

# Identifying the Talent in Talent Management

■ By Gen. Gustave “Gus” Perna



The Army's new talent management program will match Soldiers to jobs and missions that align with their preferences, skills, and experiences.

Before I left the Pentagon this fall to become the Army Materiel Command's commanding general, I asked my colleague in charge of Army personnel policies, Lt. Gen. James C. McConville, to help me explain the Army's new talent management program in this issue of *Army Sustainment*.

In my 33 years in the Army, Soldiers have basically been defined only by rank and military occupational specialty. But thanks to Lt. Gen. McConville's farsighted work, the way we manage talent will fundamentally change.

## A New Personnel System

For the first time, the Army will have an integrated personnel and pay system for active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard members. The system will include a database containing information about Soldiers' job preferences, backgrounds, skills, and proficiencies.

This system will be useful for matching Soldiers to particular missions. For example, if we find ourselves on a humanitarian mission in a South American country, we could tap into the new system to find Soldiers with appropriate language skills or other special knowledge of the region.

Think of the system as a Global Combat Support System—Army for personnel. Just as that system is giving sustainers unprecedented visibility over equipment and supplies, this new system provides visibility of our talent.

You will no longer simply be Sgt. Smith in charge of a supply room. Now we know all of the special skills and attributes that you have, as well as your professional desires, so we can

find you the best fit. As Lt. Gen. McConville has pointed out to me, if we had a system like this in place in the 1960s when Jimi Hendrix entered the Army, we would have put the greatest guitarist ever in the band, not jump school.

There will be some growing pains as we get the right people and put them in the right spots. But this will make a million-person Army more agile and flexible; most importantly, it will increase readiness.

The new system will only work if leaders take ownership. We cannot treat this nonchalantly, as if it is just another survey the Army wants us to fill out.

In the pages of this issue, two leaders I greatly admire, retired Gen. Johnnie E. Wilson, whom I once worked for, and Lt. Gen. Aundre F. Piggee, who succeeded me as the Army G-4, offer insights into the management aspect of talent management. They provide tools and blueprints for how to maximize the benefits of a good talent management system.

## Five Points About Talent

I want to focus my comments on talent. The Army is a people business. I always use five points when I talk to Soldiers about talent.

**Be the very best.** When you go to war, you want the best people around you and you have to be at your best. You cannot be average, just “phone it in,” and get promoted; it will not happen. The way all of those before us were successful was by being the very best.

**One hundred percent of the people need to do 100 percent of the work.** In today's environment (a smaller Army with more demands and deployments looming), everyone needs to be ready.

That includes the total force—active, reserve, and civilian. Within the Army, I see unlimited talent and energy in our personnel, but everyone has to contribute. Wars are won by nations, not one individual, one unit, one group, or one service.

**Focus your efforts on what is important.** What is important right now is building readiness, building a future Army, and taking care of our Soldiers, civilians, and families. If you are working on something that is not focused on the Army's priorities, re-evaluate what you are doing.

**Hold yourself accountable.** In 2003, when I got a phone call saying that we were going to war and I was to load my unit's equipment on a train, no one first asked, "Is your equipment ready to go?" It was my job to make sure it was ready. I held myself and my unit accountable. If you get a call saying that you are being de-

ployed tomorrow, ask yourself if you are physically and mentally fit. Do you have the discipline needed to go now? Are your Soldiers and equipment ready?

**Be competent, be committed, and be strong in character.** Competence, commitment, and strength of character are responsibilities we have to ourselves, our families, our units, our Soldiers, our Army, and most importantly, our country.

Since I became the commander of the Army Materiel Command, many people have asked me if I plan to continue contributing to *Army Sustainment* magazine. I cannot always drop into your supply room, but I want to keep sharing my ideas with the talented men and women of our sustainment community.

So yes, I will keep writing, and I charge each of you to keep sharing,

discussing, and even challenging the ideas presented in this great professional bulletin.

One final thought: the Army G4, the CASCOM commander and I are working on a plan that will combine the efforts put into *Army Sustainment* magazine with those of the team that produces *AMC Today*. This will create the magazine of choice for Army logisticians and a key professional development forum for our Soldiers and our civilian workforce, as I believe it is very important for the logistics community to have a venue to discuss and debate the ideas and developments that will form the backbone of our future force.

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*A Soldier with the 122nd Aviation Support Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, conducts a maintenance check on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (Photo by Sgt. Steven Galimore)*