Building Effective Leader Teams Faster

Michael Prevou, Ph.D.
Strategic Knowledge Solutions

LTC Bradley Hilton
U.S. Army

Lt Col Michael Hower
U.S. Air Force

Linda McGurn
Dynamics Research Corporation

Candace Gibson, Ph.D.
University of Western Ontario

ABSTRACT

Effective cross-boundary teaming is imperative in today's operational environment. Evidence shows that we are shifting from routine individual tasks to more complex cognitive tasks in a team-based environment, increasing the demand on cross-functional teams. This increased level of complexity demands a new approach to forming and launching teams in both the military and in industry. Current military doctrine primarily deals with hierarchical unit teams and discusses the need for effective joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) teams, but it does not specifically address methods to manage the complex cognitive tasks these teams perform. Emerging military mission command doctrine is a slight improvement; it talks a good game, but it offers little in the way of practical approaches for building common and shared purpose, trust, and team competencies. In 2009, we introduced the *Teams of Leaders* approach while working with JIIM teams at European Command (EUCOM). We demonstrated its usefulness in decreasing the time it takes a team to form, launch, and reach a high level of performance. In succeeding years, we have improved both our team development approach and the means by which we measure success. This paper reports on the progress of that work and expands the approach to both industry and healthcare, as well as the Army force generation (ARFORGEN) cycle. A structured *Team Launch Workshop* is introduced, which increases shared understanding and builds trust in both established teams and newly forming teams, along with a set of evaluation criteria designed to measure the seven dimensions of a high-performing team. Using results from four case studies (an interagency team, a U.S. Army Brigade Combat Team, an interdisciplinary health research team, and a rural health consortium), we discuss the components of high-performing teams, provide metrics to measure high performance, offer practical strategies to increase communication and collaboration, and suggest effective ways to apply information technology and knowledge management to improve the reach and corporate memory of leader teams.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael Prevou, Ph.D., is the co-founder and President of Strategic Knowledge Solutions, which specializes in knowledge and learning solutions. He has been a leader in the field of cross-boundary teaming approaches designed to improve the speed of team development and the level of performance. He has co-authored two books on the *Teams of Leaders Approach*—The Teams of Leaders Handbook and the Teams of Leaders Coaching Guide. Dr. Prevou may be reached at mike@strategicKS.com.

LTC Bradley Hilton has been actively involved with Knowledge Management (KM) for the past 10 years. He was involved with the Army's initial development of the KM field, including the integration of KM doctrine, communities of practice, and the development of KM officers and education systems. He spent three years at European Command Headquarters in Germany working on the Teams of Leaders initiative, which focused on rapidly building and effectively employing cross-boundary and culturally diverse teams highly competent in learning and adapting. He is now assigned to the Army Mission Command Center of Excellence working on the development of integrated and synchronized network capabilities that enable mission command. He may be reached at bradley.c.hilton@us.army.mil.

Lt Col Michael Hower is the Commander of the 31st Student Squadron at Squadron Officer School, Air University, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, where he is responsible for educating, motivating, and mentoring Air Force junior officers to learn the leadership, communication, and collaboration skills necessary to succeed in today's complex world. Since 2005, he has also served as the research director for Air Force Forums—the Air University experiment in social learning and professional networking—designing, developing, and testing knowledge management systems to improve the way the Air Force collaborates globally to solve problems and save resources. He may be reached at mike@mikehower.me.

Linda McGurn is a Dynamics Research Corporation (DRC) consultant supporting the Army Operational Knowledge Management Proponent office. She is the knowledge adviser to the Mission Command Center of Excellence. Ms. McGurn has also analyzed and developed operational prototypes for advanced blended learning. She has instructed the knowledge assessment module of the Army Knowledge Management Qualifying Course and has been an adjunct instructor at the University of Saint Mary where she designed and taught the MBA program's first Principles of Project Management course. Ms. McGurn is a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction at the University of Kansas School of Education. She may be reached lmcgurn@drc.com.

