

“BUILDING THE BENCH” – ARMY NATIONAL GUARD MENTORING

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USAWC CLASS OF 2008

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Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE 15 MAR 2008	2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project	3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2007 to 00-00-2008			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE 'Building the Bench'- Army National Guard Mentoring		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S) Jeffery Jahnke		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT See attached					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 34	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Jeffery A. Jahnke
TITLE: "Building the Bench" – Army National Guard Mentoring
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 27 February 2008 WORD COUNT: 6,964 PAGES: 33
KEY TERMS: Mentor, Mentee, Protégé, Leadership
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The National Guard's essential role of strategic reserve and bulwark of Homeland Security requires leadership ready and able to lead this multi-faceted organization in complex and dynamic times. Mentoring is a potent personal and professional development technique that is considered by many to be a key component in developing strategic leaders, civilian and military. Because of the unique aspects of being state militias made up of citizen-soldiers, the Army National Guard (ARNG) would benefit greatly from a mentorship program that adopts components of both civilian-business and active military mentorship models. This paper will present an academic review of mentorship theory and research, civilian-business models, and existing military programs – especially the Army Mentoring Program to evaluate the components that would be most appropriate and beneficial to the ARNG for development of its strategic leaders for the 21st century.

“BUILDING THE BENCH” – ARMY NATIONAL GUARD MENTORING

...it is the men and women of America who will fill the need. One mentor, one person, can change a life forever. And I urge you to be that one person.

—George W. Bush
President of the United States
State of the Union Speech (January 28, 2003)

The mission of the Army National Guard (ARNG) is changing and the demands on its members and leaders ever-increasing. Within its state-owned militia role, the ARNG is no longer the “weekend warrior”, but is now the bulwark of Homeland Security – prepared to defend against a growing number and type of threats, natural and man-made. As part of the current total Army structure, the ARNG has gone from a dormant strategic reserve to an operational force actively engaged in America’s world-wide military and combat commitments. Its leadership must be ready and able to lead this multi-faceted organization in these complex and dynamic times. The state organizations need an effective way to develop that leader culture and leverage the expertise of seasoned veterans and leaders. Mentoring is a potent personal and professional development technique that is considered by many human resource professionals to be a key component in developing strategic leaders, civilian and military. Because of the unique aspects of being state militias made-up of citizen-soldiers, the ARNG would benefit greatly from a mentorship program that adopts components of both civilian-business and active military mentorship models, to build its bench of strategic leaders for the 21st century.

Background

Mentorship, like counseling and coaching is an evolving construct ...thus it has both old and a new elements. The Army Chief of Staff, General John A. Wickham, Jr., declared Leadership as the Army theme of 1985. In his White Paper 1985, DA PAM 600-5, he set a framework for individual action, with his first challenge to every leader “Be a teacher and a mentor to the officers, NCOs, soldiers, and civilians entrusted to you. Sharing your knowledge and experience is the greatest legacy you can leave your subordinates.” He acknowledged mentoring to be an important part of Army quality leadership, and that opportunities taken (or missed) now will determine the quality of future leaders and the future Army.¹ The national relevance of mentoring was spotlighted more recently in President George W. Bush’s 2003 State of the Union Address, quoted in the opening above.

The civilian-business sector and various components of all branches of the military have adopted some form of mentoring. The Army Active Component (AC) has a mentoring campaign underway with online programs and references to mentoring in numerous military leadership manuals. With the transformation of the military, a combination of the best civilian and military mentoring concepts – both old and new - should be considered an important part of developing current mid- and senior-level field grade officers into the strategic leaders for future generations. This paper will review current civilian-business and military mentoring models and evaluate/propose those that would be most beneficial for implementation by the ARNG for development of its leadership structure. The organization and its future strategic leaders are facing a rapidly changing environment, and developing people who will thrive is critical. As

General Shinseki stated in 2000, “If you don’t like change, you’re going to like being irrelevant even less.”²

Mentoring Defined/ Mentorship

“**Mentor** (*noun*) – a: a trusted counselor or guide; b: tutor, coach”³ – a very simple dictionary definition of a role that is part of a complex and beneficial relationship. A more specific definition of a mentor is “... anyone who has a beneficial life- or style-altering effect on another person, generally as a result of personal one-on-one contact; one who offers knowledge, insight, perspective, or wisdom that is helpful to another person in a relationship which goes beyond duty or obligation.”⁴ The author of this definition also stresses the importance of it being a voluntary relationship of mutual trust and respect between the mentor and the mentee.

