



Building Cohesive & Adaptive Teams

Small-Unit Leader Training Aid



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Overview

This training aid is designed for small-unit leaders (e.g., platoons, squads, and teams) to supplement and maximize the value of the training and other work tasks that are already taking place in their unit.

Specifically, this aid is intended to help you, as a small-unit leader, build a cohesive and adaptable unit that is better prepared to overcome the challenges that will be encountered in the future operational environment.

As a small-unit leader, you set the conditions that promote cohesion and enable adaptability. Keep an open mind to different perspectives. Be receptive to constructive feedback and new ideas for improving the unit. Creating opportunities and empowering members to contribute to decision making creates a climate that is conducive to learning and development and as unit members learn and develop, their confidence will grow and their performance will improve.

Your efforts to provide members with diverse experiences will enhance the versatility of the unit and that versatility will translate to adaptability. Similarly, your efforts to provide members with challenging experiences that stretch their abilities will foster teamwork and growth that promotes cohesion.

This training aid presents guidance on how to create opportunities for development. You can use this guidance as presented here though you are encouraged to modify and adapt it to the specific needs and circumstances of your unit.

To comprehend the concepts contained in this publication, you should understand the fundamentals of leadership found in ADP 1, ADP 6-0, ADP 6-22, and FM 6-22. Relevant doctrine is cited throughout and compiled into a comprehensive reference list near the end.

Unit Cohesion

Unit cohesion is the interpersonal bond among unit members that makes them want to stay and work together. Just as a machine depends on the strength of its interconnected parts, cohesive units benefit from strong ties among fellow Soldiers. The three components of unit cohesion include:

- ◆ Professional and personal bonds.
- ◆ Shared commitment to doing the job and achieving unit goals.
- ◆ Pride in the unit or esprit de corps.

Compared to non-cohesive units, cohesive units have higher levels of trust and commitment, expend more effort and stick to tasks longer despite adversity, and communicate better. As members interact and communicate more, Soldiers' connections strengthen, and team coordination improves.

Cohesive units are more satisfied with their mission-related tasks than non-cohesive units.

Building a cohesive unit can be challenging. To simply say, "everyone should get along" would be naïve and unrealistic. The fact is that as a leader you may have to overcome bad rapport or conflicting personalities among members of your unit. Don't expect everyone to become best friends overnight.

Rather, set conditions that increase commitment to unit goals and create opportunities for unit members to work together to achieve those goals. This gives your Soldiers the chance to bond over the work. When Soldiers put the mission first and set their personal differences aside, cohesion grows organically.

Adaptability

Adaptability refers to the ability of units to adjust rapidly to changing situations while continuously assessing the situation. Whether during day-to-day operations or mission execution, an adaptable unit works together to make the most of their expertise and solve challenging problems. The two main components of adaptability include:

- ◆ The ability to identify critical performance requirements in each new situation.
- ◆ The ability to influence conditions and respond effectively to changing threats and situations with appropriate, flexible, and timely actions.

Adaptable units use the lens of their combined experience to recognize when conditions change and identify performance requirements for success under the new conditions. Of course, it isn't possible to train for every possibility. When trained skills are judged to be insufficient for success, unit leaders determine and communicate the new and/or modified skills that need to be applied in the new conditions.

However, truly novel problems may require truly novel solutions that are best generated with diverse perspectives. When time permits, adaptable units work together to determine how to respond effectively to change. As new or modified approaches are implemented, members of an adaptable unit keep looking for signs that more change is needed and/or whether new/modified plans are achieving the desired effects.

As a small-unit leader, you can foster adaptability by providing varied and diverse experiences in training and underwriting honest mistakes. When changing conditions are a standard part of training, Soldiers develop the mental agility, self-awareness, and versatility that enable the unit's adaptability.

When unit members are empowered to speak up, share their ideas, and contribute their expertise, you, as the unit leader, benefit access to their diverse perspectives and experiences. You can then draw on this knowledge when determining the performance requirements associated with changing conditions. Maintaining an open dialogue also enables you to identify unit strengths to correct or offset weaknesses. Targeting these weaknesses during training will help you build a better-rounded and more versatile unit that is prepared to recognize and react to changing conditions.

Adaptability is about the powerful difference between adapting to cope and adapting to win.
 –Max McKeown

The image below illustrates how cohesion and adaptability are interrelated and critically important to the success of your unit.



How to Use this Training Aid

This training aid is designed to help you understand and implement ways to build unit cohesion and adaptability. The sections in this aid 1) provide information regarding unit characteristics that promote cohesion and adaptability, 2) describe actions you can take to develop those characteristics, 3) provide a tool to facilitate your observations, and 4) provide guidance for providing feedback based on your observations.

This training aid was designed for use during training events and can be laminated for durability in the field and so that you can write in it and wipe it clean for reuse. Although the aid was primarily designed for use during training events, it can also be used to create developmental opportunities during your unit's day-to-day work.

Lastly, the uses of this training aid can extend beyond guiding your efforts to build unit cohesion and adaptability. A few examples include (but are not limited to) using the guide to:

- ◆ Develop Soldiers' critical thinking skills.
- ◆ Assist with counseling.
- ◆ Broaden the unit's knowledge of how units in other branches and with other MOSs operate.
- ◆ Help new unit leaders diagnose existing issues (e.g., with unit trust and communication) then generate multiple solutions.
- ◆ Assist the commander with diagnosing training proficiency.

Read on to learn how to use each section of this training aid.

Enablers of Cohesion & Adaptability

The *Enablers of Cohesion and Adaptability* section discusses unit characteristics that foster cohesion and support adaptability. The section also identifies indicators you can look for to gauge the cohesiveness and adaptability of your unit. The four unit characteristics that promote the development of cohesive and adaptable units include:

- ◆ Empowerment of Unit Members.
- ◆ Communication.
- ◆ Mutual Trust.
- ◆ Shared Understanding.

