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Acquisition Leadership Development & Capabilities: Research, Development, Testing & Evaluation

Presented to:

15th Annual Acquisition Research Symposium

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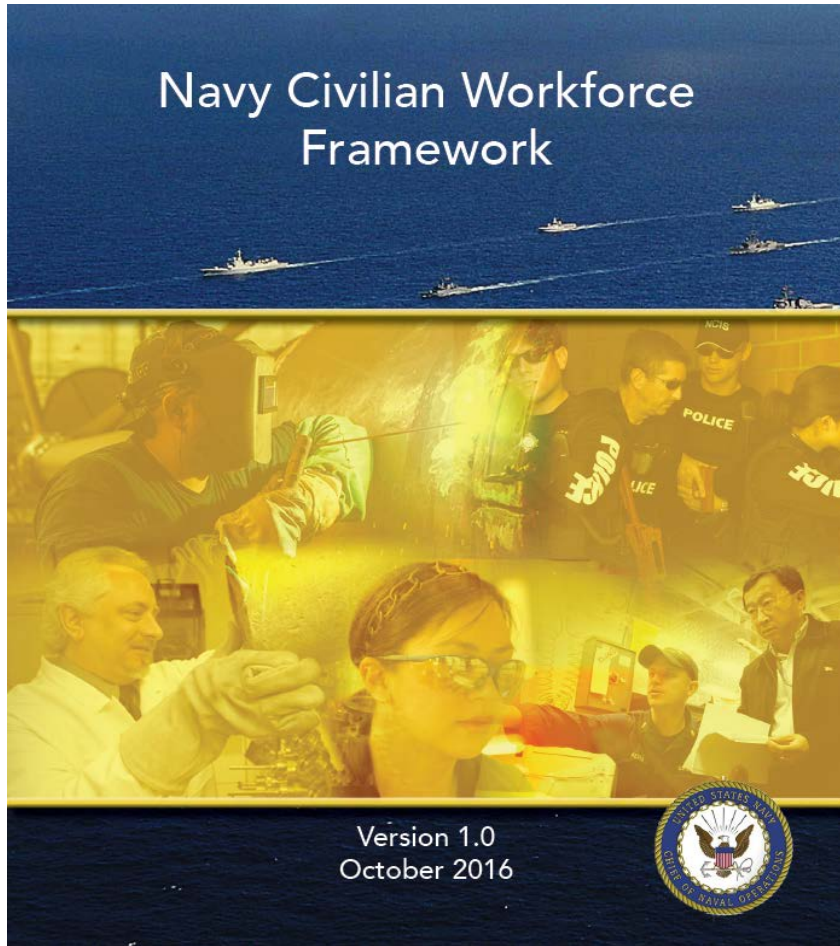SPAWAR Assistant Chief Technology Officer for International Cooperation

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Navy Civilian Workforce Framework

Version 1.0
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- New age of competition, defined by the pace and complexity of change.

- To remain competitive - superior - amidst that change, need a highly capable Navy Team.

- Focus of leader development expands: individual (early career) to larger organizations in (mid-career) to the entire Navy (senior level).

- Provide sufficient flexibility to meet diverse command needs, share best practices and provide effective tools. These tools can enable rapid action and continued improvements.

- Civilian Workforce Advisory Board to ensure rapid learning, a more deliberate approach to strengthening key element of the Team.

Agile, innovative learning culture for a complex world

Research Problem: Department of the Navy leadership continues to highlight the need for new thinking and innovative approaches to meet the challenges of a complex environment, but the models and methods of learning and development are largely unchanged.

Research Proposal: Assess a complexity leadership model of learning and development as a means to provide agile and adaptable insights needed to meet the challenges facing the Department of the Navy acquisition workforce.

