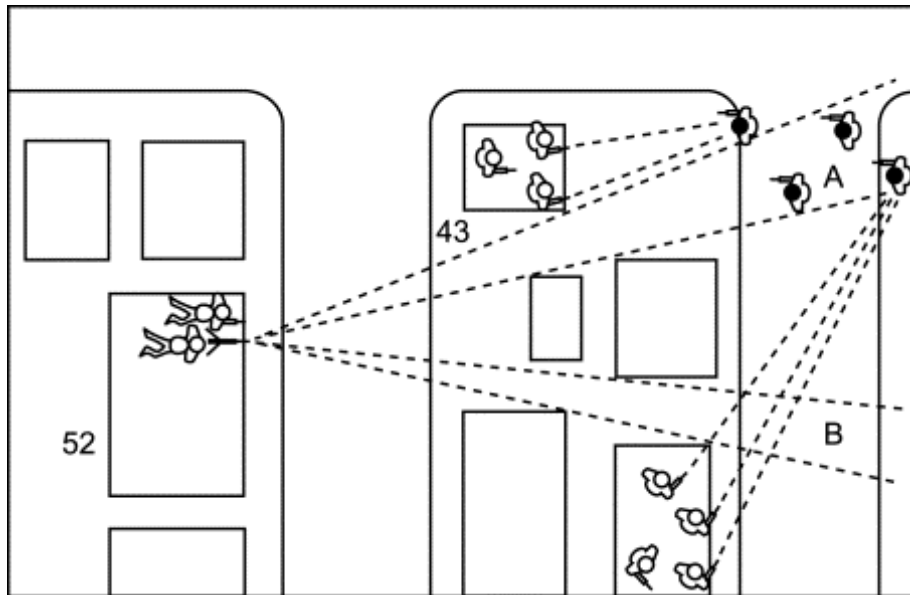


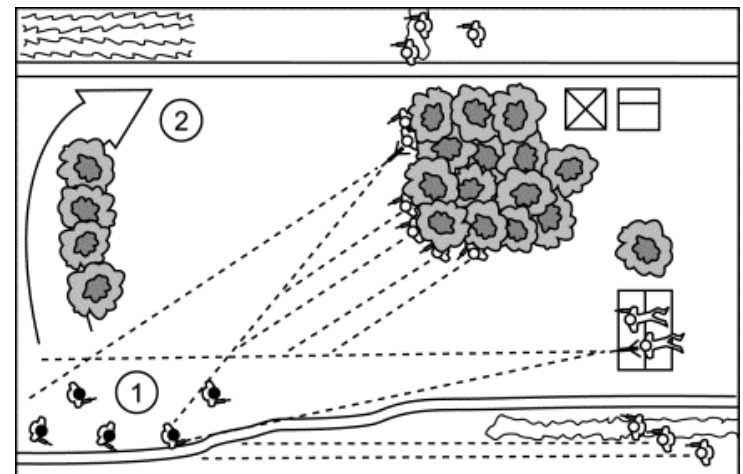
How to Lead a Tactical Decisionmaking Exercise



Battalion PME
Maj B.B. McBreen

Overview

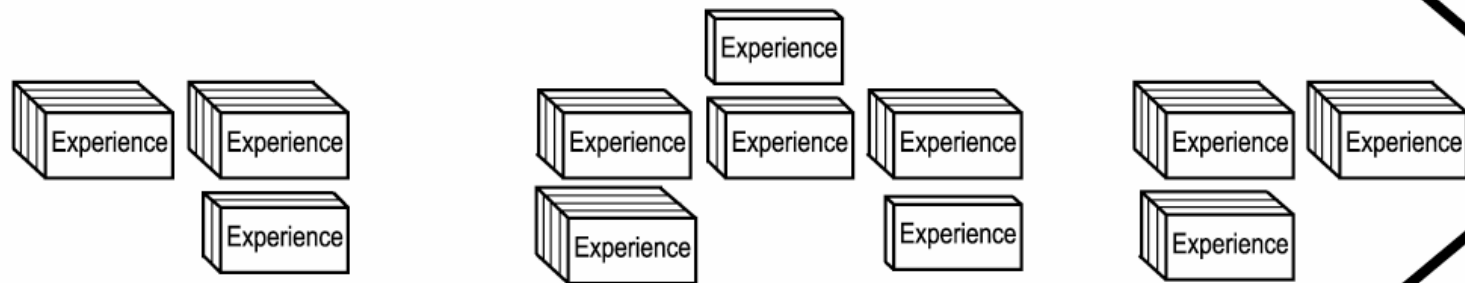
- How are Experts Made? Two attributes
- Tactical Decisionmaking Training
- **How to Lead a Tactical Decisionmaking Exercise**
 - Basic Technique
 - Advanced Techniques
- Effective Coaching



