

Getting match fit: How can the Army achieve the organisational agility and mindset to exploit its new operating model?

Getting match fit: Command effectiveness

On Wednesday 15 February, the CHACR hosted a workshop sponsored by Brigadier Army Staff (BAS) focused on ‘command effectiveness’ or, in other words, boosting the effectiveness of higher-level Army headquarters to fulfil the command function. ‘Command effectiveness’ is one of several lines of operation being pursued in the refinement of the new Army Operating Model, established from April 2016 and which is fully described in the introductory article in this edition of *Ares & Athena*.

The aim of the day was to develop organisational agility in Army headquarters structures and behaviours. To this end, the workshop brought together a broad representation of staff officers from across the Army Headquarters with representatives from industry and consultancies, who offered their own perspectives on what enabled their organisations to be agile both structurally and mentally. The afternoon saw four syndicates address set questions focused on identifying barriers to greater effectiveness and the role of ethos and values in supporting more effective behaviours. The workshop ended with syndicate back-briefs and a plenary discussion, which presented BAS and his executive team from the Army Headquarters with conclusions with which to inform the on-going refinement of the Army’s Operating Model as it nears its first review point in April 2017.

This edition of *Ares & Athena* captures the proceedings of the workshop, together with some reflections contributed by attendees.

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COMMAND EFFECTIVENESS

The Army Command Review sought to transform the Army HQ and its subordinate 3* HQs from their pre-Levene operating model to one that is more efficient, flexible and responsive. The intent was to enable the Army to be more strategic in its approach and to ensure that its higher command is fit for current and future challenges. In June last year, the Army Command Review closed as a programme of change. In its wake, the Army's command effectiveness work continues the process of transformation in order to deliver CGS's vision:

The Army has effective and efficient HQ organisations and business processes underpinned by the requisite knowledge, skills and experience, behaviours, governance regime and management information in order to deliver the Army strategy.

Army Command Review work focused on the operating model, structure and associated knowledge skills and experience (KSE) and began to consider behaviours. Taking this work forward, the command effectiveness line of operation considers a wider portfolio, including:

- **A leadership culture underpinned by the Army's Values and Standards and Leadership Code¹.**
- Behaviours that inculcate a greater sense of ownership of Army decisions and a clear understanding of how the Army Staff functions.
- **Clearly defined roles, responsibilities, authorities and accountabilities, which are exercised in line with the Defence Operating Model principle of delegation.**
- An adaptable structure which enables the Army Operating Model (AOM) through the provision of the necessary human resource.
- **Improved decision making: supported by relevant information, informed by resource implications, taken on a value-for-money basis, and aligned to the strategy.**
- Greater emphasis is placed on clarity, transparency and clear evidence.
- **Improved information management where information is shared, common and trusted.**
- The optimal KSE to execute new processes and make future improvements.
- **The organisational ability to learn lessons, continually adapt and improve.**

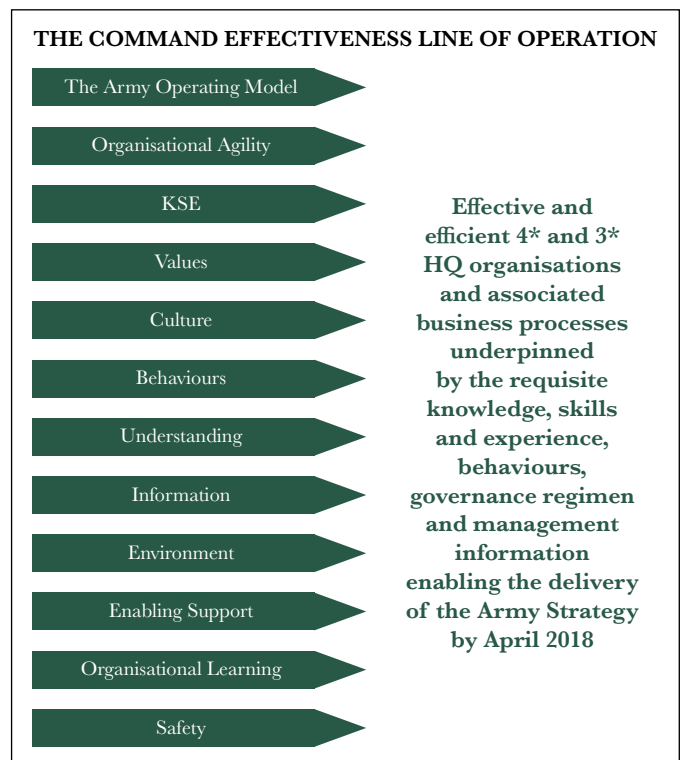
The command effectiveness line of operation is being taken forward through 12 lines of activity, as shown right. Full realisation of the benefits of this work will occur over the next 18 months, with formal reviews in April 2017 and April 2018. Progress is being measured through six-monthly maturity stocktakes. The work is being conducted in an open and transparent manner, and all ranks and grades are being encouraged to engage in it. In most areas, the command effectiveness work is progressing in a deliberate manner, but 'quick wins' are being identified and actioned wherever possible.

Much of the work on command effectiveness is intended to improve the Army's productivity; developing an efficient and effective command capability. However, it is also about ensuring that we are 'match fit' in the post-Levene era of

delegation and meeting our requirement under Defence reform by implementing the new operating model. The AOM also incorporates the Defence DDDGOA² framework, and P3M methodology and will enable the Army HQ to operate 'smarter'.

The AOM is enabled by a new structure within Army HQ. At the moment this is known as the 'Milestone 1' structure. Transition continues and the structure, which is 52 per cent military and 47 per cent civilian, is being manned at the moment through the APC boarding process and civil service recruiting. Early work has also begun on a Milestone 2 structure, which will aim to build greater agility into the way outputs are resourced with human capital. The decision point for this work will be April 2018. The biggest structural change of the ACR was the formation of two 3* commands to enable the Army HQ to be 'strategic'. The headquarters of Field Army and Home Command are key elements of the AOM, but are themselves still in transition and yet to be fully manned.

A key tenet of the Army's strategy is the need to accept the requirement for 'continuous adaptation' to meet new challenges. The command effectiveness work aims to make the Army better able to manage change, and adapt ensuring that we remain 'match fit' as the context changes and new challenges emerge. The Army is conducting a fundamental review of organisational learning. An Army Learning Plan has been developed and this is being conducted within the framework of the Defence Organisational Learning Strategy. This includes learning culture, the lessons process, and continuous adaptation (led by Director Army reform). In May 2017, DCGS will chair the first Army 3* Learning Committee to help bring coherence to this work and drive it forward.



¹In addition to the Civil Service Code and the Civil Service Leadership Statement.

²Direct, Develop, Deliver, Generate, Operate, Assure.