Foundational Knowledge

To understand the importance of empowering unit members and building teams of trusted professionals that communicate well and align themselves under a shared task and purpose, you should be familiar with the following doctrine:

- ◆ ADP 6-0. Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces.
- ◆ ADP 6-22. Army Leadership and the Profession.
- ◆ ATP 5-19. Risk Management.
- ◆ ATP 6-22.6. Army Team Building.

Leader Actions

The *Leader Actions* section describes actions you can take to increase the cohesiveness and adaptability of your unit. It provides ideas for things you can do during day-to-day work as well as during training events. These actions help you set conditions and create opportunities for developing characteristics and skills that promote cohesion and adaptability.

Foundational Knowledge

To ensure a robust understanding of how and why Army leaders develop their Soldiers and units, you should be familiar with the concepts described in the following the doctrine:

- ◆ ADP 6-22. Army Leadership and the Profession.
- ◆ AR 350-1. Army Training and Leader Development.
- ◆ ATP 6-22.6. Army Team Building.
- ◆ FM 6-22. Leader Development.
- ◆ FM 7-0. Train to Win in a Complex World.

The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.

–Ronald Reagan

This aid includes an *Observation Card* you can use to quickly document your judgments of your unit's cohesion and adaptability. By rating your unit's proficiency across a set of key indicators of cohesion and adaptability, you can quickly capture your thoughts when time is limited. You are *strongly* encouraged to take notes supporting your ratings in the space provided to help you remember what behaviors you saw that led to your ratings. These notes will help you provide detailed information in your feedback.

When presented with evidence that supports your ratings of their performance, feedback is perceived as objective rather than just one person's opinion. When Soldiers perceive feedback to be objective, they are more likely to accept the feedback and take it to heart. Furthermore, specific examples put feedback in context which helps identify concrete actions to take to improve performance in a particular area.

Foundational Knowledge

Concepts relevant to leaders' roles in evaluating unit and individual performance are described in the following doctrine:

- ◆ ADP 7-0. Training.
- ◆ AR 350-1. Army Training and Leader Development.
- ◆ AR 623-3. Evaluation and Reporting.

The ratings and notes will inform the feedback you provide to your unit. Use the outline in the *Providing Valuable Feedback* section to shape feedback in a way that promotes unit members' self-discovery of their strengths and developmental needs.

Similar to the after action review process, group-level feedback should prompt discussion around each member's perceptions of the whole unit's performance as this will help enrich unit member's shared understanding and give them some ownership of their own development.

At times, you may also need to deliver individual feedback to address aspects of individual performance that are affecting the rest of the unit, for better or worse. Therefore, the *Providing Valuable Feedback* section contains guidance for delivering individual feedback as well as delivering feedback to the unit as a group.

Foundational Knowledge

As an Army leader, it is critical for you to understand how to conduct after action reviews in a way that fosters Soldiers' self-discovery. You should also be familiar with ways of delivering constructive feedback. The following provide essential information regarding both processes:

- ◆ ADP 6-22. Army Leadership and the Profession.
- ◆ ADP 7-0. Training.
- ◆ ATP 6-22.1. The Counseling Process.
- ◆ ATP 6-22.6. Army Team Building.
- ◆ AR 350-1. Army Training and Leader Development.
- ◆ FM 7-0. Train to Win in a Complex World.
- ◆ FM 6-22. Leader Development.

Scenarios for Group Discussion

At times, some situations or settings may limit your ability to observe the unit executing training or other work tasks (e.g., when waiting for your unit's turn on a training lane). Turn those situations into opportunities for development by using the scenarios contained in this aid to guide group discussions. Sometimes simply hearing how members think in certain situations can help members get to know one another, which contributes to the unit's cohesion.

Pose the *Scenarios for Group Discussion* and the associated questions to your unit to prompt discussion around what unit members would do in the scenario. This type of scenario-based discussion creates opportunities for you to view others' leadership styles, their ways of thinking, and provides you with a mechanism for developing your unit in almost any setting. Include these discussions as part of training or during gaps in training, provided your unit is amenable to it.

Foundational Knowledge

The following doctrine describes the value of group discussions as a mechanism for developing others:

- ◆ FM 6-22. Leader Development.
- ◆ ADP 7-0. Training.

Notes Pages

Use the blank *Notes Pages* in the back of this guide to note your observations of your unit's strengths and developmental needs across the four enablers of cohesion and adaptability. Your notes can be brief but should help you deliver feedback to your unit. Specific examples to support your feedback will help your unit understand what they are doing well and where there remains room for improvement. You are encouraged to carry these notes over to a journal before wiping them clean for reuse so you can build upon lessons learned by referring to them later.

*For me, as [a senior OCT], I look for certain things on tasks... You'll always observe something and take notes, you need to take notes.
—Observer Coach Trainer, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California*

Empowerment of Unit Members

Unit leaders empower unit members by encouraging initiative, delegating authority, supporting their decisions, and holding them accountable for their actions. Empowered unit members are authorized to operate as they see fit within the limits of the commander's intent and resources available. Empowering the team to improve coordination between members and improve operating procedures can strengthen its ability to handle change. Empowering unit members also:

- ◆ Provides broadening experiences to build the versatility of the unit.
- ◆ Creates ownership of tasks, increases motivation, promotes cooperation, and encourages persistence in the face of challenges.
- ◆ Builds trust because empowering others is a forceful statement of trust.
- ◆ Builds unit member's confidence in their ability and encourages disciplined initiative.

Why it Matters

Low-risk situations are the best times to empower unit members because leaders can spend more time using collaborative approaches to teach and coach unit members without endangering mission success. When collaborative approaches are used and unit members are encouraged to actively participate, they experience an increased sense of worth and recognition that contributes to cohesion. By providing opportunities for Soldiers to participate in decision-making you are creating opportunities for yourself to gauge their strengths and capability gaps. Designing training to fill those gaps makes the unit more versatile. A versatile unit is an adaptable unit.

