



This post originally appeared @ [The Bridge](#) on November 15, 2014 as part of the [#Human Project: Professional Views on the Army's Human Dimension White Paper](#). Additionally, check out posts by [Tom Ricks](#), [Doctrine Man](#), and [Nate Finney](#).

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On any given Sunday, quarterbacks from across the NFL lead their teams to victory or defeat with millions watching. Every pass, every interception, and every touchdown is commented on and critiqued in real time via social media. One minute, the quarterback is the subject of a thousand praises; the next he is attacked on levels that are often way too personal. But, in spite all of these external pressures he has to lead his team, make the right split-second decisions, and perform. Many times I have wondered what it feels like as a leader, to carry such a burden onto the playing field. I cannot imagine being a platoon leader or company commander and making decisions in combat under this same type of pressure. Unfortunately, the reality is that technology is bringing this paradigm to leaders on the battlefield.

As the recently published [Human Dimension White Paper](#) points out “private use drones, closed circuit television cameras, and satellites will allow social media users, bloggers, and traditional media outlets to secure live feeds....and proliferate them immediately.” Every direct fire engagement, every raid, and every humanitarian relief mission may be commented on and critiqued, as well as twisted to complement the enemy’s narrative, in real-time via social media. Very soon, military actions on the battlefield could get a hashtag. And like an NFL quarterback, the situation at hand will require leaders to quickly process information and act effectively, despite the burden of being under the big lights.

In order for leaders to perform in this type of environment, the level of preparation must be even greater than it is now. As this paper highlights, the basics have changed. The ability to

shoot, move, and communicate, which have always been fundamental to warfare, may help us win battles, but alone are not sufficient to win wars. Going forward, leaders must possess the mental acumen to interpret mass amounts of information and make effective decisions. Leaders must also possess a level of cultural awareness so that actions on the ground are not disconnected from the operational and strategic narratives. Finally, leaders must understand how to leverage and navigate social media to counter competing ideas targeting populations and domestic audiences. In addition to shooting, moving, and communicating, these are the skill sets leaders will be evaluated on in front of a world-wide audience. It is because of these requirements that we should reevaluate how we prepare leaders and organizations to fight on any given Sunday. We need to evaluate how we identify, develop, and select leaders; build and train teams; and operate as an institution.

The Human Dimension White Paper addresses these issues by seeking to optimize human performance through laying out a framework that operates along three lines of effort. The first is focused on the individual; developing leaders who are able to think clearly and act decisively on the battlefield even as every action is captured and transmitted via social media. The second seeks to create strong teams by developing tough, mentally and ethically challenging training that reflects the realities of the modern battlefield. Finally, and probably the most challenging of efforts, is to revolutionize the Army education and personnel management system so the institution is able to effectively achieve the first two lines of effort in the coming decade.

The end state this paper hopes to achieve in the human dimension cannot be tackled alone by generals, colonels, and sergeants major. It is literally going to take an army. The following are a few ways in which leaders can contribute to and shape the greater discussion:

1. **Read and Discuss:** First, I recommend leaders at all levels read the white paper and discuss the ideas put forth among peers, in your units, and in your classrooms. Ask the question, “How can I make improvements along the three lines of effort within my sphere of influence?”
2. **Write and Publish:** Write your thoughts down on paper and share them. Great ideas die when they are not shared outside of our training rooms, conference rooms, and social circles. You don’t necessarily have to publish them on blogs or professional journals; submitting them up through your chain of command is another way to inform the wider discussion.
3. **Take Action:** We as individuals can take steps to increase cognitive dominance and develop realistic training and institutional agility that does not require directives or “Big Army” decisions. We each own a piece of the system and can positively affect

change in each of our spheres of influence. There are numerous small steps we can take that will assist the greater Army in moving forward to achieve the end state outlined in the paper.

As a military, we do not have the luxury of planning and practicing for a season that begins on a predetermined date; we do not even know the field we will fight on for our next “any given Sunday.” We do, however, know we will need prepared leaders and cohesive teams for when that day comes. Whether you agree or not with the proposals in this white paper, we cannot afford to be indifferent, because on any given Sunday, leaders will lead their teams to either victory or defeat with millions watching.

[Click here](#) to download the *Human Dimension White Paper*

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