Candace Gibson, Ph.D., is an associate professor in the Department of Pathology at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Health Information Management Association. She has been instrumental in assisting organizations in Central Michigan and Canada with team development and application of the *Teams of Leaders* approach. She has received numerous awards for her outstanding teaching in undergraduate, graduate, and continuing professional education. Her current interests include the development of advanced e-learning tools, clinical informatics, and the development of e-health human resources for the introduction and use of the electronic health records at regional, national and international levels. She may be reached at candaceg@uwo.ca.

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INTRODUCTION

A dramatic transformation is underway, changing how the world connects and collaborates. The whole of governments, as well as industry, the military, and healthcare all face a new challenge—how to continuously engage in a networked world to learn, decide, and act quickly to outperform adversaries, conserve resources, or save lives. Cross-boundary and multifunctional teams are often created to work through the complexities associated with organizational hierarchy and bureaucracy, but often, as Richard Hackman (2002) in his book *Leading Teams* noted, the results are less than desired. Cultures and methods are being challenged, according to Hackman, while traditional structures are being scrutinized, dissected, deconstructed, and reengineered, necessitating entirely new approaches to how business, medical professionals, and government agencies form and operate leader teams.

This paper expands on previous research about forming and launching cross-boundary leader teams, and explores the question of how we measure the performance of these teams. Using case studies, we address the challenges faced by four teams, the distinction between hierarchical teams and teams of leaders, and the criteria used for defining team performance. Finally, we describe a proven approach for developing and sustaining high-performing teams of leaders, which includes activities and exercises that can be used to improve team communication and collaboration during the stages of team development. This approach has helped diverse teams of leaders reach a higher level of performance faster than traditional techniques.

This paper focuses on how we applied a team development intervention with four types of organizations, and how we measured changes in behavior and beliefs of team members. Case studies are developed with lessons learned and best practices that may be applied to any organization.

- Case Study 1 – The Interagency Team: European Command Exercise AUSTERE CHALLENGE
- Case Study 2 – The Interdisciplinary Team: Medical Research at the University of Western Ontario
- Case Study 3 – The Multidisciplinary Team: Public Health in Central Michigan
- Case Study 4 – The Military Team: Improving the U.S. Army Brigade Combat Team (BCT)

Each of the cases is based on improving performance in a nested team of leaders from different organizations. With the exception of the military BCT, none of the team members are linked through a formal hierarchy or a chain of command.

Building Leader Teams That Work

The belief that working in teams makes us more creative and productive is widely held by organizational leaders who are quick to assume such teams are the best way to obtain superior results. However, research shows that "teams underperform despite the additional resources" typically provided by the organization (Coutu, 2009).

Hackman (2002) outlined five conditions that must exist for teams to be successful:

- An understanding of who is on the team
- A compelling direction or purpose
- An enabling structure
- Organizational support
- Expert team coaching

He suggests that failure to ensure these conditions are met requires us to rethink the importance of teams and team development in organizations. He also posits that evidence does suggest that teams can achieve high performance if they have a structured team process approach.

Based on our observations, many organizations have turned to technology as the means to provide this structure, but this technology often results in an overabundance of information, a lack of clarity, and slower decision making (Hackman, 2002). Additionally, most organizations lack the doctrine, policy, and supporting structure for developing high-performing cross-boundary teams. While many organizations do address "teaming" in general for homogeneous and hierarchical teams, their corporate procedures provide little, if any, "how to" guidance on forming and launching diverse teams of leaders, guiding such teams through their work, and sustaining teams as membership, missions, and environments change.

The bottom line is that most organizations do not address ways to build the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective high-performing teams; rather, they focus on technical expertise and assume teaming skills exist. Rarely does doctrine address building a culture of collaboration between teams of leaders (Lipnack and Stamps, 2000). A structured approach combining doctrine, method, and technology, is critical in developing these leader teams to ensure work gets done.