Mentorship is further defined as a developmental relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced partner, referred to as a mentee (or sometimes, protégé – a person guided and protected by a more prominent person). “Mentor relationships cannot be made to happen. Finding a mentor has many of the drawbacks of finding a spouse or love-mate. The harder one tries, and the more one expects of others and oneself, the more likely one is to fail.”⁵ Mentoring works when both parties see the investment in the relationship as worthwhile, fulfilling and non-threatening.“ It has been said that you can’t hire a mentor. The reason is that the mentor’s expectation of compensation could contaminate the relationship. After all it is difficult to focus exclusively on the needs of the mentee when one’s income is involved.”⁶

It is generally accepted that the mentor-mentee relationship happens naturally, develops with time, may have periods of closeness and then separations but can still remain a lasting, valued relationship, and continues until the time when one or both parties no longer see the value or further benefit. One author found “Mentor relationships in the business world seem to develop into lengthy friendships.”⁷ Another found that “Almost half of all respondents who have had a mentor report they still have a relationship with all of their mentors, and a quarter report they still have a relation with some.”⁸ Menttium, a company specializing in developing corporate mentoring programs, states that “mentoring succeeds when it is: mentee-driven, mentor-guided; dynamically reciprocal with active learning; different from managing, performance coaching or sponsoring; voluntary, confidential, structured, and formal.”⁹

A mentee will seek a mentor for purposes of enhancing personal and usually professional development, which in some ways will overlap. Personal development seeks to “do that little bit more” and get the guidance and direction for a complete career path – maybe looking outside the normal things to do to get ahead. A mentor can provide guidance and share the knowledge of personal experiences with the mentee for making decisions, like: determining a suitable career path, and timings and selection of the appropriate positions for advancement; which assignment or position to take if two are competitive, which one is more suitable to development for future competitiveness (picking the right job for now and for the future); how to approach and solve problems (similar to coaching, the mentee, not the mentor, should solve them). Professional development seeks to gain the technical and tactical competence to make oneself competitive with peers. A mentor can point the mentee to the required knowledge base,

schools, and training needed to meet the requirements for success along the chosen career path.

Some individuals have the ability to complete all the requirements and make the right career choices by either luck or skill without the assistance of a mentor. And others who have experienced mentoring may not directly attribute it to their success. One author who surveyed business executives found in some groups “curiously, those who have had a mentor rank luck as more important than having a mentor for their own success, but consider a mentor more important than luck for others’ successes.”¹⁰ And “despite the high level of influence executives report their mentors exerted, respondents do not consider having a mentor an important ingredient in their success. They ascribe higher values to such personal characteristics as the ability to make decisions, motivation, the ability to motivate others, the ability to lead, energy level, the ability to complete assignments and willingness to work long hours.”¹¹ Yet other development professionals found that many high-level professionals attribute achievement of their career objectives to having a mentor.¹² One researcher who applied statistical methods to the question of mentoring benefit found “Executives who have had a mentor earn more money at a younger age, are better educated, are more likely to follow a career path, and, in turn, sponsor more protégés than executives who have not had a mentor.”¹³ So while the benefits of mentoring may seem intuitively to be substantial, the perceived correlation with one’s success may vary. And those who have been mentored are likely to be mentors, so the benefit could be self-perpetuating.

Acknowledging that mentoring and its developmental benefits occur on a personal level, the organization that the mentee belongs to also benefits. The individual’s

personal and professional growth contributes to the organization's success, which is further bolstered by the mentor's increased commitment to both the organization and his mentee. "Mentorship not only helps build strong leaders, but it also helps develop a loyal team of employees who know how to perform their jobs and know how to turn to each other for advice... People are the most important part of any organization, and developing those people through mentoring gives the organization a competitive advantage."¹⁴ Most organizations would agree this is a highly desirable activity, but much of the literature for this research topic highlighted the difficulties of changing organizational culture and loss of effectiveness when mandated. As stated earlier, mentoring is intended to be voluntary and mentee-directed. While there is a place for management-directed mentoring programs where new arrivals are temporarily paired with experienced peers for purposes of quicker assimilation, mandatory participation in programs intended for career development often has minimal impact, especially if mentors are appointed rather than chosen. Conversely, if organizations endorse mentoring for only the selected few, it can create a "second class citizen" syndrome of resentment in those that are not mentored. Organizations that concentrate on "high performers" may not recognize "high potential," especially in "late bloomers."

Mentoring is meant to be a meaningful enhancement and optimization of personal aptitude – it is not a substitute. Equally important to understanding what mentoring is, is understanding what it is not. It is not, and should not be, any form of favoritism, protectionism or "sponsorship" that advances the mentee undeservedly based on his/her affiliation with the mentor (in the "good old boy network") rather than his own abilities. The perception of mentoring as favoritism or as creating unfair advantage can

be difficult to avoid, especially in cases where the mentor may be grooming his/her replacement.