DEVELOPING GREATER WHOLE WORKFORCE AGILITY IN HIGHER ARMY HEADQUARTERS

“The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas... as in escaping from the old ones.”
– John Maynard Keynes, economist

“The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is to get an old one out.”
– Basil Liddell Hart, military theoretician

The Chief of the General Staff closed the recent General Staff Conference by reiterating his determination to deliver an Army that is “match fit” to make the most of the means we have and the opportunities that come with delegation. One widely recognised element of this work is a need to embed a culture of adaptability into all we do, which is where the notion of ‘organisational agility’ comes into play. Organisational agility has been defined as “the capability of a company to rapidly change or adapt in response to changes in the market. A high degree of organisational agility can help a company to react successfully to the emergence of new competitors, the development of new industry-changing technologies, or sudden shifts in overall market conditions³.” It is, however, also worth reflecting that in any large organisation, experience has shown that truly agile organisations learn to be both stable (resilient, reliable, efficient) as well as dynamic (fast, nimble, adaptive)⁴, making the best use of staff to deliver outputs.

The Command Effectiveness workshop run by the CHACR heard views from selected speakers, some of which are reproduced elsewhere in this publication. Having ‘primed the pump’ the workshop then discussed two key questions designed to stimulate debate around the subject of achieving greater organisational agility within higher Army headquarters:

- **What barriers prevent higher Army HQs from increasing their agility and how do we unlock these barriers to deliver the intended effect?**
- **Company philosophy or culture is often cited as a reason for a lack of organisational agility. Do Army values and culture support the behaviours needed to enable agility and if not, what should be done to define and improve the necessary behaviours?**

Analysis

Organisational agility provides a headquarters with ‘the ability to react’ quickly and positively to those new ideas, changes to the strategic situation and short-notice requirements that create the continuous change experienced in many organisations, and which cannot be met by more traditional hard-wired structures. Perhaps more importantly, agile organisations have a mind-set that sees the positives

³www.businessdictionary.com

⁴*McKinsey Quarterly Dec 15: Agility: It Rhymes with Stability*

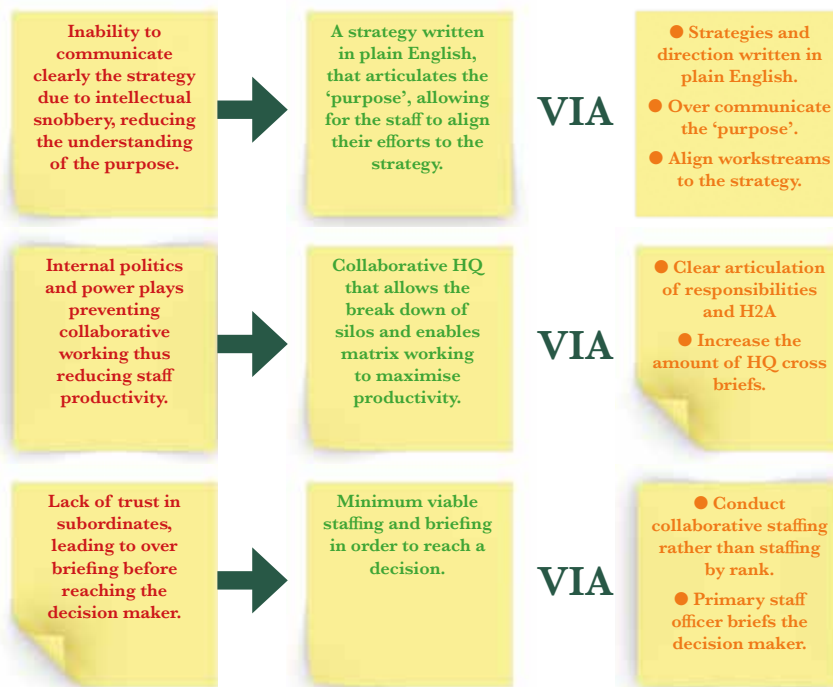
in generating teams with the right competences to deliver complex projects, and then move on to new requirements in line with the needs of the strategy.

A number of barriers to delivering organisational agility were identified at the workshop, which can be grouped into five areas, one of which – the right culture and associated behaviours – was discussed separately, as it is fundamental to delivering the agile mind-set needed by managers and workers alike. The remaining four areas are described in the chart below. One of the key barriers to delivering agility, also identified in work to mature and embed the Army Operating Model, is the perceived inability to deliver clear and consistent priorities for work outputs in higher headquarters. Linking priorities to time to enable staff effort to be sequenced has also proved difficult, thereby exacerbating the problem. We are good at adding priorities, and raising them up the scale of importance, but, historically, we are very poor at removing priorities from the list. This results in increasingly stretched staff trying to deliver everything, with less polished results and little ability to react. Too many of the processes used in the higher headquarters of the Army have been developed over a number of years. This development has led to processes that are densely layered and overcomplicated, relying on a level of assurance that stifles innovation and consumes staff effort.

The right combination of knowledge, skills and experience in the right place at the right time is a fundamental pre-requisite to delivering the ‘match-fit’ headquarters required in the post-Levene delegated era. To be genuinely agile in delivering this concept, the headquarters must understand, at all levels, the difference between the three separate, but linked elements of knowledge, skills and experience (KSE) and be able to articulate what is needed to deliver specific outputs. Currently, this is a fundamental failure, which only a cursory look at current job specifications will confirm. Amongst a number of constraints that prevent the Army from developing agility in its headquarters are the political and financial constraints on liability. The Army has no simple means to import expertise, particularly in specialist or technical areas, from external or lateral sources. In a period of constrained finance, there are also limits on generating posts, whether military or civil

<p>STRATEGY</p> <p>Must match ambition, articulate risk appetite and enable the vision, tying in operational and institutional army tasks, to ensure clear priorities are communicated.</p>	<p>RISK AVERSE PROCESSES</p> <p>Over-engineered processes do not enable innovation and prevent proper qualification of risk. Too many layers generate insufficient flexibility. HR and MS ‘rules’ identified as particularly risk averse.</p>
<p>SKILL SETS NOT USED EFFECTIVELY</p> <p>Failure to identify knowledge, or skills, or experience requirements, exacerbated by poor employment of those with skills and ineffective training for those without. Military assignment lengths prevent exploitation of experience.</p>	<p>STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS</p> <p>Political, financial and liability constraints on workforce hamper agility. The stove-piped hierarchy is driven more by numbers and posts than outputs. Exploiting external skill sets is difficult.</p>

servant to service new requirements. To generate real agility in the higher headquarters there need to be improved mechanisms for lateral entry, particularly for contractors with key niche skills, and an understanding of how individuals and teams can be generated that have the right skill-sets to deliver prioritised outputs. Many noted that one way to offset this fragility is to draw upon contracted support solutions, but that Defence's approach to contracting is anything but agile, being heavily bureaucratic, ponderously slow and poisoned by inherent suspicion of the private sector and its motivations. This is perhaps as much about culture as process or structure.



