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What Veterans Bring to Civilian Workplaces

A Prototype Toolkit for Helping Veterans
Communicate to Private-Sector Employers About
the Nontechnical Skills Developed in the Military

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Preface

Veterans have a great deal to offer to potential civilian employers, including valuable nontechnical skills, such as leadership, decisionmaking, being dependable, and attention to detail. However, for veterans, communicating with civilian employers about the nontechnical skills they have developed through military training, education, and on-the-job experience can be challenging, because military and civilian workplace cultures and languages can seem radically different from one another. To help address this issue, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness asked the RAND Corporation to develop prototype tools to help formerly enlisted veterans describe the full range of nontechnical skills they can bring to potential civilian employers.

In this toolkit, we describe how 19 general skills, important to civilian job success, are developed through on-the-job experience and selected formal military education courses for enlisted personnel in the Army and Marine Corps in selected combat arms occupations. The methodology used to develop the prototype toolkit is detailed in a separate report (available at www.rand.org/t/RR1919). Further, a high-level summary of this toolkit for employers is also available in a separate handout (www.rand.org/t/TL160z4).

This prototype toolkit is intended as a packet of materials to help veterans review job postings, enhance their résumés, and communicate with potential employers about their military training, education and experience. The packet begins with a letter from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness's Transition to Veterans Program Office that can be sent to veterans, explaining the purpose of the other materials enclosed in the packet. The toolkit materials that follow the letter consist of three parts:

- **Introduction:** This section provides more information on the materials and how to use them.
- **Course overviews and course summary tables:** descriptions of the specific formal courses that the Army and Marine Corps use to teach and develop nontechnical skills, as well as summary tables that concisely break down which specific skills and competencies each course focuses on and which ranks of military personnel take each course.
- **On-the-job experience vignettes and summary tables:** descriptions of specific experiences of Soldiers and Marines, as well as summary tables. Both the vignettes and summary tables are organized by skill.

The contents of this prototype toolkit (in part or in whole) should be useful to veterans, career counselors, and civilian employers (for a version of these materials directed specifically at employers, see www.rand.org/t/TL160-1). The toolkit should also be of interest to U.S.

Contents

Dear Service members and Veterans,

When employers recruit prospective employees, they look for candidates that have both technical skills and non-technical (essential) skills, such as leadership, teamwork, team-building, critical thinking, and stress management. It can be difficult to find these essential skills in candidates even though they are critical to the success and growth of the employer's business.

One of the numerous benefits of hiring transitioning Service members and Veterans is that, unlike many civilians, transitioning Service members and Veterans have received formal professional military training and education courses that explicitly teach these essential skills, as well as substantial on-the-job experience to further hone these skills.

To those unfamiliar with military training, education, and specific position assignments, it is challenging to understand the essential skills that transitioning Service members and Veterans gained while they were in uniform. Similarly, you may find it challenging to convey the essential skills you gained to prospective civilian employers. Accordingly, this toolkit was created to help communicate the full value of essential, non-technical skills gained in the military.

The toolkit contains an overview of specific formal training programs that the United States Army and Marine Corps use to teach and develop essential skills, as well as descriptions of specific on-the-job experiences where these skills are further honed. While this research was conducted on Marines and Soldiers in the Combat Arms professions, this toolkit can be used more broadly to understand the essential skills gained from other military services and other professions.

We hope this toolkit will help you better convey to prospective employers the essential skills that you have gained via formal skills training and on-the-job experiences. The intent is to assist you in developing your résumé and preparing for interviews in order to help you obtain your desired civilian position.

Sincerely,

Karin A. Orvis, Ph.D.
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Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness
Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. 20301

Introduction and Guide to Using This Toolkit

Veterans have received significant, formal, in-residence training and education in a range of nontechnical skills that employers value—such as teamwork, oral communication, and continuous learning—and likewise typically have extensive experience in using those skills while on the job. Veterans therefore often have a competitive advantage for civilian employment because many of their civilian counterparts of equivalent age have not received comparable workplace training or been placed in comparable positions of responsibility on the job.

However, many veterans find it challenging to communicate, in nonmilitary terms, about the skills they have developed while in the military. Veterans may not even realize that the formal training and education they received in the military have helped them build skills that make them competitive for civilian jobs or that their experience is attractive to civilian employers. Civilian employers also find it difficult to understand which skills veterans possess, and how military experiences could make veterans well suited for a seemingly unrelated job context. So it is important that veterans be able to communicate their skills and experience to potential civilian employers.

The purpose of this toolkit is to clearly, concretely, succinctly, and in civilian terms identify and describe many of these essential nontechnical skills that veterans develop through formal military courses or on-the-job experience, shedding light on the full value veterans can bring to the civilian workplace. The bulk of this toolkit consists of course overviews and experience vignettes. The course overviews describe specific courses that the Army and Marine Corps use to teach and develop nontechnical skills. The experience vignettes describe specific incidents of Soldiers and Marines using nontechnical skills while performing their jobs. The overviews and vignettes are accompanied by summary tables that concisely break down which specific skills and competencies are considered most critical to performance in certain ranks and occupations. As will be explained later in this introduction, it is also important to note that the summary tables, course overviews, and on-the-job experience vignettes have broader application to other ranks and occupations, and even to other military services.

This introductory section first provides some guidance on how to use the summary tables, overviews, and vignettes, and it provides some background on this toolkit. We have organized much of this toolkit in a question-and-answer format, so that the reader can more easily skim for topics of interest.

Using the Summary Tables, Course Overviews, and Experience Vignettes

The summary tables provide an overview of how strongly a skill is emphasized in the typical courses completed across a military career and how critical the skill is in on-the-job experi-

ences for three levels of personnel in the combat arms. In total, there are four summary tables: two tables each for the Army and the Marine Corps—one applying to formal courses and one applying to on-the-job experience. These tables are meant as quick reference guides for veterans. The course overviews elaborate on the table content by providing specific examples of course activities, and the experience vignettes do the same for common on-the-job experiences.

Although the course summary tables show the skills most strongly developed separately by course and job experience at each rank, it is important to understand that the developmental effect on each veteran can be thought of as cumulative. For example, if you are an Army sergeant, you would have gone through Basic Combat Training, and likely the Warrior Leader Course, and served as a private, corporal, and sergeant in a unit. So, while a skill such as "handling work stress" might be listed in the table as being more explicitly taught or practiced in earlier courses, the skill continues to be developed as you advance in rank and take on greater and greater responsibility on the job. In this way, you would likely accumulate both training and on-the-job experiences relevant to handling work stress by the time you leave military service.

Veterans can consult the course overviews and on-the-job vignettes to get a better sense for how to describe courses and experience in the military workplace in concrete terms that civilian employers can understand. Many of the skills that Soldiers and Marines are exposed to, although perhaps often applied to a wartime activity, can also be extremely valuable for the civilian workplace. When reviewing the examples provided in the vignettes, we therefore encourage veterans to consider how the nontechnical skills they developed via training and education or while on the job might be applied in civilian job contexts. We also encourage you to mention those skills to employers and use the examples provided in this toolkit as models of how to describe your training and on-the-job experiences relating to those skills to employers.

To help facilitate use of these materials, we have recommended that the contents of this report be made available via an online interface, with direct links to specific parts of the tool (e.g., summaries of particular courses, summaries of all content relevant to specific skills, pertinent Q&As). Such an online interface would permit reorganization of the material in multiple ways to meet different veteran needs (the material could be organized by skill, by service, by rank, by military occupational specialty [MOS], etc.). This recommendation is discussed further in our companion report, which addresses our methodology (available at www.rand.org/t/RR1919).

What is the goal of these materials?

We created these materials to help veterans communicate about their skills to civilian employers. The goal is to make what military service members do in training, in education, and on the job visible to the public. To do that, we provide descriptions of the typical activities and experiences that veterans have in a way that helps them articulate to employers how those skills have been applied in their past experience.

How should veterans use this toolkit to review job postings, enhance their résumés, and conduct interviews with civilian employers?

We anticipate that the materials included in this packet can help veterans in at least three ways.

First, the relevant course and experience summary tables can help veterans to review job postings, which often highlight specific skills required for specific positions, and determine which positions they are most eligible for. For example, for supervisory positions, communica-

tion skills, interpersonal skills, team-building, and the ability to directly supervise personnel may be critical. In project management roles, the ability to plan, persist, and be conscientious might be the most important. And all employers look for employees who are dependable, reliable, and work well with others.

Second, veterans can use these materials to help summarize in their résumés the skills in which they have formal training and education or relevant on-the-job experience. For example, you could include a section in your résumé that lists the courses you have completed and the skills addressed in each. Similarly, when describing your military job experiences, you could include some description of nontechnical skills you developed while in those jobs.

Third, veterans from all services and all jobs can consult the course overviews and on-the-job experience vignettes to get ideas for how to communicate their military experiences to civilian employers during job interviews. While you may have taken more courses than the ones listed and you may or may not have experienced exactly the same examples described in those sections, we hope that these summaries exemplify an approach you can use during interviews to describe your course and job experiences to potential employers. Rater and senior rater comments from enlisted efficiency reports can help you think of other individually applicable examples. Once you have identified your own skills and have examples that show how you attained and how well you demonstrated those skills, you can be proactive during interviews. For example, you might say "Let me tell you about the types of leadership, team-building, and critical thinking skills I developed while serving in the military." Be sure to follow up with concrete examples of instances in which you applied the skills effectively on the job, taking care to highlight the ways your efforts were a success.

Finally, while this toolkit can stand on its own, it is best viewed as one of a number of resources for helping veterans communicate about the wide range of essential nontechnical skills they bring to the workplace. In particular, counselors or other professionals can provide a practice venue for you to identify your own skills and describe them in civilian terms on your résumé and during mock interviews. All of the services offer transition program staff (for example, Army Career and Alumni Program career counselors) who can potentially help you to use this toolkit. Elsewhere in this report, we suggest that organizations providing transition programs and veteran employment counseling develop and sponsor workshops for veterans aimed at using the toolkit to improve their communication skills with regards to nontechnical skills

How was this toolkit developed?

We followed an intensive and systematic process to develop this toolkit. We detail the specific methodology in a separate report (available at www.rand.org/t/RR1919) and provide a shorter summary in the technical appendix of this report. To summarize, we conducted a multi-year project that involved reviewing existing research literature on essential nontechnical skills desired by employers to define the skill areas of interest; meeting with military training and education subject-matter experts to define the military training content; and conducting focus groups, interviews, and a survey of more than 200 Soldiers and Marines across four combat arms occupational specialties, as well as administering surveys to an additional 225 service members from those same four specialties.

Scope of This Toolkit

This pilot effort focuses on the nontechnical skills of enlisted veterans in the Army and Marine Corps. It further focuses on Soldiers and Marines in combat arms occupations—that is, personnel who are expected to directly participate in tactical land combat. We chose to focus on combat arms occupations because they represent some of the largest occupational groups in the Army and Marine Corps and have some of the least obvious transferability to the civilian marketplace.

Which nontechnical skills does this toolkit cover?

The nontechnical skills covered in these materials are listed in the following table, along with definitions and other names these skills are known by.

Nontechnical Skill Definitions

Skill Name	Definition (Related Terms)
Cognitive	
Decisionmaking/ decisiveness	Chooses the best solution or option in a timely and decisive manner, even in ambiguous situations and without assistance when appropriate. *(related terms: assertive, authoritative, resolving)*
Critical thinking	Actively and skillfully conceptualizes, applies, analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates information to formulate options and to reach a conclusion. Demonstrates mental agility and the ability to reason, anticipate obstacles, identify problems, locate, gather, and organize relevant information, generate alternatives, evaluate and analyze information, and apply what is learned. *(related terms: analytic thinking, reasoning, argumentation, interpretation, problem solving)*
Directing People and Projects	
Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals	Influences and inspires others by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the organization's tasks and goals and improve the organization's capabilities; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situations; offers career development opportunities to subordinates; mentors others' skills, abilities, attitudes, future intentions, and career issues; recognizes achievements; sets an example for others; encourages other's self-assessment and enhancement of skills in an activity; and promotes training, learning, and preparing for the future. Generates enthusiasm for task objectives and team accomplishment through standard and creative influence techniques. Recognizes contributions and achievements of all types, among people in high- and low-visibility activities alike. Rewards employees for high performance. Sets an example for others by acting in ways that are consistent with organizational goals and objectives. *(related terms: administering, overseeing, organizing people)*
Managing/ supervising the work of others	Organizes, coordinates, and leads subordinates in work efforts to effectively and efficiently accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Involves staffing, delegating roles and responsibilities, clarifying objectives, and monitoring, assessing, adjusting, and rewarding the actions of subordinates. Requires knowledge and experience applying performance management concepts, principles, and practices. *(related terms: administering, overseeing, organizing)*
Project planning	Identifies resources, plans, organizes, schedules, and coordinates tasks and activities so that work is completed effectively and efficiently. Prioritizes various competing tasks and performs them quickly and efficiently according to their urgency. Finds new ways of organizing work areas or planning to accomplish work more efficiently. *(related terms: project management, strategic planning, organization, coordination, planning, scheduling)*

Nontechnical Skill Definitions—continued

Skill Name	Definition (Related Terms)
Professional Development	
Continuous learning	Takes the necessary actions to develop and maintain knowledge, skills, and expertise; demonstrates an interest in learning; anticipates work changes; identifies career interests; applies a range of learning techniques; integrates newly learned knowledge and skills with existing knowledge and skills; and is aware of own cognitive processes. *(related terms: adaptive learning, willingness to learn, active learning, metacognition)*
Training others	Plans, organizes, and conducts activities that increase the capability of individuals or organizations to perform specified tasks or skills. Has knowledge and experience applying employee development concepts, principles, and practices related to planning, evaluating, and administering training and education initiatives. *(related terms: teaching, developing skills)*
Interpersonal	
Teamwork and team-building	Establishes productive relationships with other team members to perform team tasks and works to improve team performance; acknowledges team membership and role; and identifies with the team and its goals. Team-building activities include improving the ability of a team to work together to accomplish a task or activity; resolving conflicts within a team; developing collaboration to promote learning and expand team perspectives; discouraging unproductive behavior among team members; and encouraging and building mutual trust, respect, and cooperation. *(related terms: team player, followership, cooperation, collaboration)*
Interpersonal skills	Recognizes and accurately interprets the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others; works well with others; shows sincere interest in and sensitivity to others and their concerns, needs, and feelings; shows insight into the actions and motives of others and recognizes when relationships with others are strained; and maintains open lines of communication with others. *(related terms: demonstrating concern for others, demonstrating insight into behavior, intercultural skills)*
Oral communication	Persuasively presents thoughts and ideas; receives, attends to, interprets, understands, and responds to verbal messages and other cues; expresses information orally to individuals or groups, taking into account the audience and the nature of the information; practices meaningful two-way communication; picks out important information in oral messages; understands and is able to process complex oral instructions; and appreciates feelings and concerns of oral messages. *(related terms: speaking, public speaking, persuasive speaking, debating, active listening, two-way communication)*
Written communication	Communicates thoughts, ideas, information, messages, and other written information in a logical, organized, and coherent manner; creates documents, such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts; presents well-developed ideas, with supporting information and examples. Uses standard grammar and sentence structure, correct spelling, and appropriate tone and word choice. *(related terms: writing)*
Intrapersonal	
Being dependable and reliable	Diligently follows through on commitments and consistently meets deadlines; behaves consistently and predictably; is reliable, responsible, and dependable in fulfilling obligations. (related terms: *getting the activity done*)
Conscientiousness and attention to detail	Diligently checks work to ensure that all essential details have been considered; performs assigned tasks and responsibilities diligently even when not under direct supervision; displays self-discipline and self-control; follows oral and written directions; complies with organizational rules, policies, and procedures. *(related terms: conscientiousness, respect for procedures, discipline, autonomy, productivity)*

Nontechnical Skill Definitions—continued

Skill Name	Definition (Related Terms)
Situational awareness	Perceives, analyzes, and comprehends critical elements of information in one's environment. This also includes continually seeking new information to update and refine one's understanding. More simply, know what is going on and how it relates to the goals of the individual, team, and/or organization. *(related terms: alertness, responsiveness, attentiveness, situational understanding)*
Adaptability	Responds quickly and effectively to uncertain and unpredictable work situations. Open to change, rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Thrives in the "gray" area and requires minimal structure. Quickly learns new work tasks, technologies, and procedures. *(related terms: active learning, changing to fit the situation, able to adapt, situational flexibility)*
Handling work stress	Functions effectively under pressure; remains composed under pressure and high-stress situations; does not overreact; manages frustration and other stresses well; acts as a calming and settling influence on others. Exhibits a hardiness of spirit despite physical and mental hardships; possesses moral and physical courage. *(related terms: productive stress management, resilience, effectiveness under pressure, triumph over adversity, coping)*
Persistence	Works hard to achieve a goal or accomplish an assigned task. Won't quit, does not tend to procrastinate, and completes tasks once begun. Sees work through to completion. Even in the face of failure, keeps trying. Tends to believe that success is always attainable with hard work and persistence. Works hard even when the reward is small, unlikely to be obtained, or will only be realized far into the future. *(related terms: perseverance, grit, work ethic)*
Behaving ethically	Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner and encourages others to do so as well. Always does the right thing even when no one is watching. This includes (but is not limited to) performing work-related duties according to laws, regulations, and policies, but also understanding that behaving ethically goes well beyond what the law requires. Takes responsibility and maintains accountability for own actions, decisions, and roles in missions. *(related terms: integrity)*
Operating safely	Identifies and carefully weighs safety risks in making decisions and adheres to safety rules and regulations. Fosters a safety culture, wears safety gear, and encourages others to follow safety rules and speak openly of their safety concerns. Has knowledge of the principles, methods, and tools used for risk assessment and mitigation, including assessment of failures and their consequences. *(related terms: safety and risk management)*

Definition Sources

Office of Personnel Management, *Multipurpose Occupational Systems Analysis Inventory—Close-Ended (MOSAIC) Competencies*, January 2013. As of March 16, 2017:
http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/competencies/mosaic-studies-competencies.pdf

Office of Personnel Management, *Delegated Examining Operations Handbook: A Guide for Federal Agency Examining Offices*, May 2007. As of March 16, 2017:
https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/competitive-hiring/deo_handbook.pdf

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration Competency Model Clearinghouse, 2017. As of March 16, 2017:
http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/

Are the skills discussed in this toolkit a comprehensive list of the skills veterans possess?
No. Veterans are likely to have developed skills through courses and on-the-job experience beyond those listed in the tables and described in the skills overviews. Many, and perhaps most, veterans will have taken courses beyond those covered in this toolkit, and those courses emphasize skills beyond those listed in these materials. Further, there are some skills that, though not the focus of a single course, permeate the entire military culture, such as operating safely and continuous learning.

Why do we include both military courses and on-the-job experiences in this packet?
By including both, we are providing illustrations of the two primary types of exposure that may set veterans apart from their civilian counterparts. All veterans would have experienced some sort of training in these valued skills, as illustrated by the course overviews. All veterans would have had opportunities to demonstrate some, and perhaps all, of the skills summarized in the on-the-job experience vignettes. Formal military courses and on-the-job experience represent the two major components of veterans' military experience in these essential skills. In combination, the two sources provide a more complete picture of veterans' experience in these skills.

Where can veterans learn about communicate about their technical skills, as opposed to nontechnical skills?
The purpose of this toolkit is to document and describe in civilian terms the nontechnical skills addressed through formal military courses. Other existing resources describe technical military training. For example, see the technical skills translator resource that Military.com created in partnership with Monster.com: http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator/. Military.com, with 10 million members, is the largest military and veteran membership organization.

Can the information in this toolkit be generalized to non–combat arms personnel?
Yes, in many cases. The formal training documented here primarily focuses on nontechnical training received by personnel in all Army and Marine Corps enlisted occupations and on training that is specifically required for selected combat arms occupations. However, many formal courses not included in the pilot offer comparable training in nontechnical skills (e.g., the military services teach all personnel to work in teams). Further, veterans may be able to model the approach presented in the course and on-the-job descriptions—using concrete examples and nonmilitary language—to comparably describe the skills they have developed through their individual occupations and training experiences. Finally, the on-the-job vignettes, in some instances, are general to the military. In other instances, these stories may serve as a foundational idea on which veterans can impose their own personal experiences. In this way, the information in this toolkit may generalize to many noncombat enlisted personnel.

Course Summary Tables

In this section, we present tables summarizing the top nontechnical skills addressed in each formal course offered to members of the Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations. These tables are meant as quick reference guides. The course overviews in the subsequent section elaborate on the table content through examples of how the skills are practiced or taught in each respective course.

The first table summarizes skills developed through selected Army courses, including two courses that all Army personnel enroll in and two in which a large proportion of personnel in combat arms occupations enroll. The second table summarizes skills developed through four selected Marine Corps courses in which most Marines enroll. We chose to focus on these courses because they are required for nearly everyone. By their nature, they have to be applicable across jobs. Therefore, the content does not focus on job-specific technical skills and instead focuses on the other essential nontechnical skills highly valued by the military.

In each table, the columns list courses, organized from left to right in the sequence taken (so skills developed are cumulative, reading from left to right). Under each course title, we indicate the ranks that most commonly enroll in each course. There is a one-to-one correspondence between courses and ranks in the Marine Corps but not the Army.

The rows in each table list skills. The ✦ symbol indicates that a given skill is among the top skills emphasized in a given course.

Note that some skills listed in the earlier section titled "Which nontechnical skills does this toolkit cover?" do not appear in the summary tables, for two reasons. First, we added three skills to the list after the analysis of formal courses was complete, in response to suggestions by subject-matter experts. These additional skills are adaptability, behaving ethically, and situational awareness (see the "Nontechnical Skills" table presented earlier for definitions). Second, other skills (such as operating safely and continuous learning) are not displayed in the summary tables because we determined that none of the courses we reviewed significantly developed those skills. However, when applicable, veterans should emphasize to employers that they have been exposed through other courses, military culture, and on-the-job experience to the importance of operating safely and continuous learning—as well as other nontechnical skills.

Are the skills marked in the summary tables cumulative?
Yes. If a Soldier enrolled in the Army's Basic Leader Course as an E-5, he or she would also have completed the relevant Basic Combat Training course as an E-1, E-2, or E-3 and so would have received formal training in the valued skills marked under both courses. The summary tables are organized to show that the courses for lower-ranked personnel focus on developing such skills as handling work stress and being dependable, whereas courses for higher ranks focus more on leadership, team-building, and supervising.

Summary of the Top Nontechnical Skills Addressed in Army Courses

Skill Addressed	Basic Combat Training (entry-level personnel: E-1–E-2)[a]	Basic Leader Course (mid-level personnel: E-4–E-5)[a]	Advanced Leader Course (mid- to senior-level personnel: E-5–E-6)[b]	Senior Leader Course (senior-level personnel: E-6–E-7)[b]
Handling work stress	✦			
Being dependable and reliable	✦			
Persistence	✦			
Conscientiousness and attention to detail	✦			
Interpersonal skills	✦	✦		
Teamwork and team-building	✦	✦	✦	✦
Oral communication		✦	✦	✦
Managing and supervising the work of others		✦	✦	✦
Decisionmaking/decisiveness		✦		✦
Training others		✦		✦
Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals		✦		
Critical thinking				✦
Project planning				✦

NOTES: The absence of a ✦ does not indicate that instruction in the skill is absent from the course, only that it was not among the "top skills" most emphasized in the course according to the subject-matter experts interviewed. See www.rand.org/t/RR1919 for a full description of the methodology used to construct the table. Table information describes the courses during the 2014 to 2015 time frame during which this study was conducted. Courses before or after that period may differ.

[a] Taken by all Army personnel

[b] All combat arms personnel take a version of this course; however, some of the content and emphasis differs by job grouping (i.e., by occupational branch) and sometimes by job. Here, we report only those skills that instructors have indicated are common to all versions of the course for Armor and Infantry jobs.

Why do the skills appear to change as someone's rank increases?

While the skills emphasized by course change with increases in rank, the reasons for those changes are largely intuitive. In the Army table, the course completed by the most junior-level personnel is Basic Combat Training. The skills emphasized in that course are noticeably different from those taught in the courses targeting the more senior-level personnel. This suggests that, as personnel increase in their seniority and experience levels, the military introduces them to new skills that are appropriate to changes in their level of responsibility. A similar shift in emphasized skills can be seen in the Marine Corps table, although the shift is less pronounced, as the table does not include the most junior-level course.

