

Leading from Afar – Leadership Training Challenges for Network Centric Warfare

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ABSTRACT

The information age is changing the face of warfare and how we prepare leaders. Network centric warfare is transforming how DoD fights and these changes demand we expand our approaches to training leaders to keep pace with a more distributed battlespace. According to the FCS Operational & Organizational plan, “Small unit leaders will be able to command and control over greater distances ... operating in widely dispersed areas, integrated with CA Teams across the JIM spectrum.” The impact will be more ‘distributed’ leadership. Above the small unit level it is reasonable, possibly desirable, to create combat teams with little previous contact or interaction thus increasing leadership challenges. A network centric battlefield will require distributed leadership beyond today’s doctrine. To enhance current leadership doctrine and training, we propose integrating new research emerging on distributed leadership with the challenges of a net-centric force. Research on distributed leadership in business has recently flourished. This paper draws from work to identify training strategies that will enhance leadership in the military’s future net-centric world. Leaders of dispersed teams must overcome team members’ sense of isolation and disconnectedness, distrust, and weak coordination. They meet these challenges through frequent interactions via the strategic use of multiple communication technologies, consistent, clear, and adequate information, and well-timed feedback. We pinpoint specific training approaches for leaders that, in conjunction with a solid base of leadership training, will significantly enhance their ability to lead distributed teams. The accelerated move to a more modular Army makes this paper timely. Ongoing reorganization plans call for transforming current forces into modular Units of Action, the building blocks of the Future Force. Leader development challenges cannot be put off until 2010 when the first FCS-equipped UA is fielded. Preparing for distributed leadership is crucial to the success of our current and future forces.

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LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES DRIVEN BY CHANGES IN 21st CENTURY OPERATIONS

“The Army’s Commitment. The Army of tomorrow relies on the Army of today to accept the challenge and responsibility for the development of leaders for the future.” (DA Pam 350-58, 1994, p1)

The information age is changing the face of warfare, and the Army’s transformation to the Future Force is driving modifications within the Army. These changes apply not only to the Future Force, but also to the current force, which will transform to a more modular Army by 2007 (Roosevelt, Feb 19 2004, p 5) and will act as a precursor to the Future Force. The Army’s leadership is charged with integrating ideas and concepts being developed for the Future Force into today’s formations.

In addition, net-centric warfare is emerging as the new way to fight. Wider areas of influence and rapidly changing situations are traits of future conflicts. For example, in order to win decisively, the Future Combat System (FCS) equipped Unit of Action (UA) will need to have small unit leaders who can operate in widely dispersed areas with swiftly developed teams taking advantage of the numerous FCS capabilities. This dispersed, net-centric fight will create more instances that require distanced leadership. “Leaders will be educated for more rapid decision making and team building. Characteristics of the future force include flexible team membership and multi-functional adaptive leadership skills”... (Johnston, Leibrecht, Holder, Coffey & Quinkert, 2003, p 1). Building cohesive virtual teams that can perform combat missions will likely be more the norm than the exception in the future.

In light of the Army’s Commitment (noted above), enhancements to leadership training and development are necessary to prepare for the future. Leadership

skills of the Future Force will be more demanding, and will require multi-functional, adaptive and self awareness skill sets (Johnston et al., 2003, p 1). As the Army’s *Concepts for the Objective Force* White Paper states: “New technologies and advanced capabilities are clearly leading to a rapidly expanding, non-linear, multi-dimensional battlespace. Operations are becoming more distributed in time, space and purpose and increasingly joint, multinational, and interagency in nature” (US Army White Paper, n.d., p 3). These changes call for training and development in distanced leadership.

The goals of flexibility and agility demand the ability to create and lead diverse and distributed virtual combat teams to accomplish the mission. In other words, leaders need to be skilled at distanced leadership, or what we call “leading from afar.” Our purpose in this paper is to educate and increase the knowledge base on distanced leadership. Rather than offer one empirical study we will provide a summary of lessons derived from research. Many of the lessons will address the issues of isolation, building trust and other recognized challenges of distanced leadership. Drawing on existing research on distanced leadership, we summarize several tools and techniques that can enable, empower, and assist leaders of today and tomorrow to fight in 21st century operations.

