



For media queries or more information please contact Bill Ackerly, PAO/Strategic Communication Officer, Mission Command Center of Excellence (MC CoE) at (913) 684-8525 william.g.ackerly.civ@mail.mil

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Mission Command Center of Excellence
804 Harrison Dr. Bldg 472
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027
<http://mccoe.army.mil>

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Army implements new self-awareness program for commanders

(Bill Ackerly, Mission Command Center of Excellence)

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan. – The Commander 360, or CDR360, is a new leader development program in the Army’s Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback, or MSAF, suite. The intent of the CDR360 program is to leverage 360-degree assessment feedback to enhance leadership growth and to increase rater involvement in the development process. The program is designed specifically for Centralized Selection List (CSL) lieutenant colonels and colonels.

“CDR360 creates the opportunity for commanders and raters to engage in more informed discussions about capabilities, performance and development,” said Lt. Gen. Robert Brown, commanding general of the Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth. Through the multi-source assessment process, the CDR360 program enhances commander self-awareness of strengths and developmental needs regarding command and leadership actions and accelerates subsequent development with the involvement of the rater.

The CDR360 program provides commanders and their raters with information to facilitate more informed guidance and focused dialogue. Through the program, the commander and his or her rater use the 360-degree feedback to design and create the

commander's individual leader development plan. The CDR360 program is purely developmental and the results are not shared beyond the commander and the rater, (e.g. results are not provided or discussed with the senior rater or beyond), nor are they used as input to the officer evaluation report (OER).

The CDR 360 program promotes lifelong learning and is a key ingredient in the Army's deliberate, continuous and progressive process of leader development. It is another way to encourage greater leader-to-leader development across the Army by increasing rater involvement in multi-source assessments. The CDR360 program focuses on commanders at the lieutenant colonel and colonel level because they represent a critical role as organizational leaders and key drivers of change for the Army.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno directed the Center for Army Leadership (CAL) to develop the CDR360 program. The concept was piloted in July 2013, and participants found the process beneficial in providing feedback from multiple perspectives, stating that it provided more useful detail for developmental planning than their last OER.

Raters who participated in the pilot also said the instrument provided detailed assessment of commander's performance from otherwise uncertain perspectives, especially subordinates and peers. Commanders and their raters were more motivated to devote time to developing the leader's skills after completing the CDR360 assessment and developmental discussion.

The CDR360 instrument was created by a team of CAL personnel psychologists, current and former battalion and brigade commanders, general officers, along with the School for Command Preparation and the U.S. Army Research Institute to ensure factors of successful command were included.

Beginning 1 October 2014, CSL lieutenant colonel and colonel-level commanders are required to participate in two CDR360 events during the course of their command tenure --- the first within three to six months of assuming command and the second between 15-18 months of command. Each event includes a 360-degree assessment as well as a mandatory developmental discussion between the commander and his or her current rater. The assessment itself is common access card-accessible and takes about 10 minutes to complete. The instrument assesses the commander on observable behaviors that are aligned with Army leadership doctrine in Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, key mission command principles in Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, and boots-on-the-ground experience.

The CDR360 uses a measurement instrument with special capabilities that are different from that used with MSAF. CDR360 is tailored and validated to the specific demands and challenges of the command role. It differs from the standard MSAF protocol in that the commander's current rater is actively involved in the process, receiving a copy of the feedback report as well as having responsibility for leading a required developmental discussion with the commander on the results. In the CDR360 program, the rater selects the assessors, and the commander is able to nominate one peer and one subordinate to participate, subject to the rater's approval.

Completion of the CDR360 event will fulfill the commander's responsibility for participation in the MSAF program as required by AR 350-1 for that phase in one's career. More than 240,000 Army leaders have successfully participated in multidimensional ratings through MSAF, and this program for commanders is a natural progression in realizing the full benefit of 360-degree assessments.

Following the successful pilot in 2013, CAL conducted an initial operational capability demonstration of the final version of the program, involving 24 active-component commanders. Effective 1 October 2014, participation in the CDR360 program is a formal requirement for all CSL lieutenant colonel and colonel-level commanders in the active components, with a similar phased fielding to the Reserve component commanders by October 2015.

As the Army continues to learn, CDR360 is a dynamic example of the Army seeking out best practice opportunities to identify weaknesses and improve leader’s abilities.

“I believe that multidimensional feedback is an important component to holistic leader development,” Odierno said. “By encouraging input from peers, subordinates and superiors alike, leaders can better ‘see themselves’ and increase self-awareness. The ability to receive honest and candid feedback, in an anonymous manner, is a great opportunity to facilitate positive leadership growth.”



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