

# Talent Management: Right Officer, Right Place, Right Time

■ By Lt. Col. Kent M. MacGregor and Maj. Charles L. Montgomery

*Thirty-two top performing company-grade warrant and noncommissioned officers at the joint and multinational levels within the Pacific region completed the 8th Theater Sustainment Command's Phase I of the Young Alaka'i Leader Development Program 16-02 on September 17, 2016. (Photo by Staff Sgt. John C. Garver)*



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## FEATURES

The Human Resources Command uses talent management to place officers in positions that are best suited for their units and their careers.

If you have served as an Army officer for more than a few years and have experienced a permanent change of station move, you have probably wondered what considerations and information are used to determine your next assignment. The simple answer is “all the information that is available.” But what does that really mean?

The Human Resources Command (HRC) has the unique responsibility to optimize personnel readiness across the Army. It does so by engaging the force, maximizing leader development opportunities, and building strategic leaders.

Through recurring engagement opportunities, HRC collates information pertinent to an officer’s career to inform decision-making for the purpose of strategic management. This information is crucial to the strategic talent management (TM) role of HRC’s Officer Personnel Management Directorate (OPMD) and Force Sustainment Division (FSD).

### What Is Talent and TM?

The Mission Command Center of Excellence published a TM White Paper in April 2015, and the Army Combined Arms Center quickly followed with the TM Concept of Operations five months later. The Army also published the U.S. Army TM Strategy in September 2016. These documents define and set the Army on a path to more effective TM.

The Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis, an arm of the Army G-1, developed this commonly accepted Army definition of talent: “Talent is the unique intersection of skills, knowledge and behavior in every person. It represents far more than the training, education and experiences provided by the Army. The fullness of each person’s life experiences, to include investments they’ve made in themselves, personal and familial relationships (networks), ethnographic and demographic background, preference, hobbies, travel, personality, learning style, education and a myriad number of other factors better suit

them to some development or employment opportunities than others.”

The concept of TM is maturing, and information technology systems are being developed to maximize HRC’s ability to execute this critical task. FSD currently uses a variety of means to strategically manage talent while ensuring the Army achieves the chief of staff of the Army’s number one priority: readiness.

Simultaneously, HRC focuses on professional development in accordance with Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management, and personal readiness by managing the life cycle of an officer’s career.

### TM Is the Commander’s Business

Like each of the OPMD assignment divisions, FSD’s mission is simple: place the right officer (with the right skills) in the right unit at the right time to meet readiness and professional development needs.

The goal of TM is similar, but it looks to enhance Army readiness by maximizing the potential of all its personnel in order to create an optimal level of individual performance. Placing the right person with the right talents in the right job begins with the unit’s mission essential requirements list (MER), or in TM vernacular, the “demand signal.”

OPMD executes two manning cycles annually. These cycles determine who will move and which units will receive the officers identified to move in order to meet the unit’s designated manning levels. Units submit a MER to OPMD’s Officer Readiness Division.

The MER is how the commander prioritizes unit vacancies based on the table of organization and equipment (TOE) or table of distribution and allowances (TDA). The MER explains what other talents (knowledge, skills, or behaviors) are needed to make the unit successful. The clarity of the demand signal enhances the strategic talent match, benefiting both the unit and the officer. Commanders lose

their voices if they do not deliberately participate in the MER process.

In the months preceding the semi-annual manning conference, assignment officers are busy on the phone identifying which officers will move during the cycle, what the officers would like to do for their next assignments, and where they would like to do them. At the same time, the assignment officer must always consider each officer's professional development needs.

The Officer Readiness Division, in conjunction with the assignment branches, determines which requirements will be filled and their priority. Once the branch receives its mission requirements, the assignment officer starts to implement talent matching using HRC's current tool set and all relevant available information.

### What Are the Tools?

The assignment officer is the principal face of FSD. As the primary touch point for an officer's next assignment, an assignment officer balances Army

requirements, guidance from branch proponents and local leaders, policy, and the officer's input and performance assessments. He or she also ensures that an officer remains on a developmental and competitive career path by applying all the information that has been collated.