Summary of the Top Nontechnical Skills Addressed in Marine Corps Courses

Skill Addressed	Recruit Training (entry-level personnel E-1–E-2)[a]	Corporals Course (mid-level personnel: E-4)[b]	Sergeants Course (mid- to senior-level personnel: E-5)[b]	Career Course (senior-level personnel: E-6)[b]	Advanced Course (senior-level personnel: E-7)[b]
Handling work stress	See note a				
Being dependable and reliable	See note a				
Persistence	See note a				
Interpersonal skills	See note a				
Conscientiousness and attention to detail	See note a				
Teamwork and team-building		✦			
Critical thinking		✦	✦	✦	
Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals		✦	✦	✦	
Oral communication			✦	✦	
Written communication			✦	✦	
Decisionmaking/decisiveness			✦	✦	✦
Training others			✦		✦

NOTES: The absence of a ✦ does NOT indicate that instruction in the skill is absent from the course, only that it was not among the "top skills" most emphasized in the course according to the SMEs interviewed. See www.rand.org/t/RR1919 for a full description of the methodology used to construct the table. Table information describes the courses during the 2014 to 2015 time frame during which this study was conducted. Courses before or after that period may differ.

[a] Recruit Training materials were not available in our pilot study. We anticipate that a review of those materials would produce results similar to those found in the Army. However, this premise has not yet been confirmed.

[b] Completed by most, but not all Marines.

In the course summary tables, why do the skills addressed for Army personnel differ from the skills addressed for similarly ranked Marine Corps personnel?

For three reasons. First, as mentioned above, the Army and the Marine Corps make independent choices in their job and training analyses as to how much to emphasize the learning of skills in the schoolhouse versus on the job. Thus, for example, the Marine Corps may choose to emphasize written communication more in the schoolhouse, whereas the Army might choose to develop that skill more in the unit.

Second, the components can organize training differently. For example, the Marine Corps Corporals Course appears to address only three of the nontechnical skills, largely because it is a short course that has a much more narrow focus than the other courses. However, the skills addressed in the Corporals Course, when combined with the Sergeants Course, do appear to be similar to those observed in the Army's Basic Leader Course. As a result, similarly ranked personnel in both organizations end up being exposed to similar skills in their formal training.

Third, the differences may be more apparent than real. For example, the Army tends to describe courses as addressing *management and supervision* and *teamwork and team-building*,

whereas Marine Corps instructors tend to describe them more as addressing *leadership*, *influencing*, and *mentoring*. This could reflect a cultural difference between the types of jobs held by people of the same tenure and how the organization approaches training its personnel—or it could just be that the lines of differentiation between the concepts of management and supervision, team-building, and leadership often blur. All are important elements of what many consider simply "leadership." As a result, the table is perhaps showing difference where there is none.

During interviews, we asked subject-matter experts to explain and clarify their definitions of these constructs so that we could judge how their illustrations fit into our definitions and our current work reflects these discussions. Some of these differences were ironed out during the interviews. However, further clarification requires further data collection and analysis.

Does every veteran have the skills checked off in the tables?
No. It is true that nearly every veteran at various points in his or her career will have completed the applicable courses. However, the degree to which a given veteran has mastered the skill will depend on a wide range of factors, including the individual's aptitude for and interest in the skill and the opportunity he or she has had to practice and perfect the skill on particular jobs. Conversely, and for similar reasons, the absence of a check does not preclude the possibility that a veteran has the highest level of skill in that area. In fact, as indicated in a note for the tables, the skills not checked may well have also been taught in your course. Because there is the potential for such variability, the onus is still on you to determine whether you have the skills at the appropriate levels to make you attractive to civilian employers. The more you can describe experiences that demonstrate your ability level and your opportunity to apply the skill on a regular basis, the more convincing you will be to a civilian employer.

Course Overviews

The course overviews use concrete examples to explain how military courses develop skills that are transferable to the civilian workplace in terms civilian employers understand. The summaries are each structured as follows:

- **Bottom line:** The key takeaway for each course in terms of the top-valued nontechnical skills developed.
- **Course description:** A concise description of the course that addresses audience, time frame, and main learning goals.
- **Top-valued skills emphasized:** Explanations and examples of each of the top-valued skills emphasized in the course.
- **Other skills and competencies taught:** A brief discussion of some of the other nontechnical skills addressed in the course, including explanations and examples (if applicable).
- **Key training activity:** A discussion of a key course activity, usually a culminating or "capstone" activity, and how that activity develops many of the top-valued skills developed in the course.

Note that, throughout the course descriptions, the term *skills* refers to essential nontechnical skills, unless specified otherwise. Note also that the course descriptions and course activities described in this toolkit reflect the courses as administered around 2014 or 2015. Course content, length, or other characteristics may have been different in other years (future or past).

Are the course overviews a comprehensive description of the courses considered?
No. The intent of the course overviews is to summarize how the key nontechnical skills identified in the course summary tables are emphasized in the course. To set the stage and provide important context, we include a short description of the course; however, that description is by no means meant to be a comprehensive summary of all that the course entails. The other information included in the course overviews is also focused on providing only the information that is relevant for understanding the context in which the skills are being trained. It therefore focuses on information most useful to civilian employers, and avoids terms that might be difficult for a civilian audience to interpret. Further, for the sake of brevity, the descriptions of the various course activities are not exhaustive; for example, the "key training activity" might be just one of a number of culminating activities in the course. For more information on each course, see the Marine Corps or Army programs of instruction.

Why are the examples included in the course overviews important?
People usually understand concepts better when they are shown ideas through examples rather than only told about them. The examples included in the course overviews eliminate military jargon, translating for civilian employers the unfamiliar notion of military work into one that seems more similar to civilian work.

Employers can more easily get a sense for your experience and proficiency in a skill when you describe an example of how you learned or practiced it in courses or how well you demonstrated it on the job. Examples are much more believable and understandable than simply telling an employer that you possess the skill. Read the examples we provide here and think of similar experiences you had in your training courses or on the job that illustrate the same types of skills. Describe those experiences to employers using your own examples.

Army Basic Combat Training

Bottom Line

Basic Combat Training is a ten-week course designed to teach basic combat skills, such as first aid and rifle marksmanship, and to instill the following valued nontechnical skills that are directly relevant to being a good civilian worker:

- Teamwork and team-building
- Handling work stress
- Being dependable and reliable
- Interpersonal skills
- Conscientiousness and attention to detail
- Persistence.

Course Description

Basic Combat Training is a ten-week course completed by all enlisted Army Soldiers at the start of their careers in the military. They enroll in this course before enrolling in technical training, where they learn the technical skills specific to their job (for example, a mechanic would learn how to repair vehicles).

The stated course objective is to transform young and inexperienced civilians who just joined the military into confident, disciplined personnel instilled with the attitudes the Army values most, which include placing the mission first and never accepting defeat, quitting, or leaving a comrade behind. The Army calls this conversion process *soldierization*, and it is infused into various activities designed to teach combat basics (for example, engaging an enemy with a rifle, moving under enemy fire, first aid).

Basic Combat Training is designed to be immersive, intense, and physically and mentally taxing. Fitness tests, obstacle courses, and individual and team events are implemented throughout the ten weeks. Students must persist and succeed at these activities to graduate, and the passing standards for each activity are intentionally set high. Training activities are scheduled for almost all waking hours of the day, seven days a week. Students are cut off from the "outside world," with no access to phones and only very limited Internet access.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Teamwork and Team-Building
Individuals' success in the course depends on their ability to work collaboratively with others and to do so consistently, around the clock, for ten weeks. For example, the team's living areas must always be kept extremely neat, clean, and orderly, with every student held responsible for the slightest infraction, regardless of who may have been responsible. Students are expected to take responsibility for and pitch in to fix problems, not to blame the culprit. The overall intent is for students to learn to be supportive team members.

Many individual and group training exercises also explicitly demand teamwork for success. For example, in one exercise, groups must move together through a series of frightening obstacles that require teamwork to negotiate successfully.

Handling Work Stress

Basic Combat Training is designed to continuously stress and pressure students, because the goal is to develop Soldiers who can function under the stress of combat. For example, students participate in live-fire exercises, where a mistake could result in death. In one live-fire exercise, the students must crawl forward while live bullets are fired over their heads. While there are many safeguards, students are definitely aware that live bullets are passing closely overhead. The pressure on students is continuous—for example, the approximately 230 students in a typical training group have 30 minutes to retrieve and eat their meals, so even eating is designed to teach students to handle stress. To instill a mission focus, many exercises are treated as competitions in which teams are rated against each other.

Being Dependable and Reliable

All students must do their part to accomplish team tasks. No one wants to let the team down, and so each student must be dependable in the eyes of the rest of the team. For example, both the entire training group of 230 and individual students are evaluated on their marksmanship skills. No one wants to let the team down by being the only student out of 230 not to pass their rifle examination.

Interpersonal Skills

During the ten-week training period, students' social world consists entirely of fellow students, and they must develop and display productive interpersonal skills to survive. For example, at least two students are scheduled to remain awake each night, patrolling their barracks area, watching for fires, cleaning the barracks, and monitoring whether any students attempt to leave the training area. Teams must create their own schedules, and no one wants the midnight slot. Students, when rotating through team leader positions, must demonstrate strong interpersonal skills to ensure that those assigned the undesirable portions of the schedule feel they were treated fairly. These interpersonal skills often include an intercultural component, as the ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic, and/or economic composition of the team is more diverse than most students have ever experienced. Basic Combat Training also includes formal instruction on subjects that are important to institutional interpersonal relations, such as preventing and responding to sexual assault and promoting equal opportunity.

Persistence

The course activities are designed to be challenging for every student. The proficiency standards are set so that they cannot be passed the first time. For example, students must be able to properly put on their chemical protective gear in eight minutes, and a great deal of practice and persistence is required to achieve this standard. Students must have or develop the discipline and time-management skills to practice until they meet the standards and to persist until they do.

Conscientiousness and Attention to Detail

Most technical and day-to-day tasks must be demonstrated to what is considered perfection. For example, students must precisely "zero their rifles" so that their sight is aligned with the strike of the bullet. Unless the rifle is properly zeroed, the student will not be able to hit enough targets to successfully pass the rifle examination, which is a graduation requirement. In another example, students moving along a trail must closely watch their assigned sector for a long time to detect any signs of an improvised explosive device (IED) positioned to kill or injure team members.

There are many day-to-day examples of the required conscientiousness and attention to detail: uniforms must be set up and worn to exacting standards, beds must be made tightly and precisely, and wall lockers must exactly follow standardized setup instructions and diagrams. In both technical and day-to-day cases, when standards are not met, students must redo the activity—under instructors' close watch—until the standards are met.

Other Skills and Competencies Taught

Skills and competencies beyond those described above emphasized in Basic Combat Training include:

- **Oral communications:** Soldier students from widely different backgrounds must effectively communicate with each other to accomplish team exercises.
- **Operating safely:** Live-fire and other exercises are inherently dangerous, and procedures and teamwork to mitigate risks are emphasized throughout the course.
- **Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals:** Soldier students rotate through leadership positions and are responsible for leading and motivating their teams to successfully complete assigned tasks. Given the difficulty of the course for most students, supporting and inspiring other team members is critical to group success.

Key Training Activity

A four-day field training exercise is the culminating course activity. The course location is moved to a simulated combat environment in which an enemy attack is possible, around the clock, for four days, so time allocated for sleeping is limited.

During the field training exercise, students must perform critical individual and collective combat tasks in a demanding and fast-paced simulated operational environment. For example, nine students might have to evacuate a wounded teammate to a safe location, and this might involve crossing an area where the enemy might be present. The wounded student must get to the safe location quickly or will die as a result of the wounds. Tasks include transporting the wounded student, administering first aid, maintaining route security, reacting to enemy fire, and identifying and neutralizing land mines. The team must quickly decide who does what, and each student must perform their tasks quickly and correctly for team success.

Army Basic Leader Course

Bottom Line

The Basic Leader Course (BLC) is the first course of study in the Army noncommissioned officer (NCO) Education System.[1] BLC provides a formal complement to students' on-the-job experience, providing structured development of the ability to lead and supervise a small group of workers as a first-line supervisor. Key valued nontechnical skills developed in this course include:

- Managing and supervising the work of others
- Teamwork and team-building
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals
- Training others
- Interpersonal skills
- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Oral communications.

Students are not expected to master these skills. Rather, the course is designed to develop in each student the skills necessary to assume small-group leadership positions, in which they will continue to develop their skills through on-the-job experience.

Course Description

The BLC is a 22-day course that provides basic leadership training to support the transition from the follower/worker role to that of a junior NCO, who is a small-group leader/first-line supervisor. The typical BLC student has just been promoted or is about to be promoted into a team leader role in which he or she will oversee about five other Soldiers. The course focuses on teaching basic leadership skills to students from all occupational specialties (including combat arms Soldiers, such as infantry, and support Soldiers, such as those with medical, maintenance, and administrative specialties).

The BLC is taught in a small-group environment of two instructors for every 16 students, facilitating student involvement and individual feedback. Exercises in which students engage in simulated combat-related situations and collaborative small-group (4–8) work efforts are used extensively. Students rotate through small-group leadership positions and are assessed on their leadership performance. Instructors engage each student individually to make the course as challenging as possible for each student. The low instructor-to-student ratio maximizes instructors' opportunities to provide formal and informal feedback and to otherwise mentor students and model skills.

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[1]   NCOs are enlisted personnel who have achieved a rank of corporal (E-4) or higher. NCOs typically hold leadership positions over other enlisted personnel. BLC is taken by specialists (in preparation for becoming NCOs), corporals, or sergeants.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Managing and Supervising the Work of Others

Almost all BLC lessons teach small-group supervisory skills, either passively, through lecture and conversation, or actively, through practical application. Lectures address supervision concepts and principles. During group exercises, as rotating team leaders, students must plan and direct the team's effort to successfully complete the exercise. For example, a small group might be confronted with a simulated combat situation that requires a series of actions, and the group leader must act in a supervisory capacity to decide which actions to take first and how to deal with unexpected events (for example, having to take care of a casualty). Student group leaders also practice supervisory skills when they oversee nontraining activities, such as cleaning work areas, that require delegation, and they must ensure that delegated tasks are completed correctly and on time.

Teamwork and Team-Building

Students must effectively work as members of a team throughout the BLC, while also rotating through team leader positions. The course encourages development of teamwork and team-building by making all team members responsible for the behavior of all other team members. If a team member arrives late for an exercise, is not dressed properly in uniform, or performs poorly in an exercise, the entire team bears the consequences. This ensures that team members engage with and support each other in accomplishing team tasks and that temporary team leaders encourage team-building. During the peer-teaching lesson, students who are experienced in one area are expected to work with students who need improvement in that area so that the team as a whole succeeds.

Training Others

The course teaches training principles and techniques through lectures, and students must then conduct classes and provide individual training sessions to their fellow students as graded exercises (for example, teaching other students to disassemble, clean, and assemble a rifle). Students also learn to collectively review and analyze team performance, identify areas for improvement, and discuss how the team's performance could be improved through what is called the after-action review (AAR) process. An AAR is a performance-focused discussion of an event or exercise intended to facilitate Soldiers' self-discovery of how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. During the course, students lead mock AARs, and instructors provide feedback.

Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring Others to Accomplish Organizational Goals

The BLC also includes opportunities for students to practice developing subordinates' skills and motivation. For example, students must prepare and conduct a graded mock developmental counseling session for a fellow student. One student role-plays the counseled Soldier based on provided background information, while another student counsels. The counselee and counselor discuss performance strengths and weaknesses and develop approaches for improvement, then the instructor evaluates the counselor's effectiveness and provides feedback. Each student conducts several counseling sessions, gaining an understanding of how to effectively counsel, as well as of the importance and benefits of doing so.

While the course teaches the leading and motivating of others, the lessons do not tend to teach inspirational skills and focus more on tasks than on goals.

Finally, the course is designed to shape students' views of leadership. For example, students are taught to conduct themselves by "being the example, so others can follow."

Interpersonal Skills

Students in the BLC have a wide range of specialties, come from many different types of units, and have a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. They must learn to work with people who do not share a common language and point of view. Instructors and peers evaluate students' interpersonal skills, providing each student with formal feedback on how other members of the team view the student's interpersonal skills.

Decisionmaking/Decisiveness

The BLC's practical exercises require students to continually make quick and decisive choices. In team leader roles, students practice giving orders and making and implementing decisions with confidence and authority—for example, regarding the exercises to be included in morning physical fitness sessions. Students also practice decisionmaking during the key developmental activity, described below.

Oral Communication

Throughout the course, students must express their ideas during classroom discussions and role-playing exercises. Each student must also research, prepare, and present a formal briefing on a significant military topic (for example, the role of the NCO during World War II). Students are formally evaluated and critiqued on their participation in classroom discussions, role-playing, and formal briefings.

Other Skills and Competencies Taught

Skills and competencies beyond those described above emphasized in this course include:

- **Written communication:** Several short, graded written assignments require correct grammar, clarity, completeness, and conciseness.
- **Planning** skills are required for success on individual and collective exercises (for example, students must plan for the developmental counseling session and describe the plan to the instructor).
- **Conscientiousness and attention to detail** are required throughout the course. For example, morning physical fitness training must align to prescribed standards, and student leaders are evaluated on how well other students follow their standards.
- **Being dependable and reliable:** The training schedules are demanding, and students must arrive precisely on time and in exactly the right uniform throughout the course.
- **Operating safely:** The course teaches students to identify safety risks and develop plans to mitigate these risks. The course outlines risk-mitigation actions for every activity.

Key Developmental Activity

The 36-hour field training exercise culminating activity provides students the opportunity to practice the key skills taught throughout the course and receive a leadership ability evaluation. Students organize into teams of five, led by a rotating student leader who is responsible for directing two teams. The teams and their rotating leaders prepare for and conduct a series of short, simple simulated combat missions, such as an attack of an enemy machine gun position or moving between two locations where there is a chance of an ambush.

Student leaders must develop a feasible plan to accomplish the mission, issue an order that clearly and completely communicates the plan, supervise preparations, and ensure that team members understand the plan and their role in it. Student leaders must also direct the actions and reactions of the team while executing the mission and conduct AARs of the team's performance at the end of each mission. Team members must work together effectively for mission success. Each student receives grades and counseling on his or her leadership performance.

Army Advanced Leader Course

The Advanced Leader Course Differs by Occupational Specialty

Once enlisted personnel rise to the mid–noncommisioned officer (NCO) ranks (sergeant [E-5] or staff sergeant [E-6]), they are required to take a version of the Advanced Leader Course (ALC). The specific content and emphasis of the ALC may differ by occupational specialty— that is, by job, job grouping, or occupational branch. This course overview uses as an example the ALC for Indirect Fire Infantrymen. That occupation involves operating a mortar—a weapon that fires explosive rounds at relatively short ranges and with high-arcing ballistic trajectories. To determine the generalizability of the skills taught in this course, we talked to instructors who teach versions of the course to all Armor and Infantry personnel. We determined that all but one of the skills described below can be generalized to other versions of the course. Veterans in Infantry and Armor jobs make up a substantial proportion of the total of transitioning veterans.

Bottom Line

The ALC supports the development of many important valued nontechnical skills; four from our list are

- Teamwork and team-building
- Supervising the work of others
- Oral communications
- Conscientiousness and attention to detail (may not be as highly emphasized in other versions of the ALC).

While these skills are emphasized in the context of the Indirect Fire Infantrymen course in particular, and in comparable courses for armor and infantry occupations more generally, each of these skills is also required of civilian supervisors.

Course Description

The Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC is a six-week course designed to build on the skills developed during previous assignments and schooling by NCOs, including sergeants (E-5s) who have been selected for promotion and staff sergeants (E-6s).

The goal of the Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC is to further develop key skills necessary to perform in leadership positions in mortar sections and platoons. Although there are variations, a mortar section normally has two mortars and six to eight Soldiers, and a mortar platoon generally has four mortars, almost 30 Soldiers, and a Fire Direction Center (FDC). An FDC receives requests for mortar fire and computes the data (elevation, direction, and propellant) needed for mortar crews to lay (aim) and fire their mortar tubes so as to hit the target.

The Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC offers some lessons that teach general subjects (for example, preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, being resilient) and administrative subjects (for example, property accountability/supply management) and introduces some skills students need to serve as a mortar platoon sergeant. But the course's primary focus is to develop combat-related planning and execution skills in mortar section leaders. The course presents concepts and techniques for conducting many important types of operations (for example, conducting a patrol, selecting locations for positioning the mortars where they can best support an infantry attack) and technical mortar functions (for example, calculating firing data, laying [aiming] the mortar). After these concepts and techniques are presented, the course uses practical exercises in the classroom, in simulations, and in the field, where student teams plan and execute these combat missions.

The course is taught in a small-group environment (one instructor for 16 students), which helps facilitate student involvement and individual feedback. Peer teaching is done after the first week, so each student has to prepare and conduct at least two classes. Practical exercises and collaborative planning efforts of small groups (2–8) are used extensively to enhance interaction and learning outcomes. The low instructor-to-student ratio enhances the ability of the instructor to provide formal and informal feedback, promote meaningful discussion, and act as a teacher and facilitator during these exercises and during the course.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Teamwork and Team-Building
Student groups conduct most of the practical and field training exercises, and students rotate as student group leaders. The students come from different units, and group members must quickly bond and cooperate to become effective teams. The student groups are given limited time to complete their exercises. This requires students to work together as an effective team, and the student leaders must effectively manage and supervise the team's collaborative efforts (for example, developing a mortar target list).

Managing and Supervising the Work of Others
Being able to manage and supervise others is a skill set that students assigned to the group leadership positions described above need for success in these exercises. Given the amount of precision needed to successfully and safely engage targets with mortar fire, there is a need for oversight and checking.

Additionally, students are organized into student organizations (such as platoons and squads), and students are rotated through leadership positions with responsibility for nonlesson activities, such as leading morning physical fitness training, ensuring that student training schedules are met, and ensuring that students arrive at training with the right equipment and in the right uniform.

Oral Communication
Almost all lessons require the students to clearly express their ideas, and students are evaluated based on the substance and clarity of their presentations, including at least one formal briefing. Effective two-way communication is required to promote the discussions needed for effective collaborative planning. Also, after the first week the students teach the classes, so each student

is the instructor/facilitator for several lessons, which helps them develop presentation and two-way communication skills.

Conscientiousness and Attention to Detail

A major portion of the course is devoted to learning and practicing the tasks and procedures necessary to gather data to aim a mortar tube so that, when the mortar is fired, the round will hit a precise point on the ground (this involves, for example, maintaining communications with the observer and placing the location of the observer and the target into the computer). The crew must lay and fire the mortar exactly in accordance with the data, and the standards that must be achieved require that these actions must be performed quickly and correctly. To graduate from the course, the students must pass tests and perform successfully during practical and field training exercises; these activities require a high level of precision and great attention to detail in following procedures.

Other Skills and Competencies Taught

The Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC also teaches some other valued nontechnical skills with a high degree of direct application/level of learning:

- **Operating safely:** The students are taught how to analyze operational and training events, identify the risks associated with these events, and plan mitigation actions. At the beginning of each training event, safety risks and mitigation actions are outlined. All training is conducted with a high emphasis on safety.
- **Training others:** In addition to being taught training and leader development concepts and taking part in numerous training exercises (see the key developmental activity, below), each student is assigned small-group instructor responsibilities for several lessons, and the student's performance is graded. Although the students are provided with lesson plans and supporting material, students still need to do considerable research to prepare for the lessons and presentation, and teaching skills are necessary to conduct the classes. Students are taught to collectively review, discuss, and analyze team performance; identify areas for improvement; and discuss how the team's performance could be improved through the after-action review (AAR) process. An AAR is a performance-focused discussion of an event or exercise that enables Soldiers to discover for themselves how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. As with other skills developed during the Indirect Fire Infantryman ALC, the small-group instructors provide feedback and support.
- **Interpersonal skills:** Given the requirement to be an effective member, and frequently a leader, of a newly formed team that must successfully perform numerous practical exercises, interpersonal skills are key to course success. The student's evaluations are done not only by the small-group instructor but also by a system of peer reviews, to give each student formal feedback on how other members of the team see the student's leadership and interpersonal skills.
- **Written communications:** Students are taught how to write clearly and concisely, and they must successfully complete a short writing assignment.

Key Developmental Activity

A five-day field training exercise is the culminating activity that provides students with the opportunity to exercise the key skills taught in the course and to successfully accomplish both leadership and mortar tasks and skills that are graduation requirements. Students organize into a mortar platoon, with one student assigned as platoon leader and one as platoon sergeant. Other students are assigned as FDC and Mortar section leaders, and still others are responsible for administratively running the range. Part of the exercise involves having the platoon support an infantry platoon conducting a tactical mission (such as attacking a defending enemy position). The platoon must move and set up positions that allow it to be able to engage the enemy whenever needed, thus requiring close coordination with the attacking platoon and effective decisionmaking. A second part of the exercise is a live-fire exercise, in which the platoon's mortars must hit assigned targets accurately and quickly. The third part requires the platoon to recover after the field exercise—performing after-operations cleaning and maintenance and ensuring that all equipment is accounted for and returned to its proper location.

Students rotate through the leader and other section positions. Each student gets at least one chance to act in a leadership role. The rotating student leaders must develop feasible plans to accomplish the mission, issue orders that clearly and completely communicate the plan, supervise preparations, ensure that team members understand the plan and their role in it, and direct actions during execution of the mission. At the end of each mission segment, the students participate in an AAR. The student platoon members must work together effectively for mission success, and each leader is graded and counseled on his leadership performance.

