

A photograph of soldiers in full combat gear, including helmets and vests, carrying a simulated casualty on a stretcher. The scene is set outdoors during a bright, hazy day, likely at sunrise or sunset, with the sun low on the horizon creating a strong backlight effect. The soldiers are in motion, and the overall atmosphere is one of active training.

# A Multidimensional Approach to Leader and Organizational Development

■ By Brig. Gen. Christopher J. Sharpsten

*Soldiers carry a simulated casualty to a collection point during training at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, on Nov. 11, 2016. (Photo by Sgt. Nikayla Shodeen)*



**G**rowing talent today is critical to the future of the Army profession. The Army must find effective techniques to evaluate, position, and groom leaders. Too often, units rely on an overly simplistic method of ranking talent to build order of merit lists for ratings, job placements, and school opportunities. A ranking method like this fails to consider the dynamic nature of our operational environment, unit cultures, individual personalities, or specific situations.

### **Multidimensional Assessment**

To be truly effective at growing talent, leaders must use a model that assesses individuals and units in a more comprehensive manner. One such model is the multidimensional assessment. This model enables a leader to assess subordinates across multiple spectrums simultaneously

to determine strengths, weaknesses, and potential blind spots. Using an X-Y scale, leaders can examine a Soldier's experience level, technical proficiencies, character traits, and other factors that are relevant to a certain unit or mission set.

Imagine that during the first few months after assuming command, a commander desires to understand the experience levels of the unit's senior staff officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Instead of ranking the leaders from best to worst, the commander assesses what unique contributions each leader can make to the team by charting their experiences on a scale with two spectrums. The commander's goal is to ensure that the right leader is in the right job.

The two spectrums on the chart are doctrine-focused versus innovation-focused and functional versus multi-

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The 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command used its multidimensional assessment model to shape its leader development program and become a more effective organization.

functional. The ends of both spectrums are neither good nor bad. They merely describe the leaders' previous experiences. (See figure 1.)

Working purely from the job descriptions and units on a leader's officer or enlisted record brief, the commander can begin to see which quadrant the leader is best suited for. Subsequent interviews with the leader may further clarify which quadrant is the closest match.

This method shows where the leader is a good fit at the current time; but more importantly, it shows where the leader needs to focus personal development efforts to become a well-rounded leader. It also shows where the organization needs to focus its development program.

### Leader Development Program

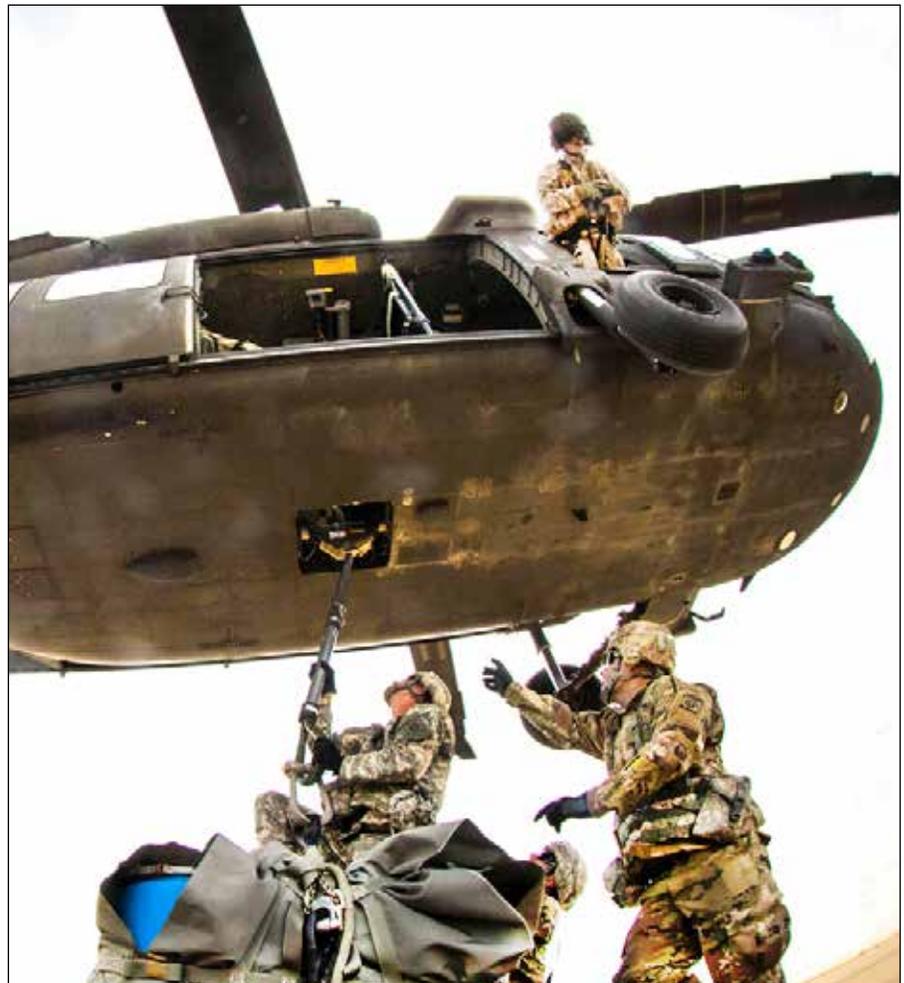
The 3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) took this

model to the next level by using it as an organizational assessment tool. The results gave the 3rd ESC a starting point for its leader development program.