Regardless of the force, current or future, leadership is a key part of our Army’s mission. “Leadership is the most dynamic element of combat power; therefore, growing leaders is our stock-in-trade. Our education, training and development of Army leaders ... are critical tasks that will become more complex as we move to a future that demands increasing levels of judgment, agility, self awareness, adaptiveness, and innovation from leaders. This situation requires continuous leader development at all levels of The Army.” (FM 1, 2001, p 29) As this document states,

leadership requires continuous development and new tools to adapt to the changing environment. After all,

“Leadership development is purposeful, not accidental.” (FM 22-100, 1999, p 6-26)

Although a core competency, the Army does not have the market cornered on leadership. In reviewing many of the Army’s leadership documents there is an apparent ‘gap’ in leading virtual teams or what we term ‘leading from afar.’ This should be no surprise, since the digital revolution – the information age - is still in its very formative stages and effective leadership techniques emerge over time. The corporate world is also experiencing similar ‘digital’ leadership growing pains and the body of academic evidence supporting this area is burgeoning. Although still somewhat limited, it is attracting more academic investigation as this unique subset of leadership develops. We want to get ahead of the ‘learning curve,’ examine this research for key leadership techniques, and move toward supporting the 21st century warfighter.

This look at emerging leadership tools is not unique in its aims. There are a number of ongoing efforts to investigate future leadership demands within the Army Science Board, TRADOC’s Future Force Center, and the Army Research Institute to name a few. Leadership development is a “deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process, grounded in Army values, that grows soldiers and civilians into competent and confident leaders capable of decisive action. Leader development is achieved through the lifelong synthesis of the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained through institutional training and education, organizational training, operational experience, and self-development.” (FM 7-0, 2002, p 1-7) Still, there are obvious challenges ahead.

Our approach in this paper is unique in that we examine emerging research conducted in the business world and provide some tactics, techniques and procedures to assist in the development of better distanced leaders within the military. As noted above, our goal is to supplement the already firm foundation of Army Leadership training, for the Army’s basic leadership program is excellent and copied by many. Our intent is to put more tools into the leadership toolkit for self-development that our versatile and agile leaders of today need and leaders in the future will demand—in other words, provide capabilities to enable the success of the distanced leader.

LEADING FROM AFAR: CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE MILITARY AND IN INDUSTRY

As the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff clearly state in a recent article, “We train for certainty while educating for uncertainty.” (Brownlee & Schoomaker, 2004, p 17) Leadership is one of the core competencies necessary as we move to the future.

Although the Army excels at developing leaders, the future will demand even more of our leaders. (TRADOC Pam 525-66, 2003, p 105) As the Army’s Chief of Staff stated in a recent article, a leader’s “skills will change as the specialization characteristic of industrial-age warfare gives way to the information-age need for greater flexibility and versatility.” (Brownlee & Schoomaker, 2004, p 12) We know “the importance of training and operating as a team has increased in the digital environment... (Johnston et al., 2003, p 12)” and we must adjust to meet this challenge. “That strategic reality is the immediate need for versatile, cohesive units...(Brownlee & Schoomaker, 2004, p 14)” that can deliver in net-centric combat. Clearly, the information age will place greater demands on leaders and this concern must continue to drive Army leadership research.

One of the reasons that our Army’s leadership education must continue to grow in the information age is due to the changing nature of Battle Command. Battle Command, the art and science of applying leadership and decision making to achieve mission success (US Army, Army Transformation Roadmap 2003, 2003, p 2-1), is becoming network centric. In the future, Battle Command will be executed by teaming commanders and leaders using on-demand collaboration. (US Army, 2003, p 2-4) That makes being trained in issues of distanced leadership all the more critical.

The business world also sees the connection between effective leadership of distributed teams and their ability to excel in today’s net-centric business world. Distributed (virtual) teams enable organizations to be present in more than one place simultaneously, with their members linked through technology. The business world also uses virtual teams to reduce costs and improve the profit margin. As reported in the May 2004 issue of the Harvard Business Review, “One team ...went beyond its charge and designed a manufacturing process that saved ... millions of dollars. Another team delivered virtual training to 80% of its company’s employees at one-eighth the

traditional cost (Majchrzak, Malhotra, Stamps, & Lipnack, 2004, p 132).” Organizations like these leverage distributed teams and the results are often substantial increases in performance and the bottom line. Similarly, a competitive advantage, overmatch, or decisive combat power is what the Army wants on the battlefields of today and in the conflicts of the future.

