

OD Intervention Design Report: Training and Coaching Interventions

JAWK Consulting Co.

Abbie Sharpe, et al.

HRD 8250

Spring 2024

Clemson University

Introduction

Training and coaching are foundational in organizational development when attempting to inspire change. Our intervention will use training and coaching to improve interpersonal communications. As Rothwell states, counseling is designed to formalize/increase helping relationships in which individuals may relate their problems to sympathetic listeners or be advised on dealing with work or interpersonal issues (1995). Training is designed to provide individuals with knowledge, skills, or attitudes that may be applied immediately on the job (Rothwell, 1995). This is an essential skill for managers and leaders, especially within the military, where senior leaders expect briefings to be delivered in a confident, relaxed, and forceful demeanor (ST 22-2, 2009). We aim to improve young officers' verbal communication abilities through coaching and training cadets as they earn their commission into the Army.

We will conduct our intervention using both one-on-one coaching and group training. It is important to utilize both of these approaches since some cadets will learn better from one than the other, and they will be able to apply what they have learned during their one-on-one coaching sessions to the group training discussions and vice versa. As we progress through the intervention, potentially into the following school year, we will assess the balance between these two methods (coaching versus training). We will use feedback from both cadets (students) and cadre (instructors) to determine how much time and energy we should allocate to each, or if one is definitively preferred to the other, in which case we will consolidate resources to maximize the utilization of the preferred intervention method.

Application

Clemson University Army ROTC is an organization that aims to prepare cadets to serve as officers in the United States Army. The organization faces a critical issue hindering the development of cadets and the organization as a whole: interpersonal communication. From the previous evaluations of JAWK Consulting and its knowledge of military culture, a substantial disconnect exists between cadets and cadre. Most notably, there needs to be greater consistency between these two parties in communication strategies and styles. Despite all the benefits of the past three decades' communication revolution, including instantaneous access to our global network of colleagues and flexibility for continued learning during a pandemic, we are presented with a problem: younger employees are not as comfortable with face-to-face interaction as older employees, particularly their supervisors and managers (Dawkins, 2022). Because of this, we propose that training and coaching be implemented into Clemson Army ROTC's current curriculum. By providing effective group training and personally tailored one-on-one coaching, we will drastically improve the cadets' interpersonal skills and public speaking abilities and thus empower them to become confident, well-spoken, inspirational leaders as they prepare to enter the Army's Officer Corps.

Assumptions of Intervention

First, we assume that Clemson Army ROTC cadets possess a working knowledge of college-level language arts and grammar skills that will be a starting point for this process. We assume all participants are teachable and motivated to engage in the training and coaching. We also assume that individual differences, such as learning styles and competency starting points,

will exist. We will include flexibility in our training and coaching plans to cater to these differences. Finally, we assume all cadets will participate in our training and coaching; ideally, this time is included in and protected by commitments that already fall within the purview of Army ROTC.

Purpose of Intervention

Our intervention aims to develop cadets' ability to verbally publish confident and coherent communication throughout everything they do, including information sessions, decision briefings, operation orders, staff rehearsals, and after-action reviews. Based on our experience in the military and from interacting with hundreds of cadets and young officers, we believe this training is necessary for today's generation of Army cadets, who are much more fluent in digital communication than in-person. This will help to develop direct dialogue, confident speech delivery, and eye contact while respectfully maintaining the customs and courtesies of the military's communication culture. One-on-one coaching and group training will allow for the development of these skills across a broad audience, ensuring uniformity, collaboration, and peer mentoring. The purpose of performance counseling (which we equate to coaching) is to enable soldiers to become more capable, resilient, satisfied, and better prepared for current and future responsibilities (ATP 6-22.1, 2014). Counseling and coaching are designed individually to provide personal development, problem-solving skills, self-awareness techniques, career guidance, and development. Providing these services in a one-on-one setting establishes open communication as a trust relationship is built, seamlessly reinforcing any feedback while the cadre assist cadets in adapting to these unique communication challenges.

