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EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

MENTORING: A LEVER TO TRANSFORMATION AND THE FUTURE OF THE CANADIAN AIR FORCE

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ABSTRACT

The Canadian Air Force is challenged to transform itself into a relevant force in the 21st century. To facilitate this transformation the Air Force must focus on a number of issues, not the least of which is the development of the leaders of tomorrow. A stepping-stone in this regard is a consistent and effective mentoring program that provides visibility into potential of officers and the training and guidance to take advantage of identified potential. This can be achieved through a revamping of the existing mentoring program with particular focus on formal structure and support coupled with a flexible and informal mentor/protégé relationship. Critical to the success of the program is the embedding of mentoring into the culture of the Air Force, the application of appropriate resources, integration with the career management process and a follow-on performance measurement process. Implementation should also be iterative, up to two years, followed by an evaluation to ensure the program is meeting the need.

INTRODUCTION

> Air Force leaders need to be provided with a range of experience and professional development over their career with which . . . to effectively develop and employ aerospace power across a spectrum of activity and conflict. Air Force leaders who acquire this complete understanding of aerospace power will become thinkers, leaders and visionaries . . . that will give the Canadian Forces future operational advantage.[1]

As thought provoking and visionary as this statement is it is nothing but a hollow concept without the necessary mechanisms in place to facilitate this vision. Experience and education must be gained in an expeditious and timely fashion in conjunction with a mechanism to ensure the right people are receiving these attributes. *Strategic Vectors* suggests that mentoring is one of the tools that should be utilized to meet this requirement.[2]

The current Air Force mentoring program lacks scope and definition. It is a combination of personnel management tools, informal mentoring and somewhat haphazard application. It has tended to be occupation dependant and often starts too late in one's career. As a result, the Air Force mentoring program is ill prepared to assist the Air Force with transformation or personnel development in the 21st century. The mentoring program must change to meet new requirements and become a more effective and consistent career development tool. This essay will development and recommend key improvements for incorporating mentorship in the officer corps of the Canadian Air Force.

This discussion will look specifically at mentoring officers but the principles and recommendations can translate in most cases to meet the development of non-commissioned

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[1] Department of National Defence, A-GA-007-000/AF-004 *Strategic Vectors: The Air Force Transformation Vision* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2004), 49. Transformational Enabling Leadership, Vector 5

[2] *Ibid*., 52.

members. It is also difficult to discuss mentoring in isolation of broader career management processes so there will be some discussion of these issues as well.

In addition to introducing the theory of mentoring including standardizing terminology, mentoring programs of allied air forces will be reviewed. A summary of current Canadian Air Force methodologies will be followed by a discussion of the way ahead. It is valuable to start this discussion by defining the rationale for changing the way the Air Force currently implements officer development.

A CASE FOR ACTION

Brigadier General Gosselin, Commandant of the Canadian Forces College highlights one of the key factors in the case for action in his description of the need for change in the officer professional development program. He states, "The ever changing conditions in today's world are leading to increasing complex challenges."[3] The most profound change that the military has faced in recent history is the cessation of the Cold War. What once was a highly predictable opponent with well defined structured responses to well understood doctrine fostered a reasonable sense of security. Leaders understood what they were facing, were in a position to establish processes and train for predictable and known challenges. This is not to minimize the importance of leadership through the Cold War but to emphasize that with recent changes, leadership and a well trained officer corps has become that much more critical.

The military forces of the world are now faced with increased instability and an opponent that does not play by the rules or traditional causes and is embodied in rogue factions and states. The spectre of the World Trade Centre in 2001 and the constant threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have forced most militaries of the western world into some form of

transformation. This transformation from Cold War to the asymmetric threat environment is critical if military forces are to become effective in the 21st century.

This change in threat ". . . coupled with restructuring and downsizing of the forces" has driven all militaries to rethink the way of doing business.[4] Doing more with less means finding a more efficient means of achieving goals. It also imposes an inordinate amount of work on those leaders that must execute the programs.

