Act of 1963 itself. The absence of formalized transitional efforts prior to the enactment of the Presidential Transition Act of 1963 was detrimental to the success of newly elected presidents. Sources consistently discuss the overriding purpose of the law, which is to minimize the disruption accompanying the transfer of executive power in the United States. Throughout these discussions, one develops an improved understanding not only of the complexity of transitions but their associated growth in scope and cost since the law's inception. Many authors highlighted that time, not funding, was the key constraint pertaining to the transitional process for presidents. Finally, most authors attempted to frame their discussions based upon an evaluation of the effectiveness of transitional efforts via a subjective assessment of each initial administration's successes and failures.

The second theme identified through the literature pertaining to presidential transitions highlighted the overriding importance of effective transitional efforts. Authors consistently agreed that new presidents must make their first months in office count and that they must possess the capacity to "hit the ground running."¹⁰ There was also consensus that failing to do so is catastrophic for the entire administration as well as the president's legacy. The preeminent importance of effective transitions necessitates effective planning and execution from start to finish in a time-constrained environment. However, assessing an in-progress transitional effort is difficult. Therefore, most authors analyzed transitional effectiveness retroactively. No single

¹⁰ James P. Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running* (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1988), cover.

document develops a checklist with respect to measures of performance or effectiveness for presidential transition efforts. Thus, an important underlying shortcoming that emerged from this literature is the necessity for a framework for appraising presidential transitional efforts.

The third theme that emerged from the literature was an improved understanding of the critical deliverables and key outcomes of presidential transitional efforts. Imbedded within this theme are the common problems and pitfalls of presidential transitions. Transition efforts must provide an understanding of the organizations and key players that the administration will work with while also laying the foundation for building consensus and momentum. These efforts must also make the president-elect situationally aware across the full spectrum of the government while also enabling timely nomination of key administration officials. Finally, transition efforts must consistently emphasize and reinforce an understanding of the political environment of Washington, D.C. to include policy processes.

Corporate Executive Transition Themes

With millions of dollars at stake, the popularity surrounding corporate-level leadership is understandable. Numerous sources exist that revolve around the concept of corporate leadership, succession and transition. Key works on the topic include Michael Watkins's *The First 90 Days* and *Right From the Start* which he wrote with Dan Ciampa. These works collectively describe the environment and necessity of strategically aligned plans for assuming control of a new organization. William Bridges, a recognized expert in organizational change and executive leadership works include *Managing Transition* and an essay "Leading Transition: A New Model for Change" written with Susan Mitchell. Additional key literature examined include MG (Ret) Perry Smith's *Rules and Tools for Leaders* and John Kotter's book *Leading Change* and essay "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail." Three broad themes stand out when reviewing the associated literature: executive leadership, orchestrating corporate change and executive succession and transition.

Organic to the theme of executive leadership are the ideas and concepts centering on leadership at the strategic level and its associated responsibilities. Several authors attempted to define or quantify effectiveness at this level while others provide checklists and tips for strategic leader success. Most of the authors discuss these issues in the context of leading corporate change. Interestingly, several authors noted that strategic-level leaders regularly fail to completely understand the processes and implications of organizational change. A significant portion of the literature focused on the concept of effectively taking charge. Consistently, authors highlighted the challenges facing new leaders as well as the importance of preparation before taking a job and placed the onus of responsibility completely on the incoming leader.

The second main theme identified within the business literature revolves around techniques for orchestrating corporate change. Consistently, authors argued that executive leaders must understand transformation. Several authors identified models and provided guidelines for action planning and the facilitation of change within organizations. Central to these recommendations was the importance of understanding the organizational situation to make logical conclusions about required changes. Additionally, it is apparent that executive leaders must provide appropriate justification and gain buy-in from constituents to facilitate successful change initiatives.

The final prevailing theme within the business literature was the concept of executive succession and transition. Succession planning is the process of identifying, training, and mentoring future executives. Most of the business literature highlighted the trend of an increasing number of transitions. Although authors were quick to highlight the risks associated with transitions, most describe executive transitions as an opportunity if managed effectively and efficiently. Although the volume of transitions is increasing, most authors believed that transition execution generally remains poor in spite of the universal recognition of the importance of executing them well.

There appears to be an absence of expertise within the corporate world in terms of procedures for executing successful executive transitions. However, over the last fifteen years, Executive Transition Management (ETM) has emerged as a lucrative service business, particularly within the nonprofit sector. The process shows promise with regard to improving the track record in the corporate world. Sources provide differing perspectives in terms of the critical deliverables and outcomes of an ETM process. However, common to almost all of the recommended transitional imperatives were vision, strategy and achievement of early wins.

Synthesis and Way Ahead

When comparing the literature that focuses on presidential transition efforts with those that focus on corporate transition efforts, several similarities emerge. First, among all of the literature, there is a universal recognition of the importance of effective, efficient transitional efforts. Although differing in some matters specific to the environment, all of the literature attempted to define effectiveness through frameworks, checklists and efforts to define the critical deliverables and outcomes. All authors agreed on the importance of hitting the ground running within a time-constrained environment.

The discussions within the literature also contained some important differences. While corporate authors placed the onus of preparation and planning on the inbound leader, presidential authors placed that responsibility on transition teams. Almost all of the business literature was leader-centric while presidential transition literature recognized the inability of an incumbent to grasp completely the depth and breadth of the task ahead. Another obvious difference was that law regulates and finances presidential transitions while corporate transitional efforts lack that structure. Finally, presidential transitions have the advantage of hindsight to assist in evaluation while the business literature focused more on leadership theory and business best practices to enable future performance.

An interesting conclusion emerges with respect to expected transition preparation on a personal level when comparing the differing transition methodologies employed. Transition teams constitute an expected commodity for an incumbent president as they are with military transitions at the strategic level. They both assist in improved situational understanding for an incumbent leader. Business texts on the other hand, provided a somewhat schizophrenic point of view. Authors agreed that most executives do not understand change, corporate change management is weak and that poorly handled transitions are far too common. However, there is little evidence that corporations employ effective transition team techniques on par with those seen in the government sectors.

Some obvious gaps exist with respect to the literature on the subject. First, little formal literature exists with regard to military transition efforts. This monograph overcomes these foundational shortcomings via interviews with experts that have orchestrated or participated in military transitional efforts. Additionally, personal experience with transition operations will enhance discussion on the topic. The second critical gap in literature was the absence of an agreed upon glide path toward success in corporate transitions. An examination of the ETM Model utilized by some non-profit organizations shows promise with respect to establishing a “how to” methodology for the corporate world and is discussed in Chapter 5. Despite the identified shortcomings in written literature, a sufficient depth and breadth of information exists to enable answering critical questions that support the hypothesis of this monograph. Both business and presidential literature provide a great deal of information that, if employed together, could improve the process that the Army has already proven to be effective.

Chapter 3: Military Transitions

Your success or failure rests, to no small degree, on your ability to diagnose your situation, identify its characteristic challenges and opportunities, and fashion promising action plans.¹¹

Michael Watkins

On October 13, 2005, General William S. Wallace became the 12th Commanding General of the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). He received the colors from the United States Army Chief of Staff General Peter J. Schoomaker in a ceremony at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Attending the assumption of command ceremony were many distinguished visitors to include the Secretary of the Army, Francis J. Harvey as well as commanders, commandants, and command sergeant's major of TRADOC's thirty-three schools and centers.¹² In the Army, ceremonies like this are both symbolic and functional. While they mark the end of the outgoing leader's command, they also signify the beginning of a new one. They provide a clean break from the past and signify the beginning of a new chapter for the organization. This particular ceremony signified the passing of the reigns of one of the largest and most influential organizations in the Army.

It is important for a new leader to feel comfortable with an organization and confident in his ability to lead it into the future. On that day, it was evident to everyone attending the ceremony that General Wallace already possessed a clear vision for the future of TRADOC and already had a plan to move the organization there. His state of preparedness to hit the ground running came in no small part from the work of his transition team. Through a systematic effort, the CG TRADOC Transition Team assisted General Wallace in assessing and understanding the organization more thoroughly while also developing for him a strategic action plan.

¹¹ Watkins, 238.

¹² Patrick Buffet, "Wallace takes command of TRADOC," *Fort Leavenworth Lamp*, 20 OCT 2005, 1.

This section describes the process and procedures utilized by the CG TRADOC Transition Team. While outlining the process utilized, it provides insight in to the types of products the team created for General Wallace between September 7 and October 13, 2005. The section does not attempt to describe the evolution of the Army's transitional methodology and avoids speculating "why" particular processes happened the way they did. Instead, the intent is to simply describe "what happened" and "how it happened" in order to build a model for further analysis. Each member of the CG TRADOC Transition Team signed a statement of nondisclosure pertaining to its work. As a result, this chapter remains focused on processes and products while avoiding specific survey results or change recommendations. Discussion about potential shortcomings in the process and recommendations regarding improvement of the model and processes therein occur later in the monograph in Chapter 6.

The Environment of the CG TRADOC Transition

Team Guidance

Shortly before the beginning the team efforts, Major General David Fastabend, the CG TRADOC Transition Team Chief and current Deputy Director, TRADOC Futures Center, visited individuals identified to participate in the effort from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.¹³ At that time, he informed us that the purpose of the team was to facilitate the transition of the incoming TRADOC Commanding General. The team's mission was to assess the state of TRADOC and its environment, capture ideas that confirm or refine the organization's direction, and outline a broad framework for immediate actions upon assumption of command for the next CG TRADOC. The team was also going to develop personal and organization campaign plans based upon the

¹³ Major General Fastabend was a Brigadier General (Promotable) during the CG TRADOC Transition Team effort but has since been promoted. For consistency, he is addressed as Major General (MG) throughout the monograph.

assessment.¹⁴ He projected that the required products of the team could include recommendations regarding vision, arrival statement and guidance, a personal campaign plan, change initiatives and an implementation strategy.

MG Fastabend's brief also laid out some ground rules for the effort. The first ground rule centered on the political sensitivity involved with the confirmation process for general officers. It was important that team members made no presumptions of General Wallace's confirmation. Thus, from the beginning, everyone on the team understood that they were participating not on General Wallace's transition team, but instead on the CG TRADOC Transition Team—an important distinction. As a result, MG Fastabend was the only member of the team to interact with General Wallace prior to his Senate confirmation. The second ground rule was to remain unbiased throughout the process. MG Fastabend made it clear that a key task of the team was to seek to understand the messages provided to the team by the interviewed stakeholders and to avoid sending unintended messages. TRADOC needed to listen to what the force was saying without prejudice and members of the team would serve as its ears. Finally, because of the importance and sensitivity of the information discussed throughout the process, every member of the team signed a nondisclosure statement. Information discussed throughout the process by members of the team was treated as "Close Hold."¹⁵

Team Composition

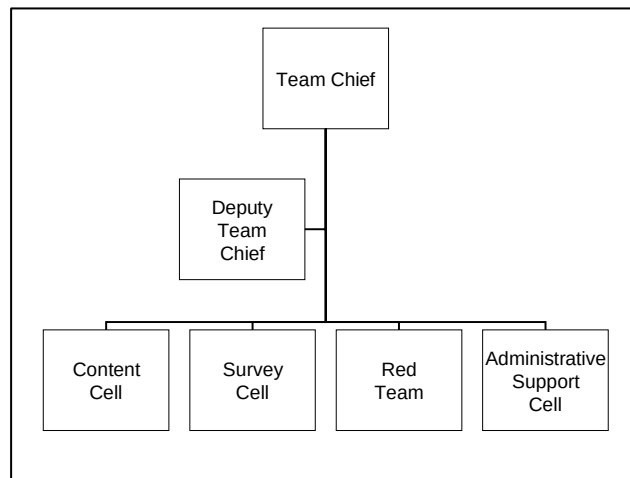
The team structure included four basic sub-teams or cells. The content cell fulfilled the plans and operations function for the team. It conducted analysis and synthesis of the survey data, created products and briefings, tracked team progress and issues, and conducted necessary internal and external coordination. It consisted of the lead planner, Brigadier General Robin

¹⁴ MG David Fastabend provided a "Memorandum to Transition Team Members" prior to the execution of the transitional effort.

