

Kevin L Cecil / Artifact Two / Education Module

Artifact Two Summary – Training Module of the TEAM Leadership Model

This artifact is a derivative of the overarching TEAM Leadership Model. The five artifacts that make up the model are Training, Education, Accountability, Management, and are underpinned by the artifact Communication and Commitment. The modules as they currently exist are the culmination of twenty-eight years of executive leadership experience and concurrent leadership education. They are a representation of a living document and concepts which have evolved over time as my experience and education have occurred. They are oriented towards the past (experiences), present (orientation), and future (application). As with any organization, no aspect of the TEAM Leadership Model is effective as a stand-alone concept. The elements of the model work in synergy with and complement one another.

Rationale for Selection

Program Outcome:

This artifact aligns with DEL Program Outcomes 1 and 5. A leader who wants his organization to be successful will make it an organizational focus to embed education into their organization. Education is the reverse side of the coin of training and is intended to expand a team member's understanding of why things are done rather than just how they are done. This is done by continually sensing opportunities to increase the level, and just as importantly, the relevance of education within their teams.

The concept of identities being constituted out of the process of interaction (Weik, 1995) is related to a focus on education within organizations. Team members are going to tie their identities to the organization they represent. Educating them on what that means as related to the goals and mission of the organization will solidify that aspect of their identity. This education can consist of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches. The goal is to educate team members on how their role fits into shared problem solving, synthesizing capabilities, and transcending boundaries across the organization.

Link To Knowledge:

The Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) that are associated with the Education Module of the TEAM Leadership Model align with concepts of making boundaries permeable and building collaborative relationships. Education that aligns with the organization's mission, goals and values will enhance team members' understanding of their place within the organization. One key aspect of that concept is developing themselves and others to

capacity through coaching, mentoring, and sharing of experiences. An organizational focus on Education is also important to be able to create a road map of expected development at each level a team member reaches in the organization.

Developmental pyramids are useful tools for both the team members and the organization. They provide a framework for team members to understand what is expected as they progress. They also use the same framework to inform how leadership responds to emergent factors and complexity. In their discussion of Martin Heidegger's take on strategy (Nonaka & Zhu, 2012) they highlight the need to recognize that we will get thrown into situations and the importance of knowing whether and how to do something about it. Educating team members serves to enhance their understanding of how such situations may arise. It also serves to provide them with knowledge based on the experiences of others so that they are prepared to do so.

Personal Growth and Development:

Organizations place differing emphasis on the value of Education depending on their mission, objectives, and values. During my career I served in organizations that highly value education. By conveying this focus and associating it with the level of success an organization could achieve through an educated team, that focus became imbedded in my own world view. This value proposition put forth by the organizations I was a part of inspired me to seek education beyond what was required to perform my day-to-day duties.

As I progressed in my career, I realized the benefits of furthering my education in the pragmatic ways reflected in the decisions that were made tied to promotion and other tangible benefits. More importantly, however, I grew by enhancing my understanding of the broader context that one does not understand unless one is taught to seek it. The latter is the foundational reason that Education is an element of the TEAM Leadership Model. It is one of the five key areas that I use and would mentor and teach others to go forward using the model.

Connect to Broader Leadership Context:

The context that the element of Education falls within reflects an understanding that effective leaders must appreciate and seek understanding of the complexity as it relates to leadership. Organizations may resort to rhetoric and reactive responses (Innes & Booher, 2018) rather than informed strategies when they do not grasp the complexity of the challenges they face. To me this can create a form of tunnel vision that negatively impacts a leaders' ability to create effective strategies. By encouraging team members to seek education, both directly related to and adjacent to the mission of the organization,

executive leaders metaphorically enhance court vision (Linden, 2010). The metaphor is that great basketball players have very wide peripheral vision.

As related to the value of Education within organizations, when team members learn concepts across a broad perspective it enhances their ability to think critically. The value in scholarly research, at whatever level, is the emphasis placed on studying the way other people think about topics. The secondary value is in the goal of learning to recognize personal biases and consider topics from another perspective. This last part is something that I grew to appreciate more as I progressed up the levels of leadership responsibilities during my career.

Executive Summary

Presenting Situation:

The Air National Guard (ANG) does not function like the active duty and reserve components. Because of the unique nature of the mission of the Guard, the lines of authority can be ambiguous at times. At the strategic level it is a matter of whether the Guard has been federalized under the President for contingency or deployment needs. Day to day, they fall under the governors of their state and that person exercises overall control.

This creates unique lines of authority because the Guardsmen who work at the National Guard Bureau (NGB) are tasked with creating policy and strategy for the career fields they oversee but are limited in their ability to enforce the policy. The anecdotal saying is that the Air National Guard is composed of 54 little air forces. This dynamic is even more unique when it comes to how Recruiting and Retention functions within the ANG.

At each state there is a Recruiting and Retention Superintendent (RRS) who is the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) within their state. Each state has a headquarters unit that oversees all the other units within the state. The RRS has oversight of Recruiting and Retention within the state but how this oversight is conducted varies as well. It all depends on who they work for at the state level, which is typically an officer who serves as a director of staff. Sometimes they are empowered to have direct operational control over the recruiting office in the subordinate units and on the other end of the spectrum they have no control at all.

This becomes problematic when the NGB creates Recruiting and Retention goals, strategy, and policy and a state RRS will simply not comply or is prevented from doing so. This dynamic often exists whether they are succeeding or failing in achieving their goals. Within each unit and state there is a lot of pride, politics, and complexity that influence the relationship with a state and the NGB. As an effort to solidify this relationship and enhance

the strategic relationship that should exist between the RRS and NGB, the decision was made to create a RRS specific course focused on Education.

