The background image shows the interior of a military vehicle, likely a Humvee. A soldier's helmet with the name 'GREEN' on the front is placed on the dashboard. The dashboard is a dark, perforated metal surface. In the background, a large window looks out onto a wooded area with trees. The text 'VEHICLE MAINTENANCE SERVICE' is visible on a sign in the background.

Wheelhouse Wednesday: Developing Dynamic Leaders by Bridging the Experience Gap

■ By Maj. Sarah E. Stevenson

Spc. Stephen Green, 508th Transportation Company, 266th Quartermaster Battalion, maneuvers a humvee through an obstacle course during the first 266th Quartermaster Battalion Truck Rodeo on Oct. 8, 2015. (Photo by T. Anthony Bell)

FEATURES

The Transportation School develops its leaders by finding creative ways to follow the Army Leader Development Model.

Leadership is the cornerstone of the Army profession; it is deemed so important that it is indoctrinated into each level of the Army. Publications and regulations discuss leadership and teach service members how to focus on it within their organizations.

One such book is Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 350–58, Army Leader Development Program. Derived from and expanding on Field Manual 6–22, Army Leadership, DA PAM 350–58 explains leader development further by describing the processes and methods used to manage the Army Leader Development Program. It breaks down leadership by introducing the Army’s Leader Development Model. (See figure 1.)

Leader Development Tenets

Each section of the Army Leader Development Model has the same three tenets: experience, education, and training. Following prescribed doctrine and policy, schoolhouses teach leadership to students during professional military education. The schoolhouses focus on developing the education and training tenets.

The education tenet is often taught in a classroom through formal instruction. Specific field-craft education and formal leadership instruction are written into the courses’ programs of instruction using both classroom instruction and practical exercises.

This provides students with the building blocks of their profession, better equipping them for mission accomplishment at their units. The classroom instruction also provides a foundation for the training tenet of the Army Leader Development Model.

Transportation School Training

Despite being geographically dispersed, the Transportation School has several training resources at its disposal for all facets of the Transportation Corps. At Fort Lee, Virginia, military occupational specialty

(MOS) 88N (transportation management coordinator) Soldiers train on computer systems in the classroom and then put their skills to use at the Multimodal Training Site.

At the site, students can put what they learned in the classroom to use on C–130 Hercules and C–17 Globemaster aircraft and load cargo at the railhead to see how what they planned in the classroom works in practice. Transportation officers and warrant officers also use the site to practice what they have learned in the classroom.

Officers attending the Transportation Basic Officer Leader Course and Warrant Officer Basic Course use other training sites at Fort Lee as well, including simulation centers where students experience rollover drills and practice convoy skills in a controlled environment.

Transportation watercraft operators are trained at Fort Eustis, Virginia, which has simulators of each Army watercraft. The post also has a disaster tank simulator that simulates a watercraft taking on water. All of these simulators allow students to hone their skills in a training environment, providing them with an advanced skill set before leaving the Training and Doctrine Command environment for their units.

Finally, at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, MOS 88M (motor transport operator) Soldiers use a vast road network to hone their driving skills on various tactical wheeled vehicles.

The Transportation School wanted to take training further. When looking at ways to encompass leadership and mentorship training, the Transportation School looked to its higher headquarters. Aligning with the Combined Arms Support Command’s line of effort (LOE) “Develop Game-Changing Leaders,” the Transportation School created the LOE “Develop Leaders.”

This LOE has three major objectives: train, educate, and develop agile Transportation Corps and Department of the Army civilian leaders, talent management, and mentorship.

Wheelhouse Wednesday

The experience tenet is often developed during on-the-job training while Soldiers are accomplishing missions with their units. The Transportation School looked to reduce the experience gap by incorporating formal and informal leader development and mentorship.

Formal training was written into the programs of instruction for the Transportation Basic Officer Leader Course and Warrant Officer Basic Course and supplemented with a relaxed, unofficial event to provide students with another opportunity for leader development and mentorship.

Titled “Wheelhouse Wednesday,” this recurring event is meant to connect students and senior leaders of the Transportation Corps. The idea has proven to be a great way to enhance formal schoolhouse training and has been a tradition since the 1970s.