It is important to acknowledge that empowering subordinates to make decisions and/or take initiative is not always feasible. High-risk operations under rapidly changing conditions is not an environment that lends itself to teaching and coaching. In such environments, you must maintain responsibility and authority for making decisions. When your unit must react quickly to change, there simply won't be time for group discussion. Use training events and daily work in garrison as the primary venues for empowering unit members and providing broadening experiences.

Example Indicators of Empowerment of Unit Members

Look for these indicators during training and day-to-day work:

- ◆ Unit members have the necessary resources, authority, and clear intent for success.
- ◆ Subordinates are receptive to having tasks and responsibilities delegated to them.
- ◆ Unit members demonstrate initiative.
- ◆ Unit members offer their perspectives and ideas about how the unit can achieve its goals.

Good communication is essential to the exchange of mission- and task-relevant information that supports small-unit adaptability. Beyond exchanging information, good communication supports unit cohesion and adaptability by:

- ◆ Clarifying unit goals.
- ◆ Keeping unit members informed.
- ◆ Increasing team coordination.
- ◆ Helping members build trusting relationships.
- ◆ Helping members resolve conflicts.
- ◆ Improving overall unit climate.

Communication is a combination of sharing information and listening actively.

Why it Matters

Units that have established good communication will be able to rapidly convey new information to maintain a current understanding of the operational environment as things change. Maintaining awareness and understanding of the environment is essential to a unit's ability to anticipate enemy actions and rapidly adapt to changing situations. Purposeful communication ensures that all unit members have a shared understanding of their task and purpose, as well as their individual roles and responsibilities that contribute to the unit's success.

Example Indicators of Unit Communication

Look for these indicators during training and day-to-day work:

- ◆ Unit members share information readily and candidly.
- ◆ Task- and mission-relevant communication is timely.
- ◆ Unit members' independent actions directly support unit goals.
- ◆ Unit members ask good questions pertaining to unit objectives.

Mutual trust builds over time when unit members treat each other fairly, due to a sense of respect that they have for one another. Respect grows from members' confidence in their teammates' competence and dedication to doing the right thing for the right reasons. Mutual trust also builds through shared experiences and successes. Mutual trust supports unit cohesion and adaptability by:

Mutual trust exists when unit members can count on each other.

- ◆ Supporting open communication.
- ◆ Helping unit members build professional and personal bonds.
- ◆ Increasing confidence in unit readiness.

Why it Matters

Soldiers may have different backgrounds or interests, and may even have conflicting personalities, but finding common ground in shared unit goals and demonstrating professional respect lets unit members know they can rely on each other to do the job. When individuals violate the Army values, are disrespectful of their colleagues, or shirk their duties, it undermines trust, quickly hinders unit cohesion, and erodes the confidence essential to teamwork and mission accomplishment.

Example Indicators of Mutual Trust

Look for these cues during training and day-to-day work.

- ◆ Unit members are dependable and do what they say they will do.
- ◆ Unit members have integrity and their behaviors are grounded by sound principles.
- ◆ Unit members give each other respect as professionals.
- ◆ Unit members have confidence in the unit's competence and ability to accomplish the mission.

The term “understanding” refers to an individual’s comprehension or of how something works. For example, individual unit members may understand their role within the unit and their contribution to the unit’s task and purpose.

Shared understanding can be observed in team interactions. For example, teams with a shared understanding are more likely to interpret information in a similar manner and apply the same “meaning” to that information as it pertains to the unit (e.g., the implications of new information for the unit’s current plans).

Shared understanding exists when team members have a common understanding of things that are relevant to the team, like the environment and the team’s task and purpose.

Why it Matters

Teams with shared understanding spend less time making sense of information to adapt to changing conditions. For example, shared understanding enables members to leverage their prior experiences to quickly identify possible solutions to emerging problems which increases teams’ efficiency and effectiveness. The greater the similarity in team members’ understanding of the situation, the better able they will be to coordinate their actions to complete tasks and fulfill their purpose.

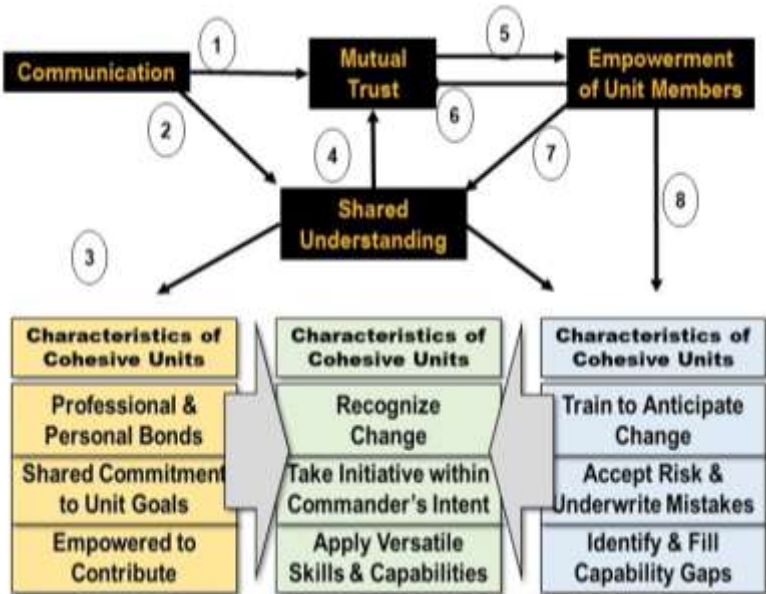
Example Indicators of Shared Understanding

Look for these cues during training and day-to-day work:

- ◆ Unit members know who to go to for what.
- ◆ Member know their role, others’ roles, and how each contributes to accomplishing the unit’s shared goals.
- ◆ Unit members interpret and assign meaning to events in the same way.
- ◆ Unit members can quickly organize when new problems emerge.