Also important to understanding mentoring is how it fits with other learning relationships and development roles. Figure 1 shows one author's representation of the definitions and relationships of the roles, with *teacher* at the core and *mentor* encircling all the roles, adding "the extra dimension of one-on-one development."¹⁵ At different times, mentors may play some part of these other roles, with their primary role being broader and devoted to the mentee's needs. Some sources further assert that mentoring is best done outside one's direct management or 'chain of command', who are primarily focused on the employee's performance and successful accomplishment of current assignments for the organization's benefit. In terms of the development roles, it is most likely that what direct management engages in is coaching or counseling.

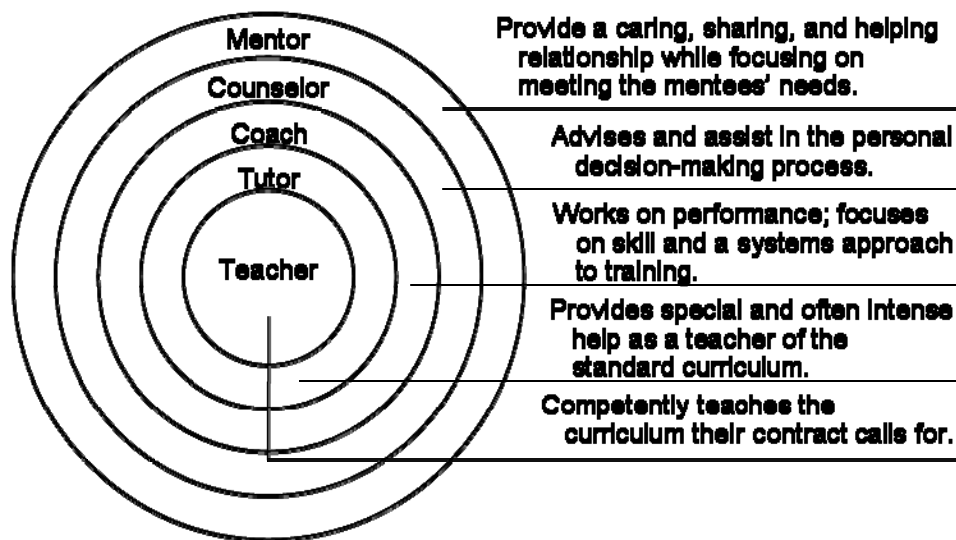


Figure 1. Model of One-on-One Teaching and Helping¹⁶

Application/Models

Much of the writings on mentoring programs focus on the benefits and shortcomings of formal vs. informal, or structured vs. unstructured programs. Gordon Shea, in his briefing on mentoring for the American Management Association in 1994, provided a mentoring model that is explained by and satisfies the shift to a complex, high-tech, global environment. "Mentoring has progressed from a Machine-Age model to an Informational-Age model and this new form of helping people learn offers a wealth of management opportunities for organizational rejuvenation, competitive adaptation, and employment development. Much of this change has occurred in response to significant developments affecting organizations overall, including operational and technological advancements, evolutions in local and world markets, and an entire set of new workplace realities – downsizings, delayerings, restructurings, reengineering, and the like."¹⁷ He found that while many organizations had adapted their business models, their mentoring practices still reflected the former model – elitist, protector/sponsor, cloning managers, focus on climbing the tall organizational ladder and ignoring the importance of individual talent, personality, and aspirations to organization development. An Information-age mentoring program takes a multi-faceted approach that blends situational mentoring (short, episodic bursts of information to meet immediate need), with informal mentoring relationships (voluntary, highly flexible, self-managed, mentee-driven, open system available to anyone interested and allowing multiple partners and "no-fault divorce"), with formal mentoring programs (training for mentors and mentees; mentoring coordinators and electronic databases; driven by organizational needs and goals). At the time of the briefing's publication in 1994, a

major electronics firm was developing just such a program, as was the U.S. Coast Guard for both its military and civilian personnel.¹⁸

There are multiple approaches to making the connection between the mentor and the mentee. Organizations may assign mentors to mentees, may provide personality profile indicators (Myers-Briggs is most common) or electronic bulletin boards to assist participants in finding/evaluating potential partners, or may allow “chemistry” to bring partners together. The approach may also be determined by the driver for the relationship – compatibility or gain. While compatibility may make for a comfortable situation, there may be more to be gained by exposure to different viewpoints or personalities.¹⁹

The research reported interesting applications of the mentioned approaches – like organizations matching employees with mentors at other firms (“Absent clear guidelines, however, such relationships sometimes fizzle out.”),²⁰ or encouraging mentees to build a stable of mentors (“The old one-on-one game is going out. To get ahead, you want to create your own multitalented board of advisors.”).²¹ One source provided SCORE (Senior Corps of Retired Executives) as an example, a national network of volunteers who are matched with novice entrepreneurs who want help with starting and building new businesses, or overcoming obstacles. Another example was of Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric Corporation from 1981-2001, who was well-known for his corporate reorganization, strategic business-building, and mentoring of the CEOs of many of America’s biggest corporations. “... traditionally inbred corporations are being forced to look outside to keep up with the best business practices... He preached the need for executives to get outside their organizations to

see what works best and then borrow those techniques or ideas... Welch's attitude makes it easier for other executives to seek him out. This is Information-Age networking at its most productive."²²