Leader Teams: Where Work Gets Done

It has become clear is that most organizational work is accomplished by teams. Less clear is that many efforts are now being conducted in leader-teams—groups of action-oriented decision makers from multiple disciplines, functions, or organizations who come together for a specific purpose. These teams are nesting themselves into larger efforts to maximize capability and problem-solving. Generally, leader-team members are not bound by an explicit hierarchical structure; rather, they retain the authority to reach back to their organization and generate action. The leader-team members may be organizational representatives or the leaders of an organization. Each team member brings a unique contribution to the effort and acts as a decisive driver for the functions he or she represents. These team members are linked through purpose, but they often lack clear lines of authority, which results in them accomplishing work by finding mutual benefit or by co-opting others.

In today's fast-changing environment, these leader teams are frequently nested into a larger network or effort. Unfortunately, whether nested or not, these teams are often inoperable. This inoperability is often spotlighted as the natural byproduct of biases created by stove-piped organizational hierarchies, cultures, regulatory systems, geographical dispersion, policies and procedures, inconsistent languages or lexicons, and juxtaposed organizational interests. These obstacles to interoperability and high performance cause friction and stagnation, resulting in reduced agility and ability with, at times, deplorable results.

Nowhere is the phenomenon more starkly realized than in intergovernmental teams and healthcare (von Lubitz, 2010). As governmental agency missions expand to include lead and supportive roles in the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) context, so does the recognition of this vacuum. General Martin Dempsey's remarks to the 2009 Joint Warfighting Conference define the challenge of the next 20 years in terms of JIIM networks. In circumstances such as Hurricane Katrina, there may be no "lead" agency at all, requiring each team or agency to adapt while organizational leaders come together rapidly to form cooperative teams. As Gen Dempsey states, "If we are to be truly committed to becoming a Joint Interagency Intergovernmental and Multinational Team, then our interagency and coalition teammates are going to have to match our decentralization of capability and decision-making authority with their own" (Dempsey, 2009).

Implicit in Gen Dempsey's address is that constructive relationships among agencies, industries, and nations, are central to the success or failure of the decentralized JIIM network. The emerging Army doctrine for Mission Command acknowledges this need for cross-boundary teaming (which is very different from the hierarchical teaming that occurs in units (FM 3.0, 2011)) and makes team-building a prime objective of every commander. In the healthcare and health research fields, working across boundaries is not new; however, team-building training and deliberate processes exist in few curricula, except for the occasional mention in leadership courses and burgeoning professional education efforts.

Based on our observations and initial pilot efforts in 2009 and 2010, remarkable advantages can be recognized if organizations have a deliberate approach to creating and maintaining collaborative team environments (Prevou, Veitch, & Sullivan, 2009). Subscribing to a few basic conditions for productive teaming can improve performance and solve these complex, ill-structured problems with relative ease (Hackman, 2002). A model that allows organizations to form teams that learn, adapt, and innovate faster is a necessity to succeed in the high-risk dynamics of today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world.

People like to be part of *the team*, but only when that team functions with a high degree of shared purpose, trust, and competence. Success builds confidence and empowers the team to confront more difficult challenges. In simple terms, applying sound teaming principles and practices is a cost-effective way to increase profits and productivity by tapping the contributions of a broader pool of talent. Developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities to form and perform on these teams is a time intensive task, one that we cannot wait until the next crisis to begin.

Teams of Leaders (ToL)

ToL is a leadership framework for rapidly building and effectively employing cross-boundary teams that are highly competent both in making and executing decisions and in learning and adapting together.