Like the military, the business world has become more dependent on information age capabilities rather than industrial age norms. The same traits that the Army is looking for in its leaders, such as agility, adaptiveness, and innovation, are desirable in the business world. Teams and actions are more distributed in military operations and business in the information age and face-to-face leadership is often replaced by virtual leadership of ad hoc teams to accomplish specific missions. The quickly assembled combat team from dispersed assets in a combat environment will have many similarities with a business tiger team put together from distributed groups to ‘attack’ a corporate objective.

Due to these similarities, in this paper, we draw on academic research on distanced leadership in business settings. As noted above, there are reasonable parallels that make this a fertile ground for developing knowledge on emerging leadership skills/tools. Many of the leadership stories and case studies cited in FM 22-100, Army Leadership, are historical in nature. In the information age, the business community has been operating in a net-centric framework for some time, as has the Army in garrison. But business battles are fought in what the military would consider a peacetime environment, with high stakes – in dollars, not lives. And the Army has not had a tactical internet as large or robust as the business community has been operating on for many years (the World Wide Web and an extensive telecommunications infrastructure). So the historical lessons from industry’s experience become the fresh ideas for net-centric warfare.

The lessons from business may not be an exact match, but as will be explained later in the paper, the critical issues of trust, isolation, and accessibility are common to both. New research often leads to new ideas in many technical fields, and leadership research is no exception. The analytical rigor which the academic studies that we used to develop this paper employed also provides a solid base to develop new leadership tactics, techniques and procedures for the Army.

RESEARCH ON VIRTUAL/DISTANCED LEADERSHIP

Thousands of organizations in diverse industries now have leaders who lead others from afar. As distanced leadership becomes increasingly common in organizations, engaging in leadership strategies that work is key to organizational success.

Distanced/distributed teams pose leadership challenges. Co-located office settings provide more opportunities for organizational members to communicate frequently and spontaneously with each other; they allow for potential to interact immediately for troubleshooting; they foster a forum in which to directly access information; and, they enable the development and maintenance of relationships (Davenport & Pearlson, 1998). These opportunities are absent in distanced settings, unless the leader takes concerted steps to make them happen.

Research has revealed three issues that are critical to effective distanced leadership. They are: (1) preventing feelings of isolation among virtual team members and making distanced leaders accessible to them; (2) building and maintaining trust among virtual team members; and (3) ensuring information equity among all team members, distanced and proximate.

Preventing Perceived Isolation

Often, leaders who are co-located with their team members develop and energize relationships with their team through informal as well as formal interaction. In globally dispersed settings, however, there are fewer opportunities to informally communicate, leaving some distanced employees feeling isolated from their leaders and from events that take place at the central organization (Fisher & Fisher, 2001; Van Aken, Hop, & Post, 1998; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1998). As a result, distanced leaders often must cope with their geographically dispersed team members’ feelings of isolation from other organizational members, from their leadership, and from their organization. Perceived isolation is a critical issue for it has been found to lead to low morale and low productivity. This challenge applies to the military context as well. Isolated on the battlefield, they may have to perform tasks several levels above today’s leaders. (Johnston et al, 2003, p 12)

Because isolation can have adverse consequences, creating a work climate in which the distanced leader is perceived as accessible is critical to effective

distanced work relationships. By perceived accessibility we mean the distanced individual's perception that he/she can contact or reach his/her leader when so desired. This is an important issue to consider in a geographically dispersed context. For many years it was thought that physical distance was necessarily crippling to leaders. But, recent research has demonstrated that as long as leaders can establish a climate in which their subordinates believe they can access them when necessary, actual physical distance is not necessarily a negative (see Connaughton & Daly, under review).

Trust

Trust is also critical in maintaining effective relationships over distance. Trusting relationships promote open, substantive, and influential information exchange well as reduce transaction costs, and trust is the glue of the global workspace (see Connaughton & Daly, 2003; 2004 for more detail). However, trust in distanced settings has been characterized as fleeting (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998) in part due to the inability to observe and interact face-to-face with team members and leader(s).

