

Unit cycle dictates knowledge management posture

By LTC Paul Calvert

Where your unit is in the Army Forces Generation cycle dictates how it approaches knowledge management activities. For example, when you begin a cycle, usually at the conclusion of an operation or deployment, knowledge workers gather observations and best practices, archive and catalog good ideas and best practices, and finally improve processes that did not work so well. As equipment and people are reset, new Soldiers come while old Soldiers go. New and overhauled equipment are issued.

During the ready phase, knowledge workers sharpen their axes and help the unit prepare. Unit members integrate new equipment, evaluate processes, train staffs/operators, develop standard procedures and establish drills. Members also begin contacting their deployed counterparts for possible changes and adjustments to their SOPs, while new and emerging doctrine is reviewed and incorporated into routine activities. But it is during the training events leading up to a unit's deployment when KM emerges. As operations centers and tactical operations centers are established and digital systems begin to get wide spread use again, some of the KM bills come due from the reset and ready phases. If you missed steps along the way, they will be readily apparent when processes falter. The right people and

adequate resources must have been committed before major training activities, or there will be diminished capability and false starts.

Obviously, the larger the unit, the more resources are required to ensure a smooth transition between cycles.

The biggest proof of a successful KM program can best be seen during operations, particularly in how knowledge workers feed inputs to the command group so that accurate situational awareness is maintained. Whether gathered face-to-face during trips around the battlefield or digitally through sensors, information management feeds or collaborative team efforts, the various inputs help form the common operational picture.

Some anticipate the need and make the appropriate allocations in advance. Others by necessity morph from how they were initially organized. It doesn't matter what you call it or who you designate to do it, knowledge management still has to be done. We operate in a mostly digital, wired environment and new functions are performed in many places.

Here are some ways to hedge against some of the KM challenges that face a unit before deployment:

- Maintain a full-time knowledge worker throughout ARFORGEN, a belly button to poke within your unit.
- Use as many tactical digital systems and collaboration tools for garrison operations as is possible to maintain proficiency, and



adapt your internal processes to maximize their use.

- Train your people on how to be good at knowledge sharing, which for some may be an unusual role.
- Build people-to-people networks and encourage your staff members to reach out to experts outside the organization.
- Take advantage of as many training opportunities as possible, and allow as many people as you can to participate in workshops and conferences to stay aware of emerging concepts and ideas.

These are a few techniques and others may very well apply. Seek out further ideas from your knowledge management specialists.

ACRONYM QuickScan

ARFORGEN - Army Force Generation

KM - Knowledge Management

SOP - Standard Operating Procedure

TOC - Tactical Operations Center