This often leads to an inability to challenge, failure to ruthlessly prioritise and a 'consent and evade' reaction, all of which militate strongly against innovation and agility. It was recognized that changing behaviours cannot be achieved instantly. It requires the entire headquarters to be engaged in the change, with 'buy-in' by senior leadership and concomitant exemplary leadership absolutely crucial. The flow charts

above identify some of the interventions that could be adopted to generate momentum in behavioural change.

Culture and behaviours

The predominant view of the workshop was that removing barriers will support delivery of more agile organisational structures, but to deliver the step-change needed will require a shift from delivering individual outputs to one that places the needs of the organisation first, and implements the behaviours needed to deliver this. Steven Denning argues that "agile practitioners are obsessed with delivering value to customers"⁵, which in the case of the Army Headquarters are represented by Defence and the 3* Commands. Delivering a more agile organisation does not necessarily mean delivering more with less, but it must generate more value with less work, in other words greater productivity.

Behaviours are a product of the culture within an organisation, which in itself reflects the values espoused by that organisation. The Army's clearly-defined values certainly support agility and innovation, but they must be policed to prevent an erosion of trust, a key element of the ethos of any headquarters. Increasingly, 'real world' factors test both the values and the implicit trust required for agility. For example:

- **Selfless commitment is increasingly tested by demands for tangible reward.**
- Loyalty can conflict with a learning culture.
- **Discipline, built around a chain of command, can conflict with empowerment.**
- The 'people first' mantra is too often challenged by actions that appear contrary to it.

In general, the Army's culture, characterised by an ethos of service, an operational focus and an instinctively 'can-do' attitude, is seen as strong and resilient. However, elements of that culture are prone to negative perception, particularly when fear of failure and lack of trust manifest themselves.

⁵forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2016/09/08/explaining-agile/#db1596c301b8

- To further enable senior leaders to drive this change, we must generate in our higher headquarters the same rigour and united focus that we achieve on operations. This should include:
- Applying mission command to routine HQ Staff work.
 - Driving empowerment as far as possible, to exploit our natural resourcefulness.
 - Rewarding successful innovation and tolerate failed ideas.
 - Incentivising financial savings with tangible rewards (Gainshare).
 - Living within our manpower resource.
 - Supporting the value of integrity by enabling 'truth to be told unto power'.
 - Rewarding (in career terms) effective use of wider knowledge, skills or experience, especially those gained through external placements or academic qualifications.

Summary

The CHACR workshop provided an excellent opportunity to share new ideas and reinforce some existing concerns around barriers, as well as identifying the new behaviours required to deliver a more agile organisation within Army higher headquarters. The Maximising Talent and Command Effectiveness lines of operation are doing good work to overcome some of the identified barriers including inter alia simplification of processes, skills development/transfer and empowerment, and the development of the Army Advanced Development Programme will be a genuine source of greater agility for Army HQ. The workshop did not generate any 'silver bullets' to improve organisational agility in higher headquarters, but it did provide some really useful insights that have been captured in this publication and by attendees. Perhaps the single strongest theme to emerge from the conference was the desire to increase trust in the headquarters through application of true mission command. If outputs can be genuinely prioritised through effective and consistent communication of intent, analysed and apportioned accurately and resourced to deliver, then staff support will be focused in the right areas and sequenced to deliver timely effect for the customer.

AGILE AT THE TOP?

It would be easy to argue that the British Army is in danger of jumping on the buzzword-bingo bandwagon by wanting to focus its attention on ‘agility’. It seems to be one of the most popular values or behaviours that we have seen with companies that we have worked for, and yet I would argue with conviction borne of personal experience that on operations the Army is one of the most agile organisations around. Proven operational agility should not, however, be used as an excuse to avoid tackling the question being posed (by many other organisations as well) about how the corporate HQ becomes more agile.

Before launching in, it is worth thinking briefly about the definition of agility: the ‘ability to move quickly and easily’; or ‘to think and understand quickly’. Agility is an output – an observable behaviour/cultural attribute, not something that can be sprinkled around – there is no ‘agility dust’. Our view is that individuals’ and organisations’ outputs are the results of the behaviours that they demonstrate, and those behaviours stem from the mindset that is adopted. This short piece concentrates on three proven themes that we regard as essential in making change in any organisation – I leave it to the reader to work out how to apply them to Army HQ.

Theme 1: Clarity and alignment

Any change in culture, including a drive for greater agility, must be an explicit part of the overall transformation process. Treating it as a bolt-on to strategy is doomed to failure, because strategy is executed by people and the same people behaving in the same way as in the past will perpetuate the same problems.

As with mission analysis, the senior leadership team needs to be totally clear and aligned on what it is seeking to do. This includes defining the desired culture and what it looks like in terms of demonstrable behaviours both within the organisation and the senior leadership team.

Where we have found that companies go wrong are:

- **They only consider the structures or processes.**
- They do not show a level of self-awareness – (we use diagnostics to help them) – so do not know where they are starting from.
- **They are not explicit about the cultural attributes they want – and how they fit in to the overall plan.**

Having clarity allows you to set the ‘intent’. For agility, being explicit about what this means is not about creating unstructured chaos, but rather providing the direction of travel, the behaviours that are needed and how they will be measured.

The hard-wiring also needs to be aligned to the desired behaviours. This may include performance management, reward mechanisms, structure and even the physical environment. In a bid to improve agility, one firm decided to



hold its meetings standing up – it certainly shortened them and sent a clear message.

Theme 2: ‘New ideas through old thinking’

If the top team is really clear about what is needed – and explicitly commits to it, then to implement it will require new ways of thinking. Simply applying the old thinking to the new ideas will result in failure.

A case study here is Southwest Airlines (the originator of the low-cost airline model) and TED (United Airlines response to Southwest). TED ‘borrowed’ the manual from Southwest, using all the same models and processes, but continued to apply the United Airlines way of thinking (hierarchical, stove-piped, etc). The result was failure. TED closed after just a few years as United failed to adapt its thinking to the new business model.

Changing ways of thinking, particularly to improve agility, is difficult. People have often been promoted because they are experts and view expertise as power. We spend a lot of time with senior teams convincing them that they are not the people who have to either take all the decisions or know all the answers. That they are not always ‘right’ – and nor do they need to be. Mission Command is a great model but is it always



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practised in the HQ?

A further observation on the military is that in the HQ (so not in a ‘pure’ military environment) there is often a crisis of confidence. This is not your designated area of expertise (war-fighting is), so there is a lack of challenge and conviction that you can make a difference.

Theme 3: Leadership shadow

Our work is based on a number of fundamental beliefs. One of them is that people do not change just because you tell them to. We all remember our Sandhurst instructors exhorting us to set an example – it’s the same.