This is a critical issue in the military, for trust is a key attribute in the human dimension of combat leadership (FM 3-0, 2001, p 4-19). Soldiers must trust and have confidence in their leaders. Leaders must command the trust and confidence of their soldiers. Once trust is violated, a leader becomes ineffective. Trust encourages subordinates to seize the initiative. As the CSA document states, leaders and soldiers are "Bound to each other by integrity and trust,... every Soldier is a leader" (Brownlee, & Schoomaker, 2004, p 13).

Information Equity

Information equity is another critical issue when leading from afar. Cramton (2003) argues that people co-located get more information than those at a distance. In an earlier field study, Cramton (2000) also found more conflict in dispersed teams due to an imbalance of information shared, a result she attributes in part to physical distance fostering an erroneous perception that information had been equally shared among distanced and proximate team members. Indeed, co-located team members often neglect to share essential information with those at a distance because they forget distanced employees do not have access to the same information (Cramton & Webber, 2000). In a study of corporate employees located at a distance, Connaughton and Daly (under review) found that when these distanced individuals perceived they were receiving equitable information as

their co-located counterparts, they were more likely to be satisfied with their job and with their leader.

Other Communication Issues

The distanced leader's frequency and clarity of communication with subordinates, as well feedback to subordinates are also important considerations. Frequent communication from the leader has been shown to relate to distanced individuals' commitment to the organization. Huff, Sproull, & Kiesler (1989) found that the frequency with which distanced employees communicate with others in the organization leads to greater organizational commitment because frequent communication encourages individuals to feel as though they are actively participating in the organization. In addition, clear communication is related to individuals' satisfaction on the job. Academic studies have found that people generally seek to reduce their ambiguity and consequently, have a preference for clear (over unclear) messages. And, when it comes to feedback, the frequency and quality of feedback has been linked to better work relationships as well as greater task productivity (Jablin, 1979; Potter & Balthazard, 2002).

TECHNIQUES FOR ENHANCING DISTANCED LEADERSHIP

The following techniques may be useful in combating perceived isolation and distrust, and in ensuring perceived accessibility and information equity across time and space. All are based on previous research.

Technique One: Use Face-to-face Communication Early On and Then, Periodically

Building a strong initial relationship between leaders and followers who are separated by long distance is the first step to successfully leading from afar. Although virtual teams are, by definition, geographically separated, research suggests that face-to-face communication is still important to achieving organizational outcomes (Cohen & Prusak, 2001; Weisband, Schneider, & Connolly, 1995), specifically for performing particular organizational tasks such as initiating group projects, negotiating issues, and solving problems (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991). Face-to-face communication also enables people to build shared meaning (Zack, 1993).

One critical moment for long distance leaders to utilize face-to-face communication is when they are building the relationship with those they will be leading from afar. Successful leaders understand that this is the stage where face-to-face communication is

essential, for during this time, people are building trust and coming to know one another.

Research also suggests that a distanced leader's early face-to-face meetings were a crucial step for distributed team effectiveness (Connaughton & Daly, under review). Face-to-face interactions help managers and subordinates develop personal relationships that are difficult to develop with the leaner media often used in distanced work settings (e.g., email). Misunderstandings are less likely to arise, politics seems to be minimized, and relationships are built early on when people have face-to-face contact. Trust is created.

After the relationship is built, one of the most important tactical and symbolic steps leaders can take is to make regular personal visits to the remote sites. Personal visits function not only to increase the long distance leader's understanding of the remote employees' point-of-view, but they also increase the visibility of the distance leader. And, they help reduce the "us" versus "them" mentality. Face-to-face visits also offer symbolic value. Doing so sends a powerful message of dedication and can enhance remote employees' motivation.

Technique Two: Personalize Communication

Research reports that distanced workers report greater satisfaction with their leaders when they feel those leaders know them on a personal level and also when they know their leaders on a personal level (Cascio & Shurygailo, 2003; Hart & McLeod, 2002). Successful distanced managers find ways to create a personal relationship with employees even though they are far away. There are many ways that a leader can personalize interactions, both symbolically and tangibly. A leader, for example, may display group pictures of himself and his regional team members on his office wall or maintain a "log" of remote individuals' interests and their family members' names. Distanced leaders that we have spoken with have reported receiving what they felt was a positive response from distanced individuals when they address them by their nicknames, know their likes and dislikes, and can name members of their families and inquire about their lives.

