Spring 2024

Professional Development Handbook

K. D. Moreland
Boise State University

© 2024, K. D. Moreland.
Professional Development Handbook

K. D. Moreland

Boise State University

Author Note

K. D. Moreland, Bachelor of Applied Science from the Department of Multidisciplinary Studies at Boise State University, Boise, Idaho.

Contact information for this capstone project, K. D. Moreland.
Abstract

This action research project was designed to help lower enlisted Soldiers receive additional knowledge that will help with their career progression and knowledge within the military. This handbook is quick and easy to access with some additional resources if they want to dive into the material a little deeper. This handbook would be great for someone who is getting ready to go to a promotion board and wants to study up on basic Army knowledge and some additional regulations that are important to know.

*Keywords*: Military, Career Progression, Knowledge, Promotion Boards, Competition Boards
Introduction to your Capstone Project

I was inspired to do this project because at the time there was a unit who was having a promotion board for all lower enlisted Soldiers and after talking to some of these Soldiers, they felt unprepared. I felt like this was the perfect opportunity to use my capstone project to create something that could help these Soldiers in studying and developing themselves so that they can grow professionally within the military.

To begin this project I started with creating a timeline broken down into six week increments. This provided me with a guided time management plan so that I could stay on track. Then I started with determining what material to put in the handbook. I used my past experience and what I already knew these Soldiers were struggling with. Then it became time to start putting everything down on paper. Then, it was time to get feedback from the stakeholders to see if there was anything else they wanted to have in the handbook. Once I received feedback I added any additional information I wanted, and began to organize and structure it. This led me to the finalization of my capstone project which consisted of editing errors and ensuring it was ready to be printed and handed out. I then went to my local staples and had them printed and binded together. I then passed them out and after a few days I began to receive final feedback on the capstone project.

Elements coming together

Either Soldiers can go out of their way and seek help/mentorship or they can be provided with a handbook that provides career progression knowledge. My justification for working on this project is that I know being in that lower enlisted spot can be challenging and unfortunately you don’t know what you don’t know. Having a mentor or someone looking out for you, teaching you, and guiding you is a great help. I know that when I was in their shoes I had a
Sergeant who took me under his wing and really helped me gain knowledge and skills needed to progress in the military. When interviewing the enlisted Soldier at Gowen I found out that many of the lower enlisted Soldiers were not prepared for a promotion board and lacked a massive amount of knowledge (Moreland, 2024). That means that this handbook I am creating will be extremely beneficial and justified. The impact on me is I love helping Soldiers and being that mentor that I was upon a time had. The stakeholders will receive knowledge and skills needed to feel confident to begin their career progression. My approach to completing the work is going to be aggressive. The reason I say that is because it is going to take a lot of time and dedication to complete this project and if I don’t get that aggressive head start I will set myself up for failure.

One setback I have is that my journey to my career progression can vastly differ from other persons. Therefore, what I think might be important to put in the handbook, someone else may not feel the same way. I can try to solve this problem in one of two ways. One, get feedback from a few different Soldiers and see what they want me to put in the handbook, get a different proceptive. Two, put what I feel is necessary and have them be able to filter out what they need or do not need. Another setback I have is that I am an active duty Soldier, so my timeline and expectations are likely to differ from reserve Soldiers who only meet up once a month. I had five days a week of being mentored and groomed, whereas reserve a lot of time do not have that luxury. Their perspective on career progression or standard might be different.

The research I am doing indicated awareness for myself by allowing me to see that there are many different reasons for lack of career progression. I found a great source that talks about a connection between career progression and retention. Keeping Soldiers to stay in is already hard enough as it is. This article mentioned how Soldiers feel they lack training and tools needed to progress and feel like they do much for too little (Nicol, Wesley, et al., 2022). If those Soldiers
were able to promote and get a head start on their career progression, I think many of them would change their mind and might want to stay on. Another resource shows that career programs, career satisfaction, and career commitment are tied together within an organization. (Rani, 2015). If we can get the lower enlisted Soldiers guidance or programs that allow them to career progress we would likely see a higher retention rate. This is huge for the Army, which is one of my stakeholders in this project. This research has not changed my capstone proposal, in fact it has only added to the motivation to continue with this handbook.

My research is valuable to others because I am not the only Noncommissioned Officer who has been in charge of Soldiers and has the opportunity to be a mentor. This research can change and alter the way leaders can think and help Soldiers within the military. The leaders today are responsible for training the next set of leaders, so if we do it right then we are setting up the military for success and in return sets our country up for success. As much as I like to rely on leaders though, I believe that supplying this information and tools does rely on a Soldier's emotional intelligence. I believe this because they are the ones that have to decide what they want to do with this information. It is simply a resource that can be used for those who want to use it.