So we always start with the CEO and their leadership team because they cast a very long leadership shadow. We do not believe that HR initiatives provide sufficient ‘top-down’ drive to crack the ‘permafrost’ – nor do endless work-streams or initiatives. If mindsets and behaviours are to change then leaders need to change themselves and this needs to be explicitly communicated to the wider organisation. Throughout, the emphasis is on effective, practical, measurable actions – not just wall posters exhorting people to do things differently. We are pretty cynical about values posters – leaders have to demonstrate the actions. So, if agility

in the HQ is important, why was the workshop primarily attended by SO2s?

Putting it into practice

What does this look like in reality? We have a client who declared ‘Agile’ to be one of four attributes of their culture.

- **The senior leadership team defined what it meant to them and the behaviours that they will commit to in order to model it.**

- At a subsequent broader leadership conference, cross-functional groups were formed and produced a three-month plan for driving agility. They would report back at the next conference.

- **Only with the leadership aligned and practising agility in their work did work begin at the next levels down.**

What is interesting is that the first two steps took place over a couple of months. Why? Because there was commitment from the leadership to get involved with what they thought was important activity, and thereby set the example. An example of command-, not staff-, led activity.

IMPROVING COMMAND EFFECTIVENESS

– A VIEW FROM THE MIDDLE THIRD

The purpose of the Army HQ, and its 3* subordinates, is – like any other military HQ – to support the commander in his decision making, convey his intent in an actionable format to subordinate formations and provide a control and co-ordination function. The HQ, more properly the staff that make it up, is therefore a capability and limitation in its own right. Getting the HQ structure, process and procedures right is a useful pre-condition to achieve command effectiveness but arguably it is not the most important and may be one of the easier factors to fix. Far harder is imbuing the right culture and managing it as a capability. In the current context, which is characterised by multiple and overlapping change programmes, this will be challenging but the following changes within the Army HQ would be helpful:

● **Provide the AHQ and the subordinate 3* HQs with a clear purpose. Vision statements or narratives are useful but they need to be conveyed as actionable direction expressed in language which is commonly understood. By extension this means the commander has considered the task in detail and believes it is worth doing. The need for the commander to ‘write the intent and mission statements’ for his subordinates is enshrined in our doctrine and culture, so why should we not expect commanders to apply the same intellectual discipline in the higher HQ environment?**

● Calibrate the strategy to the AHQ. This means taking into account the capacity of the staff and acknowledging its limitations. This is also about meaningful prioritisation and aligning priority tasks with the purpose of the HQ.

● **Recognise that much of what any HQ does must fall into the category of ‘Business as Usual’ (BaU), even if the business in question is developing strategy or policy, and that BaU must be resourced. It is a fallacy to assume that BaU is entirely synonymous with delivery or implementation activity and can be delegated.**

● Ensure an adequate degree of co-ordination across the HQ. Currently the 2* functional pillars converge at the 4* level. No commander should also be his own chief of staff. It is also unrealistic to rely on a plan or set of orders (in this case the Army Command Plan) to achieve co-ordination in itself, especially in a large and complex organisation.

● **Recognise that agility, in the sense of being able to switch staff effort, can only be achieved by creating and maintaining surplus capacity (unlikely in the current climate) or more effective prioritisation. The latter is preferable because it affords institutional agility rather than resource agility.**

Last, acknowledge where a flat HQ structure is the result of design or accident. Gapping inevitably leads to a flatter structure as the workload is spread across those desks that are manned. Up to a point it encourages initiative and ‘empowers’, however it also reduces the scope for analysis and challenge and sucks decision making upwards. This contributes to the diaries of our senior leaders being so full. I suggest we are currently making a virtue of a necessity, but then again, don’t we always.





FIELD LESSONS FOR THE STAFF

Why do we treat in-barracks staffwork differently to operational staffwork? What is it about working ‘on the staff’ that makes soldiers and officers forget many of the basic ideas that underpin the ethos of the Army. Many of our ‘staff’ challenges could be solved by remembering how we routinely do things in the field.

Delegation

Delegation comes naturally in the field. We have to; because of the dispersed nature of operations and training. The commander can’t be everywhere. Mission Command, the bedrock of our leadership doctrine, enables delegation. It is ingrained in soldiers and officers from the time they join the Army and we use it effectively on operations and in training. Leaders trust subordinates, and empower them with the necessary time and resources to get on with delivering what is required, considering two levels down in order to ensure that

their direction is achievable.

Yet, despite much rhetoric, delegation remains a major challenge when faced with staffwork. We succumb to the natural tendency to centralise, rather than delegate in order to incentivise efficient use of scarce resources. Furthermore, direction often lacks the clarity of a field orders group, and leaders frequently fail to consider ‘troops to task’ adequately when directing work. Finally, despite having an expert and highly-committed workforce, at times it seems that only a full colonel or above’s judgement is valid, and we fail to empower the staff with the necessary time, capacity and trust.

Learning

The Army rightly prides itself on its ability to learn and adapt. Despite all that has been written about our challenging decade-or-so of campaigning, we are good at learning from

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what we do on operations and in training. The operational lessons process is considered best practice by most external observers, and learning from what we do is very much within our 'muscle memory' in the field. No-one within the British Army could imagine a world without the 'hot debrief', 'after action review (AAR)', or 'mission exploitation'. No-one, it seems, except anyone working on the staff.

We are currently growing the ability to manage lessons within the Army HQ. Why have we not had this before? Because no-one was identifying any lessons to manage! No hot debriefs, no learning reviews, no AARs, no mission exploitation. No learning.

Leadership

In the British Army, we do leadership. We think it's our thing. CGS has placed significant focus on the Army's leadership ability, and field commanders throughout the chain of command carefully consider how they are leading those under their command. Yet it seems that, for some

working in staff posts, any introspective consideration of their leadership ability is abandoned on walking through the doors of the headquarters. 'Staff officers' at every level fail to make time to provide clear direction and inspire those they lead. The downward passage of information is poor, leaving more junior staff devoid of context and situational awareness in a way that would shame us in the field. Inboxes take priority over subordinates and senior leaders are not sufficiently visible.

There are clearly some brilliant and inspirational leaders in the Army, but we must all remember that the Army's leadership doctrine applies equally to the staff and in the field.

There are other examples, but I will stop there to avoid this becoming a diatribe. My simple point is this: we must apply what we know works for us in the field when we are in staff posts. The challenges we experience on the staff in today's Army require exactly the same skills we use to great effect in the field. There is no such thing as being good on 'the staff'. Just good leaders, in the field or in staff posts.



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COMMAND EFFECTIVENESS AND AGILITY: PURPOSE, PEOPLE, CAPACITY AND COMPLEXITY

The Command effectiveness workshop asked us to consider how we could increase our headquarters' agility. There is no simple answer; we are a big beast and work at pace on meaty issues. And we are not an organisation that sits still – as an Army we have changed considerably in the last ten years and achieved change in both organisational and cultural terms. But arguably we don't change quickly enough to remain competitive in the current environment. What's the problem and how can we deal with it? Perhaps looking at four areas might be a start point; purpose, people, capacity and complexity, all of which need to be enabled by communications (which isn't covered here).

