



## Why the RCN Should Develop and Implement Talent Management into its Succession Planning Doctrine

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### JCSP 49 DL

#### Exercise Solo Flight

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# **WHY THE RCN SHOULD DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT TALENT MANAGEMENT INTO ITS SUCCESSION PLANNING DOCTRINE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is facing a challenge in recruiting and retaining personnel. These challenges are undermining the operational effectiveness of the force as well as its ability to execute future plans. While the CAF is making a concerted effort to attract new members, there appears to be less attention paid to retention of the CAF's shrinking force. Part of the current retention strategy involves providing academic and/or experiential opportunities to help develop personnel for more senior roles within the institution. This is called succession planning (SP). While considerable effort is invested in SP, lessor efforts are directed to talent management (TM) of individual people who are being developed to take on these future institutional roles. SP is currently applied as a panacea, but it does not select the best-suited individuals for specific positions. It only provides general development opportunities irrespective of "best fit" for the individual's talents or the needs of the organization. This paper will argue that current SP efforts within the Naval Logistics Officer (NLO) doctrine of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) do not provide enough TM of individuals. Further, individual TM – that is, continuing tailored development of the innate skillset and aptitude of a particular person – should be considered and incorporated into SP. Doing so will retain existing talent and improve retention within the CAF. I will support this argument through the introduction of behavioural theory concepts before comparing NLO doctrine to that of other CAF elements and parts of the American military.

## **SUCCESSION PLANNING VERSUS TALENT MANAGEMENT**

The terms SP and TM are closely linked and are often used interchangeably. Succession Planning can be seen as "the process of identifying and developing successors for critical roles within an organization."<sup>1</sup> Talent Management is the "act of aligning the talents of individuals with the needs of the service to maximize the performance of both."<sup>2</sup> Both processes' foundational role is to provide opportunities to develop people for future positions within an organization. In doing so, both practices chart paths for advancement and offer developmental opportunities such as academic training and employment experiences that enable an organization to fill future roles. The fundamental difference between SP and TM is that SP focuses on producing generally qualified people for the required institutional positions whereas TM involves tailored selection of specific individuals for specific future institutional positions and streams. Not all TM theory is useful to a complex organization like the CAF, and we should be wary of applying the same uniform solution as has been used with SP. However, certain elements of TM theory could be explored and incorporated into the current RCN SP doctrine to make it work better for the organization.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Bottomley, *Developing Sustainable Leadership Through Succession Planning*, (Arizona: School of Advanced Studies, University of Phoenix (Arizona, USA). p.1.

<sup>2</sup> United States. United States Marine Corps. "*US Marine Corps Talent Management 2030*," Executive Summary (November 2021), 1.

## BEHAVIOURAL THEORY MODELS

The practice of TM came to the forefront in the early 1980s, when businesses began to consider that the increasing individualisation of organizations required a new framework to consider an employee's potential for future success as separate from their current performance.<sup>3</sup> The 1990s introduced the term "human capital" and brought a sharper focus to forecasting and planning with respect to employees.<sup>4</sup> Along with technological advances, this new focus led to "informed" workplaces, which in turn had an "impact on the value and power of talent."<sup>5</sup> Since the 2000s, increasing attention has been afforded to developing TM practices, and in particular, incorporating behavioural theory.<sup>6</sup>

Theories around TM continue to evolve.<sup>7</sup> Given this evolution, there is no single approach that can be perfectly applied to any situation. In an organization, the perception of those involved with the program can play a significant role in how successful a particular TM approach will be.<sup>8</sup> While most TM models encompass the entire employee cycle, from recruiting through onboarding (training) and maintaining/developing (retention)<sup>9</sup>, this paper will only examine the training and retention elements. This will be done via two theoretical models: the Dominance/Direct Driver, Influence/Inspiration, Steadiness and Compliance/Conscientious (DISC) approach and the Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness (SCARF) Model.