The ToL approach has been piloted in the U.S. Armed Forces and in programs within the healthcare field. This approach has been proven effective as a way of overcoming common team dysfunctions. It provides a specific methodology to help teams ***form and launch*** to achieve results more quickly. It is especially useful in complex, adaptive situations, where:

- Team members come from a variety of organizations;
- Team members are spread out geographically;
- Teams are solving complicated problems, involving many issues and stakeholders;
- Teams must adapt to rapidly changing conditions;
- Teams need to multiply their effectiveness through new team-based approaches and high-tech, collaborative tools; and
- Teams need to rapidly develop shared purpose, vision, trust, and competence to accomplish complex, non-routine tasks.

As tested and practiced in the complex setting of non-combat JIIM activities, the ToL methodology leads to efficient performance and high-performing leader teams much more quickly than traditional team-building techniques (Prevou, et. al., 2009). These high-performing teams share certain characteristics:

- They communicate and collaborate more effectively;
- They have a stronger sense of shared purpose, shared trust, shared team competency, and shared team confidence; and
- They possess the ability to quickly build strong relationships, empathize with other perspectives, negotiate, and co-opt others (both inside and outside the organization).

Our Methodology

In all cases we conducted what we call the *Team Launch Workshop*. This workshop is a two-day event designed to align team members with the seven components illustrated in Figure 1. A critical part of the workshop is the *Leader Team Exercise* (LTX), which is a structured thinking process used to facilitate conversation and collaboration. Additionally, for each of the workshops referenced in the case studies, we developed a 24-question (later 35-question) pre- and post-workshop Likert scale survey, which was completed by participants and observers to assess high-performing team attitudes and behaviors. The purpose of the initial survey was to establish a baseline of the team's characteristics. This baseline was then compared to the results of the same survey, administered after the team launch, exercises, and workshop were complete. The key findings from the workshops and surveys are discussed in more detail in each case study and the presentation of findings.

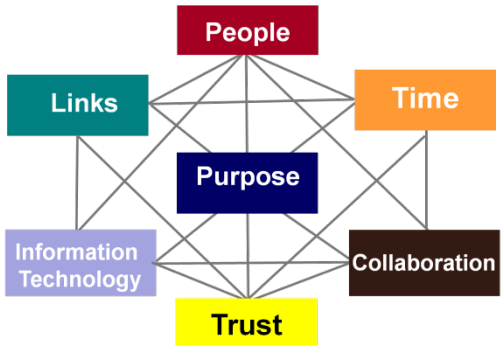

Figure 1: Components of a *Teams of Leaders* Team

FOUR EXAMPLES OF BUILDING EFFECTIVE TEAMS OF LEADERS

Case Study 1 – The Interagency Team

In the original pilot, the ToL approach was applied by the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) during AUSTERE CHALLENGE—an annual interagency exercise—which took place in Germany during April and May 2009. A conglomerate of government agencies participated, including the Departments of State, Agriculture, Justice, and Defense, along with the U.S. Agency for International Development and many other, smaller groups.

During the exercise, the research team observed and evaluated the performance of five teams and their interactions, both internally among members, and externally among other leader teams. The main focus

was on two interagency teams deployed from Washington, D.C., and three EUCOM Headquarters internal teams. Each leader-team was comprised of leaders representing their respective organization or agency from multiple levels of government. The results of this study were published at IITSEC in 2009 (Prevou, et. al., 2009).

The leader teams were measured for effectiveness through direct observation and scored on three different occasions using six criteria and informal interviews. The research team used a 24-question assessment from the ToL coaching guide that measured shared purpose, trust, competence, confidence, collaborative technology, information, and knowledge management. (This instrument has since been updated.)

Of the five teams, *Leader Teams 1 and 2* had neither ToL training or coaching, while ToL interventions were performed on *Leader Teams 3, 4, and 5* (Figure 2).

Leader Teams 1 and 2, with no ToL training, served as the control groups. They formed and operated as most teams do with no formal launch, operating procedures, or coaching, struggling throughout the 10-day exercise to reach even modest levels of performance.

