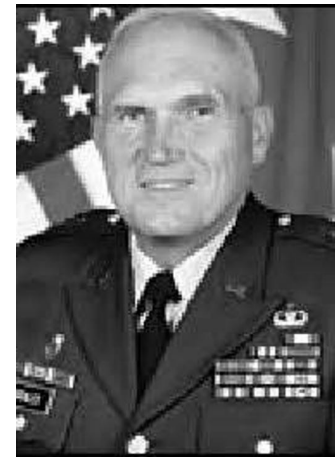
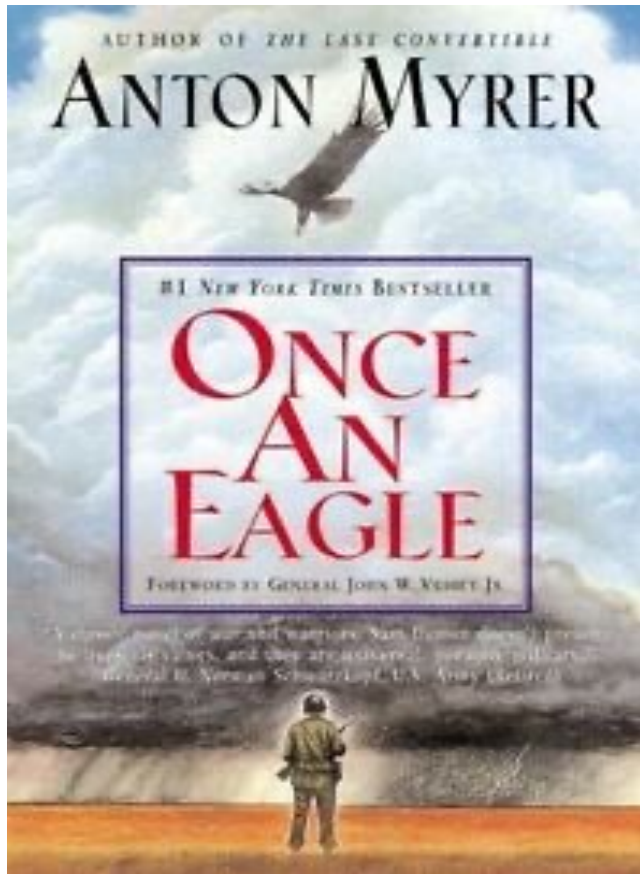


The Army Owes Courtney Massengale His Due: Qualities of a General Staff Officer



“We need more officers with Courtney’s skill as strategist, officers with the ability to think in time, who are able to express themselves with elegance, clarity, conviction, and intellect, and yes, navigate through the swamp of political-military policymaking.”

Colonel Jonathan Harvey, U.S. Army
War College Fellow at Duke University, Sanford School of Public Policy Academic Year 2021
Jonathan.harvey@duke.edu

- **Research Question:** What knowledge, skills and behaviors must Army officers have to serve as staff responsible for enabling senior leader decision making?
- **Thesis:** Officers are currently ill-prepared and unequipped to enable decision makers in strategic level headquarters. The Army must increase officers' knowledge and develop their skills and behaviors to provide the force proficient general staff officers who can think differently and solve complex problems.
- **Why it Matters**
 - The future operational environment will make “warfare both familiar and utterly alien”
 - The Joint Chiefs of Staff call for “strategically minded joint warfighters, who think critically and can creatively apply military power”

Agenda

Key Terms

Method

Findings

Recommendations

Terms to Frame Discussion

- **Knowledge:** Education and training
- **Skill:** Proficiency and ability
- **Behavior:** Values, attitudes, and temperament
- **Field Grade Officer:** Major, Lieutenant Colonel, or Colonel
- **Strategic Level Headquarters:** Organizations responsible for applying military means to achieve policy aims and objectives
- **General Staff Officer:** Field grade officer assigned to a strategic level headquarters in a staff position
- **General Officer Personal Staff:** Officers who work in close proximity to and have regular, daily interaction with the General Officer
- **Commanding General/ Decision Maker/ Decider**