Military Programs (Navy, Air Force, Marines) – Department of the Army Civilians

All the military, and some civilian, branches of the U.S. Armed Forces have either recently implemented formal mentoring programs, or have acknowledged in formal and informal documents the importance of mentors for professional development. Many of the military applications of mentoring models found the programs to be mandatory, and focused on, or even required, raters/chain-of-command/supervisors to be mentors. The Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps programs assign mentors, have specific and detailed mentor-mentee interaction requirements for participants, place responsibility for the mentee's development with the mentor, and pre-define the goals of the mentoring relationship mostly around developing organizational leadership.^{23 24 25} A recent edition of the Department of the Army civilian's *Manpower and Force Management Career Program Bulletin* (Fall 2007) states "As leaders, we don't always recognize the importance or value of mentoring. We have become consumed with mission accomplishment. We tend to do our supervisory chores by rote. Yet, we are surprised when we recognize that the civilian workforce that will replace us in the future is ill prepared to assume leadership roles. Functional training, formal education, and OJT don't always chart a path to professional growth... Ideally supervisors can be identified as mentors, but often it is more beneficial for an intern or journeyman to look out beyond the chain of command for different perspectives."²⁶ No formal mentoring program is mentioned for the Department of the Army civilian workforce, but like the military

programs, the responsibility for the relationship lies with the supervisor, and the targeted benefit is apparently to meet the organization's future leadership demands.

Comparative Analysis of Leadership and Mentoring

"If one believes that mentoring is simply leadership, look again."²⁷ This comes from the 1985 article "Defining Mentorship" in *Armor* magazine, which provides a rich context on mentors, mentorship, and leadership in the military – how mentoring relationships develop; how mentors can come from leaders, but not all leaders are (or even should be) mentors; and the findings of a discussion group of soldiers in the 194th Armor Brigade at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. The author, MAJ James O. Patterson, explained that a mentor is a special type of leader –

....most of us have worked for, or with, that officer or non-commissioned officer who was certainly human in appearance, but whose aggressive style, word choice, and techniques left us looking for the bear, the lion that lived within him. Yet from this man or woman, we learned. We learned how to kill. We learned how to survive. We learned how to fix the unfixable. And some of us still learn from these leaders, because they become our mentors, and here is where leadership becomes mentorship. Mentorship is a specialized, advanced, sustaining, extra-legal form of leadership. Our learning from this mentor-soldier does not stop when we leave the unit; it continues in the form of phone conversations, letters, even special study assignments from that mentor. The mentor may no longer be our legal, chain-of-command leader, but an educating part of that leadership continues to improve both our professional and personal lives.

He explains that a mentor becomes a trusted friend and comrade, who shares a bond that comes from and strengthens with the "sharing of common experiences and stresses in the military environment... much in the spirit of the German *blutenbruderschaft* or blood brotherhood", with a strong element of confidentiality; and a counselor ("this giving of guidance is an inherent duty. Indeed some leaders are better counselors than other leaders").²⁸

The discussion group aimed to define *mentor* and *mentorship*, but found it difficult to define how the relationship begins. They described that often the mentor initiates the relationship, choosing to mentor the soldier because of seeing something “deserving of special attention or grooming... While most of the group members describe the initiation as a result of vague ‘chemistry’ between the mentor and the associate, no two formulas were alike... most associates are mentored for a period of from several months to several years, often without their own knowledge... This situation should in no way be confused with a ‘good old boy’ network, a form of favoritism which lacks the comradeship and the objectivity of the mentoring process. For this reason, most group members believed that the mentoring process usually occurred outside the rating chain, although it may have had its roots in a past chain-of-command relationship.”²⁹ While most believed they were “selected” to be mentored, they thought that it also made sense for soldiers to look for a mentor. The group also came to understand the differences between the leader and mentor roles – the key differences are listed in Figure 2. Leaders focus on the performance of the unit and the immediate goals of mission accomplishment, while mentors focus on the mentored associate’s future and development needs, with a deeper goal of “improving the Army and, hence, the Nation. The mentors, or potential mentors, are a select group because all soldiers are not capable of becoming mentors.”³⁰

Key Differences – Leaders and Mentors	
Leader	Mentor
1. Owes equal attention to all subordinates.	1. Devotes extra time to a single individual, yet is not bound to do so.
2. Often, if not always, is in the association's chain of command.	2. Very seldom in the associate's chain of command, to preclude favoritism in duty performance.
3. Style and methods are fairly well-established and addressed in doctrinal literature.	3. Strength of style and methods rest in an idiosyncratic approach. Little or no doctrinal background or resource material.
4. Acting as a leader is a requirement for all persons in leadership positions.	4. Strictly voluntary.
5. Time-related due to chain of command dependency.	5. Time independent; can last until death of either associate or mentor
6. Has a legal base in UCMJ, MTOEs, oath of commission, Constitution, etc.	6. Authority base is personal consent.

