WARFIGHTING READINESS demands a synergy of effectively organized and trained soldiers supported by well-maintained equipment. Command climate, the key influence affecting everything units can achieve, lies at the heart of readiness. The U.S. Army meticulously holds leaders accountable for effectively training, maintaining, and caring for soldiers and families, but it pays little attention to how organizations are developed. Units and soldiers are suffering from this neglect.

Ideally, every Army unit should be a steadily improving team characterized by open communication, mutual trust, innovation, and coaching. In such units, practices would match beliefs, and subordinates would contribute to making the team better. However, according to command climate trends spanning the past 3 decades and the Army Training and Leader Development Panel (ATLDP) study, many soldiers do not enjoy effective command climates. The time has come to raise the ante and to hold leaders accountable for building teams.

In 2003, Lieutenant General Walter Ulmer, Jr., said that Army units “are not nearly as uniformly effective as they can and must be.” In spite of amazing advances in technology, the synergy of army teams remains an essentially human phenomenon. Without effective group performance, the Army can neither deter nor win America’s wars. The 2002 white paper “Objective Force in 2015” emphasizes a vision, but not the means, for “leaders provid[ing] a command climate that supports initiative, innovation, and risk-taking” as a fundamental concept of the transformed Army.

Enhancing unit effectiveness is a practical necessity. As the Army moves from an individual-replacement system to lengthened command tours and increased tour stability, it will place considerably more emphasis on building effective units that stay together longer. Optimizing organizational capabilities solely for an extended deployment or combat training center rotation only to virtually disband the unit thereafter will no longer suffice. Vacillating within a band of excellence will be increasingly counterproductive. To build and sustain trust, cohesion, and increased readiness, the Army needs units that grow continuously, not just during peak periods, and that incrementally improve over the long term.

Disturbing Trends
Climate critically binds individuals and the organization; ultimately shapes the effectiveness of organizational processes and accomplishments; and is the tacit foundation facilitating productive interactions among team members. During the past 30 years, there have been countless studies of military professionalism, leader development, and the state of the Army culture. The following statement reflects a disturbing trend in command climate: “The existing climate includes persistent overtones of selfish behavior that places personal success ahead of the good of the Service; looking upward to please superiors instead of looking downward to fulfill legitimate needs of subordinates; preoccupation with attainment of trivial short-term objectives; incomplete communication between junior and senior officers which leave the senior uninformed and the junior feeling unimportant.”

Results from the 2001 ATLDP study sprinkle salt on the wound:

- Army practices are out of balance with beliefs, which compromises unit readiness and leader growth.
- Junior officers are not receiving adequate leader development experience.
- There are insufficient opportunities to learn.
- Micromanagement is pervasive and a part of Army culture.
- The failure of baby boomers to effectively
communicate with younger generations of soldiers is driving many captains out of the Army.7

One ATLDP study conclusion, in part, is that there is a lack of trust between junior and senior officers. Junior leaders have a strong perception their senior leaders do not want “criticism and therefore use micromanagement to block opportunities for subordinates to learn through leadership experiences.”8 Innovation, risk-taking, and leader development—essential elements of Army Transformation—cannot thrive in such a climate.

Existing Processes

The adverse trends in organizational climate did not result from inattention. The Army has long recognized the value of improving organizational climate and has instituted—

- Behavior-based performance appraisals of leaders.
- Standards-based training.
- Performance and development counseling.
- Equal opportunity and command climate surveys.
- Aggressive leader development initiatives.

Why have these well-intentioned initiatives failed to take root, and what can the Army do to improve the command climate?

Command climate problems persist because the Army inadvertently encourages leaders to do the wrong things. Leaders are not penalized for underperformance nor required to improve. More problematic, however, is that they are rewarded for short-term results while sacrificing the organization’s ability to maintain high performance in the long run.9 Subordinates are quick to identify weak leadership, but high personnel turbulence and limited access into the inner workings of units challenges even the best senior leaders to identify counterproductive trends.10 Leader appraisal, development, and accountability are inconsistent and do not reflect current leadership doctrine.

Field Manual (FM) 22-100, Army Leadership, suggests that “the excessive emphasis on current operations at the expense of improving actions will threaten the future of the Army.”11 The Army’s definition of leadership specifies two priorities: operating (mission accomplishment) and improving (organizational growth). In practice, however, the Army seldom emphasizes improving organizations. The Army seems to disproportionately reward short-term outcomes while ignoring other important organizational factors relating to institutional culture and command climate.12 Performance appraisal systems do not reflect leadership doctrine, which is also a problem in the corporate world. One savvy CEO observed, “We don’t want [leaders] to improve the bottom line and collect bonuses for doing so while discouraging, misusing, or burning-out the talented people who produced those results.”13 The issue for the Army is straightforward—enforce the leadership standard. FM 22-100 holds Army leaders accountable for building cohesive teams.

