

Chief of Armor Hatch: Developing Leaders

“We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order – creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory. ... This increasingly complex security environment is defined by rapid technological change, challenges from adversaries in every operating domain and the impact on current readiness from the longest continuous stretch of armed conflict in our nation’s history. In this environment, there can be no complacency – we must make difficult choices and prioritize what is most important to field a lethal, resilient and rapidly adapting Joint force.” - 2018 National Defense Strategy

People remain the No. 1 priority in the Army, and developing leaders is quintessential to building readiness. To develop leaders to meet the challenges listed in the 2018 National Defense Strategy, we must understand what leader development is and why it is important.

The Army Leader Development Strategy defines leader development as “a continuous, progressive process by which the synthesis of an individual’s training, education and experiences contribute to individual growth over the course of a career.” Field Manual (FM) 6-22 defines three domains associated with leader development (institutional, operational and self-development).

The *institutional domain* represents career-long learning and development. Leaders matriculate the institutional domain at different points in their careers to receive professional military education.

The *operational domain* is where leaders gain experience. In the operational domain, training events (situational-training exercises, round-table discussions or seminars) provide multiple repetitions and sets to strengthen mental agility while post-training after-action reviews provide feedback for improvement.

Leaders continuously navigate the *self-development domain* as they enter and exit the operational and institutional domains; the self-development domain is where leaders learn from the experiences of others through professional reading and reflect on their own experiences. This domain enables leaders to interpret their mistakes and internalize lessons-learned during training.

Figure 1 depicts the Army’s leader-development strategy.

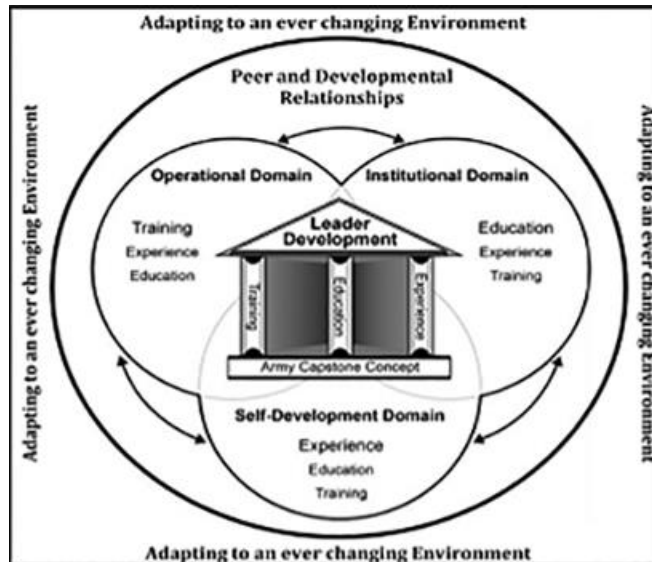


Figure 1. Army leader-development model from 2013’s *Army Leader Development Strategy*.

Retired GEN Martin Dempsey said that “our doctrine and our organization and even the guidance we give ... is not going to be perfectly suited. And so these young men and women out there on the edge – it’ll be their

responsibility to take what they are given ... and apply it in a way that will allow us to protect our national interest and promote our values.”

Armor leaders must think faster and react with lethal precision; therefore the method we use to develop leaders must be deliberate and planned like an operation. The planning process for developing leaders is no different from planning and resourcing an attack, defense or gunnery.

Unit leader-development programs (LDPs) are vital in developing Armor leaders. They must target identified shortfalls and develop critical thinking and decision-making skills. Plan and manage LDPs at the battalion level for platoon leaders/platoon sergeants, and at the brigade level for company commanders, first sergeants and field grades.

Table 1 is an example LDP for platoon sergeants from FM 6-22.

