

A large, multi-decked battleship, the USS Missouri (BB-63), is the central focus of the image. The ship's complex superstructure, including gun turrets, radar masts, and various antennas, is visible against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. In the foreground, several military personnel in camouflage uniforms are walking across the deck. Some are carrying flags, including the United States flag and other national flags. The overall scene is one of a formal military event.

Pacific Talent Management

A Regional Approach to Recruiting and Retaining Talent

■ By Maj. Gen. Edward F. Dorman III, Col. Phillip A. Mead, and Maj. Marc C. Vielledent

Top-performing military leaders, from 18 organizations across the Pacific theater, gather aboard the USS Missouri at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for graduation from the Young Alaka'i leader development program, on Jan. 16, 2016. The program provides broadening opportunities to prepare tomorrow's strategic leaders. (Photo by Master Sgt. Mary E. Ferguson)



The 8th Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) is executing talent management initiatives focused on assessing, developing, and retaining talent and enabling commanders to develop and place high performers in positions that match their potential. The approach affords commanders the flexibility to anticipate future requirements and leverage manning cycles, schools, assessments, and other developmental opportunities to ensure the right Soldier is placed in the right job at the right time.

This article outlines a holistic Army service component command talent management approach for sustainers within the Asia-Pacific

FEATURES

The 8th Theater Sustainment Command's comprehensive talent management strategy identifies and provides focused career opportunities for Soldiers within the command while ensuring the Army benefits from their education and experience.

region. While focused on U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), this talent management model could be adopted by any command within the Army.

Strategic Approach

For the purposes of this article, talent management is defined as a strategy focused on creating a balanced workforce by retaining the best Soldiers, developing and broadening their skills and experiences, and employing their skills in the best interests of the Army. The goal is to establish progressive assignments that improve the Soldier's regional understanding and create a continuity of knowledge relative to—or matched with—operational plans, regional partners, and individual capabilities.

This strategy increases the individual's knowledge, skills, and attributes (behaviors) and can result in both career progression and enriched regional relationships and interoperability. However, the strategy must be executed according to sound business rules and complemented with the buy-in of individuals and their families, regional commanders, the Army Human Resources Command (HRC), and the sustainment triad (the Army Materiel Command, Army G-4, and the Combined Arms Support Command).

A Three-Tiered Regional Approach

Retaining talent, recruiting talent, and identifying future commanders, encapsulates the 8th TSC talent management program.

Retaining talent. Talent retention is the main effort, but the process starts by focusing on our strongest field-grade officers who exhibit tremendous potential but are not competitive for the command selection list. These officers continue to serve the Army for many reasons. Providing them with additional assignment opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region, on a voluntary basis, is a win-win for the Soldiers, families, and commands. We have a number of colonel authorizations, with only five coded as requir-

ing former brigade commanders. Though we have less flexibility with our senior sustainment leader, retaining just a few within the command pays significant dividends.

The crux of our retention effort is the identification of key billets. Not all major and lieutenant colonel jobs can be categorized as critical and we recognize that only a few positions require regional continuity to coordinate and synchronize operations across the command and with partner nations. But, ensuring we develop and place the right officers in these positions is key to the overall readiness of the Asia-Pacific region.

Recruiting talent. This effort's sole focus is to ensure local recruiting efforts are coordinated and synchronized. The 8th TSC leaders fully acknowledge that recruiters from each major subordinate command will visit intermediate level education courses to recruit the best and brightest candidates, but friction occurs when different commands recruit the same personnel. The 8th TSC's talent management program ensures that recruiting results are shared among the command's senior leaders and general officers and that any duplicate requests are deconflicted before units engage HRC. In the event that multiple commands recruit the same officer, HRC develops a solution with the USARPAC deputy commanding general for sustainment. This enhances fairness and ensures commanders get the right officer in the right position.

Identifying future commanders. To retain top talent, the 8th TSC works to identify follow-on assignments for officers with clear command selection list potential. Once these top-tier officers are identified, commanders work with HRC and the sustainment triad to identify each officer's next assignment as well as a successive tour.

Today, the Army manning approach is "one job at a time" with a performance assessment at each gate. But, for the exceptional few, it

is in the best interest of Army readiness to develop the future “bench.”

The 8th TSC also works with HRC to influence and position Army service component command operational moves, curtailments, and extensions. There are some assignments in the region that do not provide top-tier officers with optimal career progression. For these officers, the 8th TSC aims to leverage operational moves for career development. In other instances, a top-tier officer may be offered an additional broadening assignment at a two- to four-star headquarters after finishing a developmental assignment, if there is sufficient time left in the tour. In these instances the 8th TSC seeks HRC support for extensions or curtailments to support the broadening assignment.

Progress

The 8th TSC is just under two years into implementing the theater talent management strategy, and it has already shared its collective requirements and talent assessments that include buy-in from the 25th Infantry Division, the Army Materiel Command, and the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command. The 8th TSC achieved consensus and its council of colonels kicked off the talent management strategy in July 2015.

In the fall of 2015, the 8th TSC held its first Pacific council of colonels followed by a general officer steering committee. Local talent management efforts focused on key and developmental assignments, while the regional talent management program focused on key field-grade officers and senior leader billets.

Additionally, USARPAC established a warrant officer board of directors in early 2016 to empower warrant officers to manage talent and develop partnerships among the senior leaders of major commands. This board of directors comprises senior warrant officers from the major commands within USARPAC and reports to the commanding general.

There has also been progress made in modifying the assignment processes to provide better predictability for families, commanders, and HRC. Within the past year, HRC proposed a shift from brigade distribution management sub-level assignments to senior mission commander (SMC)—two-star and above level—distribution management level assignments. Although some human resources professionals disagree with this change, the 8th TSC talent management program represents a compromise. Assignment managers provide their proposed distribution management sub-level assignments to the USARPAC SMC, along with the officers’ file assessments, and allow time for senior leaders to recommend any unit changes. This proposal does not shift the entire workload onto the SMC assignment personnel, but it does afford SMC input, which provides efficiency and predictability by eliminating last-minute changes to assignments for officers who are en route or have just arrived.

Last year, the 8th TSC provided the 25th Infantry Division with a top-tier lieutenant colonel to assume a rear-detachment battalion command position. Had this position been assigned the previous year, it would have likely resulted in a lesser qualified officer assuming this critical position. However, the 8th TSC was able to affect the overarching primary objective of the sustainment command—to build and maintain readiness.

The 8th TSC talent management approach optimizes Soldier and unit readiness by placing the right Soldier in the right job at the right time—all while working within the Army human resources enterprise. The talent management program also enables key leaders in the Asia-Pacific region to gain regional acumen and cross-cultural competencies that are much needed in the theater’s complex environment. Although early in its development, the 8th TSC’s holistic and compre-

hensive talent management strategy ensures that the regionally engaged Army is sustained with leaders who possess the right cultural, regional, and organizational skills. The Army must retain its best talent, and those officers must have maximum opportunity to serve in critical, career-enhancing, professionally developing positions that best posture them for increased responsibilities and upward mobility.

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