Army schools provide considerable training about leadership but offer little about promoting organizational effectiveness or how to evaluate it. The ramifications of this neglect are significant. According to former Major General John “Jack” Faith, fully one-third of today’s leaders do not sufficiently trust and, hence, empower their subordinates. The absence of trust results in over-management of subordinates—“a failure far from obvious to their bosses as the unit produces the desired near-term results.”14 Former General Wesley Clark believes senior leaders have “gone too far in over-planning, over-prescribing, and over-controlling.”15 Given the myopic criterion for interpreting units’ effectiveness, leaders and their supervisors mistakenly reward and reinforce zero-defects leadership.

The Officer Leader Development System fails to identify the need for counseling as being fundamental to Army growth. Since officers do not know how to counsel effectively and, therefore, are not comfortable with the counseling process, the Army is perceived to have a cultural aversion to counseling, dialoguing, and developing. Open communication between raters and subordinate leaders “humanizes the environment . . . and functions as a mechanism for integrating (leaders) into the corporate structure and culture.”16 Without open dialogue, the practical benefits leading to leader development and increased organizational effectiveness are lost at all levels.

Learning by doing is a hallmark of the military profession. Superiors largely shape and guide operational experience. Getting the job done without effective coaching shortchanges individuals and significantly impedes organizational growth.

Actions, whether they reward or punish, speak louder than words. In an interview, Jim Moore told Bob Rosner, “If you want to get serious about management effectiveness, you have to measure it and hold people accountable.”17 Even the most junior officers in the Army quickly learn that accountability provides the best motivation for change. Rewarding outstanding performance in shaping command climate is the fastest and surest way to promote it.
Results of the Army Command Climate Survey (CCS) at the company-level “belong” exclusively to company commanders, who “own” the information. If company commanders do not pass the information to their supervisors, there is little or no means for supervisors to impose or monitor needed change. Unit members almost certainly know what survey results reflect, but they are powerless to create change. Paradoxically, supervisors who can direct change lack sufficient insight into unit problems to exercise authority.

Addressing the expectations of unit members enables the organization to be more effective and productive. Getting insight from subordinates is part of the challenge; making changes or changing perceptions is the other part. Providing the means for supervisors and unit members to better understand and manage organizational challenges will directly improve command climate and warfighting readiness.

Few things drain unit members’ energy more than practices that do not match the organization’s proclaimed beliefs. Inconsistency between stated beliefs and practices breeds distrust and skepticism, and some supervisors punish out-of-the-box thinking, innovation, and empowerment while verbally advocating the same.

Micromanagement practices are also highly inconsistent with rhetoric emphasizing risk-taking and innovation. On the other hand, conducting after-action reviews matches the Army’s belief that units benefit from direct feedback, regardless of how painful it might be. At the individual level, however, the Army offers no such instrument. To make the Army a true learning organization, it must systematically place a similar after-action spotlight on individual leaders.

Constructive individual feedback will positively influence leader development and enhance organizational climate. To this end, the Army has considered multirater appraisal systems (called 360-degree feedback) to provide multiple perspectives. In military organizations however, such practice is fraught with so much controversy as to be counterproductive. In fact, the CCS is already an effective means for obtaining feedback from subordinates; the Army simply needs to prescribe its use beyond the company level.

Without question, subordinates and peers have insight that raters and leaders lack. The Army needs to tap into that unique insight to further the development of leaders and Army organizations. Lieutenant Colonel Michael S. Galloucis says, “Only the led know for certain the leader’s moral courage, consideration for others, and commitment to unit above self. If we prize these values, some sort of input from subordinates is required.”
Clearly, the difference between stated Army beliefs and practices in regard to these important climate factors is inconsistent with Army Transformation objectives. Reconciliation of these differences will help the command climate flourish. The Army should formally solicit soldier feedback as a means of improving the leader and the unit. This initiative would help align Army leader development and performance appraisal systems with the Army’s stated objective of being a learning organization that harnesses the experience of its organization and people to improve the way it does business. The Army needs full recognition and accountability for individual and organizational learning. Effective leaders continually assess and improve their organizations and set longer-term objectives. They put their organizations first.