Distanced leaders can also engage in, and encourage, small talk. Yet because people are often communicating through technology, small talk can easily be forgotten in distanced relationships. There are many different ways small talk can be incorporated into distanced interactions. For example, a leader

could begin the monthly videoconference meeting with her distanced individuals by asking questions such as "How has your family been doing?" or "How was that soccer match you had been talking about last time?" Although the nature of their answers is important, it is the conversations themselves, initiated by these questions, which assist individuals in feeling connected to the organization and to their distanced leader.

One technique that we discovered among some of the best leaders was the use of brief narratives and personal disclosures. A leader may electronically disseminate a story each week to his remote team members. That story may be work-related or it may be personal in nature. Those stories help individuals understand the leader, and fill an information void that personal observation in co-located settings may fill.

Technique Three: Over-Communicate

The most effective leaders *over-communicated* with their distanced team members. They did this in a number of ways. For one, they tended to use at least two different media for any message of importance. If they communicated with the virtual team member first over the phone, they followed-up the phone call with an email (or vice-versa). These tactics function to make sure that the remote team member understood correctly.

Team leaders rarely let a day go by when members did not communicate with one another. Frequent phone conversations between the team leader and individual members—even with those who did communicate regularly in teleconferences, in the work space, and in e-mails—were not unusual. One team leader reported being on the phone with his team for ten to 15 hours a week. (Majchrzak et al., 2004, p 136)

Technique Four: Be Disciplined

Leaders need to have much more discipline about everything from returning calls and emails to managing meetings and tasks. Otherwise, things quickly fall apart. Clearly, the leader needs to be disciplined. Promises must be kept and deadlines must be adhered to.

Part of this discipline is establishing regular times to interact with remote team members. In face-to-face settings, non-task interactions occur often in unscheduled ways. Individuals may see each other in the break room, in the hallway, or at the water cooler. They may spontaneously visit a team member in

his/her office space. But when leading those who are geographically separated, regular times for communication should be established. Otherwise these interactions might not happen.

Technique Five: Establish Expectations and Ground Rules about Communication at the Start

Effective communication is difficult in any setting. It is much more difficult in distanced settings. Part of the challenge revolves around the communicative behaviors and misbehaviors of team members. Individuals who have led successful distanced teams related that they had learned, from prior experience, to quickly establish some ground-rules for how the team would communicate. The leader codifies and communicates these ground rules from the moment the team is assembled.

Technique Six: Manage Meetings in a Disciplined Manner

There are two aspects to successful meeting management over distance: (1) articulating norms for preparing for and engaging in meetings; and (2) ensuring that meetings are regularly and publicly scheduled. Research shows that individuals tend to respond more favorably when they know what to expect from an interaction. This is especially important for meetings conducted over distance. The specific norms will depend on the leader and the nature of the team. Yet having those norms outlined ahead of time and shared with team members is crucial in making meetings efficient and effective.

Technique Seven: Keep National Cultural Nuances in Mind

Even when unintentional, misinterpretations and misunderstandings related to cultural differences can result in strained work relationships. To be successful globally, distanced leaders must appreciate culture differences in interaction norms and they must also adapt their behaviors accordingly. Distance leaders should be sensitive to and adapt to culturally-based interaction norms when communicating with distanced employees as well as with individuals in various nation-states. This not only requires training in cultural norms, but requires an individual to assume responsibility for being constantly sensitive to differences in communication and meanings across national (and regional) cultures.