¹⁵ Ibid., "Memorandum to Transition Team Members."

Swan from TRADOC, an instructor from the Advanced Military Studies Program (AMSP) at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) and two AMSP students from Fort Leavenworth, and a member of the TRADOC CG's Commander's Planning Group (CPG).¹⁶ The survey cell consisted of eighteen people tasked from throughout TRADOC and was primarily responsible for conducting the interviews and for inputting the categorized responses into the database. The Red Team consisted of active and retired senior ranking officers and had the responsibility of providing a critical eye toward the overall process and products. Although the entire Red Team did not participate for the entire process, COL(R) Greg Fontenot, the head of the Red Team, did. The administrative support cell consisted of four people from Fort Monroe and provided general administrative, secretarial, automation and database support. The entire organizational structure was subordinate to MG Fastabend, the team chief and Mr. Mike Starry, the deputy team chief as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1. CG TRADOC Transition Team Organizational Chart



¹⁶ Brigadier General Swan was a Colonel (Promotable) during the CG TRADOC Transition Team effort but has since been promoted. For consistency, he is addressed as Brigadier General (BG) throughout the monograph.

Process and Outcomes

The CG TRADOC transitional effort took just over a month and consisted of four general phases: Planning, Assessment, Integration and Transition. In this section, discussion of each of these phases occurs in more detail in order to model the effort. The first phase of the transition began in earnest on September 7, 2005 when the 37 members of the team arrived at Fort Monroe, Virginia from across the Army. MG Fastabend opened the initial meeting with an introductory icebreaker followed by discussion about the charter for the team. He provided a clear description of what the team was to accomplish along with his initial thoughts on how it would do so. He explained his intent for the team to be an adaptive team of teams working in concert to achieve its purpose. The TRADOC historian briefed the team about important attributes of TRADOC's history to include previous commanders and their respective legacies. With everyone on board, the team was ready to begin its work.

Planning

The aim of the planning phase was to develop an assessment plan and execution methodology. The team first developed a list of open-ended questions for the survey intended to provoke dialogue with interviewees while also remaining manageable for interviewers. The group started by brainstorming and then utilized an iterative process to reduce the list to eleven core questions.

1. Please characterize your relationship with TRADOC.
2. What are TRADOC's strengths?
3. What are TRADOC's weaknesses?
4. What are TRADOC opportunities and potential initiatives?
5. What are TRADOC's vulnerabilities?
6. Where must TRADOC assume no risk in support of the Army?
7. How would you describe the TRADOC culture?
8. If you were to propose a simple TRADOC vision, what would it be?
9. What strategic/predictable surprises should we anticipate near and far term?
10. What are the top three things you would like to communicate to the TRADOC commander?
11. What are the top three engagements—audience and purpose—that you would recommend for the next CG TRADOC?

Next, the team developed response categories designed to enable interviewees to categorize responses about the eleven core questions. The response categories allowed interviewers to associate responses within twenty-two response categories divided into four major sub-groupings (depicted in Appendix A). To develop these response categories, the group utilized TRADOC's core functions and competencies as a baseline and then refined them to capture potential answers to survey questions. The response categories ultimately enabled the analysis cell to sort and categorize the data.

The group next focused on developing a list of potential interviewees noting the necessity for an appropriate balance of prospective interviewee points of view. The completed interviewee list included a broad representation from TRADOC's internal and external stakeholders to include representation from within TRADOC, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA), active and retired 4-star generals, Joint Forces Command, the Joint Staff, academia, media, and senior officers and NCOs from the field. In the end, one-hundred seventy-eight individuals were identified as a representative sample of TRADOC's stakeholders and scheduled for interviews.

With the survey tool completed and interviewees identified, two additional tasks needed to occur prior to the execution of the assessment. First, the Information Technology (IT) support team that resided within the administrative support cell built a database of the core questions and response categories. They created a Microsoft Access database and uploaded the database template on each survey cell member's laptop. The concept for response submittal was that interviewers would input response data into the database at the completion of each interview and send the files back to the analysis cell using the internet. For redundancy, interviewers could submit interviews via e-mail, to an Army Knowledge Online (AKO) knowledge site, or to a team sharepoint. The IT support cell was responsible for receiving and cataloguing the submitted interviews for further analysis. The IT support team also created a "users guide" for each survey cell member and conducted associated database training. Concurrently, survey cell members

conducted interview training and rehearsals. By September 9, all interviews were scheduled, travel plans arranged, and interviewers prepared to execute their assigned interviews. The survey cell departed Fort Monroe while the analysis cell continued their preparations.

Assessment

During this phase, the team executed the survey plan. Although the phase was scheduled to occur between September 12 and 17, interviews actually occurred between September 9 and 17 based upon interviewee availability. As interviews were completed, survey cell members inputted the response data and submitted them to the administrative support cell who, in turn, published them for the content cell on a daily basis. The content cell tracked survey progress and provided updates to the team chief on a daily basis. The content cell read and analyzed each survey and began identifying trends with respect to the core questions. By the end of the assessment phase, the content cell compiled a grouped list of these “initial impressions” within a presentation that framed the organization through the lens of the core questions. The initial impression brief ultimately became a foundational portion of what the team referred to as the “commander’s estimate.”

Integration

The entire team reconvened at Fort Monroe on September 19. The aim of the integration phase was to synthesize the ideas provided by the stakeholders into a broad framework for recommended future action. The phase began with members sharing key insights from their respective trips, which broke the ice and refocused the team on its purpose. Next, the content cell presented the entire team the initial impressions brief. Up to that point, survey cell members only possessed feedback from their individual points of view. This briefing provided a holistic look at the data in a broader context and developed a common picture throughout the team of the

assessment trends. Additionally, the dialogue that occurred during the briefing enabled refinement and improvement of the briefing.

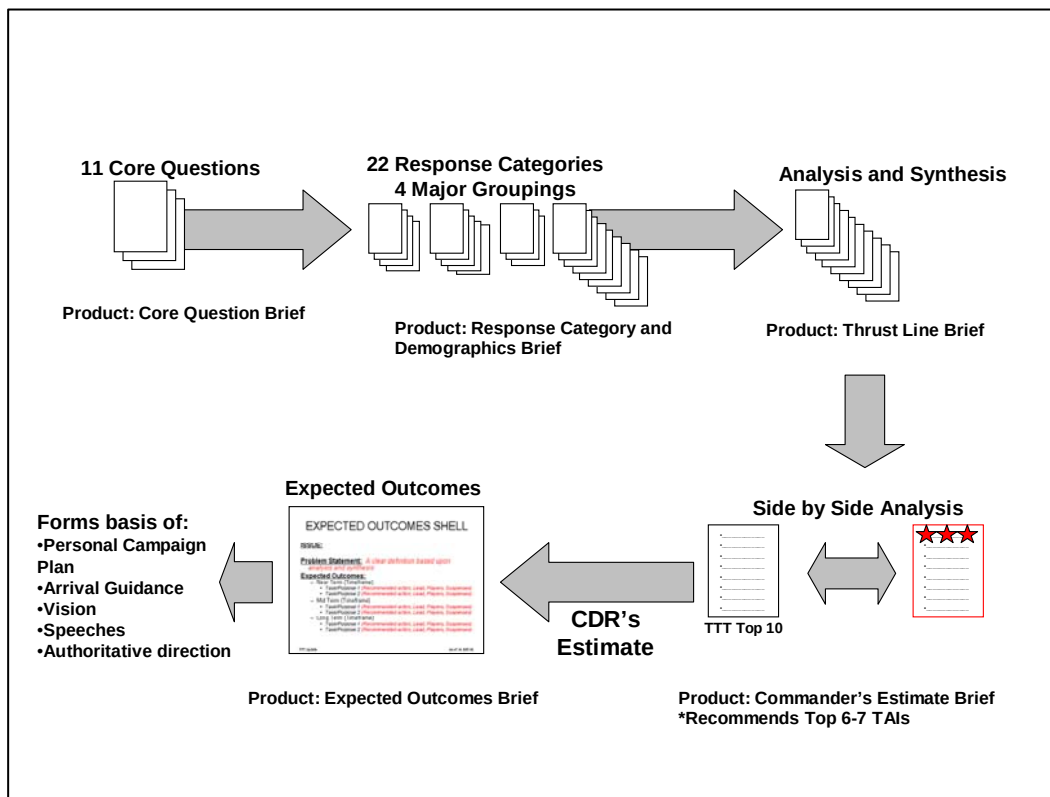
The team then applied alternative lenses to the data. The team first divided among the four response categories sub-groupings and analyzed the survey response data along those lines. To do so, the IT support team sorted and printed the survey responses based upon the desired groupings. The sub-groups made conclusions based upon their analysis and the common responses became referred to as “thrust lines.” Upon completing this analysis, the entire team came together while sub-groups briefed their thrust line findings. The team completed a similar process by applying a demographic lens to the core question responses and response category responses. To enable this analysis, the IT cell once again queried the database and prepared the survey response data by demographic categories such as active general officers, retired general officers, responses from inside the Beltway and command sergeants major. The application of these lenses served to codify trends and identify thrusts not previously recognized. After the sub-groups briefed their key findings, both sets of analysis were added to the growing commander’s estimate. Collectively, the group consolidated, refined, and streamlined the thrust lines to a list of the top ten areas requiring attention by the incoming commander.

The team chief next directed the team toward the development of expected outcomes of the top issues. Expected outcomes are the desired set of conditions or products resulting from the recommended change initiatives. The team divided into sub-groups to tackle the development of expected outcomes for each associated issue area. Sub-teams defined their respective issue area and explained the main challenges associated with that problem based upon the survey results. Although specific information cannot be provided with regard to the expected outcomes of the TRADOC Transition Team based upon the non-disclosure agreement, an expected outcomes shell is included in Appendix B to provide an example of how the information was captured.

At the end of the day on September 23, survey cell members returned to their duty stations but much work remained for the content cell. From September 19 to 24, the content cell

refined the issue review areas and narrowed the recommendation list to five critical review areas. The cell brainstormed potential names for the review areas ultimately deciding on “TRADOC Areas of Interest” or “TAIs.” The content cell conducted a second iteration of the expected outcomes development process in order to hone the wording and concepts of each TAI. It identified potential leaders for each TAI and added specificity with regard to the desired end-state conditions of each TAI. With the end-states determined for each TAI, the content cell began focusing on execution and implementation. The content cell also utilized that week to think about and begin drafting an updated TRADOC vision. Figure 2 depicts the logic flow and associated process outputs throughout the integration phase.

Figure 2. Logic Flow of the Integration Phase



Transition

The final phase focused on activities that transferred team observations and products to the future TRADOC Commanding General and his staff. The phase began in earnest on October 3, 2005 when the content cell met with General Wallace at TRADOC's Future Center (Forward), in Crystal City, Virginia. Then confirmed, he was preparing to move to Fort Monroe and execute his assumption of command ceremony. The content cell presented General Wallace with the completed commander's estimate products to include the core question brief and elements of the execution plan while providing printed copies of the response categories and demographic briefs. The content cell also presented conclusions about TRADOC's main problems, key ideas and potential integrating themes based upon survey results. The eight-hour session was pivotal in the process since it provided an interface between the content cell and General Wallace for the first time. The dialogue enabled a better understanding of his thoughts about the organization and gain concurrence and guidance for further planning. The team ensured that conclusions aligned with the recommended TAIs, expected outcomes, and the recommended vision. Strategic communications emerged during this phase as being critical and recommendations about themes, messages and audiences were essential to the success of the change initiatives. Alignment between targeted audiences and associated strategic communications messages were included in the proposed implementation process.