During Wheelhouse Wednesday, senior leaders can share their experiences with students. Students are encouraged to test theories and expand their expertise through discussions with senior leaders. These discussions often lead to follow-up office calls between students and senior leaders, which further the potential for mentorship. Wheelhouse Wednesday also supports the creation of dynamic Transportation Corps leaders in the operational force.

Wheelhouse Wednesday has been a Transportation Corps tradition since the corps was at Fort Eustis. Members would meet weekly at the on-post club, The Wheelhouse, to foster connections with each other outside of the office. Senior transportation leaders believed conducting leader development in a relaxed atmosphere without formal structure would foster better relationships.

The program continued when the Transportation Corps moved to Fort Lee. It is now conducted quarterly at an on-post sports bar called The HideAway. Each session begins with singing the Transportation Corps song followed by the introduction

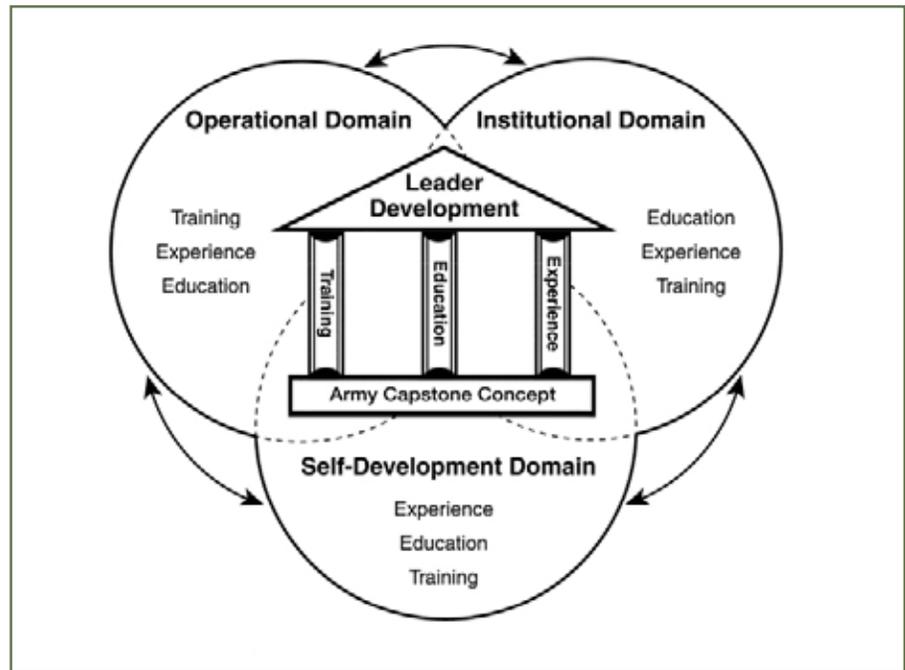


Figure 1. The Army Leader Development Model from Department of the Army Pamphlet 350-58, Army Leader Development Program.

and discussion of a predetermined topic. Topics have included what a battalion commander expects from platoon leaders and career planning for Transportation Soldiers, among others.

Following the question and answer portion, individuals from the Office of the Chief of Transportation are introduced, providing students with additional resources for career progression and talent management. The event ends with junior and senior leaders breaking into smaller discussion groups to encourage leader development, develop mentorship networks between senior leaders and students, and foster esprit de corps.

The Transportation Corps' Wheelhouse Wednesday is one way to execute higher level guidance on leader development by reducing the gap between training and experience for students and officers. Placing an emphasis on leader development will serve the Army well.

The institutional training received in the schoolhouse combined with this quarterly session allows students

to enter the force better prepared to handle the challenges they may face.

Because they have the institutional knowledge from the schoolhouse and the ability to reach out to senior leaders through connections developed at Wheelhouse Wednesday, students are better prepared to handle the ever-changing Army environment.

In the same way that there is no single way to lead, there is no single way to teach leadership or foster mentorship. Wheelhouse Wednesday is simply a way the Transportation Corps executes higher level guidance by creating an environment to foster both leader and mentor development and enhance formalized training.

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