Army Senior Leader Course

Senior Leader Course Applies to Infantry and Armor

Army noncommissioned officers (NCOs) take a version of the Senior Leader Course as they progress in rank to more senior levels. NCOs are enlisted members, such as corporals (E-4s), sergeants (E-5s), or staff sergeants (E-6s), who have a rank that gives them leadership over other enlisted personnel. Course content and emphasis may differ by job or by job grouping (that is, by occupational branch). Here, we report on a version of the Senior Leader Course—the Maneuver Senior Leader Course (MSLC)—that relates to Armor and Infantry jobs. Veterans in Armor and Infantry jobs make up a substantial proportion of the total of transitioning veterans.

Bottom Line

The MSLC supports the development of many important skills, and key among these are seven valued nontechnical skills from our list:

- Planning
- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Teamwork and team-building
- Managing and supervising the work of others
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Oral communications
- Training others.

While these skills are developed mainly in context of combat operations, the thought processes, systematic approaches, and teamwork and team-building skills developed can transfer to performing civilian-sector planning, management training, problem solving, and supervision functions.

Course Description

The MSLC is a seven-week course designed to build on the skills gained by experienced mid-rank NCOs—staff sergeants (E-6) who have been selected for promotion and sergeants first class (E-7)—during previous assignments and schooling. The goal of the MSLC is to further develop key skills necessary to perform in leadership positions (platoon sergeant/acting platoon leader) in tank, infantry, scout, and mortar platoons. A maneuver platoon is a small organization (20–40 personnel) organized into some combination of sections, squads, and teams, all led by subordinate leaders.

     The MSLC has some lessons that teach general subjects and procedures (such as building Army family teams) and administrative ones (such property accountability/supply management) and introduces some skills necessary to serve as a company's first sergeant (a company

consists of up to 100 Soldiers, and the first sergeant is the company's senior NCO leader). But the course's primary focus is to develop combat-related planning and execution skills. Concepts and techniques for conducting many important types of operations (such as a dismounted platoon attack) are presented, and these are followed by practical exercises in the classroom, in simulators or simulations, and in the field, during which student teams plan and execute these combat missions.

The course is taught in a small-group environment (one instructor for 16 students), which helps facilitate student involvement and individual feedback. Peer teaching is done after the first week, so each student has to prepare and conduct at least two classes. Practical exercises and collaborative planning efforts of small groups (2–8) are used extensively to enhance interaction and learning outcomes. The relatively low instructor-to-student ratio enhances the ability of the instructor to provide formal and informal feedback, promote meaningful discussion, and act as a teacher and facilitator during these exercises and during the course.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Planning, Decisionmaking, and Problem Solving

The central focus of the course is developing the leader skills needed to plan and execute a range of different types of operational combat missions. In numerous exercises, the students are given a specific military situation (including such information as friendly and enemy strength, locations, disposition, terrain) and a mission to accomplish (for example, "Your platoon will attack at 0600 and capture Hill 876 in order to allow B Company to advance"). The students must develop plans and make decisions that would result in successful mission outcomes. Thus, these planning exercises are actually problem-solving exercises that require critical thinking (developing and analyzing feasible options or "courses of action") and decisionmaking (selecting the best option).

The students are taught several processes that provide structured, systematic approaches for accomplishing these functions and promote the development of these skills. In discussions facilitated by the small-group instructor, students assess the strengths and weakness of the plans and decisions and develop alternatives. Often, the time available for planning and decisionmaking is limited. While the planning and decisionmaking are exercised in a military situational context, the specific situations are varied and often complex, and the thought processes and approaches developed by these exercises have broad applicability to civilian settings.

Managing and Supervising the Work of Others

Being able to manage and supervise others is a skill set that students assigned in the planning group leadership positions described above need. In many exercises, student groups and their leaders must execute their plans by walking through execution on a terrain board, on which the students move pieces representing friendly forces and the instructor (or another student group) moves and takes the actions of enemy forces. In these exercises, the student leaders must assess the effects of unforeseen enemy activities or situational changes (for example, the trees the platoon leader had planned to use for cover are not there) on the plan and then decide and direct the appropriate reactions. Thus, these exercises develop quick decisionmaking skills and skills involved in managing and supervising others in a dynamic situation.

Mission execution exercises are also conducted in simulations (where the operation is executed on a computer program), simulators (where the students leaders command and control the operation from a tank or infantry fighting or reconnaissance vehicle simulator), and in the field (where the students are organized into platoons and execute tactical missions on actual terrain).

Teamwork and Team-Building

Most of these planning and problem-solving exercises are done by student groups, and students are rotated as student group leaders. The student groups are given limited time to develop their plans. This requires students to work together as an effective planning team, and the student leaders must effectively manage and supervise the team's collaborative efforts.

Critical Thinking

All the planning exercises require the students to apply critical thinking skills, and some of the problems are quite complex, with no obvious or fully correct solutions. Some lessons feature difficult leadership situations—for example, the unit is in a major training exercise preparing for deployment to Afghanistan and a key subordinate has a family emergency—that require students to develop and discuss various feasible solutions. Moreover, the small-group instructors are trained to implement the Army Learning Model, which involves instructional techniques designed to facilitate thoughtful dialogue and interaction as a way to develop student adaptability and critical thinking skills.

Oral Communication

Almost all lessons require the students to clearly express their ideas, and, in many cases, students are evaluated based on the substance and clarity of their presentation. Additionally, each student must present, and is graded on, numerous formal and informal briefings and presentations. Effective two-way communication is required to promote the discussions needed for effective collaborative planning. Also, as outlined above, the students teach the classes after the first week, so each student is the instructor/facilitator for several lessons, something that exercises presentation and two-way communication skills.

Training Others

Each student is assigned small-group instructor responsibilities for several lessons, and the student's performance is graded. While the students are provided with lesson plans and supporting material, considerable research is necessary to prepare for the lessons and presentation, and teaching skills are necessary to conduct the classes. As with other skills developed during MSLC, the instructors provide feedback and support.

Other Skills and Competencies Taught

The MSLC also teaches some other valued nontechnical skills with a high degree of direct application/level of learning:

- **Written communications:** Students are taught and tested on their understanding of writing fundamentals and are required to write a "personal experience monograph," which must be done to standard as a graduation requirement. Additionally, there are

many requirements to write planning products (such as a course of action for accomplishing a tactical mission), and these must be clear and concise.

- **Conscientiousness and attention to detail:** Many of the planning and administrative documents (for example, five-paragraph operations order, duty rosters) have prescribed formats and content requirements that the student must meet to pass the lesson.

Key Developmental Activity

The five-day field training exercise is the culminating activity that provides students with the opportunity to practice the key skills taught in the course. The class (typically around 180 students) is divided into two groups: One group goes to the field, and one trains in a virtual trainer—the Close Combat Tactical Trainer—that has tank and infantry fighting vehicle simulators. The simulators have crew positions, in which students must function as actual crews would and the simulator acts as an actual vehicle would.

Students organize into platoons, and one student is assigned as platoon leader and one as platoon sergeant. Students rotate through leader position, and each student gets at least one chance to act in a leadership role. The platoon and its rotating leaders prepare for and conduct a series of short, simple simulated combat missions, such as a platoon attack on a moving enemy tank platoon. Student leaders must develop a feasible plan to accomplish the mission, issue an order that clearly and completely communicates the plan, supervise preparations, ensure that team members understand the plan and their role in it, and direct the actions and reactions of the platoon during execution of the mission. The student platoon members must work together effectively for mission success, and each leader is graded and counseled on his leadership performance.

Marine Corps Corporals Course

Bottom Line

The Corporals Course prepares Marines to transition from subordinates to junior leaders. The course accomplishes this by building three valued nontechnical skills:

- Critical thinking
- Teamwork and team-building
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring.

Course Description

The Corporals Course is a three-week-long course given to newly promoted corporals each year. These corporals have 2–4 years of military experience and are preparing to assume intermediate leadership positions in which they will typically lead and manage 3–4 subordinate Marines. The students are drawn from all the Marine Corps' combat, support, and aviation occupational specialties.

The course is divided into three instructional blocks:

- **Administration and communication:** Students learn about the Marine Corps' performance evaluation and promotion system and about professional communications.
- **Leadership:** Students are introduced to the role of the Marine Corps' heritage as a source of motivation and inspiration, the philosophy of combat conditioning, and how to deal with combat-related stress.
- **Warfighting:** Students are given refresher training on Marine Corps offensive and defensive operations, tactical communications, and land navigation and are also introduced to the way the Marine Corps organizes its forces.

Students learn about these subjects through a combination of lectures, practical application sessions, coaching sessions, and guided discussions. Homework is assigned for some subjects.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Critical Thinking

The Corporals Course challenges its students to consider their thought processes and decisions. The course uses the Socratic method—an approach in which the teacher asks a series of questions instead of giving students information directly, forcing students either to get to the desired knowledge by answering the questions or to become more aware of the limits of their knowledge, or both. The goal is to help the students begin to consider the impact of their actions and decisions as junior leaders. Students are presented with disciplinary case studies, ethical dilemmas, and other ambiguous situations they might encounter in their jobs and asked to publicly explain their decisions to their peers and instructors. The group and the

instructors then debate and discuss the decisions. Because the course emphasizes these critical thinking skills in the context of the students' normal jobs, this constitutes only a first step in developing the students' critical thinking skills.

One example of this method of instruction is the social media class. Instructors stated that the class begins with a lecture on the Marine Corps' policy on social media. Students are then broken up into discussion groups moderated by instructors. The instructors present questionable social media posts and ask the students whether they think the given post is within Marine Corps' policy. Students are asked to argue their positions. Instructors occasionally probe students' arguments to help the students gain a greater understanding of their own positions and thought processes.

Teamwork and Team-Building

Because of how the Corporals Course is designed, and because of the composition of the students in it, the course encourages teamwork and team-building skills. Students are drawn from all different occupational specialties in the Marine Corps, which forces students to interact with other students from different communities, each of which has its own distinct way of working. As a result, students must learn to accommodate each other's tendencies and proclivities and rely on each other's different strengths during group assignments. Also, instructors regularly reassign students to different groups, forcing them to constantly adapt and rebuild teams. These teamwork and team-building skills are taught through this indirect method, rather than formally.

One example of teamwork is in the land navigation practical exercise. Students are broken up into teams and given maps, compasses, plotting tools, and a set of coordinates to find. Students must write down a code printed on a box placed at each coordinate to verify that they have successfully navigated to the coordinate. Students must work in teams to plot out a course and to keep track of direction and distance while on the course. To do so, students draw on each other's different skills to accomplish the mission—for example, one student may be better at accurately calculating magnetic azimuths and pace counts, while another student may be more adept at keeping the compass steady as the team walks. The course must be completed before a certain time, thus adding an element of stress to the team environment.

Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring

The Corporals Course introduces students to the use of organizational values, culture, and traditions as a way to motivate and inspire their subordinates. While students enter the Corporals Course already familiar with these values, culture, and traditions, the course presents in-depth examinations of historical events and traditions and how they can be used to inspire and motivate subordinates by linking them to the organization.

For instance, students are taught about the historical role of noncommissioned officer (NCOs)—enlisted members, such as corporals (E-4s), sergeants (E-5s), and staff sergeants (E-6s), who have a rank that gives them leadership over other enlisted personnel. Students are presented with case studies of Marine Corps NCOs exhibiting desirable behavior, often during combat situations. Some case studies involve NCOs who sacrificed themselves to save their units in combat. Other case studies involve NCOs who took decisive actions to keep their units from being destroyed. These stories are historical case studies that instructors say are used to instill a desire to lead and motivate the students' subordinates when the students return to their normal duties after the course is over.

Other Skills and Competencies Taught

Based on a review of the course lessons and discussion with instructors, the following other skills and competencies form our list are also taught:

- The instructors often encourage **continuous learning** in the context of students' own career progression. Course instructors stated that they encourage students to seek more knowledge beyond the curriculum. And instructors ensure that students are given access to course instructional materials, PowerPoint presentations, and reference material to facilitate continuous learning. Instructors also encourage students to seek out off-duty education opportunities, such as college classes.
- **Training others:** Students in the Corporals Course are required to learn how to train others by learning how to conduct short, informal classes on simple topics (for example, how to calculate azimuths on a map, how to program a radio to send encrypted messages). Students are given a subject and a short time to prepare, and are expected to refrain from using notes. Instructors also state that classes are taught using alternative teaching methods (such as the Bob Pike training method, which has students participating more in their own learning—see http://www.bobpikegroup.com/About/Overview), and students are encouraged to emulate those methods when they return to their units.
- **Oral communication:** Finally, instructors note that students learn oral communication as a matter of course. Students are not formally evaluated on public speaking skills, but the nature of the curriculum and assignments given in the Corporals Course is such that students are forced to articulate their thoughts. Guided discussions, required presentations to a group on assigned topics (as described above), and other activities give each student the opportunity to speak publicly on professional topics. Students receive formal classes on oral communication in later courses.

Key Training Event: Foundations of Marine Corps Leadership

The multi-unit Foundations of Marine Corps Leadership course module encompasses many of the key and additional skills taught in the Corporals Course. Students are presented with policies, traditions, and ideas that underpin the organization's concept of what it expects from its leaders at all levels. Students explore these ideas extensively in group discussions, where instructors challenge students to think deeply about how the concepts should be applied to their day-to-day jobs. Students present their ideas orally and respond to questions, debate, and comments in a professional, moderated forum.

Marine Corps Sergeants Course

Bottom Line

The Sergeants Course builds on leadership skills that were introduced in the Corporals Course so that students are able to assume greater positions of responsibility. The course accomplishes this by developing students' skills in

- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Critical thinking
- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring others
- Training others.

Course Description

The Sergeants Course is roughly four weeks long and is given to sergeants of all military occupational specialties in the Marine Corps. Students typically have served 3–6 years in the Marine Corps, have typically led teams of 4–6 subordinates in their previous jobs, and are now leading teams of 13–15 subordinates.

The course is divided into three instructional blocks:

- **Administration and communication:** Students develop their oral and written communications skills, build on their knowledge of Marine Corps administrative procedures and the performance evaluation system, improve their interpersonal communications skills, and are coached on how to interact with the media.
- **Leadership:** Students build on leadership skills learned in the Corporals Course. Students continue to study the Marine Corps' history and how it is used as a motivational tool.
- **Warfighting:** Students are given refresher training on Marine Corps' offensive and defensive operations. Students are also introduced to the Marine Corps' method of planning military operations.

Students learn about these subjects through a combination of lectures, practical application sessions, coaching sessions, and guided discussions. Homework is assigned for some subjects.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Decisionmaking/Decisiveness
Students are required to apply decisionmaking skills (sometimes under time pressure and under uncertainty) in a variety of venues. For example, students are presented with tabletop decision

games in which they are presented with a scenario featuring incomplete information and asked to form a plan of action within a given time.

One such scenario is as follows: A 13-person unit encounters a mob of looters during a patrol through a recently surrendered city. The unit's orders are to avoid interfering with local law enforcement routines unless its own safety is threatened. As the students evaluate the situation, they are then told that one of the people in their unit attempts to stop some of the looters by firing shots into the air, despite knowing that he is to avoid interfering. Students are then given a few moments to decide what to do, and one will be called on to present his or her idea to the class.

The instructors critique the student's course of action and ask why the student chose one decision over another, or what they were most concerned about in their decisionmaking process. The purpose is to help the students consciously understand their own decisionmaking processes and the biases they have, to make them more self-aware.

Critical Thinking

The Sergeants Course uses small-discussion groups and the Socratic method to develop students' critical thinking skills. The Socratic method is an approach in which the teacher asks a series of questions instead of giving students information directly, forcing students to either get to the desired knowledge by answering the questions or become more aware of the limits of their knowledge, or both. Students must explain their thought processes and judgments during decision games and field problems. Game scenarios often feature complex problems and incomplete information. Instructors noted that students are also presented with hypothetical ethical dilemmas and asked to decide on a course of action in a small-discussion-group setting. Students are encouraged to debate, consider, and reconsider their positions during group discussions.

For instance, instructors will present a scenario in which the student is put in charge of running his or her unit's annual physical fitness test. Test scores factor into promotion decisions, and failing scores often spell the end of a career. Students are asked to think about a friend they were promoted ahead of. The students are told that, after the test is complete, the friend comes up to the student and tells him or her that he did not pass and asks the student to do him a favor and change his score before the student reports the scores.

Instructors state that, at this point, one student is called on to present his or her response to the hypothetical friend. The student is asked to explain his or her thinking, how his or her emotions and feelings of loyalty affected their decision, and other questions that enable the student and his or her classmates to think critically about complex issues.

Oral Communication

The Sergeants Course builds on the oral communication skills first introduced in Corporals Course by using both evaluated and informal events to provide structured opportunities for students to practice public speaking. Students must give extemporaneous speeches without preparation and write and deliver speeches using visual aids. Prepared speeches are evaluated and critiqued for content, coherence, delivery, the ability to answer audience questions, and other factors. Finally, transitions between speakers in group speeches are practiced and evaluated.

Although a prepared speech is an evaluated training event in the Sergeants Course, instructors commented that small-group discussions are some of the most important oppor-

tunities for students to improve their oral communications skills. The Socratic method used by instructors to prod and coax students (such as in the tactical and ethical decision games described above) requires students to quickly and clearly articulate their thoughts.

Written Communication

The Sergeants Course continues to build on the written communication skills learned in Corporals Course by requiring students to compose longer and more complex written analytical essays, which are critiqued and refined over several iterations during the course. The course also teaches students to navigate the organization's official correspondence system of written orders for military operations, as well as administrative memos, evaluations, and other forms of written communication. Students are thus exposed to a range of writing styles and purposes.

The main example of this skill cited by instructors was the analytical essays that students must write. Students are given a topic to write about and are given deadlines to write first drafts, rewrites, and final drafts. Instructors read all drafts and comment on everything from content, layout, and grammar to the use of headings and subheadings. All students receive substantial attention on their analytical essays.

Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring Others

The Sergeants Course exposes students to the organizational culture of the Marine Corps and how to make that culture relevant to their subordinates in a way that motivates and inspires them. Case histories of key events in the Marine Corps are examined and discussed in small groups. Furthermore, students are expected to reflect on their place in the organization during group discussions and in written journal entries.

Instructors were unanimous in citing the peer leadership environment of the course as an example of this skill. Instructors observed that, normally, students' ranks play a role in how well they can lead their subordinates. Students do not normally have to rely fully on their persuasive skills. But during the course, students (who are all of the same rank) must rely fully on their ability to gain buy-in from their fellow students to accomplish any task.

Training Others

Course materials state that the Sergeants Course familiarizes students with the Marine Corps' method of developing long-range, annual, and quarterly training plans in lectures, but instructors noted that students do not do any practical application. However, the course does teach students how to constructively provide input and feedback to subordinates during training and then encourages students to do so for one another throughout the course, during moderated after-action reviews.

Key Training Event: Small Unit Leader Exercise

Many of the key skills and competencies taught in the Sergeants Course are encapsulated in a two-day field exercise called the Small Unit Leader Exercise, in which the students take turns acting as the unit's leader. During each rotation, the leader is given a problem to solve, 15 minutes to develop and communicate a plan to the rest of the unit, and 45 minutes to carry out the plan. Problems may range from distinctly military ones, such as ambushing an enemy unit, to more generic ones, such as figuring out how to move people and equipment across an obstacle.

Students are expected to use the military's method for developing quick, improvisational plans, communicate their plans clearly and confidently to their fellow students, and display good judgment, initiative, and ingenuity throughout the exercise.

Marine Corps Career Course

Bottom Line

The Career Course refines existing valued skills already learned in previous courses and prepares students to advise and assist officers in planning and implementing projects and operations. The course does this by developing these valued nontechnical skills from our list:

- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Critical thinking
- Oral and written communication
- Leading, motivating, and inspiring others.

Course Description

The Career Course is a roughly seven-week course that is open to staff sergeants of all military occupational specialties in the Marine Corps. Students have typically served 4–10 years in the Marine Corps, have typically led teams of 13–15 subordinates in their previous jobs, and are now preparing to assist officers in leading organizations of up to 40–60 subordinates.
The course is divided into four instructional blocks:

- **Administration and Communication:** Students are taught how to conduct investigative inquiries, are given further instruction on how to write military correspondence and position papers, and further develop their briefing and media interaction skills.
- **Leadership:** Students are given additional instruction on how to manage stress control and weight control programs, are given additional training on organizational ethics, and are introduced to the Marine Corps' concept of values-based leadership.
- **Warfighting:** Students are introduced to the Marine Corp's problem-solving process and are given more classes to familiarize them with the types of operations a platoon of 30–40 subordinates is supposed to be able to do.
- **Training:** Students are introduced to the Marine Corps' process of developing and continuously improving training curriculum.

Students learn about these subjects through a combination of lectures, practical application sessions, coaching sessions, and guided discussions. Homework is assigned for some subjects.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Decisionmaking/Decisiveness
Students continue to develop the decisionmaking skills learned through on-the-job training and in previous Professional Military Education (PME) courses by participating in group discussions on decisionmaking. The discussions include ethical dilemmas, in which students are presented with a morally ambiguous situation and asked to discuss how they would respond.

Other venues for practicing decisionmaking include tabletop decisionmaking games, in which students make decisions under time pressure and incomplete information. Finally, students are given case studies on various military decisions and participate in guided discussions in which they dissect the circumstances and the decisions made by commanders in those case studies.

Students study the art of decisionmaking by reviewing the decisions that led to the "Lance Corporal Rother incident." This incident occurred in 1988, when a series of hasty decisions during a training exercise resulted in a Marine Corps unit accidentally leaving one of its Marines behind to die in the harsh California desert. Students are given a chance to read the inquiry report and then discuss the incident in moderated discussion groups. Students are asked by instructors to reflect on the factors that played into the leaders' hasty decisionmaking. Students are also asked to reflect on how such an incident might have unfolded in their unit. Instructors stated that consciously thinking about how others have made bad decisions helps students understand the root causes of bad decisionmaking.

Critical Thinking

The Career Course develops the critical thinking skills of its students by challenging students to come up with creative solutions to challenging situations in many contexts. Answers are discussed and debated in groups.

One example cited by instructors is when students are called on to discuss whether they would immediately report a missing weapon (which is a serious issue) to their unit commander or whether they would attempt to find it themselves first. Other situations may involve real-life events that took place in Iraq or Afghanistan. Group discussion and debate require students to fully develop their ideas and understand their own thought processes, much as the above example of the Lance Corporal Rother incident is intended to do.

Oral and Written Communication

The Career Course continues to build on the written communication skills learned in the Corporals Course and Sergeants Course by continuing to require students to write analytical essays that instructors critique. Students are also introduced to Marine Corps administrative correspondence by having to write award recommendations, position papers, and other official correspondence.

Students practice their oral communication skills constantly during the Career Course. Students conduct mock interviews with news media role-players to get them used to speaking cogently while on camera. Group presentations emphasize smooth transitions between briefers.

One example of both skills cited by instructors was the evaluated confirmation brief. A confirmation brief is a proposed plan for a mission that is presented to a commander for approval, or confirmation. In the Career Course, students are given a scenario and are tasked with writing and delivering a confirmation brief. Students are allowed time to write up their brief and then practice giving it. During the examination, student teams present their plans to the instructors, who are acting as their commanders. Instructors stated that they emphasize smooth transitions between presenters on the same team.

Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring Others

Students learn to lead, motivate, and inspire others through the peer leadership required to accomplish tasks and assignments and solve problems while in the course. All students are placed in charge of a training event, and Career Course instructors constantly reshuffle teams

to force students to build rapport with new individuals that are often from other military occupational specialties. This peer leadership is particularly important at this stage in the student's career, because he or she has most likely gotten used to leading subordinates who have innate respect for the student's rank. Requiring students to consciously use their abilities to motivate and inspire team members to accomplish the task at hand is essential to developing their ability to lead.

Physical training is one example that instructors cited as an event where this skill is practiced. Physical training strips away the privileges of rank and requires all students to work together equally. Instructors stated that students work out almost daily with their classmates and that instructors constantly devise contests to stoke competition.

Other Skills and Competencies Taught

Based on a review of the course materials and discussion with the instructors, we have determined that one other high-value nontechnical skill—*continuous learning*—was taught. Instructors stated that they constantly point out the need for students to build on the knowledge learned in the Career Course, much as students did in previous courses. Instructors also stated that they facilitate continuous learning by making course curriculum materials (such as presentation slides and handouts) available to students who want to pass the knowledge learned in the Career Course to the subordinates in their units.

Key Training Event: Orders-Writing Process

The orders-writing process is a planning process students become familiar with during the Career Course. The orders-writing process requires students to demonstrate the critical thinking and good written communication they have learned over a series of classes. Instructors state that the orders-writing process is often unfamiliar to most students and is considered to be a challenging training event, given the complexity of the process and the thoroughness required.