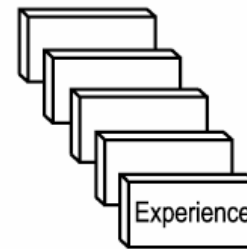
How are Experts Made? Practice

- **10,000 hours of *deliberate practice***
 1. **Coach:** an expert who sets focused goals
 2. **Peers:** support focused practice
 3. **Self:** self-analysis, self-criticism & persistence
- Experts build experience through *deliberate practice*. “Not just repetition, but meaningful repetition.”
- “Don’t teach them to *think* like experts, teach them to *learn* like experts.”
- Experts practice more. “The difference between amateurs and professionals is a capability for deliberate practice.”

How Does an Individual Become an Expert?



**Through Experience,
Focused Experience!**



Self: Setting Goals
Focused Practice
Self-Criticism

Peers: Encouragement
Participation
Criticism & AAR

Expert Coaches: Advising & Teaching
Coaching & Encouragement
Tracking & Resetting Goals

Every Experience is enriched by a factor of five by **feedback**: preparation, task focus, observation, self-critique, and AAR.

2nd Attribute: Feedback

- Experts identify their own weaknesses at a very detailed level. Every review provides new targets for more goal-directed practice
- Experts absorb constructive feedback
 - **Coach:** Expert, well-informed observations and ideas
 - **Peers:** Collaborative learning, encouragement and ideas
 - **Self:** Self-analysis, self-criticism and persistence
- Experts experiment with solutions to solve their own problems. This is “learning how to practice.”
- Practice without feedback is a waste of time

Experts have Insight



Col John Rosenberger at NTA

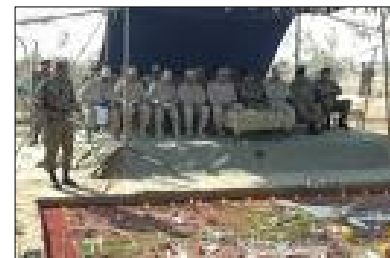
- Experts see a different world than novices. Intuition (or perception) is actually seeking and seeing subtle clues.
- Experts select single solution rapidly, while novices must compare multiple options.
- Frequent practice is the sole reliable activity to develop improved decision-making.
- A good simulation can be better than direct experience due to feedback and repetition.

How are *Decisionmaking* Experts Made?



- **Practice: 10,000 Hours of *deliberate practice***
 1. **Coach:** Leaders and Instructors
 2. **Peers:** Fellow Marines, seniors and subordinates
 3. **Self:** self-analysis, self-criticism & persistence
- **Feedback:**
 - Simulated combat decisionmaking requires estimates, decisions and orders under peer pressure
 - AAR: All decisions are discussed to identify areas to improve and maximize collective learning

Decisionmaking Training



- Combat decisionmaking is the *key* skill of the combat leader
- Combat decisionmaking is a *learned* skill, requiring extensive practice
- Commanders need to learn to cope with complexity and partial information
- Decisionmaking training *augments* and *accelerates* real-world experience. Field exercises do not provide enough decisionmaking events.

What is Decisionmaking Training?

- **Any simulated battlefield:**

- TDGs – paper or white board
- Sand Table
- Simulations
- Field Exercises



- The *purpose* is to practice making an estimate, making a decision, and communicating an order
- This builds experience, helps recognize patterns, and serves as a catalyst to tactical discussions. Secondary uses are weapons, SOPs, CA TTPs.

How to Lead a Tactical Decisionmaking Exercise



- **Orientation**
 - Orient Map, Read Situation, Answer Questions
- **Order**
 - *Everyone* writes an order under a time limit
 - *One man* issues a real order to real subordinates
- **Discussion**
 - Discussion occurs only *after* the orders are done

Orientation



- Prepare. Know the scenario.
- Have one player read the scenario.
- Answer questions. Clarify terrain, friendly forces and command relationships.
- Ambiguity is good. Avoid answering *all* the questions.
- Do not permit discussions of possible solutions. Participants do not discuss their estimates or ideas yet.

Order



- *All* participants write an order. This forces all hands to commit to a decision. Set and enforce a time limit.
- Select one solution to present. Do not ask for a volunteer.
- Make it real. “Stand and present your order.” Select three or four subordinates to receive the order directly. Not a discussion, an *order*.
- Do not allow excuses: “If this were real...” “This is what I would do...” “If I had more time...”
- Introduce an unforeseen event. Ask commander for new orders. Ask subordinates “What would you do?”