What organizational capabilities and leader development needs best position the Department of the Navy Acquisition Workforce to meet future challenges and opportunities of a complex environment?
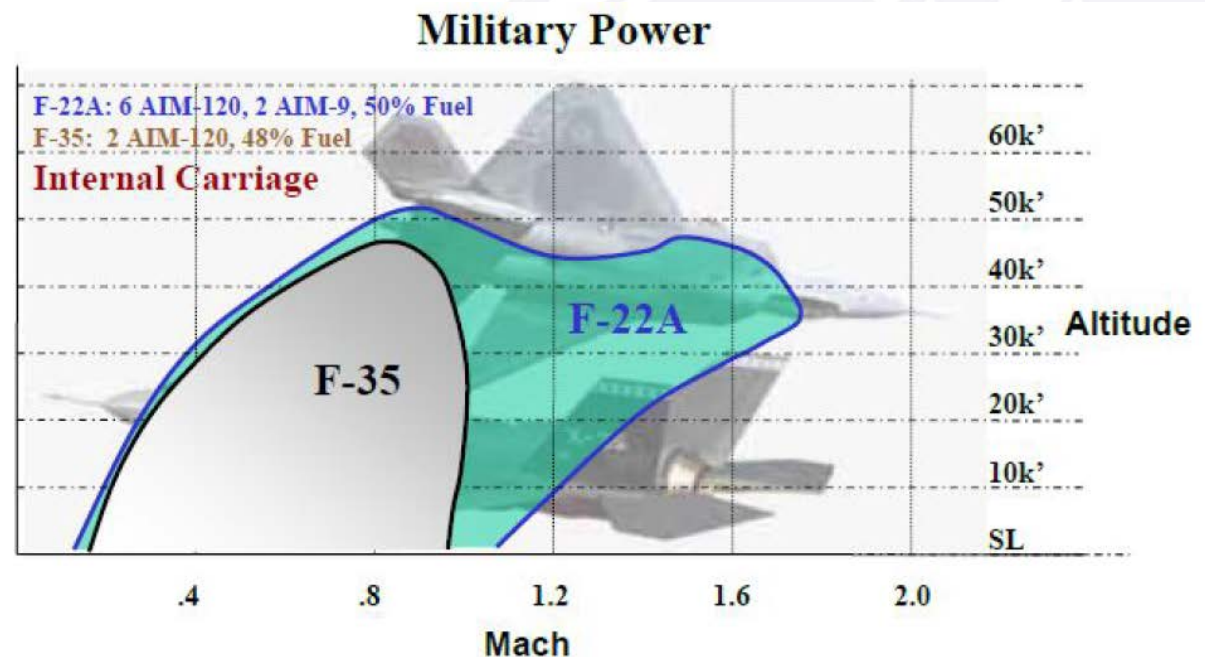
Expand the critical thinking envelope

- Employ methodological rigor and complexity leadership theory to common Department of the Navy workforce challenges (versus reliance untested programs or outdated assumptions and practices).

- Assess the impact of a flexible, continuous learning process that practitioners at all levels could use to think about organizational challenges and leader development needs in a complex environment.

- Compare current thinking and models of leadership in Department of the Navy organizations to emerging theory on complexity leadership and experiential learning and development.

Assess the thinking process (absorptive capacity-building)

Method:

- Conduct a small scale test of a process that leaders at all organizational levels could use to think about leader development needs in a complex environment.

- Assess the quality of continuous learning and collective knowledge flows in delivering real-time, relevant insights about leadership challenges and leader development needs directly to organizations.

Means:

*Hybrid Delphi approach (real-time, expert forecasts & feedback) Facilitated nominal grouping technique followed by two on line panel assessments.

*Landeta, J. Barrutia, J. & Lertxundi, A. (2011). Hybrid Delphi: A method to facilitate contribution from experts in professional contexts. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change. 78, 1629-1641.*

Bridge between theory and real world

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- Recruitment
  - Approximately 15 organizational leaders
  - NAVAIR: Vertical sample of Air Vehicle Test & Evaluation (5.1.6)
  - SPAWAR: Horizontal sample of International Technology Cooperation
- Human Subject Research Assurances
  - Voluntary (participation & attrition) with minimum workload
  - Confidentiality of responses (PII & data protections)
- Potential Benefits
  - Insights & forecasts (practical)
  - Process assessment data (methodological)
  - Leadership development in complex environments (theoretical)

Employ science and theory to organizational & human behavior

Leadership Challenges:

- Bureaucratic structure misalignment
- Lack of clear prioritization
- Resource limitations
- Workforce bureaucratic limitations

Leadership Capabilities (what it takes):