Leader Team 3 received a briefing and short class (two hours) on the ToL approach. Following observation, they were noted by the research team as having some of the best collaborative processes; however, the team's organization and synchronicity were initially lacking. At the outset, a disagreement on purpose and a problem of trust with other teams was observed. Left unresolved, these problems hampered the team's overall performance.

Leader Team 4 received the same briefing and short class on ToL, but was also assigned a ToL coach from outside the organization as group facilitator. This additional coaching resulted in a solid level of sustained performance. The team demonstrated shared understanding of the situation, purpose, and trust. While they adequately achieved the desired end state, they did experience some difficulty in effectively using collaborative technologies. These difficulties were somewhat mitigated by the constructive relationships between the key members, team experience, and coaching in the ToL methodology.

Leader Team 5 received the briefing and ToL class, but had an internal (rather than external) coach assigned as group facilitator. This coach had previously completed a day of ToL training, making him comparable in skill with the external coach assigned to Team 4. Through coaching and the LTX, this team was able to achieve the highest levels of performance. Virtual collaboration, use of the team information portal, and knowledge management among the members were some of the best observed.

Figure 2 compares the performance of each team during the exercise against the dashed horizontal line for "minimum level of performance" and the red "S" curve line, which represents desired performance. The blue ovals on the red "S" line indicate the desired stages of a ToL team.

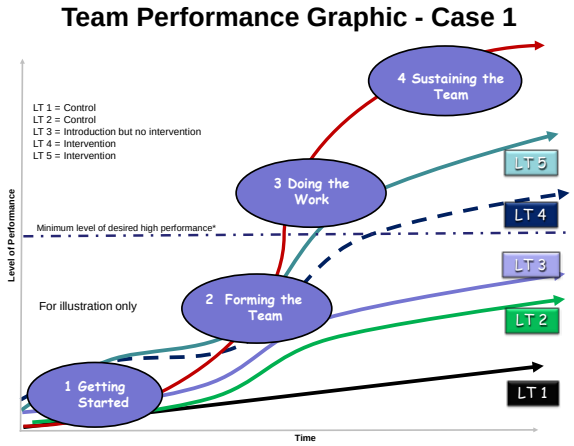

Figure 2. Test Group Performance

From the figure above, it is clear that each team that applied even the smallest parts of the ToL approach fared better than the teams that lacked ToL knowledge. The teams that applied the ToL approach haphazardly realized modest improvements over 10 days but failed to reach the standard for high team performance set by unit leaders. Teams that applied ToL with the assistance of an expert facilitator showed the most improvement.

Extending the Envelope – ToL in Healthcare

After the interagency pilot described in Case 1 was complete, we asked ourselves if the ToL approach could be applied in other areas with complex, adaptive systems? Health care presents many of the same elements encountered in the interagency environment, but on interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary levels. Could a ToL approach improve how interdisciplinary medical research teams identify and bring new approaches and cures to market? Could ToL improve the way multidisciplinary health care teams improve public health? These questions led us to contacts in Canada and central Michigan to work with two different types of health teams—one a research team,

and the other a public health care team with providers and participants crossing many different state and federal agencies. These cases extended and improved the ToL methodology as described below.

Case Study 2 – The Interdisciplinary Team: Medical Research at the University of Western Ontario

Medical research is no longer conducted by lone, renegade scientists working in laboratory isolation. Today, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research teams are funded to combat cancer, diabetes, infectious disease, neurodegeneration, and many other medical adversaries. Although the need for interdisciplinary teams to tackle these complex health problems is clear, there is little evidence on how these science teams should be developed and what factors can ensure their success (or even what we might define as success for such groups) (Stokols et al, 2008; Masse et al, 2008). Many researchers still cling to the model of the lone scientist and little or no training is given on how to collaborate and effectively communicate across disparate professional cultures. To combat this problem, we decided to test the ToL approach with an interdisciplinary team centered at the University of Western Ontario.