Purpose and culture. Ask ten Army officers what the purpose of the Army is and they will give you ten different answers; all of them worthy but with a degree of variance. Yet the vast majority of business schools and their publications tell us that aligning purpose and culture is vital in generating an effective organisation. Which brings us onto another question; can we provide a concise definition of our culture? The answer is probably no, because we have not defined it. If this lack of clarity is prevalent in the case of the Army as a whole, we might surmise that it's the case in our various headquarters and departments too. So although we all have a good feel for our purpose and our culture, we lack precision in this the start point for any change. This will undoubtedly affect our ability to change at pace (i.e. our agility). So defining and communicating our purpose with precision at every level and then checking our culture aligns with this purpose would be a good start point. And we then need a well-resourced plan to change culture (and behaviours) and align it with purpose.

Purpose and process. Good management practise ensures that processes serve the purpose of the organisation. If processes fail to serve the purpose of the organisation, they generate friction, which is an impediment to agility. Whether you take the point that we aren't clear enough on our purpose or not, we can all identify a number of processes that are not integral to each of our organisations' purposes. This adds friction and friction. There has been a lot of work in reducing the bureaucratic burden and this is right and proper – we should perhaps now look at the processes that remain and question whether they can be changed to help rather than hinder.

People and our world-leading MS system. Our MS system is quite rightly considered to be world leading, in that it is both transparent and fair. But there are some disadvantages. We have a system that ties officers and soldiers to two reporting officers; we need these two to know us well in order that they can appreciate our work and we need to be in sight and mind (rather than the opposite). Furthermore, it seems that we need two years in each assignment to master our remit and to show our

full potential. Divorcing an individual from their ROs or moving them before they receive their second report in rank thus smacks of career foul – so we don't. As a result our workforce can't be reallocated easily to meet a higher priority. We must re-examine this as a priority and generate a way to move people without career foul. Or perhaps we should create a permanently established Army equivalent of a 'skunkhouse'⁶ in each HQ; this small organisation can be used to innovate, Red Team and to think more broadly.

Capacity and our can-do attitude. We pride ourselves in the Army as being a 'can-do' organisation and we encourage our people to take a 'can-do' approach to life (i.e. selfless commitment). Both of these positive cultural attributes can generate a lack of flexibility. The vast majority of those in the Army's various headquarters are working very hard and are probably pretty near to capacity; this is so because we have an excellent work ethic and want to demonstrate our capacity both as individuals and as organisations. But this also means that when another task appears we tend to absorb it too. But when working at

or near maximum capacity, individuals and organisations lack the ability to surge, we deliver slower and to a lower standard. We could change this by assuming that all our subordinates are working at full capacity all the time; when we task them with more to do or with changes to make, we should require them to tell us what they can't now do. We should constantly re-balance (or even reduce) the workload, rather than adding to it.

Complexity. The way we run this institution is becoming ever more complex and perhaps this is illustrated by the change in the ratio of specialists to generalists in the Army. We have new and better-defined career fields that acknowledge this.

The new Army Operating Model represents a considerable improvement in the way we do business – but the language we are using to describe it and the processes that we use to enact it have become specialist areas in themselves. The P3M methodologies that vary between Army HQ directorates are another example. The force generation and force processes are similar cases in points. We have a tendency to turn simple models into opaque processes described in inscrutable terms. In the operational environment we use doctrine to provide a framework of understanding for our approach and we use tactics, techniques and procedures to simplify what we do. Our operational doctrine is excellent and easily accessible; whither our corporate doctrine? This complexity is another barrier to agility. In essence therefore, command effectiveness is underpinned by behaviours and enabled by communications. We need to be better at all of these things to become more agile.

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Defining and communicating our purpose with precision at every level and then checking our culture aligns with this purpose would be a good start point

⁶An enriched environment that is intended to help a small group of individuals design a new idea by escaping routine organizational procedures. Rogers E. (2003) *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th ed., p. 109

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ARMY ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Army's tradition of a can-do attitude mixed with a desire to make the best of any job given, whatever the level of preparation provided (or lack of preparation provided) to the new job-holder, has led to accusations of gifted-amateurism and a realisation that we can provide enhanced preparation for given appointments. One area of traditional weakness has been the way we prepare staff officers for the sort of business-related change management roles associated with working in large headquarters such as the Army Headquarters. 'The only constant is change' is both a truism and cliché and a statement that resonates with generations who have been put into such roles.

So, into this mix comes a series of initiatives to better prepare those heading for, or already in, the Staff. Career streaming is an obvious example of this, but so too is a new programme designed to give a selected group of officers and civil servants the business skills needed to ensure that the Army is best placed to tackle the sort of change management challenges likely to be faced in the future.

In outline, the Army Advanced Development Programme (AADP) will take a group of up to 15 officers (10 recently selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel and ACSC, and five who have attended ACSC) and five civil servants, and expose them to business education, training and real-time experience for up to two years. This is much more a programme than a traditional appointment. The Army Headquarters' work will form only one part of the Programme and will be regulated to ensure that time is available for other commitments, importantly including family and sporting commitments.

The intent is to provide business skills training and education from non-traditional sources (at least as far as is available to Staff officers up to now). This will be achieved through a combination of interventions, including management consultancy training and mentoring, taking an MBA, being exposed to a wider network of high achievers through association with external institutes, practicing and testing new skills on real-time Army Headquarters' projects, while remaining engaged in military matters through visits and attendance at suitable lectures and briefings. This last part will be enhanced by each AADP member having a 2*

mentor, most likely to be SCS for civil servants.

At the end of the programme, the AADP member should feel better trained, better qualified, with a wider and more diverse network of contacts spread across the Public and Private sectors, and with a confidence associated with having tested newly-acquired skills on real-time projects. This Programme will be relevant whether the next appointment is Command, or a demanding SO1 level role either at Andover or elsewhere, and it will support future employment associated with future promotion.

As this is being written, the programme is being put together, while the first cohort will be selected for AADP in early March with an anticipated start date in early September. For the future, readers heading for Pink List and ACSC selection, or at an equivalent civil service level, will be wondering whether AADP might be for them, particularly if ACSC is traded for this opportunity.

The answer will come with much thought and discussion, including with career managers, covering personal circumstances, career needs and future career aspirations; this article cannot provide a template that would fit all. However, it would be worth readers considering how their careers have set them up for what they are likely to be doing in the future, while noting that AADP will be seen as equivalent to psc(j) by Army selection and promotion boards. If the conclusion points at a shortfall in business skills, then AADP could be the answer.