Arguably, this means that there is often little time to address fundamental issues such as career development. This complicates the task of designated mentors and influences the ability of high potential individuals to receive recognition, a basic principle of mentoring.[5] Any process that is used must maximize a mentor's limited time and take every advantage to identify potential and develop future officers.

Another argument for change is the phenomena of occupationalism and platform centric operational focus.[6] This has manifested itself in the Canadian Air Force as a fleet-based (or occupational centric in the case of support occupations) operational perspective and at times a myopic view of the application of aerospace power. Air Force leaders must be able to employ forces throughout the entire aerospace spectrum and achieve the desired effect regardless of platform.[7] In order to achieve the goals suggested by Strategic Vectors "it is necessary to

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[3] J.P.Y.D Gosselin, "The Canadian Forces College: An Introduction," *SITREP* 65, no 2 (March/April 2005): 16.

[4] *Ibid*., 16.

[5] Joseph G Kopser, "Mentoring in the Military: Not Everybody Gets It," *Military Review* (November-December 2002): 40.

[6] M. Thirtle, "Developing Aerospace Leaders for the Twenty-First Century: A Historical Context for the DAL Concept." *Aerospace Power Journal* 15, no 2 (Summer, 2001), 55..
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[7] DND, *Strategic Vectors* . . ., 49..

recapture the 'heart and soul' of the service through the deliberate cultivation of the aerospace mindset."[8]

Equally, it has been identified that service personnel are much more "savvy" about their career's and their career expectations.[9] There is a better understanding of what is required and little hesitation to look for careers outside the military if things are not proceeding as expected. This situation is further argument for a more robust system of development and a more conscious application of leadership and leadership development to ensure that the Air Force remains a career of choice for officers who can provide the greatest benefit to the organization.

A common thread within each of these issues is the development and education of leaders. It has been recognized that, "developing tomorrow's personnel with yesterday's human resource development system" is one of the challenges in achieving Air Force transformation.[10] What is in place at the moment is not working and one area where improvements and benefits can be derived is in the Air Force mentoring program. A renewed approach to mentoring is a key element of transformation and developing leaders of tomorrow. To understand its place in personnel development a discussion of the theory of mentoring is appropriate.

WHAT IS MENTORING

The Oxford on-line dictionary defines mentoring as "the action of advising or training another person, especially a less experienced colleague."[11] Johnson suggests, "Mentoring means

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[8] Thirtle, *Developing Aerospace Leaders for the Twenty-First Century . . .*, 52.

[9] Richard W. Swengros, "Strategy for Developing the Right Leaders for the Objective Force: An Opportunity to Excel," (Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College Strategy Research Project, 2002), 9. Acknowledging that this reference is to experiences of the US Army, it is reasonable to extrapolate this phenomenon to the Canadian Air Force given similar demographics of a volunteer western nation military service.

[10] Col D. Neil, "Canada's Air and Space Policy," (lecture, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, ON, March 24, 2005).

to facilitate, guide and encourage continuous innovation, learning and growth to prepare [individuals, groups and organizations] for the future."[12] Murray expands on both these definitions by articulating mentoring as:

> A structure and series of processes designed to create effective mentoring relationships, guide the desired behaviour changed of those involved, and evaluate the results for the protégés, the mentors, and the organization with the primary purpose of systematically developing the skills and leadership abilities of the less experienced members of the organization.[13]

All seem to agree that mentoring is a methodology for developing the skills and abilities of less experienced individuals in preparation for future roles in an organization. However, methodology and relationship definition are often the basis of the "hard work" that is required to bring mentoring to an organization.

Murray's definition introduces some of the terminology commonly used in mentoring theory. Here the open literature deviates and although it is not the intent of this essay to debate the differences, it is important to understand the terminology and ensure a common framework for discussion.

Terms such as mentor, coach, sponsor, champion, role model and counsellor are terms often used in discussion of mentoring. Sponsors and champions, for example, tend to be advocates of an individual or groups and there is no direct relationship between the sponsor and those being sponsored. Role models influence by example and there is usually no structure to a relationship.[14] Coaches are usually employed for a specific skill development.[15] Counsellors

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[11] Oxford on-line, http://dictionary.oed.com/; Internet: accessed 2 April 2005.