The process begins when students are given a military scenario that must be evaluated—the first step in the orders-writing process. Students must carefully gauge the enemy they are facing, the resources (troops, time, materiel, etc.) they have available, and environmental effects (for example, weather and the availability of daylight or moonlight).

Once students complete the evaluation process, they must formulate a plan and write it clearly and concisely. The plan must be aligned with the resources available; this requires students to work through a prescribed set of considerations, such as articulating the effects the unit is expected to achieve, the plan for moving troops in and out of the area where the operation takes place, radio frequencies, plans for reorganizing troops that become separated from their units, and other minute but important factors. Students also must adhere to strict word definitions (for example, using the word *destroy* means troops are expected to incapacitate 30 percent or more of the enemy's troops and equipment). The written order that results requires significant critical thinking and good writing to ensure the plan is thorough and can be successfully conveyed to large numbers of subordinates.

Marine Corps Advanced Course

Bottom Line

The Advanced Course extends and focuses the skills of gunnery sergeants to prepare them to serve as strategic-level advisors to leaders of medium-size (200+ personnel) organizations. The Advanced Course does this by focusing on the following valued nontechnical skills from our list:

- Decisionmaking/decisiveness
- Training others.

Course Description

The Advanced Course is a roughly seven-week course that is given to gunnery sergeants in the Marine Corps who have approximately 12 years of experience. Instructors noted that in addition to building on existing skills already taught in previous courses, the course takes advantage of the significant on-the-job experience the students themselves have accumulated to teach new skills.

The course is divided into four instructional blocks:

- **Communication and administration:** Students build their knowledge of military justice procedures by learning to conduct formal investigations, how to supervise a lawful search and seizure, and other military justice topics that relate to their ability to advise and assist commanders.
- **Leadership:** Students continue to examine ethical and leadership dilemmas, as in previous courses, and also learn how to help commanders develop strategic guidance for their units.
- **Warfighting:** Students learn about the Marine Corps' process for finding solutions to unstructured problems. Additionally, students build on their knowledge of the Marine Corps' role in operations with other military services.
- **Training**: Students learn about the Marine Corps' method for developing an annual unit training plan.

Key Skills and Competencies Taught

Decisionmaking/Decisiveness

Students build on previous training in decisionmaking by developing their situational awareness and ability to synthesize ideas and information to enable higher-level officers to make sound decisions. Students are also given the skills necessary to help them triage and organize information for presentation to their commanders, who are the ultimate decisionmakers. Although students do not learn any new skills to make their own decisions, it is expected that they already possess the abilities to do so.

The series of classes on the Marine Corps' Planning Process is one example of decisiveness and decisionmaking cited by instructors. Teams of students are given a tactical scenario and a mission (for example, pushing an enemy force out of a city while minimizing civilian casualties). Students must come up with different courses of action to achieve the mission. Students then test out the different courses of action through wargaming and work through the results as a group before deciding on the course of action to take. This process teaches students to deliberately and methodically make effective high-level decisions that can affect the entire organization.

Training Others

The Advanced Course teaches students to manage the training program of a medium-size organization (200+ personnel). Students are taught how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's current ability to carry out its mission. Students then design a training plan that allows the organization to meet the leader's goals and strategic vision. Finally, students are taught how to evaluate the effectiveness of the training plan they put together, to ensure that it does what is intended.

One example of how this skill is applied is in the training instructional block. Students learn how to develop a unit training plan. They are given a scenario with a hypothetical unit, the mission they are supposed to accomplish, and the unit's current training status. Students work in teams to assess strengths and weaknesses of the unit, compiling a written summary of the gaps in training that must be addressed. Students then build a training plan that identifies and schedules training events to address the gaps in a timely manner. Students are also given classes on how to assess how successful their training plan was and how to refine it to make it better the next time, with the end result being that students are exposed to all the tools that will enable them to design and implement a training plan for any medium-size organization.

Other Skills and Competencies Taught

Although these are not an explicit focus of the Advanced Course, instructors stated that the following other skills and competencies from our list are also taught:

- **Oral communication** is practiced regularly, since students participate extensively in small-group discussions, make presentations in front of class, and otherwise continue to practice their oral communication skills. Group presentations continue to be emphasized, as in other Marine Corps' courses, to emulate the style of Marine Corps' briefings, which are often presented in teams to a single commander or small group of individuals.
- **Managing and supervising the work of others:** The Advanced Course begins to focus the attention of students on this skill during lectures and small-group discussions. Students are taught how to design and implement various programs for their organizations, such as the unit's weight control program, stress management intervention program, and other initiatives that will require the students to focus the efforts and resources of others. Students receive lectures and discuss these lessons in small groups. However, instructors noted that students are not given practical application in these areas.
- **Teamwork and team-building** is indirectly emphasized in the Advanced Course through the peer environment. Students come from all military occupational specialties in the

Marine Corps, which exposes them to different perspectives, preferences, and priorities. Instructors noted that this requires students to focus on maximizing the potential contributions of all members to accomplish the assignment or task at hand. Although course documents show that the Advanced Course does not explicitly train or teach its students any additional teamwork or team-building skills, instructors noted that the peer environment indirectly emphasizes these skills.

Key Training Event: Unit Readiness Planning

The Unit Readiness Planning block of classes in the Advanced Course illustrates many of the skills the course teaches. This block of classes requires students to produce a unit training plan for a notional organization. Instructors emphasized that this requires students to produce a high volume of analysis and work in a short time. Students must develop plans and analyses for their leaders in a way that presents all the information that those leaders need to make a decision. Students present plans and analyses in oral presentations that require them to clearly and convincingly convey their thoughts. The Unit Readiness Planning training event introduces students to the strategic world they will work in by virtue of their new ranks and positions in the Marine Corps.

On-the-Job Experience Summary Tables

In this section, we present tables summarizing the nontechnical skills that veterans from Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations utilize on the job. These tables are meant as quick reference guides for veterans interested in the overall criticality level of each skill for each job. The on-the-job stories in the subsequent section elaborate on the table content through examples of how the skills are used on the job.

The first table summarizes criticality for Army Soldiers in five combat arms occupations and ranks; the second table summarizes criticality for Marines in six combat arms occupations and ranks. In both tables, the skills in the far left columns are ordered from most critical to least critical and grouped into tiers based on overall views of criticality from both the Army and the Marine Corps.

Although some skills (those in Tier III) clearly fall at the bottom of the criticality list across both Army and Marine Corps jobs, it is important to note that, on average, our participants reported that *every* skill was at least moderately important and that they used them all at least a few times a week. In other words, even skills that appear at the bottom of the list in the tables are still considered valuable. Thus, veterans should not overlook the Tier II and Tier III skills when considering possible on-the-job experiences that veterans might bring to the civilian workplace.

Why are there fewer ranks (columns) listed in the experience tables than in the course tables?

All military personnel are required to serve for a minimum number of years; the number of years varies, but in most cases they will have achieved at least the E-4 rank by the time they transition out of the service. As a result, we focused our on-the-job experience stories on the ranks of the majority of those who would be transitioning out (E-4s and up). Unfortunately, we were not able to include E-7s in our pilot effort (or E-6s for one Army occupation) because they were too few in number at the locations where we piloted our methodology.

Why are there more skills listed in the experience tables than in the course tables?

During the course review process, feedback from reviewers and discussions with subject-matter experts suggested including three additional skills: adaptability, behaving ethically, and situational awareness.

What are the meanings of the various shapes in the experience tables?

The shapes indicate the criticality of the skill in each job and ranks. During our data collection, service members evaluated how frequently they use the skill in their job and how important it is to their job. They evaluated this in two ways. First, participants selected the top five most frequent and top five most important skills on their job (referred to as the *Top Five* selections).

Second, participants rated each skill on how frequently they use the skill in their job and how important it is to their job (referred to as the *Ratings*). Ratings ranged from 0 or 1 (never/not at all important, respectively) to 5 (all the time/extremely important). We combined these four types of evaluations to determine the level of criticality for each skill.[1] We included three levels: top most critical (skills at the top of the list after the four evaluations were combined), next most critical (skills that were in the middle of the list), and the remaining critical skills (skills at the bottom of the list, but still rated on average as moderately important or occurring a few times a week). Solid boxes represent top most critical, hollow boxes represent next most critical, and a star represents the remaining critical skills:

■ = Top most critical skills

□ = Next most critical skills

⊀ = Remaining critical skills.

How were the tiers formed and the skills ordered in the experience tables?

The skills in the tables are ordered based on the criticality results we found across both the Army and Marine Corps jobs that we examined, as discussed in the previous section. We identified tiers by grouping skills into three categories, again based on the overall criticality information that we obtained across both the Army and Marine Corps. Tier I includes skills that overall were primarily rated as top most critical or next most critical. Tier II includes skills that overall showed more variation in criticality ratings. Tier III includes the skills that remained. It is important to highlight that even though the Tier III skills were at the bottom of the list, on average, they were all still evaluated to be at least moderately important and used at least a few times a week in every job we examined; in some cases, ratings of importance and frequency were even higher than that. Therefore, the labeling of "remaining critical skills" is deliberate, and veterans should not disregard these skills as not being relevant or practiced in the jobs we examined.

Does every veteran have the skills listed in the tables as top most critical for the job?

No. The degree to which the skills marked as "top most critical" have been mastered by individual job applicants will depend on a wide range of factors, including the applicant's aptitude for and interest in the skill and the opportunity they have had to practice and perfect the skill while serving in that military occupational specialty (MOS).[2] For those skills that are most critical, members of that specialty *typically* will have had multiple opportunities to practice the skill, and performing the skill effectively is considered a critical part of the job. Nevertheless, opportunities to practice the skill will still vary within specialties, depending on the type of assignments one holds. Because there is the potential for such variability in individual experiences and proficiencies, even within the same specialty, the onus is still you to determine whether you have the skills at the appropriate levels to make you attractive to civilian employers. The more you can describe experiences that demonstrate your ability level and your opportunity to apply the skill on a regular basis, the more convincing you will be to a civilian employer.

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[1]   We calculated the proportion of people selecting each skill as *Top Five*, then we averaged the frequency and importance proportions. We calculated the mean importance and frequency ratings for each skill, then averaged frequency and importance *Ratings*. We then combined these two evaluations, with the *Top Five* selections weighted more heavily than the *Ratings*. For more details on this process, see our companion report, available at www.rand.org/t/RR1919.

[2]   Conversely, and for similar reasons, just because a skill is found at the bottom of the list in the table does not mean that an applicant has not mastered it.

Summary of Nontechnical Skills Utilized in Army On-the-Job Experiences

Tier	Nontechnical Skill	E-4 (mid-level personnel)		E-5 (mid- to senior-level personnel)		E-6 (senior-level personnel)
		Infantry (n≈107)	Armor (n≈20)	Infantry (n≈41)	Armor (n≈35)	Infantry (n≈23)
I	Decisionmaking/decisiveness	■	■	■	■	■
	Being dependable and reliable	■	■	■	■	■
	Critical thinking	■	■	■	■	■
	Leading, motivating, and inspiring others	■	■	■	■	■
	Training others	■	■	■	■	■
	Oral communication	■	■	■	■	■
	Managing/supervising the work of others	⅄	■	■	■	■
	Situational awareness	■	■	■	□	■
II	Teamwork and team-building	■	■	■	□	□
	Adaptability	□	■	■	□	□
	Operating safely	□	■	■	■	⅄
	Handling work stress	■	□	■	□	⅄
	Continuous learning	■	■	□	⅄	⅄
	Conscientiousness and attention to detail	□	□	⅄	⅄	□
III	Behaving ethically	⅄	⅄	□	⅄	□
	Interpersonal skills	⅄	⅄	⅄	⅄	□
	Persistence	⅄	⅄	⅄	⅄	⅄
	Project planning	⅄	⅄	⅄	⅄	⅄
	Written communication	⅄	⅄	⅄	⅄	⅄

NOTES: ■ = Top most critical skills; □ = Next most critical skills; ⅄ = Remaining critical skills.

Summary of Nontechnical Skills Utilized in Marine Corps On-the-Job Experiences

Tier	Nontechnical Skill	E-4 (mid-level personnel)		E-5 (mid- to senior-level personnel)		E-6 (senior-level personnel)	
		Infantry (n≈43)	Artillery (n≈46)	Infantry (n≈49)	Artillery (n≈26)	Infantry (n≈22)	Artillery (n≈18)
I	Decisionmaking/decisiveness	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Being dependable and reliable	■	■	■	□	■	■
	Critical thinking	■	■	■	■	■	⋏
	Leading, motivating, and inspiring others	■	□	■	■	■	□
	Training others	□	■	■	■	□	■
	Oral communication	□	■	□	⋏	■	□
	Managing/supervising the work of others	□	■	⋏	■	■	■
	Situational awareness	□	□	□	■	□	□
II	Teamwork and team-building	■	■	⋏	□	⋏	■
	Adaptability	□	⋏	■	⋏	■	■
	Operating safely	⋏	■	⋏	□	⋏	■
	Handling work stress	□	■	⋏	□	⋏	■
	Continuous learning	□	■	⋏	□	⋏	□
	Conscientiousness and attention to detail	□		□	□	■	□
III	Behaving ethically	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏
	Interpersonal skills	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏
	Persistence	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏
	Project planning	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏
	Written communication	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏	⋏

NOTES: ■ = Top most critical skills; □ = Next most critical skills; ⋏ = Remaining critical skills.

On-the-Job Experience Vignettes

The on-the-job experience vignettes use concrete *examples* (which we also refer to as *stories* or *vignettes*) to show how on-the-job experiences can develop skills that are transferable to the civilian workplace in terms civilian employers understand.[1] The stories included here illustrate real experiences of service members in Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupational specialties applying essential nontechnical skills on the job.

The on-the-job experience vignettes are organized by skill (or group of skills). Before each set of vignettes is a discussion of the skill (or skill group) highlighted in the vignettes, organized as follows:

- **Bottom line:** A summary of the significance of the skill (or group of skills) in combat arms jobs (as shown graphically in the summary tables) and generalizability to other jobs.
- **Definition:** A definition of the skill or skills.
- **Overview:** A succinct discussion of how these stories might be relevant in civilian employment contexts, even if the individual circumstances might initially appear very different.

After this introduction, the vignettes for the skill (or group of skills) in question are presented. These vignettes are derived from stories we collected about on-the-job experiences from nearly 300 Soldiers and Marines. When determining which vignettes to present for a given skill, we selected those that complemented each other by representing different facets of the skill, and those that were considered most typical by our subject-matter experts. We then ordered the vignettes roughly by our view of how well they would resonate with civilian workplace, with the most relevant ones presented first. Each vignette follows the same format:

- **Title**: Named to highlight the punch line of the story.
- **Story Outline:** A succinct account of the story, outlined according to the situation in which the story takes place, the behavior or action that was taken, and the result that occurred after the skills were applied.
- **Full Story:** A more comprehensive version of the story written in paragraph form describing the details of the experience.
- **Source:** The storyteller's service, job type (and corresponding military occupational specialty [MOS] code), and occupational level when the story occurred. Note, however, that although a story may have been experienced by someone at a high rank, it may still be applicable to individuals at ranks lower than that. In fact, in most cases, when reviewing these stories with senior service members serving as our subject-matter experts, these

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[1] Throughout the descriptions, the term *skills* generally refers to nontechnical skills, unless specified otherwise.

experts evaluated the stories as likely to occur across multiple ranks. Thus, many of the stories are not rank-specific.

Why are the examples included in the on-the-job experience vignettes important?

People usually understand concepts better when they are shown ideas through examples rather than only told about them. The vignettes depict for civilian employers the unfamiliar notion of military work in a way that seems more similar to civilian work..

Employers can more easily get a sense for your experience and proficiency in a skill when you describe an example of how you practiced or demonstrated it on the job and how you succeeded at it. Examples are much more believable and understandable than simply telling an employer that you possess the skill. Read the examples we provide here and think of whether you have had similar experiences in your job that illustrate the same types of skills. If so, describe those experiences to employers using your own examples.

What should I be aware of when reading these stories?

First, in an effort to bridge the disconnect between military and civilian language, we included military jargon with accompanying descriptions for a civilian audience. That is, we included military terms and specific types of equipment, etc., so that veterans reading the stories can relate to the story and recognize important details about the context in which the story occurred, and we also included brief descriptions of these military-spefic terms and details so that civilian employers could also follow the story. You should keep in mind that employers likely will not be familiar with military jargon or the names of specific pieces of equipment. Just as we have done in the vignettes, you should explain military-specific terms and names each time you mention them in your résumé or during an interview. To help cut back on the amount of explanation needed, we suggest mentioning such terms or names only when it helps illustrate how you used a skill. In many cases, you may not need to use military jargon at all.

Second, a continual challenge that we encountered throughout the process of documenting on-the-job experiences was to balance simplicity, without oversimplifying, and to convey richness, without adding too much extraneous or technical detail. When talking with employers, you will also need to strike the same balance. Give just enough information to demonstrate your competence, show you have had opportunities to use the skill and how you succeeded at using them, and illustrate how the skill might be transferable to the civilian workplace. Take care, however, to avoid overwhelming employers with irrelevant information. Keep the purpose of your story clear. To do this, we recommend structuring your examples in the same fashion as those we present here. Provide a succinct account of the experience, focusing on the situation in which it took place, the behavior you demonstrated or action that you took, and the result. Then follow up with more specifics and description as needed.

Third, these vignettes are meant only as examples. Your own experiences may very likely differ from these examples, even if you have had many opportunities to demonstrate a particular skill and you are in one of the focal MOSs we studied. As a result, these examples are not meant to be lifted wholesale as if they were your experiences. Instead, they are intended to assist you in generating your own stories for use on your résumé and in conversations with potential employers. If you are working with a career counselor or other employment professional, ask them for support in making the most out of these stories by tailoring them to your own circumstances.

Decisionmaking/Decisiveness and Critical Thinking

Bottom Line

Decisionmaking/decisiveness tops the list of Tier I (top most critical) skills needed on the job at all job levels for both the Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations examined. *Critical thinking*, a closely related skill area, was also among the most strongly endorsed critical skills.

Both of these nontechnical skills are conceptually similar, and the stories for each have considerable overlap. Therefore, we present examples for both skills together.

Definitions

Decisionmaking/decisiveness: Chooses the best solution or option in a timely and decisive manner, even in ambiguous situations and without assistance when appropriate. *(related terms: assertive, authoritative, resolving)*

Critical thinking: Actively and skillfully conceptualizes, applies, analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates information to formulate options and to reach a conclusion. Demonstrates mental agility and the ability to reason, anticipate obstacles, identify problems, locate, gather, and organize relevant information, generate alternatives, evaluate and analyze information, and apply what is learned. *(related terms: analytic thinking, reasoning, argumentation, interpretation, problem solving)*

Overview

Although the consequences of ambiguous situations in most civilian occupations are not as grave as they are in the military (i.e., death), ambiguous situations do arise, and they can have important consequences for an organization's bottom line. The stories below illustrate how military service members may often find themselves in uncertain circumstances, faced with difficult issues that demand thoughtful consideration and effective ways to respond. A military veteran may have had many similar opportunities to practice handling ambiguity during his or her time in service.

These examples illustrate themes such as the importance of seeking out important information, synthesizing multiple inputs, generating possible courses of action, and selecting and implementing the best course of action. In some of the stories, the circumstances allowed time for extensive research and deep analysis about a given challenge (*Example A: Innovative Techniques for Avoiding Roadside Explosives*); these stories illustrate a more deliberate decisionmaking process, known as risk management, that is widely used across the military services to help organizations and individuals balance risk (cost) with mission benefits.[2] In other stories, the

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[2]   Risk management is a five-step process: (1) identify hazards, (2) assess hazard to determine risk, (3) develop controls and make risk decisions, (4) implement controls, and (5) supervise and evaluate (Army Techniques Publication 5-19, *Risk Management*, Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, April 14, 2014).

circumstances allowed only for a brief pause to analyze the relevant factors before requiring immediate action (*Example C: After Being Attacked, Maintaining Clear Thinking*); these stories highlight the importance of arriving at swift and firm conclusions when time is of the essence. Although the circumstances and target of analysis will certainly differ between a military and civilian context, the cognitive activities associated with critical thinking and decisionmaking are similar.

Vignettes

A. Innovative Techniques for Avoiding Roadside Explosives (IEDs): Baby Powder and Glow Sticks [Army]

Situation: My battalion was deployed in a high-risk area with many roadside IEDs (i.e., a bomb constructed and deployed in unconventional ways).

Behavior: My platoon leader and I conducted a risk assessment and then developed novel techniques of avoiding IEDs: having Soldiers walk in a single-file line (instead of a "V" formation) and use innovative methods to mark safe pathways (baby powder during the day and glow sticks inside water bottles during the night).

Result: My platoon did not sustain a single IED casualty over the course of the nine-month deployment, so our methods were successful. For comparison, our battalion had upward of 30 amputees.

My team conducted most of our missions on foot in an area flush with IEDs. My platoon leader and I formed several strategies to keep our Soldiers safe. First, we located a mine sweeper to detect metal underground. Then we instructed our Soldiers to walk single-file instead of in the usual "V" formation to lessen the chances that a Soldier would trip an IED. During the day, we used baby powder to mark safe pathways, because the enemy wouldn't know what it was for and it blows away after a day or so. At night, we used glow sticks inside water bottles to mark safe pathways. Our methods were ultimately effective. My platoon was the only one with zero amputees, while my battalion had upward of 30. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, E-6]

B. Orient, Observe, Decide, Act [Marine Corps]

Situation: My team was conducting a squad-supported training exercise with real ammunition, which meant that we had many different support teams working with us.

Behavior: To overcome various obstacles, I analyzed each situation, selected the best course of action, and appropriately positioned my Marines.

Result: We successfully completed the exercise by clearing the enemy and setting up a defensive position.

My team was conducting a live-fire maneuver with multiple weapon systems and support teams. Our mission was to take down an enemy defensive position. I was to receive an order, prepare my squad accordingly, and coordinate with machine gun and mortar teams. But I was also receiving updates from evaluators aimed at making the situation more difficult, so I had to constantly adapt and make quick decisions about where to position the teams and how to best use our assets. For instance, to demolish a wire obstacle between us and the enemy, I had my squad provide cover for the engineers so they could reach the obstacle and blow it up. For every decision, I followed the same steps: orient, observe, decide, and act. Using these strategies to actively problem solve, we were able to clear the enemy and hastily set up a defensive position. [Source: 0311 Infantry Marine, Squad Leader, E-4]

C. After Being Attacked, Maintaining Clear Thinking: Elderly Women in the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time [Army]

Situation: My platoon (approximately 30 Soldiers) was patrolling the main supply route, when we were attacked by Iraqi civilians. Once we reached safety, my role was to stand security while others in my unit assessed the damage. I soon saw a figure approach us and, because it was night, I did not know if this individual was the enemy or not.

Behavior: Instead of acting rashly, I evaluated the behavior of the figure and immediately instructed our translator to talk to the person to determine her intentions.

Result: The figure ended up being an elderly woman who was lost. Even though the atmosphere was extremely tense, because we had just been attacked, I prevented the death of an innocent by thinking calmly.

During a deployment in Iraq, I patrolled our main supply route with 30 other Soldiers supporting my Stryker brigade [Strykers are eight-wheeled, armored vehicles]. It was Ramadan, so there were more people than usual walking through the streets. Some angry locals approached the Strykers aggressively. We repeatedly told them to stay back. However, they did not stop advancing. We were trying to deal with this situation when two of our vehicles got hit by rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). The loud blast from the explosion to my Stryker made my ears ring, and my body was stunned. Our platoon proceeded through the hostile area, though, and when we reached a safer zone, we dismounted from [exited] our vehicles to inspect equipment damage and record any injuries. I was tasked with observing our surroundings and maintaining security. Shortly after I began my watch, I saw a figure walking towards us from about 100 meters away. The darkness of the night made it difficult to see, so I was unsure whether or not the individual was dangerous. Still shaken up from the RPG, I was very tense, and my initial inclination was to shoot. Instead, I chose to analyze the situation to best inform my next course of action. The Rules of Engagement [military authorization defining the circumstances in which forces may fire at the enemy] state that I cannot fire unless I have probable cause. The advancing individual had not yet demonstrated aggressive intent, so I made the decision to hold back. I called out "stop," but the person kept moving forward. I attached my sights [aiming optic] to my weapon and turned on my white light [flashlight weapon accessory] to get a better look. The individual was an elderly woman, and her behavior appeared harmless. She could still pose a threat, however, as a suicide bomber. Life or death (for us and them) can be determined in a matter of seconds. Immediately, I decided to notify our interpreter, who yelled at her to walk in a different direction, which she eventually did. She was just at the wrong place at the wrong time. By thinking through and evaluating my circumstances, I was able to come to a solution that ultimately prevented the death of an innocent bystander. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Rifleman, rank unknown][3]

D. Analyzing Multiple Factors: Selecting a Camp Site During Cold Weather Training [Marine Corps]

Situation: My battery conducted a cold weather training in Bridgeport, California.

