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## MODERNIZING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO INCREASING JOB SATISFACTION & PERFORMANCE AMONGST THE OFFICER CORPS IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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**JCSP 40**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

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EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

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## **MODERNIZING LEADERSHIP PRACTICES TO INCREASING JOB SATISFACTION & PERFORMANCE AMONGST THE OFFICER CORPS IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

*“To remain a legitimate instrument of national power in the 21st century the Canadian Army must commit to developing a robust and sustained culture of perpetual innovation.”<sup>1</sup>*

- Designing Canada’s Army of Tomorrow

### **Introduction**

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) must continue to evolve its leadership practices in order to remain a sophisticated and effective organization that is attractive to the educated segment of Canada, offering not only job security but also high levels of job satisfaction. Retention of officers remains a problem for the CAF and is costly in terms of funding and the effectiveness of the force.<sup>2</sup> Modern motivational theories and practices have continued to take hold in the private sector, focusing on innate human needs and creating intrinsic motivation that is promoting higher levels of job satisfaction and performance. In order to increase job satisfaction, performance and retention of the CAF Officer Corps, leaders at all levels need to recognize the benefits of the motivational concepts of autonomy, mastery and purpose, and employ them when leading officers.

### **Background**

Increasing job satisfaction amongst officers should be an important topic for all leaders within the CAF, not only for retention concerns, but also for the effectiveness of the organization. Attrition rates amongst some officer occupations are very costly and the

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<sup>1</sup> Department of National Defence, “Designing Canada’s Army of Tomorrow” Kingston, ON, Directorate of Land Concepts and Designs, 2011: p.49.

<sup>2</sup> Moorehead, Craig. “Recruitment Woes and Officer Attrition in the Canadian Forces.” Atlantic Council of Canada, 2014: p.3

demographic of potential recruits is a very tight pool.<sup>3</sup> For example, to train Army Electrical Mechanical Engineering officers, costs \$200,000 in the first 7 years; however, after 7 years, 35 percent of personnel left the CAF.<sup>4</sup> Affecting performance, studies have shown that the reward of a pension keeps people from leaving the CAF even though job satisfaction is low.<sup>5</sup> This can lead to several years of unmotivated, unhappy members that are not truly engaged in the goals of the organization, decreasing the overall effectiveness of the CAF.

Research and practices based on increasing intrinsic motivation within employees have evolved in the private sector and have yielded excellent results in terms of increasing job satisfaction, performance and retention.<sup>6</sup> It has been shown that rewards such as money or anticipated recognition can actually decrease interest in a task and long term performance.<sup>7</sup> External rewards or punishments, known as “carrot and stick” management, are particularly ineffective when dealing with employees with responsibilities, similar to CAF officers, in the area of knowledge work, critical analysis, creativity, conceptual design, and problem solving.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that organization should strive to develop intrinsically motivated employees. Daniel Pink<sup>9</sup> in his book *Drive*, outlines the three key elements to develop intrinsically motivate employees and liberate

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<sup>3</sup> McRoberts, Hugh. “National Defence – Military Recruiting and Retention.” Report of the Auditor General, Chapter 2, 2006: pg.35

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.65

<sup>5</sup> Oakes, Leslie. “Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Intention to leave: A sample of the Canadian Armed Forces.” Dept of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University, ON, Canada, 1991: p.134

<sup>6</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”. Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: pp.68-79

<sup>7</sup> Deci, Edward. “Effects of Externally Mediated Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 18, 1971.

<sup>8</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”. Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: pp.33-34

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Pink is a best selling author of several books related to motivational theories, contributed to New York Times, Harvard Business Review, Fast Company and Wired. He also lectures to corporations and universities around the world on the new work place.

their natural drive: provide them with autonomy, a learning environment in which to effectively develop their capabilities (labelled *mastery*), and a sense of purpose.<sup>10</sup>

### **Autonomy**

Extensive research has shown that it is human nature to be autonomous, curious and self-directed. Researchers, Deci and Ryan, cite autonomy as one of three basic human needs.<sup>11</sup> When autonomy support is provided to employees in terms of tasks, technique and time, intrinsic motivation is enhanced, resulting in increases in performance, job satisfaction and also work-home balance.<sup>12</sup> CAF leaders should leverage this research and apply the concepts that have proven successful amongst many other organizations.