[12] Harold E. Johnson, *Mentoring: For Exceptional Performance* (Glendale: Griffin Publishing, 1997), 5.

[13] Margo Murray, *Beyond the Myth and Magic of Mentoring: How to Facilitate an Effective Mentoring Program* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), 5.

[14] *Ibid.*, 11-12.

are often used in remedial situations in response to less desirable behaviour.[16] Though these terms tend to be used interchangeably, mentoring involves using all these techniques, focuses at the macro level and involves "going above and beyond" in support of top performers.[17]

Protégé, candidate, apprentice, trainee and subordinate, among others, are terms often used to describe the individual who is benefiting from mentoring. The distinction here is less apparent and appears to be driven by what best suits the organization. This is an important point to recognize. Regardless of what name is chosen to define the relationship, it is critical that the name best suits the organization and minimizes the risk of failure simply for the sake of a name.[18] For ease of discussion, the terms mentor and protégé will be used to define the mentoring relationship for the remainder of this essay.

In mentoring the mentor and protégé is typically a one-on-one relationship. The role of mentor is defined in two broad functions; career based activities and psychosocial activities.[19] Career based activities include sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and challenging assignments while psychosocial activities include role modelling, counselling, acceptance and confirmation and friendship.[20] Murray offers a more practical interpretation of a mentor's role:

- A source of information on the organization,
- Insight into organizational HR development,

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[15] Johnson, *Mentoring: For Exceptional Performance*, 5.

[16] Florence M. Stone, *Coaching, Counselling & Mentoring: How to Choose & Use the Right Technique to Boost Employee Performance* (New York: American Management Association, 1999). 79.

[17] *Ibid.*, 161.

[18] Murray, *Beyond the Myth and Magic of Mentoring* . . ., 10.

[19] B. Wild, *Understanding Mentoring: Implications for the Canadian Forces*. Report Prepared for the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group Ltd., 2002), 4-5.

[20] Kathy E, Kram, "Phases of the Mentor Relationship," *Academy of Management Journal* 26, no 4 (1983), 614.

- Tutoring in skills and behaviour,
- Performance feedback,
- Coaching activities beneficial to experience,
- A confidant during periods of crisis and problems,
- Assist in career goal development,
- A no-fault conclusion of the relationship when the time is appropriate, and
- Maintaining integrity of the relationship between protégé and organizational boss.[21]

Clearly, not ever mentoring relationship or organizational program needs to include all the functions mentioned above but these guidelines should form the basis of any program development.

The mentoring relationship is two sided and the protégé must:

- Assume responsibility for growth and development,
- Have potential to move beyond current position,
- Have ability to perform in more than one area,
- Demonstrate initiative, and
- Be receptive to feedback and coaching.[22]

Mentoring relationships can be defined as primary or secondary.[23] Primary mentoring involves long duration, very intense relationships and encompasses all facets of the career and psychosocial functions. Primary mentoring is focused on success within the organization and

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[21] Murray, *Beyond the Myth and Magic of Mentoring . . .*, 12-13.

[22] *Ibid.*, 13-14.

[23] Wild, *Understanding Mentoring . . .*, 5-6.

life in general. Secondary is less personal and usually shorter in duration and focussed on advancement within the organization. Secondary mentoring is the more common form of mentoring and arguably the easiest one to establish and administer for most organizations.

Mentoring relationships can be formed either formally or informally.[24] In the formal approach mentors are assigned to the protégé through a structured organizational program. Informal mentoring is more or less spontaneous. Not specifically driven by organizational direction, the mentor and protégé enter into a relationship seen as mutually beneficial. The advantages and disadvantages of each approach will be outlined in more detail later in the discussion.

Mentoring has benefits for both the individual and the organization.[25] Merits vary but include faster learning curves, reduced turnover, increased employee loyalty and individual increases in motivation and productivity. Acknowledging that "regardless of how able a leader may be, he will not achieve a position of top responsibility unless his ability is recognized . . .," mentoring also highlights the capabilities of future leaders and facilitates personal and professional development.[26]

This kind of payback should be appealing to most organizations and individuals. The Air Force is no exception in these times of high attrition and finding the right person for the job. If the Air Force can take advantage of these benefits, it should be well situated to progress transformation.