Figure 2. Key Differences – Leaders and Mentors³¹

Army Leadership Practice, Programs and Doctrine

In researching the Army's use of mentoring, two famous examples were found and often repeated in both the civilian and military literature. The first points to General George Marshall's role as a mentor, and its impact on the selection of the Army's future wartime strategic leaders. "It was in his five years at Benning, during what became known in the Army as the 'Benning Revolution,' that Marshall began accumulating the roster of names – kept in his own first class memory or else in the fabled 'black book' that officers thought he maintained – from which he later put together American military leadership in World War II."³² "More than 150 officers who taught or were trained at the Infantry School when Marshall was revolutionizing it eventually put on generals' stars."³³ The second recounts General, and later U.S. President, Dwight Eisenhower's experience of being mentored. "Shortly after World War I, Eisenhower, then a young officer somewhat pessimistic about his career chances, asked for a transfer to Panama to work under General Fox Connor, a senior officer whom he admired. General Connor

offered, and Eisenhower gladly took, a magnificent tutorial on the military. The effects of this relationship on Eisenhower cannot be measured quantitatively, but in examining his career path from that point, one cannot overestimate its significance. As Eisenhower wrote later about Connor, “Life with General Connor was a sort of graduate school in military affairs and the humanities, leavened by a man who was experienced in his knowledge of men and their conduct. I can never adequately express my gratitude to this one gentleman... In a lifetime of association with great and good men, he is the one more or less invisible figure to whom I owe an incalculable debt.”³⁴

The examples of these two well-known generals are still relevant today, and consistent with findings from the Army’s 1984 Professional Development of Officers Study (PDOS) survey of company and field grade, and general officers – mentorship is the desired leadership style, “Army leaders, regardless of age or grade, are expected to use a mentorship approach to leading and developing subordinates.”³⁵ Results of the survey also factored into the themes and action statements of General Wickham’s 1985 White Paper *Leadership Makes the Difference*, DA PAM 600-50, mentioned in the Introduction section of this paper. He writes “There is nothing mysterious about leadership. The simple truth is that good leaders are made, not born. Good leaders are easy to spot, hard to grow, and impossible to produce on command.”³⁶

The Department of the Army’s Letter announcing the mentoring strategy states “The Army’s definition of mentorship is the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect... What we, together, are asking each military and civilian leader is [*sic*] to make a commitment to mentor one person beyond the

chain of command starting this year and carrying this practice on into future years.”³⁷ It is signed by the Sergeant Major of the Army, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, and the Secretary of the Army. The Information Paper that followed, in May 2006, further explains the mentoring strategy and details of the on-line based AKO (Army Knowledge Online) Mentoring Community that were both launched in July 2005.

The focus of our strategy is on mentorship beyond the chain of command... addressees mentorship for all Army constituents (AC/RC Soldiers, DA Civilians, spouses, retirees, veterans, cadets, disabled Soldiers/veterans, and contractors who have access to AKO)... an extremely powerful tool for personal and professional development; it improves competence, leadership skills, self-awareness, and morale. It is an opportunity to make a positive difference in the next generation of leaders while maximizing one’s own potential as a leader... Conclusion: The Army believes the mentors have a vital role to play in preparing the next generations of leaders and professionals. Mentoring, both formal and informal and structured and unstructured, will continue to be part of our professional development process.³⁸

The corresponding regulation, AR 600-100 *Army Leadership* (effective March 2007), names counseling, coaching and mentoring in Chapter 1 as the “development multipliers” – the tools leaders use as part of the Leadership Development Model.³⁹ The model is explained in detail in DA PAM 350-58 (effective 1994), and comprised of three pillars – mentoring is included in the Operational Assignments pillar as a “special case” function of the commander, “...more personalized and individualized than teaching and coaching. It is an optional, subjective process between a concerned senior leader and a very select few of his subordinates. Mentoring involves candid dialogue, career advise [*sic*], caring and support, commitment, and assistance with assignments.”⁴⁰

FM 6-22 *Army Leadership – Competent, Confident, and Agile* (effective October 2006) Chapter 3, Paragraph 48 states “Leaders at all levels recognize the Army is a team as well as a team of teams,” then defines and describes the roles of formal and

informal leadership. “Legitimate or formal Leadership is granted to individuals by virtue of assignment to position of responsibility and is a function of rank and experience.”⁴¹

Informal leadership occurs when a member finds himself in a position to serve as a leader, not based on rank or position, and not meant to undermine the legitimate authority of the chain of command. “It can arise from knowledge gained from experience and sometimes requires initiative on the part of the individual to assume responsibility not designated to his position.”⁴² Mentors and mentoring would fit well within this description of informal leadership.