**Strategic Remedies**

Former Chief of Staff of the Army General Eric K. Shinseki declared, “The development of bold, innovative leaders of character and competence is fundamental to the long-term health of the Army organization.” 22 Similarly, appropriate systems to reinforce them must accompany new mindsets in organizational climate. Climate management is a key enabler to “improve the collective effectiveness, provide the opportunity for members to realize their potential, and develop their individual skills and performance.” 23 Further, “Results [mission accomplishment] are not enough! We need to hold leaders accountable for how they get results. We must find ways to hold leaders accountable for developing, inspiring, and empowering the people who produce those bottom-line results, as well as for the results themselves.” 24

Such accountability begins with an appreciation of the embedding (creating change) and reinforcing (sustaining change) mechanics of shaping a group climate. 25 Relevant embedding mechanisms include attention to what leaders measure and control, liberate role-modeling and coaching, and the application of consistent criteria for allocating rewards and status as well as for recruitment, selection, and promotion.

Reinforcing mechanisms for sustaining new unit priorities include establishing organizational systems and procedures for accountability while broadly distributing consistent statements of philosophy, creeds, and charters. Change is sustained only by introducing embedding and reinforcing mechanisms. During the past 30 years, several well-intentioned strategies to promote organizational climate in the Army have failed because reinforcing mechanisms were lacking. Accordingly, strategic remedies proposed here provide embedding and reinforcing mechanisms for the organization and for individual soldiers to bolster organizational climate.

In *The Real C-Cubed: Culture, Careers, and Climate*, Nick Jans says, “There must be an absolute commitment to hold leaders at all levels accountable for the extent to which they are creating the kind of culture and work environment that the Army believes is essential.” 26 In a learning organization, action planning (strategy development) to resolve individual and organizational shortcomings enhances accountability for change. According to Jans, “The Army needs to focus leadership performance feedback on climate in the unit, performance of its component teams and the leadership group, and less on the observed performance of the individual leader.”

**Recommendations**

The Army can do many things to effect change. The following paragraphs contain some suggestions.

**Improve accountability.** The chain of command must attend to shortcomings that future command climate surveys identify. Prescribing formal action planning and establishing a nonevaluative (nonthreatening) coaching mechanism for reinforcement is key. Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy, should be amended to require administering the CCS within 90 days of a new commander’s arrival and annually thereafter at all levels from company level to major command level. 27

Surveys should be assigned randomly and confidentially to a representative sample one and two levels below the surveying headquarters. For example, corps headquarters would survey a representative sample of officers and soldiers assigned to division- and brigade-level command sections and staff. Survey results should go to the organization’s commander, as now done at the company level. Results should lead to an action plan developed with the help of the commander’s designated outside-the-chain-of-command coach to enable evaluation-free, non-threatening feedback. The commander’s rater should approve the plan, which would ensure appropriate, well-considered actions to address climate shortcomings and promote organizational effectiveness. Likewise, successes in command climate must be acknowledged to promote organizational climate as a valued component of readiness.

**Make organizational climate a readiness factor.** A 2002 Center for Strategic and International Studies report on military culture called for developing organizational climate surveys that would be-
come part of the Unit Status Reporting system. The Army should prioritize organizational climate and materiel readiness equally. Army senior leaders must actively develop junior leaders who “reward competence, set clear priorities, allow free flow of information, inspire trust, support learning, [and] stimulate motivation and versatility” in their units.28

Other criteria could include yes or no questions to determine, among other things, whether—

- The organizational climate, as measured during the most recent CCS, contributes to unit readiness and effectiveness.
- The unit rewards competence.
- The unit sets clear and appropriate priorities.
- The unit promotes open dialogue and free flow of information throughout the organization.
- The unit inspires trust, supports learning and risk-taking, and stimulates innovation.

A summary metric would provide senior leaders insight into overall team effectiveness, as an essential readiness factor that currently does not exist. Implementing command climate feedback into the unit readiness report embeds important organizational constructs and reinforces desired leader development priorities.

**Modify the officer evaluation report (OER).**

OERs are important for the function they serve on selection boards and for the behavior they engender.29 Appraisal and development are important outcomes of the OER system and need to be emphasized to create better leaders and stronger organizations.

Army’s leader appraisal and development systems do not adequately enhance command climate and organizational effectiveness. Personal performance must never be granted greater importance than unit performance and effectiveness, yet the current OER system greatly favors personal performance. The system must also address making the organization better by enhancing morale, team aggressiveness, consideration of others, and commitment to unit above self.