ALLIED AIR FORCES

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[24] Murray, *Beyond the Myth and Magic of Mentoring* . . ., 4-5.

[25] Anthony G. Wallace, "Future Directions in Leadership: Implications for the Selection and Development of Senior Leaders," (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), 118.

[26] Kopser, *Mentoring in the Military* . . .,40.

To provide some balance in analysis it's appropriate to review what if anything is being introduced by other air forces in terms of mentoring. The allied air forces of the United Kingdom (RAF), Norway (RNAF), Australia (RAAF) and the United States (USAF) were chosen as possible examples of mentoring programs. Possibly indicative of the state of mentoring in military forces, with the exception of the USAF, written information for the other services was virtually non-existent.[27] In these cases various forms of non-legislated mentoring more akin to championing or sponsorship is taking place. In these cases the "sponsor most certainly knows who is being sponsored; however the sponsored person may or may not know who the sponsor is."[28] Since these are not formal mentoring programs the greatest flaw may be that "informal mentors are likely to choose people like themselves, the very people they are likely to protect and sponsor."[29] Though research shows that this type of mentoring advantages those being sponsored it leaves a gap in the process of finding the most capable leaders as opposed to those who most closely reflect the current leadership.[30]

There is a universal interest and a level of effort to embrace the merits of mentoring but of the allies reviewed only the USAF has made any efforts to articulate the process. The USAF, recognizing that the existing personnel development system did not meet their needs, took a significant move in 2000 by initiating the Developing Aerospace Leaders or DAL program. Designed as a comprehensive review of developmental policies, guidance and activities, it was intended to recommend how the USAF could develop its personnel at all levels. DAL was the

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[27] Personal interviews with international students attending CSC 31 corroborated these findings. There is no formal documentation to support any mentoring but all confirmed that a non-legislated, undocumented process was on going.

[28] Murray, *Beyond the Myth and Magic of Mentoring* . . ., 11.

[29] Wild, *Understanding Mentoring* . . ., 14.

genesis of what has become a new management approach referred to as Force Development. "Force Development's goal is to move away from one-size-fits-all approach to development."[31] Stood up in 2002, it is intended to replace the occupation based management system, ". . . properly balance core competencies, developmental assignments, professional education, training, mentoring and deployments" and it is tailored to the individual.[32] By moving outside an individual's occupation, the system provides breadth of knowledge and experience to all those prepared to take advantage and a structured means of monitoring development and identifying prospective leaders. Once candidates are identified, Force Development permits visibility and offers guidance to those interested in the challenges of senior leadership.

Mentoring in particular is addressed in the Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-34. The USAF defines the mentor as "a trusted counsellor or guide."[33] Mentoring is further defined as "a relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally."[34] It also emphasizes, "Mentoring is not a promotion enhancement program. It is a professional development program designed to help each individual reach his or her maximum potential."[35] It is intended to foster communication

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[30] *Ibid.*, 15.

[31] A. J. Bosker, "Developing Leaders: Air Force Revises Plan." *Air Force Print News*, 13 November 2002, 1.

[32] *Ibid.,* 1.

[33] United States, Department of the Air Force, Air Force Policy Directive 36-34: Air Force Mentoring Program (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 1, 2000), 1.

[34] *Ibid*., 1.

[35] United States, Department of the Air Force, Air Force Policy Directive 36-3401: Air Force Mentoring (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 1, 2000), 1.

between subordinates and superiors and "enhances morale and discipline and improves the operational environment while maintaining respect for authority"[36]

The USAF program relies predominantly on supervisors as mentors. Through formal and informal feedback, mentors provide guidance in setting career goals through the near-, mid- and long-term of an individual's career. Though individual goals and aspirations are important to the mentoring process, the USAF program clearly states the requirement to meet the organizational needs by declaring, "We must develop people

who are skilled in the employment and support of air and space power and how it meets the security needs of the nation."[37]

The jury is still out on the success of this approach. On the positive, the USAF has applied some structure and direction to its mentoring program. However, it relies predominantly on the use of supervisors and appears to be little more than good leadership practises repackaged to address mentoring. There is little innovation here. As well, the use of supervisors as mentors is an issue under some debate in the literature and will be addressed in follow-on discussion.