In Chapter 6, *Leader Intelligence*, the role of judgment is tied to learning and leadership, including a quote from General Omar Bradley’s address at the USAWC in 1971 – “Judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgments.” Leaders are expected to learn and gain experience from their own trial and error, and vicariously through watching others, the advice of mentors, and coaching by superiors, peers and even subordinates.⁴³ Chapter 7, *Leading*, defines the four core competencies of leading – Leads others; Extends influence beyond the chain of command; Leads by example; Communicates.⁴⁴ These make it clearer how being a mentor is one solid form of being a leader. Chapter 8 defines the activities for developing people, teams and the organization – “Success demands a fine balance of teaching, counseling, coaching, and mentoring.”⁴⁵ **Counseling** is the rater’s review of the subordinate’s performance and potential, is tied to formal evaluation reports, and is extended to all subordinates.⁴⁶ **Coaching** is the function of helping someone through a set of tasks, helping them understand their current level of performance, and how to reach the next level.⁴⁷ **Mentoring** takes place when the mentor provides a less experienced leader with

advice and counsel over time to help with professional and personal growth...

Mentoring focuses primarily on developing a less experienced leader for the future.”

This section also states what would be the strategic value of mentoring – “Future battlefield environments will place additional pressures on developing leaders at a rapid pace. To help these leaders acquire the requisite abilities, the Army relies on a leader development system that compresses and accelerates development of professional expertise, maturity, and conceptual and team building skills. Mentoring is a developmental tool that can effectively support many of these objectives. It is a combat multiplier because it boosts positive leadership behavior on a voluntary basis.”⁴⁸

Important to note is that although the mentoring strategy itself is a fairly recent statement (2005), its message and definition is consistent with all the publications reviewed – even those that pre-date it by more than ten years, implying that the Army’s concept of mentoring (voluntary, individualized leadership development, focus on future benefit to the mentored soldier and the organization, responsibility of leaders to mentor and not restricted to chain of command relationship) is both long-standing and time-proven.

Universal access to computers and the Internet, along with rapidly advancing software technology allows organizations to provide their members with Internet-based mentoring through the use of web pages or by e-mail (known as “virtual” or “cyber” mentoring, or “e-mentoring”). This access to information and other personnel removes many of the obstacles of traditional mentoring done by face-to-face acquaintances, and broadens the pool of potential mentoring partners when not constrained by time-zones, location/assignment, or formal introductions.⁴⁹ As mentioned previously, the online Army

Mentoring Program was launched in 2005 and is accessed within the AKO web community. Members register and create their profiles on the program website, then search for partners to invite into a mentoring relationship. There are also specialized mentor forums for members to post questions for anyone to answer.

A very recent USAWC Strategy Research Project from March 2007 examined the effectiveness of the Army Mentorship Program. The author surveyed the functionality of the online program tool – finding errors in the key member-entered profile inputs which negatively impacted the quality and validity of the search results. He compared the number of AKO user accounts (1.9 million) to the number of active users of the program at that time (1,292) to the total number of users who actually created profiles that could be searched by other users (573). He favorably evaluated the subject-specific mentoring forums as a resource for guidance and getting questions answered, but noticed questions that went unanswered more than three years, and non-relevant questions being posted to topic-specific forums – therefore finding these forums inefficient and not meeting their full potential. Based on his review of the AKO tool's functionality, the usage of less than 1% of eligible users, and the inefficient use of the mentor forums, he believes “that the current mentorship program is totally ineffective ... this program may have been endorsed at the top but it has not been accepted and executed throughout the middle and lower levels within the organization.”⁵⁰ He concludes that online mentoring may be appropriate for corporations focused on profit but not for the Army, since there is no monetary profit – mentoring is the work of caring leaders.

To investigate the findings of that author, and as part of the research for this paper, the online tool was reviewed. It appears disappointingly unsophisticated and unable to perform a lot of the expected “intelligent” software functions that enhance the user experience – data input logic functions, field-level help prompts, advanced search functions. However, this tool’s shortcomings and disappointing use by AKO members would not necessarily equate to an ineffective program – seems more like a (correctable) software issue and a failure to advertise.⁵¹ From the Army’s mentoring strategy information paper, the online program and the Army G-1 website resources were intended to provide every user with greater access to information and tools to increase their knowledge of mentoring and stimulate mentoring activities. So while agreeing that e-mentoring cannot substitute for good military leadership and mentoring, these tools do provide valuable knowledge to allow participants to optimize that relationship. It is probably not fair to conclude that the online Army Mentoring Program is ineffective, but perhaps rather underdeveloped and underutilized.