- Provide for and empower a flexible workforce
- Goals and expectations linked
- Accept risk at all levels
- Shape a collaborative culture

Common Themes for NAVAIR & SPAWAR

Development Activities:

- Enable a workforce that is technically proficient with changing technologies
- Create clear goals and bridge gaps with warfighter-alignment
- Delegate authority to the lowest level for action
- Communicate in open and focused ways

Development Opportunities:

- Practical OJT assignments, Hands on with greater scope and increased responsibility
- Leadership crucibles (challenging assignments)
- Targeted coaching to strengthen leadership abilities and critical thinking

Common Themes for NAVAIR & SPAWAR

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- Delphi panel assessment round 1:
  - Prioritize Leadership challenges & capabilities
  - Prioritize Development activities & opportunities
- Delphi panel assessment round 2:
  - Consensus on challenges & capabilities
  - Consensus on activities & opportunities
- Process assessment survey
  - Further develop capability to support operational leaders
 - Deploy method for greatest impact

A continuous learning model at every level of the organization

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<u>Create adaptive space:</u>

Operational leadership- formal alignment of systems and structures to deliver products (exploitation)

Enabling leadership- creating the conditions to support and sustain adaptive space

Entrepreneurial leadership- sourcing of new ideas, learning and growth for the organization (exploration)
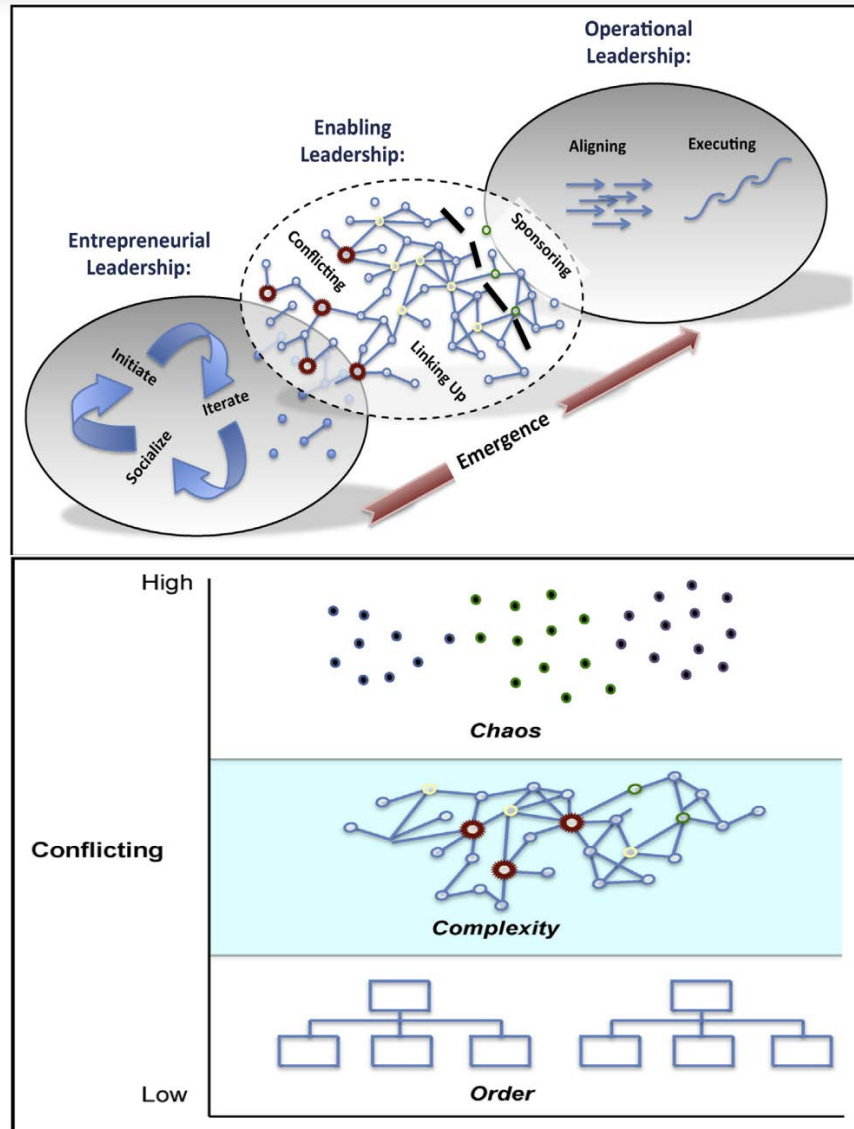
Uhl-Bien, M. and Arena, M. (2017) Organizational Dynamics, 46, 9-20

