Integrated Decision Making in the United States Marine Corps

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26 February 2014
Agenda

• Introduction to the United States Marine Corps
  – Leadership - Introduced early in life of a Marine
  – Integrated planning & decision-making considered part of Leadership and Marine proficiency training
  – Decision-making is fully integrated in all that we do; it’s integral to developing our leaders.

• Refresh on Strategic Decision Group’s Decision Quality
• Marine Corps Planning Process – strategic/operational
• Rapid Response Planning Process – operational/tactical
• BAMCIS (6 troop leading steps) – tactical
• Observe-Orient-Decide-Act Loop - tactical
• Q&A
First and foremost…Leadership

14 Leadership Traits:

JUSTICE
JUDGMENT
DECISIVENESS
INITIATIVE
DEPENDABILITY
TACT
INTEGRITY
ENDURANCE
BEARING
UNSELFISHNESS
COURAGE (moral & physical)
KNOWLEDGE
LOYALTY
ENTHUSIASM

US Military employs “up or out” philosophy of personnel management. In the USMC, you can be the best in your field, but if you are not a leader, then you will not progress.
Elements of Decision Quality

1. Appropriate Frame
2. Creative, Doable Alternatives
3. Meaningful, Reliable Information
4. Clear Values & Trade-offs
5. Logically Correct Reasoning
6. Commitment to Action

SDG’s Decision Quality Chain and MCPP cycle

1. Problem Framing
2. Course of Action Development
3. Course of Action Wargaming
4. Course of Action Comparison & Decision
5. Orders Development
6. Transition

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Marine Corps Planning Process

• Marine Corps Planning Process is an integrated, disciplined approach used primarily for strategic and operational level decision making and planning.

• The key elements of this iterative cycle are:
  – Top-down Planning
  – Single Battle Concept – three-block war
  – Integrated Planning
  – Commander’s participation in form of Intent and Guidance

• “Effective decision-making requires both the situational understanding to recognize the essence of a given problem and the creative ability to devise a practical solution.”

  MCDP-1
• **Definition** - Design is the conception and articulation of a framework for solving the problem.

• **Purpose** – achieve a greater understanding of the environment and nature of the problem IOT identify a appropriate conceptual solution.

• Design provides a means to learn and adapt requiring intellectually versatile leaders with high-order critical thinking skills who actively engage in a continuous dialogue and collaboration to enhance decision-making *at all levels.*

**Design is based on:**
- Critical thinking
- Conceptual planning
- Visualization
- Emergence of a hypothesis
- Continuous activity
Problem Framing

- **Problem framing** enhances understanding of the environment and the nature of the problem. It is also when the Commander issues his initial intent and guidance.
- **Identifies** what the command must accomplish, *when* and *where* it must be done and, most importantly, *why* (the purpose).
- **Most important step** as the remaining steps are based on Design and Problem Framing.

**Product:** Mission statement is written in this step and articulates the task and purpose. **Commander provides** - his intent, which includes the purpose of the operation. Commander’s Intent is enduring and is continuously restated and amplified as required throughout the cycle.
COA Development

- **Purpose** – produces options for accomplishing the mission in accordance with Commander’s Intent.
- **Promotes** understanding of the environment, problem, and the approach to solving the problem.
- **COAs must satisfy** the mission in accordance with Commander’s Intent & Guidance
- **COAs must be**: suitable, feasible, acceptable, distinguishable, and complete.
- **Must use Commander’s guidance**

2 key questions:
What needs to be accomplished?
How should it be done? This is essence of COA Development.

**Commander provides:**
- Wargaming guidance
- Evaluation criteria
**Purpose** – examines and refines options in light of adversary capabilities and potential actions/reactions as well as characteristics peculiar to the operating environment (e.g. weather, terrain, culture, non-DoD stakeholders, etc.).

- Forges greater understanding of the environment, the problem, and possible solutions.
- Involves a detailed assessment of each COA.
- Forms basis for Commander’s COA comparison and decision.