The next critical element of the transition phase was the determination of how to translate General Wallace's decisions and direction in to action. The transition team was not established to implement recommended change initiatives. Instead, its purpose was to design an action strategy that enabled the new commander to lead the change initiatives. The TAIs formed the foundation for a campaign plan by providing major objectives. Informed by an understanding of TRADOC's situation, the team recommended an implementation timeline for the change process along with a methodology to manage and execute the strategy to include key decisions. The team recommended that the commander meet with key players immediately following his assumption

of command. At that time, he could provide to his subordinate commanders his strategy encompassed within a discussion of his vision, the TAIs, and the proposed execution plan. Later, subordinate leaders were to provide feedback on their understanding of the plan while also providing recommendations for necessary adjustments. Later, designated TAI leaders would establish their teams, conduct their assessments, develop solutions and provide recommendations to achieve the expected outcome of their respective TAIs.

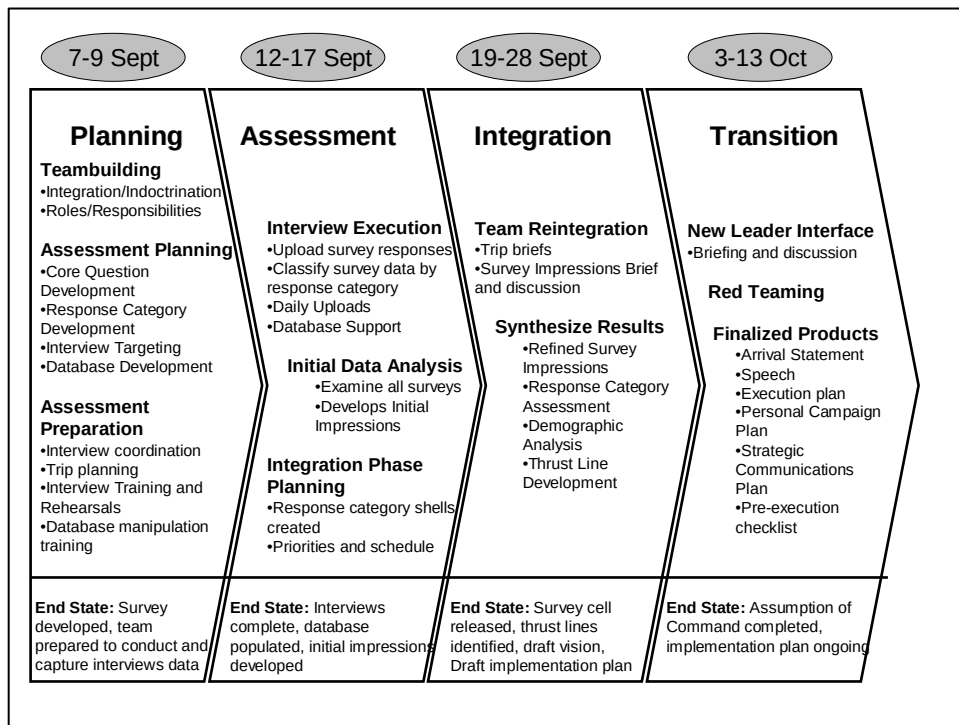
A final critical event occurred during the transition phase. On October 4, 2005, the Red Team met with the content cell at the TRADOC Futures Center. Although COL(R) Fontenot served as the Red Team interface throughout the entire process, this meeting provided a final check of the proposed strategy prior to its official introduction. The Red Team served as the devil's advocate for the entire process and raised questions while voicing their concerns about the recommended changes and implementation strategy. This step provided another lens toward the recommended strategy and provided the content cell with yet another perspective. At the conclusion of the meeting, the team continued its refinement of the products and strategies. The Red Team effort reinforced some the content cell's concerns and highlighted the necessity for a strong strategic communications plan for successful implementation of the strategy.

After making all of the designated changes, the team distributed elements of the plan to the necessary subordinate agencies of TRADOC, specifically with the TRADOC Commander's CPG. Armed with that information, they made necessary changes to the TRADOC calendar and arranged future meetings with subordinate agencies. The products of the transition team also provided a foundation for the assumption of command speech and arrival guidance with ample time to complete these tasks prior to October 13, 2005, General Wallace's assumption of command date.

Model, Process and Products

A clear process with a consistent logic flow occurred during the CG TRADOC transitional effort. Based on that experience, two models emerge. The model for the transition process consists of four phases and the critical components of each phase are included in the model as displayed in Figure 3.

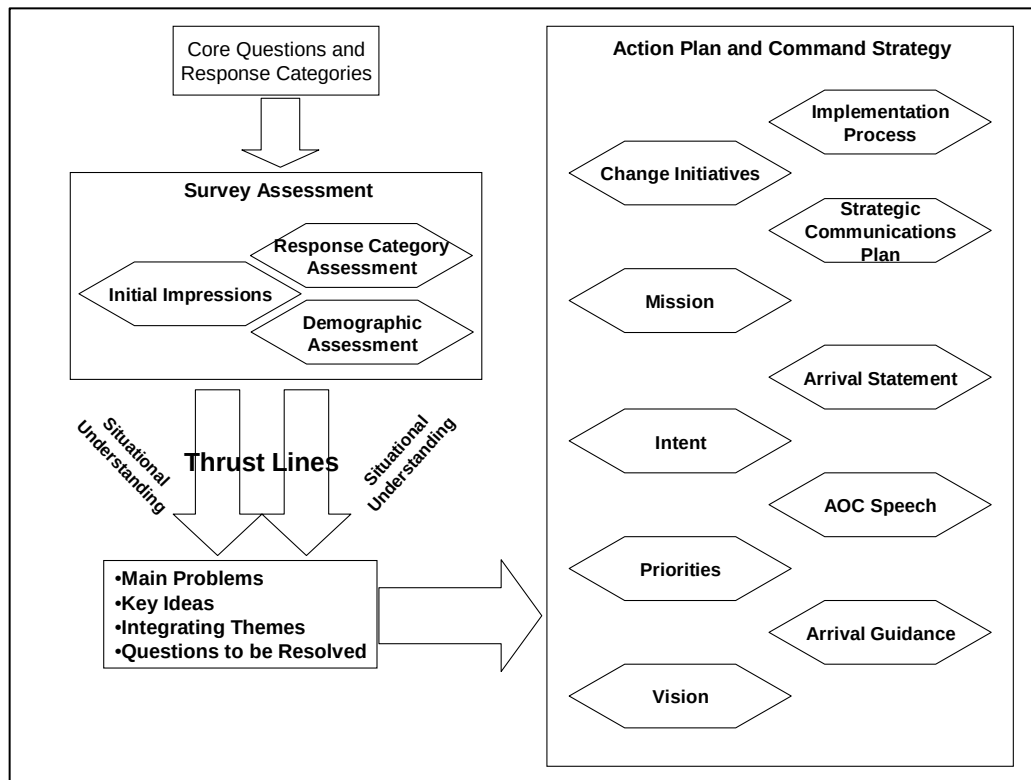
Figure 3. The CG TRADOC Transition Model.



The second model depicts the product flow that transpired throughout the process. The survey assessment, composed of the initial impressions along with the response categories and demographic assessments, provided the foundation for everything that followed. They informed the team about the nature of TRADOC's relationships and provided the transition team with thrust lines that led to conclusions about the main problems, key ideas, potential integrating

themes and questions left to be resolved. Those elements served as the basis for the entire action plan and command strategy. Figure 4 shows the product flow.

Figure 4. TRADOC Transition Team Product Flow



Summary and Way Ahead

It is important to walk into a job with an objective understanding of both the perceptions and the realities; thorough assessment is vital.¹⁷

Perry M. Smith

The CG TRADOC Transition Team's effort was an iterative, collaborative process informed by a holistic understanding of the organization and its environmental situation. Its effectiveness came because of quality leadership, solid teamwork, a logical process, and quality

¹⁷ Perry M. Smith, *Rules & Tools for Leaders* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2002), 35.

analysis and synthesis. Not to take anything from the incoming commander, it is unlikely that any one person could have developed an equivalent situational understanding alone. The products of the team enabled the incoming commander to hit the ground running by providing a thorough organizational assessment through multiple lenses. It also provided a clear strategy for change initiatives aligned with the organizational situation along with a glide path to achieve the desired outcomes of the organization's future vision. The CG TRADOC Transition Team accomplished its purpose and TRADOC will be a better organization for it.

When I learned about my selection to participate on the transition team for the incoming TRADOC commanding general, I looked for resources among Army literature to include FMs, DA Pamphlets and articles to be better prepared to contribute to the team but found nothing. I also discovered, based upon the volume and type of questions that I received from my contemporaries, that few had even heard of a transition team. The knowledge of how to execute a transition instead appears to reside among senior officers or by those have participated in transitional efforts previously. If you were to ask a senior ranking officer about transition teams, they would probably be quite familiar with them. They would probably understand the general process and its outputs in spite of the lack of a formal publication. However, not just senior officers participate on these teams. Most of the members TRADOC's transition team were majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels. Most of them were unfamiliar with the process, too.

Given the commonality of transition teams in the Army, why is there no codified procedure or documentation for conducting them? It seems logical that having an understanding of the problem solving procedure would be useful for a company or field grade officer tasked to participate in these types of efforts. The purpose of this section was to capture the transition team process for future use based upon personal experiences on the CG TRADOC transition team. Although the author recognizes that each transitional effort could vary to some degree, the remainder of this monograph assumes the CG TRADOC transitional effort is typical of Army strategic transitions. The model created enables comparison to presidential and corporate

transitional efforts. Then, based upon an examination of lessons learned from other types of strategic transitional efforts, this monograph develops recommendations for improvement to that model.

Chapter 4: Presidential Transitions

How do presidents elect prepare to assume command of the largest, most complex, and the important institution in the world? Whom did they choose for the cabinet, sub cabinet, and other high offices and how did they choose them? What are their priorities, and how did they go about implementing them? How do they persuade others to follow them? Which inherited policies do they adopt, which do they abandon? How they organize their staffs, and how do they relate to their cabinet, to Congress, and to career officials? In short, by what manner and means to they try to govern in toward what ends?¹⁸

Carl M. Brauer

Transition teams are critical to the success of a new president. Without a successfully executed transitional effort, new presidents are likely to be unsuccessful. This section explores the environment of presidential transitions through an examination of the history of presidential transitions, applicable law and examination of the Carter and Reagan transitions, which provide contrasting examples of varying success. This section also identifies best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls of presidential transitions.

A newly elected president has just eleven weeks between Election Day and Inauguration Day to prepare to take charge of the most powerful nation on the planet. Presidential transitions include pre-election activities undertaken by candidates to prepare for the election, the period after the election where the new administration takes the reins of power, and lasts until the administration begins preparations for midterm elections.¹⁹ From a process perspective, presidential transitions generally occur in two stages. The pre-election phase begins immediately after the nominating conventions and focuses on process, management and organization problems. The post election stage focuses on policy problems.²⁰

¹⁸ Carl Brauer, *Transitions: Eisenhower through Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), xiii.

¹⁹ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 3.

²⁰ Anthony J. Eksterowicz and Glenn Hastedt, "Modern Presidential Transitions: Problems, Pitfalls, and Lessons for Success" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 317.

In order to accomplish its purpose, a presidential transition team must first establish a functional organizational headquarters and a chain of command. Prior to Reagan, most presidents chose to run their transition operations outside of Washington, D.C. Reagan chose a large government office building several blocks from the White House for his transition headquarters, even though he personally spent most of his time in California. The transition team must next determine an appropriate relationship with the campaign staff. Reagan was careful in choosing his transition team members to prevent conflict with his campaign staff.²¹ The transition team must develop a thorough understanding of their boss. One can understand many of the key outcomes in a presidential transition in advance by knowing the candidate's background, status, and purposes and seeking the office. Knowing what presidential candidates have done, who their friends are, and why they want to serve in the White House reveals much about how a transition team should focus their efforts.²²

The Environment of Presidential Transitions

Prior to the 1960s, presidential transitional efforts remained limited. Generally, presidents-elect stayed away from Washington until Inauguration Day and waited to appoint his cabinet until just before assuming office. In the first presidential transition, George Washington peacefully relinquished his position to John Adams without a dedicated transitional effort but that was a simpler time. In 1944, Franklin Roosevelt set a precedent of briefing his opponent on national security and foreign policy matters to ensure continuity from the office regardless of the winner of the election.²³ That action initiated what has ultimately grown to become modern presidential transitional efforts.

