

# Leader Development in Army Units: Views from the Field

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## Objective

- Help the army identify effective and feasible leadership development programmes in operational units, in conjunction with the Center for Army Leadership.

## Background

- Army leaders believe that a very significant contribution to leader development comes from experiences in operational assignments, yet there are few studies that indicate whether Army units even have leader development programs, and if they do, what programs consist of and how well they are executed.
- Met in groups with over 450 officers during 2006; administered short questionnaires; had half-hour discussions with junior officers; had longer discussions with more senior officers.

## Main findings

- There is **no standard leader development program**, despite virtually universal recognition of the importance of on-job development of leadership competencies.
- Besides actual experience, the leader development activities that are most valued by junior officers are **role models and personal interaction**. 'People need to see what right looks like'.
- 'Mentoring from a leader in your chain of command' is particularly valued (60% of the officers rated this as the most effective leader development activity, and another 40% put it in second place). 'Mentoring from someone not in your chain of command' was also valued.
- 'Professional reading' and 'Classroom work on leadership topics' were well down the list.
- Unit commanders decisions about what to do for leader development are constrained by a number of factors, most of which are outside their control. To respond to these factors, many senior officers suggested it **would be useful to have a flexible 'tool kit' of leader development ideas**.
- TRADOC should promote wider and more systematic peer-to-peer sharing of best practices.