The only ARNG specific mention of mentoring is the pamphlet California Army National Guard Warrant Officer Mentor Program (CA ARNG PAM 600-11-1) written in 1999. The program states that mentoring contributes to the development of future leaders who know how to fight and win on future battlefields, and helps address the primary personnel issues of retention and readiness of the warrant officer corps. The program ranges from mandatory assignment of mentors and activities for warrant officer candidates, to the specific responsibilities of mentors, mentees and the Command Chief Warrant Officer for the personal and professional development of both junior and senior warrant officers.⁵² The program provides a mentoring framework that is arguably

relevant and adaptable to other state ARNG and military groups – officers, NCOs, enlisted.

Comparison of Active Component and National Guard Approaches

The organization, structure, and leadership development of the Army's AC is very similar to the ARNG, but for purposes of considering what could make an effective mentoring program, the two careers can be quite different. The military in general is perhaps the most diverse organization in the U.S. – with rising numbers of minority members (females, racial/ethnic minorities) and not many minority senior leaders to mentor them, and a dual-track career structure of enlisted and officer. For the ARNG, three additional subgroups exist with the traditional, the Active Guard and Reserve (AGR), and the state technician soldiers – with AC service time (and combat) a powerful differentiator. The Army is the full-time career of AC soldiers, similar to the AGR soldiers. However a large portion of the ARNG is the traditional status citizen-soldier who must manage two careers – balancing part-time military service and career development against the pressures of their full-time civilian job, and the potential for deployments and extended military duty to jeopardize advancement in the latter. Add to that the unique circumstance of the very limited contact time spent with the unit – weekend drills and two Annual Training weeks.

AC soldiers have generally the same career background and education path as those of similar rank and position. ARNG organizations contain soldiers that bring knowledge and experience from a vast range of professional and educational backgrounds, corporate positions, and AC service. The final consideration is geographic stability and location of mentors. Soldiers serving in the AC are assigned world-wide,

and even with stabilized tours will change stations every 2-4 years. This rapid turnover of leaders and all organizational personnel makes it more difficult to form the kind of trust and bonds associated with a mentoring relationship, and then maintain it when one of the partners moves to another duty location. On this point, ARNG soldiers have the advantage of being assigned within a state (normally their home state or nearby – of their choosing) and tend to stay within that state for their entire career (with the exception of special assignments or other types of deployments), as do their leaders and mentors. Additionally, the ARNG retirees often remain in their home state and maintain ties with the units and people with whom they served.

For all the career aspects that the AC and ARNG have in common, the career conditions noted above make them a very different experience for the soldiers. In terms of the geographic and personnel stability, the ARNG on a state and even national level has much in common with large civilian corporations, but other career conditions make them very different as well. It is for these reasons that I propose a blend of appropriate business and military mentorship models that will have the highest benefit for developing the future leaders of the ARNG.

The Way Ahead

“The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is to get an old one out.”⁵³ The presence/use/implementation of mentoring is determined, evolved, and developed in an organization as part of the command climate at the highest level of the organization. The senior leaders of the organization must have a strategic vision. In keeping with the Army Mentoring Strategy, the ARNG would benefit from a renewed interest in and command emphasis on senior leaders actively seeking soldiers to

mentor – outside their chain of command, and from direct leaders encouraging subordinates to seek out mentoring relationships. Senior leaders would establish the guidelines they will use to identify the leadership skills that will be needed by the future generation leaders, and build the pool of potential key leaders that will run the organization in the future. Because most ARNG soldiers remain within the state for their careers, the stable personnel and leadership pool allows senior leaders to see the return on their investment of time spent mentoring and developing young leaders, and a greater chance of equal opportunities to develop mentoring relationships throughout the organization. For this reason, there is a higher chance of a successful mentoring program. The downside is that since the force tends to be stable, more controlled and with minimal influx of newcomers, the pool of mentors and mentees could become stagnant or may create the conditions where only conformity is appreciated or acceptable, or even worse, creates a “good old boy network” where well-entrenched mentors use that position to unfairly advance their own or the careers of their protégés. With today’s operational tempo and combat zone deployments, the ARNG cannot afford to have non-qualified individuals occupying critical positions. “It was in exactly that spirit that Marshall cashiered hundreds of old officers judged unable to adapt to the dynamic of the new battlefield, including many friends, who cursed his name ever after.”⁵⁴

Soldiers should be encouraged to look for and identify multiple sources of mentoring to meet their specific development needs, and not rely on one mentor to meet all those needs. They may find mentors in experienced peers, or subordinates (it is not uncommon for NCOs to mentor junior officers). To leverage the benefit of geographic stability, and overcome the limited time of contact, they might consider

several successful civilian approaches – namely team mentoring, where the team acts to mentor its members, and mentoring groups or circles, where mentees would have a group of mentors available to call on, similar to a group physician practice.⁵⁵ Military retirees, both AC and ARNG, could become a valuable resource network – an example is the “Graybeards”, retired major and lieutenant generals who mentor division commanders during Warfighter exercises.

