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Strategic Leadership Competencies in the Canadian Forces

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Canadian Forces Leadership Institute

March, 2003

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Strategic leaders are characterized as vital to the success of their organization. They establish the organization's culture, develop strategic goals and direction, form partnerships and alliances with agencies, vendors, and other organizations, and represent the organization to internal and external constituents. The manner in which these leadership behaviours are performed, responsibilities handled, and decisions made, influence employees' work motivation, task quality and performance. Employees depend on their strategic leaders for guidance in times of uncertainty, long-term direction and goal-setting, as well as for learning culturally appropriate behaviours (i.e., socialization). Thus, strategic leaders' characteristics and behaviours are inherently linked to their organizations' success. Recognizing this crucial role, an increasing number of leadership scholars are focusing their research efforts on the strategic apex (i.e., the top echelon of the organizational hierarchy; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001).

The purpose of the current paper is to help the Canadian Forces (CF) identify, define, and implement a competency framework that will improve the performance of their strategic leaders. The CF currently relies on a traditional performance and experience-based criterion strategy to promote officers to its top ranking organizational positions. Recent social, political, economic, and demographic changes have forced the CF to modify its mission, values, culture, and philosophy regarding its role in an increasingly global environment. To adapt to this environment, new leadership competencies are required.

The recent introduction of a novel job analysis technique, competency modeling, has drawn deserving attention from Industrial/Organizational psychology and management scholars. Competency modeling is a procedure by which organizations can determine, define, and implement competencies required for the successful performance of any designated job. The

application of such a systematic methodology allows for the integration of social, cognitive, and behavioural competencies under a cohesive and comprehensive framework.

Adopting an Industrial/Organizational psychology perspective, the current paper identifies and defines competencies required by senior leaders[1] in the context of the CF. This framework of strategic leadership competencies will be useful for application within the Canadian military to achieve its political, economic, and institutional objectives in both national and international arenas. It will also serve as the foundation for ameliorating the CF's selection, training, development, and other Human Resource (HR) processes designed for constituents occupying strategic leadership positions.

Specifically, Section 1 highlights new challenges faced by CF senior leaders, as well as the roles and behaviours required to overcome these social, political, economic, institutional, and demographic changes. The next section provides an overview of competency modeling methodologies, including how to develop, implement, and evaluate such a model. Section 3 identifies and describes strategic leadership competencies found in scholarly and practitioner-oriented literatures, which are related to successful leadership. Although this section includes competencies required for success in military and non-military strategic leadership positions, it focuses on competencies unique to the CF's particular environment and challenges. Our discussion of the principles of competency modeling will highlight that a complete list of strategic competencies is unavailable without the development and implementation of a competency model tailored to the CF. Thus, this section describes competencies characteristic of successful leaders, at a general level only. Finally, in Section 4 guidelines are provided for

[1] In this paper, the phrases "senior leaders," "strategic leaders," and "executive leaders" will be used interchangeably.

integrating this competency framework within some of the CF's HR processes. Implications related to the implementation of such a framework are also discussed.

SECTION 1- Review of Current CF Leadership Environment

New Demands on Organizational Leaders

Over the past two decades, the mission and purpose of the CF have changed dramatically. Its war missions are increasingly replaced by peacekeeping and peacemaking operations. Advancements in technology (e.g., new communication devices, the availability of information) and improvements in weaponry have changed the face of combat and the appearance of battlefields. Budget cuts and downsizing (e.g., the closure of several military bases in the 1990's) have presented particular challenges to meeting organizational objectives (Horn, 2000). These changes have important implications for senior military leaders. New competencies are required for executives to effectively lead Canada's military forces into the 21st century (Horn).

At the heart of all organizations are their missions and values. These dictate the organization's strategies, culture, structure, and HR policies. Recent societal changes have prompted the CF to review its missions and purpose. A significant factor influencing this review is constituents' changing expectations of the CF's role within Canada and abroad. Up until the end of the Cold War, the CF's role was to physically protect Canadians and their values against foreign enemies (Horn, 2000). This was successfully achieved through military missions and interventions. Since then, the CF has increasingly participated in peacekeeping and peacemaking missions. This change in direction is welcomed by Canadians and allies worldwide. However, to succeed in these new missions, CF leaders are required to develop new strategies and tactics (Horn). Peacemaking missions, for example, often demand leaders to exercise diplomatic negotiation skills to resolve conflicts and prevent further bloodshed between two enemy

countries or groups. In addition to missions conducted overseas, the CF is also expected to assist civilian organizations in times of crisis (e.g., disaster relief efforts in Quebec and Ontario during the ice storm). Also, the threat of terrorism is very salient and proximal for Canadians. The CF has not yet been presented with the responsibility of managing such threats or responding to terrorist attacks in Canada. However, anti-terrorist activities may soon be added to the CF's list of responsibilities (R. Walker, personal communication, January 22, 2003). The increased number of responsibilities and missions, coupled with rising expectations of Canadians regarding military personnel activities occur within the context of continual budget cuts. This situation is stretching the military to its limits, placing extreme pressure on CF leaders to provide a renewed strategic vision and direction to their institution and its members (Horn).