The OER is insufficiently discriminate, except in the most egregious instances of poor leadership. Forced distribution mitigates the problem somewhat, but not entirely. Contrary to leadership doctrine, OERs are also biased toward assessing mission-accomplishment (13 of 21 dimensions) relative to long-term organizational development (3 dimensions).30 The Army must redress this imbalance to comply with leadership doctrine. Regrettably, the quantity of time expended rather than the quality of performance is the OER’s unit of measure for the developing and building dimension. Similarly, the OER assesses learning as a function of merely being motivated to improve rather than achieving any
demonstrable results. These organizational constructs are out of step with doctrine and Army Transformation priorities.

Building teams must become at least as important as operating them; trusting, dialoguing, teambuilding, and caring and taking care of people and families must become a part of individual performance assessment. Direct assessment sends a strong signal about what the Army believes is important. The Army must revise the OER to include more organizationally relevant constructs, such as—
- Inspiring loyalty to the unit.
- Improving organizational facilities and systems.
- Increasing morale and teamwork.
- Promoting unit responsiveness and adaptability.
- Developing cohesion.
- Practicing family outreach.
- Showing care for the welfare of soldiers.
- Putting commitment to the unit above the self.

When it comes to climate, Army senior leaders need to look beyond traditional readiness statistics to assess qualitative, less-easily measured factors associated with long-term performance.\(^3\) Army leaders should consider incorporating peer and subordinate input into OERs. Even so, it is reasonable to expect that raters and senior raters, once they are aware of CCR results and resulting action plans, will be able to more fully ascertain individual leader performance and potential in maintaining a healthy organizational climate. Raters and senior raters should be directed to include generalized feedback relating to CCS as well as the effectiveness of actions leaders have taken to overcome real or perceived shortcomings. As long as organizational factors and insights remain a priority in every leader’s evaluation, cultural change toward creating and sustaining more effective organizations is certain.

**Amend the CCR.** Surveys that “provide data that are quantifiable, valid, reliable, objective, comparable, replicable, generalizable, and capable of indicating trends” are the best means of obtaining reliable data regarding climate.\(^3\) Widely used climate instruments assessing respect, trust, team morale, opportunity to participate in decisionmaking, cohesiveness, innovation, risk-taking, and caring for people frequently account for as much as 53 percent of the variance in predicting effectiveness.\(^3\) Merely measuring certain characteristics of the organization alerts all members of the team to significant organizational values and constructs. Measurement is the key to developing organizationally focused values and priorities in the next generation of leaders.

The CCR that the Army G-1, Army Research Institute, and Army inspector general use is adequate but does not address trust, loyalty, commitment, openness, cooperation and teamwork within the organization, and professional satisfaction.\(^3\) The Army should amend and expand the CCR to address subordinate perceptions about the following:
- Values and beliefs versus practices.
- Latitude and power to operate within the full scope of one’s duties.
- Commitment.
- Trust.
- Team morale.
- Receptiveness to new ideas.
- Cohesiveness.
- Innovation and risk-taking.
- The organization’s responsiveness to feedback from the team.
- Developmental opportunities.
- Pace and stress.
- Humor.
- The extent to which family needs are attended to.
- Sensitivity to personal needs.

Directing use of the CCR at all levels within the first 90 days of a new commander’s assignment and on at least an annual basis thereafter will foster needed improvements in climate across the Army.

**Prescribe coaching.** In *Nursing Economies*, Constance M. Savage says, “Professionals have coaches. Amateurs do not.”\(^3\) Coaching provides the means for using CCR feedback to introduce behavioral changes and achieve desired organizational results. Army leaders are professionals; they need proper coaching. The Army’s commitment to leader development has produced an ample supply of coaches who are immediately available and accessible. Effective coaching should become a cultural cornerstone and practical reality.

As former Colonel Jon H. Moilanen observes in a 2002 *Military Review* article, “Leaders mentoring leaders in a clearly defined manner and complementary coaching of soldiers and teams reinforces learning and motivation to adapt. Direct and recurring advice and counsel among leaders reinforces adaptive behaviors.”\(^3\) Moilanen adds that according to 100 executives from Fortune 1000 companies, coaching contributes quantifiably to organizational productivity (up to 53 percent), retention (up to 39 percent), and job satisfaction (up to 61 percent). Not surprisingly, history confirms that General George S. Patton, among others, took his obligation to mentor junior officers quite seriously, aggressively,
and continuously throughout his career.\textsuperscript{37}

The ATLD study reveals that the Army is doing an especially poor job of dialoguing with, counseling, and coaching junior officers. According to analyst Thomas Weafer, “One of the reasons that senior officers may not be doing [a good job of coaching] is that they don’t really know how to properly do it.”\textsuperscript{38} Because leader development applies at every level, leaders at every level—from the top of the Army organization down—should model coaching. Business writer Robert H. Miles says, “Transformation requires enormous amounts of energy. One of the catalysts to generate this energy is the leader who must model required new behaviors.”\textsuperscript{39} Conscious and continuous coaching and developing subordinate leaders are part of the new behaviors essential to successfully transform command climate across the Army.