Behavior: I evaluated my surroundings based on a few key variables and selected the optimal camp site and gear distribution.

Result: None of my Marines developed hypothermia.

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[3]   The rank of this source is unknown; however, subject-matter experts evaluated this story to apply to someone from the rank of E-1 to E-4.

My battery was conducting cold weather training in Bridgeport, California, where the Mountain Warfare Training Center is located. During a month-long training event, we had a three-day/three-night survival exercise. Each fire team of four Marines received only two sets of cold weather gear (e.g., sleeping bag), so two Marines had to share one set of cold weather gear. As the Local Security Chief, it was my responsibility to identify and select the most suitable place to set up camp. Camp site selection is very important. In evaluating the options, there were many variables to consider. For instance, we needed a place with enough snow, so that we would be able to dig out space large enough to escape the wind. We also needed a place close to a water supply, so we wouldn't have to melt snow, which takes time and heat. After doing a brief analysis of these variables, I chose a suitable space. I also decided on a plan for how to distribute the limited gear. While we rotated and/or shared these resources, I also examined which individuals were best suited to withstand the cold and gave these individuals the gear for shorter durations. Finally, I identified alternative methods to keep warm (e.g., I covered myself in pine needles). As a result of my careful deliberation regarding camp site selection and gear distribution, none of the Marines in our battery got hypothermia. The Marines in another unit that was deeper in the valley had seven cases of hypothermia. [Source: 0811 Artillery Marine, Local Security Chief, E-4]

E. When Understaffed, Devising a Strategy to Repel Enemy Forces [Marine Corps]

Situation: During a training exercise, my platoon of about 40 Marines was tasked with forming a defense against an opposing force. We were understaffed.

Behavior: I analyzed our best course of action and chose a defensive posture that was highly flexible. When the attack came, I provided the teams with further instructions as appropriate.

Result: The Chief in charge of the opposing force determined that we had successfully repelled their attack.

During a training exercise in Twentynine Palms [a military facility in California], my unit was tasked with occupying and defending an oversized base. We had a platoon of 40 Marines, but the base could have easily fit four platoons of 160 Marines. Later, we received intel [information] to expect an attack from a notional opposing force [other Marines acting as enemy combatants] with Armored Personnel Carriers [APCs; similar to tanks], machine guns, and gas. I determined the best course of action by analyzing the layout of the base, the expected method of attack, and the available resources (equipment and personnel). Taking these factors into account, I decided it was best for my teams of Marines to build a defensive posture that was highly flexible. For example, I had a medium machine gun dismounted on the tallest tower so we could provide general watch of the area, I had a QRF [Quick Reaction Force] man a Humvee [light truck] with a 50-caliber machine gun to go wherever it was needed, and I had six guys on the main gate with me to repel an APC. I devised this plan and then took it to the platoon sergeant for review. After it was approved, I briefed my teams on their responsibilities. When the attack came, I provided the teams with further tasks and instructions as appropriate. As a result, the Chief in charge of the opposing force made the call that we had successfully repelled the enemy based on our reaction and how well coordinated we were. Had I not assessed the situation and determined that highly flexible concentrated precision forces were our best course of action, our defense would not have had the guidance or an adequate understanding of the larger situation to properly react. [Source: 0814, Assistant Platoon Leader/Local Security Chief, E-5]

Being Dependable and Reliable

Bottom Line

Being *dependable and reliable* is the second-highest-rated skill in Tier I (top most critical skills) required on the job for the Army and Marine Corps for almost all job levels in the combat arms occupations examined.

Definitions

Being dependable and reliable: Diligently follows through on commitments and consistently meets deadlines; behaves consistently and predictably; is reliable, responsible, and dependable in fulfilling obligations. *(related terms: getting the activity done)*

Overview

Dependability and reliability are qualities that every employer desires in an employee, from the most senior to the most junior levels. Unfortunately, in the civilian world, not all employees recognize the importance of being dependable and reliable. In contrast, in the military, being dependable and reliable is viewed as so fundamental that it is instilled as part of the culture. Its importance is so ingrained that many military service members consider it an *implicit task*— so important that it simply need not be stated. Nevertheless, although these skills may seem elementary to many military personnel, they are one of the hallmarks distinguishing a high-performing employee from that of a low-performing employee in the civilian world.

Below are some examples of military personnel excelling in these areas in ways that civilian employers desire. For example, one shows how the military demands that an individual live up to basic expectations for dependability on the job (*Example A: Every Day I Do What I Am Supposed to Do*), and in another, service members go above and beyond to make sure their work is of high quality (*Example C: Arriving Early and Staying Late to Get the Job Done*). Both vignettes illustrate how a high degree of accountability is inherent in military culture. This ingrained expectation affords civilian employers confidence that veterans are likely to complete essential tasks without micromanagement.

Vignettes

A. Every Day I Do What I Am Supposed to Do: It's Really Pretty Simple [Army]

Situation: I have daily responsibilities.

Behavior: I use my time wisely and plan ahead so that my fellow Soldiers can depend on me. Before meetings, I arrive ten minutes early in the proper uniform with a pen and paper in hand and ready to work.

Results: I consistently fulfill my duties to the best of my abilities.

In my nine and a half years in the Army, I never called in sick or missed a day of work. I am committed to my responsibilities and fulfilling the needs of leadership and the Army. I use my time wisely and plan ahead

so that my fellow Soldiers can depend on me. I arrive ten minutes early to meetings in the proper uniform with a pen and paper in hand and ready to work. I do this every day—not just when it's convenient or easy. I wouldn't and shouldn't have a job if I couldn't do what I am supposed to do. It's really pretty simple. [Source: 11B Army Soldier, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

B. Maintain Accountability for Personnel and Equipment [Marine Corps]

Situation: Along with my men, I was responsible for preparing and transporting our High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launcher by air and then meeting the basic needs of men and equipment while establishing our presence until the rest of my unit arrived.

Behavior: I fulfilled my obligations by following protocol.

Result: The launcher arrived to the base without issues, and we were ready to perform our mission when the rest of the unit arrived three days later.

In preparation for a field operation, I was in charge of transporting our High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launcher [rocket launcher mounted on a vehicle], by air, from Camp Pendleton [in San Diego County, California] to Twentynine Palms [in San Bernardino County, California]. The launcher is both very large and costs millions of dollars, so it was important that I carefully followed all of the necessary procedures. Before leaving Camp Pendleton, I prepared the launcher for transport by having the team check that all of the antennas, communications, and roadside gear were in place and working. Then, in order for the launcher to be able to fit inside the C-130 (aircraft), we had to "press the launcher," which involves deflating the tires, taking off the antennas and mounts, etc. After successfully loading the launcher and 30 minutes of flight, we arrived in Twentynine Palms. We then waited for three days until the rest of the unit arrived. There was no direct leadership present during these three days, but I continued to make sure that all basic needs were met for my men and the equipment. For instance, I am responsible for logistics (e.g., where my men eat and sleep), as well as maintaining accountability to leadership (continual reporting of our status to the chain of command back at base). If I had not followed protocol and performed my duties, we could have lost or damaged equipment and/or personnel. Instead, as a result of my diligence, the launcher and personnel arrived without issue and were ready to perform our mission when the rest of the unit arrived three days later. [Source: 0811 Artillery Marine, Section Chief, E-5]

C. Arriving Early and Staying Late to Get the Job Done [Army]

Situation: I was tasked with briefing an operations order to the battalion commander [Senior Leadership], which is an activity I had never completed before.

Behavior: I arrived early, stayed late, and didn't take lunch to complete the briefing by the deadline.

Results: The battalion commander was satisfied with my work.

I was told I would be briefing the battalion commander (a colonel) [senior leadership] on an operations order [order to direct the conduct of military operations] in less than one week. I had never done anything like this before and I wasn't given much instruction. I was nervous. To get the job done, I focused my time. I came in early to work, worked through lunch, and stayed late to make sure the briefing was accomplished. No one checked in with me until the day of the briefing. I relayed my plan to the battalion commander and answered his questions. I delivered the briefing according to deadline, and the battalion commander was satisfied with my work. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, Operations NCO, E-5]

Leading, Motivating, and Inspiring Others to Accomplish Organizational Goals

Bottom Line

Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals is a Tier I skill and among the four most critical skills needed on the job for the Army and Marine Corps at nearly all job levels in the combat arms occupations examined. Marine Artillery (08), for which *leading, motivating, and inspiring others* was evaluated as somewhat less critical, is the only exception.

Definitions

Leading, motivating, and inspiring others to accomplish organizational goals: Influences and inspires others by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the organization's tasks and goals and improve the organization's capabilities; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situations; offers career development opportunities to subordinates; mentors others' skills, abilities, attitudes, future intentions, and career issues; recognizes achievements; sets an example for others; encourages other's self-assessment and enhancement of skills in an activity; and promotes training, learning, and preparing for the future. Generates enthusiasm for task objectives and team accomplishment through standard and creative influence techniques. Recognizes contributions and achievements of all types, among people in high- and low-visibility activities alike. Rewards employees for high performance. Sets an example for others by acting in ways that are consistent with organizational goals and objectives. *(related terms: motivating, inspiring, mentoring, encouraging, developing)*

Overview

In the civilian marketplace, leadership is a highly valued skill, but one in which most civilian personnel (especially more junior ones) have little experience. In contrast, the military provides unique levels of responsibility and opportunities to practice leadership behaviors very early in one's career. The examples below are intended to illustrate some of those responsibilities and opportunities.

Although some of the examples may seem foreign to the civilian world, such as a leader's interest in an individual's physical fitness and personal life (*Example D: Making Fitness Requirements; Example E: Maintaining Force Readiness),* many of these stories demonstrate key themes that are transferable to civilian employment, such as articulating a future vision, stimulating action in others, and paying attention to individual differences. Furthermore, these stories highlight veterans' abilities to navigate different types of social situations to produce the desired results. For example, sometimes leadership requires an individual to be in the spotlight (*Example C: Assuming Command When Necessary*), and other times it requires working in the shadows (*Example B*: *Leading from Behind the Scenes*). Taken collectively, these stories show the

art and science of influencing people to act in ways that positively contribute to accomplishing larger goals of the organization.

Vignettes

A. Listening to Frustration and Providing Meaning: An Unanticipated Second Month in the Field and Only an Eight-Hour Break to Wash, Repack, and Get Haircuts After the First Month [Marine Corps]

Situation: While about to complete a month-long training exercise away from home, we were notified that, upon completion of this exercise, we had to take the place of another unit and immediately go out on an unanticipated second month-long exercise. The Marines in my section were already exhausted from our training and visibly frustrated by the change.

Behavior: I allowed my Marines to let out their frustration by venting, and then explained to them that our selection was an indication that our superiors trust us and believe that we were up to the challenge.

Result: By listening to their (understandable) frustration and providing additional meaning to the change, the morale of my Marines improved, and we performed the next month of training successfully.

During the third week of a month-long training exercise, my section of nine Marines and I were exhausted from the training and ready to go home. We later found out that another team had an incident that resulted in their removal from the training. As a consequence, we were assigned to their duties. We were instructed to finish our training and then go back to our home base (Twentynine Palms) for about 8 hours to wash our equipment, get haircuts, repack, and head back out for another month. My team members were extremely frustrated and visibly disgruntled. I took it upon myself to try to generate enthusiasm. I've gathered a "toolbox" of different leadership styles and strategies throughout my time in the Marine Corps by watching other leaders, starting with my drill instructor in boot camp. In this case, I knew that my guys would benefit from letting out their frustration, so I allowed them to rant to each other and to me about the situation. I then tried to motivate them by explaining the reason why we were doing this. It wasn't just bad luck or bad timing: We were chosen to replace the other team because our superiors knew that we were up to the challenge. They had other batteries to choose from, but they chose ours for a reason. By talking the Marines through the situation and encouraging them, I was able to get my fellow Marines to "embrace the suck," as we like to call it, and get through the next month of training successfully. [Source: 0811, Section Chief, E-5]

B. Leading from Behind the Scenes: Developing an Alternative and Talking Privately [Marine Corps]

Situation: I was working as an advisor to a new platoon commander [the officer in charge] who wanted to create a training plan with tasks that the platoon was already proficient in.

Behavior: I devised an alternative and spoke privately with the commander to explain the rationale of why the plan I presented was more appropriate.

Result: The alternate plan was accepted and worked effectively. The platoon was prepared for the upcoming deployment months in advance of the platoon commander's timeline.

I was working as an advisor to a new platoon commander [the officer in charge] to conduct a mission-essential task before a deployment. Creating mission-essential tasks involves breaking them down into

different segments, fitting them into a specified timeline, and creating instructions for how to accomplish the mission. In this case, the mission-essential task was a training schedule. The platoon commander wanted to engage in tasks he learned were important in his formal schooling, such as going out to the range to shoot or take weapons apart and put them back together. However, these were basic tasks, and the platoon already had significant experience in completing them. So, instead, I developed a different plan that would give the platoon an opportunity to further develop their skill sets and presented it to the platoon commander in private and explained why this was a better alternative. For example, I suggested having the platoon work as a team to identify the terrain and the corresponding appropriate course of action in a variety of circumstances, which was a task the platoon didn't have much experience with. The outcome of this informal, one-on-one conversation was that the platoon commander adopted my approach, and we were able to train the platoon to the overall standards three months faster than the plan in the platoon commander's original timeline. The platoon commander also acquired a greater understanding of the platoon's overall capabilities, including their strengths and weaknesses. [Source: 0369 Infantry Marine, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

C. Assuming Command When Necessary [Army]

Situation: During a training exercise where my platoon was tasked with conducting a raid on a village, my team leader and many of our Soldiers "notionally" died.

Behavior: Because we had lost Soldiers, I took the initiative and assumed command. After assessing the situation, I chose to set up security around the building and wait for additional personnel to arrive before proceeding. After more Soldiers joined, we continued and completed the mission.

Result: Our platoon did not suffer any more "notional" deaths, and we completed the mission.

Over the course of a training exercise, my platoon was tasked with conducting a raid on a village. The raid involved clearing multiple buildings [checking and securing the safety of a structure]. On our first building, the platoon stacked up [positioned] along the side of the building. A few Soldiers set up security and kept watch for enemy forces while our team leader checked the door. The door was unlocked, so we gradually trickled inside. After walking through the rooms and evaluating the first floor, as directed by our team leader, we determined it was safe and secure. As our team leader steadily walked upstairs to the second floor the building, an enemy combatant "notionally" killed him and a number of other Soldiers, requiring a reorganization of responsibilities for our platoon. Those who remained were of equal rank, but I took the initiative and assumed command. When we approached the next building, I analyzed the situation. I concluded that, because we had lost our team leader and needed more Soldiers, it was best to instruct the platoon to set up security around the building and wait for an additional team to arrive before entering. After more Soldiers joined the platoon, we began to clear the building. I directed the flow of our movement, such as the timing for when to walk through the upstairs or go down the first-floor hallway, based on the structure of the building and any noises I could hear within the building. Ultimately, my calculations and decisions proved useful, as our platoon did not suffer any more "notional" casualties, and we completed the mission. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Rifleman, E-4]

D. Making Fitness Requirements: Variety, Dedication, and Personalized Coaching

Situation: I was tasked with helping some overweight and unmotivated Marines make the weight require-
ment to ensure they could stay in the Marine Corps.

Behavior: To inspire them to lose the weight, I set up events, nutritional programs, cooking classes, and led
fitness courses for their benefit. I also met with each of them individually to affirm their impor-
tance to the Marine Corps as a whole and address their individual needs.

Result: I ended up having an 88 percent success rate.

I was a Body Composition Program Lead Coordinator, which was the secondary billet [position assignment] to my job. In the military, there are weight requirements based on height. My main task was to help Marines meet this requirement. The Marines in the program were anywhere from 1 pound overweight to 50 pounds overweight. They had six months to make the weight standards, or they would be required to separate from the Marine Corps. It was challenging to inspire these Marines, because none of them wanted to be there. To generate enthusiasm and encourage their level of self-assessment, I set up events, nutritional programs, and cooking classes and led fitness courses for their benefit. I also had nutritionists come from the hospital on base to assist me. I encouraged each of the Marines individually through counseling, mentoring, and leading the training specific to their needs in the program. The goal was to establish their importance to the Marine Corps overall. This involved sitting down with each participant and conducting and informal personalized counseling session to gather information about their abilities and needs for nutrition. Through many, many hours of direction and leading through example, I ended up having an 88 percent success rate for Marines making the weight requirements. [Source: 0311 Infantry Marine, Staff Sergeant/Body Composition Program Lead Coordinator, E-6]

E. Maintaining Force Readiness: Knowing Your Soldiers [Army]

Situation: To maintain force readiness as a leader, it's important for me to establish close bonds within my
team so that I get to know them on a personal level and understand their needs as individuals.

Behavior: I came to understand my Soldiers' needs as individuals. For example, I ask my team members
questions about their day and private lives, I invite them over for barbecues at my home, and I
offer general advice when asked.

Result: This trust established camaraderie and contributed to mission success and recognition.

As a leader, even at the lowest levels of leadership, you have to pay close attention to the specific needs of your Soldiers—both professional and personal. That's because of the need to maintain force readiness; if the issue(s) facing a solider can affect the overall mission (e.g., personal issues are taking their focus away from the mission at hand), then it is of concern to me as a leader. To ensure that I know the state of my Soldiers, I create a positive atmosphere so that they can form close bonds with each other, and I am approachable to listen to their ideas, give general advice (marriage, children, and work), or help address bad news. Whenever I interact with my team, I come with a good attitude. I ask questions about their day and their private lives, so that I can get to know them on a personal level. I've also invited them over for barbecues at my home. This genuine interest, combined with me demonstrating my competence as a leader, contributes to the mission. My team trains very hard for me, which I think is because we have camaraderie. We perfected close-quarter combat techniques and machine gun tactics. We have been awarded the best weapons squad battalion two years in a row. When my team went on two combat rotations, no one was injured. During one of the combat rotations, my squad even single-handedly fought off an ambush using anti-tank weapons. My leadership helped the team develop as individuals and as a team to become more effective in accomplishing our missions. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Squad Leader, E-6]

F. Shaking Up Monotony: Motivating Through Learning [Army]

Situation: My unit goes to the field anywhere from four to six months out of the year, and sometimes the Soldiers have low morale.

Behavior: I came up with new training activities to keep everyone interested, such as scenarios where they need to get out of their tanks or exercises where they work in a position they don't typically occupy to keep things new and interesting.

Result: My leadership strategy improves morale and keeps the Soldiers engaged in the mission.

My unit goes to the field to train every other month for a month, so we're gone between four to six months out of the year. That puts a lot of strain on the Soldiers, and sometimes they lose motivation. This can be a real issue for training, because some Soldiers don't put in as much effort as they can. So, I have to come up with ways to keep everyone motivated. To do that, I conduct classes on situations that they aren't used to as a way to keep the training less monotonous. As an example, I'll give them scenarios where they need to get out of their tanks. Another task I'll give them is to complete an exercise in a position they don't typically work in to give them some cross-training. The goal is to get them excited about learning something new, which takes their mind away from the strenuous schedule. My leadership strategy of changing the pace through doing some new exercises improves morale and keeps the Soldiers engaged in the mission. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, Section Sergeant, E-6]

Training Others

Bottom Line

Training others is among the Tier I (top most critical) skills required on the job and evaluated to be critical at all job levels in the combat arms occupations examined.

Definitions

Training others: Plans, organizes, and conducts activities that increase the capability of individuals or organizations to performs specified tasks or skills. Has knowledge and experience applying employee development concepts, principles, and practices related to planning, evaluating, and administering training and education initiatives. *(related terms: teaching, developing skills)*

Overview

Experience in training others can develop a skill likely to be handy in the civilian workforce. Most importantly, transferring knowledge and skills to others can increase the collective level of understanding and performance among colleagues. And in the military, such transfer of knowledge and skills is commonplace. It simply cannot be avoided. From informal training of others (such as helping to orient new employees to the job) to more formal one-on-one training, or even to the design and administration of highly structured classroom training, military personnel may have done it all. The civilian employer can take advantage of that experience by turning to veterans to help train others in formal or informal ways in their own organization.

There are many instances showing how military personnel are required to provide training to those around them. For example, individuals transfer to different units (approximately every three years), but before they leave, they often have to "train up" their incoming replacement. In addition, technology advancements lead to new equipment, and the strategy and tactics of our military—and our enemy's—evolve. This, too, requires constant training, and in the military that training trickles down from the top, with more senior personnel responsible for training those below them. In fact, a significant number of senior enlisted military personnel work as classroom instructors for part of their military career.

The examples below illustrate some of this range of training experience, including teaching formal classes, which can involve identifying a training need and then planning and instructing the session or course (e.g., *Example A: Boarding and Inspecting Ships*), or more informal instruction, such as identifying an opportunity and seizing the moment to impart wisdom (*Example E: Cross-Training in the Tank*). They also illustrate how the teaching methods used can involve many approaches, such as increasing the level of difficulty (*Example B: Training in Sequence*), utilizing repetition (*Example D: Practice Makes Perfect*), and enforcing consequences (*Example F: A Painful Mistake*).

Vignettes

A. Boarding and Inspecting Ships: Verbally Explain, Physically Demonstrate, Allow for Practice, and Then Offer Feedback [Marine Corps]

Situation: I was tasked with training Navy Sailors how to create a Navy VBSS [Visit Board Search and Seizure], which boards suspected ships and inspects for illegal contraband and/or activities.

Behavior: My training tactics were to verbally explain the skill, physically demonstrate the skill, and then have the Sailors perform the skill. If they performed the skill incorrectly, I would offer verbal feedback and reenact the error so that they could see their mistake.

Result: By the end of the training, the Sailors developed proficiency in the concepts, principles, and skills taught in the exercises.

On my last deployment, six individuals from my platoon were tasked with developing a curriculum and training for Sailors who didn't have any prior experience to create an internal, Navy VBSS [Visit Board Search and Seizure] team. The purpose of VBSS is to board suspected ships and conduct inspections for illegal contraband (e.g., weapons, drugs) or activities (e.g., piracy) and take appropriate action (e.g., eliminating hostile threats). My specific role was to instruct a group of 20 Sailors on how to develop the skills necessary to effectively board and clear a moving vessel in open water. Some of the exercises included setting up ladders, approaching the helicopter, and fast-roping down a ship [descending down a thick rope quickly]. My training tactics involved multiple methods to help reinforce proper techniques. First, I verbally explained the skills and then physically demonstrated them being performed correctly. Afterwards, I had the Sailors perform the skills. If they made a mistake, I would give them verbal feedback and physically reenact their mistake so that they could see what they were doing wrong visually to more fully understand the issue and how they could fix it. Ultimately, my goal was to ensure the Sailors could take over the ship more safely by becoming more fluid and quick in their boarding and inspecting the ship. By the end of the training, the Sailors developed proficiency in the concepts, principles, and skills taught in exercises. [Source: 0321, Slack man, E-4]

B. Training in Sequence: Crawl, Walk, Run [Marine Corps]

Situation: I trained some new Marines basic patrolling and immediate action drills so that they would be prepared for a deployment.

Behavior: I tailored my curriculum to ensure I wasn't making the instructions too complicated, but also that I was not teaching them more of what they already knew.

Result: The new Marines became proficient in patrolling techniques and how to respond to enemy fire.

I was training our new Marines on patrolling and immediate action drills [response to enemy combatants] so that they could effectively respond to an enemy situation. I broke down the activities I was teaching into a series of steps that increased in difficulty, sometimes called the crawl-walk-run method. We started out really basic to make sure everyone could perform the skill safely in a simple context (e.g., using rubber rifles to practice having a few Marines return fire in an ambush while having the rest focus on getting away from the gunfire). Once proficiently is attained in the simple context, we made it a little bit harder by introducing more complexities. Finally, we went full speed with live guns, as if we were performing the skill for real. As a result of this approach, the new Marines gained important skill sets and learned how to perform them properly. [Source: 0321, Acting Team Leader, E-4]

C. Identifying a Skill Deficiency and Addressing It: Marksmanship [Marine Corps]

Situation: The platoon commander and I identified a skill deficiency—the Marines in our platoon had poor marksmanship skills.

Behavior: We met together and designed a training plan specifying the tasks of the training and the core principles to be taught in the course. I was responsible for performing the logistical work, such as scheduling the range, acquiring the ammo, preparing the instructors, and securing the number of days for the training.

Result: The platoon improved their shooting precision and the training plan turned out to be good enough that other platoons requested the training.

The platoon commander and I noticed that the Marines in our platoon had poor marksmanship skills. So, we met together to design a training plan for the platoon and then organized a group of instructors. The platoon commander drafted the training initiative write-up by specifying the tasks of the training and the core principles taught in the course. I was responsible for performing the logistical work, such as scheduling the range, acquiring the ammo, preparing the instructors, and securing the number of days for the training. The training became a company-wide event because the other companies liked and benefited from the training plan. As a result of forming the training course, the platoon it was originally intended for and then the company as a whole improved their shooting precision. [Source: 0313, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

D. Practice Makes Perfect: The Importance of Repetition [Marine Corps]

Situation: Some new Marines joined our artillery battery (an organization that can range from 60 to 200 Marines that fires high-powered munitions), and they were not familiar with the weapon systems we use.