CURRENT CANADIAN APPROACH

The current Canadian Air Force approach to career development/mentoring comprises three components. The first is the traditional career management system, which guides personnel within their specific occupations and frames development and careers around a universal occupation development concept. The expectations for development are different

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[36] *Ibid.*, 2.

[37] *Ibid.*, 3.

within each occupation and as has been the case throughout the short history of the Air Force, only certain occupations are permitted access to the highest levels of leadership.[38]

This system has become dated for a number of reasons. It has suffered significantly from the latest challenges of downsizing, resource shortages and issues of attrition within Air Force occupations. As a result it has less to do with career management/development and more to do with ensuring jobs are filled. Finding the right person for the right job is becoming less of a priority then simply finding a "warm body" to do the job. This crisis management approach has also disconnected the management of personnel from efforts to foster viable career development plans. Though the interests

of the service have priority, if the service is to benefit, sufficient consideration must be given to development of future leaders sometimes at the cost of other factors.[39]

Second, the Air Force has always had some form of mentoring. At present, it is occupation focused and not applied consistently. The program is not articulated anywhere and is generally administered by senior occupation councils. As was the case with allied air forces, the current process is more akin to championing or sponsorship and in most cases is not initiated until the major or lieutenant colonel level.[40]

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[38] The most senior positions of Air Force leadership have been reserved for pilots and in some cases over time to other aircrew occupations. Though not necessarily a bad thing, it does cap the potential of other occupations where conceivably the best leader in the Air Force could be from a non-aircrew occupation. Though other factors limit the possibilities for other occupations, a robust mentoring system may find the exceptions to the rule.

[39] These views have been developed by the author through personnel experience in guiding the careers of junior officers and through working groups at the operational level of the air force to develop succession planning/mentoring for 500 Series Technicians and AERE Officers. The views of the traditional nature of the career management shop, the disconnect between succession planning and the ultimate goal of simply finding people to fill positions were also corroborated in a discussion with Col Wauthier, D Mil C, 2 Apr 05.

[40] Because very little is written down, this interpretation is derived from the author's personnel experiences with his own career development in the AERE occupation and discussions with other personnel in air force managed occupations (PLT, NAV, CELE, etc).

Of note, this process tends to be reactive rather than proactive. It responses to shown potential (i.e., position on a given promotion merit list) rather than early identification of potential. Though one of the cornerstones of mentoring is attention to your best performers, it is critical to ensure best performers are identified early enough in one's career to be able to take advantage of guided development.[41]

Coupled with this activity is the expectation that all supervisors will enter into some kind of mentoring relationship with their subordinates. Unlike the USAF, this process is not articulated in any policy guidelines, is prone to interpretation and the "interest" of the supervisor. Associated with the supervisor's role as a mentor is the utilization of the Performance Development Review (PDR), a "form filling" exercise that is required as part of the annual performance evaluation. Part of the Canadian Forces Personnel Appraisal System, the PDR is a useful tool with regard to counselling poor performance to ensure no surprises on the performance report and it also assists the supervisor in populating the performance report. It has far less utility in mentoring high performers.

The third element, just recently introduced, is referred to as Air Force Personnel Management – Officers (Air Command Order (ACO) 1000-7). This document and an equivalent one for non-commissioned members are the most recent and only current orders to outline any process related to career development/progression of personnel in the Air Force. The purpose of ACO 1000-7 "is to ensure that individuals with the capability to achieve senior appointments are identified, tracked and provided with developmental opportunities."[42] Within this order there are two processes, the appointment process and the succession planning process. The appointment

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[41] Stone, *Coaching, Counselling & Mentoring* . . ., 3.

process addresses the short-term goal of identifying "adequately competent individuals" to fill key positions.[43] Though linked and coordination is critical between both processes, of most interest to this discussion is the succession planning process. Succession planning is "used to address the long-term requirement to identify, track and mentor individuals having the potential and motivation to achieve senior appointments."[44] Career progression under this program is based on an individual's performance and the ability to compete with very competent and capable peers.