Discussion



- Start discussion by adding a new event to the situation. “What if...” Ask a subordinate.
- **Ask** open ended questions: “Why...?”
- **Ask** about assumptions “Estimate of enemy...?”
- **Ask** “What if...?” questions
- **Ask** about the order “ME?” “Intent?”
- There are no right answers. Discussion is to gain insights into estimate of the situation and decisionmaking process.

Five Advanced Techniques

- BEFORE: 1. Goal Clarification
- BEFORE: 2. PreMortem
- BEFORE: 3. Commander's Intent Review
- DURING: 4. Situation Awareness Calibration
- AFTER: 5. Decisionmaking Critique

1. Goal Clarification

- Specify the goals of the exercise
- Identify weak trends that need work
- Focus the discussion and critique
 - “We’re going to focus on team communication.”
 - “Our task organizations should be simple.”
 - “Let’s work on clear well-understood orders.”
 - “We know that machine-gun positions are key.”

2. PreMortem



- To identify weaknesses in a plan:
 - Brief the plan / Issue the order
 - Imagine the future, “We failed badly.”
 - Ask each man, “Why did we fail?”
- Adjust plan to address weaknesses
- No one likes to critique a plan. But if told that it has already failed, they are far more likely to share their doubts.

3. Commander's Intent Review

- Commander's Intent visualizes the future
 - Because combat is unpredictable
 - Allows subordinates' initiative, judgment, changes
- “In Order To” (IOT) describes End State
- Subordinates briefback Commander's Intent
- Ask “What if...” questions to stress their understanding of the commander's intent.

4. Situation Awareness Calibration

- To compare team member's goals & thoughts
- During simulated combat, call, "Time Out."
 - What is current goal of the unit?
 - What are you doing to support that goal?
 - What are you worried about?
 - What is the current threat?
 - What will situation be in twenty minutes?
- Compare and discuss each man's answers
- "Are we all on the same page?"

5. Decisionmaking Critique

1. “What were the tough decisions?”
“Why were they difficult?”
2. “Was this perfect?” “Why not?”
“What was our biggest weakness?”
“What would you do differently to improve?”
3. “What information do you wish you had?”
“Could you handle uncertainty better?”
4. “How would you do it over again?”
“What would you have done if...?”



Effective Coaching

- Adults are self-learning and goal-oriented
- Good coach sets goals, lets students develop
- The learner must be a participant. The learner must see multiple perspectives. The experience must be authentic.
- Avoid grilling: “How would you do this differently?” “What were you trying to do?”
- Encourage positive insights, self diagnosis
- Coaches ask good open-ended questions...

Better Questions



- “Wouldn’t this have been a better course of action?”
“*Did you consider any other alternatives?*”
- “Do you really think that will work?”
“*What will your probability of success be?*”
- “Do you really think air support can turn his flank?”
“*What if the air-strike misses the target?*”
- “Don’t you think that hill is too steep?”
“*What information did you use to select that terrain?*”
- “Do you remember our priorities?”
“*Why was that important?*”

A Good Facilitator

- Encourages discussion
- Encourages multiple solutions, avoids his own 'best' answer
- Encourages individuals to improve
- Tactically knowledgeable
- Enthusiastic mentor
- Critiques without criticism
- **Summarizes lessons**



Benefits of Training

- Combat decisionmaking is the *key* skill
 - Combat Leaders make critical decisions
- Combat decisionmaking is a *learned* skill
 - Practice, Focused Practice
 - Self, Peers, and Leaders develop expertise together
- Decisionmaking training *augments* real-world
 - Hundreds of orders and dozens of exercises...
 - One real-world decision and order:
“Three sentences, in 30 seconds, while under fire.”

Benefits of Pressure



- Commanders need to learn to cope with complexity and partial information.
- The best predictor of decision-making success is the capacity to tolerate uncertainty. Select those comfortable with chaos.
- The most important question is not “What do I do now?” The most important question is “What is going on?” Find and develop those leaders who can size up a situation and recognize the best course of action.

In the Battalion:



- (1) TDG per month is not enough
 - Train self, train unit, seek leadership
- Combat Simulations: Fight with peers
- AARs should finish with specific goals:
 - “I need to improve my ability to analyze the enemy’s intent.”
 - “I need to simplify task-organizations...”
 - “I need to clearly separate task and intent statements...”

Bibliography

- “Readings on Tactical Decisionmaking”
- Dr. Gary Klein and Klein Associates supported the MCWL during 1997-1998. Their work with decisionmaking experts – military, medical, firefighters, musicians, chess masters and others – helped develop multiple techniques to improve decisionmaking exercises. Klein’s advanced techniques were used in 1998 by the initial MCWL Combat Squad Leader Decisionmaking Course.