Tying it all Together

The graphic below illustrates how the four enablers of cohesion and adaptability play into the model presented on page 4.



1. Professional and respectful communication builds trust by providing a means for members to demonstrate their competence and commitment.
2. Communication is the vehicle by which individual understanding becomes shared understanding. Without communication, unit members cannot get on the same page.
3. Shared understanding of how unit members can work together and bring their individual skills to bear to achieve shared goals fosters cohesion.
4. Shared understanding of how members work together to support the unit's shared goals builds trust in members' ability to execute tasks.
5. When unit members are trusted to perform effectively, they feel empowered to demonstrate initiative.
6. When unit members have been empowered with the resources they need for success, it solidifies the trust among unit members.
7. When unit members are empowered to take ownership of individual tasks, it fosters shared understanding of the interdependence of the unit's work.
8. When unit members know where unit expertise lies and members are empowered to shape decisions in their area of expertise, the unit becomes more versatile which in turn, fosters adaptability.

Leaders' actions directly influence the cohesiveness of a unit. These actions can in turn influence the adaptability and ultimately the effectiveness of a unit. This section describes approaches you can take to building a cohesive and adaptable unit.

Building Cohesion

The three components of unit cohesion help you organize and prioritize the actions you can take to build a more cohesive unit. You can prioritize your actions according to where you see the biggest need.

Component 1: Personal and professional bonds

Providing direction to the team and helping team members find common ground will make it more likely that they will put aside any interfering differences and choose to work together.

Component 2: Shared commitment to the unit's goals

Leadership is an influence activity and when leaders attempt to influence unit members, the three possible outcomes are: 1) resistance, 2) compliance, and 3) commitment (see ADP 6-22). Though you never want resistance, compliance can sometimes suffice (e.g., for simple tasks). Your unit will perform at its best when all members are committed to achieving the unit's goals and objectives.

Component 3: Pride in the unit or esprit de corps

Everyone has a job to do but you want your unit to be a place everyone wants to be. When members are proud to be member of your unit, they will give their best efforts to ensure its continued success.

Read on to learn how you can promote development across each component to build a more cohesive unit.

According to Army leadership doctrine, cohesion is the “bonding together of team members and their leaders in such a way as to develop and sustain their commitment to their unit and their resolve to accomplish the mission” (ATP 6-22.6). Though it is rare for everyone in a unit to get along perfectly, a cohesive team puts aside personal differences and *chooses* to work together to accomplish the mission. As a leader, you want to foster these strong professional bonds among members of your unit by:

- ◆ Communicating standards and expectations. Setting a clear structure and clarifying roles allows team members to understand how to collaborate and communicate to complete unit tasks effectively which, in turn, fosters mutual trust.
- ◆ Ensuring that all team members are treated with respect. Effective teams have a sense of humor and know how to have fun, but they never have fun at someone else's expense. Effective teams are composed of professionals who do not speak disparagingly about other members.
- ◆ Conducting team-building exercises when the unit is together. It could be as simple as stoking some friendly competition during PT, or brainstorming ways to tweak training to mix things up a bit. Make sure the team building exercises are well-thought-out and match the personality of your team; otherwise, they might do more harm than good.
- ◆ Taking advantage of breaks or downtime for unit members to release tension and get to know each other on a personal and professional level.

To increase everyone's commitment to achieving the unit's shared goals, try:

- ◆ Bringing everyone together to talk about the unit's goals. Be sure to explain why the unit has these goals and how they contribute to the mission success of your parent units (e.g., company, battalion, brigade). Give everyone an opportunity to ask questions.
- ◆ Seeking input regarding the unit's needs and working with members to set goals around meeting those needs. By asking members what they need to be successful, you are demonstrating your support for and interest in their success. By asking members to participate in generating ideas for how to meet those needs, you are demonstrating your value for their input and ideas.
- ◆ Periodically and informally checking that each member is satisfied with, and feels like a fit to, their current role. Help members see the value of their contributions by explaining how it supports larger unit goals. If an individual is not satisfied, help them consider desirable changes and the conditions that need to be met to make those changes feasible.
- ◆ Communicating a unit vision and each person's role supporting the unit's progress toward achieving the vision. A clear and specific unit vision gives members a sense of purpose and helps them define their own role within the team.

Commitment is a team members' willingness to belong to the team and motivation to help achieve the defined goals.

Help your unit members take pride in the unit by:

- ◆ Empowering unit members to make certain decisions within their area of expertise. Leveraging the expertise of others not only demonstrates good leadership and humility, it also gives unit members a sense of ownership. Unit members are more likely to work cohesively when they feel that they have ownership of the issues and activities.
- ◆ Valuing and recognizing everyone's contributions, before and after the fact. When someone volunteers to take on a task, thank them. When the unit performs well, you should recognize a job-well-done in a public forum and provide specific examples of how individuals contributed to the larger unit success.
- ◆ Requiring every unit member to assist with unit chores, such as maintenance and upkeep of work areas. This creates a sense of fairness and when people must maintain what is theirs, they take more pride in it. Do not force all the work nobody wants to do onto the new arrival, as that will only erode unit cohesion.
- ◆ Recognizing and rewarding the unit for exemplary performance. Did your unit ace that motor pool inspection or outperform another unit during that training event? Make it known. Release the unit an hour early on Friday or have a new plaque made for the unit walls. The options are many but the point is to show your pride in the unit and make it clear that members should be proud of the team.