- Staff performs Action, Reaction, Counteraction
- Refine staff estimates of support concepts
- Concludes with Commander’s approval of recommended changes to COAs before next step.
COA Comparison & Decision

- Provides Commander with an understanding of the relative merit of each COA and aids in his decision making.
- Evaluates friendly COA against each established criteria.
- Compares them with each other.
- Commander selects COA he believes will best accomplish the mission.

In making his selection of a COA, the Commander may:
- Select COA w/o modification
- Modify a COA
- Develop new COA by combining favorable elements of multiple COAs
- Discard all COAs and resume problem framing or COA development
Orders Development

- Purpose is to translate Commander’s decision into oral, written, and/or graphic communication sufficient to guide implementation and promote initiative by subordinates.
- Directs actions and focuses subordinates’ tasks and activities toward accomplishing the mission.
- Contains only critical or new information and not routine matters found in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- A good order is judged on its usefulness not its size.

- Reconciliation
- Crosswalk
- Final action is approval of order by Commander
Transition

- Wide range of briefs, drills, or rehearsals necessary to ensure a successful shift from planning to execution
- Successful transition enhances the **situational understanding** of those who will execute the order, maintains the **intent of the concept of operations**, promotes **unity of effort**, generates **tempo**, and ensures clear understanding of the **Commander’s Intent**
- Continuous process that requires free flow of information between commanders and staffs
- Confirmation brief
Rapid Response Planning Process (R2P2)

- Goal = less time planning to create more time in preparing for execution of the mission
- R2P2 = Condensed form of MCPP. Six hours allotted for decision making, planning, and preparation. Practiced regularly in pre-deployment work up training.
- Successful R2P2 predicated on:
  - Thorough understanding of MCPP
  - Detailed preparation, training, and organization of the force
  - Intelligence and mission planning products developed previously
  - Current intelligence information (what uncertainties were realized between initial collection of information and now?)
  - Refined, well-rehearsed SOPs
- Unlike MCPP, mission planning, decision making, and preparations are conducted concurrently.
- Intertwined planning and decision making cycles enables Commander and staff to prepare for contingency planning and re-focusing a unit’s training based on open-source news and classified intelligence reports.
Decision making and planning cycle for junior officers and enlisted Marines (Platoon level).

- Begin the planning
- Arrange for reconnaissance and coordination
- Make reconnaissance
- Complete the plan
- Issue the order
- Supervise

This integrated decision making and planning process is for less complicated decisions and missions. The decision making points for the unit Commander is the same as in MCPP.
OODA Loop

- Created by Col Boyd (USAF), a jet fighter pilot
- Tactical level, immediate response
- Must be performed within minutes
- The person who gets through the loop the fastest and the most often wins!
- Using this decision making loop will put the enemy off his guard.

1. Observe
2. Orient
3. Decide
4. Act

Observe → Orient → Decide → Act → Observe
Planning and Decision Making

• Go hand-in-hand
  – Decision making is completely embedded in the planning processes
• MCPP – strategic and operational (30-days to 5-years)
  – Commander’s Intent and involvement at each step
  – SMEAC
• R2P2 – operational and tactical (6-hours)
  – Commander’s Intent and involvement at each step
  – Imperative for staff to be intimately familiar with existing plans and unit standard operating procedures
  – SMEAC
• BAMCIS - tactical (30 minutes – 6 hours)
  – All pay grades
  – SMEAC
• OODA Loop – tactical (seconds to minutes)
  – He who cycles through the loop the fastest and the most times wins!
Decision-making process at all levels

- Underpins everything we do
- What are specific hallmarks of MCPP that makes it different than other processes? The defined roles and responsibilities of personnel and the close involvement of the Commander in the planning process. He is the decision maker and his involvement from beginning to end and all else in between is critical to success. The last two steps (Orders Development and Transition) are when the decisions begin to be executed with supervision. Decision Quality does not have these steps. Often times, outside of the USMC, decisions are made and not carried through because the decision making cycle used does not encourage supervision.
- Leadership development
  - Everyone is a leader
  - This way of thinking is how we shape our leaders from the very beginning
Summary

• These processes are part of the culture, used routinely, to the point of becoming a habit.
• The philosophy of the USMC is to in-grain these processes into Marines as part of their fabric.
Q&A

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