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Research Methodology

Two Methods of Human Subject Research Used

Survey

- Target respondent: Majors, Lieutenant Colonels, and Colonels with experience on strategic level staff
- Distributed by Army War College and through social media
- 42 questions: select a choice, choose all that apply, and open response
- 147 responses received
- Representative of the core population who fills general staff officer positions

Interview

- General officers' personal staff
- Three parts: background, assessment of staff work, and observations
- 21 base questions and eight additional as follow-up
- Non-attribution agreement with interviewees

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Key Survey Results

| | Sought decisions | Prepared to serve on staff | Prepared to brief senior officers | Prepared to execute planning | Understood organization | Products enabled decisions | Prepared by experience./ mil service |
|--------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Overall | 88% | 73% | 83% | 77% | 77% | 97% | 58% |
| Sister Service Officers (11%) | 76% | 67% | 61% | 38% | 71% | 81% | 48% |
| Functional Area Officers (40%) | 94% | 81% | 87% | 86% | 81% | 95% | 89% |
| Basic Branch Officers (49%) | 73% | 57% | 82% | 75% | 68% | 80% | 52% |
| SAMS Graduates | 100% | 80% | 90% | 90% | 80% | 100% | 60% |

- Staff officers on strategic staffs directly seek decisions from decision makers
- Officers regard themselves as prepared to serve on strategic staff
- Officers regard themselves as having strong communication skills
- Officers overwhelmingly assess their products enable decision-making
- Officers fault their service and experience as factors of their ill-preparedness
- Specialized training dramatically impacts self-assessment

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Key Interview Insights

Staff Work is “good, usually really good, but not great – but rarely bad”

- Lack writing and briefing skills
- Fail to understand larger context
- Fail to answer the question

Assessment of Staff Officers

- Lack self-awareness
- Lack emotional intelligence/ empathy
- Lack inform and influence skills

Most Effective Staff Officers

- Highly skilled written and oral communicators
- Gain trust by demonstrating proficiency
- Collaborators, team players, and team builders
- Calm, prepared, and adaptable
- Emotionally intelligent and display empathy
- Anticipatory

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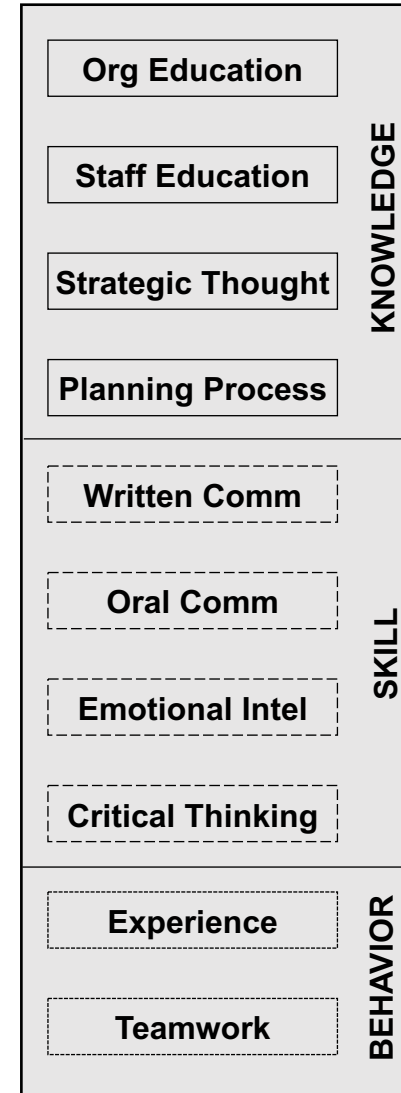
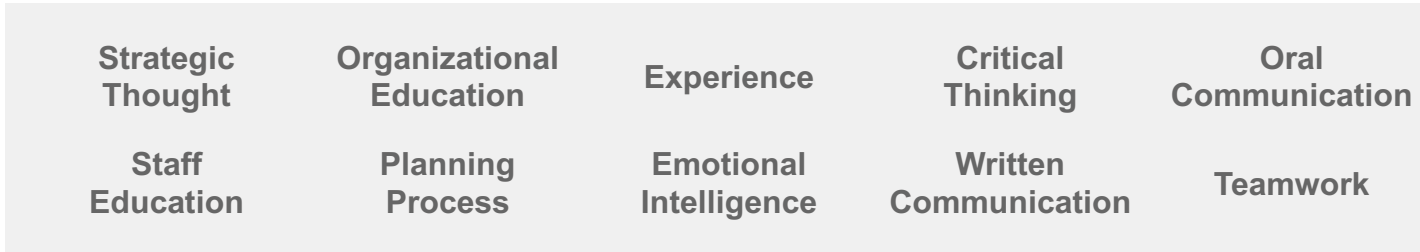
Key Terms