Autonomy is central to Self-Determination Theory (SDT) research, which had discovered that a sense of autonomy has a powerful effect on individual performance and attitude.<sup>13</sup> Autonomous motivation promotes greater conceptual understanding, better grades, enhanced persistence at school and sporting activities, higher productivity, less burnout, and greater levels of psychological well-being.<sup>14</sup> Studies across businesses have shown that greater job satisfaction is achieved amongst employees whose bosses offered “autonomous support.”<sup>15</sup> The resulting enhancement in job satisfaction resulted led to higher performance on the job, which also extended to better performance of their

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<sup>10</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.” Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Deci, Edward and Ryan, Richard, “Facilitating Optimal Motivation and Psychological Well-Being Across Life’s Domains,” Canadian Psychology 49, no.1, February 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us.” Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: pp.90-104

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.94

<sup>14</sup> Deci, Edward and Ryan, Richard, “Facilitating Optimal Motivation and Psychological Well-Being Across Life’s Domains,” Canadian Psychology 49, no.1, February 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”. Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: pp.101

organizations. For example, researchers at Cornell University studied 320 small businesses, half of which granted workers autonomy, the other half relying on controlled top-down direction. The business that offered autonomy grew at four times the rate of the control-oriented firms and had one-third the turnover.<sup>16</sup>

The CAF doctrine of mission command<sup>17</sup> supports the concepts and need for autonomy, in particular in what tasks are required to achieve commander's intent and how to achieve these tasks. However, in practice mission command is not well executed and a culture of micro-management has been reported where leaders are challenged to relinquish strict control and management of their subordinates' activities.<sup>18</sup> In order to improve autonomy, CAF leaders should refer to Pink's identification of three key areas in which autonomy support can be applied to employees: their task (what they do), their technique (how they do it), and their time (when they do it).

CAF leaders can increase autonomy support in relation to task and technique by drawing on the lessons and recommendations of Pink and lessons from the private sector. First, Pink recommends including subordinates in goal setting for their section or organization.<sup>19</sup> He explains that people often have higher aims than ones that bosses hoist upon them. Involving subordinates in goal setting will increase their level of engagement and commitment.<sup>20</sup> Second, in-line with mission command tenets, allow subordinates to

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<sup>16</sup> Baard, Paul; Deci, Edward; Ryan, Richard, "Intrinsic Need Satisfaction: A Motivational Basis of Performance and Well-Being in Two Work Settings," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 34, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Mission command relies on a clear understanding of the commander's intent to co-ordinate the actions of subordinate commanders and thereby allows them maximum of freedom of action in how they accomplish their missions. Department of National Defence. "Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations." Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy, 2005: p.65

<sup>18</sup> English, Allan. "What Happened to Mission Command in the CAF?" *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol. 14, No.3, Summer 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Pink, Daniel. "Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us". Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: p.170

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

develop their own tasks to achieve goals. 3M President William McKnight stated “those men and women to whom we delegate authority and responsibility, if they are good people, are going to want to do their jobs in their own way.”<sup>21</sup> Third, encourage subordinates to spend a portion of their time to work on their own side-projects. This breeds a culture of innovation and has been a key component to some of the most successful companies in the world. Notably, 3M and Google have achieved great successes by encouraging employees to spend one day of the workweek to engage in side-projects of their choosing.<sup>22</sup> This approach was attributed to the invention of Post-it Notes for 3M. Also, more than half of Google’s new offerings are birthed during this period of pure autonomy!<sup>23</sup> CAF leaders can execute a similar philosophy in certain settings, increasing the sense of autonomy while creating the conditions for innovative thinking.

The last concept, control over one’s time, is a crucial part of supporting autonomy. Perhaps the most innovative concept in providing autonomy amongst organizations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the movement towards what is called results-only work environment (ROWE).<sup>24</sup> This concept provides employees the freedom to manage their own schedules between their work and home life, the ability to work from home when it best suits and the ability to work from the office when it best suits. ROWE encourages people to contribute to an organization’s success rather just show up and grind out the workday. Several reputable businesses have gone this route with exceptional improvements in productivity such as Best Buy, The Gap Outlet, public

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.92

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.94

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.98

health departments in the US and the US Federal Government Office of Personnel Management.<sup>25</sup>

In the CAF, there are many opportunities where such a concept could be employed for officers, especially in staff roles within institutional organizations such as capability development, resources management, requirements, and even those in direct support to operations. Leveraging prevalent technologies such as Blackberries, the Internet, and remote access to networks would allow members to be more flexible with regards to their work location while performing their function. ROWE may be perceived by some as threatening to the military values<sup>26</sup> of duty, loyalty and integrity. However, encouraging autonomy does not mean discouraging accountability or any military values; it may in fact enhance them. Members will be trusted and enabled to achieve the required results in the best, most efficient manner possible, free from the shackles of standardized work hours and locations. ROWE would offer CAF members more opportunity to balance home and family life. Without sovereignty over our time, it is nearly impossible to have autonomy over our lives.<sup>27</sup>

