

Maximizing the Army's Logistics Talent

■ By Lt. Gen. Aundre F. Piggee



The Army deputy chief of staff, G-4, shares his lessons learned about talent management as the Army begins using a new talent management program.

Planning the editorial content of *Army Sustainment* is a little like mentoring. The Army G-4 selects topics in order to send a clear message to every sustainer that this is what we need to focus on. In upcoming issues this year, we will tackle how the Army sustainment team can train, build readiness, and best support the Army in 2017. But first, there is no better way to start the year than with this issue's emphasis on talent management.

The Army's new talent management program is designed to improve how the Army matches Soldiers' knowledge and skills with emerging requirements. This effort could not come soon enough, as demands for the Army to support global contingency operations continue to grow.

The Army has never faced a more diverse array of challenges than it does today—from where it will fight future wars to how it will fight them and what enemy it will face. In the headlines every day, we see continued instability in the Middle East, with massive numbers of refugees leaving and the consequences of that migration around the world. We see challenges in Europe caused by Russia's aggression. In the Pacific, we see China's increased capabilities and North Korea's continued instability.

We face technological challenges as well. Rivals may not have greater capabilities than ours, but they are developing comparable ones. Our past dominance of land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace are all at risk.

How do we ensure the Army's greatest resource, talent, is not at risk, too? The Army has to do its part; this talent management program is a positive step. Soldiers must do their part by being fit, trained, and ready for duty. Leaders must also do their part by coaching, teaching, and mentoring.

Opportunities abound in the Army, and we have to keep asking, "How can we ensure our Soldiers are taking advantage of these opportunities so they can be their very best?"

Many of my ideas on managing talent are not my own. They come from observing senior leaders and being encouraged by mentors to take different routes than I originally planned during my career. I tried what they suggested, and it has worked for me. In the spirit of sharing, here is what I have learned about managing talent.

Use Knowledge to Mentor

First, understand all the Army's programs, assignment processes, policies, and systems so that you can effectively counsel and mentor. You cannot mentor unless you have a solid baseline of knowledge. That knowledge affects what you can do for your Soldiers and what you can teach them.

You are always a mentor in some capacity, if not by your words, then by your example. Your Soldiers are paying attention to you and will learn from you—both the good and the bad.

Make sure you engage in honest and fair counseling routinely—not just when appraisals are due. You need to have the hard conversations about performance and potential, which might be difficult for you and your Soldiers. This issue's hip-pocket guide provides a checklist with tips for improving counseling at all levels. Study it. Add it to your notebook. Refer to it often. Share it with your peers.

Embrace Discomfort

Second, sometimes people want to remain in jobs where they feel comfortable and perform familiar roles. But as leaders you need to know your Soldiers' strengths and capitalize on those strengths by placing them in new jobs where they may be uncomfortable. This



will teach them new skills and maximize their potential.

In addition to knowing your Soldiers' skills, you need to know your own. Personal growth results from placing yourself in unfamiliar situations. If you are an introvert, take on an extrovert's job. If you are good at tactics, take on a job where strategic skills are needed. As you learn and achieve success in these situations, you will grow to be a better leader and a better person.

Consider the Whole Picture

Third, look at the whole picture when you advise. Consider your Soldiers' family situations. Manage talent from the perspective of what is right for the individual and their family circumstances. Sometimes small changes can help bring big performance improvements.

Encourage Broadening

Fourth, understand and encourage Soldiers to participate in broadening assignments. Many Soldiers believe that these are positions entirely outside of their military occupational specialties, such as working in industry, serv-

ing as a congressional liaison, or going to graduate school.

But broadening assignments are much more than those opportunities. They also include some tactical and institutional positions, such as serving in special operations units, at regionally or functionally aligned headquarters, or at training centers or schoolhouses. These jobs can stretch you professionally.

Redefine Success

Fifth, think anew about personnel management. The old personnel management framework created a highly structured path with definite milestones. It was ultimately defined by progression up through the ranks. This led to an up-or-out system, one dependent upon a requirement to meet certain gates but bound by increasingly limited opportunities for advancement.