Talent information accumulates over time. As more information becomes available, more refined talent matches fall into place. Company-grade officers working up and through key developmental (KD) assignments are mastering fundamental leadership and branch-specific skills to achieve branch expertise.

Company-grade sustainers can expect to serve primarily in brigade and below formations, leading troops and executing sustainment tasks in both TOE and TDA units. All the while, a performance profile is maturing through academic and officer evaluation reports, individual skill qualifications are being recorded on the officer record brief (ORB), potential is being articulated by senior raters, and per-

sonal needs and desires are being noted based on the assignment officer's engagements with the officer and the chain of command.

KD OERs contain critical information. The compilation of this information and Army requirements now drive options for post-KD broadening experiences for company-grade sustainers. Performance matters; the best performers will receive more and diverse opportunities.

Assignment officers will give officers assessments of where they stand against their peers during any of their multiple one-on-one engagements. The assessments become more refined as the sustainer completes KD qualification. Once KD is complete, the officer may be eligible for a broadening assignment. It is important to note that the assignment officer's assessment has no part in a Department of the Army promotion and selection board.

Broadening assignments are categorized into three distinct groups: tactical, institutional, and scholastic.

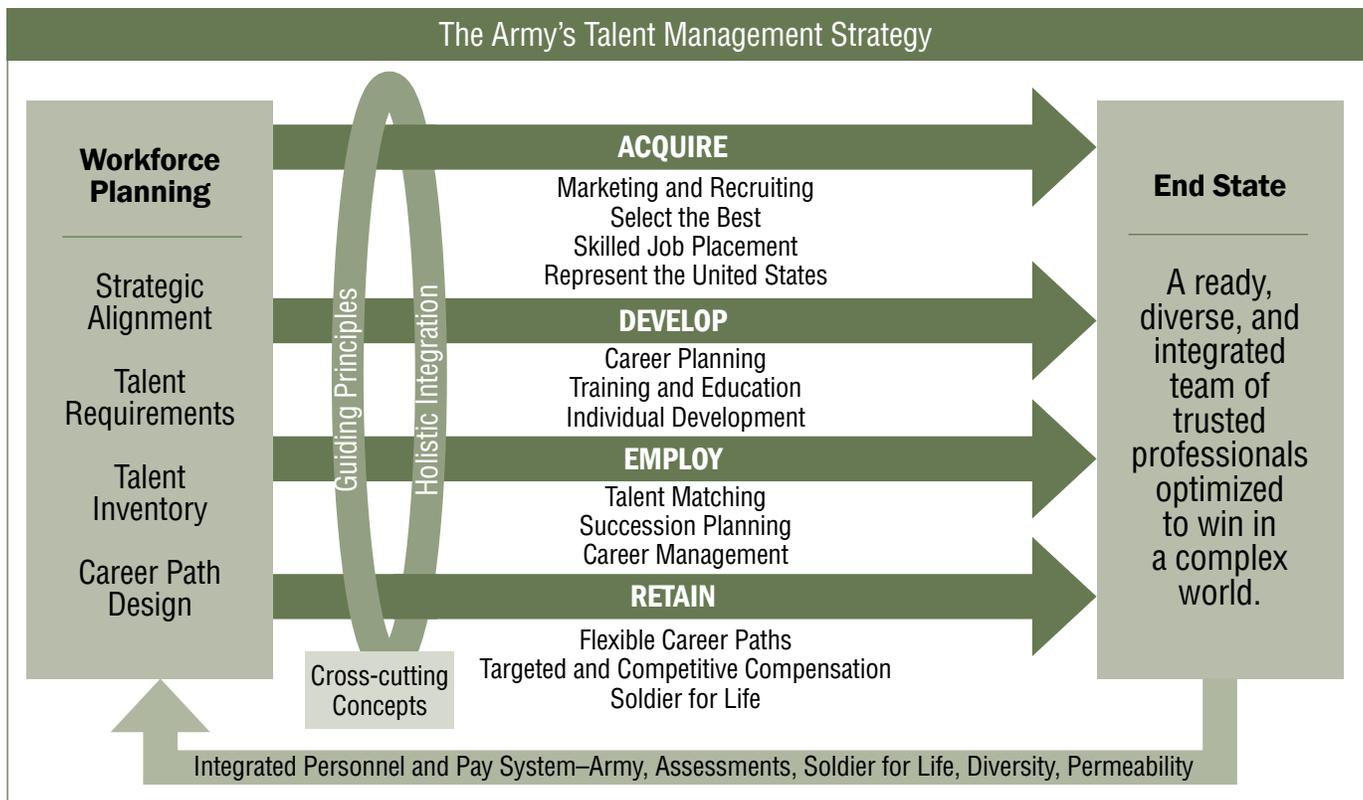


Figure 1. The Army's talent management strategy.



*Col. Stephen Bousquet, commander of the 369th Sustainment Brigade, congratulates Lt. Col. Joel Buffardi following his promotion ceremony in Iraq on Nov. 9, 2016. Buffardi was serving as a liaison officer with the 369th Sustainment Brigade.*

Tactical broadening opportunities may include assignments to the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and other special mission units.

Institutional broadening allows officers to serve in generating force assignments as small-group leaders or instructors at the Army Recruiting Command, an Army component command, a combat training center, a mission command training center, or a regionally or functionally aligned headquarters.

Examples of scholastic broadening opportunities include the Joint Chiefs of Staff Intern Program, congressional fellowships, the Olmsted Scholarship, and a wide variety of Advanced Civil Schooling opportunities with follow-on assignments to the United States Military Academy and other highly selective branch or functional area positions.