Expected Outcome of Intervention

The essence of training is fundamental to performance within the military. By providing relevant communication training, we expect participants to exhibit enhanced communication skills, primarily in public speaking and interpersonal communication, and an increased awareness of military customs and courtesies. We expect this coaching and training to narrow the interpersonal communication skill gap between newly commissioned and seasoned officers.

Counseling and coaching are highly personalized but are only sometimes offered for civilian careers. Thus, having a distinct opportunity to provide participants with individually designed coaching from trained professionals well-versed in military culture will benefit the participants and, consequently, the Army. A quantitative outcome cannot be definitively measured due to the qualitative nature of communication and the broad scope of jobs these cadets will enter upon commissioning. However, we expect cadets to report increased self-confidence as a result of our training and coaching. We also expect cadets and cadre alike to report healthier communication between both parties, as the cadre will recognize and appreciate the cadets' improved public speaking skills and interpersonal tact.

It is important to note that we recommend this intervention not be associated with a letter grade or performance evaluation for the cadets. While Clemson Army ROTC cadre will indeed witness their cadets' improved public speaking and interpersonal communication skills as well as the cadets' improved self-reported confidence levels, cadets' performance in this intervention, while mandatory as a part of Army ROTC, should not affect their grade or performance evaluation in any way. We deem this a necessary control measure to maximize the cadets' process-oriented investment in our intervention instead of being concerned with an arbitrary,

labeled outcome. This will bolster the cadets' willingness to learn and active participation, as they have so much more to gain from this intervention than just a letter grade.

Organization Usage (Interventions Adopted in Other Organizations)

In 2021, Bjornestad, Olson, and Weidauer conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate the effects of implementing an active listening skills curriculum (independent variable) on improved scoring on an active listening assessment (dependent variable). The participants were 64 cadets from three Army ROTC programs in the Midwest. We find this study to be highly applicable to ours because of the population with whom they worked (cadets), the topic at hand (communication), the method(s) they used (practice and application by way of vignettes and role-playing), the involvement of external consultants (Army Research Institute psychologists), and the participants' time commitment, as it closely mirrors ours (one hour per week for ten weeks).

To go even deeper and explain how similar this study is to our proposed intervention, Bjornestad et al. lays out five modules they used to develop the cadets' active listening skills: 1) attending behaviors and closed/open questions; 2) reflection of feeling, empathy, and reframing; 3) improvement with confrontation and feedback; 4) integration of skills; and 5) introduction of multicultural issues and awareness. Though the authors make no mention of Merrill's First Principles of Instruction model (discussed below), the resemblance and parallels are uncanny. After taking the cadets through their carefully designed curriculum, the experiment's posttest used mock developmental counseling cases (real-world examples) where cadets' role-playing conversations were recorded and their active listening skills were assessed. This one-on-one method coincides beautifully with our GROW coaching approach (discussed below), as we will

use personal one-on-one coaching as an intervention tool aimed at improving the cadets' aforementioned competencies.

Bjornestad et al. saw a significant improvement in participants' perceived empathetic listening when compared to the control group, which indicated a positive impact for cadets who received the curriculum instruction. This is relevant to our intervention because of the similar techniques we will utilize: curriculum instruction, role-playing and vignettes, observation of interactions to gauge progress, and the involvement of outside consultants.

Primary Theories to be Used

Coaching: GROW Model

One of the best interventions to solve the communication issue is coaching. Coaching can be done one-on-one and therefore helps develop individual and specific areas of communication needs. We intend to apply the GROW coaching model as laid out by Sir John Whitmore and Graham Alexander in the 1980s. This model has been adapted over the years to fit the needs of modern organizations (Whitmore, 2009). The GROW model focuses on planning the destination or desired end result and then works backward to develop the course of action and coaching needed to reach the desired goal. This model is unique as it works with each individual rather than focusing on the group. Therefore, this model will be used for each cadet participating in the coaching process.

- **G: Goal** The first step of this model is establishing a goal. This goal must be specific and measurable. You must also outline how you will assess if the goal is met at the end of the intervention. In our case, the goal is for cadets to develop and demonstrate improved interpersonal communication and public speaking. We will assess if the cadets have

achieved this using an exit survey given to cadre and cadets to assess current perceived communication issues. Also, before “graduating” from their coaching, cadets will participate in a mock interaction and must demonstrate improved formal communication.