Building Adaptability

Adaptable units are versatile with diverse experiences that underlie units' ability to: 1) identify critical performance requirements in new and changing situations and 2) influence conditions by responding effectively to changing threats and situations with appropriate, flexible, and timely actions that meet the new performance requirements (ADP 6-22). Here are some things you can do to build a more adaptable unit during daily work and unit training events.

Broaden the Unit's Knowledge Base

Seeking mastery of the unit's specialty is paramount but a basic understanding of other units' capabilities provides a knowledge base that facilitates adaptability. For example, if you are leading an infantry unit, your unit's mastery of infantry skills is top priority. Taking time to educate your Soldiers on other units' roles and capabilities gives your Soldiers a more detailed frame of reference for identifying critical performance requirements for responding effectively to change. Simply knowing when they are facing an artillery problem vs. an engineering problem, for instance, helps Soldiers determine what actions are needed to influence the conditions.

Consider implementing a shadowing program so unit members can get insight into other's jobs, broaden their knowledge base, and increase awareness of each other's areas of expertise. When a changing situation requires a specific skill or skillset, unit members will know who the best person is to identify the critical performance requirements for influencing the conditions. Broadening Soldiers' knowledge base expands the lens through which they view the environment, its problems, and potential solutions. This enhances their ability to recognize change, assess problems from multiple frames of reference, and determine when conditions have changed enough to warrant alterations to existing priorities and plans.

Strength-Train the Unit's Adaptability Muscles

Complex mission sets may put your unit in a firefight one minute, and in the next, require your unit to be calm and polite when speaking to civilians. By designing training that requires your unit to respond to various kinds of change and shift gears—up or down—you give them the repetitions necessary to strengthen their adaptation muscles and increase their confidence in the unit's ability to tackle the unknown.

Training injects provide a great way to simulate changing conditions during training. Injects can range from simple variations in surface details to complex changes to the mission structure. Simple injects can include actions such as furnishing new information, denying communications, or benching a Soldier to simulate a casualty. Complex injects may include staged ambushes, obstructed routes, or FRAGOs that change the mission altogether. Consider designing training to include an opposing force—role played by another unit or a portion of your unit—to create more variety in the ways you can force your unit to adapt.

Inject is a general term for various actions you can take to change things up.

When making use of injects, look to see if members recognize there has been a meaningful change in the situation. Observe if/how they work together to determine if they need to adjust their current approach. To assist newer members with identifying critical performance requirements for responding effectively to change, describe injects to only your subordinate leaders and direct them to work with members to define the problem. Ideally, you want your more-experienced Soldiers to draw upon their experiences to understand the performance requirements of the change and explain to less-experienced Soldiers how those experiences are relevant to the changing situation.

Consider Contingencies

When your unit has some downtime, such as during lulls in field exercises, start hypothetical discussions about the myriad challenges your unit may encounter when operating in some specific environment (e.g., megacities vs. rural terrain). What could change? How would the unit recognize that change? What would the unit do if this happened during a deployment?

It can be helpful to draw scenarios from your experiences since you have a frame of reference for what works, what doesn't, and possible outcomes of a given action. You can also have members identify similar situations they have encountered in the past, and the actions they took in that situation.

Just as injects can be used during training events to simulate changing conditions, making use of "what if" and "then what" questions is a simple way of introducing new changes and challenges that force your Soldiers to think about contingencies for their contingencies. This helps you keep the conversation going and helps your Soldiers by teaching them to question their assumptions and anticipate the second- and third-order effects of a proposed course of action. When Soldiers begin naturally asking these questions of themselves and their fellow unit members, it is a positive signal they are developing a mindset that promotes critical thinking and enhances adaptability.

Broaden the knowledge of less-experienced Soldiers by comparing their input with input from more-experienced Soldiers. Pay attention to which scenarios get the unit engaged and consider ways you could create similar conditions by using injects during a training event.

Creating a climate that supports generation, sharing and constructive critique of ideas can positively benefit your unit's adaptability. As a leader, you can begin creating such a positive climate by modeling the openness, approachability, and professional respect you expect your Soldiers to demonstrate. In so doing, you set the standard to which you must hold Soldiers accountable. Keeping an open-door policy and holding periodic sensing sessions can be effective ways to solicit ideas and insights of your Soldiers to improve the unit.

Simply being open to input and feedback helps create a positive climate and keeps the ideas flowing—whether suggestions for making certain processes more efficient, ways to make training events more engaging and valuable, or solutions to a particular problem. If your unit is facing a particular challenge, consider asking for ideas directly to demonstrate your value for others' ideas and use spot-corrections for any member whose actions stifle the free-flow of ideas. You never know when someone may offer up a brilliant idea.

Of course, you may get some less-than-brilliant ideas from time to time, but even these give you an opportunity to foster a positive climate. Rather than dismissing the idea outright, offer a respectful critique or pose questions to encourage the offeror to refine their idea. This contributes to their development and maintains positive perceptions of the unit climate. Consistency in modeling these behaviors and holding others accountable for doing the same is critical for maintaining a positive climate. Negative perceptions, once established, have a way of creeping through the unit via peer interactions and can tough to correct once they take root.

Practice Problem Solving

Your unit's adaptability is determined in part by its ability to solve problems. There are actions you can take as a leader to develop this ability within a safe and time-permissive environment such as in garrison or during home-station training. Both environments will present a variety of issues, from mundane to critical, that you can leverage as opportunities to develop the problem-solving skills of your Soldiers.

Begin by having your Soldiers select and define a problem in terms of its specific effects on the unit and its causes. Keep in mind, the cause could be a constellation of factors. To keep things manageable, tackle the problem by addressing one cause at a time with your Soldiers.