Planning is based on identifying individuals to be assigned to potential lists, O1-O3. Managed by the Air Personnel Management Board (APMB), Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) is the approving authority for assignment to the O1 list (potential to reach Lieutenant General) and O2 list (potential to reach General Officer rank) based on the ability of subject officers to attain senior executive level. The O3 list is comprised of senior captains and junior majors who demonstrate potential to advance quickly through the next two rank levels. Based on recommendations of the fleet/community and occupation based advisory group (AG), the APMB approves nominations to the O3 list. AGs have applicability at Lieutenant Colonel and below.

An additional balance is achieved through the use of ranking lists. These are lists of those individuals who will compete for promotion in the next year (A List) and those who require special attention to compete favourably for promotion in the near term (B List).[45] These lists are managed by APMB and comprise Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel ranks. These ranking lists if properly developed ensure a balance between the O lists and other potential candidates.

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[42] Department of National Defence, Air Command Order 1000-7: Air Force Personnel Management – Officers (Ottawa: Chief of the Air Staff, 2004), 3.

[43] *Ibid*., 3.

[44] *Ibid*., 3.

Coordination among AGs and chains of command in developing these lists also generates a balance among communities.

Although ACO 1000-7 provides tools to identify individuals with potential it falls short of defining a process for developing potential. Beyond continued demonstration of potential on annual merit lists there are no defined processes to address continued development. For example, for the O3 list, it is the AGs through career managers that "are responsible to ensure that the necessary professional development takes place in a timely manner."[46] This leaves individual AGs with the responsibility of defining development of individuals; a process that is susceptible to all the pitfalls identified in the two components of career development defined previously.

The Air Force has taken a significant step by articulating a process for succession planning. The next logical step is to compliment this with other tools that will ensure that the best are identified and developed into leaders of tomorrow. Mentoring fills this role quite well. The issue now becomes one of determining what the Air Force needs to do to take full advantage of the merits of mentoring.

THE WAY AHEAD

As mentioned, the Air Force currently has a very limited sponsor-like secondary mentoring program that is somewhat fragmented, is applied only to certain occupations and is not articulated. The use of secondary mentoring is consistent with shorter mentoring relationships as is recommended in most literature.[47] In addition to expanding the scope of the

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[45] *Ibid*., 13.

[46] *Ibid*., 12.

[47] Murray, *Beyond the Myth and Magic of Mentoring* . . ., 99.

program, the larger issue is whether the Air Force can meet its needs with an informal as opposed to formal program.

Informal mentoring is usually not tied to organizational goals, is usually occupation focused, varies depending on mentors interests and is mentor driven, there is no training and success of the program is usually anecdotally based.[48] To its advantage, informal mentoring does not require as much effort to implement and has a developed relationship of trust and respect from the outset. Selection of mentor and protégé is spontaneous and can come from shared experiences and interests.[49]

Formal mentoring offers structure and organizational support to mentoring. Benefits include opportunities for education and training, structured mentor and protégé selection, performance measurement and program integration.[50] There is however a much greater risk to the organization in achieving success. It takes greater effort to implement and there is a risk that the selected mentor and protégé may not be compatible or it may take much longer to develop a

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[48] Janine Knackstedt, *Literature Review on Mentoring in the Organizational Context*. Report Prepared for Department of National Defence (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2003), 16. Research of recent literature particularly with respect to the CF and the Public Service has highlighted LCol Knackstedt as a subject matter expert. Her doctorate was in mentoring and her work, though mostly unpublished, is quoted often in public service literature. She is currently employed at ADM HR(Civ) in the organization responsible for mentoring. She was also an academic advisor for an MDS thesis dealing with mentoring during CSC 30.

[49] Wild, *Understanding Mentoring . . .*, 8.