A small group of scientists and medical professionals at the University of Western Ontario has been tackling various aspects of bone and musculoskeletal health over the past several years. Working as individuals, they have been fairly successful in obtaining grant support for their research, attracting graduate students, and publishing peer-reviewed articles—the traditional markers of scientific success. Recognizing that they could benefit from a collaborative approach among a broader group that would include not only the basic scientists, but also clinical specialists, therapists, and technicians, they began to meet with the goal of developing a broader purpose. For eight months, the team had been struggling with why it should exist, who should be part of the team, and how to work together. We proposed a *Team Launch Workshop* to help get the group started.

During the two-day workshop, members of this newly emerging research team developed a shared understanding of their purpose, agreed upon a common vision for their research, and established rules of engagement for how they would operate as a team. At the end of the first day, one of the busy clinicians who had not intended to participate the following day rearranged her schedule so she could attend, stating the value of the approach and the structured yet flexible team launch process had convinced her the team could and would make progress.

In this case, the LTX played a prominent role as measured by the workshop assessments. Changes in attitudes towards key high-performing team elements were assessed (both pre- and post-workshop), and scores increased in all but one area. In fact, 14 of the 24 assessment measures showed statistically significant increases using a Mann-Whitney rank sum test.

Key assessment elements that showed improvement following the workshop were:

- Everyone has the same picture of the overall purpose;
- The team discusses, agrees on, and reviews clear simple goals;
- Everyone understands team deliverables;
- The team continuously clarifies roles, responsibilities, and competencies needed;
- Leadership is widely distributed and shifts as needed;
- The team collaboratively establishes and actively applies operating agreements;
- The team actively implements strategy for engagements across organizational boundaries;
- The team has a high level of trust and clear milestones and schedules of dates;
- Task timelines are collaboratively established; and
- People discuss team processes and suggestions for improvements.

Case Study 3 – The Multidisciplinary Team: Public Health in Central Michigan

Early in 2010, a series of reports were released by the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute which documented the overall "health" of counties across the United States. In the report, six counties under the purview of the Central Michigan Health District performed poorly and spurred the District Health Officer to action, convening a public health summit assembling health providers, social workers, mental health professionals, leaders from business and government, and the media to discuss strategies to improve overall public health. The group came together in January 2011 for a *Team Launch Workshop* and to develop a core group of internal ToL coaches/trainers who would stay within each county to facilitate future activities.

This was a more disparate group than the medical/health researchers and clinicians described in Case Study 2—multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary in nature. All team members were

volunteers—there because of altruistic feelings or fiscal motivation to improve the community. Although the initial meetings were considered ineffective, the group did share motivation, an understanding of purpose, and the mission of "Uniting the communities and working together, we will improve health and promote wellness in central Michigan." This mission statement, a vision ("Together We Can Build a Healthier Community"), and core values were developed during the workshop along with a set of formal operating agreements. These documents—the vision, mission, values, and operating agreements—form the basis of an orientation package available to on-board new team members. The package is also used as a basic team charter as the group moves the process into each of the individual counties.

During the workshop, the team developed a set of eight short-term and long-term objectives to assist them in working with the six counties, as well as developing a district-wide health improvement plan. Comments at the end of the workshop indicated the enthusiasm and momentum generated.

Slightly modified versions of the LTX pre- and post-assessments were given to the team members (purpose, people, links, time, and trust were assessed), and most measures showed improvement. Changes were more modest here than in Case Study 2, but some key measures were significantly higher.

In this Case, information technology and knowledge management were not directly measured, but they did play a vital role in group discussion. During discussion, it became evident that the team—like most multidisciplinary teams—had no common platform for information exchange, and no formalized knowledge management processes in place. It was determined that these two issues would greatly hamper future cross-boundary communication, and should be remedied. We are currently working with this group to establish a collaborative communications platform (or *Team Room*) where members can continue to work together, share information, work collaboratively on development of the health improvement plan, and share resources across the counties.