To go back to this article's introductory paragraph, the 'can-do' attitude and desire to make the best of any job will still be needed, but the Army is now developing a way of ensuring that a cohort of those selected to work at SO1 level have a far more relevant business management skill set, allowing them to contribute more effectively and quickly to the inevitable challenges that await.

If you think that AADP might be for you, but would like to learn more, then speak to your career manager or contact: Brig Charles Page (ArmyIDev-LRIT-Hd@mod.uk) on 94393 7599 or Lt Col Nick Peek (ArmyStrat-AMCS-Cons1-SO1@mod.uk) on 94393 6385.

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[Business skills training] will be achieved through a combination of interventions, including management consultancy training and mentoring, taking an MBA, being exposed to a wider network of high achievers through association with external institutes, practicing and testing new skills on real-time Army Headquarters' projects, while remaining engaged in military matters through visits and attendance at suitable lectures and briefings



GETTING AT THE HEART OF ORGANISATIONAL AGILITY IN THE ARMY STAFF – A STAFF OFFICER’S PERSPECTIVE

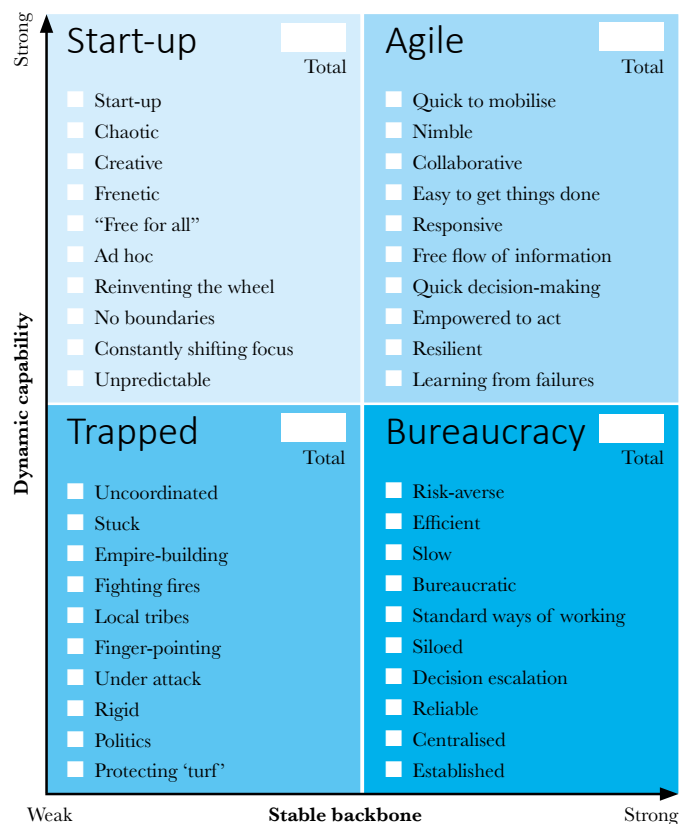
An agile organisation is one that can renew, adapt and change quickly in order to succeed in a rapidly changing and turbulent environment. On operations, the Armed Forces are able to deliver rapid effect with an unmatched degree of flexibility that allows the force to deliver tasks as diverse as counter-narcotics, MACP, contingent operations (such as those in Afghanistan), support to the Olympics and niche tasks such as bomb disposal and flood defence.

Force Structure

This ‘dynamic capability’ comes from two key areas; a stable platform of training and ethos that acts an anchor point for the force and an ability to force package troops in an agile and responsive way.

In the operational space the Army structure of ‘cap badges’ allows force elements to be drawn from across the force, ‘cherry picking’ those capabilities that are required for each task. This is akin to a business organisation with a primary structure anchored around coaching, training and career fields (such as technical, sales, supply, marketing and engineering), that, in its day-to-day work ‘force packages’ these elements into small flexible teams that can be grown, shrunk and dissolved in an agile fashion⁷. This ‘stability versus agility’ allows a business organisation to be strong and stable but also be reactive to financial under-performance, competitor activity or technological breakthroughs – the three key drivers of change in civilian industry⁸. How can the Army Staff reflect this in the business space? Try using the McKinsey & Co organisational analysis tool above right to do a quick study of your area of the Army Staff⁹. The majority will find the organisation heavily weighted to the ‘bureaucracy’ end of the chart.

The stove-piped, departmental set up of the Army HQ coupled with the naturally hierarchical structure is a potential hindrance to agility. In addition, the liability and establishment-focused MS structure when overlaid with cap badges and individual specific qualifications presents a particularly rigid structure. The Army HQ adds to this inflexibility by having role-specific job specifications that are fixed and considered necessary for year-on-year reporting. There are clearly elements where this type of structure is needed, such as in the drafting of ammunition technical policy. But getting at agility requires the staff to understand which areas of the business should be agile. By identifying, across the HQ and within directorates, the core stable



foundations or platforms that do not change, i.e. Army business as usual, such as commodities management, this will allow the HQ to earmark those areas, such as strategic planning or programme management that require flexible teams able to grow and shrink as required and where job specifications, lines, structures and process are anathema to the agility required. Dynamic reporting, constant dialogue and the agreement and evolution of objectives without strict adherence to MS strictures is necessary for this to work. This iterative reporting is already well established at regimental duty where job specifications are fluid and dependant on a unit’s forecast of events. Indeed, this has already been recognised in the Army Advanced Development Programme – an injection of SOIs and civil servants into the HQ, to be trained as high quality business generalists, with additional consultancy skills, who will form an agile team capable of addressing a wide range of initiatives and change programmes in the Army Staff¹⁰.

Process, governance and decision making

An agile structure needs to be supported by agile decision making, the heart of process and governance. McKinsey and Co split decisions into three categories. Type I – high stakes, big decisions that need to be taken by senior management. Type III – small decisions that need to be passed down the chain as far as possible with clear accountability and those

⁷McKinsey Quarterly, December 2015, Wouter Aghina, Aaron De Smet, Kirsten Weerda, *Agility it Rhymes with Stability*.

⁸Neal, D. (2007) ‘Do we really understand what is meant by transformational change for Defence?’ *Defence Studies*, 6: 1, pp73-96. Taylor and Francis [Online] Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14702430600838537> Accessed 20 Feb 17.

⁹McKinsey Quarterly, December 2015, Wouter Aghina, Aaron De Smet, Kirsten Weerda.

¹⁰Army Advanced Development Pathway, D Pers.