²¹ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 16.

²² Charles O. Jones, *Passages to the Presidency: From Campaigning to Governing* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1998): vii-viii.

²³ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 9.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy unveiled a new approach to presidential transitions. He appointed 29 task forces after his election to analyze and report to him on a variety of domestic and foreign policy issues constituting the beginning of modern presidential transitions. In 1968, Richard Nixon appointed 30 task forces. By 1980, the process included the appointment of 100 transition teams.²⁴ With the growth in scope of presidential transitions, costs also increased. Kennedy spent over \$300,000 provided by the Democratic National Committee and personal funds to finance his transitional effort. Although the government provided some office space, his team members were volunteers. After taking office, Kennedy appointed a commission to examine transition costs and make recommendations about institutionalizing and financing the process. Legislators agreed that effective transitions were in the best interest of the nation and passed the Presidential Transition Act of 1963.²⁵

The Presidential Transition Act of 1963

The Presidential Transition Act of 1963 formalized what had been up to that point, an ad hoc and casual process. Its purpose was to minimize the disruptions occurring during the transfer of executive power. The statute clearly warns, “Any disruption occasioned by the transfer of the executive power could produce results detrimental to the safety and well-being of the United States and its people.”²⁶ The Act dedicated resources totaling \$900,000 toward reducing disruptions. However, time, not money, is the precious resource during presidential transitions. Eleven weeks is a very short time for one to prepare to assume control of the most powerful nation in the world.

²⁴ David Pitts, “The Evolution of Presidential Transitions in the United States,” [Electronic version] accessed from http://www.usembassy.it/file2000_12/alia/a0121914.htm (19 Nov 2005).

²⁵ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 9.

²⁶ Paul Light, “Implementation of the 1963 Presidential Transition Act,” [Electronic version] accessed from <http://www.brookings.edu/views/testimony/light/20001204.htm> (19 Nov 2005).

The Presidential Transition Act of 1963 designates the General Services Administration (GSA) as the lead agency in helping the president-elect prepare for office. The act permits the administrator to make a determination of the apparent winner long before the Electoral College meets.²⁷ The GSA must provide for office space, furniture, staff, printing and postal expenses, office equipment and supplies.²⁸ Additionally the president-elect is entitled to charter commercial aircraft or use of government planes on a reimbursable basis upon approval. The GSA also pays consultant fees as required during transition. The law stipulates that funding is only available for changes in presidents. In cases of reelection, such as in 1996, transition money returns to the federal treasury.²⁹

In 1968, Johnson used the Act for the first time. Johnson's Administration split the \$900,000 equally between incoming and outgoing administrations. President-elect Nixon used all of the funds allotted plus another million dollars raised by private donations. In 1976, the amount provided for transition increased to \$2 million for the incoming administration and \$1 million for the outgoing administration.³⁰ Congress passed the Presidential Transitions Effectiveness Act in 1988 increasing transition funding to \$5 million while also allowing for future increases adjusted for inflation as depicted by the \$6.1 million allotted for the 2000-2001 transition.³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 9.

²⁹ Christy Oglesby, "A Change is Gonna Come: Transition Machine Cranks Up Before Election," [Electronic version] CNNfyi.com, accessed from

³⁰ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 9-10.

³¹ Pitts, http://www.usembassy.it/file2000_12/alia/a0121914.htm.

The Carter and Regan Transitions

The Carter and Reagan transitional efforts provide useful insights into the unique environment, best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls of presidential transitions. These transitional efforts were chosen for further examination because the degrees of success of their outcomes diverge greatly despite their similar environments. In their article “Modern Presidential Transitions: Problems, Pitfalls, and Lessons for Success,” Anthony Eksterowicz and Glenn Hastedt, experts in the field of presidential transitions, point out that “Both Carter and Reagan approached their transitions in a systematic fashion and devoted varying degrees of time and effort to the transition process.”³² However, the results of their respective efforts differed greatly. Examining outcomes with this degree of polarity provides increased understanding of the topic.

Jimmy Carter won a tightly contested election in 1976 earning about 50% of the popular vote compared to Ford's 48%. In the Electoral College, Carter won by only 56 votes. His platform was broad-based and reform oriented, he could not claim a mandate based upon the election results despite his 80 percent approval rating at inauguration. Carter was a Washington outsider and pledged to improve the effectiveness of the Washington bureaucracy. His transition was important because he required improved understanding of Washington's policy-making machinery as well as the political culture inside the Beltway. Carter was the first modern president to think systematically about his transition. His transition planning began when he appointed a transition chief, Jack Watson, who assembled a staff of about 50 people during the summer of 1976.³³

Although Carter's transition planning began early, his team made several critical mistakes. First, much of his planning occurred in a vacuum. His transition team completely

³² Eksterowicz and Hastedt, 300.

³³ Ibid., 301.

excluded his campaign staff during planning leading to hurt feelings and friction that reduced the effectiveness of his overall campaign.³⁴ Carter's transitional effort also failed in its obligation to educate his administration about governmental processes to include congressional procedures. Not understanding the political process resulted in making some of his plans suspect by Washington's politicians.³⁵ For example, the Carter Administration asked Congress to deliver a government reorganization of authority to his desk so that he could sign it immediately after taking office. However, at the time that he asked for it, Congress was not yet organized to deal with that type of legislation. This simple misunderstanding created perceptions of incompetence about governmental processes and reduced his credibility with Congress.³⁶

In 1980, President Reagan received 51 percent of the popular vote in a three-candidate contest. However, he carried 44 states and tallied 489 electoral votes. Like Carter, he campaigned as a Washington outsider and attacked the government. Unlike Carter, he easily claimed a mandate for government reform.³⁷ A split Congress existed with Democrats controlling the House of Representatives and Republicans controlling the Senate. Ronald Reagan also initiated transitional planning early laying the foundation for what became the most elaborate transition operation in history. In April of 1980, he asked a group of supporters to begin planning his first 100 days of his administration. This initial transition task force consisted of two teams. One team consisted of 132 people divided into 25 committees and the second team consisted of 329 people divided among 23 issue-area groups.³⁸ The operation quickly expanded to 132 teams in addition to outside think tanks that assisted in policy recommendations. To finance the effort,

³⁴ Alvin S. Felzenberg, "Keys to a Successful Presidency," [Electronic version], accessed from http://www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Mandate/keys_intro.cfm (19 Nov 2005).

³⁵ Eksterowicz and Hastedt, 305.

³⁶ Ibid., 300.

³⁷ Ibid., 305.

³⁸ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 16.

Reagan's campaign staff gathered contributions to supplement the money obtained under the Presidential Transition Act.

The Reagan transition was more successful than Carter's because it was more thoroughly planned, organized, and executed more efficiently. Reagan's team was better organized than Carter's and avoided internal friction. However, like Carter's effort, Reagan's team also failed to teach key players in the administration about the political processes of Washington, D.C.³⁹ For example, several key members of his Administration did not understand how the Federal Reserve adjusted interest rates. This poor understanding of the political machinery of Washington made some skeptical of his plans. Many pointed out that the numbers of his economic program "simply did not add up."⁴⁰

Reagan's transition team also may have been too big. In the end, about 1500 people were involved in his effort. It was a cumbersome organization resulting in confusion among its members. Its size also created problems for outsiders who became unsure of who was speaking for the administration. James Pfiffner noted, "Even though the transition teams had no policy authority, and public statements were supposed to be funneled through the transition hierarchy, there were a number of embarrassing leaks as representatives of various interests began to push their own policy preferences."⁴¹

³⁹ Eksterowicz and Hastedt, 315.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 307.

⁴¹ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 18.

Lessons Learned from Presidential Transitions

Best Practices

The transition process is understandably complex. However, analysis of presidential transition efforts leads to conclusions about six best practices. These are:

Start Early – According to James Pfiffner, an expert in presidential transitions, “Planning for transition must begin before the election despite risk of appearing to be presumptuous about the outcome of the election.”⁴² In 2000, the GSA began planning its transition services during the summer of 2000, months before the election.⁴³

Switch gears quickly - The incoming administration must seamlessly shift gears from campaigning to governing in order to move toward its policy agenda and personnel selections.⁴⁴ “The new president must, after long months of campaigning, immediately grasped the levers of power and take control of the government.”⁴⁵ Party turnover transitions present greatest of discontinuity and greatest danger for confusion and vulnerability for National Security.

Leadership - Strong leadership over the transitional effort is paramount to the overall success of the project. Key transitional leaders must understand the incoming president’s mindset and have strong teambuilding and project management skills.

Balance continuity with the necessity of change - James Pfiffner states, “In seeking to move out in bold new directions, new administrations should be mindful of the need for

⁴² Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 162.

⁴³ Christy Oglesby, “A Change is Gonna Come: Transition Machine Cranks Up Before Election,” [Electronic version] accessed from <http://cnstudentnews.cnn.com/fyi/interactive/specials/inauguration/stories/leading.transition.html> (7 Jan 2006).

⁴⁴ Pitts, http://www.usembassy.it/file2000_12/alia/a0121914.htm.

⁴⁵ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 2-3.

constancy with our friends and foes.”⁴⁶ Transition team recommendations about policy, processes and procedures must strike a balance between continuity within the government while gaining buy-in for the necessity for change.

Utilize experts - Transition teams should find and utilize experts and consultants because the most effective transitions occur when professionals are involved.⁴⁷ According to Pfiffner, “Regardless of the constraints and opportunities faced by each president, the range of possibilities will be enhanced by careful planning, coherent organization, and a focused agenda, and careful attention to the lessons of past Transitions.”⁴⁸ The utilization of experts also allows the transition team to learn from past mistakes.

Determine the Transition Cut-off – Leaders must determine when the transitional effort ends and how the team will hand-off control of its activities to the agencies. Reagan chose to keep his teams in place until the designation of new agency heads. At that time, he delegated the decision to the new agency heads.⁴⁹

Critical Outcomes

Critical outcomes of the presidential transition process have emerged over time. At a minimum, presidential transitional efforts must empower incoming presidents by choosing a White House staff, nominate cabinet members and political appointees, enable control of the

⁴⁶ James Pfiffner, “Presidential Transitions and National Security Issues.” Edited by Howard E. Shuman and Walter R. Thomas. *The Constitution and National Security A Bicentennial View* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1990), 198.

⁴⁷ Kenneth W. Thompson, ed. *Presidential Transitions: The Reagan to Bush Experience*. (Maryland: University Press of America, 1993), xi.

⁴⁸ James Pfiffner, *Presidential Transitions: Organization, People and Policy* (Virginia: The Institute of Public Policy, 1996), 21.

⁴⁹ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 17.

bureaucracy, formulate a budget, and prioritize the legislative agenda.⁵⁰ A summary of the four critical outcomes of presidential transitional follows:

Personnel recommendations – One of the most powerful tools of a new president is the right to make personnel appointments. However, the selection process can be one of the most frustrating tasks for a new administration if managed poorly.⁵¹ Transitional efforts must build the team by orchestrating the personnel recommendation process. Since a new president is responsible for nominating around 4000 appointments, the transition team must conduct this critical task carefully and efficiently.

Prioritize and focus the agenda – The transition team must assist the incoming president in making tough choices about which campaign promises to pursue in earnest and which to place lower with regard to priority. Failing to do so can hurt a president as it did for the Carter Administration that attempted to fulfill all campaign promises without prioritization. The Reagan Administration prioritized its economic goals and subordinated some of its social policy objectives.⁵²

Identify early wins to build momentum - While prioritizing the agenda, the transition staff should identify early victories that may provide the momentum for further gains.⁵³ This momentum is critical in taking control of the government bureaucracy and setting the stage for future victories.