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Back up

Principal Investigator:

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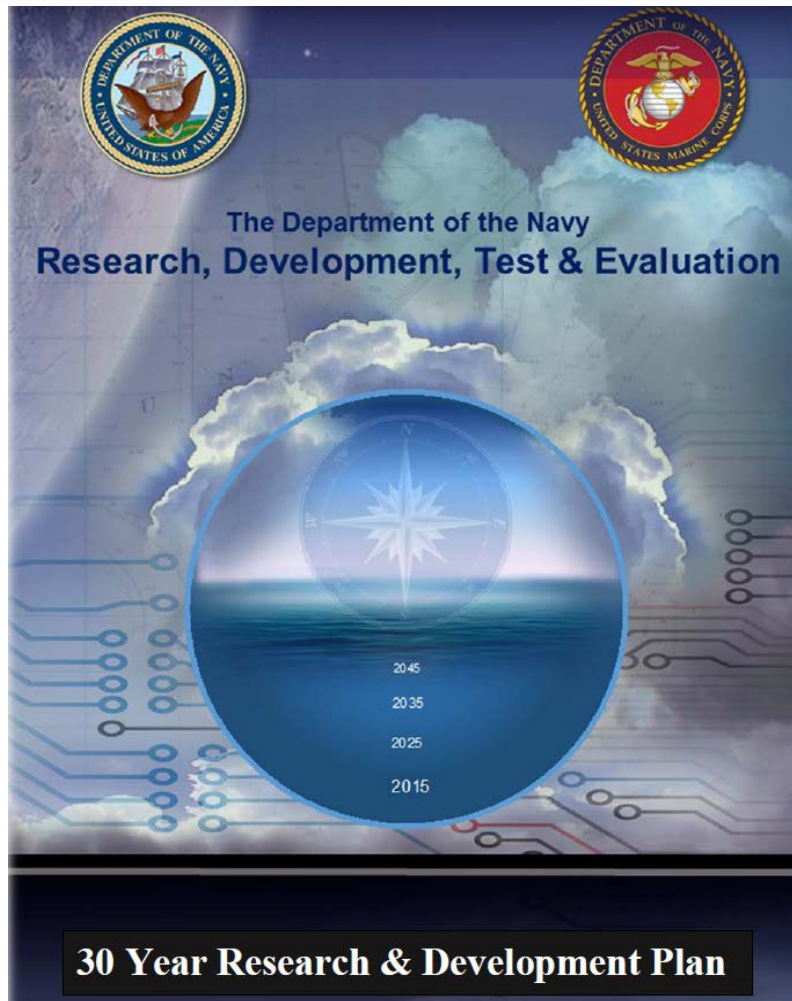   Naval Postgraduate School,   GSBPP

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Conducting a small scale test of a process that leaders at all levels can use to think about leader development in a complex environment

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The Department of the Navy
Research, Development, Test & Evaluation

2045
2035
2025
2015

30 Year Research & Development Plan

Workforce Development

1. Develop Core Technology for in house R&D capability
2. Advocate for Advance Degrees
3. *Create a learning and collaborative culture*
4. *Develop a NR&DE leadership program*
5. Strengthen technical depth and breadth of NR&DE workforce
6. Develop in advance of need, the appropriate future skills and capabilities for success across NR&DE
7. Develop a plan to build and sustain the skills and requirements for lead systems integration roles across the NR&DE

Continual improvement in all stages of the civilian workforce.

Forecast Challenges
(Acquisition – *Concrete Experience*)

Targeted Development
(Exploitation – *Active Experimentation*)

Organizational Strategy
(Assimilation – *Reflective Observation*)

Leadership Needs
(Transformation – *Abstract Conceptualization*)

Application of Delphi Technique to Leadership Development

Adapted from Kolb and Kolb (2009). Experiential Learning Theory: A Dynamic, Holistic Approach to Management Learning, Education and Development.