- **R: Current Reality.** This is the most important step, as we can only solve a problem once we have identified the starting point. To figure out each cadet's starting point, we must use the first session to ask these questions. Here are some sample questions, with respect to their established goal, to ask cadets to find their respective starting points:
 - What is happening now (what, who, when, and how often)?
 - What is the effect or result of this?
 - Have you already taken any steps toward your goal?
 - Does this goal conflict with any other goals or objectives that you have set?
- **O: Options or Obstacles.** Now that the initial session has been completed and the starting point for the cadet, we will determine all the possibilities to help the cadet reach their goal or the options available. From there, we will use the remaining coaching sessions to develop the skills for the cadet to reach their goal.
- **W: Will or Way Forward.** This step is critical to implementing new training and moving forward to improve communication skills within the organization as a whole. It is not enough to provide the coaching to develop these skills and fill in the gaps each cadet may miss. Still, you must help the individual understand the relevance and importance of being willing to use these skills in daily communication. In other words, this step will allow them to reinforce their will and boost their motivation (Whitmore, 2009). To do this, JAWK Consulting will coach the cadet in establishing a plan to enact their new

knowledge of the importance of communication skills. Here are sample questions to ask to spark the will within cadets.

- So, what will you do now and after that? When? What else will you do?
- What could stop you from moving forward? How will you overcome this?
- How can you keep yourself motivated?
- When do you need to review progress? Daily, weekly, monthly?

At the end of the coaching cycle, we will conduct check-ins to gauge the progress of each cadet.

Training: Merrill's Principles of Instruction (Training)

To apply JAWK Consulting's area of specialty (talent and skill development) to the situation at hand, we will utilize Merrill's Principles of Instruction (Merrill, 2002). The five principles are problem-centered instruction, activation, demonstration, application, and integration. We will discuss how these will take shape as we apply them to improving public speaking and interpersonal communication. To optimize our time utilization and digestion of learning material, we will split the training sessions into these two separate domains: public speaking and interpersonal communication (i.e., the first half of the semester will focus on interpersonal communication, while the second half will focus on public speaking).

- **Problem-centered instruction:** Merrill (2002) states that "a specific demonstration of the particular whole task similar to those the learners will be able to do following instruction provides a better orientation to the instructional material to follow than a list of abstract objective statements". We will apply this first principle by showing cadets what "right" looks like with interpersonal communications and public speaking. We will accomplish this by showing them videos of effective military briefs and public speeches.

We believe this crucial first step will capture their attention and inspire them to realize that speech is a powerful tool and that it will serve them well to develop this competency early in their military career.

- **Activation:** “Learning is promoted when relevant previous experience is activated” (Merrill, 2002). By this point in their schooling, all cadets will have had experience with interpersonal communication and public speaking, likely both positive and negative. We will use interactive prompts here to have cadets draw upon these past experiences. Cadets will be given several minutes to write down their thoughts to use as a launching point for a partner or small-group discussion, during which they will share their experiences. These group discussions are important for enhancing group dynamics and helping cadets learn from each other’s experiences. It is during this activation phase that the cadets will realize how important these skills are (interpersonal communication and public speaking) and how different their past experiences could have gone if they were more proficient in these areas.
- **Demonstration:** The JAWK Consulting team, with cadre participation, will now demonstrate vignettes that include examples and non-examples of interpersonal communication and public speaking. We view this phase as a continuation of the first phase, problem-centered instruction, as we believe it is important for cadets to understand what “right” looks like in practice. This demonstration phase is important for framing the problem at hand in the cadets’ minds, as Merrill (2002) states, “learners remember and can apply information far more readily when the information includes specific portrayals”.
- **Application:** Cadets can now apply what they have learned through role-playing scenarios. For example, Cadet A will play the role of a supervisor conducting a quarterly

performance evaluation, while Cadet B will play the role of the subordinate. Both cadets will be given a scenario card to give context to the situation. JAWK Consulting members and Army ROTC cadre will supervise in a circulatory manner, utilizing what Merrill (2002) calls *diminishing coaching*: “Learning is promoted when learners are guided in their problem-solving by appropriate feedback and coaching, including error detection and correction, and this coaching is gradually withdrawn”. Sufficient time must be allocated during these sessions so that cadets are not rushed during their role-playing and can deliberately apply what they have learned while soliciting feedback from JAWK consultants, cadre, and peers alike.