### **Mastery**

Achieving mastery in one's work is another key driver of intrinsic motivation that leads to greater job satisfaction and performance. This concept of mastery refers to providing an environment where employees feel they are developing their capabilities at a challenging, but manageable rate. This sense of progress contributes to one's inner

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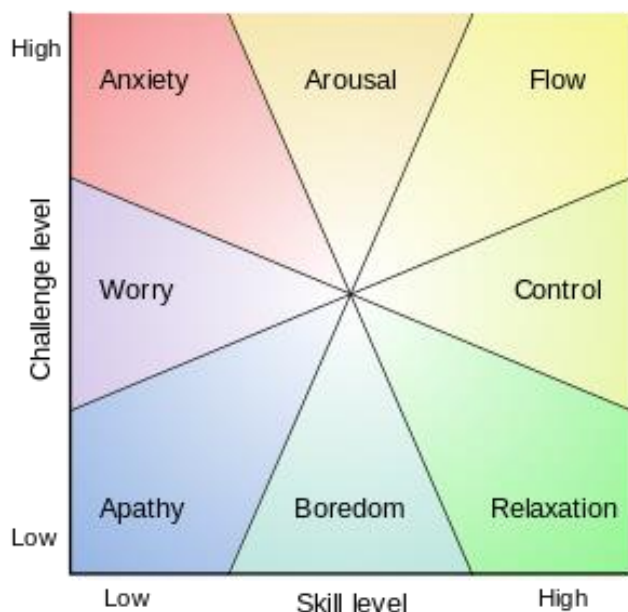
<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.99

<sup>26</sup> Canadian Defence Academy. "Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada" Kingston, ON, CF Leadership Institute, 2009: pp.38-49.

<sup>27</sup> Pink, Daniel. "Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us". Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: p.105



drive.<sup>28</sup> Pink states leaders must understand the capabilities of their employees in order to provide what is called “flow” for their employees.<sup>29</sup>



**Figure 1. Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow* Model. Mental state in terms of challenge level and skill level.<sup>30</sup>**

The concept of *flow* was developed by researcher Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.<sup>31</sup> His studies have revealed that what makes an experience genuinely satisfying is a state of consciousness called *flow*.<sup>32</sup> A state of *flow* for employees, as seen in Figure 1, is where developmental progress and job satisfaction are the highest. *Flow* requires employers to calibrate what people are being directed to do and what they are capable of doing. If they are assigned responsibilities or tasks that are too difficult, employees will feel anxiety,

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.25

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.105

<sup>30</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. “*Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.*” Dordrecht: Springer, 2014.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has studied over 20 years the states of optimal experience--those times when people report feelings of concentration and deep enjoyment.

<sup>32</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly (2014). “*Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.*” Dordrecht: Springer, 2014: p. xi

poor engagement and low satisfaction in their work.<sup>33</sup> If their responsibilities are too easy, employees will become bored and disengaged with their work; equally job satisfaction suffers.<sup>34</sup> This is where leaders must communicate with subordinates on how they are feeling about tasks to gauge their level of capability in relation to their assigned responsibilities. Pink concludes that leaders should seek to provide “Goldilocks tasks”, which are neither too difficult nor too easy.<sup>35</sup> The focus should be on not giving tasks fitting the subordinate’s capabilities exactly, but incrementally above their capabilities, giving them space and support to reach higher levels, fostering improvement, continual mastery and growth.<sup>36</sup>

Achieving high levels of capability and state of *flow* can be especially challenging for CAF officers who transfer into new positions every two years on average. These positions may vary immensely and require varying skills and knowledge bases ranging from commanding soldiers on operations, to business planning involving hundreds of millions of dollars, to capability development positions, and more. The learning curve can be steep for many positions in areas in which officers do not have experience or knowledge. Figure 2, Blooms Taxonomy, is used to demonstrate the various levels of learning that officers would have to endure when posted to new areas of work. It is often stated amongst officers, that it takes the first year to learn the job and the current issues (knowledge, comprehension, early stages of application), the second year to effectively conduct their responsibilities (application), and if a third year is afforded, they can