Behavior: I broke up the tasks and explained them step-by-step, showed them how to complete the tasks through physical demonstrations, and had them practice the tasks repeatedly.

Result: The new Marines gained proficiency and were better prepared for live-fire exercises in the future.

Some new Marines joined our battery. They were not familiar with the weapon systems we use. In Artillery, we primarily use a launcher and crew-served, which are both large machine guns. It takes a long time to learn and get familiar with the launchers, amounting to probably about a year of practice. The crew serves, however, are easier to learn and might only take about a week. When some new Marines started working with us, I wanted to mentor them by familiarizing these Marines with these weapons systems. To develop their understanding of operating the weapons, I broke up the tasks and explained them step-by-step. I taught them what to do, and then showed them a physical demonstration. Finally, I had them try on their own. I made sure that they didn't develop bad habits and then had them practice many, many times. In my training style, I've found repetition is the most effective means of learning this type of material. Taking the time to train these Marines and instructing them to practice this process repeatedly helped them gain proficiency and ultimately prepared them for live-fire exercises in the future. [Source: 0814, Launcher Chief, E-4]

E. Cross-Training in the Tank [Army]

Situation: My tank crew had some free time out on the field.

Behavior: I taught my Soldiers other positions in the tank, so that they can fill in for a missing person.

Result: My team was able to expand their overall capability, which can potentially be helpful in future situations.

My tank crew and I had some free time while we were out training in the field. I decided to utilize the extra time to teach my Soldiers other positions in the tank. I had my loader, gunner, and driver rotate positions periodically. The purpose of this cross-training is so that if someone is missing, not in position during a critical situation, or even killed, another team member can perform the job. By taking into account the opportunity for development, my team was able to expand their knowledge, skill sets, and overall capability. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, Squad Leader and Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

F. A Painful Mistake: Carrying a 200-Pound Dummy to an Incorrect Location 800 Meters Away [Army]

Situation: During a field training exercise, one of my students incorrectly communicated the coordinates for a MEDEVAC [Medical Evacuation] call.

Behavior: I made him and his team members transport the approximately 200-lb casualty to the location that he called in, approximately 800 meters away.

Results: Allowing the student to fail and see the consequences reinforced the steps the students needed to learn and the importance of the training

I was the lead instructor during a field training exercise when the RTO [Radio Telephone Operator] called in a MEDEVAC [Medical Evacuation] and relayed what I knew to be incorrect location coordinates—the position the RTO communicated was 800 meters away from their actual position. I allowed time for the RTO and his team members to realize and correct the mistake, but they did not. If this was an actual situation, they would have lost time and resources, and the MEDEVAC could have been sent to an unsecure location and/or the casualty may have died. To emphasize the gravity of this mistake, I let him and his team members transport the simulated casualty (approximately 200-lb dummy) 800 meters to the location that was called in. Actions have repercussions, and training is also about conveying the consequences of your actions. [Source: 11B Army Infantry Soldier, Instructor, E-7]

G. Preventive Maintenance: The Student Becomes the Teacher [Marine Corps]

Situation: I trained the Marines in my section to conduct preventative maintenance (PM).

Behavior: My method is I give a class on the mechanics of maintenance, and then ask one of my Marines to teach a class on the same topic the next week to test if they retained information.

Result: The Marines in my section became capable of performing the PM without my assistance.

I have been training the Marines in my section to conduct weekly preventative maintenance (PM), so that they'll be self-sufficient and accomplish tasks, even when I'm not there. During PMs, I gather everyone around and walk through the PM reference book that has detailed instructions and graphic illustrations, so they are familiar with how to use it. Then I offer a class where I show them how to clean their gear, maintain ammunition, shut off the panel of the launcher, etc. I encourage them to ask questions, then they get to practice. The next week, I ask one of the Marines to give the same lesson, so I see if that individual retained the information well enough to teach others. I emphasize that this is a learning experience, so they shouldn't be afraid of making mistakes; however, proficiency is expected, and I make clear we won't leave until the

maintenance is done correctly. My training methods help them take responsibility for their learning and focus their efforts so that they're quick and effective. In one case, my lance corporal even took the initiative to ask me about completing the PM himself. As a result of my training, the Marines in my section became capable of performing the PM without my assistance. [*Source:* 0811; Section Chief; E-5]

H. What's in It For Me? Taking the Time to Explain Why [Marine Corps]

Situation: I was assigned as to work as an instructor.

Behavior: I improved my teaching abilities by clearly explaining what I was going to teach the students, why I was going to teach it, and how my teaching would benefit them.

Result: My students learned the material. In a few cases, Marines told me they used the techniques I taught them on deployment and these techniques saved lives.

When I teach others, I try to inspire them so what they want to learn the information. I typically start by describing what I was going to teach them, and then explaining why I was teaching it. I would emphasize how the information would benefit them (save lives, advance their careers, etc.) to persuade them to take the learning seriously. I really emphasize the point of "what's in it for me?" As a result of taking the time to emphasize the "why," Marines paid attention. I have had Marines that returned from deployments and say, "This real-life situation happened, I applied what you taught me, and it saved lives." Hearing that kind of feedback—something I taught them saved lives—is a major accomplishment. [Source: 0321 Infantry Marine, Weapons Platoon Sergeant, E-5]

Oral Communication and Interpersonal Skills

Bottom Line

Army Soldiers strongly endorsed *oral communication* as a Tier I (top most critical) skill at all job levels for the combat arms occupations examined, whereas Marines showed more variation regarding the criticality of oral communication across jobs. In contrast, *interpersonal skills*, a similar skill set, was in Tier III (least critical, but still at least moderately important and used at least a few times a week) for both the Army and the Marine Corps.

Nevertheless, both *oral communication* and *interpersonal skills* are conceptually similar, and the stories for each overlap substantially. Therefore, we present these skills together.

Definitions

Oral communication: Persuasively presents thoughts and ideas; receives, attends to, interprets, understands, and responds to verbal messages and other cues; expresses information orally to individuals or groups, taking into account the audience and the nature of the information; practices meaningful two-way communication; picks out important information in oral messages; understands and is able to process complex oral instructions; and appreciates feelings and concerns of oral messages. *(related terms: speaking, public speaking, persuasive speaking, debating, active listening, two-way communication)*

Interpersonal skills: Recognizes and accurately interprets the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others; works well with others; shows sincere interest in and sensitivity to others and their concerns, needs, and feelings; shows insight into the actions and motives of others and recognizes when relationships with others are strained; and maintains open lines of communication with others. *(related terms: demonstrating concern for others, demonstrating insight into behavior, intercultural skills)*

Overview

In civilian jobs, oral communication and interpersonal skills may be the difference between an employee who can effectively lead others, interact with customers and vendors, and coordinate the efforts of their coworkers and one who cannot. This is also the case in military jobs. In fact, oral communication is the primary type of communication for the majority of military occupations. Thus, military service members have likely gained a significant amount of practice speaking in a clear, concise, and convincing manner for the intended audience and situation and ensuring that their message is understood by engaging in follow-up conversations and reading nonverbal behavior. These stories show effective communication by highlighting key points that are often cited as common communication pitfalls, such as offering advice in a tactful manner (*Example B: Timing of Advice*) and the frequency of notifications (*Example E: Precise Language and Constant Updates*). These stories also highlight the importance of tailoring one's communication style (e.g., word selection, formality, demeanor) for the situation (*Example A: Every Word Matters*) and the audience (*Example D: Formal Presentation to the Boss*)

and show the many opportunities military service members have had to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds (*Example C: Being Overtly Friendly in a Typically Gruff Environment*). Specifically, they show that being able to convey information and ideas to different stakeholders and in different situations is an essential building block for all workplace activities.

Vignettes

A. Every Word Matters: Giving Fire Commands [Marine Corps]

Situation: As the Operations Chief of the Fire Directions Center (FDC), I give fire commands for powerful long-range weapon systems.

Behavior: When I issue commands, I ensure that my language is clear, concise, and intelligible.

Result: A single incorrect or unclear word can result in the fire being miles away from the intended target. This would waste resources and could cause the death or injury of a Marine and/or innocent civilian. I prevent this from occurring by communicating clearly.

In a Fire Directions Center (FDC), there is an Operations Chief who leads around 10 to 20 Marines. As the Operations Chief, oral communication is critical because I shout fire commands, which are precise mission data that carry great risks. I have to be clear, concise, and intelligible with every word that I say to ensure that nothing is misunderstood. Something as small as mumbling a number can be problematic, because this could be misinterpreted. These numbers mark specific coordinates, and a single incorrect digit can result in a mistake that shoots rounds miles away from the intended target. We're dealing with big distances, wind, weather, everything. The error would result in a waste of resources and, at worst, could mean the death or injury of a fellow Marine or innocent civilian. By using clear communication, I prevent these issues from occurring. [Source: 0844 Artillery Marine, Operations Chief, E-6]

B. Timing of Advice: The Recipient Has to Be Ready to Listen [Marine Corps]

Situation: I worked as an instructor at the Mountain Warfare Training Center (MWTC), which involved mentoring company commanders. I had a company commander who was overconfident in his abilities and unwilling to listen.

Behavior: After allowing him to make a mistake with low consequences, I talked to him in a tactful and professional way to guide him towards better communication strategies—for example, by advising him to consult his staff noncommissioned officers.

Result: He became ready to listen and more receptive to the input of his staff, which improved the performance of the company overall.

My job as an instructor involved evaluating, guiding, and mentoring company commanders while they execute operations. We were in the Sierra Nevada, which has a lot of steep terrain and natural hazards, and I was in charge of one commander who was overzealous and overconfident, and would not take advice. When the consequences of an error were low, I let him make mistakes. This made him more willing to listen, and by talking to him in a tactful and professional way, I could show him a better approach. For instance, I advised him to take advantage of his staff noncommissioned officers because they have a lot of experience that they can share. He eventually became more of a team player, which ultimately improved the performance of the company as a whole. [Source: 0369; Instructor Team Leader; E-7]

C. Being Overtly Friendly in a Typically Gruff Environment: Developing Secret Handshakes [Marine Corps]

Situation: We were stationed in the Philippines and tasked to teach their military various military tactics.

Behavior: I addressed language barriers, cultural differences, and combat mind-set differences through multiple strategies. I made every attempt to learn the language and nonverbal norms. I spoke simply and slowly, avoided technical language, and, contrary to a typical military environment, I was overtly friendly.

Result: We were able to teach the Filipinos more than any other U.S. service that had come to the country, and we established strong positive relationships for future operations.

We were stationed in the Philippines to teach their military various military tactics, such as VBSS [Visit Board Search and Seizure], CQB [Close Quarter Combat], and maritime operations to combat terrorist groups in the southern region. I was the lead instructor of 25 students for CQB and encountered many challenges in trying to teach these skills, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and combat mind-set differences. I made efforts to address each of these challenges. For instance, I attempted to learn their language, both verbal and nonverbal norms. When I did speak English, I spoke simply and slowly and avoided any language that was too technical or advanced.

Filipinos tend to express emotion more than Americans do, so I tried to reciprocate their expression by being overtly friendly, which was different for me because the military environment is typically more gruff. From Day 1 of our military training, we are ingrained to be aggressive. So you have to teach them how to throw someone on the ground nicely, but still keep up the intensity. Moreover, I never refused an invitation to interact with the locals, which gave me more time to practice the language and establish relationships. We would develop secret handshakes. As a result, over the course of a month, we were able to teach the Filipinos more than any other U.S. service that had come to the country, which opened many doors to the Marines returning to the Philippines for other operations. Our efforts to be sensitive to their needs and culture helped us establish strong, positive relationships. [Source: 0321, Assistant Team Leader, E-5]

D. Formal Presentation to the Boss [Marine Corps]

Situation: I was tasked with briefing the planning details for a large training event.

Behavior: I rehearsed in front of my peers and the company commander to ensure that I was able to clearly articulate the plan and defend decisions.

Result: The battalion commander and the board approved my briefed plan.

I was tasked with conducting the briefing for the planning of a combined arms exercise for the whole company, which is a huge live-fire exercise. Preparation for the event involves detailed analysis, planning logistics, securing and preparing the range, and fulfilling any administrative requirements. For the briefing, I created a PowerPoint presentation containing all the necessary elements for the plan for the event, including the range reservation and the communication with outside agencies. To prepare for the briefing, I practiced speaking in individual and group rehearsals with peers until I felt comfortable presenting. Then I went to my superior, the company commander, and rehearsed in front of him. We engaged in a meaningful two-way conversation, where he asked me difficult questions that I needed to prepare rebuttals for. Once he approved my presentation and felt confident that I could answer questions about the presentation articulately, I went up to the battalion commander and briefed for a board of superiors in the battalion. The battalion commander and the board approved the briefed plan, and we were able to successfully execute the combined arms exercise. [*Source:* 0311 Infantry Marine, Rifleman, E-6]

E. Precise Language and Constant Updates: Tracking Down Gear

Situation: About 10 Marines usually have only a day or two to gather and pack all the unit gear for a field operation. There are a lot of items that need to be assembled, and they are distributed all across the base.

Behavior: We use precise language and constant updates to keep each informed.

Result: We assembled all of our necessary gear in a timely manner.

Communication is an important part of our jobs. It's especially important when we prepare the unit for field operations. We usually have only a day or two to gather and pack all of the necessary equipment and items for the field (e.g., tents, tables, boxes, food). The gear can be in multiple different places, all over the base. Because we have to pull these items together quickly, there are a lot of moving parts that we need to keep track of. We use precise language and constant updates to keep each other informed on what has been accomplished, what still needs to be done, and who is available to do it. In this particular example, we were coordinating among 10 Marines. As a result, we gathered all of the necessary gear quickly and were able to conduct our field operations. [Source: 0844 Artillery Marine, Warehouse NCO, E-4]

Managing/Supervising the Work of Others

Bottom Line

Managing/supervising the work of others is placed near the bottom of the Tier I (top most critical) skills. Generally, this skill is evaluated as more critical for the higher job levels (ranks of E-5 and E-6) than for the lower job level (rank of E-4) in the combat arms occupations examined.

Definitions

Managing/supervising the work of others: Organizes, coordinates, and leads subordinates in work efforts to effectively and efficiently accomplish organizational goals and objectives. Involves staffing, delegating roles and responsibilities, clarifying objectives, and monitoring, assessing, adjusting, and rewarding the actions of subordinates. Requires knowledge and experience applying performance management concepts, principles, and practices. *(related terms: administering, overseeing, organizing people)*

Overview

Managing and supervising the work of others is critical in every civilian organization, but not all jobs afford someone an opportunity to manage or supervise others. As a result, only a subset of the civilian workforce has that past experience. In contrast, in the military, people are regularly expected to oversee the work of others.

At early stages in their military career, individuals are placed in positions of responsibility to oversee the completion of routine and nonroutine tasks. The scope and complexity of this oversight grows with rank. Accomplishing tasks often requires deliberate planning and problem solving, within-team coordination, and workload balance, as well as monitoring and modifying actions and strategies. Many of the stories illustrate these behaviors in an environment that is fast-paced and full of competing demands (*Example A: Juggling Multiple Priorities*). These stories emphasize the importance of unambiguously assigning responsibility (*Example E: Clear Instruction and Division of Labor*) and constantly monitoring the situation (*Example B: Always Knowing What All Your Marines Are Doing and Where*). Successfully managing people and tasks ensures that the larger goals of the organization can be accomplished.

Vignettes

A. Juggling Multiple Priorities: Constant Communication and Task Delegation [Marine Corps]

Situation: My team was tasked with building a new combat outpost while still engaging in combat operations.

Behavior: I maintained constant communication, and I delegated tasks to my Squad Leaders and the local Afghan Army.

Result: The combat outpost was built to standard in a timely and efficient manner.

My team was tasked with establishing a new combat outpost in Afghanistan. There were no structures at all, so I led a team of about 50 people in the construction of a perimeter, security posts, and storage for food and water. Meanwhile, I was also managing combat operations and trying to develop relationships with local leaders. Making sure everything got done required constant communication and delegation. I assigned duties to my squad leaders and the Afghan Soldiers supporting us, and I communicated via radio and on-site visits to clarify instructions, provide feedback, and track our progress. The organizational skills that I learned during my military career helped ensure the new outpost was completed in a timely manner. [Source: 0369 Infantry Marine, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

B. Always Knowing What All Your Marines Are Doing and Where [Marine Corps]

Situation: I am responsible for knowing the whereabouts and activities of my 26 Marines.

Behavior: Each day at morning formation, I clarify each Marine's schedule, monitor their locations, and report these activities to Marine Corps personnel management.

Result: I effectively coordinate my personnel's activities and maintain productivity.

I am responsible for managing on a daily basis. My Marines have varying responsibilities and are therefore in different locations throughout the day. Every day, we have morning formation, where I take attendance and clarify the day's schedule for each Marine. It's necessary for me to monitor where everyone is supposed to be and what they are supposed to be doing. For example, this morning, I had two Corporals participate in a survey, four other Corporals test-driving seven-ton trucks, one Marine with an appointment on the main side for a job fair, two Marines on leave, and the remaining 17 Marines were at the barracks for formation. After I account for everyone, I send in the morning report through the Marine Corps website to personnel management. Monitoring everyone's activity helps coordinate the platoon and maintain productivity. [Source: 0811, Section Chief, E-4]

C. Staffing According to Skill, Experience, and Schedule: Be Cool with the Bad Guy [Army]

Situation: I was responsible for staffing an ECP [Entry Control Point] with about 30 Soldiers to ensure that only authorized personnel enter. One day, an individual who had a warrant out for his arrest attempted to enter the area.

Behavior: I carefully make shift assignments based on skill, experience, and schedule. That day, one of the more senior individuals that I had staffed discreetly notified command while delaying the individual with an excuse about "system problems."

Result: The individual did not realize that he had been identified, and military police had time to get to the ECP and arrest the individual.

I was responsible for overseeing an ECP [Entry Control Point] and managing about 30 Soldiers. Supervising ECPs involves making sure that only authorized personnel can pass through the area you're guarding.

Managing personnel is vital for mission success. I needed to staff the ECPs according to each Soldier's skills, experience, and the time available in their schedule. When staffing the team, I balance the experience levels of the group, so that there will always be at least one senior Soldier on site. For example, at one ECP, an individual who had a warrant out for his arrest tried to enter. Fortunately, I had chosen to staff a senior Soldier at the ECP, and he knew not to act alarmed. He discreetly notified command and, to make sure the individual was unaware that he had been identified, casually stated that there was something wrong with the system, so it would be a moment until they could get it back online. Meanwhile, the military police had time to get to the ECP and arrest the individual. So, it was an important decision to staff a more senior level Soldier who would know what to do. [19K Armor Soldier, E-6]

D. New to the Job: Learning and Then Developing Structure [Army]

Situation: I became a platoon sergeant for a new platoon.

Behavior: I identified the Soldiers' most important priorities and reoccurring tasks. I organized our needs into subcategories by task and priority and assigned these tasks to my Squad Leaders. To monitor their progress, I had the Squad Leaders report back to me on a regular basis.

Result: My team was able to function smoothly and meet our goals.

When I first joined the platoon as a platoon sergeant, I tried to understand the daily practices of my new Soldiers to get a sense of their overall rhythm. I identified their most important priorities and reoccurring tasks. I also found that there wasn't a system in place for delegating work. So, instead of trying to manage everything myself, I organized our needs into subcategories by task and priority. Then I assigned each of my Squad Leaders certain subcategories to work on. Some examples of subcategories included vehicle maintenance, Soldier fitness, Soldier attendance, and managing the weaponry storage room. My squad leaders and I sat down and came up with an SOP [Standard Operating Procedure; a form providing step by step instructions] to clarify how our Soldiers need to be supervised and supplies need to be reported and tracked. I had the squad leaders act as subject-matter experts for this SOP. To monitor their progress, I had the squad leaders report back to me periodically for updates. As a result of improving the management of the platoon, the team was able to function smoothly and meet our goals. [Source: 11B Army Infantry, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

E. Clear Instruction and Division of Labor: Getting the Job Done [Army]

Situation: On my first day as a squad leader, I was tasked with leading a training exercise to destroy an enemy structure, but nothing was set up to support the training.

Behavior: I organized the squad into two workgroups and assigned each group with different tasks to prepare the training environment.

Result: We finished the site set-up quickly, preventing further delays.

On my first day as a squad leader, I was tasked with conducting a live-fire exercise where my nine-man team needed to destroy an enemy structure. However, nothing was set up as it should have been. The enemy structure needed to be built, targets needed to be placed, and the wire obstacles needed to be prepared. Instead of becoming frustrated, I delivered specific instructions to my Soldiers to provide the needed support. I organized the squad into two work groups with different tasks. During the site setup, I provided continuous supervision of my team, offering input, guidance, and encouragement. As a result of my coordinating roles and responsibilities, the squad had a greater understanding of what needed to be done and was more focused. We were able to finish all of our tasks both quickly and sufficiently, preventing further delays to the training exercise. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, E-5]

Situational Awareness and Conscientiousness and Attention to Detail

Bottom Line

Situational awareness is the last of the Tier I (top most critical) skills. With one exception, all job levels in Army combat arms occupations examined strongly endorsed this as a critical skill. Marine Corps participants rated this skill as among the next most critical skills in all but one occupation, which instead rated it among the top most critical. *Conscientiousness and attention to detail*, a related skill set, is a Tier II (next most critical) skill. That is, it showed more variety in level of endorsement across jobs in both services. Overall, the majority of job levels and combat arms occupations examined considered *conscientiousness and attention to detail* to be Tier II (next most critical) skills.

Both *situational awareness* and *conscientiousness/attention to detail* are highly similar, and the stories for each skill are, sometimes, nearly identical. We therefore present the stories illustrating these skills together.

Definitions

Situational awareness: Perceives, analyzes, and comprehends critical elements of information in one's environment. This also includes continually seeking new information to update and refine one's understanding. More simply, know what is going on and how it relates to the goals of the individual, team, and/or organization. *(related terms: alertness, responsiveness, attentiveness, situational understanding)*

Conscientiousness and attention to detail: Diligently checks work to ensure that all essential details have been considered; performs assigned tasks and responsibilities diligently even when not under direct supervision; displays self-discipline and self-control; follows oral and written directions; complies with organizational rules, policies, and procedures. *(related terms: conscientiousness, respect for procedures, discipline, autonomy, productivity)*

Overview

In the civilian marketplace, conscientiousness and attention to detail are important elements in any job. For example, mistakes in budgeting calculations can translate to financial losses, not following protocols can lead to damaged goods, and errors in emails can denigrate a company's image. Similarly, in the military, careless errors, lack of respect for procedures, and taking shortcuts can have consequences. Situational awareness also has applications in both contexts. In the civilian world, there are many workplace situations that require someone to pay attention to and properly read a situation and respond accordingly. This section provides some examples of military members exercising both of these skills.

Military service members are often placed in situations that require constant vigilance so that they can quickly determine what is normal (and abnormal) to guide their actions. In such situations, attentiveness to the smallest details helps in constructing an accurate understanding

of the situation. Moreover, such situations are not static, so service members must continually attempt to revise this understanding by searching out new information. Although some of the situations described would not normally occur in a typical civilian workplace, such as detecting roadside bombs (*Example A: Deviation from Normality*) and other hazards (*Example C: A Cracked Hook*), the themes of thoughtful observation and analysis can prove useful in other contexts. For instance, consider an employee who wants to approach his or her boss with a proposal of how to perform certain work tasks differently—noticing that the boss is dealing with a series of crises, the employee decides to wait until these have subsided and the overall mood is more positive. Another story highlights the importance of ensuring that a task has been completed correctly and fully, including details that may be easy to overlook or dismiss as insignificant (*Example D: It Is the Small Stuff*). Together, these stories show the ability to both attend to detail and keep in mind the bigger picture.

Vignettes

A. Deviation from Normality: Locals Avoiding Us and a Backward Store Sign [Army]

Situation: We conducted a patrol on foot in Afghanistan in a village we had been several times before.

Behavior: We paid careful attention to our surroundings and noticed that the villagers were unfriendly and that a store sign was facing the opposite direction it usually did.

Result: I called in the unusual activity and left the village, which was very important because we later learned insurgents had planted an improvised explosive device [IED] behind the store sign.

While conducting an on-foot patrol in Afghanistan during my last deployment, my team went through a village we had been to several times before. During patrols, everyone needs to constantly scan the environment to recognize potential threats. Potential threats include not only obvious danger, but also any change from what is normal for the area. My team had to consider all of the details in our surroundings. As we entered the village, we noticed that the people were acting strange. Usually the villagers were friendly, but when we greeted them by saying, "Hey, how's it going?" they avoided us. As we continued walking, we observed there were fewer people walking around. I also saw that a store sign that typically faced toward us was now facing in the opposite direction. One of my team members and I decided to call in the unusual activity and wait for EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal; technicians responsible for dismantling hazardous items]. It turned out that enemy combatants had placed an IED [improvised explosive device] behind the store sign, and there was a pressure plate in the road to act as the trigger. My team had to be attentive to details on all patrols (previous and current) to know what's normal for the village and what's unusual. If we hadn't done this, we could have walked into an IED. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Squad Leader, E-4]

B. Always Be Cognizant of Your Environment: By the Way, What Time Is It? [Marine Corps]

Situation: We undergo various training exercises to notice details. In one instance, leadership left a watch in a visible area.