Technique Eight: Choose Appropriate Media for Achieving Objectives

Communication is the essence of distanced teamwork. Although face-to-face communication is important,

distanced leaders often must, by definition, use technological media (e.g., email, video conferencing, computer-assisted meetings) to communicate with those they are leading from afar. Distance leaders must choose and utilize the appropriate communication channels in order to successfully obtain their objectives over distance. Recommendations are as follows:

- **Use face-to-face communication to set vision, to reach policy decisions, and to begin to build relationships.** There are various reasons for this, including: (1) face-to-face interaction accommodates leaders' need to read body language in order to see if remote employees are buying into ideas; (2) it enables remote employees to ask timely procedural questions; and (3) it allows leaders to immediately respond to remote employees' reactions. In making policy decisions, face-to-face communication is perceived as essential in satisfying needs for efficient conversation, for quickly exchanging pertinent data, and for negotiating power issues among relevant actors.
- **Use regularly scheduled telephone calls to exchange important task-related information, to maintain relationships, to appraise performance, and to coordinate teams.** Because leaders cannot always travel to regional sites, the telephone provides another rich medium through which to communicate. Not only does the telephone allow for quick exchange, it also allows distanced leaders to maintain relationships. And it allows distanced leaders to pay attention to distanced employees' paralinguistic cues in order to make assessments about their affective sentiments. In order to perform these responsibilities successfully, leaders must allow for questions, feedback, and real time exchange. For example, research shows that performance feedback, especially on areas for improvement, should be given in a private, one-on-one setting where the appraisee has the opportunity to respond and ask questions (Lee & Jablin, 1995). Telephone allows for that immediate exchange when face-to-face interaction is impossible.
- **Use electronic mail to exchange technical information, to give specific directions, to update interested parties, and to maintain**

relationships. Email is an efficient way to update team members. Imagine the following scenario: when a European manufacturer gives information about when a shipment will be going out, the leader at corporate headquarters “fans” their email to everyone involved with that project. In this case, email is an efficient means to share the information that everyone wants to know. Email can also be used after face-to-face or computer-mediated meetings in order to brainstorm action items for upcoming co-located or virtual meetings. Email is also a suitable tool for maintaining relationships; it can be used to fill the feeling of “you never write, you never call,” and it can be used to help create the social presence between leaders and their team members that is often taken for granted in co-located offices. For important messages, however, a follow-up telephone call may be necessary in order to ensure that these messages were understood.

- **Do not use email to handle emotionally charged relationship issues.** Conflict, and other emotionally charged issues should not be dealt with over email. Distanced leaders often find that conflict is handled best through a channel other than email. They indicate that individuals will react more strongly to email that they perceive negatively than they will to a similar message delivered over the phone or in person. This attribution serves to augment conflict instead of rectify it. Not only do emotions flare, individuals also may forward that email to others in the organization, thereby intensifying the disagreement further.

Technique Nine: Overcome the Challenge of Multiple Leaders

In distanced settings, matrix leadership is quite common. One might have a functional head, a team leader, and perhaps a country or regional director. Unless these leaders are consistent in the goals, messages, and standards, the individual being led can face difficulties: Who is the “real” superior in this situation? Who should I listen to?

Technique Ten: Use Knowledge Management Tools

Working in the same physical location allows people to garner information from one another. If a leader needs something that a co-located team member is working on, the leader can simply walk to the

member’s workspace and ask. If the member is not there, the leader can grab the binder on the shelf where the information lies. At a distance, this information propinquity is not available. Many times, information is easily accessible when working face-to-face, but distance presents a challenge. This “knowledge management” task is especially critical when individuals are spread across the globe.

Successful distanced teams quickly develop and constantly update sophisticated knowledge management services to ensure that job-related information is readily available to distanced team members. The most common sorts of knowledge management are web-based repositories of information that are religiously maintained. For example, a distanced leader could create a web site where junior leaders can post their “lessons learned” and share best practices with other organizational leaders. Or, a distanced leader could use an electronic forum to advertise what “works” in the regions and to propagate those ideas to headquarters and other remote sites. Additionally, a distanced leader could develop an internal electronic bulletin board where subordinates can ask questions and receive suggestions from other junior leaders.

In summary, here is a ‘Leading from Afar’ checklist, similar to what we believe you might find in an appendix of a future revision of FM 22-100, Army Leadership.

DISCIPLINE OF DISTANCED LEADERSHIP CHECKLIST

(adapted from S. L. Connaughton, S. L., & Daly, J. A. (2003). Long Distance Leadership: Communicative Strategies for Leading Virtual Teams. In D. J. Pauleen (Ed.), *Virtual Teams: Projects, Protocols, and Processes* (pp. 116-144). Hershey, PA: Idea Group, Inc.)