Being selected for major and completing Intermediate Level Education initiates the field-grade portion of an officer's career. Information about the officer's talent continues to build, and a profile begins to emerge for strate-

gic TM. The cycle of KD qualification continues for sustainers who can expect to serve at the corps level and below in both TOE and TDA units.

As field-grade sustainers complete their major KD experiences, the compilation of information and Army requirements again drives options for broadening experiences. OERs from both KD jobs and broadening assignments will determine the officer's competitiveness for the centralized selection list and promotion to lieutenant colonel.

Officers demonstrating the greatest potential at this stage can expect to be assigned to joint duty assignment list positions, as a military assistant, aide-de-camp, or executive officer, or to joint, Army, or Army Materiel Command staffs to gain enterprise-level experience.

HRC's methods and information are neither perfect nor complete, but over the years HRC has refined its strategic TM tactics, techniques, and procedures. The future holds great potential for progressive leaps forward as FSD, OPMD, and HRC work collaboratively with the Talent Man-

agement Task Force and senior Army leaders to enable better strategic TM.

## The Future of TM

Information (and how it is used to achieve both readiness and professional development) is important. Its importance will remain critical going forward.

Many of the new initiatives now being considered are expected to improve what human resources professionals and commanders know about officers and unit requirements. Further, a number of proposals that are in the planning stages could fundamentally change career progression and how an individual officer's talent is employed.

The first major initiative underway is the rollout of the Assignment Interactive Module 2 (AIM-2). The previous version of the system was fairly limited in its application and use. Its goal was to begin collecting officers' assignment preferences and information not normally found in Army personnel systems.

AIM-2 will be a primary means of communication among officers in the field, units, and HRC. It will allow more robust information-sharing and collaboration, and its goal will be to minimize the underuse or misalignment of talent in the assignment process.

AIM-2 is the bridging strategy from HRC's current information collection and management practices to tomorrow's Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army. AIM-2 functionality will continue in the Integrated Personnel and Pay System—Army for use by all branches in the active Army, National Guard, and Reserve.