Behavior: We are expected to pay attention to our surroundings (e.g., notice the watch and even the time displayed on the watch), retain this information, and then report it back.

Result: I'm more prepared for deployments, because I actively seek out information in my environment.

You have to be cognizant of your environment. We conduct training exercises where you walk into a room, survey your surroundings for about a minute, walk out, and then you are expected to be able to report

everything you saw in the room in as much detail as possible. Or it may be less formal. For instance, we could go out on a run for our daily physical training. At the end of the run, they would ask us what we saw around the mile markers and then ask a series of follow-up questions. An example item could be a watch and my leaders may ask, "You saw a watch? What time was displayed?" I had to pay very close attention to my surroundings to notice these details and then retain this information. This ensured that we are effective at comprehensively assessing important elements in the environment. This kind of training is important because it practices what is needed during deployments. Actively seeking and being attentive to your surroundings ensures that you don't accidentally step on an IED [improvised explosive device] or put yourself in an otherwise perilous situation. [Source: 0321 Infantry Marine, Radio Operator, E-4]

C. A Cracked Hook: Avoiding a 30 Foot Fall into the Ocean [Marine Corps]

Situation: During a training exercise, my team needed to take over a ship. We needed to climb over 30 feet into an oiler.

Behavior: I paid close attention to my surroundings and noticed that the hook that secured us to the ship was breaking.

Result: As a result of my awareness, I was able to temporarily repair the problem by securing us with an additional hook, which prevented possible injury.

During a training exercise, my team needed to seize [take over] an enemy boat. This mission required a high climb of over 30 feet into an oiler. As I was climbing onto the ship, I paid close attention to my surroundings. I noticed that the shepherd's hook, which is used to hook the ladder onto the side of the ship, was cracking. By paying attention to this detail, even during the stressful situation of climbing up a very narrow ladder over the ocean, I was able to alert my team to the situation. To temporarily repair the hook, I took the safety lanyard [a rope for fastening something to a ship] that I had and threw an extra hook on to secure the ladder with the safety lanyard. If I hadn't been attentive and noticed the hook breaking, four of my Marines would've gone into the ocean with 40 pounds of gear on, which could have been fatal. [Source: 0321 Infantry Marine, Element Member, E-5]

D. It Is the Small Stuff: Cleaning Your Weapon [Army]

Situation: During a deployment in Iraq, some of my Soldiers weren't cleaning their weapons or inspecting their vehicles properly.

Behavior: I created and monitored a schedule with which I could ensure that they got up early to clean their weapons and inspect their vehicles.

Result: The Soldiers started to implement that schedule on their own.

After a couple months being deployed in Iraq, I began to notice that some of my Soldiers were not cleaning their weapons or inspecting their vehicles (e.g., load plan, kit) properly. This is bad because if weapons are not clean, they can become jammed. If they become jammed during an attack, when we need to use them the most, Soldiers can die. I created a schedule to ensure they woke up early, every morning, to clean their weapons and inspect their vehicles daily. We did this for a while, and then my Soldiers adopted this as habit. As a leader, you need to pay close attention to these details; you can't just assume that the Soldiers are taking care of it themselves. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Team Leader, E-5]

Teamwork and Team-Building

Bottom Line

Teamwork and team-building tops off Tier II (next most critical) skills for both military services. However, service members in the lower job level (E-4) considered this skill to be Tier I (top most critical) for all the combat arms occupations examined.

Definitions

Teamwork and team-building: Establishes productive relationships with other team members to perform team tasks and works to improve team performance; acknowledges team membership and role; and identifies with the team and its goals. Team-building activities include improving the ability of a team to work together to accomplish a task or activity; resolving conflicts within a team; developing collaboration to promote learning and expand team perspectives; discouraging unproductive behavior among team members; and encouraging and building mutual trust, respect, and cooperation. *(related terms: team player, followership, cooperation, collaboration)*

Overview

Although teamwork is something that many organizations value, not all civilians are well practiced at working in a team. In contrast, in the military, teamwork is practiced and practiced again in everyday life. Military service members in the combat arms are expected to operate in teams from the very start of their military career. At the smallest level, there are "battle buddies," which are two individuals assigned to accompany and assist one another. And the team size only increases: There are fire teams (3–4 individuals), squads (8–16 individuals), platoons (16–44 individuals), and so forth. Inherent in this organizational structure is learning to work effectively with others, even those you do not like personally, to deliver results. As the stories show, service members learn to identify individual strengths and weaknesses in order to place people in roles and situations that will elicit the very best from a person (*Example A: The Great Race*). The stories emphasize a recurring theme of generating collective confidence and unity through various methods, such as effective use of competition (*Example B: Building Cohesion Through Competition*) and expertise (*Example C: Finding Your Role by Mastering Your Weapon System*). As a result of these types of team experiences, many veterans are well positioned to work collaboratively with a variety of individuals to achieve an organization's larger goals.

Vignettes

A. The Great Race: Building a Platoon [Army]

Situation: While stationed in Germany, my platoon leader and I had nine months to get a new 40-person organization ready for deployment.

Behavior: We developed team-building training activities, such as daily physical training and a 26-mile march and run through Germany. My platoon leader and I were able to see our individual team members' unique personalities and skill sets through the exercises and design our teams appropriately.

Result: Our team worked together well during the deployment and we had some of the highest re-enlistment rates within the battalion.

My platoon leader and I were charged with creating an entire platoon from scratch that would deploy to Iraq in nine months. Command gave us 40 Soldiers, and we had to form the teams. We developed team-building activities—one of which was a 26-mile march and run through Germany that we called the "Great Race"—designed to test each Soldier physically and mentally and reveal their unique personalities and skill sets. Using our experience from previous deployments, we identified the best fit for each position and for each team overall, and thought through what type of leader each group needed. Does this group need a stern, strong leader or a persuasive leader with the gift of gab? By matching up the right people, we fostered cohesive teams that performed well once we got to Iraq. By the end of the deployment, we had some of the highest reenlistment rates in the battalion. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

B. Building Cohesion Through Competition [Marine Corps]

Situation: During training, the cannon section [an organization of at least six Marines managing a large weapon system] has to learn to work closely together.

Behavior: The team coordinates with each other to get the round ready, secure the breach, and fire.

Result: By practicing this exercise over and over together, the team forms strong cohesion.

In the Artillery field, the cannon section is where teamwork shines, because the section has to function like a well-oiled machine. A gun section requires one Section Chief, who is assigned to at least six Marines. One of those Marines is the Gunner, and then there's the Assistant Gunner (who act as a number one and number two). Those Marines are in charge of placing the round in the cannon tube and then securing the closure of the breach. The remaining three to five Marines cooperate by taking charge of ammunition. The Section Chief verifies everything, including the rounds, the orientation, the elevation, and the safety of the operation. Once the Chief confirms everything is OK, the team works together to fire the round. Everyone on the team is familiar with both their own job and everyone else's. The team also has to be aware of what is happening in the moment, such as who is bringing a round up and where is the ram team as you're putting the round on the tray. This must happen seamlessly to fire as quickly, safely, and accurately as possible, normally at a speed of 4 rounds per minute. If one person is off, it can slow down the entire process or have lethal results. It's all about confidence and trust that others are where they are supposed to be and doing what they are supposed to be doing. Considering that we're shooting hundreds of pounds of explosives downrange, it's no small matter. To build cohesion within, we compete. For example, Marines typically aren't as excited when we're running practice drills (i.e., no real rounds), so we create a competition out of event to see which team is the fastest and most effective. This helps individuals pull together and work as a team by giving them a shared, meaningful goal. By learning to work effectively as a team, the Marines perform better in combat. [Source: 0811 Artillery Marine, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

C. Finding Your Role by Mastering Your Weapon System [Army]

Situation: As a Corporal you start to learn how to foster team-building.

Behavior: As one tactic, I encourage each of my Soldiers to master their weapon system so that they have the specific and needed skill set to increase the survivability of their comrades

Result: This hard work and competence develop a deep sense of loyalty among team members. We consider each other family.

Although the Army infuses teamwork very early in a Soldier's career, when Soldiers reach the rank of Corporal (E-4), they start to learn how to foster team-building. For example, one of my strategies is to encourage each of my Soldiers to master their particular weapon system. By having a specific role and goal, my Soldiers feel that they're an integral part of the team. To help develop mastery, it could be something as simple as setting up a range so that your weapon squad can work on their skill. This motivates the guys to be the best at what they do. They want to be considered dependable, because they know their skill set is going to be needed down the line. So, the focus of our group activities is not on the individual Solider, but on what the Soldier can do to increase the survivability of his comrades. This creates a highly interdependent team, because we need these different skill sets. Everyone does their job and grinds it out together. These exercises have a resulting impact on how the Soldiers identify with the team and our goals. Because of this hard work and competence, Soldiers take pride in the team and become fiercely loyal to that squad. They almost become like a family. To an extent, I would say that I am a lot closer with my Soldiers than I am with my own family. The Soldiers become your brothers. It's a huge part of what we all do. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, E-6]

D. Performing Together in Challenging Situations: The Shoot House [Army]

Situation: My team was tasked with completing a training exercise called the "shoot house," which is the culminating event for room clearing [checking and securing the safety of a structure] that uses real ammo.

Behavior: As the team leader, my role was to instill confidence in all of my team members, build trust between Soldiers, and improve the team's ability to work together to accomplish the task.

Result: The team worked effectively through the training iteration, which lasted a couple days. In that time, we established trust, respect, and cooperation with each other.

After weeks of practicing room clearing [checking and securing the safety of a structure], my team had to complete the culminating training exercise, which is called the "shoot house" and is the first time we use real ammo. It's a very confined space, and mistakes can have lethal consequences, so it's a high-risk training situation. This is probably the largest team-building exercise that we have. As the leader, my role is to instill confidence in all of my team members by reassuring them that they are prepared. However, trust is really built through having the team accomplish the task in challenging situations. The team worked effectively through the training iteration, which lasted a couple days. In that time, we established trust, respect, and cooperation with each other. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Team Leader, E-4]

Adaptability and Handling Work Stress

Bottom Line

Adaptability and *handling work stress* are conceptually similar skills and are both in Tier II (next most critical skills). For the Army, Infantry evaluated *handling work stress* as slightly more critical than their Armor counterparts did. For the Marines, Infantry evaluated *adaptability* as more critical, whereas Artillery evaluated *handling work stress* as more critical.

Because *adaptability* and *handling work stress* are related, many of the stories are similar. Therefore, we document the stories associated with each skill in tandem.

Definitions

Adaptability: Responds quickly and effectively to uncertain and unpredictable work situations. Open to change, rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Thrives in the "gray" area and requires minimal structure. Quickly learns new work tasks, technologies, and procedures. *(related terms: active learning, changing to fit the situation, able to adapt, situational flexibility)*

Handling work stress: Functions effectively under pressure; remains composed under pressure and high-stress situations; does not overreact; manages frustration and other stresses well; acts as a calming and settling influence on others. Exhibits a hardiness of spirit despite physical and mental hardships; possesses moral and physical courage. *(related terms: productive stress management, resilience, effectiveness under pressure, triumph over adversity, coping)*

Overview

Adjusting to change and working under stress are things that many jobs in the civilian marketplace demand. Similarly, expecting the unexpected is a hallmark of military life. From Day 1 of boot camp, military service members experience unpredictable and chaotic situations. They must be able to handle high workloads and function effectively, even in the most unforeseen and demanding situations. Compared with most civilian employment, the level of intensity (e.g., combat) and commitment (e.g., swore an oath to obey the orders) is significantly higher in the military.[4] Many stories show how emotional responses such as anger, resentfulness, or frustration are simply unnecessary distractions and only detract from accomplishing the task (*Example A: After Six Months of Planning, You Have Two Days to Rework the Plan* and *Example G: Focus and Perform*). Military veterans are able to maintain control of situations because they have had challenging experiences confronting difficult situations (*Example F: Overcoming Your Fears* and *Example H: Getting it All Wrong*). Also, they have learned to rely on a variety of strategies, such as clarifying necessary steps (*Example I: Breaking it Down*), finding the fun (*Example K: Lean on Humor*), and acknowledging adversity (*Example J: Embracing the Suck*). Military service members will be well equipped to deal with workplace stressors and change

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[4]   Exceptions could include first responder–type jobs, such as firefighting and police.

(e.g., tight deadlines, demanding clients, and fluctuating requirements), given the uncertain nature of military life.

Vignettes

A. After Six Months of Planning, You Have Two Days to Rework the Plan

Situation: The Belize military wanted the Marine Corps to devise and deliver training. After six months of preparation, they requested significant changes to the plan at the last minute.

Behavior: Over the course of just two days, the Marines quickly and diligently reworked their training plan to accommodate for the new requests.

Results: Training was successful, and strong relationships were formed with the Belize officials and locals who recognized our efforts to incorporate their feedback.

The Belize military requested training on combat techniques. Seven other Marines and I were tasked with developing and delivering that training to about 60 individuals over the course of two months. A complex operation with many facets, we took approximately six months to devise the requested training plan. When we arrived in Belize, the Belize officials told us that they wanted us to make significant changes to the training plan. We also found out that the expected training locations were not large enough to train all 60 individuals at once, so there would have to be multiple sessions. We needed to adapt quickly to this new information and accommodate these unexpected changes. We took two days to redesign the training plan to adjust to the Belize officials' new vision and the available training facilities. For example, most of the logistical details needed to be reworked, particularly in regards to the location. Ultimately, we were able to deliver the training plan that the Belize military approved so that we could begin. About a month into the training, we realized that the real impact of quickly reworking the training to the Belize officials' requests was gains in trust with the Belize military and the local populace. That is, we learned that the Belize military assumed that we would not take their change in training requests seriously and refuse to redesign a plan tailored to their needs. By working diligently to modify our plan to the new situation, we proved that we were supportive and genuinely cared about how our work affected them. The Belize military and local populace responded by demonstrating positive attitudes towards our presence in the country and the U.S. Marines Corps in general. [Source: 0321 Infantry Marine, Assistant Team Leader, E-5]

B. Planning for the Unexpected: Street Protests [Marine Corps]

Situation: My team was tasked with providing personal security for a diplomat from a foreign nation, so we planned the safest routes. However, there was a protest that was blocking one of the routes.

Behavior: Because we had planned for multiple contingencies, we were able to quickly switch to an alternative course.

Results: The mission was a success, and no one posed a threat to the diplomat.

My team was tasked with providing personal security for a diplomat from a foreign nation. So, my responsibility was to conduct a threat assessment. The threat assessment was composed of two parts. First, I went to the country and coordinated with the host country police, military, and a half a dozen government agencies to form a planning cell, or a team, for security. Second, my team identified all of the possible access points for a security breach and then determined the safest routes for the diplomat to take on the days we were providing security. Although we had three weeks of planning for the operation, the most important aspect of offering personal security is to remain flexible for potential changes in circumstances. For instance, there

was a protest that was blocking one of the routes we had planned to take. So, we needed to actively adjust to an alternative course. Ultimately, because we had planned many contingencies and were able to adapt quickly to unexpected obstacles, the mission was a success, and no one posed a threat to the diplomat. [Source: 0369 Infantry Marine, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

C. In the Well: Modifying Patrol Routes and Strategies [Marine Corps]

Situation: While on a deployment in Afghanistan, we learned that the Taliban were using underground tunnels connected to old wells to maneuver around our observation post.

Behavior: To adapt to this new information, we changed our area's patrol routes and started checking the wells.

Result: We managed to weaken the Taliban's control over the region.

When I was on deployment in Afghanistan, the other squad leaders and I would hold a daily action review, where we'd debrief the events and findings of our missions. Throughout a deployment, it's important to rapidly adapt to new information, because the enemy's tactics change, the environment changes, the populous changes, and the locals' attitude toward you changes. You can't expect stable conditions. During one of our debriefings, a new piece of information we discovered was that the Taliban had started using old wells from the '50s to access an interconnected system of tunnels underground that allowed them to maneuver around our observation post. In demonstrating situational flexibility, we changed our area's patrol routes and strategies to start checking the wells. The new routes and well checks weakened the Taliban's control over the region, and they had to find another way to operate, proving that our methods for adapting to the enemy tactics were successful. [Source: 0811 Artillery Marine, Squad Leader, E-5]

D. Find a Way to Get the Job Done [Army]

Situation: My team was asked to conduct track maintenance for a company of tanks, but the tools for the job were either broken or missing.

Behavior: We fixed the broken tools and coordinated with other units to borrow tools that we were missing to get the job done.

Result: We completed the task.

In the Army, we are often asked to complete missions and tasks without sufficient resources, so we have to get creative. For example, my team was asked to conduct track maintenance for a whole company of tanks, but the tools that we typically use for this task were either broken or missing. We had to be resourceful, so we worked efficiently as a team to fix the broken tools, borrow tools from other units, etc., to get the job done. By adapting to a situation that wasn't otherwise straightforward, we were able to complete the task. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, Team Leader, E-5]

E. The Needs of the Army Come First [Army]

Situation: I was asked to change military occupation specialties multiple times to accommodate the needs of my unit and the Army.

Behavior: I was flexible and adapted to each role I was assigned.

Result: I've worked effectively in all my jobs for the Army.

Soldiers may be repurposed or forced to reclassify into different jobs. Therefore, Soldiers must remain flexible, because the needs of the Army come first, and those needs can change very quickly. When I first I came to the Army, I was assigned the military occupation specialty (MOS) 19K, making me a tanker [member

of a team operating a tank]. After I arrived at my unit, I was immediately deployed to Korea, where I was transitioned to the Scout MOS [conducting reconnaissance]. Then, when I returned back the United States from the deployment, my unit discontinued having heavy armor, i.e., tank forces. Instead, my unit became a light infantry force. Once my unit started using the tanks again, I was deployed to Africa on a humanitarian mission to support civilians. In all of these scenarios, I adapted to the necessary changes and worked effectively at my job for the Army. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, Team Leader, E-5]

F. Overcoming Your Fears: People Are Watching, and How You Act Affects Others [Marine Corps]

Situation: I'm afraid of water, but in the Marine Corps it's required to complete swimming exercises.

Behavior: As the platoon sergeant, it's important for me to keep my composure so that my guys don't see me showing fear. So, I complete the exercise while hiding how afraid I am.

Result: I uphold my duty as a leader by maintaining my Marines' confidence in my abilities.

I'm terrified of water, and, in the Marine Corps, they not only make us swim, but we have to swim with all of our clothes on, including our helmets and heavy equipment. Some swimming exercises include the helo dunker [underwater helicopter escape training] and the egress trainer [underwater escape exercise]. It's nerve-wracking for me. Plus, as a platoon sergeant, I have 40 guys watching me, which makes it even more stressful. I manage this stress by just sucking it up and completing the water exercises even though I'm petrified. I can't let my platoon see me stressed. As leaders, we are the glue that holds the platoon together, so I take hiding my fears very seriously. When we go into combat, my Marines may be scared and they look to their leader for guidance. They will have more confidence and perform effectively under pressure if they have a leader who appears calm and collected. [*Source*: 0369 Infantry Marine, Platoon Sergeant, E-7]

G. Focus and Perform: Excuses and Worrying Just Waste Time [Marine Corps]

Situation: I was given only five minutes to complete a task that typically takes at least 20 minutes.

Behavior: Instead of losing valuable time by making excuses and worrying, I focused on the task and performance.

Result: I managed to complete the task in a reasonable amount of time.

Frequently, we're given tasks where the person assigning the task doesn't understand what's involved in the process and underestimates how much time it will take. An example of this happened when I was tasked with fixing the panel in the missile launcher. The time on the panel didn't match the time on our radios, which can be an issue because it can hinder communications. The person who tasked me with the job gave me only five minutes to complete it, but it typically takes around 20 minutes, because you have to reset the system, and it's slow to reboot. This is an impossible task, but making excuses and worrying just wastes time. So I avoid getting flustered by focusing on the task and working as fast as the system will allow. I may not have met the deadline, but I managed to complete the task in a reasonable amount of time. [Source: 0814 Artillery Marine, E-4]

H. Getting it All Wrong: Regroup and Repeat [Army]

Situation: The first time I went to gun range as a squad leader, I was nervous and made a lot of mistakes in front of my superiors. I tried to think three or four steps ahead and attempted to complete the exercise myself.

Behavior: My unit had 12 hours to try again, so we went back to the drawing board, completed the plan, and slowed everything down, and I delegated tasks to different Soldiers.

Results: I was able to cope with the pressure, direct my Soldiers, and complete the exercise.

The first time I went to a live-fire range [place to practice using weapons with live ammunition] as a squad leader, I made a lot of mistakes. Actually, I messed everything up, from my planning to my execution. I had practiced with blank fires, but when I got to live rounds, I freaked out. I was so anxious about failing and tried to complete the exercise by myself. I didn't let my team leaders do their job. It did not work out well. Adding to the stress, all of my senior leadership was watching (the platoon leader, first sergeant, company commander, and battalion commander) and shouting corrections. Everyone knew I was doing poorly, including my peers and my Soldiers. I was embarrassed. Afterwards, my First Sergeant [superior] pulled me aside and said, "Look, man, you got to settle down. Settle down." My squad had 12 hours before we would start again. We went back to the drawing board and regrouped. I asked for feedback. This time I delegated tasks to my Soldiers, and I made sure they all knew what they needed to do. To accomplish these types of missions, you have to trust others to do their job. Also, you can't have fear of failure. When we went through another live-fire range, I was able to cope with the pressure, direct my Soldiers, and complete the exercise. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Squad Leader, E-5]

I. Breaking it Down: One Step at a Time [Army]

Situation: My team got in a small arms conflict with enemy combatants in Iraq.
Behavior: I managed the pressure by breaking down each task I needed to accomplish into small parts and performing my tasks one step at a time.
Result: My team was able to overcome the enemy without injury or death.

While in a small arms conflict with the enemy [e.g., fighting with small weapons, such as machine guns], I had to calmly reposition key weapon systems in order to have better fields of fire [area that can be reached by weapon fire]. At the same time, I had to monitor radio traffic for enemy positions and maneuvering. Generally, while performing in combat, and even under time pressure, I would deal with the stress by breaking down each task into small parts, and performing each task one at a time. I analyzed the conditions [enemy behavior], determined if I needed to change positions of the weapon systems, formed a plan, and then executed the plan. In this case, I was able to maintain composure and execute the tasks assigned to me [overcome enemy forces] without any casualties [injuries or deaths]. [Source: 11B Infantry Soldier, Special Operations, E-5]

J. Embrace the Suck: Acknowledging the Hardship and Pushing Through [Army]

Situation: During a JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center] exercise, my platoon got ambushed at a low-water crossing, and my Platoon Leader, Platoon Sergeant, and 20 Soldiers all "notionally" died. I became the senior squad leader of 20 Soldiers for the next 48 hours of the exercise, which is two levels above my pay grade.
Behavior: I took a tactical pause between each task, accomplished each task one step at a time, and encouraged my Soldiers to keep a positive attitude even the conditions were difficult.
Result: My platoon accomplished the event, and I was promoted for my performance.

My platoon went to JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center], an event that is necessary for a platoon to complete successfully before a deployment. The goal of JRTC is to put Soldiers in difficult situations to test the unit's ability. During the exercise, my platoon leader, platoon sergeant, and 20 Soldiers all notionally died while we were ambushed at a low-water crossing. So, I became the senior squad leader of 20 Soldiers for the next 48 hours, which was very stressful because I was expected to perform two levels above my position. To manage the stress, I took a tactical pause between each problem we faced and accomplished the task one step

at a time (What was the issue? Who is best able to address this issues? etc.). When I talked with my Soldiers, I acknowledged the harshness of the situation and encouraged them to keep going. As we say, "embrace the suck." As an example, I told them: "Look guys, I get it, we aren't going to have any food, we aren't going to have enough water, but guess what? This is what we signed up for. At the end of the day, let's just dig these 18 inches into the ground and then build 18 inches of cover over our heads for our bunkers." The Soldiers would reply, "Yeah, roger." We were all tired, but we kept our morale up. At the end of the exercise, my platoon was able to handle the stress and accomplish the event. I was promoted as a result of my performance at the event. [Source: 11B Infantry, Squad Leader, E-5]

K. Lean on Humor [Army]

Situation: My team was asked to go to the gun range with no advance notice, stay until 10 p.m., and then get up the next day to be there again at 6 a.m.

Behavior: I commiserated with my team by joking around and making light of the situation.

Result: I managed the stress and helped my teammates get through it too.