Case Study 4 – The Military Team: Improving the U.S. Army Brigade Combat Team (BCT)

The BCT is the core combat element of the U.S. Army. As part of the Army's three-year force generation cycle, most BCTs have 18 months to change over personnel, train leaders, and prepare equipment before redeployment into combat. Given the stress of the current wartime environment, this 18-month preparation cycle is often curtailed. Could the ToL approach be adapted to a hierarchical organization to create a strong team of leaders who share a common understanding of the mission and situation and sense of purpose? Could ToL help develop teams to prepare, train, man, and equip the unit, as well as build trust among soldiers? Could ToL help compress the process from 18 months into only nine?

Our research team was asked to help a new commander form and launch his command team. The team consisted of the Brigade Commander, Deputy Commander, CSM, XO, Operations Officer, and each of his six subordinate teams: Battalion, Commander, CSM, and S3. The two-day offsite facilitated by our research team created a way to have meaningful conversations about the road to war and created opportunities for the team to build the specific decision points, desired conditions, and training approaches needed to accomplish the 18-month program in only nine months.

Before the workshop began, the participants completed an individual personality/style assessment online and a team assessment survey that was repeated on the last day of the workshop. This survey added the areas of information technology and collaboration, which were evaluated during this pilot since the organization had the basic systems and foundations already established.

Figure 3. BCT Team Launch Workshop

A facilitator led the initial discussion about how team members can understand themselves and their team, based on profiles from the individual personality/style assessments. On the following day, the team facilitated discussion and LTXs around launching the team, built on the BCT's Road to War and battle rhythm. The discussion included using information management and KM to improve team communication and collaboration.

One of the major achievements was to get the BCT command team to agree on operating procedures. The fundamental questions of 'how do we want to operate?' and 'what are the expectations?' surfaced and were discussed in detail among the team. This agreement was a major contribution toward the shared team competency and trust and moved the new team forward along its team development path.

As a result of these conversations and negotiated agreements, "the Brigade XO said, there was a higher sense of buy in by the subordinate teams, they felt like part of the solution." The team also developed their operating procedures for how they would work together to share and create new products using a suite of information technology and KM tools.

Work with this team has not been completed, and the plan is to follow the initial *Team Launch* at the BCT Command Team level with seven similar workshops with each of its six battalions and the brigade HQ staff team. Then, over the next 60 days, shorter one-day workshops will be conducted at each company level and facilitated by the battalion leadership. This scaffolded approach helps create common purpose and understanding through three levels of nested teams.

The BCT, while still very much a hierarchical organization, now operates much differently. Because they have a quick and effective way to talk through challenges and missions (the Leader Team Exercise), they tend to solve problems at a lower level and more quickly. This approach has increased communications across unit boundaries and improved knowledge flow and collaboration. This methodology is expected to accelerate the development of trust, team competency, and confidence within and among each team and helped the teams get to a level of proficiency nearly 3-4 times faster than normal conditions.

Lessons Learned from the Four Case Studies

Lessons from Case 1:

- ✓ Training on team communication and collaboration skills enhances team performance.
- ✓ Group facilitation improves performance; internal facilitation (by a member familiar with the organization(s)) improves performance more than external facilitation.

Lessons from Case 2:

- ✓ Exercises that facilitate awareness of and conversation about the seven dimensions a high-performing team enhance team performance.

Lessons from Case 3:

- ✓ Team charters, which codify vision, mission, and values, as well as operating agreements are critical to the success of disparate teams with frequently changing membership.
- ✓ Lack of common team platforms, methods, and protocols for information exchange hamper team performance even when other team performance measures are high.