[50] Knackstedt, *Literature Review on Mentoring in the Organizational Context*, 16.

relationship.[51] Though each approach appears to have balance in the advantages and disadvantages, the most successful approach to date has been informal mentoring.[52]

To take advantage of the success of the informal approach and also derive some of the benefits of the formal approach, the Air Force should look to a mix between informal and formal.[53] In this case, the hybrid program should offer the opportunity for mentors and protégé relationships to develop without specific direction but be coupled with all the support mechanisms typically offered in a formal program. It is also important to note a formal program does not necessarily mean mandatory participation. In fact, "voluntary participation is an important condition for the success of a program."[54]

Equally important is the requirement for flexibility in the program.[55] This will be partially driven by the informal aspect of the program but additionally the mentor must be offered the opportunity to mentor in a style and manner that is most comfortable. "There is a fine line between too much structure and not enough."[56] The key is for the Air Force to find this fine line in its hybrid program and change to meet the needs. As a beginning, this can be achieved by implementing the recommendations of this paper over a short operating period (up

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[51] Wild, *Understanding Mentoring . . .*, 10.

[52] *Ibid*., 11.

[53] *Ibid*., 10. A third approach has been suggested for mentoring implementation. It is referred to as the semi-formal option where the strategy is to develop an implementation that takes advantage of the merits of the formal and informal approaches.

[54] Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Guidelines for the Development of a Mentoring Program* (Ottawa: Official Languages and Employment Equity Branch, 1995), 17.

[55] Public Service Human Resource Management Agency of Canada, *Mentoring Programs in the Federal Public Service: Status and Best Practices* (Ottawa: Policy and Planning Branch, 2004), 29.

[56] Knackstedt, *Literature Review on Mentoring in the Organizational Context*, 12.

to two years) and then performing an evaluation on the results before making a full commitment on the final implementation.[57]

The Air Force must also establish a mechanism, likely through the career manager, which gives personnel the opportunity to identify themselves as interested in participating in the mentoring program. Where mentoring relationships have not developed informally, this mechanism will give more senior personnel the opportunity to select protégés.

Although the role of supervisors in mentoring is not unique to the military, the fairly rigid chain of command offers some interesting challenges. It is suggested that a supervisor as a mentor is too close to the protégé and has far too much influence in terms of performance and job assignment.[58] This can lead to reluctance on the part of the protégé to confide in his supervisor, which is contrary to a primary role of any mentor. On the other hand, the supervisor is well positioned to provide guidance as more time is spent in direct contact with the protégé. Research in fact has shown that at least half of those involved in a mentoring program have had supervisors as mentors. Knackstedt argues that most of these relationships started as supervisor-subordinate relationships but later evolved into mentorship after the supervisory phase was over.[59]

The USAF argues that the use of supervisors maintains the integrity of the chain of command.[60] Within the military chain of command supervisors must be able to continue to demonstrate leadership and provide development to subordinates. The traditional development

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[57] Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Guidelines for the Development of a Mentoring Program*, 25.

[58] Wild, *Understanding Mentoring . . .*, 23.

[59] Janine Knackstedt, *Mentoring in Organizations*. Report Prepared for Department of National Defence (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2001), 2.

[60] United States, *Air Force Policy Directive 36-3401. . .*, 2.

tools work well for supervisors but the mentor must be able to promote, be an advocate for and be able to protect the protégé; powers the supervisor will not likely have. This requires a mentor to be several hierarchical levels above protégés.[61] The Air Force must be sensitive to the Treasury Board guidelines that specify, "Mentoring demands an investment and a commitment beyond the duties involved in day-to-day supervision."[62]

To ensure the chain of command is respected supervisors should continue to follow the principles of leadership and take advantage of development tools as required. Where individuals highlight their interest in a mentor every effort should be made to ensure that the mentor is at least two ranks above the protégé. This is particularly critical as the protégé gains rank. Though there is no supporting literature to provide direction in this area, as a minimum and to start the program, the Air Force should establish mentors at least two ranks above for senior officer protégés. In exceptional cases, junior officers should be accorded the same treatment. With training and education the mentor and supervisor should be capable of a synergistic relationship in the overall development of the protégé/subordinate.