### *DISC Approach*

The DISC approach is a behavioural model first introduced by psychologist William Mouton Marston in the 1928 book, "Emotions of Normal People" and later refined by industrial psychologist Walter Vernon Clarke.<sup>10</sup> In an organizational setting, it is a tool used to improve productivity, teamwork, leadership, and communication.<sup>11</sup> This tool assists in evaluating personality and behavioural traits through four factors: Dominance/Direct Driver, Influence/Inspiration, Steadiness and Compliance/Conscientious (Figure 1).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibraiz Tarique, *The Routledge Companion to Talent Management* (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>7</sup> P. Caligiuri et al, *Global Talent Management: A Critical Review and Research for the New Organizational Reality. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behaviour*. Vol. 11 (January 2024). 414.

<sup>8</sup> Marian Thunnissen, "Talent Management." *Employee Relations* 38, no. 1(2016): 69.

<sup>9</sup> Eva Gallardo et al, "Talent Management: Context Matters," *The International Journal of HR Management* 31, no. 4(2020): 458.

<sup>10</sup> Ganesh K. Beedu "A Study of the Effectiveness of DISC Personality Test" (doctorate thesis, Department of Business and Media, Selinus University of Science and Literature, 2021), 14

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

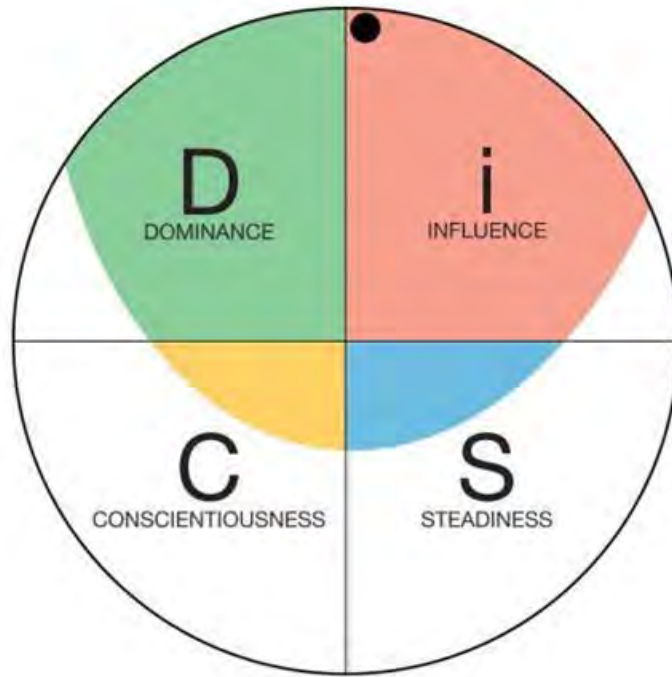


Figure 1

DISC Assessment (example)

Source: G.K. Beedu, “A Study of the Effectiveness of DISC Personality Test”

The Dominance or Direct (D) factor measures one’s ability to take control of situations, how task-oriented an individual is, and their focus on achieving goals.<sup>13</sup> People that score highly on this factor like challenge and creating change. They are self-assured, assertive and risk-takers.<sup>14</sup> People who score highly on the Influence or Inspirational (I) factor are social people that enjoy being the centre of attention. Influential personalities are often described as extroverted, enthusiastic, and enjoy working in teams.<sup>15</sup> They are able to shape an environment through autonomy, coaching and counselling.<sup>16</sup> People who score high on the Steadiness (S) factor are stable, predictable and even-tempered, while being friendly, sympathetic to others and great listeners.<sup>17</sup> In an organization, steadiness types are supportive and collaborative and can be described as calm, deliberate and dependable.<sup>18</sup> The Compliance/Conscientious (C) style can be described as detail-oriented, logical, and analytical.<sup>19</sup> People who score high on this factor tend

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 25.

to gravitate toward clear structure and logical processes, and they embrace individual efforts and contributions.<sup>20</sup>

The DISC approach can be an excellent coaching tool when used as part of a TM strategy. It enables a coach or mentor to better understand the assessed person's strengths and weaknesses and helps identify motivational factors, leading to an accurate assessment of potential success in the future.<sup>21</sup> It can also be used to improve onboarding of new employees as managers can leverage the results of the test to maximize training and assign an individual to a more targeted development stream.<sup>22</sup>

### *SCARF Model*

The SCARF model (Figure 2) is based on social neuroscience theory that explores how humans relate to others and themselves.<sup>23</sup> The basis for this model is the theory that the human brain is “governed by the principle of minimizing threat and maximizing reward”, particularly with respect to social behaviour.<sup>24</sup> The SCARF model is made up of five factors: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness. Individual behaviour occurs within a particular factor in relation to threats and rewards.