In the Army, we are used to having our schedule change and coping with the pressure that puts on our work and personal lives. Recently, my team was ordered to train at the live-fire range [gun range] at 3 p.m., and we were expected to all be there immediately with our weapons ready. When we got there, we had to stay until 10 p.m. to finish the exercise. Then we were told we needed to be out at the range the next morning at 6 a.m. It was physically tiring, and my family wasn't happy that I was working late. To deal with the stress, I commiserated with my team, because we were all going through it together. Joking with one another and making light of the situation can have a calming effect. As Soldiers, we embrace the difficult times together as a team, and that's what helps us manage the stress. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, rank unknown][5]

L. The American Military Practices Chaos Every Day [Army]

Situation: All at the same time, I was faced with a subordinate who damaged an expensive piece of equipment, another who got a DUI, and still another who was having family problems at home.

Behavior: I prioritized which crisis to address first, and then addressed each one in its turn. This included speaking with each Soldier individually to come up with an action plan and to keep them calm.

Result: By being constantly exposed to multiple problems at the same time, I learned how to effectively prioritize my work.

In the military, you deal with stress every day. There was a quote from a German general about the American military. It was: "The American military does so well in war, because war is chaos. And the American military practices chaos every day." This describes it perfectly. There is so much unpredictability in what situations you're going to deal with. One example is JRTC [Joint Readiness Training Center]. The goal of JRTC is to put your company in as many challenging and compromising scenarios as possible, so that they're ready for combat. The most typical scenario is the death of the company's chain of command, to see how the junior Soldiers respond to an absence in leadership. And there are many additional stressors that they can add (e.g., limited equipment, low visibility) to make it more difficult. You are deprived of food and sleep. It can be in extreme weather conditions—hot, cold, wet, whatever. JRTC is a multi-week-long training event. And just when you think that it's over, the timeline can be extended. Other examples occur daily. It's especially taxing when you are in charge of others, because you now have to deal with others' problems on top of your

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[5]   Rank of this source is unknown; however, subject-matter experts evaluated this story to apply to all enlisted ranks (E-1 through E-8).

own. These problems can be things like someone damaged very expensive equipment, a person got a DUI, or someone is having trouble at home. It is important to decide which crisis to prioritize. It can also be important to speak with each individual to keep them calm and come up with an action plan. Being exposed to these stressors on daily basis and learning to prioritize work is learning how to handle the work. [Source: Soldier, Section Sergeant, E-5]

Operating Safely

Bottom Line

Operating safely is in Tier II (next most critical skills), as it shows some variability in criticality across jobs. It is, however, especially critical across all job levels for Army Armor and Marine Artillery.

Definitions

Operating safely: Identifies and carefully weighs safety risks in making decisions and adheres to safety rules and regulations. Fosters a safety culture, wears safety gear, and encourages others to follow safety rules and speak openly of their safety concerns. Has knowledge of the principles, methods, and tools used for risk assessment and mitigation, including assessment of failures and their consequences. *(related terms: safety and risk management)*

Overview

In some civilian occupations, workplace safety is a central issue. And like some of those jobs, work in certain military jobs can be especially dangerous, so it is not surprising that operating safely is viewed as high priority for them as well. For example, operating firearms and heavy machinery requires strict adherence to safety procedures. Disregarding safety rules can result in serious bodily injury and costly equipment damage.

Some civilian workplaces share such repercussions (e.g., construction, agriculture). The stories below highlight several safety themes, such as anyone can become a victim when careless (*Example A: Tanks Don't Care Who They Kill*); everyone shares a responsibility for enforcing appropriate precautions, even if they seem unnecessary (*Example B: Everyone Is a Safety Officer*); and each person must adhere to procedures, however burdensome (*Example D: Follow Safety Protocol*), that may have direct parallels in those civilian industries. Protecting the safety of individuals (and the organization) is vital to performance. Veterans from the combat arms occupations likely understand these principles, given the severity of consequences in their previous employment.

Vignettes

A. Tanks Don't Care Who They Kill—You or the Enemy [Army]

Situation: My team needed to run the gunnery training exercise.

Behavior: Before conducting the exercise, I made sure my team checked the weapon system, performed the proper maintenance, wore the appropriate gear, kept heavy materials secure, and followed all of the safety protocol.

Result: No one got injured during the gunnery training exercise.

For Soldiers who operate tanks, or "tankers," we do a training exercise called "gunnery." Gunnery entails shooting live rounds out of a tank. There are a lot of things that can go wrong if you don't maintain the tank

properly, which can be dangerous. So, I check all the weapon systems. I also make sure the team is doing the correct maintenance and that all the weapons are clean and safe to fire. I have to make sure that all the guys have the proper safety equipment. For instance, they need to wear fireproof gloves. If they are wearing just regular gloves, they could get oil all over them while doing maintenance, and they could catch on fire. Plus, there are a lot of heavy components in a tank, and if these components are not properly secured, they can fall down. For example, a tank can hit a bump and an unsecured latch could easily result in a Soldier losing a finger. I talk to my team about this, so that they understand that there are consequences if you don't think about safety. The saying goes, "tanks don't care who they kill—you or the enemy," so it is critical to strictly adhere to safety protocol. The protocol we follow is the OSA [Occupation Safety and Health]. By checking the weapon system, doing the proper maintenance, wearing the appropriate gear, and keeping heavy materials secure, my team was able to prevent possible injury during the gunnery training exercise. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, Gunner, E-4]

B. Everyone Is a Safety Officer: Wear Your Helmet [Army]

Situation: During maintenance day, I noticed my driver was working on top of the tank without a helmet.
Behavior: I reminded him to wear a helmet.
Result: He later slipped, but he didn't get injured because he was wearing his helmet.

On our maintenance day, called PM [Preventative Maintenance], I noticed that my driver was working on the top of the tank without a helmet. When you see these types of situations, it is important to say something to ensure safety, even though wearing preventative gear can be uncomfortable—everyone is a safety officer. I immediately told him to put his helmet on to prevent the possibility of an injury, so he did. I also told him to make sure he had three points of contact on the tank to keep his balance, such as both of his feet and his hand. Ten to fifteen minutes later, this same individual, working on the top of the tank, slipped off and hit his head against the side of the tank. Because I reminded him to wear his helmet just minutes before, he was fine. [Source: 19K Armor Soldier, Gunner, E-4]

C. It Is Dangerous On the Range [Marine Corps]

Situation: I was the Range Safety Officer where Marines were training with machine guns and grenade launchers.
Behavior: I made sure that every safety precaution was in place before the training started.
Result: The Marines were effectively trained without injury.

Acting as a Range Safety Officer (RSO), I am responsible for fostering a safety culture and encouraging other Marines to follow regulation. The last range I was in charge of was a range practicing crew serves (large machine guns), so there was a total of 50 machine guns and grenade launchers. These weapon systems are very dangerous, which makes safe use particularly important. As an example, I've seen individuals accidentally shoot themselves in the foot, shoot instructors, and burn their hands on the launchers because they don't realize how hot they are. When you are on a live range, stress goes through the roof. There's no such thing as "that's a little mistake." To prevent incidents, safety must be a priority. I take preventative action to make sure that Marines understand what they are doing and make sure every safety precaution is in place before training starts. For example, keep your finger off the trigger unless you are planning to shoot, and stay behind the firing line. In the case that an injury happens, I coordinate the medical support to take care of the injury. The RSO is responsible for taking care of any incidents. As a result of enforcing these safety precautions, the Marines were effectively trained without injury. [Source: 0811 Artillery Marine, Battery Gunnery Sergeant, E-6]

D. Follow Safety Protocol—Always [Marine Corps]

Situation: During a firing mission [mission where we have to fire our weapon system], the Fire Direction Center (FDC) that's supposed to give us coordinates and permission to fire did not follow the latest standard operation procedure (SOP). Before giving us permission to fire, we need to read back the order to the Operations Chief at the FDC to ensure that we heard the command correctly.

Behavior: In the interest of safety, I halted the operation and explained to the FDC their mistake.

Result: The Operations Chief at the FDC redid the part of the operation they had missed, and we were able to complete the mission without incident.

My team and I were on a fire mission where we shot live rockets from our High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) Launcher. The procedure for firing begins with communication with the Fire Direction Center (FDC). First, the FDC compiles the fire data for the launcher for us to receive, we read them back the instruction to verify we understood the directions, and then they give us the go ahead to fire. Artillery has recently changed the standard operating procedure (SOP) for firing to require the Marines stationed at the launcher, to read back the command and actual firing data to the FDC directly after receiving the command before they can grant permission to fire. This practice is to double-check that the location we shoot to is the location that we're supposed to shoot. During a recent fire mission, the FDC called back "fire" without me recalling the details of their command. Even though I was pretty sure the information I had was correct and I didn't want to delay to mission, I knew that there could be grave consequences if we ignored the procedures. So, in the interest of upholding safety regulations, I decided to halt all operations. I then radioed back to FDC to tell them that, according to the SOP, they have to ask for my firing data first. As a result of encouraging safe operations, the Operations Chief at FDC went ahead and asked for the data, and then approved us for fire. The operation was completed without incident. [Source: 0811 Artillery Marine, Launcher Chief, E-5]

Continuous Learning

Bottom Line

Continuous learning is at the lower end of Tier II (next most critical skills). For both the Army and Marine Corps combat arms occupations examined, this skill is more critical at the lower job level (E-4) and becomes progressively less critical as job level increases.

Definitions

Continuous learning: Takes the necessary actions to develop and maintain knowledge, skills, and expertise; demonstrates an interest in learning; anticipates work changes; identifies career interests; applies a range of learning techniques; integrates newly learned knowledge and skills with existing knowledge and skills; and is aware of own cognitive processes. *(related terms: adaptive learning, willingness to learn, active learning, metacognition)*

Overview

Civilian workplaces are constantly changing to keep up with new technologies or other changes in the marketplace. In some cases, these changes can occur so quickly that employee technical skills can become obsolete. Because of this, someone who is continuously striving to learn and update their technical skills is likely a desirable employee to have onboard.

The military agrees, and simply expects that continuous learning will occur as part of service members' typical on-the-job activities. Constant change is a defining feature of the life in the military. For example, as noted in the "Training Others" section, service members regularly transfer to different units (approximately every three years), requiring perpetual learning on the job. In addition, as developments in technology result in new equipment and as the strategy and tactics of our military and our enemies evolve, service members have to strive continually to learn and improve to keep pace. One good example is the military practice of the "after action review" (*Example C*), which is a structured discussion for the relevant stakeholders to discuss what happened, why it happened, and how it can be done better in the future (i.e., a method for actively learning from past mistakes). Other examples below illustrate the necessity of learning others' responsibilities in case you have to perform them (*Example A: You Need to Know Others' Jobs in Case Someone Goes Down*) and learning new equipment in case you have to use it *(Example B: Taking It Upon Yourself to Pull Out the Technical Manual)*.

Vignettes

A. You Need to Know Others' Jobs in Case Someone Goes Down [Marine Corps]

Situation: As members of small team, Marines are expected to know all of the roles, skill sets, and tasks of each team member. This is in anticipation of the possibility of a Marine going down, moving on to another job, or transitioning to a new team.

Behavior: To learn my team members' roles, I sought out my peers and supervisors to ask questions, enrolled in courses on base, and read books and publications on relevant topics.

Result: As a result of integrating the knowledge of my team members' duties into my own practice, my team was able to work fluidly on our missions, because we knew we had backups in place in case anything happened to one of the Marines on the team.

As members of small teams, we are expected to know all of the roles, skill sets, and tasks of each team member. This is in anticipation of the possibility of a Marine going down, moving on to another job, or transitioning to a new team. So, it's important for all members of the team to train both formally together through exercises and informally by actively engaging in training individually. To learn my team members' roles, I sought out my peers and supervisors to ask questions, enrolled in courses on base, and read books and publications on relevant topics. As a result of integrating the knowledge of my team members' duties into my own practice, my team was able to work fluidly on our missions, because we knew we had backups in place in case anything happened to one of the Marines on the team. [Source: 0311 Infantry Marine, E-5]

B. Taking it Upon Yourself to Pull Out the Technical Manual: Night Vision Goggles [Marine Corps]

Situation: The Marine Corps continually gets new equipment, which new Marines learn how to use in the schoolhouse, but which leaders get no formal instruction on.

Behavior: To ensure that I also know how to operate the equipment, I go to the armory and research the technical manual.

Result: I am able to proficiently use the latest equipment and maintain the respect of my subordinates.

The Marine Corps is always getting new equipment, such as NVGs [night vision goggles]. Some of the latest equipment goes to the schoolhouse to be learned there, but others go straight to the wheelhouse. New Marines typically learn how to use this equipment in ITB [Infantry Training Battalions], which is the second stage of training for the Infantry MOS [military occupational specialty]. That puts the rest of us in a difficult position because, as the Infantry leaders, we should know the equipment, no matter how new it is. I take it upon myself to enhance my skill set and figure out how to use new gear. I'll go to the armory and pull out the technical manual and start researching. I learn the capabilities and limitations in addition to how to work the equipment. It's important to have that desire for understanding in order to stay up to date with the latest information. If you don't stay up to date, you risk losing credibility with your subordinates. By actively learning and integrating new knowledge into my skill set, I am able to proficiently use the latest equipment and maintain the respect of my subordinates. [Source: 0369 Infantry Marine, Company Gunny Sergeant, E-7]

C. After Action Review: Bringing Everyone Together and Evaluating the Process [Marine Corps]

Situation: Artillery involves an intricate process of passing information from a group of Marines working as observers to the Marines on the ground [those operating weapon systems].

Behavior: To improve our efficiency, we meet after every mission to identify problems and analyze solutions.

Result: We developed a new strategy that saves us a considerable amount of time.

In the Artillery, Marines on the ground receive missions from observers who detect potential targets and enemy activity. My team processed the information, computed the technical data, and sent it to the rocket launcher crews. We held daily meetings after field operations, training, and live-fire missions to identify problems, analyze the issues, and improve efficiency. One improvement we made as a result of these meetings was to pass on the initial information we receive to give the launchers a jump start, and then send them the processed data when we've completed our analysis. In the past, we would finish our analysis and send the information all at once. By critically evaluating our practices, we were able to develop a better way to work that has saved a considerable amount of time. [Source: 0844, Assistant Operations Chief, E-5]

D. Learning a New Weapon System Can Be Similar to Learning New Language [Marine Corps]

Situation: I recently switched weapon systems from working with cannons to High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers, a much more complex weapon system.

Behavior: To actively integrate new knowledge and skills into my understanding, I enrolled in courses, used acronyms to help me remember details, worked in study groups, and applied my knowledge on the field through practice.

Result: I have the knowledge and tools to successfully operate the HIMARS weapon system.

As an Artillery Marine, I recently switched from working with cannons to High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) launchers. HIMARS is an entirely different, much more complex weapon system than what I'm used to. So, changing weapons is basically like learning a new language. To actively integrate new knowledge and skills into my understanding, I enrolled in Gunner's and Chief's courses as a blank canvas and tried to soak up as much information as possible. Another learning strategy I employed was using pneumonic devices or using different acronyms to help me remember certain details. Working in study groups was also helpful, as I gained important knowledge of the material from peer-on-peer teaching. Finally, I applied what I learned through practical application and repetition through practice in the field. By taking the time to learn a range of techniques, I now have the knowledge and the tools that are needed for success using the HIMARS weapon system. [Source: 0811 Artillery Marine, Platoon Sergeant, E-6]

E. The Job of a Marine Is Constantly Evolving [Marine Corps]

Situation: I joined the Marine Corps right out of high school, seemingly ending my association with formal educational institutions.

Behavior: I began to learn from Day 1, through boot camp, infantry school, and a specialty school for my MOS [military occupation specialty]. I learned Navy SOPs [standard operating procedures] for my TDA [temporary duty assignment], enhanced my skill set in the latest enemy tactics, learned how to use new equipment and weapons, and continued to attend schools based on my rank.

Result: I continued to learn about a job that is constantly evolving, which enables the possibility of promotion.

I joined the Marine Corps right out of high school. Although I no longer attended a formal educational institution, my Marine Corps experience has been a continual learning process. When I initially enlisted, I went straight to boot camp, which was followed by infantry school. After a brief deployment, I went to an additional school based on my specialty area. I also got a temporary duty assignment (TDA) in the Navy, where I had to learn the Navy SOPs (standard operating procedures). Learning new regulations is a standard practice for entering any new unit. When I returned, I had to train to stay current on the latest information on enemy tactics and procedures. Additionally, as the senior member of my platoon, I needed to become an expert on any new equipment and weapons, so that I could teach my Marines how to use them. I continued to attend a set of schools based on my rank and MOS [military occupation specialty] to prepare me for the next rank. Working as a Marine is not a job that you just get and can turn your brain off once you obtain a certain rank or you pass a course. This is a constantly evolving job, and you have to keep learning in order to continue your career and be competitive for promotions. [Source: 0321 Infantry Marine, E-6]

Closing Comments

Two experiential sources contribute heavily to the development of job-related skills in military service members: *training* accrued across someone's time in service and *on-the-job experience* accrued across someone's time in service. This toolkit provides a window into typical experiences from each source, for members of selected combat arms occupations in the Army and Marine Corps. However, military personnel from other fields and even other military services will likely have many parallel experiences.

To develop the content in this toolkit, we embarked on a multiyear pilot research effort to test out and refine an evidence-based methodology for identifying experiences that are illustrative of typical military jobs. To start, we compiled a list of essential nontechnical skills desired in the civilian and military workforce. We then met with training subject-matter experts and surveyed around 750 combat arms personnel (and interviewed approximately 300 of these individuals) to learn about and systematically document their most typical experiences.

Our research showed that nearly all service members receive the same levels and kinds of training at around the same points in their careers. As a result, our course experience examples are likely to be typical for nearly everyone in the combat arms professions and, in some cases, even for those in non–combat arms occupations. The on-the-job experiences, however, are more likely to vary from person to person and job to job. For that reason, we offer multiple examples, to illustrate the range of on-the-job experiences that were considered typical by our participants.

How These Materials Might Be Further Developed

Overall, we view this project as a success. We were able to use a structured research approach to produce a toolkit describing typical military experiences that support the development of important civilian job skills. However, the work should not stop here. We ultimately compiled this toolkit to help open up a dialogue between employers and veterans about the types of essential nontechnical experiences they bring to the marketplace. Although we think this prototype toolkit is useful in its present form for that purpose, we strongly recommend that research expanding on this effort continue. An important next step could be to take active measures to have veterans use the toolkit and get their feedback on how it could be improved. This input could be used to refine the toolkit and increase its usefulness. In addition, new toolkits could be developed for other types of jobs (i.e., noncombat jobs) and across all four military services. However, given that user feedback on this prototype may lead to important changes to the format and content, we suggest soliciting veteran feedback on this toolkit before developing new toolkits, so that the new toolkits can capitalize on any improvements that

result. Finally, developing programs to further support these materials would be worthwhile (e.g., developing workshops for employers and veterans to facilitate use of the tool content, and evaluating the effectiveness of the content at improving communication about these skill sets). The work here can thus be viewed as just one step towards helping veterans and employers communicate about the wide range of essential nontechnical skills that veterans bring to the workplace.

Technical Appendix

How was this toolkit developed?

RAND researchers developed these materials using a systematic approach for documenting the types of military course experiences and on-the-job experiences that military personnel receive in these essential workplace skills. We started by identifying a list of the skills from available literature that civilian employers said they value in their workforce and then expanded the list to include any additional skills relevant to civilian employment that were suggested by our reviewers and subject-matter experts. We defined each skill based on definitions that have been developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and other sources.

We then used a combination of course document review and meetings with military training subject-matter experts to define the military training content and determine which skills are among the top ones emphasized in each course.[1] We vetted initial drafts of the toolkit with selected instructors and training developers, and revised appropriately based on the feedback. We show these top skills by course in the summary tables. Instructors and course lesson plans provided illustrative examples of how courses develop each of the top skills. These examples serve as the foundation for the course overviews.

To gather real stories illustrating nontechnical skills used on the job and determine which skills are most critical, we conducted in-person focus-group discussions and administered an in-person survey with 284 job incumbents (206 were from the four combat arms occupational specialties we targeted, and an additional 78 were from closely related specialties in the combat arms). We then held follow-up interviews with about 40 of these individuals by phone. We obtained more than 400 stories, which went through a series of iterations and formal reviews by senior enlisted service members and civilian subject-matter experts. Through that review, we narrowed the list of stories to just the subset judged most applicable by our subject-matter experts and most representative of the range of experiences described by our participants. We also administered paper surveys to an additional 147 participants from the same combat arms occupations, which resulted in a total of around 400 survey responses.

We present the survey results in the on-the-job experience summary tables. Selected stories resulting from the focus groups and subject-matter-expert reviews are located in the on-the-job experiences vignettes.

(For additional details on the methodology, see our companion report at www.rand.org/t/RR1919.)

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[1] Some military courses focus on what the military calls *training*, and some focus on what the military calls *education*. For simplicity, we use the word *training* to refer to both training and education.

What are the limitations of this toolkit?

Our work developing this toolkit was intended as a pilot effort. Therefore, it was necessarily limited in scope. As a result, there are a number of limitations to this toolkit that are worth noting.

Most importantly, the materials compiled here are the results of a pilot effort and intended to serve as a proof-of-concept prototype. So, they focus just on selected combat arms occupations and therefore are not designed to be comprehensive of all military jobs. More specifically, for the pilot effort defining training, we included the combat arms branches, and for the pilot effort defining the job experience vignettes, we focused on a few of the most heavily populated military jobs within the combat arms branches. Thus, some on-the-job experiences in the prototype are likely to be specific to the military occupational specialties (MOSs) we examined. Moreover, although most of the formal courses we reviewed are taken by a majority of the enlisted personnel in the Army or Marine Corps, including those outside combat arms branches (and are therefore likely to generalize), two courses we reviewed—the Indirect Fire Infantryman Advanced Leader Course and the Maneuver Senior Leader Course—are specific to the combat arms.

We did begin to explore the generalizability of the stories describing on-the-job experiences and found that many of the stories were applicable outside the MOS and branch of the Soldier or Marine telling the story with only minor revisions. Thus, it is possible that, in many cases, the information in this toolkit, with minor modifications, would generalize to non–combat arms personnel.

Another limitation in scope is that we were only able to consult existing literature to understand the civilian employer's perspective on these skills and on veteran applicants. Additional civilian employers' and veterans' input would be especially beneficial in determining and addressing the specific challenges that veterans encounter when attempting to translate their nontechnical skills to the civilian sector. In addition, having civilian employers and veterans review and provide feedback on the prototype materials would be useful. Systematically collecting this information through interviews, focus groups, and brief surveys could provide rich insight from a critical stakeholder group and further contribute to bridging the disconnect between military and civilian employment. We therefore recommend that additional work be conducted to solicit feedback from employers and veterans on which aspects of the toolkit are most useful and what could be done to improve the toolkit, and the toolkit should be revised to address those comments.

Some limitations are specific to our review of skills taught in formal courses. First, the content taught in any one course is dynamic—instructors constantly modify courses, and changes are not always documented. Overall, this toolkit reflects courses as delivered in 2014. A veteran who was an Army E-5 in 2002, for example, will have taken a different (but related) course from the Basic Leader Course that we reviewed. Second, the training information in the toolkit is based on course document review and interviews with feedback from a few instructors per course. It is possible that the information provided in the materials could differ if we had solicited feedback from different expert instructors in the various courses or had vetted the course descriptions and top skills with students attending the course.

Still other limitations are specific to our review of skills learned on the job. First, the on-the-job experiences we identified are almost surely subject to more variability than we were able to capture. We spoke with many individuals about their experiences, and we also discovered that there were differences in their experiences. Although subject-matter experts from each

MOS helped identify the most applicable and appropriate stories for inclusion in our prototype, it is possible that, had we included different subject-matter experts, the stories selected would have been different. More broadly, it is also likely that there are other representative experiences that were not captured in our discussions. This limitation is less of a problem if prospective employers and veterans approach these materials as a guide to training and on-the-job experiences, rather than as a description of the exact experiences a particular candidate has had. For example, the vignettes can be viewed as a guide to the kinds of experiences an infantry squad leader may have had, and if they are relevant to the job being considered, the employer may want to ask the candidate about whether they have had experiences similar to those described in the vignettes.

Second, in the focus groups and subject-matter-expert panels, it is possible that conformity pressures influenced the responses we obtained about the typicality and accuracy of stories. Many, if not all, of the focus group participants and subject-matter experts worked together and would share many of the same experiences. Thus, the stories could benefit from additional vetting through surveys with a larger group of job incumbents.

Finally, though not a limitation, note that some skills—such as conscientiousness or dependability—are sometimes considered stable traits rather than malleable skills. However, the military's general approach to these skills (as evidenced by their attempts to inculcate these skills in their personnel) is consistent with a perspective that proficiency in all skills referenced in this toolkit can be trained and developed over time. For the sake of conciseness, in these materials we refer to all skills, abilities, traits, and competencies as skills.