Lessons from Case 4:

- ✓ The approach appears to be effective on hierarchical teams and well as matrixed, cross-boundary teams.
- ✓ Forcing a difficult conversation to occur in a professional and respectful way contributed greatly to shared understanding and building trust.
- ✓ The approach can be applied in layers throughout the organization to improve shared understanding of purpose and vision in up to three levels of the hierarchy.
- ✓ Members of the team felt more satisfied that their voice was heard and that they understood the teams (or bosses in this case) strategy for going forward.

Lessons From All Case Studies:

The LTX is an effective and powerful tool to develop shared understanding of purpose and build trust through a structured and deliberate conversation. Even where the team believed they had an understanding of the overall vision and mission at the beginning of the workshop, there was still positive movement along the dimensions of purpose on the post assessment.

Both the LTX and deliberate operating agreements are especially important drivers of shared trust and confidence for disparate teams, like the one described in Case Study 3. The rich conversation produced by the LTX, combined with discussion and agreement about the team's "rules of engagement," helped the team members build relationships with one another.

CONCLUSION

The results were positive in all four cases where Teams of Leaders was applied and the approach has matured with each application. The ToL approach has shown notable ability in building and sustaining team relationships, actionable understanding, and performance by increasing the quality and quantity of both communication and collaboration. It has demonstrated the ability to significantly improve the team's understanding of a situation and its shared purpose and vision for an operation. Through this relationship-building process, ToL improves trust and helps develop the sense of shared competence and confidence required for complex mission sets while

incorporating greater numbers of people and organizations.

Pre- and post- intervention surveys and observations confirm the positive improvement. Additional studies are ongoing to follow up with teams six months after the interventions to see if the approach is still in use and effective.

There is a clear implication to organizational learning. Effective leader-team development cannot be left to chance. Some type of cross-boundary teaming approach must be taught and mastered. While everyone will not master the skills, those whose teams do achieve a high level of leader team building expertise will have a significant competitive advantage over other organizations.

The *Teams of Leaders* approach accelerates Leader Team performance through four stages of team development, with a deliberate methodology to improve communication and collaboration.

The Army, like its sister services, is a team of teams and, while it believes that team building is at the core of its leader development and training strategy, most of that strategy deals only with hierarchical and homogeneous team building skills, not cross-boundary and multi-functional teams. Emerging doctrine has just recently acknowledged the need to develop nested teams of teams and build the knowledge, skills, and abilities to cross components, interagency, intergovernmental, and cultural boundaries.

The evolving Army Mission Command doctrine acknowledges the need to synchronize information technology with knowledge management to create a culture of collaboration to speed and improve knowledge flow and decision making. It describes the need to develop "the cognitive ability in leaders to master transitions, innovate and adapt" (U.S. Army Leader Development Strategy). While the Mission Command doctrine captures the challenges required to solve complex, ill-structured problems and work across boundaries, cultures, and organizational hierarchies, it suggests a methodology is needed to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for this type of teaming.

The ToL approach fills that vacuum. The ToL methodology works. The LTX is effective in helping a diverse group of teams work through situations and requirements to improve understanding, visualize the execution and possible outcomes of how the operation will proceed, describe how we will work together and who does what by when (direct), and how we will measure success. The work accomplished with these four organizations has proven that there is substance to the ToL methodology that warrants further exploration and refinement.

It is not only the medical profession and whole of government that requires potent, high-performing teams. In these challenging economic times, numerous mega companies have fallen or teeter on the brink of collapse. The ability to adapt, learn, and team expertly is often identified as a major contributor to a company's competitive advantage. Whether developing new cancer drugs, building automobiles, managing mergers and transitions, or delivering humanitarian aid, the ability to rapidly develop effective teams could mean the difference between organizational success and failure. By increasing team collaboration and communication skills, the ToL approach narrows time to maturation and achieves performance that far surpasses normal teaming techniques. ToL has the potential to be to the collaborative leader-teams what the Internet was to commerce—transformational.

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- University of Western Ontario
- European Command
- U.S. Army Battle Command Knowledge System
- U.S. Army Operational Knowledge Management Proponent
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