Figure 2

### SCARF Model

Source: Growth Engineering website. <https://www.growthengineering.co.uk/scarf-model/>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>22</sup> Yusuf Arafin, “Talent Management-Based Training to Produce High-Performing Resources,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Lubik* 13, no. 1 (January-June 2023): 306.

<sup>23</sup> David Rock, “SCARF: A Brain-based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing others,” *NeuroLeadership Journal*, Issue 1 (2008): 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

The Status factor is evaluated as one's relative importance in relation to others in an organization. The reduction of one's status may be perceived as a threat because it reduces the chances for reward, such as promotion or high-performance evaluations.<sup>25</sup> Conversely, even small public recognitions can lead one to feel they have increased status, which could result in better employee engagement and associate positive feelings with the organization.

Certainty refers to the human need for predictability and clarity in a situation. The brain is constantly processing and looking for predictive patterns in order to enable decision-making while making subconscious assessments of threats in relation to taking an action.<sup>26</sup> If an employee is feeling uncertain about a particular circumstance, this may trigger the brain to assess a threat, increasing stress and decreasing performance. Increasing certainty can result in a sense of safety and stability which could result in better decision-making and collaboration.<sup>27</sup>

Autonomy refers to the sense of control that people feel they have over their own decisions and actions within social situations. Increasing autonomy increases the sense of agency over decisions resulting in a sense of reward. Conversely, reducing autonomy can be perceived as a threat as the individual feels a loss of control and an inability to influence their environment.<sup>28</sup>

Relatedness refers to a sense of connection or attachment to the group. It acknowledges a foundational human desire for social connection and interaction. When someone feels a strong sense of relatedness, they feel accepted, understood and valued resulting in increased productivity.<sup>29</sup> Threats to relatedness, such as viewing someone as a competitor or opponent, could result in a decrease in empathy leaving employees feeling alienated.<sup>30</sup>

Fairness refers to the human desire for equitable treatment and just results. This encompasses the promotion of transparency, accountability and inclusivity within the social context of an organization.<sup>31</sup>

The SCARF model can be applied by both individuals and organizations to increase productivity and employee loyalty by minimizing threats while maximizing rewards. In an organizational setting, having a better understanding of how specific individuals perceive management's actions as threats or rewards can enable focused education and training efforts, tailored coaching and mentoring approaches, and develop more emotionally intelligent leaders.

The DISC and SCARF models are examples of behavioural assessment tools that could be used to incorporate TM into the RCN NLO SP. The next section will delve into the updated Naval Logistics Officer Occupation Management Directive (NLOOMD), issued by Director Naval Logistics (DNL). This next section will explore areas in the NLOOMD where specific TM practices could be implemented rather than generic SP practices.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## TALENT MANAGEMENT AND NAVAL LOGISTICS OCCUPATION MANAGEMENT DOCTRINE

Recently DNL reviewed the NLOOMD, last reviewed in 2022. Though the review included some modernization, such as increased attention to equity and diversity initiatives, it did not provide in-depth consideration for the development of a TM program (though it did allude to related concepts in some places). The Aim, at paragraph 2, states: “This directive is intended to establish an overall occupation management framework [...] and provide amplifying information on topics such as succession management, [and] career path modelling[.]”<sup>32</sup> Paragraph 19 of the Directive notes the following:

Succession management is a means of providing personnel with the right skills, at the right place and right time in their careers. This process optimizes the personal and professional development of its members and their assignments to duties that utilize and enhance their individual skills, knowledge and other attributes required.<sup>33</sup>

The use of the terms “succession management” and “career path modelling” appear related to TM as understood in the wider academic literature. However, whether these are implemented as such remains to be seen. In this writer’s experience, both the Directive and the NLO occupation have previously considered NLOs as a homogenous group with only organizational milestones to achieve, not personal ones. This approach has led to a succession planning model that considers any trained NLO capable of succeeding in any NLO job, without considering the individual requirements of a position or the strengths and weaknesses of the NLO. Personal talent is not factored into an individual’s development or job assignment, leading to disillusionment of those individuals and decreased retention, or a bad fit in a senior position which creates resentment in subordinates. Talent in the CAF needs to be identified early in order to make individuals feel valued and connected to the organization, or they will leave.