Next, have your Soldiers brainstorm and share ideas regarding solutions that address the root cause. If necessary, get things started by presenting your idea first. Once all ideas have been gathered, facilitate mental simulation of the proposed solutions. Ask "then what" questions to force members to think of the second- and third-order effects of a proposed solution and ask "what if" questions to make underlying assumptions explicit and promote members' self-discovery of potential flaws of a solution. The results of the mental simulations should either highlight the best solution or indicate the need to generate new solutions.

The objective of practicing problem solving is not to teach Soldiers how to brainstorm and deliberate. You cannot take a timeout to brainstorm with your Soldiers in the midst of battle. Soldiers in combat will use their training to execute the decisions *you* make as their leader. The objective is to make well-reasoned problem-solving second nature. With practice, Soldiers will develop mental shortcuts that enable them to quickly identify the root causes of changing conditions and the critical performance requirements for responding effectively to change in time-constrained environments.

Observation Card

Purpose

To equip you with a quick and easy way to record observations of your unit's cohesiveness and adaptability.

Rating Scale

The rating scale allows you to quickly document your judgment of your unit's performance. For each item, mark whether you think the unit struggles, occasionally struggles, barely meets expectations, meets expectations, or exceeds expectations by marking Your ratings provide a snapshot of your unit's strengths and areas for improvement to help focus your feedback. Track your unit's development over time by keeping a record of your ratings in a separate location (e.g., a journal).

Notes Pane

The rating scale is quick to use but ratings alone will do little to guide the development of your unit. Use the notes pane to record specific things you observed that support your judgement of the unit's performance. Even noting just a few keywords to refresh your memory will go a long way toward helping you deliver valuable developmental feedback to your unit.

Not only do specific examples facilitate reflection and learning among unit members but they provide evidence that encourages feedback recipients to accept and internalize the feedback. Observer Coach Trainers (OCTs), who are seasoned experts when it comes to observing training and delivering performance feedback, espouse the critical value of specific examples when delivering performance feedback.

COHESION	Struggles	Occasionally Struggles	Barely Meets Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Treat each other with professional respect					
Seek assistance when needed					
Effectively coordinate interdependent tasks					
Communicate effectively					
Shared commitment to achieving the unit's goals					
Trust each other to do the job					
Understand their roles and the roles of others					
Are able to influence each other regardless of rank					
Unit pride and esprit de corps is high					
<p>Notes</p>					

Feedback should be delivered informally and on-the-spot for minor corrections, to tell the feedback target they are doing well, or when feedback is specific to an individual's development. Feedback regarding the collective performance of the unit is often best delivered in an after action review or similar setting where everyone can participate.

When preparing to deliver feedback, review your observation cards and notes to determine the unit's successes and 2-3 critical areas for improvement. Don't plan to cover everything. Feedback is most effective when delivered in bite-sized, easily digestible chunks.

General Guidelines for Delivering Group Feedback

Begin feedback sessions by asking the group to list what three things they did well and what allowed them to do those things well. Help them identify their strengths and discuss how those strengths can be applied to other areas of performance (e.g., good communication). Describe examples of good performance from your own observations to set a positive and constructive tone for the rest of the session.

Next, ask members to list three things to improve, why they need to improve and how. Come prepared with "tactical questions" to facilitate unit members' self-discovery of their developmental needs. When unit members identify problems and solutions on their own, feedback feels less punitive. When problems and solutions are self-discovered, unit members will be more committed to self-correction and improvement. Have them do most of the talking. This takes some of the pressure off you and besides, few people enjoy being lectured.

Wrap up the session by reiterating where the unit is doing well, encourage them to strive for continuous improvement, and express your confidence in their ability to do so.

General Guidelines for Delivering Individual Feedback

While this aid was designed to help leaders use feedback in a group setting to improve group performance, there may be circumstances where you need to address the behavior of an individual that hinders the performance of the entire group, or to call attention to something being done particularly well, as an example for others to follow. Below are some best practices for delivering individual feedback.

- ◆ Find a private place to provide individual feedback unless the intent is to highlight a positive example for others to follow.
- ◆ Deliver feedback as close to the behavior as possible. However, avoid interrupting a training event or other group work unless the safety of others is at risk.
- ◆ Provide feedback early and often. This way subordinates will not be caught off guard and by surprises in formal counseling sessions or performance reviews. This could cause them to lose trust in you.
- ◆ Focus on the individual's behavior and actions and what the individual has control to change.
- ◆ Plan what you want to say ahead of time so you can be sure to cover the points you want to hit during the conversation.
- ◆ Give the individual the opportunity to come up with a solution to the problem. This helps to empower the individual and increase the chance that they take ownership of solving the problem.
- ◆ Actively listen to the individual.

See Chapter 3 of FM 6-22 for more information on how to deliver individual feedback and ATP 6-22.1 for extensive guidelines on the counseling process.

For group feedback, read on for example feedback points and tactical questions you can use to facilitate members' self-discovery of the unit's strengths and developmental needs.

I'd like to talk a bit about our performance as a cohesive unit. When I say unit cohesion, what does that mean to you?

Unit cohesion is what binds us together as a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. It involves our attachment and commitment to each other and the unit. Consider how cohesive we are in terms of our *cooperation*, *communication*, *coordination*, *commitment*, and *respect*.

Cooperation is required in most of the work we do. Our ability to work together to solve problems can ultimately determine whether we accomplish our missions.

Communication is the vehicle through which cooperation and coordination happen. Good communication involves anticipating what others need, knowing how to convey information, talking through challenges, and coordinating our efforts.

Coordination of our interdependent work is essential to completing things in timely manner and avoiding duplication of effort.

We all need to have a shared *commitment* to achieving the unit's goals and accomplishing our missions. Without commitment, we'll flounder when things get tough.

Lastly, *respect* refers to the professional respect each of you deserves and owes to each other. Respect is fundamental to our ability to function as a team that puts personal differences aside and works together to accomplish the mission.

Let's list three things to sustain and three things to improve with regard to how well we are cohering as a unit. I'll start us off.