- **Integration:** This phase of Merrill’s principles, though the final phase, will be relevant throughout the entire intervention. Cadets will immediately be able to apply what they’ve learned about interpersonal communication and public speaking to their other classes and regular Army ROTC duties. As we mentioned earlier, we recommend that letter grades not be used as a part of our intervention. Merrill (2002) reminds us, “The real motivation for learners is learning. Learners have integrated instruction into their lives when they can demonstrate skill improvement, defend their new knowledge, and modify their new knowledge for use in their everyday lives”. This is our most tangible selling point to all parties involved, as we genuinely believe the cadets will immediately be more conscious of their interpersonal communication skills and public speaking abilities, and thus display incremental growth in both areas as they progress through their academic and military careers.

Limitations

Training: The primary limitation of our training component is the time that cadets can devote to our training sessions. They already have numerous obligations, including schoolwork for their other classes, extracurriculars, part-time jobs, and preexisting ROTC commitments (e.g., lectures, labs, physical training, and field training exercises). We acknowledge that our intervention will be worthwhile in improving the cadets' interpersonal communication and public speaking skills. However, we would be remiss to ignore that for our intervention to be correctly executed, we would require a weekly commitment of 90 minutes minimum (30 minutes of one-on-one coaching and 60 minutes of group training). We propose that the one-on-one coaching sessions, since they are only 30 minutes long, be conducted outside of normal ROTC obligations, while the group training sessions take the place of ROTC lectures, which are already scheduled for one hour per week.

Coaching: A multitude of limitations arise during the implementation of coaching as an intervention to combat the issue of interpersonal communication. The predominant limitation is that of time. Providing one-on-one coaching sessions will take a minimum of 30 minutes every week, which some cadets may struggle to find with their already-demanding schedules. There is also the issue of adaptability. The coaching sessions are designed to be unique to the cadets' needs. These coaching sessions have to be adapted to fit the needs of each cadet individually, which can pose an issue. This means there must be no instructor bias in the sessions and enough time for the mentors to adapt and prepare for the sessions. The GROW model assumes that the coach is not an expert in the domain field but rather a facilitator, which means there is a limitation in the consultant's knowledge of army relations.

References

- Bjornestad, A., Olson, S., & Weidauer, L. (2021). Improving officer-soldier communication through active listening skills training with Army ROTC cadets. *Military Psychology*, 33(3), 205-215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995605.2021.1902179>
- Burkhalter, K. (2023). CBRN defense, computer software, and command decisions: CSC2 program supports the joint force through integrated software tools. Defense Visual Information Distribution System. <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/458630/cbrn-defense-computer-software-and-command-decisions-csc2-program-supports-joint-force-through-integrated-software-tools>
- Dawkins, J. (2022, Dec. 29). *Gen Z lacks the communication and networking skills needed for the workforce. Companies need to train them.* Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/gen-z-communication-and-networking-skills-work-2021-12>
- Department of the Army (2014). *The Counseling Process*. Army Techniques Publication 6-22.1. Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1-1. <https://cal.army.mil/atp-6-22x1/web/counseling.html>
- Department of the Army (2009). *Student Text 22-2, Writing and Speaking Skills for Army Leaders*. U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 3-8. https://home.army.mil/wood/download_file/view/6631/1525
- Merrill, M.D. First principles of instruction. ETR&D 50, 43–59 (2002). <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02505024>

Rothwell, W. J., R. Sullivan, G.N. McLean. (1995). *Practicing Organization Development*.

Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer Publishers, San Francisco. [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781119176626)

[10.1002/9781119176626](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781119176626)

Whitmore, J. (2009). *Coaching for performance growing human potential and purpose*. Nicholas

Brealey Publishing.