Coaches help leaders tailor “learning activities to address specific developmental needs and increase the likelihood for success in a way that classroom education cannot.”\textsuperscript{40} Feedback alone, however, will not be sufficient unless it is accompanied by formalized action-planning to ensure changes occur.

To facilitate development of action plans, the Army needs an Armywide process for coaching that encourages nonchain-of-command coaches (equal in rank and experience to the rater) to help subordinate leaders interpret CCS results and develop appropriate action plans. Thereafter, the Army should require subordinate leaders to present a summary of feedback results and to propose an action plan to their raters. Such a mechanism would—

\begin{itemize}
  \item Provide subordinate leaders with nonevaluative and experienced coaching.
  \item Facilitate organizational and leader development.
  \item Enable the chain of command to reinforce and assess corrective actions for the good of the organization, the leader, and the Army.
\end{itemize}

Prescribe formal development for all. The Army cannot justify the lack of prescribed development for all officers instead of simply for the most junior ones. Leader development is a means for influencing leadership directly and affecting organizational climate change. Developing organizationally attentive and responsive officers will promote improved climate across the Army.

The current OER system prescribes the use of DA Form 68-9-1a, “Junior Office Development Support Form,” for all lieutenants and junior warrant officers. This requirement is consistent with the nature of a learning organization. All officers, from warrant officer 1 to lieutenant general, should use the form. No officer is beyond development; suggesting otherwise flies in the face of the belief that the Army is a learning organization. Developing subordinate leaders facilitates the transformation of individuals and organizations and of the coaches and those who are coached. Effective coaches provide models for future generations of leaders.

The Military Equal Opportunity Survey of Climate (MEOSC). While the MEOSC validly assesses racial and gender fairness issues, it is of questionable value because of its limited organizational scope. Consequently, the MEOSC should be a supplement rather than an alternative to the CCS, and the Army should amend AR 600-20.\textsuperscript{41} The Army should retain and use the MEOSC as a supplemental climate survey to investigate diversity issues on a case-by-case basis only.

Transforming the Army

Transforming the Army in the 21st century cannot succeed without ensuring Army organizations are as universally effective as they can be. Effective

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\textbf{Proposed Additions to the CCS} \\
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- I trust my leaders to do the right thing. \\
- I am committed to the NCOs in my unit chain of command. \\
- I am committed to the officers in my unit chain of command. \\
- The morale of my unit is where it needs to be for effectiveness in combat. \\
- I am satisfied that I am given say in those things affecting my quality of life. \\
- Our team is tight (cohesive). \\
- I feel free to voice concerns to my chain of command. \\
- I am satisfied that my chain of command will hear me out about concerns I have. \\
- People in my unit work well together. \\
- I can depend on the members of my unit to look out for me. \\
- My leaders expect me to use my initiative to solve problems. \\
- Leaders in my unit are sensitive to the needs of my family. \\
- I like my job. \\
- I know what is expected of me in doing my job. \\
- There is a good match between what the commander says and how we operate. \\
- In my unit, an atmosphere of trust exists between leaders and subordinates. \\
- Leaders in my unit are sensitive to my needs, on and off duty. \\
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command climate will remain elusive until it is supported by appropriate measures and accountability. The cultural transformation envisioned to facilitate Army Transformation requires new mindsets about organizations and long-term developmental priorities.

Without a doubt, assessment of climates within organizations is essential to understanding team members’ job satisfaction. Appropriate use of such assessments fosters learning and development and positively affects commitment and retention. As Ulmer says, “If senior leaders begin to focus more on the welfare of their own organizations, a whole host of desirable behaviors [will] result.”

The officer corps must learn to truly transform the Army into a learning organization. In doing so, they will re prioritize self, superordinates, subordinates, and units. Army Transformation depends on leaders who will develop organizational and command climates that encourage loyalty, initiative, and risk-taking.

Senior leaders who model transformational behaviors and create conditions for a learning organization represent only the first part of the change mandate. The following are equally important:

- Adjusting Army systems to reinforce change.
- Adjusting the focus of individual performance appraisals to put organizations first.
- Expanding the levels of organizations routinely using climate surveys.
- Establishing coaching as a means for non-threatening feedback and development of action plans.
- Imposing requirements for action planning to ensure accountability for change.
- Renewing emphasis on leader development for all ranks.

Command climate is a readiness issue. The time has come to develop leaders and to create systems that account for command climate.