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Academia and business have much to tell the Army staff about being more agile and yet the keenest and clearest lessons can be taken from our own success on operations. A flexible mindset based on trust and the ability to fail without being failures

that sit in between. Type II – the frequent decisions that require cross-functional area dialogue and collaboration¹¹. These last are the ones that offer an organisation the most agility. In the operational space these three types can be illustrated by: Type I – direct orders from a Div or Bde; type III a Royal Engineer section commander in Afghanistan making a decision about LEC employment and contacting on a construction task; type II – a company operating out of a FOB. The latter requires constant cross functional coordination, distinction between which decision can be delegated down to those close to the action and those that require ‘committee’ or command group input. The command group has clear charters and participants with clear functional roles with no overlap¹². The aim within the staff is to reflect this in the business space. Firstly the

¹¹McKinsey Quarterly, December 2015 ‘The Keys to organisational agility’

¹²The Staff Officers’ Handbook (SOHB), September 2014, MOD Publication

identification of decisions that should be made by those with a handle on the day-to-day issues; secondly, for those that do require committees, establishment of well understood charters, clear roles and a focus on robust, timely decision making and avoidance of endless PowerPoint and information sharing.

People, culture, behaviours and mind-set

The final element linked to agile structures and decision making is an agility of the staff’s mind-set. The transactional relationship between a leader and his staff must have, at its core, trust. This trust has to be earned, as any military commander will attest. One of the real barriers to this trust is the limited military appetite for failure. However failure in the complex environment that is war, and indeed business, is inevitable, you cannot always win! An agile organisation should be able to absorb failure. This is clearly recognised by Google, which has ‘an ethos that is underpinned by psychological



safety – the ability to learn from failure and bad ideas and a willingness to make them fail fast¹³. Is this relevant in a military environment where lack of resources makes failure costly? US General Stanley McCrystal believes so – ‘leaders can let you fail and not let you be a failure’¹⁴. A psychologically safe mind-set engenders trust across the organisation and is a key lesson for an army headquarters whose staff turn over every 24-to-36 months. A failure adverse culture leads to one where no-one is prepared to take any risk or innovate with over reliance on process and decision by committee. Trust must go both ways, trust from leaders that subordinates will make resource informed, financially aware decisions and subordinate faith that leaders will allow them to have new ideas, be innovative and that they will be allowed to fail in good faith. This in turn

frees up the senior leadership to focus on the five or six key issues that should be occupying their time.

Conclusion

Agility in structure, process and mindset are key tenets of military operations and yet the same organisation is not as agile in the staff environment. Academia and business have much to tell the Army staff about being more agile and yet the keenest and clearest lessons can be taken from our own success on operations. A flexible mind-set based on trust and the ability to fail without being failures. Trust aids a culture of decision making that allows those close to the day-to-day activities to make decisions and empowers committees to make decisions rapidly and avoid information sharing. This must be backed by organisational agility such as that shown in regiments that allows MS to be flexible, iterative and agile and based on what the staff is facing, not what is dictated in a job specification.

¹³Briefing from Google at CHACR workshop 15 Feb 17.

¹⁴Gen S McCrystal, *Listen, Learn... then lead*, TED Talk, Mar 2011.

DOUBLE-TIME: INCREASING OPPORTUNITY AND AGILITY OF OUR WORKFORCE (AND BENEFIT FOR THE ORGANISATION)

“A company may well have the best talent on its payroll, the soundest strategies of a brilliant top management, but if it is too slow and rigid to react to a change in the market – or to itself effect a new, groundbreaking trend in that market – then all those assets will count for nothing.”

– Peter Hinssen, *The Network Always Wins*, 2016

Let us start with some facts: the future of work will be different from that of today and it is already here; money is tight; the size of the Army’s workforce is decreasing; there is a market for talented people; competition for talent is rising internally and externally (and the Army is already finding it difficult to compete); early adaptors from Generation X and the majority of Generation Y (Millennials) expect to be able to work and manage their careers differently; retention is cheaper than replacement; the rigidity of the Army’s current human resource management (HRM) system is wasteful, but it works.

Where one stands on this very last point depends on where one sits. It ‘works’ because those in it think it works and cannot see an achievable alternative. Additionally, those worst affected by the current practice exit (mentally or physically) and those who most benefit from the status quo stay and reinforce it. When we stay and continue to rise through the ranks we are likely to believe that the system is working well. At that moment in time, for those promoting through the system, all the evidence suggests that there is no better alternative. There is. It could be so much better, but it requires transformation of what we believe to be true, as well as structures. The latter is simple. This short paper attempts the former, noting that ‘if you think trying to get a new idea into an officer’s head is difficult, try getting an old one out’.

Let us all admit one thing: if we were to start from scratch, with a blank piece of paper in front of us, to redesign the Army’s management of its human resources, would we build what we currently have? No, we would not. We would not build as weighty and as bureaucratic a system, operating from at least seven departments in at least five different geographic locations. We would not build a system that did not understand qualifications, skills, talent and desires of its whole-force workforce. We would not build a system that hindered the agile movement of knowledge throughout the organisation. We would not build a system that ignored the user experience. We would not build a system that, despite all our claims to the contrary, did not actually support the needs of the Service appropriately. So what? The deduction is that we do not have a HRM system to optimise whole work-force agility that is fit for purpose. It is too conceited, too expensive and too burdensome. We need to change it. To succeed in the next decade and beyond, we need to change it quickly.

However, completely ripping up a human resource management system that has grown over hundreds of years is unnecessary, dangerous and frightening. The transformation needs inspired leadership and very careful change management. Indeed, to change to something that most cannot even see, because they have never felt the need to look at alternative models, requires early and low-risk demonstrations of what is actually possible if one uses design-thinking and technology better to support our organisational and personal goals.

Double-Time is a visionary proof of concept. Through an online application, it provides an open marketplace for talent transactions. It makes employment opportunities, across the Army (and scalable to Defence), more transparent. It can be adopted without any change to the current structures or systems making it very low risk and non-threatening. Its adoption will demonstrate the benefits of the new world, where many pioneers dream to live, to those unwilling or unable to leave the shores of the old.

The idea is called Double-Time because it seeks greater whole-workforce agility through both increasing the pace of change and receiving greater rewards for employment. Double-Time is a digital tool which, as Rightmove or Zoopla do for property, enables buyers and sellers of employment opportunity to meet and match in a transparent marketplace. Imagine being able to see, within a self-defined radius of any postcode, anywhere in the world, all the employment opportunities available to the Army (or wider Defence) whole-force workforce. Imagine being able to filter this information, as one does for property, by a set of useful criteria. For property these are factors such as location, price, number of bedrooms and distance to local amenities. To

best match employment opportunities with those interested in finding them, Double-Time would be filtered through criteria such as location, time-frame available, job role, organisation, salary bracket, rank range or grade, hours or days expected per week, whether the role was deployable or non-deployable, the contract length, whether full- or part-time and what skills, qualifications or experience are deemed essential or desirable. The civil service job site already permits much of this filtering, but does not display the results on a map and does not include employment opportunities for those within the Services.

Instead of relying on a centralised, command-economy approach to the distribution of human resources, Double-Time would create a marketplace for transfer and transactions to occur. Rather than simply an Excel jobs list, Double-Time would permit all opportunities for employment to be registered, seen geographically and filtered by criteria.