The final recommendation would be to develop a state version of an online mentoring community, similar to and compatible with the AKO program, that better serves the ARNG soldier’s needs. The Army G1 mentorship web pages provide good informational background – would propose enhancement of those pages with ARNG-specific content accessible to all users. Initially the online mentoring programs would be implemented at the State level for internal use – each participating state would have their own site, which could later be integrated between states and link with/upload to the AKO Mentoring Program database. The rollout of the state programs could be given a proper “product launch” advertisement campaign to the local units, with incentives for enrolling profiles in the online database. This would quickly build the pool of potential mentoring partners, and provide participants with multiple means to find, initiate, and maintain valuable mentoring relationships – face-to-face, virtual, long distance, intrastate, and interstate, ARNG as well as AC.

Conclusion

In my initial discussions with The Adjutant General of Pennsylvania regarding the strategic relevance of this research topic, General Wright indicated great interest amongst *all* Adjutants General in “building the bench”; i.e., identifying and developing

future key leaders at the senior field grade staff / command levels, as well as at the general officer / strategic levels. Early and effective mentoring is critical to developing a candidate pool of junior and mid-level leaders, which also ensures that a qualified group of individuals is consistently available to fill key positions as they become vacant either through attrition or crisis. In this time of transformation and “jointness,” developing leaders who are able to succeed and thrive for the long term is no small task. Leaders today not only must be able to respond and adapt quickly to the ever-changing strategic demands of the 21st Century, but also work in various environments alongside other military components and services, various interdepartmental agencies and/or coalitions, and international forces.⁵⁶ It is no small task to develop leaders able to flourish and succeed in such an environment.

The National Guard can build upon mentoring as practiced in the business community by integrating the Army’s concepts of mentoring with the latest trends/concepts in human resource management, perhaps even contracting with civilian firms specializing in developing mentoring programs appropriate for different professions. The costs associated with implementing a comprehensive mentoring program fall into two categories – the technology and program costs, and the human resource costs. Training and advertisement materials, and database development and maintenance will incur monetary expenditures. However, the biggest investment will be the time, effort and personal commitment of leaders, mentors and mentees to this non-mandatory but extremely beneficial aspect of leader development. The many benefits returned on the investment go not only to the mentee, but also to the mentoring partners as contributors to the mentee’s successes, and ultimately to the organization that gets

effective mentoring embedded into its culture. The culture of developing successful leaders becomes self-sustaining – mentees become future mentors. “Some leaders have always used mentoring to enhance the competence and performance of those they lead. The great leaders have tended to do this with exceptional skill and grace. But we are now moving away from the notion of leader as an all-knowing commander to the recognition that, in the Information Age, organizational success is built on the cumulative effect of tens of thousands of less majestic decisions. A myriad of mentors operating throughout the organization can improve the quality and beneficial effect of those decisions. Today, effective leaders regard personal mentoring – and encouraging those who are mentored to expand the circle – as one of their greatest opportunities to invest in building a successful organization.”⁵⁷

A future leader is identified, nurtured, and created – mentored to be successful at the higher levels within the organization. Through teaching, tutor, coaching and council the majority will succeed – but it is the additional step of mentoring that rounds out the individual. Senior ARNG leaders have expressed a need to “build the bench” of leaders to fill future key positions, and effective mentoring would serve to build the pool of potential candidates for those positions. With the use of command selection and promotion boards, along with developed tracking tools of the mentorship program, these actions would assist in developing the core concept – enhanced with mentoring workshop would raise awareness of requirements for bench building through command focused emphasis. The purpose of this paper was to provide information and recommendations of civilian and military models of mentorship appropriate to building the Army National Guard program – a program that guides mentors, mentees and

organizations in developing the future strategic leaders of their state organization. The research conducted shows that the mentoring concept is valid for leadership development, and provides benefit to the organization, its individual leaders, and the future force. There is a rich foundation of civilian sector and military mentoring programs already built – it is now up to the ARNG to develop the architecture for its programs.

As stated by LTG Bagnal over 20 years ago, “The responsibility for seizing the opportunities to mentor subordinates and grow the leaders of the future is borne by all leaders in the Army. At all levels of the Army, leaders must embrace the concept that the greatest legacy they can leave in a unit, or in the Army as a whole, is a group of leaders ready to meet the challenges of the future.”⁵⁸

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