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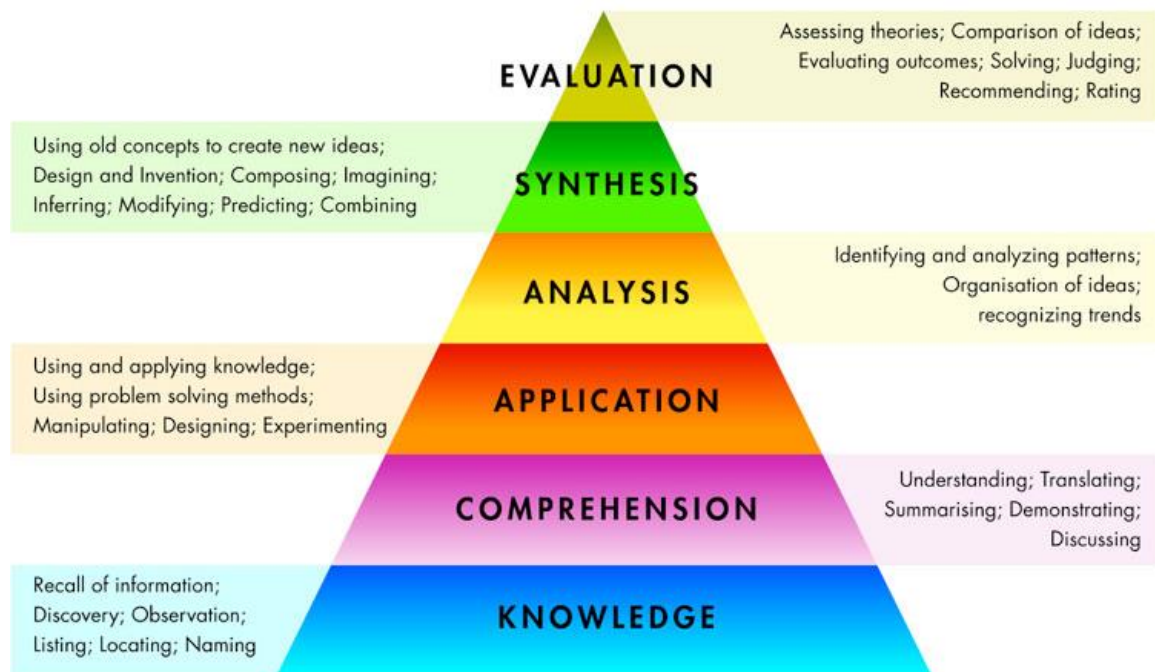
<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”. Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: p.105

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 106

explore new ideas and make recommendations (limited synthesis and evaluation).<sup>37</sup> For even more niche roles and organizations, such as Capability Based Planning, it has been said to take 5 years in the organization to reach this highest stage.<sup>38</sup> Especially in new areas of employment, *flow* would be most advantageous in order to avoid officers being overwhelmed and anxious, as that will lead to poor job satisfaction, performance degradation and lack of engagement.



**Figure 2. Blooms Taxonomy. The Classification of Educational Goals.**<sup>39</sup>

In order to seek *flow* and advance officers more quickly up the levels of Blooms Taxonomy, mitigation should be sought through such avenues as specialized training, mentorship and consistent communication with supervisors. Overall, mastery can be a

<sup>37</sup> Based on my conservations and experiences in my 22 years as an officer in the CAF.

<sup>38</sup> Email from LCol Chris Robidoux, 5 May 2015. He spent 2 years within Chief of Force Development in the CAF from 2012-2014.

<sup>39</sup> Bloom, B. S.; Engelhart, M. D.; Furst, E. J.; Hill, W. H.; Krathwohl, D. R. Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain. New York: David McKay Company, 1956.

challenge for officers; leaders should leverage the concepts presented here to strive to provide a state of *flow* for their officers.

### **Purpose**

*“When you're surrounded by people who share a passionate commitment around a common purpose, anything is possible”*

- Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks

It is human nature to seek purpose. Autonomy and mastery, are essential to fostering the intrinsically motivated employee; however, for the proper balance, a third component is needed, purpose.<sup>40</sup> The most deeply motivated people, not to mention those that are most productive and satisfied, attach their desires to a cause larger than themselves.<sup>41</sup> A sense of purpose can “provide an emotional catalyst, beyond reward or wealth maximization which lacks the power to fully mobilize human energies.”<sup>42</sup> In particular, the new millennial generation does not rate money or recognition as the most important forms of compensation or reward, but rather such factors as “a great team” and “the ability to give back to society through work” and “purposeful work.”<sup>43</sup> If they cannot find purpose in their organization, they will create a venture of their own. With this in mind, the CAF must evolve in order to attract and retain new generations of officers.