The NLO Junior Officer Management section, paragraphs 17 & 18 specifically, outline the ideal junior officer management cycle.<sup>34</sup> One favourable change to the NLOOMD is the ability for junior NLOs to choose and complete sub-specialty training prior to Assistant Head of Department (A/HOD) training. The 2022 NLOOMD did not allow for this, which created bottlenecks for trainees awaiting A/HOD training opportunities despite sub-specialty courses being available. From a SCARF perspective, the access to training increases certainty for the member as they are moving forward with their chosen specialty career instead of awaiting training opportunities. It also improves perceived fairness as the trainee can advance alongside their peers while obtaining different skill sets that will reinforce their future A/HOD training experience.

Paragraph 9 highlights the need for early identification of a career path supported by “individual career management and mentorship based on the needs of the RCN, CAF and skills

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<sup>32</sup> Department of National Defence. *D NAVLOG Directive 01/22 NLO Occ Mgmt Directive*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2024), 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

and interests of the individual.”<sup>35</sup> This statement hints at TM principles; however, the definition of career management (CM) at paragraph 19 shows “individual career management” to be largely an administrative role as it relates to the routine tasks of enrolment, posting, rank change, and course loading.<sup>36</sup> Disappointingly, mentorship is not defined in the NLOOMD.

Having a defined TM program in place could define the roles and responsibilities of the Career Manager, Occupational Advisor/coaches and mentors and show how a junior NLO can leverage these assets to better align their strengths and aspirations with future opportunities. In looking at the defined career path in the NLOOMD (Figure 3), a NLO career can be clearly traced from pre-Operational Functional Point (OFP) all the way to the Captain/Colonel rank level.<sup>37</sup> This is a great tool for an NLO at the outset of their career to assist in understanding the standard requirements to progress up until Captain/Colonel. However, adding a defined TM program to include tailored coaching through the use of behavioural assessment tools would further enhance the member’s professional experience. For example, placing intervals throughout the career path (Figure 4) where TM practices such as behavioural assessments, coaching and mentoring are introduced could assist in giving a member a greater sense of engagement in their career path, thereby increasing their sense of status. The increase in these behavioural traits trigger the reward section of the brain increasing a member’s sense of relatedness resulting in increased productivity and happiness.<sup>38</sup>

## **OTHER ELEMENTAL APPROACHES TO TALENT MANAGEMENT**

The Canadian Army (CA) and Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) do not have dedicated TM plans but do engage with TM concepts to differing extents. Canadian Special Operations Forces (CANSOF) was engaged to leverage insight into their TM practices, but due to classification, it could not be shared. However, CANSOF was able to share the basis upon which they created their doctrine, the United States Marine Corps TM doctrine, which will be explored later.

The CA’s doctrine, the Army Succession Plan (ASP), was last updated in 2012. It is an overarching SP directive for the entire CA and does not specifically target CA Logistics Officers.<sup>39</sup> It does, however, include both Regular and Reserve Force personnel; something that is not included in the NLOOMD. This is notable because considering the talents of Reserve Force personnel and how those might be leveraged to better serve the organization overall is in line with TM principles. Not having a plan for Reserve personnel is ignoring yet another source of skill and expertise, and possibly losing personnel.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>37</sup> Due to size and clarity, Figures 4 & 5 could not fit within the text of this paper and can be found after the Bibliography.

<sup>38</sup> David Rock, “SCARF: A Brain-based Model for Collaborating with and Influencing others,” *Neuro Leadership Journal*, Issue 1 (2008): 6.

<sup>39</sup> Department of National Defence. *LFCO 11-79 – Army Succession Planning*. (Ottawa: DND, Canada, 2012): 1.

The ASP's primary focus is on "the Army as an institution" with the intent of enabling the success of the institution and developing "long-term strategic leadership of the institution".<sup>40</sup> Paragraphs 15-20 and Annexes A and B outline short- and long-term SP, while paragraph 34 and Annex C outline the communication plans to individuals.<sup>41</sup> Similar to the NLOOMD, there is extensive reference to SP in support of the institution, but there is little focus on member engagement to assist in defining a career path that best suits the individual, or finding the individual that best suits the organizational role. Overall, the ASP looks similar to the NLOOMD and TM is not adequately explored.