Sustain: During the exercise, I noticed many of you seemed to be having fun conversing or joking around. This is positive and you should continue to spend time simply getting to know everyone in the unit.

- ◆ What is something you learned about someone else during the exercise?
- ◆ How is a shared sense of comradery going to contribute to our readiness?
- ◆ What are other things we are doing well to cohere as a unit?

Improve: I also noticed during the exercise that a lot of the conversing and joking around seemed to take place in the same groups. That's not uncommon. It's completely natural to connect on a personal level with others who are similar to us. However, connecting with others who are dissimilar can benefit the unit.

- ◆ What are some of the differences among us? In particular, what types of things contribute to our professional diversity?
- ◆ How does diversity among our team members contribute to our effectiveness as a unit?
- ◆ What can we do to make sure we are using the diversity of our unit to our advantage?

Notes

Everyone should get to know each other, their interests, their strengths, their weaknesses. This helps us strengthen the bonds in the unit but is also more than that. You are not expected to be best friends with everyone but having a level of familiarity with each other helps us communicate, work interdependently, and cooperate more efficiently.

To put this in perspective, think of a time when you worked on something with a good friend. Contrast that with a time you worked with someone you just met.

- ◆ How were those two situations different?
- ◆ Which had a better outcome?

All right, now I want you all to list at least two more examples from the exercise when you felt we were working as cohesive unit or doing things to foster cohesion.

- ◆ What did cohesion look like in that moment? What did it *feel* like?
- ◆ How did the cohesion affect our performance in that situation?

What about things we need to do to foster more cohesion in the unit? Give me at least two examples from your observations during the exercise.

- ◆ What are things you have experienced that really made you feel like you an integral part of a unit? Not just this unit but any unit you have been in. As Soldiers, what gives you that sense of belonging to something bigger than yourself?

Notes

Adaptability: Example Feedback Points and Questions

Next, I want us to consider how well we were able to adapt when problems popped up during the exercise. When I say adaptability, I am referring to our ability to recognize when change is required and adjust accordingly.

First, everyone has to stay vigilant to detect potential problems and recognize when a change is required. Consider for example, when we are out on patrol.

- ◆ What are some examples of things we might see in the environment that would signal to us that we may be about to encounter a problem?
- ◆ If and when you noticed those things, what would you do?

Second, consider how effective we are responding to change and what we can do to get better.

- ◆ Tell me about a time you have responded to changing conditions – either in this unit or another unit. What signaled changing conditions and what did you do to respond to that change?
- ◆ What things would hinder our ability to respond to changing conditions? For example, how does experience level factor in to our adaptability?
- ◆ Generally speaking, the more versatile we are as a unit, the more adaptable we will be. When I say versatile, what does that mean to you?
- ◆ What can we do to become a more versatile unit?

Notes

Again, let's list three things to sustain and three things to improve with regard to our adaptability. I'll start with my observations.

Sustain: When SGT Jones spotted that enemy position, he immediately directed us to cover and pointed it out. It surprised us but you all came together and quickly determined that calling for fire was the best course of action. What was going through your minds while this was happening?

- ◆ What specific risk to our mission accomplishment was presented by that change in the situation?
- ◆ What allowed us to make a decision so quickly?
- ◆ What would you have done if you thought a different course of action would have been better?

Improve: With the exception of that particular situation, there were times during the exercise when I noticed that information wasn't flowing as efficiently as it could have. In particular, during lulls in the action, I had to pull information that could have been pushed to me. Maybe we were getting too comfortable or complacent. I'm not sure, so I'd like to hear what you think.

- ◆ Why do you think our ability to communicate and share information fluctuated over the course of the exercise?
- ◆ How did that affect our performance in the exercise? How would that affect our performance during a real mission?
- ◆ What can help us get better at maintaining good communication regardless of the situation?

Notes

We've talked about how vigilance and communication affect how effectively we can adapt to changes and problems. Other factors affect this as well.

First, I think we can all agree that each of you have things you are good at and things that aren't exactly your specialty. Nevertheless, our missions are going to require different skills and expertise be brought to bear at different times.

- ◆ This unit, like every unit, has formally designated leaders. What happens when a leader is responsible for actions that require skills and expertise beyond their own?
- ◆ How do we make sure we make the best use of everyone's strengths?

Drawing on each other's strengths makes the most of the knowledge, skills, and expertise that reside among all of you. Being empowered to take the lead when the situation calls for it takes nothing away from formal leadership positions. Everyone has to have the humility to recognize their limits and acknowledge someone else is the best-suited to lead in a particular situation.

We also have to trust each other to employ our individual skills and expertise to complete unit tasks to a high standard. We need to make deliberate efforts to provide opportunities for others to have more responsibility. That will develop individual abilities, foster mutual trust, and strengthen the bonds among all of you.

Notes

Adaptability: Example Feedback Points and Questions

All right, now I want you all to list at least two more examples of our adaptability, during either the exercise or elsewhere.

- ◆ What signaled changing conditions or the need for us to adjust?
- ◆ How did we determine what adjustments were needed?
- ◆ How did you feel about the adjustments? How did they affect your individual role or responsibility at the time?
- ◆ How did the adjustments affect the outcome? How would the outcome have been different if you/we didn't adapt?

What things do we need to do to become more adaptable? Describe at least two things we can improve.

- ◆ Does a shared understanding of each person's strengths and weaknesses affect our adaptability? How?
- ◆ How do we foster a shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses among everyone in the unit?
- ◆ How do we know which strengths are needed or which weaknesses need to be accounted for or offset?

