

Hi Team,

Time for another message. As you know well, my intent is normally to provide some useful information and maybe a few chuckles along the way. I try not to make them too long (even tho sometimes I'm an abject failure). This one is a little different.

The info will hopefully be useful, but the topic is one that I believe to be critical to our future in Army Medicine, so no apologies for the length. Please read this through in its entirety. The topic is "Talent Management" (TM). It is an Army leadership imperative, a priority for the Surgeon General (TSG), and I honestly believe it to be an essential element in the development of our AMEDD Civilian Corps. It is critical to development of our workforce and our capability to achieve excellence in mission accomplishment. You will play a significant role in the process so it's important that you be informed from the start since you own your career. Read this in pieces if you must, but be sure to read it all. Then, please share it with someone who hasn't seen it, civilian or military. I don't have the words to stress how important this will be both in concept and in execution, so bear with me and here we go.

BACKGROUND:

Army civilians are an integral part of the Army team. We understand that what we do every day in Army Medicine is really about someone else. It's about service to our Nation and to those who serve our nation, both military and civilian. It's about ensuring readiness. Effective talent management (TM) is an investment by individuals and, primarily, the organization that helps us do just that, serve. The intent is to balance the needs of both the individual and the Army to achieve a mutual strong return on investment (ROI) by building the capability and capacity to serve others. Real TM empowers the employee to succeed and helps the enterprise achieve excellence in mission accomplishment. It's terrific that there are opportunities to grow and develop for us as members of the Team, but we can't forget our Team is driven by and focused on our single purpose, the mission.

For us in Army Medicine, TM is development of our AMEDD Civilian Corps teammates to build our capability and capacity by making best use of our human capital resources in support of the Army mission. Talent management is a way to enhance Army readiness by maximizing your potential as our greatest asset. It will allow us to better understanding the talent of our workforce and the talent we need to meet Army Medicine's mission. Once we do that, the AMEDD can more effectively acquire, develop, employ, and retain the talent we need to bridge any gap that exists and make us more mission capable.

PROCESS, THOUGHTS, AND PARAMETERS:

To evaluate how we best develop our talent and provide that service to others, I think our best approach is to take a look at where we are and where we have to go to be successful. Our Corps is composed of approximately 44 thousand members at any given point in time and covers more than 290 job series. Sheer scale gives us tremendous potential, even without looking at the great talents our folks bring to the table. That 44 thousand, breaks down into three general groupings:

- Technical Experts. That includes anyone with a specific skill who is not in a supervisory position and constitutes nearly 87 percent of the Corps. This group has a wide range of capabilities, everything from administrative clerks to physicians.
- Technical Supervisors. Includes anyone in a supervisory position who needs specific knowledge and has a role as a supervisor, regardless of the size of the Team. This group makes up about 12 percent of our Corps.
- Enterprise Leaders. This group is our civilian Teammates at the highest levels of Army Medicine who have responsibility for strategic operations and planning in multiple areas. It makes up about one percent of the Corps.

The obvious question then becomes how do we identify those in the 87 percent for growth to compete for the 12 percent and, likewise, for the one percent? And the follow on is, of course, what training and development do we give those in all three groups to prepare them to compete for a role at the next higher level whether that is technical or organizational leadership? We have great talent; we should leverage it to build the bench. Notice that I chose the words very carefully in the last few sentences. Talent management is not a guarantee. It is a process that will make Team members, through participation in the program, more competitive and prepare them to compete for advancement.

FIRST STEPS:

Many of you have heard me speak over the years and say, "Observation is easy, introspection stinks!" But, talent management really begins with solid, sincere, focused introspection. Each one of us needs to do an honest assessment of who we are now in our work life and what we want to be when we grow up. Not everyone wants to be an enterprise leader when they grow up and some love their technical capability and want to grow up to be the best at what they do. That's great because we need all those various capabilities in Army Medicine. It's awesome if you are now what you want to be when you grow up. We just need to work with you to make you the best of that, whatever it is.

It's important to understand there is no one answer for everyone. What's right for you is right for you, but you must make an honest assessment of what that means to you, your family, and those around you. They're all part of the deal. In a prior life I used to sing in a country band and did Willie Nelson's "Mamas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys." The last stanza says, "He ain't wrong, he's just different, and his pride won't let him do the things to make you think he's right." There is no wrong decision in this process, it's just different and very personal to you, but we must recognize that it must be a conscious decision and that decision you make for yourself is OK. Some want to be the world's best technician, whatever the skill; some want to be enterprise leaders. Either one is OK.

I think though that there is, at times, a degree of misunderstanding about what it takes to exist in the different components of our Corps.

First, we should understand that every one of us is a leader in some fashion. It may not necessarily feel that way all the time or show up on an organizational chart. But, we are truly leaders because we are, as noted above, servants of others and, as such, are challenged to lead them to success whenever they come to us whether from outside or inside of our organization. That's how we contribute to the mission every day. And, leadership is an interesting piece of work. If we want to be or are challenged to be a leader when we grow up (remember that introspective decision), it is important to understand that there is a personal, psychological, emotional and, yes, physical cost of being a leader that we must be willing to pay. As leaders it's up to us to show the way by making positive decisions even when the circumstances better lend themselves to an emotional reaction. This is important in the TM process because it truly impacts, and should impact, our decision making as we decide what we want to be when we grow up.

