

HIP-POCKET GUIDE YOU ARE YOUR OWN BEST TALENT MANAGER

The Army Talent Management Task Force is making great strides and setting conditions to assign the right Soldiers to the right positions. However, YOU know your career best. Take full advantage of all the resources the Army provides to help you succeed. There are many resources available to assist Officers and Enlisted Soldiers in making a career plan. Here are just a few of them:

Army Career Tracker (ACT): If you aren't familiar with options on ACT, seek out the information it provides on both future positions and broadening opportunities.
<https://actnow.army.mil/>

Human Resources Command: Your branch manager is a wealth of information on opportunities and skill sets you should consider for future jobs.
<https://www.hrc.army.mil/>

Doctrine: DA PAM 600-25 (NCO Professional Development) and DA PAM 600-3 (Officer Professional Development).
Officers can find branch specific information at <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/smartbook-da-pam-600-3>
NCOs can find branch specific information at <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/smartbook-da-pam-600-25>

Mentors: Every NCO and Officer should be counseling and mentoring their junior Soldier and Officers and providing guidance and input into their careers. If you don't have a mentor, keep in contact with senior NCOs and Officers that can help guide you.

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ACT - Enlisted Career Tracker

ACT - Officer Career Tracker

A U.S. ARMY LOGISTICS, G-4 PRODUCT

by Brandon Eans

As a career manager, I think daily about the advice my former First Sergeant offered me over eight years ago: “You are your best career manager”.

I was a First Lieutenant serving as an Executive Officer for a Field Artillery Battery. At the end of the workday, I would occasionally sit with the First Sergeant in his office where we would discuss the operations of the Battery. As a young officer, I valued this time as it was an opportunity to gain mentorship from the most senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) within the Battery. On this particular day, my First Sergeant voiced his frustration on certain NCOs who were not properly managing or maintaining their records in preparation for an upcoming promotion board. It was here that he gave the simple, yet profound, advice that I would use to guide my own career and as a cornerstone for my mentorship philosophy. It drove me to actively manage my own career, update my Officer Record Brief (ORB), and initiated thoughts of how I hoped to serve in the Army.

As a career manager I have learned that leaders who plan their careers, maintain their records, and communicate their desired assignments often receive the jobs they want and are best suited for. They can effectively do this by [mapping out their career](#) using Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-3, and communicating that plan with their mentors, their career managers, and their commanders. This communication allows their career managers to inform them of Army and Branch manning requirements they might not be aware of. Soldiers who actively manage their careers are therefore able to end up in jobs they want, increasing their overall job satisfaction, supporting their family, and supporting the Army's overall mission more effectively.

Soon after my conversation with my First Sergeant, I attended Captain's Career Course (CCC) at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma. I recall my small group leader teaching a block of instruction on "The Roles of Training and Leader Development" with [reference to](#) Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 7-0: "Training Unit and Developing Leaders". Within this block of instruction, we learned that there were three training domains: institutional, operational, and self-development.

Training begins in the institutional domain, which is also considered the generating force. It is where Soldiers attend schools and training centers to learn and develop individual and collective skills. The operational domain, also considered the operating force, enhances one's institutional skills and knowledge, preparing Soldiers to employ them at echelon. While the institutional and operational domains are critical, the self-development domain is just as, if not more, important. Inside the self-development domain, it is necessary for you to take personal responsibility for sustaining your strengths and improving your weaknesses. Too many Army leaders overlook this last domain and their careers suffer because of it. This block of instruction, with the focus on the importance of self-development, seemed to build upon the concept instilled into me by my First Sergeant.

Very soon after this realization, one of my mentors provided me with her 5-year career timeline. Her career timeline gave me a baseline template that I used to map out my career, but I noticed that I lacked the knowledge in areas such as job opportunities and promotion timelines. In my endeavor to learn, I came across the DA PAM 600-3, "Officer Professional Development and Career Management".

At the time, it was roughly 480 pages long. This pamphlet educated me on the traditional sequence of a Field Artillery Officer's career timeline. It showed me what the traditional career arc looked like. The pamphlet made mapping out my plan fairly simple. The next step was finding a broadening opportunity that fit my goals. I used the Army's Broadening Opportunity Program (BOP) catalog to find a desired broadening opportunity. The catalog

gave a description of the internships and the application process.

At this point, I was 90% complete with my career timeline. All that remained was to add the personal/family portion. As the adage goes, I saved the best for last. In this portion of the timeline, I input criteria information and dates pertaining to my family. I included events such as when my spouse would complete her graduate degree and when my children would enter middle school and high school. I listed anything that needed to be taken into consideration during assignment selection. Once I was complete, I sent my timeline to a few of my mentors to solicit feedback.

While serving as a Squadron Fire Support Officer (FSO) and battery commander at Fort Hood, I frequently utilized and distributed the 5-year career timeline as a mentorship tool to help my lieutenants map out their career. Upon taking command, I did what we, career managers, advise. I contacted my career manager and informed him that I took command. I sent him the 5-year career timeline that I constructed and requested his feedback. This was the first time that I initiated a conversation with my career manager and solicited career advice. He swiftly replied and confirmed that the timeline was well-synchronized. I felt as if the work that I had put into my career timeline had been affirmed. I had effectively mapped out my career without any guidance from the person known to manage careers, the career manager. Yet, it was not until I became a career manager myself that I realized that my career manager and I needed each other equally. Assignments are a complex problem, even with the implementation of the Army Talent Alignment Process (ATAP), and two-way communication helps solve a lot of these factors.

As a career manager, there are three factors that we consider: Officer expectations (personal and professional), leader development, and readiness. Officer expectations can be a number of things: career timeline/goals; start of a family; spouse's career; school-aged children stabilization; etc. These are all things that the Officer (himself/herself) will take into consideration. Yet we as career managers cannot help you if we are not aware of those expectations. Through periodic communication with your Branch Manager, we can help manage your careers in a way that works best for you. Leader development encompasses Professional Military Education (PME) requirements, developmental jobs, key developmental jobs, and broadening jobs. Many of these things can be found in DA PAM 600-3. This information is available to leaders, mentors, and career managers and can help keep them informed regarding any changes or shift to such policy. Lastly, career managers work through readiness requirements. Within this category, we consider things such as the availability of Officers, changes in manning priorities, and new Army initiatives. The career manager knows more about this than you, but is happy to share this information if you reach out.

As a young Captain, I was able to effectively utilize this career model to navigate my personal and professional expectations, however I did not have the knowledge of the viability of those plans based on the Army's requirements. Thus, because I did not communicate my personal expectations to my career manager, I set myself up for potential failure in the assignment process. Now as I sit as a career manager, I see the importance of honest, open dialogue between the career manager and Officer. Your effectiveness at managing your career depends on your ability to utilize self-development resources and communicating with other stakeholders, such as your career manager.

This point is solidified in paragraph 3-15 of DA PAM 600-3, which is entitled "Individual Career Management". Within this paragraph, there are four sub-paragraphs: individual, commander, proponent, and career manager. Of the four sections, it discusses the responsibilities of each person as it relates to Officer career management. The individual officer section is both the longest and the most important. The section begins by stating that "in many respects, Officers are ultimately their own career manager". My First Sergeant's sage advice is now Army Doctrine. I have found that the "Individual Career Management" section is one that remains unchanged over the many revisions and yet it is frequently overlooked. The fact that this section is the largest seems to again reiterate the important lesson that my First Sergeant taught me over eight years ago. "You are your best career manager".

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