MEMORANDUM FOR All Battalion Platoon Sergeants	
SUBJECT: Battalion Platoon Sergeant Development Program	
1 Purpose: To establish a platoon sergeant professional-development program and provide guidance for its execution.	
2 Intent: Provide opportunities for the battalion command sergeant major to assess the professional strengths and developmental needs of battalion platoon sergeants and develop leaders through one-on-one coaching and mentoring.	
3 Procedures:	
	a. Duration. Each session will be one and one-half (1.5) to two (2) hours long.
	b. Location. The location will be at the discretion of the platoon sergeant and will be provided when making the calendar appointment.
	c. Participants. This is one-on-one time for platoon sergeants with the battalion command sergeant major. There will be no other participants.
	d. Frequency. The first session will occur in the first 30 to 60 days of a new platoon sergeant assuming responsibility. Platoon sergeants will schedule a subsequent session every five to eight months thereafter. Platoon sergeants will conduct a final session in the last month before relinquishing responsibility.
	e. Session time breakdown (estimate):
	The first 30 minutes to one hour of the session will be a sit-down discussion by the platoon sergeant with the battalion command sergeant major in an area where they will not be disturbed. Platoon sergeants must come prepared to discuss the topics in detail (outlined later), demonstrating knowledge of their unit and understanding of their mission.
	During the second hour, the platoon sergeant will take the battalion command sergeant major to the selected location. Training should highlight what is unique and interesting to that company’s mission. This is the primary focus of the meeting. The platoon sergeant should be showing the battalion command sergeant major how the platoon accomplishes a training event. It is the platoon sergeant’s responsibility to know what training is ongoing and where. This is the time for the platoon sergeant to highlight platoon systems, conduct, or techniques and procedures.
	f. Constraints. Platoon sergeants have full latitude to present prepared information to support the topics of discussion. The platoon sergeant will not speak from a prepared script, but should be able to speak specifics about Soldiers in training, sick call, or other appointments.
4 Topics of discussion. Topics are intended to be ambiguous and prompt open-ended questions for discussion. Platoon sergeants will not receive a briefing shell to fill out. Platoon sergeants must be prepared to discuss these topics in any order or method chosen by the battalion command sergeant major.	
	a. Describe your mission and strategies to improve how your platoon accomplishes its mission. What are your strengths, weaknesses, upcoming opportunities and potential threats as they relate to your unit? Where do you want to take your platoon?

	b. Discuss your assessment of the training-management processes and training-record management for your platoon. How well does your company use Digital Training Management System (DTMS), and what are your company's challenges with DTMS?
	c. Describe your platoon's personnel situation, including staffing, certification, physical fitness (with height and weight compliance), medical readiness and profiles.
	d. What programs do you have in place for professional development? Does your counseling system foster professional development and tailor it for each individual?
	e. How do you identify, track and care for high-risk personnel in your platoon? Describe your approach to using non-judicial punishment.
	f. Discuss the external relationships and stakeholders that your platoon has to accomplish its mission. What is your assessment of the strength and benefits of those relationships? What are you doing to maintain or strengthen them?
	g. One of the following systems will be selected to discuss in detail; platoon sergeants should be prepared to discuss all of them:
	Platoon trends for chapters. What are the highest percentages of chapters? What can we do about it?
	What does your platoon do for hip-pocket training for down/slow time? Who conducts it? How is it conducted?
	Training and Soldier facilities: What is the status of training areas or facilities, barracks, or any company-operated facilities?
5 Scheduling implementation:	
	a. New platoon sergeants will begin this program within 30-60 days of assuming responsibility. This population is the highest priority for scheduling.
	b. Platoon sergeants nearing the end of their tour. Platoon sergeants within the last three months of their tenure will schedule their session a minimum of two weeks before change of responsibility. This population is second in scheduling priority.
	c. Platoon sergeants midway through their tenure (plan on 24 months being the average tour of duty) have the lowest priority of scheduling.

Table 1. Example platoon-sergeant development program. (Adapted from Figure 2-4, FM 6-22)

Engaged leadership is the final component in developing leaders. We must create environments that are conducive to learning by accepting prudent risk and not being risk-averse during training – or be attributional when assisting with personal-growth requirements. Subordinate leaders must have the opportunity to gain experience in an environment that accepts failure but provides feedback and time for improvement and growth. The aforementioned fosters mutual trust throughout the formation.

Lastly, superiors must *counsel subordinate leaders*. Counseling enables shared understanding of expectations, strengths and weaknesses, and facilitates individual development plans to achieve growth; counseling is vital to effective reflection. Reflection enables subordinate leaders to understand deficiencies and transcend within the self-development domain. Counseling has a direct correlation with lifelong learning and leader development.

Forge the Thunderbolt!

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Acronym Quick-Scan

FM – field manual

LDP – leader-development program