My personal experience says that as we grow and the more intense our leadership role, the higher the costs to be paid either in frequency or intensity. Preparing to deal with those costs impacts what route we need to take in how we, individually and collectively, see and undertake TM. Leader development and TM are intrinsically linked. As we seek to select, develop, and effectively employ well rounded leaders based on their talents derived from operational experiences, civilian education, broadening/developmental assignments, and continued personal and professional development.

If you are in the 87 percent and your introspective decision is to be the best technical expert you can be in your field that is terrific. Your talent management focus should be on improving your technical capability to contribute to the mission. The environment around us will not stand still and we must continue to grow our capability to keep up.

If you are in the same group and the vision for your future is movement toward the Functional Supervisor group, then your focus will be on maintaining your technical skills but broadening your capabilities to include leadership and supervision in order to be more competitive when the opportunity to move up arises. The TM program will help you build your competitiveness. The same thought process applies to those in the 12 percent group looking to either become the best they can be there or move to the Enterprise Leader level.

WHAT TO CONSIDER:

Once we make a decision on how we see our future, it is incumbent on us to realistically evaluate how we plan to get there. The way I see it, there are a number of criteria we need to understand and include in the evaluation. Here are my top four:

- Capability—Each of us brings our own skills, skill levels, and abilities to our work life. We have built them through experience, education, training, and self-development. While it varies widely across the workforce, we can increase capability using the same methods that gave us what we have.

- Desire—If we have capability but don't desire to do something with it, nothing will happen. This is key. My old high school basketball coach always said, "You gotta want it!" and we all know what he meant. But, desire isn't the most important....
- Will—In my simple mind and heart, I believe that will is the key. Yes, "you gotta want it," but if that's true and there isn't the will to do what it takes to achieve it, to be more competitive, to overcome obstacles that might be in the way, then nothing will happen. Strength of will is the real bottom line. It makes possible our decisions about doing what it takes to excel.
- Mobility—We have to recognize that sometimes when opportunities are not available where we are, moving to where they exist might well be the answer, maybe the only answer. If the senior position in your field at your location is GS-XX and you feel you can contribute at the GS-XX+ level, moving may be the only answer. This is admittedly often a deal breaker, but it is a decision we have to own individually.

Here are some questions to consider in thinking about our own personal growth and development:

- Am I willing to be truly introspective with myself and develop a viable vision for my work future?
- How much do I want to achieve? What is my level of desire? What are the real goals/steps that will get me there?
- Do I have the will to do what it takes to:
- Participate in opportunities to truly stretch my educational and training experiences to prepare for greater challenges and responsibility, to be more competitive?
- Seek and take opportunities for development, even when inconvenient?
- Plan and make time for development?
- Meet the prerequisites for training and education opportunities, e.g., completing my grade-appropriate Civilian Education System (CES) course?
- Take broadening opportunities even when outside my comfort zone?
- Achieve real excellence in all I do, to build and develop capability and reputation?
- Pursue education, training, and self-development?
- Understand that developmental criteria are not static, that future and currently unknown requirements may change those criteria?

The final question is, "How do we get this process started?" In the May-June timeframe we will roll out the initial version of the AMEDD Civilian Corps Talent Management Program. It will be an iterative process that incorporates lessons learned to make it better as we go forward.

COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY:

In May we will Army Career Tracker to conduct an Aspiration Survey as the first opportunity to convey your thoughts and decisions. It will allow us to collect data on the Corps and on the desires of our members. This will give us baseline information and help us identify opportunities to build the Technical Experts, Functional Leaders, or Enterprise Leaders Army Medicine needs. Because the survey is the entry ticket to the TM program, it will not be anonymous so we can help individuals, not just large unidentified groups. May is about a month away so it's time now to start your self-analysis. I strongly encourage you to review your Career Program's Army Civilian Training, Education, and Development System (ACTEDS) plans [<http://cpol.army.mil/library/train/acteds/>] and seriously think about what you want to be when you grow up, if you haven't

already done so. It will be important to know how you want to respond as you complete the survey. More of the program will roll out after the survey is complete. Again, the survey is your entry ticket to the program so please take the time to complete and return it. It's short (much shorter than my messages!).

SUMMARY:

Our Army and Army Medicine are key elements of the Nation's security. Mission excellence is the only option. Talent management is extremely important in building the workforce which will give us the capability and capacity to achieve that excellence. Those two sentences capture the driving force/forcing function for TM. They are the "why" we it is essential to address it. Here are the Key points:

- Our TM Program is driven by the needs of the Army and of Army Medicine; it is intended to improve our capability and capacity to accomplish the mission.
- There are no guarantees with the TM program but, properly executed, it should increase individual competitiveness.
- Talent Management is a shared responsibility with both you and our enterprise having responsibilities; it requires active participation at all levels.
- You are your own best career manager; decisions about how you proceed are yours. Personal responsibility is elemental.
- Honest self-assessment is essential; it is the foundation of the TM process.
- The first step in our TM program is completion of the Aspiration Survey.
- Capability, desire, and mobility are variable but important elements of the program; will is the driving force that makes things happen.

I've been thinking about this for a long time and those are my thoughts. They are intended to generate both dialogue and action. I am hopeful you will find this message helpful. Some of the points in it are likely to generate a visceral response. That's OK but I'd ask that, if that happens to you, you would take time for it to pass and then do some serious thinking about what is here. The Army and Army Medicine need you and your capability. I just want that to be the best it can be. Thanx for listening.

Sincerely,
gregg