The RCAF also does not have a specific doctrine for their logisticians. Instead, it has internal doctrine that takes a "new approach to operationalizing the RCAF's personnel resources, safeguarding against vulnerabilities and ultimately supporting operations."<sup>42</sup> In seeing personnel as a resource, this doctrine identifies TM as an "effective and efficient" requirement to "generate and employ, but also to meet the challenges of the future."<sup>43</sup> Unfortunately, the doctrine does not speak to TM as a tool to assess individual talent, but more as a synonym for SP and career management.

Chapter 6, RCAF Personnel Domains, covers some general elements of TM, specifically physiological, psychological, cognitive, and spiritual domains (Figure 5). When comparing the RCAF's approach to personnel, there are similarities between the RCAF Personnel Domains and the DISC domains, specifically between physiological and dominance, psychosocial and influence, cognitive and steadiness, and spiritual and certainty. The inclusion of these mindsets is an important step toward developing a more individually focused TM strategy that could be applied to more focused groups within a CAF element.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 6-13.

<sup>42</sup> Department of National Defence, *B-GA-407-000/FP-001, Air Force Personnel Doctrine* (Ottawa: DND, Canada, 2021): iii.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 9-6.

# Personnel Domains

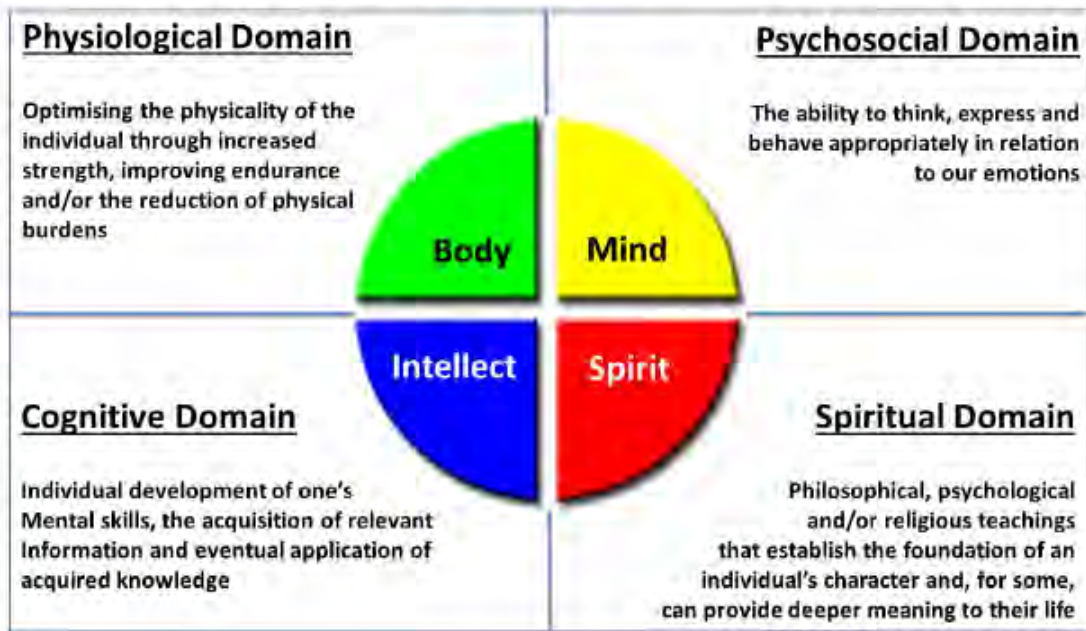


Figure 5

## RCAF Personnel Domains

Source: B-AG-407-001/FP-001/RCAF Doctrine : Personnel

## ALLIED APPROACH TO TALENT MANAGEMENT

Much like the CAF, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) is in a period of transition as it considers how to meet the changing needs of its personnel now and into the future. Unlike the CAF, the USMC has a dedicated TM doctrine. In 2021, it released its newest policy on the subject: Talent Management 2030 (TM2030). This transformational document was a notable departure from previous mindsets, with USMC Commander General D.H. Berger acknowledging that the previous approach to managing personnel was based on a post-WWII system designed to meet the needs of the industrial era.<sup>44</sup>