Creating a specific course for the RRS staff in the field was a unique opportunity that had never been tried before. It was structured as a requirement for them to attend within the first year of assuming the position. The elements of the course were designed to educate the RRS community about how things worked at the enterprise level. The topics of finance, marketing, advertising, operations, contracting, and training were some of the corps' elements embedded in the course.

All the primary leaders of these sections at the NGB taught the RRS members. All these programs were what they were responsible for and considered the POCs for at the state. The intent was to simultaneously educate the RRS community on how these programs worked at the strategic level and how important their role was in the follow-through within their states. It was emphasized that they were a vital partner in achieving mission success for their units and states.

A secondary but very important element was the deliberate support and enhancement of their roles within the state regardless of politics or other factors. A key aspect of this was delivering them the power of the purse strings by tying their programmed funding to submission of a strategic plan for review and approval by the NGB. Using that as a tool empowered them to have more ability to fulfill their roles in a manner that best supported their state mission. By teaching them how all the programs administered by the NGB were operated and administered day to day, the feeling of an "us versus them" dynamic was reduced. They were positioned as key stakeholders within the framework of the unit, state, and NGB leadership structure.

This was a departure from previous attitudes on both sides of the relationship. They learned detailed information about how the NGB worked and how that directly impacted every aspect of their position and mission within their states. Another key element of cementing this was a policy that was created stating that all primary communications would be routed to the RRS by subordinate units first. This centered them as the primary leader within their states regardless of any other dynamic.

This effort vastly improved the functioning of Recruiting and Retention mission at the NGB, state, and unit level. The effort was complimented by teaching what has changed (past), what is changing (present), and finding out what will change (future) as discussed by Wooten & Horne (2010). By educating the RRS members about how the programs worked at the high strategic level, an environment of trust and transparency in the relationship was created. This knowledge empowered them to view the strategic plans they were required to

submit with an increased totality of context. Taking the time to deliberately educate them and associate it with an embracing of the importance of their roles empowered them to do their jobs with less interference. Education resulted in increased communication, better development of strategy and policy, and camaraderie between the NGB and field.

Contextual Analysis:

One core element that executive leadership is typically focused on is serving their stakeholders via collaborative efforts. To do so they must be able to analyze situations and define organizational goals. Educated leaders and team members enhance their ability to do this because their thinking is not siloed into echo chambers. These echo chambers are often a byproduct of looking down and into their organizations. A better approach is to develop the court vision type of thinking mentioned above. To learn to question implicit beliefs and assumptions (Hughes et al, 2014) they may hold, or that may be a narrative within the organization. Teaching others to value Education and its importance in building the ability to understand the context they are operating within leads to intentional decision making.

Executive Leadership Decisions and Actions:

The creation of the Education module reflects past experiences that have produced an overall strategy for leading oneself and organizations. Much of how I operated within the executive leader duties I had during the latter part of my career is based on the model. For the last ten years of that career, much of what I was tasked with involved assessing existing research in the form of career development for enlisted Airmen. Everything the military does is based on doctrine, which is based on lessons learned over time. Because education expands a team member's ability to appreciate the reasons behind decisions and policy, it became a focus of the various organizations I served with. The first step in building strategy is to clearly understand what the objectives are. Strategically, that step results in a waterfall effect throughout the entire organization. For example, during my time within recruiting and retention we identified a breakdown in the process that leadership in the field used to train and develop recruiters. This of course resulted in some units not effectively staffing the required number of personnel to most effectively execute the mission. Because of the way the organization was uniquely structured, the senior leadership element at headquarters had the ability to establish policy and guidance, but limited enforcement options. This is because the Air National Guard is made up of 54 separate states and territories and the senior leaders in those states and territories have a level of top cover from their senior leadership. Once we identified what we believed to be the core problems across the field, we were able to use a deliberate and iterative approach (Davenport & Manville, 2010) to discover the best way ahead. This consisted of an

intentional strengthening of the relationship between the headquarters and field staff. Doing so drove changes in that the us versus them mentality was changed from an antagonistic relationship to a deliberate collaborative one. From that point forward, every major change to the way programs were run involved as much feedback as possible from the field. This form of multidisciplinary cooperation prospered from the mutual understanding that every state had its own unique paradigms they operated within. Understanding and embracing the reality of those factors that are interdependent, shaped by history and context (Boulton et al, 2015), allowed for a new environment to interact within. Seeking to allocate decision making from an autocratic to a consultive process served to enhance the knowledge and cooperation by all concerned. It drove change in how the entire organization approached education from the tactical, operational, and strategic level.

Outcome and Impact:

After engaging other stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process of how to conduct education within an organization, the true test is to evaluate what results it leads to. One way to highlight that is by stating the example of the difference between a processor of candidates and a recruiting professional. Someone who is just seeking to process candidates will not build the rapport necessary to create a long-term relationship. If a recruiter only sees themselves as a gatekeeper and processor of information during the enlistment process, they miss out on opportunities. Alternatively, a recruiting professional understands that each candidate is unique and takes the time to know and understand their interests and goals. Taking time to do this makes the person feel valued and reflects a willingness to consider the skills, knowledge, and competencies (Lawler, 2003) that will provide them the most successful opportunity within the military. This sounds intuitive as to the way a recruiter should approach candidates, but it is not. Educating recruiters on the value of this sort of mindset is one of many examples of the changes in approach taken during this period of my career. Educating team members on the reasons that utilizing certain processes driven by mindset is a part of embedding understanding in their place in the organization and to help empower critical thinking.

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