For this project I decided to start it by putting things I knew I wanted on pages and worry about organizing them later. By doing this I realized a lot about how I wanted the handbook to look and got an idea of how it would lay out. This is not always how I draw on my creative framework but I felt like if I sat down and tried to layout everything first like I normally would have, it would have taken me longer. I felt like I needed to jump right in and let my creative side work as I was creating a giant mess. Even though at times it feels like I am adding more work, I am at least getting the content I need down and allowing myself to get all my ideas out there.
This approach is unique because this is not my normal style of creative framework. I usually like to have a solid plan and would start working page by page. For example, I would have all my chapters layed out how I would want them and would start with chapter 1 and work my way down. But honestly trying to determine the chapters first was impossible and I quickly gave up. So what I decided to do was start adding everything I knew I wanted in the handbook. Once I get everything I want in there, then I can organize it in a logical order, and then determine how to make them into chapters. I ended up not even using chapters and just using a table of contents. I think I did it this way because internally I am in slight panic mode wanting to make sure it gets done in time. These last seven weeks are crucial to my graduation and I want to make sure I finish strong.

The process of making this is to add important Army things such as creeds, Army song, Army values, and popular regulations. The potential of this handbook is limitless, but for this semester the potential is to guide and help hopefully a dozen Soldiers. This handbook is something I hope to continue to build off of and add to as I progress through the military. I would also like to be able to pass this out to all my future Soldiers I have in my unit. I feel like this is innovative because not only am I creating something for the now, but I am looking into the future and seeing how this can continue to benefit me and others.

The solution of creating a handbook is that I will have it in digits and something I can easily edit and print whenever I want. Also, since I am able to print it and pass it out I found it more innovative than publishing it and hoping that people read it. This is because I will be able to get first hand feedback and be able to help people who are in my community.

Results
The benefits of my project for my stakeholders is that I am providing them with condensed and handy professional development knowledge. This provides them with additional resources and knowledge that they otherwise did not have. For the enlisted Soldiers who got a handbook it will help them when they go to the promotion board. For the leaders of those Soldiers it will allow them to feel more confident that the ones who will be replacing them are gaining knowledge needed to do just that. For the Army it is guiding and retaining Soldiers because they will be more likely to stay in if they keep promoting.

I measured the results by passing out the handbook I got printed out and then requesting feedback. I found asking for feedback easier than trying to send out a survey and having them fill it out. The results were positive and so far the Soldiers who have provided feedback seemed happy and genuinely interested in the handbook. Because the feedback I have received has been good so far, I am satisfied with the results. I wish we had more time so that I could see the results after they attend another promotion board and see how they did.

I was able to get feedback from three people. One person said they liked how ‘short, simple, and to the point it was’. They also liked how it provided additional test questions and provided regulations. Another person said they liked the current events information and they also liked the practice test questions. The third person said they also liked how condensed the handbook was, not too big and overwhelming. They liked how it provided general knowledge and had the NCO creed. There were 9 handbooks passed out, just due to short timing I was only able to get those three feedback answers. I anticipate that there will be more positive feedback and hopefully some constructive feedback so that I can continue to grow this handbook and use it in the future. So far it has been impactful to my stakeholders and myself.

Conclusion
The method I chose was the action project. The reason I chose that one was because it was a project for the workplace. I learned a few things from doing this project. The first is that I learned a way how I can help future Soldiers in my unit or other units. This capstone project was just the start, I plan on revising and adding to it as I start to grow and develop myself too. The next is that it is ok to not be perfect. “As good as it’s going to get” is a respectable mindset as well. For a while I spent way too much trying to make it perfect and ensure that it had everything I could think of. I took time away from my creativity and time to be working on it instead of trying to make it perfect. Once I was able to overcome this road block, I learned this capstone project is a lot easier. The stakeholders who benefited from this would include myself, lower enlisted Soldiers, and supervisors. If I could do something differently, I would find a way to get it printed differently. It did not exactly print out the way I wanted it to and it bugged me. So next time I print these out I am going to try something different. Skills I required were gathering information from multiple people and creating something that could hopefully benefit everyone. There are skills in realizing when to add someone's feedback and when to not include their feedback. I feel like I made the best decision for this handbook while still respecting others. I hope after completing this capstone that I still continue to get feedback and continue to grow from this handbook. I have a great thing here and I fully intend to use it, especially since I have already put a lot of hours and effort into this.

Appendix

Moreland Capstone Handbook

References

Personal Communication (interview).


Rani, N. S. A. (2015). Interlinkages between career development, career needs, career satisfaction and career commitment: Case study of a military-oriented tertiary educational institution in Malaysia.