TM2030 notes that the USMC should treat personnel as individuals, not inventory.<sup>45</sup> This is a vastly different approach to the NLOOMD which considers NLOs as interchangeable. In treating personnel as individuals, an individual's strengths, weaknesses and motivations can be

<sup>44</sup> United States. United States Marine Corps. "US Marine Corps Talent Management 2030," Executive Summary (Washington DC, November 2021), 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

collected and analyzed through the adoption of TM software.<sup>46</sup> This allows talent to be identified and developed to best suit the individual, with the institution benefitting in turn from increased engagement through technology. The USMC is also updating the posting cycle to rationalize and improve the posting frequency as well as incorporate innovative ideas such as establishing a talent marketplace.<sup>47,48</sup> Other updates to improve TM include initiatives to increase career flexibility, such as promotion opt-out and lateral move retention incentives. It is also leveraging technology to improve processes and develop measurable analytics (such as prioritizing data and employing better analytics, digitization of the reenlistment process and improved decision support tools for promotion).<sup>49</sup> While these initiatives are not all applicable to the CAF, seeing members as unique people with useful skills and using analytics to leverage those skills into better performance is beneficial.

The United States Air Force (USAF) has dedicated career planning doctrine for Logistics Officers titled AFSC 21RX Logistics Readiness Officer (LRO) Career Field Education and Training Plan (CFETP). This doctrine has three objectives: (1) focus and align efforts leveraging human capital to establish agility, critical-thinking and problem solving; (2) provide a system to collect and assess human capital-related gaps; and (3) enable the enterprise to disseminate goals and priorities to the workforce.<sup>50</sup>

The section titled Individual Development Plan (IDP) focuses specifically on TM. Its purpose is to develop an “individually tailored action plan that fosters job and career progression discussions between the 21R officer and the supervisor to ensure LRO education, training, and career development.”<sup>51</sup> Note the focus on the individually tailored action plan. The IDP planning process has seven steps that each require two-way communication between the member and their commander.<sup>52</sup> At Goal Planning, the member and their talent planner identify a realistic and attainable career path that considers PME, occupational requirements, optional developmental opportunities, and deployments.<sup>53</sup> The final step, Monitor Progress, references that the IDP is “an ongoing, never-ending process of growth and development.”<sup>54</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no information on if or how the member is assessed in the early development of their goals and future career path. Whether the USAF leverages personality assessments, similar to DISC and SCARF, is unknown but given its individual-centric TM approach, the interview process likely involves some type of assessment of strengths and

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<sup>46</sup> United States. United States Marine Corps. “*US Marine Corps Talent Management 2030*,” (Washington DC, November 2021), 4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>48</sup> Talent marketplace is a “web-based application where units post job information about available billets, Marines apply for positions virtually, and monitors serve as overall managers and arbiters.”

<sup>49</sup> United States. United States Marine Corps. “*US Marine Corps Talent Management 2030*,” (Washington DC, November 2021), 12-17.

<sup>50</sup> United States. United States Air Force. “AFSC 21RX Career Field Education and Training Plan” (Washington DC, September 2021). 3.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

weaknesses. Regardless, the overall approach shows a greater dedication to TM that should be emulated in the CAF.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The RCN should implement a dedicated TM program that will focus on individual TM that assists the SP efforts in defining clear, attainable paths to senior ranks for the NLOs assessed as having that capability and desire. Further, given that the NLO community belongs to the RCLS and is not solely an RCN entity, it is also recommended that the RCLS implement a strategic TM plan to guide the CA, RCAF, RCN and SOF branches.

## **CONCLUSION**

The CAF (and by extension the RCN) is challenged with recruiting and retaining its members. It is critical for the CAF to identify and leverage practices that will enable the institution to develop and fill key positions in the future, particularly in the face of current global instability and generational change. To do this, the CAF must re-assess its current use of SP and look to incorporate TM strategies that will aid in retention of individuals while developing the right people for the right job. This paper conducted an exploration of the current RCN SP practice alongside other CAF elements' and Allies' practices and offered a recommendation on what the RCN could do to improve upon its own SP practices by incorporating TM doctrine into its SP efforts.