Fundamental to any program is the support of senior leadership.[63] It is critical that the Air Force adopt mentoring as part of the culture if it is to succeed. This involves ensuring that the program is applied consistently and it is seen as a tool for success. The Air Force must adopt a system of training and education that identifies the merits of mentoring, the organizational

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[61] Knackstedt, *Mentoring in Organizations*, 2.

[62] Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Guidelines for the Development of a Mentoring Program*, 9.

[63] Public Service Human Resource Management Agency of Canada, *Mentoring Programs in the Federal Public Service . . .*, 9.

process and the role it plays in career development.[64] As well there needs to be an obvious connection between the support of the leadership and the program itself. The Air Force can achieve this by communicating support at the most senior level and through the visibility of senior leadership at training session, for example. The program must have a champion and there is no better than the leader of the Air Force.[65]

As mentoring is a career development tool, it must also be seen as augmenting the broader development effort. Training and execution must be seen to "fit together into an overall career development program."[66] For example, linking mentoring to the broader program and integration with the succession planning tools such as ACO 1000-7 will ensure succession planning is not done in a haphazard fashion.[67]

More importantly, mentoring must be integrated within the career management process. Career management decisions must be less fiscal in nature and coincide with the broader career development of individuals. Communication between AGs, mentors and protégés is essential and in this age of electronic tools such as web-based information and e-mail, this should be stressed and is very achievable. The greater benefit is that personnel will see moves, job changes, etc., as part of the plan and will be more motivated and less inclined to depart the service. Practically speaking, this approach is not realizable in all cases and will not happen in the very near term but the focus must be placed on those individuals who are involved in the mentoring program to ensure credibility of the program.

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[64] Knackstedt, *Literature Review on Mentoring in the Organizational Context*, 10.

[65] Public Service Human Resource Management Agency of Canada, *Mentoring Programs in the Federal Public Service . . .*, 29.

[66] *Ibid.*, 10.

[67] *Ibid.*, 28.

Traditional career management strategies must not conflict with career development. In this vein it might also be advantageous for the career management process to undergo a comprehensive review similar to the USAF DAL, with the goal of integrating all aspects of career management/development.

Another important aspect of the mentoring program, particularly in the current fiscal environment, is that it must be cost effective.[68] The Air Force can get the most "bang for the buck" by limiting mentoring to processes within the organization. Mentors can and should be more senior Air Force personnel, as opposed to contracted capability, and for the most part should rely on the professionalism and generosity of these individual to perform the mentor role. The unique nature of the military drives some of this requirement but the most value is derived by the experiences of serving personnel.

On a final note, as with any activity there must be a monitoring or performance measurement component that allows senior leadership of the Air Force to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring program. Progress of protégés, feedback from mentors and formal evaluation from all participants (as well as non-participants) will serve to provide the necessary data to allow the mentoring program to evolve or in turn be terminated.[69] To achieve this, the Air Force must provide some form of centralized control, again possibly a component of the career management organization, to ensure consistent and effective application of the mentoring program.

CONCLUSION

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[68] *Ibid.*, 11.

[69] Knackstedt, *Literature Review on Mentoring in the Organizational Context*, 12.

The Air Force is faced with a significant challenge, the need to transform into a relevant force capable of operating in the complex environment of the 21st century. To facilitate this transformation the Air Force must apply some effort to enhance the capabilities of future leaders. A stepping-stone in this regard is a consistent and effective mentoring program that provides visibility into potential of officers and the training and guidance to take advantage of identified potential. This can be achieved through a revamping of the existing mentoring program with particular focus on formal structure and support coupled with a flexible and informal mentor/protégé relationship. Critical to the success of the program is the embedding of mentoring into the culture of the Air Force, the application of appropriate resources, integration with the career management process and a follow-on performance measurement process. Finally, the Air Force should implement this program for up to two years to start, complete an evaluation and adjust the program as required to meet the needs.

Fundamental to the success of transformation is the need for "knowledgeable, productive and innovative leaders."[70] "Success does not happen by chance. Success requires a well-executed strategy. Mentoring facilitates that strategy."[71]

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[70] Gosselin, The Canadian Forces College . . ., 16.

[71] Johnson, *Mentoring: For Exceptional Performance*, 13.

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