The multidimensional assessment looked at each leader's experience in previous assignments (from tactical to strategic), unconventional units, training with commercial enterprise, and education. These were the foundations that each leader already possessed.

Interestingly, leaders fell into certain quadrants based on rank, time in service, and assignment experience. The results graphically portrayed where the Army's focus has been over the past decade both in terms of operations and the NCO and officer education systems.

The goal of the 3rd ESC's leader development program was to expand each leader's understanding and



*Soldiers attach cargo to a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on Aug. 24, 2016. (Photo by Capt. Adan Cazarez)*

knowledge to bring those experiences more to the center of the graph. In other words, each leader needed to have the tools to operate across both spectrums in order to execute boldly within their lanes.

Many of the unit's leaders had experience toward the doctrine focus and deep functional experience quadrant. This result was not surprising considering the operations that the Army has been conducting over the past decade, where it was necessary to have leaders singularly focused. However, as the Army adapts and changes with new national security challenges, so must the 3rd ESC.

The next challenge for 3rd ESC leaders was building a leader development program that provides opportunities to learn and gain experience, all while maintaining a high operating tempo.

The program involved the development of an extensive plan of staff seminars led by leaders from outside the organization, quarterly team building events, monthly NCO professional development sessions, physical training events, and academic sessions, all focused on and nested with the culminating event of a battle campaign staff ride.

The leader development program focused on historical sustainment operations during the Peninsula Campaign of 1862, a Union Army offensive during the Civil War. Within the staff seminars leading to the staff ride, the 3rd ESC focused on lessons and observations gained from assigned reading. The staff seminars and reading concentrated on all quadrants of the multidimensional assessment tool.

### The Staff Ride

The culminating event staff ride took place on Virginia's Lower Peninsula, the site of the Peninsula Campaign and several Civil War battlefields. During the staff ride, the 3rd ESC leaders applied what they learned through the staff seminars and combined it with their experi-

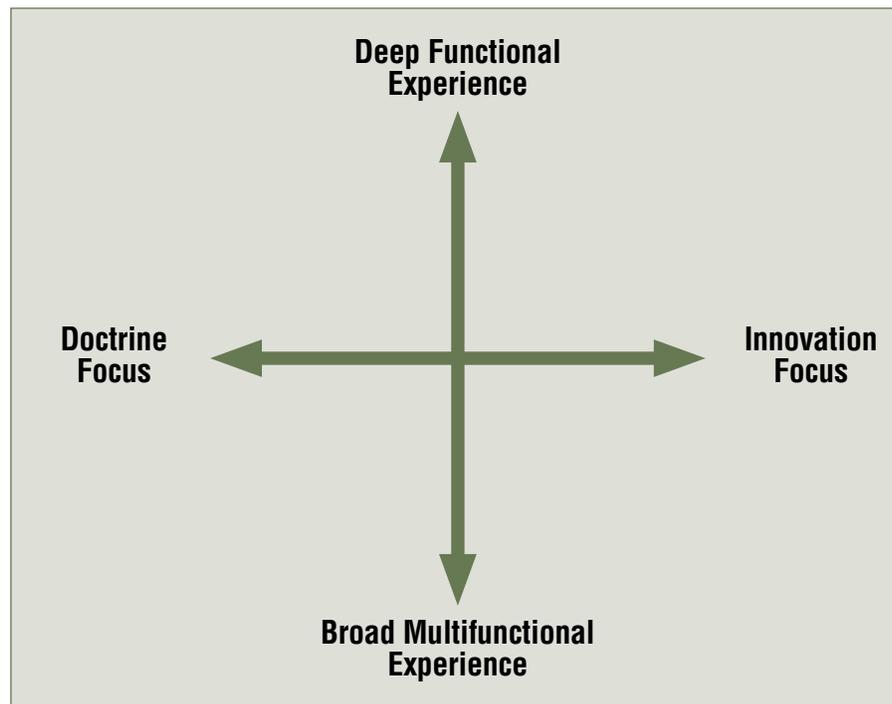


Figure 1. A leader's previous experiences are charted on this scale to graphically portray the foundation that the leader possesses.

ences. They compared sustainment operations during the Civil War to the current operational environment.

The staff ride focused on all the elements of sustainment during the Peninsula Campaign, from watercraft transportation to surgical supplies, and elaborated on the lessons learned and how they apply to planning now, more than 150 years later. The staff ride offered the leaders the opportunity see the challenges that leaders faced on the peninsula and how they overcame them, which is difficult to experience without seeing and walking the ground of the actual location.

The lessons from the staff ride provided an understanding of the spectrum of logistics support and sustainment, the use of unconventional methods, innovations in delivering supplies in an austere environment, the evolution of surgical supplies based on the battle and injuries sustained, the planning and housing of Soldiers in a way to prevent illness, the use of fast and unconventional methods to move personnel and supplies, and the tactical choices that had to be made based on logistics ca-

pabilities at the time.

These lessons brought the 3rd ESC staff's understanding more to the center of the graph. The unit's leaders are now more capable of bold execution because they have the understanding and experience to do so.

The 3rd ESC used the results of its multidimensional assessment tool to shape its leader development program to better determine strengths, weaknesses, and potential blind spots. The individual assessments were the foundation, but the goal was organizational effectiveness.

The multidimensional assessment allows leaders to challenge themselves to move out of their comfort zones and across multiple quadrants, developing as professionals as they go. This is the essence of growing talent today to improve the future of our Army profession.

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