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Figure 4. NLO Career Progression:  
 Source – Director Naval Logistics, NLO Occupation Management Directive, Annex A

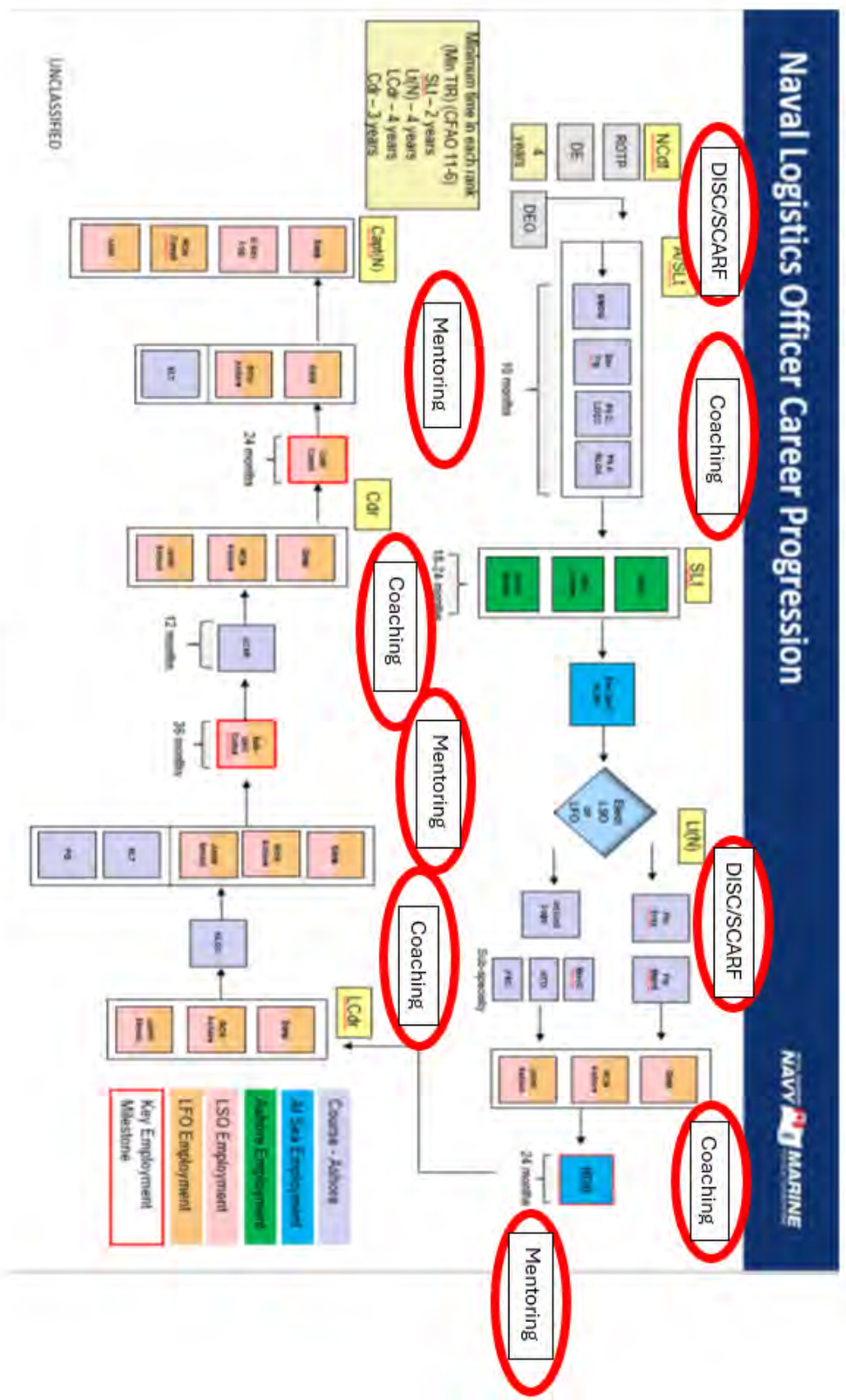


Figure 4.