Notes

Scenarios for Group Discussion

The three scenarios below describe problems that small units may encounter from time to time. As with many types of problems, there can be more than one approach to solving the problem. For this reason, the scenarios do not prescribe the correct solution. Rather, the scenarios contain open-ended questions for you to pose to your unit. These questions serve as conversation starters. Listen to your unit members' answers and keep the discussion going with follow up questions such as:

- ◆ What if _____ happened?
- ◆ What do you expect would happen if _____ did _____?
- ◆ How would this solution work if we were _____?
- ◆ What if _____ turned out to be false?

In these types of discussions, it is common for members with more experience or a big personality to dominate the discussion. Get everyone involved by asking members to evaluate the ideas posed by others. Are they able to point out flaws in the reasoning? Are members comfortable with critiquing others and being critiqued? Or do they get defensive? Observing the interactions provides insights regarding the interpersonal dynamics and potential friction points in your unit.

In addition, scenario-based discussion allows everyone to learn how their unit members tend to think about and approach problems. The low-stakes of the discussion encourage participation and creates an opportunity for members to develop their ability to interact and communicate with the purpose of achieving a goal – here, solving a hypothetical problem.

Notes

Scenario 1: The Platoon Leader Stirs the Pot

You have been a platoon sergeant in your company for about two years. A new inexperienced platoon leader has been assigned. You had an excellent working relationship with your previous platoon leader; you had similar leadership styles and views and worked closely together to create a well-disciplined and effective unit. When the new platoon leader first arrived, you in-briefed him on the unit, its strengths and weaknesses, and its experiences over the past year or so. You've recently noticed that he has begun to set objectives and direct Soldiers without input from you or the other NCOs. Your squad leaders have begun to complain that the platoon leader is micromanaging and that tasks are not being distributed fairly. It seems to be creating conflicts among the Soldiers and creating discipline problems. You've met with the new platoon leader to share your concerns about the unit, but he doesn't appear to be listening and you feel like you are not getting through to him.

- ◆ What are the platoon sergeant's options for resolving the issue?
- ◆ What might happen after the platoon sergeant implements that solution?
- ◆ Can the squad leaders and Soldiers help resolve the issue? If not, why not? If so, how?
- ◆ What types of situational factors are important to know for determining the best solution?
- ◆ Do personalities affect which type of solution is best?
- ◆ How would this situation change if you were a team leader in the unit for two years and a new squad leader came in and started stirring the pot?

Scenario 2: Hey New Guy!

You are a junior enlisted Soldier and the newest member of your platoon. You have no deployment experience and it is very likely your unit will receive a deployment notice soon. Given the training you have received, you are confident in your abilities to shoot, move, and communicate when the time arrives. The platoon leader informed you the unit scored high marks across its METL when qualifying at NTC a few months ago. You are happy to hear the unit is proficient but because you were not with the unit when it qualified, you are concerned that your lack of familiarity with your fellow unit members will hinder your ability to work effectively with them and meet expectations during the upcoming deployment.

- ◆ If you were the new Soldier, would you share his concerns? Why or why not?
- ◆ What can the new Soldier do to address his concerns?
- ◆ What do you think would happen after the Soldier does that?
- ◆ Whose responsibility is it to help the new Soldier integrate into the unit? Why?
- ◆ What should other unit members do to help the new Soldier?
- ◆ Would this situation still pose a problem if the new member was more experienced?

Scenario 3: Big Mistake or Big Lesson?

You are a platoon leader and your Soldiers are rehearsing convoy operations as part of the train-up for deployment. During the training exercise, a simulated anti-tank (AT) mine detonates on the first vehicle in your element. In the immediate confusion and expecting an ambush, the second vehicle accelerates and tries to push through the kill zone, only to get the vehicle stuck in a ditch. No one is injured, but the stuck vehicle has sustained damage. In addition, the road is now impassable due to blockage by the two downed vehicles. Communications are down and you need to get your platoon to the next checkpoint before nightfall.

- ◆ If you were the platoon leader in this scenario, how would you react?
- ◆ How would you react if you were the Soldier driving the second vehicle?
- ◆ What is the best way for everyone in the unit learn from this situation? What would that look like?
- ◆ What are the longer-term problems the unit might encounter if they failed to learn from this?
- ◆ What should happen when the unit gets back to its home station?

Scenario 4: Setting Our Priorities – The Other SOP

You have just joined your unit as its newest platoon sergeant. Your unit will be deploying in about two months, and everyone seems to have their plates full making sure everything is ready for the deployment. Your company commander, who assumed command about a year ago, approaches you and tells you that he thinks the segmented layout of the unit workspaces are limiting collaboration among the unit leaders. He asks you to task your Soldiers with rearranging the space, to include moving a bunch of old desks and file cabinets into storage before the battalion commander returns from TDY in a few days. The company commander states this is a high priority because the battalion commander had mentioned wanting to do this a while back. You appreciate his interest in promoting collaboration but wonder if rearranging office space should be a priority right now.

- ◆ What do you see as the dilemma in this scenario?
- ◆ What could happen if you complied with the request?
- ◆ What could happen if you pushed back against the request?
- ◆ If you chose to push back against the request, how would you do it?
- ◆ If you were forced to comply with the request, how could you make the most of the situation? How could you turn the additional demand into a benefit for the unit?

Relevant Doctrinal References

- ◆ ADP 1. The Army
- ◆ ADP 6-0. Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces
- ◆ ADP 6-22. Army Leadership and the Profession
- ◆ ADP 7-0. Training
- ◆ ATP 5-19. Risk Management
- ◆ ATP 6-22.1. The Counseling Process
- ◆ ATP 6-22.5. A Leader's Guide to Soldier Health and Fitness
- ◆ ATP 6-22.6. Army Team Building
- ◆ FM 6-22. Leader Development
- ◆ FM 7-0. Train to Win in a Complex World
- ◆ AR 350-1. Army Training and Leader Development
- ◆ AR 623-3. Evaluation and Reporting
- ◆ DA PAM 623-3. Evaluation and Reporting System



Notes