It is time to redefine what it means to be successful. With the new system, success will mean building an Army that acknowledges the skills and abilities that our Soldiers have. A National Guard member may speak the language of a country that we need to go to, or a reservist may have expertise from a ci-

vilian job about a product that we will need. These are the skills that will help us win on the battlefield in the future.

I truly believe managing talent is every leader's primary business. It is part of the Army's charter to take care of and provide world-class leadership for our daughters and sons, whose character and commitment led them to serve our great nation.

As I lead the G-4 team in creating the policies that you will use as sustainers, I want to hear from you. When I can, I will be stopping by to see firsthand how our policies affect your ability to train and build readiness. If you have ideas you want to share, let me know. Feedback is how we can all improve to meet tomorrow's challenges.

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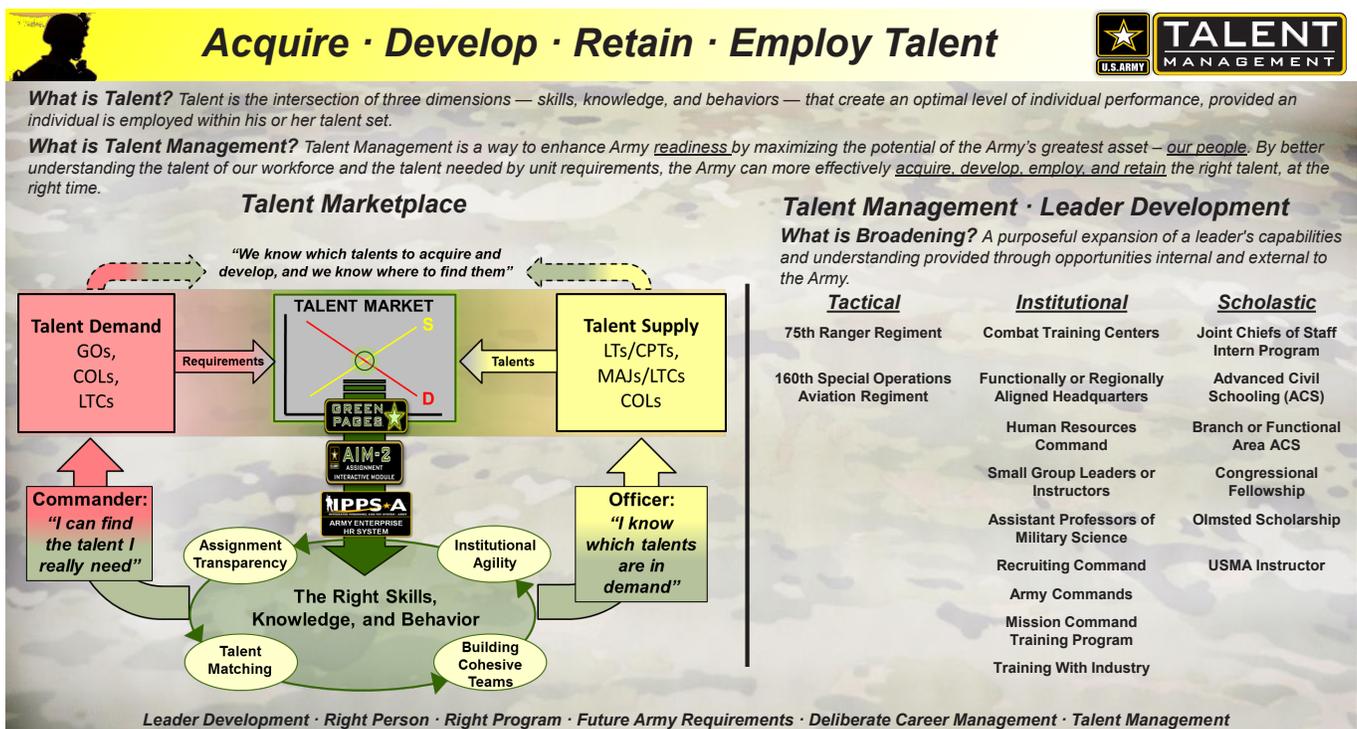


Figure 1. This Army G-1 figure explains talent management. See more at www.talent.army.mil.