For members of the CAF, the sense of purpose as a whole should rate very high – protecting their country, family and friends from the dangers of the world. In direct support of operations, the sense of purpose comes easily – it’s what members train for and lives are often at stake. However, amongst institutional positions, officers are more

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<sup>40</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”. Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: p.131

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Hamel, Gary. “Moon Shots for Management.” Harvard Business Review, Feb 2009: p.91

<sup>43</sup> Pink, Daniel. “Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us”. Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: p.133.

challenged to feel a deep sense of purpose. This is, perhaps, where leaders are needed the most in order to find creative and sincere methods to instil a sense of purpose. Whether it is Force Management, Force Development or Force Employment, all positions contribute to the operational effectiveness of the CAF. Most officers realize this fact in a broader context; however, when they are manning the cubicle day-in and day-out, the sense of purpose in their tasks can become more elusive. This is where motivation and job fulfilment can wane, with people questioning if their efforts are for a worthy cause. For leaders of such organizations, this is a real challenge that must be addressed.

Studies from Adam Grant, a University of Pennsylvania psychologist, offer some insight. His studies discovered that when subjects are aware of the greater purpose of a task, they performed at significantly higher levels, on average by a factor of 2.<sup>44</sup> Grant concluded that transformational leadership is most effective in motivating followers when they interact with the beneficiaries of their work, which highlights how the vision has meaningful consequences for other people.<sup>45</sup> This could be an excellent tool for leaders at all levels within the CAF, especially within institutional organizations. Put the officers in touch with the beneficiaries of their work, strengthening their sense of purpose, job satisfaction and performance. For example, purpose can be instilled in the Captain or Major level project director of an equipment project by sending them to the field to interact with those soldiers that are deficient the right equipment to do their job. The same can be achieved by sending the business planner on the major exercise for which he or she coordinated the funds from their cubicle many miles away. Although these

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<sup>44</sup> Grant, Adam (2012), "Leading With Meaning: Beneficiary Contact, Pro-Social Impact, and the Performance Effects of Transformational Leadership". *Academy of Management Journal*, 55, 2012: p.458

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.470

measures may not always be practical, the transformational leader will recognize how this short-term challenge can pay dividends in the long term.

Three different levels of purpose can be categorized: personal purpose, organizational purpose, and task purpose.<sup>46</sup> Each level is important, and effective organizations must pay attention to each level to enhance performance. The ideal state is for all three levels of purpose to be aligned.<sup>47</sup> Ideally, employees can experience a connection between the organization's purpose, strategies, the way the team works, and the specific work that they do. Additionally, they can commit to the organization's mission and vision, because doing so helps them fulfill their own purpose in life.<sup>48</sup> Overall, people at work are thirsting for context, yearning to know that what they do contributes to a larger whole. Leaders should spend a little less time telling how and a little more time showing why in order to establish a strong sense of pride and commitment amongst subordinates.<sup>49</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Scientific research and practical applications in the business world have shown that intrinsically motivated people will always outperform externally motivated employees over the long-term and they will experience higher levels of job satisfaction. This is especially true for more knowledge work, creative, conceptual design and analytical responsibilities and tasks, similar to that of officers with the CAF. In order to develop and maintain job satisfaction within the Officers Corps, leaders at all levels must

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<sup>46</sup> Craig, Nick, and Scott Snook. "From Purpose to Impact: Figure Out Your Passion and Put It to Work." *Harvard Business Review* 92, no. 5, May 2014: pp. 105–106.

<sup>47</sup> Marichiba, Matthew. "Purpose in the Workplace – Three Levels of Purpose." *Workplace Culture*, March 31, 2010: p.1

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*: p.3

<sup>49</sup> Pink, Daniel. "Drive – The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us". Penguin Group, London (UK), 2009: p.138

seek ways to provide them autonomy support, promote a learning environment for officers to grow their skills, and instil a sense of purpose at not only an organizational level, but also at the task level. With these concepts in mind, officers will remain more engaged in their work, perform better, be more satisfied in their work and they will stay longer. Creating such leadership will not only aid in recruiting and retention, but will also contribute to the effectiveness of the CAF. Although it takes time for people and organizations to adjust to these practices, many of the concepts already exist in some form within the CAF doctrine. It will take the creativity, flexibility and determination of leaders at all levels to truly implement and seek the great potential that lies within an organization of intrinsically motivated people.

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