Distanced Leaders Should

- ☐ Quickly create a strong personal relationship between yourself and geographically distant others.
- ☐ Build these relationships through face-to-face communication initially and then use voice and electronic channels to maintain relationships
- ☐ Make periodic planned and spontaneous visits to remote sites

- ☐ Provide opportunities for representatives of remote sites to visit headquarters periodically
- ☐ Engage in small talk with distanced individuals in face-to-face settings *and* in computer-mediated exchanges when appropriate
- ☐ Regularly distribute unit-wide information to remote subordinates (e.g., a virtual newsletter)
- ☐ Notify distanced subordinates of news that affects them at the same time as local subordinates receive the news
- ☐ Match the appropriate communication technology to the desired leadership objective
- ☐ Be specific and detailed with directions given over email
- ☐ Initiate follow-up voice communications to important email messages
- ☐ Forward email messages only to relevant parties
- ☐ Delete unnecessary parts of a previous message when forwarding or replying
- ☐ Be cautious of the use of “reply”—are you replying to one individual or a list?
- ☐ Talk about non-task related topics as well as task-related ones
- ☐ Establish regular interaction times
- ☐ Personalize interactions with distanced subordinates
- ☐ Use narratives
- ☐ Intentionally distribute information not directly or even obviously relevant to subordinates’ job responsibilities.
- ☐ Ensure that job-related information is readily available to long distance subordinates
- ☐ Make regular personal visits to the remote sites
- ☐ Be willing to go to remote sites whenever you are needed, even without prior notice
- ☐ Use face-to-face communication to set vision, to reach policy decisions, and to begin to build relationships
- ☐ Use regularly scheduled voice/conference calls to exchange important task-related information, to maintain relationships, to appraise performance, and to coordinate teams
- ☐ Use electronic mail to exchange technical information, to give specific directions, to update interested parties, and to maintain relationships

Distanced Leaders Should Not

- ☐ Deliver bad news over email
- ☐ Use American colloquialisms with foreign nationals, especially in email
- ☐ Use email to discuss emotionally-charged issues (e.g., disagreements, conflict)
- ☐ Assume that once an email message is sent, it will be read and understood
- ☐ Relate information only one time and in only one way
- ☐ Always travel to remote sites or expect remote individuals to always travel to headquarters
- ☐ Disclose pertinent information to local individuals before distanced individuals
- ☐ Assume that meanings are shared
- ☐ Allow email interaction to replace voice/teleconference interaction entirely

THE ROAD AHEAD FOR EMERGING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

For leaders to effectively lead afar, their communication has to be planned, programmatic, and consciously built into their routine. Through the planned use of communicative tactics outlined in this paper, leaders can minimize the isolation and distrust that distanced individuals may perceive.

The Army has always prized leader development (Brownlee, & Schoomaker, 2004, p 19) and must continue to improve leadership training and education in the future. Distanced leadership is an area that will merit attention. New leadership skills that are emerging from research (as cited above) must be documented, disseminated, and practiced. In addition the work of ARI, the Army Science Board, and other agencies must be evaluated to see how they fit into the Army’s leadership training plan. Leader training occurs in the institutional Army, the unit, the combat training centers, and through self-development... (FM 7-0, 2002, p 1-7) and techniques as put forward in this paper must begin to flow into all parts of the training base to develop and sustain future leaders. One key will be to continue to search out ongoing research and test the findings from business settings in military contexts. We must develop high payoff leader development tools/programs that will supplement the Army’s leadership program. A continuous drive to

better our leadership system will be of utmost importance.

In addition to developing new techniques and procedures for distance leadership, the impact of material solutions must also be considered. Future investigations should look into how our material solutions support distributed leadership challenges. We discussed how to compensate for isolation with new skill sets and techniques, how do we implement this through material (hardware and software) solutions? Can the reliability of material solutions enhance the bonds of trust required for effective leading from afar? Are we designing our battle command systems to reduce apparent isolation, enhance trust and increased perceived accessibility? A merging of the art of leadership research and the science of material development is one step on the road ahead. As we move forward with the Army's Transformation we concur with the statement: "The best way to anticipate the future is to create it." (Brownlee, & Schoomaker, 2004, p 23)

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