Provide situational understanding – According to Eksterowicz and Hastedt, “An understanding of the political and policy process is crucial for Presidential success.”⁵⁴ This necessity is compounded for presidents-elect with little experience in the mechanisms and processes of policy-making. Transition help that focuses on the political and policy process is

⁵⁰ Pfiffner, “Presidential Transitions and National Security Issues,” 183.

⁵¹ Ibid., 195.

⁵² Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 158.

⁵³ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁴ Eksterowicz and Hastedt, 301.

essential in these cases. Incoming presidents need help in not only formulating policy but in the basic understanding of the legislative process and the problems with the appointment of personnel.⁵⁵

Common Pitfalls

Presidential transitions come with their own unique set of common pitfalls. Although some of these challenges relate specifically to the political environment, collectively they provide increased insight toward the overall topic of strategic transitions. The transitional period is a time marked by both ignorance and hopefulness. High expectations among voters and party supporters in concert with a lack of experience by incoming presidents in Washington's bureaucratic processes can lead to mistakes that can be dangerous for the country.⁵⁶ Poorly handled transitions have significant ramifications. A degree of patience is important for the new president although impatience is understandable given that the greatest window of opportunity for change remains open for only a short period.⁵⁷

Winners of elections consistently exaggerate their mandates from the voters while overplaying the importance of their victories.⁵⁸ After party turnovers, administrations oftentimes reject the previous administration's approaches, which can contribute to improved performance but can also lead to reinventing the wheel unnecessarily. New presidents that run on platforms that focus on their predecessor's incompetence sometimes believe that they have nothing to learn from the outgoing administration. As a result, they sometimes dismiss advice and reject proven methods, organizations, and policies merely out of association with the discredited

⁵⁵ Eksterowicz and Hastedt, 315.

⁵⁶ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 8.

⁵⁷ Pfiffner, "Presidential Transitions and National Security Issues," 185.

⁵⁸ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 8.

administration.⁵⁹ Administrations are also eager to implement their policies and push their agendas quickly. In order to take advantage of the narrow window of opportunity to accomplish a new administration's goals, quick action is necessary. However, the complexities of the government work against quick solutions and require deliberate approaches.⁶⁰

Summary

Americans have a great stake in the transition of power from one president to the next. Even those who did not vote for the winning candidate should want the newly elected president of the United States to succeed in general. When the White House operates smoothly and the president is seen as a success, every American benefits. When the White House is in chaos and the president fails, they suffer.⁶¹

Alvin S. Felzenberg

Wide ranges of challenges face a new president-elect. Top priorities of a new administration must include organizing the executive branch, selecting personnel, and producing a policy agenda.⁶² Of course, the biggest challenge of transition teams is to accomplish these simultaneously in a time-constrained environment. The incoming president must gain a keen appreciation for the primary instruments of presidential power to include his staff, cabinet, the manipulation of the bureaucratic system, and the overall legislative agenda to include the budget. Some presidents have been unable to “hit the ground running” because of mistakes made during their transition. Although Carter approached his transition in a strategic way, his team made mistakes negatively influencing the effectiveness of his Administration.⁶³

⁵⁹ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁶¹ Felzenberg, http://www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Mandate/keys_intro.cfm.

⁶² Pfiffner, *Presidential Transitions: Organization, People and Policy*, 20.

⁶³ Felzenberg, http://www.heritage.org/Research/Features/Mandate/keys_intro.cfm.

The Reagan transition is the recognized model for an effective presidential transition.

Pfiffner summarized the effectiveness of Reagan's transitional effort when he wrote:

Through careful and conscious planning and focus of energy, the administration was able to accomplish much of what it wanted to in the first year. The White House was effectively organized, political appointments occurred effectively, and the policy agenda was closely focused and pursued systematically.⁶⁴

Because of the efforts of Reagan's transition team, he entered office with a vision, a clear plan, a prioritized political agenda and confidence in his team's ability. Early victories set the tone for the Administration and the momentum created by those early victories enabled a very successful first year for Reagan.⁶⁵

Presidential transitions present onetime windows of opportunity. As time passes, new presidents lose their mandates for change. Pfiffner captures this phenomenon when he wrote: "Ironically the cycle of decreasing influence is mirrored by cycle of increasing the effectiveness that results from learning on the job. The president's greatest opportunity to work his will comes when he has the least ability to do it effectively; this is what makes planning an effective transition so crucial."⁶⁶ Ecksterowicz and Hastedt also wrote that "The key question all presidents-elect must be able to answer is: what do we do now?"⁶⁷ Well-planned and executed transitional efforts are critical to enable presidents to answer that question.

⁶⁴ Pfiffner, *Presidential Transitions: Organization, People and Policy*, 20.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁶ Pfiffner, *The Strategic Presidency: Hitting the Ground Running*, 7-8.

⁶⁷ Eksterowicz and Hastedt, 317.

Chapter 5: Corporate Transitions

Leadership is about leverage. The new leader is, after all, just a person. To be successful, she will have to mobilize the energy of many others in her organization. Her vision, her expertise, her drive can serve as a seed crystal to the new organization, one that will grow exponentially into new and more productive patterns of behavior. Too often, however, the new leader behaves more like a virus: early actions alienate potential supporters, undermine her credibility, and stimulate defensive reactions.⁶⁸

Michael Watkins

Corporate transitions are unique in many aspects of scope, focus, and outcomes but remain quite relevant to the improvement of the Army's transitional methodology. Because of strategic-level similarities between large corporations and the Army, one might expect to discover many models and procedures for executing successful transitional processes in the corporate world. In many cases however, the corporate world is struggling to identify and implement a successful, agreed upon transitional methodology. However, transitions are emerging as a topic of interest among business-minded authors because of the ongoing struggles within the corporate world. As a result, studying corporate transitional efforts provide some useful processes along with many common pitfalls. This chapter begins with an exploration of the corporate landscape to provide context for further discussion. It then moves toward identifying lessons learned through the exploration of best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls. As with the presidential transition chapter, the primary focus is on identifying crucial elements or factors that can contribute to, or derail corporate executive transitional efforts. Best practices discussed include techniques for organizational assessment, 360-degree assessment, vision and the emerging executive transition model (ETM).

⁶⁸ Watkins, 5.

The Environment of Corporate Transitions

A Chief Executive Officer (CEO) change provides a pivotal moment for a company in the business world. It enables the organization or business to maintain momentum, change direction, or strengthen capacity.⁶⁹ Corporations generally define executive transitions as the “period that begins with the executive's decision to depart (or the board's decision to terminate) and extends to the hiring and successful completion of the six month evaluation of the new executive.”⁷⁰ During this crucial period, an incoming leader must leverage the valuable time prior to entry, and use it to prepare, learn, and plan.⁷¹ Unlike presidential transitions, no laws exist to provide a structure, funding, or focus toward transitional efforts. As a result, a wide range of tactics and methods exist. Although Board of Directors should assist incoming leaders to prepare, many do not. They instead place that responsibility on the incoming leader. Making matters worse, many new leaders do not adequately think through the transition process. They fail to develop “take charge” plans and fail to maximize the window of opportunity defined by a transition.⁷²

The Board of Directors and the Corporate Transition Process

Most large corporations utilize boards of directors to provide senior oversight to corporate affairs. For public companies, boards ultimately answer to shareholders and have the responsibility of hiring or firing chief executive officers. Since clear ties exist between confidence in the CEO and stock value, one would assume that boards would focus on effective, efficient CEO transitions. However, although many directors describe CEO succession as an

⁶⁹ TransitionGuides, “Executive Transition Overview” [Electronic Version] accessed from <http://www.transitionguides.com/overview/intro.htm> (19 Nov 2005).

⁷⁰ Ibid., <http://www.transitionguides.com/overview/intro.htm>.

⁷¹ Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins, *Right from the Start* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 274.

⁷² Smith, 29.

important issue, they often times fail to give it appropriate attention.⁷³ In *The First 90 Days*,

Michael Watkins expounded on this phenomenon:

I was struck by how few companies invested in helping their precious leadership assets succeed during transitions--arguably the most critical junctures in their careers. Why did companies leave their people to sink or swim? What would it be worth to companies if managers entering critical new positions could take charge faster?⁷⁴

Instead of providing the critical assistance and oversight necessary to set new CEOs up for success utilizing proven transitional processes, many boards choose instead to do nothing and hope for the best.

Boards of public companies generally seek proven experience in potential CEOs although finding an appropriate fit for their organization sometimes proves challenging. Instead of setting the new CEO up for success through some type of transitional effort, many boards leave the necessary fact-finding and strategy development to the incoming leader. The fact that boards place the onus on the new leader to develop a winning strategy explains why such a large amount of literature exists on taking charge of and transforming organizations. However, a significant literature gap exists with respect to effective transitional processes. Watkins wrote:

It is surprising how little guidance is available to new leaders about how to transition more effectively and efficiently into new roles. There are plenty of books and articles on leadership, but few directly address transitions at all. In addition, excellent resources on managing organizational change exist, but most implicitly assumed the change agent is already settled in the organization, with the necessary knowledge and relationships to plan, build support for, and carry out transformation initiatives.⁷⁵

Boards place incoming leaders in high-pressure situations exacerbated by several factors. First, high stakes are involved on both a personal and financial level during a corporate leader transition. For the outgoing leader, a failed transition can damage his or her legacy. A failure by the new leader could mean the end of a career. For the company, a failed transition affects the

⁷³ Ram Charan, "Ending the CEO Succession Crisis." *Harvard Business Review OnPoint* (February 2005): 5.

⁷⁴ Watkins, xii.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3.

bottom line of money. Another contributor to the pressure is heightened expectations from within the corporation.⁷⁶ Perhaps the most influential factor contributing to heightened pressure evolves around the simple fact that the new leader is new to the organization.⁷⁷

Some organizations find themselves in a CEO succession and transition death spiral. The spiral begins with boards confidently choosing a successor with some level of competence and experience. They then place the onus for success squarely on the shoulders of the incumbent leader and expect him or her to sink or swim. If the leader fails to live up to the expectations of the board, another iteration of the spiral begins. In other words, “the result of poor succession planning is often poor performance, which translates into higher turnover and corporate instability.”⁷⁸ To make matters worse, the entire process occurs in a high-pressure caldron stirred by high expectations and inexperience. Thus, it is not surprising that CEO life spans are shrinking--about seven years, down from nine years in 1995. Perhaps even more telling is the fact that only two out of every five CEOs survive past 18 months.⁷⁹ Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins summarize the issue in *Right from the Start* when stating, “The problem isn't just that CEOs are being replaced. The problem is that, in many cases, that CEOs are being replaced badly.”⁸⁰

Lessons Learned from Corporate Transitions

Best Practices

Much of the material covered so far in this chapter has been about what not to do. However, one could argue that knowing what not to do in a new situation is as important as

⁷⁶ Ciampa and Watkins, x.

⁷⁷ Watkins, 8.

⁷⁸ Charan, 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.

knowing what to do. The focus now shifts to actions and activities that can directly contribute to successful transitions. This section explores four corporate best practices in order to develop conclusions about potential useful processes for Army transitional efforts. These techniques are organizational assessments, 360-degree feedback, vision and the Executive Transition Management (ETM) model.

Organizational Assessment

Most experts agree that quickly and accurately assessing an organization is fundamental to taking charge. Thus, learning the intricacies of an organization is a critical outcome of any successful transitional effort. Learning about an organization is in many ways a function of asking the right questions. This section discusses the process of learning about an organization and provides examples questions recommended within business literature. Perhaps as important as knowing what to ask is knowing whom to ask. Determining an interviewee list is a strategic process in and of itself. In the corporate world, there are a number of people that one can approach with questions to include: board members, shareholders, stakeholders, the outgoing leader, subordinate leaders, and employees just to name a few. Techniques employed could include surveys, interviews or group discussions. Regardless of the technique, critical to the process is receiving unbiased perspective of the organization.