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Trends



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Recommendations

Reintroduce Combined Arms and Services Staff School

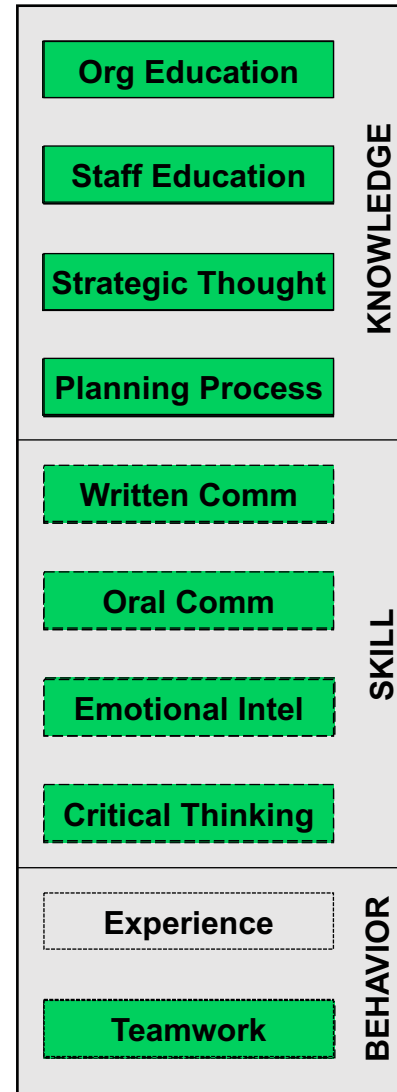
- Formal professional military education
- Focus on staff skills: oral and written communication
- Majors

Organizational On-boarding Programs

- Created and performed at each strategic level headquarters
- Normalize assigned officers to organization's mission, purpose, processes, procedures, and leadership
- Model the Department of the Army's course How the Army Runs

Formal and Informal Emotional Intelligence/ Empathy Education and Training

- Build into all professional military education courses
- Build into leader training and leader development across the Army



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Areas for Future Research

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Confirm/ Deny Findings | 1) Expanded Data Set 2) Analysis of causes through a review of current professional military education curriculum |
| Identify Opportunities | What innovative methods could be applied to layer staff skill proficiency into existing curriculum |
| Comparative Assessment | Study knowledge, skills, and behaviors of Army, Navy, USMC and Air Force to find a commonality of skills for the joint force general staff officer |

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Summary

- Research validated officers are ill-prepared and insufficiently educated to enable decision makers thinking and problem solving in strategic headquarters
- Contributing factors: 1) a lack of education and training, 2) too narrow experience base, and 3) lack of basic staff skills
- The future operational environment and the Joint Chiefs of Staff demand officers overcome these shortfalls
- Of the ten common trends identified, nine can be addressed through education or training
- If the Army overcomes the challenges general staff officers face, it benefits the individual officer as well as staffs and organizations at every levels

Courtney Massengale **was** a bad leader, but his willingness to serve on staff, dedication to the less than glorifying assignment, and his skills as a staff officer are worthy of a renewed discussion on '*Once an Eagle*'.