Each officer's AIM-2 "landing page" will be tailored to his or her branch and grade and will take the place of much of the current branch webpage content. No longer should logistics lieutenant colonels have to seek out announcements for the upcoming Senior Service College board; they will instead find information about an upcoming Senior Service College or colonel promotion board on the landing page.

The ORB will continue to provide

a single-page snapshot of an officer's military and civilian schooling, his or her assignment history, and similar pertinent data. Promotion and selection boards will continue to use the ORB to provide that basic data.

However, AIM-2 will go much farther, enabling an officer to build a resume of knowledge, skills, and behaviors visible to the assignment officer. Much of this information will also be visible to the officer's next units of assignment.

This resume will allow the officer to inform the reader of facts or talents that are not on the ORB. Were you a foreign exchange student in high school? Have you received a certification in supply chain management on your own? Are you on your local school board or active in your community? Any of these attributes or experiences could be useful for an assignment officer trying to match an officer's knowledge, skills, and behaviors to a particular Army or joint requirement.

### **Assess, Assess, Assess**

The Army is also reviewing the numerous assessments currently in place to determine which are the most useful. Everything is under review, from the OER to Commander 360 to the Global Assessment Tool to the Army physical fitness test.

Each of these assessments measure different aspects of an officer's performance, potential, and behaviors, but most are not connected in any coherent or usable way. There may be gaps in what is assessed, so other tools may be implemented to gauge an officer's knowledge, skills, or behaviors. Officers should be interested in knowing their own performance and in developing themselves, and many of these mechanisms can enable that.

A human resources professional will look for demonstrated performance, potential, and signals that the officer is ready and well-suited for the next opportunity. Regardless, the goal is to provide more information to better inform assignment and professional development processes.

Additional mechanisms may provide valuable information about an officer. The United States Military Academy and Army Cadet Command have both begun to accumulate a significant amount of data about their cadets: intellectual and interpersonal aptitude, behaviors or personality traits, and career field aspirations. The Army is also considering requiring

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officers to take the Graduate Record Exam or the Graduate Management Admission Test, possibly during the captains career course.

Any of this information, whether pertaining to propensities collected prior to commissioning or analytical reasoning capability collected at the captains course, could be invaluable when trying to decide about the fit of an officer to a particular assignment, broadening program, or even (in the case of the Voluntary Transfer Incentive Program) a future career field.

### **It Is Not Just About You**

The future of TM in the Army certainly depends heavily on information about the officer, but there is an equally important component to matching those talents to a requirement: the unit's needs. As previously mentioned, the unit's MER allows the unit to communicate the specific attributes and talents it desires of its future Soldiers.

In the near future, AIM-2 will allow the unit to enter this information for its positions. AIM-2 will enable the unit to announce its talent desires not just to HRC but also to officers who may be interested in the position and available to move.

AIM-2 will then facilitate the discussion and decision-making process for both the officer and unit by enabling the parties to see each other's

information. Officers will see the unit's requirement and desired talents; units will see the officer's basic information, ORB, and resume.

Commanders must participate so that they do not lose their voices, in whole or in part, in the process. HRC will still play the critical role of assigning officers to units in order to meet each one's required manning level, but

this "marketplace" environment will better inform the decision from both a unit and individual perspective.

Moving the Army in the direction of maximizing TM is an enormous undertaking, but it is necessary to meet the Army TM Strategy's desired end state, which is "A ready, professional, diverse and integrated team of trusted professionals optimized to win in a complex world." Success in this critical endeavor will depend on active and informed participation by individual officers and leaders in the field.

Lt. Col. Kent M. MacGregor serves in HRC's OPMD as part of the Army's Talent Management Task Force. He has a bachelor's degree in aeronautical technology and management from Arizona State University. He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff Officer Course, Joint Firepower Course, Combined Arms and Services Staff School, and Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape School.

Maj. Charles L. Montgomery is an assignments officer at HRC. He holds a master's degree from the School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He is a graduate of Intermediate Level Education, Pathfinder School, Airborne School, and the Joint Plans, Joint Firepower, and Mobilization and Deployment Courses.