In *Dance of Change*, Peter Senge argues that asking big questions is a catalyst for the evolution of organizational strategy. “A powerful question is one that is thought-provoking, and challenges assumptions, generates energy, focuses inquiry and reflection, touches a deeper meaning, and evokes related questions.”⁸¹ In *Rules and Tools for Leaders*, GEN (R) Perry Smith addresses the issue of organizational assessment and provides a relatively comprehensive menu of potential questions an inbound leader must know the answers to in order to take charge

⁸¹ Peter Senge and others. *The Dance of Change* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 511.

effectively. For purposes here, they are consolidated in Table 1 and categorized by the focus of the question. GEN Smith recommends discussing the questions annotated by asterisks with the outgoing leader.

Table 1. New CEO Questions.⁸²

Question	Focus
What are the various available means of communication that I can use to interact creatively with my associates?	Organization
What is my span of control?	Organization
Who reports to me directly?	Organization
What constituencies will I be serving, either directly or indirectly?	Organization
Who is my immediate boss and what are his or her leadership or management styles?	Organization
Am I responsible for geographically separated organizations? Do they report directly or indirectly to me?	Organization
What is the overall size of the organization that I am about to lead? Is the present Organizations Structure Effective, and is it, at the same time, encouraging initiative and innovation?	Organization
*What are your major concerns?	Situation
*What are the issues?	Situation
*What are the problems?	Situation
*What are the frustrations?	Situation
*What are the skeletons in the closet?	Situation
*What are the strengths and weaknesses of key personnel?	Situation
What is the current morale?	Situation
What is the standard of integrity among leaders in the organization?	Situation
What are the various standards of discipline within the organization?	Situation
What documents should I read and in what order?	Situation
Is there anything that, if made public, would embarrass my predecessor, the organization, or me?	Situation
Are there festering problems that are just waiting to jump up and bite me?	Situation
What is the financial situation?	Situation
What is the mission, role, or desired output of the organization?	Strategy
What is the strategic/long-range plan?	Strategy
What goals have been have been established?	Strategy
What are the priorities?	Strategy

The goal of an organizational assessment is to develop an in-depth understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to an organization. Although one could argue that this list is incomplete, it provides a useful starting point for critical thought while conducting

⁸² Information in this table is from: Perry M. Smith, *Rules & Tools for Leaders* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 2002), 30-34.

an organizational assessment. Without knowing the answers to many of these questions, a new CEO, or leader of any kind, is likely to stumble.

360 Degree Feedback

Another useful process commonly utilized in the business world is 360-degree feedback. 360-degree feedback provides performance data from multiple reference points. Typically, the process functions as a feedback mechanism used for peer or leader evaluations. However, the technique also has other uses. Many consider 360-degree feedback to be more powerful and reliable than traditional sources of feedback. Moreover, since the feedback comes from multiple sources, skewing and bias is less likely than other methods. An organization can implement the process to assess its strengths, weaknesses, provide organizational focus or assist in organizational transformation efforts. "It's been used to help sweep out the old cobwebs and bring in fresh air to thinking processes. 360 degree feedback is used to transform cultures by providing hard data on what policies, practices, and procedures support high-performance and which don't."⁸³ However, the process has a hidden pitfall. Organizations implementing a 360-degree process must remain sensitive to individual fears and concerns about the process. People have a tendency to be very cautious and emotional about providing honest feedback for fear of potential repercussions.⁸⁴

Vision

Residing within the business literature is a vast amount of information focusing on the development of an organizational vision. A vision contains two important elements. The core element of the vision addresses why the organization exists and what it stands for. The second

⁸³ David Lassiter, "A User's Guide to 360 Degree Feedback" [Electronic version] Leadership Advantage. accessed from <http://www.leadershipadvantage.com/usersGuide.shtml> (5 Jan 2006).

⁸⁴ Ibid., <http://www.leadershipadvantage.com/usersGuide.shtml>.

element focuses on what the organization aspires to be at some point in the future.⁸⁵ An organization's mission statement and its vision should be complementary since the start point for a vision is the organization's mission statement. The mission statement in turn should reflect the major themes and values of the vision. A well-written vision provides purpose for members of the organization and should be a source of pride. Building a resonating vision for an organization requires depth of thought and is rarely the product of a single individual.⁸⁶ As a result, most leaders require assistance when developing and implementing a vision.

Executive Transition Model

CEO turnover is not only occurring within big corporations, it is also occurring in the non-profit sector. Within the nonprofit sector, research estimates conclude that 10 percent of the nonprofit CEOs change yearly.⁸⁷ Given the nature of nonprofits, little room exists for friction during a transition. As a result, there is a growing field of organizations and professional consultants that provide Executive Transition Management (ETM) Services to nonprofit companies. Executive Transition Management "is the management of the entire departure-recruitment-installation process in a holistic fashion."⁸⁸ Executive Transition Management focuses not only on finding the right executive, but also on minimizing risks while maximizing opportunities afforded by executive transitions. Tom Adams, a research consultant for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, wrote:

⁸⁵ James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 221.

⁸⁶ Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 362.

⁸⁷ TransitionGuides, "Executive Transition Overview" [Electronic Version] accessed from <http://www.transitionguides.com/overview/intro.htm> (19 Nov 2005).

⁸⁸ Ibid., <http://www.transitionguides.com/overview/intro.htm>.

We have found that transitions are powerful-and under-realized- opportunities to strengthen nonprofits. Faced with a pause in business is usual, organizations can reexamine current practices, positioning, mission, direction, and vision. Boards, with expert support from ETM providers, can assess the situation, work through the hiring process, and implement strategies to enable an organization not only to survive the transition, but to thrive through it.⁸⁹

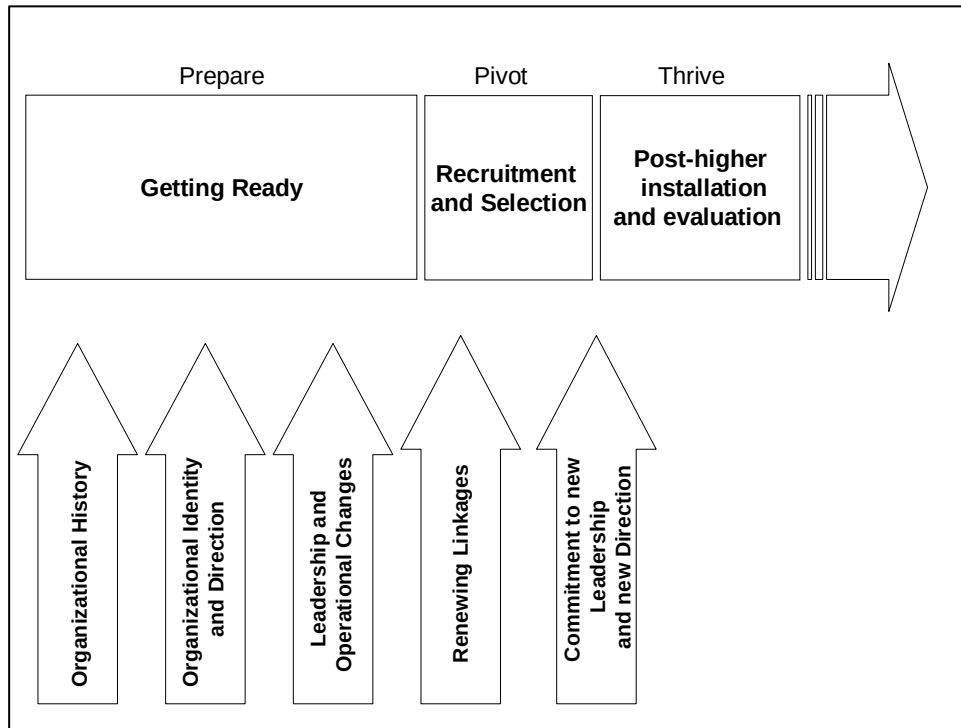
Most ETM providers use a model consisting of three transitional phases: getting ready; recruitment and selection; and post higher installation and evaluation. Tom Adams, author of “Capturing the Power of Leadership Change: Using Executive Transition Management to Strengthen Organizational Capacity” refers to these phases as: prepare, pivot and thrive.⁹⁰ Five critical developmental steps typically occur in the interim period to assist the new leader in succeeding: organizational history, organizational identity and direction, leadership and operational changes, renewing linkages, and commitment to new leadership and a new direction.⁹¹ Figure 5 depicts an interpretation of the main components of the ETM model. All of the vertical arrows are particularly relevant for military transitions teams.

⁸⁹ Tom Adams, “Capturing the Power of Leadership Change: Using Executive Transition Management to Strengthen Organizational Capacity” [Electronic version] Annie E. Casey Foundation accessed from <http://www.transitionguides.com/resources/docs/cappower.pdf>. (19 Nov 2005), 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁹¹ TransitionGuides, <http://www.transitionguides.com/overview/intro.htm>.

Figure 5. The ETM Model.⁹²



Although the ETM model possesses potential as an emerging transitional doctrine and provides several lessons, its implementation to this point remains incomplete. First, the organization must decide the type of transition that it desires so that ETM advisors can facilitate an appropriate transition strategy. The four most typical transitions in the business world are turnaround transitions, organizational startups, underperforming organizations, founder/entrepreneur successions.⁹³ Next, gaining buy-in from the organization as a whole is an important factor in the overall success of the process. When an organization does not understand or believe in the importance of the consulting process, its execution is likely to be sub-optimal. Finally, organizations must thoroughly execute each phase of the process with appropriate rigor.

⁹² Diagram developed by the author based upon understanding of the ETM model as presented in TransitionGuides, “Executive Transition Overview” [Electronic Version] accessed from <http://www.transitionguides.com/overview/intro.htm> (19 Nov 2005).

⁹³ TransitionGuides, <http://www.transitionguides.com/overview/intro.htm>.

Skipping steps or failing to give any step appropriate attention is also likely to result in the ineffective implementation of the ETM process.

Critical Outcomes

Based upon analysis of the subject matter, five critical outcomes emerge for successfully taking charge of a corporate organization.

Assess and Understand the Organization - A new leader must understand as much as possible about the organizations strengths, weaknesses, strategy, goals, and challenges when assuming the helm. New leaders must tailor their approaches to fit the technical, political, and cultural situations they enter.⁹⁴ In *Rules and Tools for Leaders*, Perry Smith states, “It is crucial that you have a full grasp of your organization's agenda, history, strengths, weaknesses, potential, strategies, and staff.”⁹⁵ With this knowledge, the new leader can decide if the organizational structure aligns with his or her vision and make adjustments as necessary.

Vision - After getting oriented to the organization, new leaders must develop a personal vision of the organization's future.⁹⁶ In *Leading Change*, John Kotter argues that an effective vision is imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable.⁹⁷

A well-defined change strategy - After the conception of a change initiative, leaders must be able to describe the visualized future state in a succinct way in order to gain buy-in. Thorough planning of the change initiative is essential. In “Leading Transition: A New Model for Change,” William Bridges and Susan Mitchell recommend careful planning of change

⁹⁴ Ciampa and Watkins, 28.

⁹⁵ Smith, 41.

⁹⁶ Ciampa and Watkins, 274.

⁹⁷ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 72.

initiatives with the delegation of responsibility for each detail, detailed time lines for all the changes initiatives, and a strategic communications plan supporting the change.⁹⁸

A developed set of priorities and a plan to achieve them - During the transition period, the new leader must select the few of vital priorities and must be prepared to adjust them as necessary.⁹⁹

Building Credibility and Securing Early Wins - “Early wins energize people and focus attention on a needed change.”¹⁰⁰ Watkins argues that securing early wins build credibility and lay the foundation for longer-term success.¹⁰¹ Early wins also build momentum which is particularly important given the finite nature of a new CEO’s mandate for change.

Common Pitfalls

The common pitfalls of corporate CEO transitions generally fall within two broad categories. One category centers on the pitfalls of taking charge while the second focuses on common pitfalls of change initiatives. Together, they contribute a potential list of things to avoid during transitional efforts from a corporate perspective. The first category of common pitfalls centers on taking charge of a new organization. New leaders must avoid believing that there are simple solutions to the organization’s complex problems. A one-size-fits-all methodology is insufficient; its mere suggestion undermines new leader credibility, and negatively influences gaining buy-in.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ William Bridges and Susan Mitchell. “Leading Transition: A New Model for Change.” [Electronic version] Leader to Leader Institute, accessed from <http://www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/l2l/spring2000/bridges.html> (19 Nov 2005).