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App-etising solution?: The author argues that a digital tool would enable the British Army to best match its employment opportunities with those interested in finding them © Crown copyright.

Opportunities to be employed on adventurous training, career courses, higher education courses, small-arms ranges or work experience could also be shared in the transparent and easily-searchable application so that those wishing to advance their own career or develop professional or personal skills to meet their own potential can find and exploit already existing opportunities. Those organisations wishing to increase their efficiency and fill all spaces on a course or a battlefield study or find employees to support their business outcomes can use the tool to reach out and connect with a broader selection of candidates with the right interests, skills and qualifications.

Benefits to the workforce include increased engagement of personnel in their own careers, empowering the workforce's desire for flexibility, creativity and purpose, increased awareness of employment opportunities across the full spectrum of the Army (and scaleable to Defence), increased access to 'work-experience' placements and ability to grow personal brands, better use of employees' talent and SQE, increased retention of military experience across the whole-force and better foresight of transition opportunities between Regular and Reserve, or across into the civil service (and vice versa). In short, Double-Time enables the 'Harry Potter' staircase of employment transitions. Benefits to the organisation include the accurate and timely creation of HRM metrics (e.g. how many employees are looking at each job? What jobs are not being looked at; why or why not? From where are employees looking? How many employees are searching for new opportunities?).

A whole series of micro-services could be built into the main application (these might support, for instance, forecasting of

skills-shortages, the management of incentives and housing, medical or school place requirements as employees change). In the short term, Double-Time will increase workforce agility and productivity, increase employee commitment (and retention), improve transparency, trust and loyalty and through this, increase the 'alliance' between employer and employees. Digitising the recruitment and application process will occur – it is only a matter of time – so Double-Time can be used as a 'design stepping-stone' to learn from a regulated marketplace where freedoms can be best exploited and which vulnerabilities require protection. The application will thus provide evidence for where best and how to reduce HRM liability while instantly increasing organisational benefit and user-experience.

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If the Army is to create a fresh, enterprising perspective to thrive in today's market, we need to operate as a network. To do that, we must allow the dots to connect

Agility is the only true competitive edge. If the Army is to create a fresh, enterprising perspective to thrive in today's market, we need to operate as a network. To do that, we must allow the dots to connect. In HRM, this means enabling the right people to be at the right place, at the right time and at the right cost. Noting that the greatest immediate challenge for Defence is financial, there is huge opportunity to link the transformation of the 'back-office' (Generating Force) with the finance and resources of the

Defence Innovation Initiative. The second Defence Challenge has been identified as 'Optimise the future workforce to meet anticipated needs, finding sustainable and effective approaches to deliver the resource and skills Defence needs in the coming decades'. Double-Time is one such innovative approach and should be championed by all those who wish the Army to thrive in the next decade and beyond.

For a video presentation by the author on his vision for Double-Time, go to <http://bit.ly/2lkh6qQ>

There is an argument that a system of career progression that has long been focused on identifying and promoting the best tactical commanders, is less effective in terms of identifying and promoting those with wider business, analytical skills and experience



OPTIMISING THE ARMY'S APPRAISAL AND APPOINTMENTS SYSTEM

The discussion at the CHACR workshop ranged widely, but one area not discussed was whether the British Army's system of appraisal and appointments is yet optimised to support command effectiveness. There is an argument that a system of career progression that has long been focused on identifying and promoting the best tactical commanders, is less effective in terms of identifying and promoting those with wider business, analytical skills and experience. It is recognised that change is being delivered, albeit incrementally, with new career fields, personal attributes being assessed and emphasis on knowledge, skills and experience in appointing. Even so, it is arguable that still we do not have a system that effectively recognises and rewards the range of talents that the Army will require in the future. Is it time for a more fundamental reset?

One reason for thinking so might be in the lack of objectivity and transparency that has crept into the system as it is operated. Part of this surrounds very human behaviours such as the tendency of reporting officers to 'over-report' on their subjects, which has led to what might be termed 'creeping excellence' and a lack of balanced reporting. Too often a paean-like narrative is in sharp contrast to a hard judgement such as 'sits in my middle-third', which conveys the real message of the report. Surely if somebody is falling short against his comparators then that should be spelled out rather than obfuscated behind a wall of faint praise? While the system is intelligent enough to manage this so that (mostly) the right people are promoted, it does not necessarily engender the sort of trust, objectivity and constructive commentary that would typify a well-balanced professional culture.

Another concern is that the system seems not yet geared to reward those who branch outside the Army to gain different knowledge, skills or experience. To do so safely it is generally acknowledged that one needs sufficient Army 'credit in the bank' to take the risk of a weaker reporting period or the time to rebuild that credit back in the Army sphere afterwards.

There are signs that we are starting to appreciate our fragility in terms of business skills and lack of strong

representation in key Defence and Joint posts. However, there remains a sense that external reports lack the rigour and weight of those from trusted Army sources. Such an introspective attitude is not characteristic of a strong, confident Army that prizes innovative thinking and external experience and wants to be well-represented beyond its own boundaries.

While these concerns are often recognised, their negative impacts are not yet seen as threats to the institutional health of the Army. Perhaps it is only natural that people play the system as they find it, with those who are successful in it naturally tending to validate it. However, if the Army needs broader knowledge, skills and experience to thrive in strategic, operational and commercial environments that are characterised by constant competition and rapid change, then maintaining a system that struggles to recognise and reward the 'different' sounds a poor option. Moreover, as the young become more career-focused and demanding, it could drive some of the Army's best talent through the exits before it has been able to recognise – let alone exploit – that talent to the full.

In terms of action, the first thing we need to do is have an open and honest debate as to whether we have a problem or not. As it stands, the criticisms made or implied here are most often expressed by those who feel disadvantaged and then only in hushed tones. It may be that there is less of a problem than suggested above, but we also need to be careful of some bias at the top – after all 'what can be wrong with a system that put me here?'

If we can agree that we have a problem, then a raft of procedural, cultural and technical changes may be required to produce a system that recognises and encourages the right blend of knowledge, skills and experience that the Army needs to remain competitive and effective in all its domains of activity. Specific measures could include establishing a 'competency framework' similar to that used by the civil service and enabling personnel to apply directly and compete for posts rather than being managed on a pool basis from afar. However, given

the human behaviours at the root of many of the perceived problems noted here, by far the most important element will be top-down direction in policy and other communication as to the culture we are trying to create and how it is to be realised.



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Perhaps it is only natural that people play the system as they find it, with those who are successful in it naturally tending to validate it



CHACR MISSION STATEMENT

To conduct and sponsor research and analysis into the enduring nature and changing character of conflict on land and to be the active hub for scholarship and debate within the Army in order to develop and sustain the Army's conceptual component of fighting power.