⁹⁹ Ciampa and Watkins, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰¹ Watkins, xii.

¹⁰² Ciampa and Watkins, 22-23.

There is also a tendency for new leaders to become isolated from their new organizations. In *Right from the Start* Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins wrote, “New leaders need perspective on their new situations. One indispensable source of perspective is a network of advisers and counselors to offer an appropriate mix of technical, political, and personal help.”¹⁰³ The subject of gaining assistance leads to the third pitfall, which is balancing listening with forging toward the future. In *Rules and Tools for Leaders* Perry Smith wrote, “False consensus, excessive conformity, and a group think are not in the interest of any organization.”¹⁰⁴ A new CEO must remain vigilant against a situation in which a consensus is gained too quickly.

New CEOs also have poor reputations with respect to change initiatives so the second grouping of corporate pitfalls centers on the planning and execution of change initiatives. The first common pitfall is that new CEOs tend to underestimate the power and importance of vision. In *Leading Change*, John Kotter, an expert in organizational leadership stressed:

Vision plays a key role in producing useful change by helping to direct, align, and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people. Without an appropriate vision, a transformation effort can easily dissolve into a list of confusing, incompatible, and time-consuming projects that go in the wrong direction or nowhere at all.¹⁰⁵

Kotter clearly believes that vision is important. Ironically, many new CEOs do not. What results are poorly understood change concepts that lack resonance within the organization.

A second common pitfall within this grouping revolves around the issue of planning change initiatives. Often times, initiatives involve drastic measures designed to maximize growth or economic value rapidly that fail to balance short-term profits with long-term strategic success.¹⁰⁶ Many corporate change efforts “create initiative overload and organizational chaos, both of which provoke strong resistance from the people most affected”¹⁰⁷ Some new CEOs fail

¹⁰³ Ciampa and Watkins, 274.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, 38.

¹⁰⁵ Kotter, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Eric Abrahamson, “Change without Pain.” *Harvard Business Review OnPoint* (July/August 2000): 76.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

to develop plans that create short-term wins, gain buy in or build momentum. Kotter writes, “Creating short-term wins is different from hoping for short-term wins. In change initiatives that fail, systematic effort to guarantee an unambiguous wins within six to 18 months is much less common.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, successful change initiatives include strategic efforts that gain recognized wins. The recognized wins, over time, build momentum for continued progress.

Summary

CEO's performance determines the fates of corporations, which collectively influence whole economies. Our standard of living depends upon excellence at the very top.¹⁰⁹

Ram Charan

The overriding goal during a corporate leader transition is to build leverage for the incoming leader through increased knowledge, aligned strategy and enhanced momentum. In the corporate world, boards have a poor record of accomplishment in managing CEO transitions and death spirals are becoming common. According to Tom Adams, an ETM expert, “Even well-established organizations can falter during and after a leadership change.”¹¹⁰ That being said, the corporate world already utilizes several techniques that could assist in improving the Army's strategic leader transition methodology. The corporate world understands the importance of conducting quality organizational assessments and recognizes the power of asking strategic questions in a 360-degree feedback construct. The corporate world also acknowledges the importance of vision and possesses codified methods of creating and implementing them. Finally, the nonprofit sector is migrating toward the implementation of the ETM model to facilitate leader transitions to avoid pitfalls.

¹⁰⁸ Kotter, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Charan, 2.

¹¹⁰ Adams, 4.

The ETM Model is a useful framework to think about transitional efforts. As a systematic process, it decreases the likelihood of becoming a victim of a transitional pitfall. If utilized properly, the ETM could enable an incoming CEO to reach what Watkins refers to as the “break-even point” faster.¹¹¹ ETM is a holistic process that assists inbound leaders in understanding their new organizations while setting the stage for change initiatives. Executive Transition Management supports the concept of the utilization of transitional advisers or consultants to facilitate the transition process more effectively. By acknowledging the importance of a systematic approach to the transition process, non-profits that outsource transitional efforts to ETM consultants are attempting to end the CEO succession and transition death spiral.

¹¹¹ Watkins, 4.

Chapter 6: Synthesis and Recommendations

The real question to ask is not, “is this practice good?” but “is this practice appropriate for us--does it fit with our ideology and ambitions?”¹¹²

James Collins and Jerry Porras

This monograph captured lessons learned in presidential and corporate transitions by identifying best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls. However, as depicted in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter taken from *Built to Last*, a renowned business book, best practices are not always universal. Lessons learned to include best practices require examination to determine environmental suitability. The purpose of this chapter is to achieve a level of synthesis with the respect to previously discussed best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls in order to make recommendations for the Army transition methodology. By analyzing similarities and differences between transitional efforts with an understanding of the environment in question, the intent is to highlight elements most relevant to Army transitions. The chapter then revisits the transition team model presented in Chapter 3 and refines it based upon the synthesis. This chapter concludes with additional recommendations for improving Army transitions.

Comparing and Contrasting Transitions

Surprisingly, the landscapes of presidential, corporate, and Army transitions are relatively similar. Clearly, each of the environments includes pressure, hopefulness, expectations and a general lack of knowledge about the organization. Transitions in all environments are pivotal moments that influence organizational success and the leader’s legacy. All transitions connect to finite windows of opportunity where change is likely to carry wide support. However, critical

¹¹² Collins and Porras, 215.

differences in environment do exist. While presidential and corporate transitions must deal with the varying levels of experience by an incoming leader, Army transitions possess the advantage of preparing a new leader with 30 to 35 years of experience. Incoming Army leaders also have the advantage of rank and military culture. Because of the military's unique culture and rank structure, they possess a certain degree of respect the minute they enter an organization. This reality also implies that the Army's leadership environment is more agile than the other environments.

The final obvious difference is that the Army and presidents have transition teams while corporations typically do not except for those non-profit companies using ETM providers. Several points emerge based upon this analysis. First, rank and culture reduce the likelihood of internal friction during Army transitions but do not negate the necessity for teambuilding within a transitional effort. Second, the acceptance of a transition team methodology in concert with the previously discussed culture implies that achieving buy-in Army transitions could be somewhat easier but by no means less important than in the other environments.

Table 2 depicts the main similarities and differences captured during the investigation of each type of transition. The table does not depict Army best practices and critical outcomes because of the lack of existing literature on the subject. Instead, the CG TRADOC transition provides the sample for best practice and critical outcomes. The only identified pitfall from the CG TRADOC transition was the lack of direct access to the incoming leader. The arrows in each row represent the concept of capturing best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls that will influence the revised transitional model depicted later in the chapter in Figure 6.

Table 2. Comparison of Environments and Lessons Learned

	Presidential	Corporate	Army (CG TRADOC)
Environment	-Varying levels of experience for incoming leader -Time constrained transition environment characterized by: High pressure, Hopefulness, High expectations and lack of knowledge about the system - Election results and congressional relationships influence process politically -Accepted transition methodology -Transition operations financed by law and outside contributions -Team members in/outsourced with political implications - Critical to administration's success - Connections to presidential legacy -Narrow Window of opportunity for change	-Varying levels of experience for incoming leader -Time constrained transitions environment characterized by: High pressure, Hopefulness, High expectations and lack of knowledge about the company -Boards of directors provide little assistance (death spiral) -No mandate. Must take control of organization -No universally accepted transition methodology -Onus of preparation on leader (except when using ETM) -People centric hiring process -Important for corporate success -Pivotal moment -Connected to legacy -Narrow window of opportunity for change	-30-40 years of Army experience for incoming leader -Time constrained transition environment characterized by: pressure, hopefulness, expectations and lack of knowledge about the specific organization -Military culture, Rank and experience provide mandate -Accepted transitional methodology -Team members in/outsourced - Critical for initial success -Broader window of opportunity for change
Best Practices	-Start Early -Quickly shift gears from campaigning to governing -Strong Leadership -Balance Continuity with Change -Utilize experts -Determine the transition cut-off	-Organization assessment via asking appropriate question to the right people in the right way -360-degree feedback -Vision -ETM (thorough planning and execution of each step)	-TRADOC CG Transition 4 phase model described in Chapter 3 and depicted on Figure 3
Critical Outcomes	-Organize Executive branch/make personnel recommendations -Empower with knowledge -Prioritize/Focus the agenda -Identify early wins -Develop implementation strategy	-Organizational and environmental/situational understanding (to include interim steps from ETM model) -Vision -Change strategy -Prioritized Agenda -Enhanced credibility and early wins	-TRADOC CG Transition Described in Chapter 3 and depicted on Figure 4
Common Pitfalls	-Group think/planning in a vacuum -Right-sizing the effort -Impatience -Exaggeration of political mandate -Inappropriate rejection of predecessor methods and policies particularly during party turnovers	-Lack of organizational understanding/Isolation -Balancing listening with forging ahead -Promoting simple solutions to complex problems -Undervaluing vision -Poorly conceived change initiatives -Lack of short-term wins	-Lack of access to the incoming leader

Similarities among critical outcomes of the respective transition types also exist. Analysis of presidential and corporate transitions result in conclusions that empowerment with knowledge of the organization and its environment is essential for the new leader. The incoming leader must seize the initiative and gather momentum while gaining consensus, buy-in and credibility. Next, transitional methodologies must result in a strategically aligned, focused and prioritized agenda. Finally, the transition must lead to a clearly developed implementation strategy with planned early wins. Of note, the ETM model depicted in Figure 5 highlights five interim critical development steps that are relevant with regard to critical outcomes. Specifically, developing an appreciation for organizational history, identity, direction and linkages are organic to developing an understanding of organization. Presidential transition critical outcomes differ from corporate outcomes in their requirement to establish the executive branch and make personnel recommendations. However, other than personnel recommendations, Army transitions share common ground with both presidential and corporate transitions with regard to critical outcomes.

Best practices and common pitfalls do not share the same commonalities. Presidential transition best practices essentially constitute tips for success to include starting early, shifting gears, balancing continuity with change, utilizing experts and determining a clear cut-off. Corporate best practices tend to be more process-oriented and focus on feedback mechanisms and the utilization of a vision to drive change. The common pitfalls associated with each transition type are relatively unique to each respective transition type. However, they are all relevant to the Army methodology and collectively provide a useful checklist of pitfalls to avoid. The implications of the divergence of best practices and common pitfalls among the compared types of transitions are that they can inform or be incorporated into the Army methodology. By combining the lessons provided by corporate and presidential transitions, one can create a universal list of best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls as depicted in Table 4. This list enables direct comparison with the TRADOC transition model in the next section.

Table 3. Common Lessons Learned

Best Practices	Critical Outcomes	Pitfalls
• <i>Start transition activities as early as possible</i> • Dedicate strong leadership to the transitional effort • Balance continuity with change • <i>Use experts where appropriate to assist in the process</i> • Determine a transition cut off • Conduct a thorough assessment utilizing 360-method	• Empowerment through understanding • Enhanced credibility • Prioritized/Focused Agenda • Implementation strategy with identified early wins	• Group think • Right sizing the effort • Impatience • Inappropriate rejection of outgoing leader methods • Isolation from the organization • Balancing listening with forging ahead • Oversimplification of problems • Undervaluing vision • Poorly conceived change initiatives • Failing to achieve one of the critical outcomes • Lack of access to the incoming leader

Revisiting the CG TRADOC Transition Model

Chapter 3 of this monograph deferred assessment of the relative success of the CG TRADOC transitional effort. Informed by an improved understanding of best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls of transitional efforts in various environments, one can conclude that the CG TRADOC transitional effort was a resounding success. In less than six weeks, a diverse group came together to enable General Wallace to hit the ground running and reach Watkin's break-even point before he even assumed command. The team provided each of the common critical outcomes depicted in Table 3 necessary for a successful transition in addition to several others. The team also utilized many of the best practices from the other environments discussed throughout this monograph. The team's work empowered General Wallace with an understanding of TRADOC's environment by utilizing a 360-degree type assessment. It provided both a prioritized and focused personal and organizational agenda. It also developed an implementation strategy with clearly identified early wins. Finally, the products and strategy enhanced his credibility through the development of clear vision for TRADOC's future along with an associated strategic communications plan. Much of the credit for the success of the

process is due to the team's strong leadership that understood the process, products and importance of the effort.

Though few could argue with the ultimate success of the CG TRADOC transitional effort as discussed in Chapter 3, the process could have been better. Lessons learned from examining the ETM model emphasize that appropriate rigor is essential in each step of a transitional process. For the CG TRADOC transition, the primary issue was time available. General Wallace noted that the team could have used more time dialoguing with him about direction and the future.¹¹³ MG Fastabend also highlighted the need for more time to execute the process when discussing shortcomings of the process. By having more time, the team would have been able to conduct more interviews and process the data more thoroughly.¹¹⁴ However, the environment of Wallace's transition necessitated a time-constrained transitional execution. General Wallace remained unconfirmed at the beginning of his transition preventing direct access until well into the process. Additionally, with only a six-week window of opportunity for transitional operations, the shortcomings highlighted with respect to the number of interviews and data processing time are understandable. The team did apply appropriate rigor and focus to each step despite the time-constrained environment maintaining the overall effectiveness of the process. However, more time and increased access to the incoming commander could have improved the overall effectiveness of the transition.

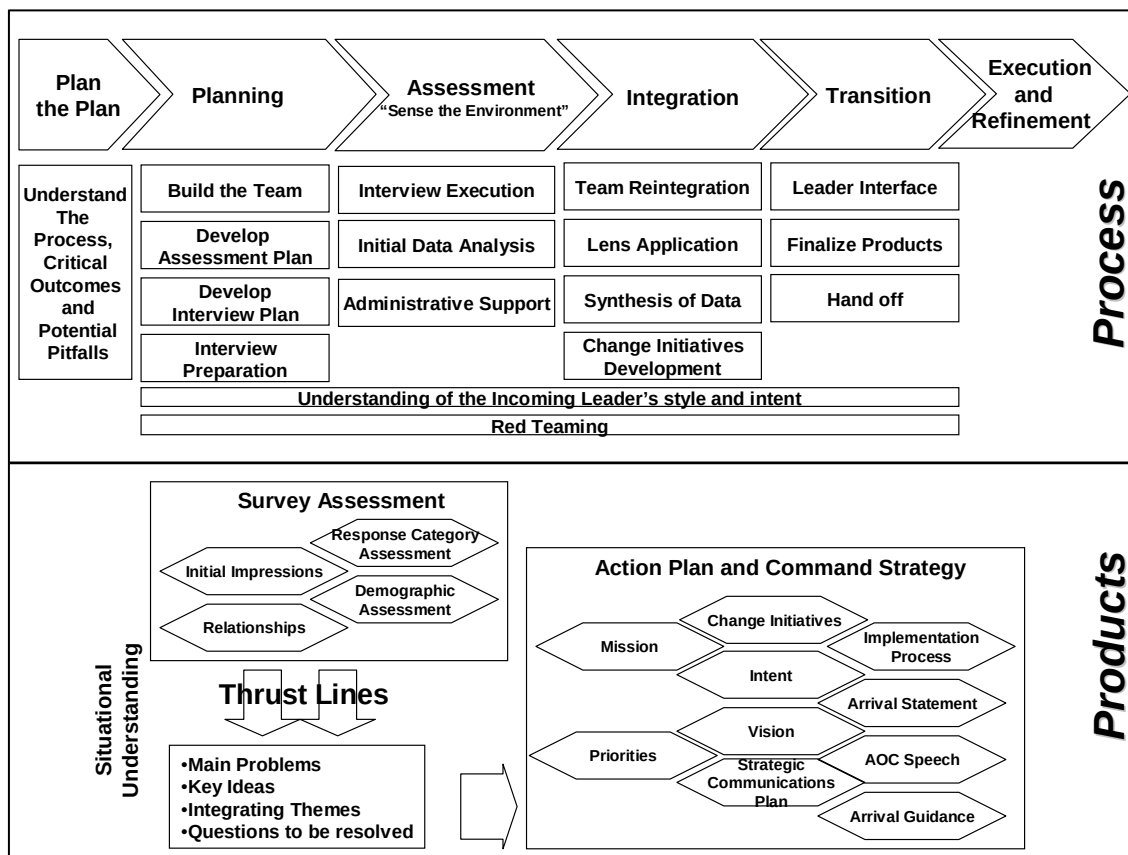
How can the processes or products of the model shown in Chapter 3 improve? Based upon the analysis of lessons learned from presidential and corporate transitions, several improvement recommendations emerge which Figure 6 depicts. First, MG Fastabend conducted

¹¹³ GEN William Wallace, Commanding General, Training and Doctrine Command, E-mail to author, 21 Feb 2006, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

¹¹⁴ MG David Fastabend, Training and Doctrine Command. Telephone, Interview by author, 17 Feb 2006, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

a “plan the plan” prior to the official beginning of the process.¹¹⁵ This step was essential for the uninhibited execution of the process. His understanding of the Army’s transition process, critical outcomes and awareness of potential pitfalls enabled his development of a planning methodology executed by the team. His experience and understanding of the process also enabled him to adapt the transition team operation as needed throughout the process, given the previously discussed time constraints. Without a “plan the plan,” a great deal of time would have been wasted.

Figure 6. Revised Transition Model



¹¹⁵ MG David Fastabend, Training and Doctrine Command. Telephone, Interview by author, 17 Feb 2006, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Next, the Red teaming effort depicted in the model in Chapter 3 portrays a finite effort. Although it is true that a formalized Red Team meeting did not occur until late in the process, Red teaming and critical thinking occurred throughout the process. Another change depicted in the model is an understanding of the incoming leader's style and intent. Since General Wallace was not confirmed until the latter portion of the TRADOC Transition Team's effort, the team developed an understanding of the commander indirectly. In an ideal situation, however, more direct interface with the incoming leader should occur. The final refinement to the process model is the addition of a formal handoff. Although the CG TRADOC Transition Team passed all of its products to key members of the TRADOC staff, a formal transfer did not occur. The environment of the TRADOC transition made this a non-issue since key members of the team resided within key billets of TRADOC headquarters. In other circumstances, this might not be the case.

Additional Recommendations

The left-hand column of Table 4 depicts two best practices in italics. *Start transition activities as early as possible* and *Use experts where appropriate to assist in the process* justify two additional recommendations for improving Army transitions. Currently, the Army has not operationalized either of these best practices but has the opportunity to do so. According to Watkins, adopting a standardized framework for transition acceleration is an asset for an organization that can yield big returns.¹¹⁶ By institutionalizing the art of strategic transition, the Army could improve future transitions. To do so however, the Army must first codify the strategic transition process with a publication that includes the key processes and products of a transitional operation. The developed doctrine should incorporate a model similar to Figure 6.

¹¹⁶ Watkins, 6.

In “Leading Transition: A New Model for Change,” William Bridges and Susan Mitchell, experts in the field of executive transitions wrote, “Transitions are becoming the rule rather than the exception. Yet few leaders know how to prepare for the changes that lie ahead.”¹¹⁷ Watkins wrote, “Transition acceleration is a skill that can be taught.”¹¹⁸ In addition to codifying the process with transitional doctrine, the Army must train transitional thinking. Watkins also argued that transitional experiences are an “indispensable development experience for every company's high potential leaders” because they “strengthen diagnostic skills, demand growth and adaptation, and test personal stamina.”¹¹⁹ After participating on the TRADOC Transition Team and conducting research for this monograph, I strongly concur with these concepts.

A logical place to start training transition team techniques is at the School for Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) Advanced Military Studies Program (AMSP). The curriculum already includes an in-depth block of instruction on leading change and the addition of transition teams would be beneficial in terms of growing transition experts and starting transition processes as early as possible by training future members or leaders of transition teams. In *Leadership in Organizations*, Gary Yukl described planning as “deciding what to do, how to do it, and who will do it, and when it will be done.”¹²⁰ Given the mission of SAMS and the types of jobs its graduates will encounter, educating its students on the transition process is worthwhile and essential. The fact that eleven of the thirty-eight members of the CG TRADOC Transition Team, to include all of its content cell members, were associated with SAMS makes it clear that this type of project is in the future for many AMSP graduates.

¹¹⁷ Bridges and Mitchell, <http://www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/l2l/spring2000/bridges.html>.

¹¹⁸ Watkins, 9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁰ Yukl, 81.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Leadership transition is an integral process for all leaders of an organization. When well-planned and well managed, the transition becomes a time of high morale and filled expectations.¹²¹

Francis Hesselbein

The average new leader requires approximately six months to reach the “break even point,” the point where he becomes a net contributor to an organization as opposed to being a net consumer.¹²² This fact alone provides strong evidence for the necessity of effective leader transition operations. The fact that only two out of every five CEOs survive past 18 months is also telling.¹²³ One must ask why any organization would mortgage its future by not preparing its leader for success? Unlike some corporate counterparts, Army strategic leaders have the advantage of having a transition team assist them in taking charge. The Army’s Transition Team process provides solutions that enable an incoming commander to “hit the ground running” and reach the “break even point” as quickly and efficiently as possible. Unfortunately, few even know the Army’s process exists, what it entails or what outcomes it produces.

This monograph fills an existing literature gap on the subject of strategic transitions and assists future members of Army transition teams to better understand the process and avoid common pitfalls. It captured key components of the Army’s methodology by creating a transitional model based upon first-hand experience by the author during the CG TRADOC Transition Team in the fall of 2005. The monograph then examined presidential and corporate transitional efforts to identify lessons learned in the form of best practices, critical outcomes and common pitfalls. Based upon that analysis, it is clear that the Army’s transitional methodology is very effective and already incorporates many of the lessons learned from presidential and

¹²¹ Hesselbein, <http://www.leadertoleader.org/leaderbooks/L2L/fall97/fh.html>.

¹²² Watkins, 2.

¹²³ Charan, 2.

corporate transitions. However, the Army's system has room for improvement and incorporating relevant lessons from the presidential and corporate environments will make the Army's system even better. Additionally, codifying and training the transitional thinking and processes will result in greatly improved transition execution in the future.

The introduction of the monograph included the quote from a member of the CG TRADOC transition team who stated, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Although said jokingly, the investigation of strategic transitions strongly reinforces that statement. Well-executed transition operations lead to the "best of times." Poorly planned transitional operations guarantee "the worst of times." The Army's transition process is excellent and, in many ways, already surpasses transitions methodologies conducted in other environments. However, the Army must remain vigilant in capturing lessons from these other environments and implement them where appropriate. Only by codifying and institutionalizing effective transitional methodologies can the Army avoid "the worst of times" in future Army strategic transitions.

APPENDIX A. CG TRADOC Response Categories

RESPONSE CATEGORIES

Category 1 - Recruit quality people, train soldiers, and develop leaders

- Recruit
- Initial Military Training
- Functional Training
- Leader Development and Education

Category 2 - Prepare the Army to dominate land combat in a joint warfight

- Lessons Learned
- Collective Training
- Doctrine
- Training Support
- ARFORGEN Implications

Category 3 - Design, develop, and integrate warfighting requirements; foster innovation; and lead change

- Concepts
- Experimentation & Wargaming
- Requirements Determination
- Capabilities Development

Category 4 - Institutional Strategic Topics

- Organization/Centers of Excellence
- Relationships
- Vision
- Resources
- Processes
- Manning
- Strategic Communications
- Culture of Innovation
- Taking Care of People

APPENDIX B. Example Briefing Shells from CG TRADOC Transition Team

RESPONSE CATEGORY ASSESSMENT

Topic:

Thrust Line:

Significant Points:

- Point 1
- Point 2
- Point 3

Bottom Line:

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

TAI:

Challenge:

Lead:

Expected Outcomes (Conditions):

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