In addition to the aforementioned challenges facing CF leaders, globalization has not alluded the CF. The United Nations' (UN) vision and mission has significantly influenced the way the CF conducts itself within Canada, and more importantly, abroad. New partnerships and alliances have been formed between former enemy countries. The number of multi-national and joint operations involving military forces and civilian agencies (e.g., police and humanitarian aid organizations) from different countries is increasing (Yukl, 1999). The CF is seldom the only agency at work during any given overseas mission. Collaboration, tolerance of cultural differences, linguistic diversity, and social intelligence are now crucial competencies that CF senior leaders must possess to be efficient on the world stage. The importance of adequately representing Canada, its people, culture, and values to the rest of the world, has also become an important aspect of senior military leaders' responsibilities.

These socio-economic, technological, and cultural changes require new behaviours and strategies (Yukl, 1999). Thus, to adequately meet Canadians' expectations, to successfully

complete diverse missions, to play a significant role and ensure Canada's reputation as a competent and ethical player on the world stage, CF senior leaders are required to not only possess traditional leadership competencies (e.g., strategic decision-making, planning and organizing, building teamwork), but new ones as well (e.g., behavioural and cognitive complexity, social intelligence).

Absence of Specific Competency Model for CF Senior Leaders

CF leaders can no longer rely solely on traditional leadership competencies; new situations and challenges demand proficiency in novel areas of knowledge, skill, and ability. The first step is to determine the competencies required for the successful performance of the duties associated with these positions. This can be achieved through the development of a competency model, tailored to executive CF leaders. These senior officers can only meet the demands of the new millennium by understanding and identifying the new requirements needed to face these challenges. Then leaders can develop the competencies necessary to prepare them for the responsibilities and duties attached to these positions. The development of competency models has been shown to have both short and long-term advantages for organizations (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Competency models play vital roles in many HR systems, such as selection, training and development, and performance appraisal. Specific benefits include the possibility for current and future leaders to obtain a realistic and comprehensive preview of the position, understand the required tasks and responsibilities, prepare leaders for the challenges ahead, and ensure that capable individuals are chosen to successfully lead the institution in accomplishing its long-term objectives and purposes. Organizations cannot afford to select incompetent or under-qualified individuals to occupy their highest ranks. A recent survey of Fortune 1000 companies indicated that 47% of these companies' executives rated their organization's

leadership capacity as being fair or poor (Csoka, 1998). Increased pressures from various constituents (e.g., stakeholders, employees), the media, and global competitors have resulted in numerous executive resignations. These failures represent extreme costs in severance packages, decreased productivity, lost opportunity, and replacement costs (Howard, 2001). This situation is also characteristic of senior military leadership, where consequences of poor leadership can lead to catastrophic outcomes.

To the authors' knowledge, the CF does not currently possess a competency model customized to CF senior leadership positions. The absence of such a model significantly limits the CF's ability to select competent officers for executive positions, a factor crucial to the institution's future and survival. In addition, based on their assignment experiences, officers promoted from lower ranks do not necessarily possess the competencies required for success in these senior leadership positions (Horn, 2000). Under-qualified individuals are likely to abandon the position within a few months (Riggio, 2000). If on the other hand, these officers persevere, their poor performance could have devastating consequences for the CF (e.g., officer casualties). Other governmental agencies, such as the Office of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, as well as the Public Service Commission (PSC), have well developed competency models to inform and help current and future leaders understand the responsibilities associated with senior positions. In addition, these competency models and associated training programs ensure that senior officers possess the necessary skills prior to beginning and throughout their mandates. The CF requires such programs tailored to senior leaders' particular requirements and challenges.

Political Backdrop for Senior Military Leaders

In addition to the challenges imposed by the CF's changing mission and role on the world scene, it also faces challenges at home. Recent events (e.g., Bosnia and Somalia incidents) have placed the CF under public scrutiny. Canadian citizens' support of the CF dramatically declined in the 1990's (Hannaford, 2001; Horn, 2000). Horn has found that both civilian and military personnel distrust and lack confidence in their senior leaders. Furthermore, leaders are perceived to lack integrity and professionalism. These deficiencies must be addressed. With the added challenge of being physically removed from a majority of their officers, senior leaders must change these negative perceptions by acting consistently and with integrity. Moral conduct requires leaders to develop non-traditional military skills like gaining commitment from subordinates and making each officer feel important for accomplishing the institution's objectives (Horn). Increased attention devoted to defining and regulating the profession of military officers is a step in the right direction (Horn).

The diversity of roles and responsibilities required of senior leaders also necessitates a change in perspective and an open mind. The traditional autocratic mentality and promotion procedures employed by the CF result in senior leaders who are experts in a limited number of specific military areas related to their previous field assignments. This narrow focus breeds executive officers who are operationally restricted and who possess limited knowledge in the other domains, responsibilities, strategies, and capabilities of the CF (R. Walker, personal communication, January 22, 2003; Winslow, 1999). To meet new demands and accomplish diverse missions, CF leaders must be able to take advantage of all the resources and expertise present and at their disposal within the CF. Consequently, leaders must gain a breadth of knowledge and experience in all areas of the military. Innovation and integration of CF

functions are critical to effectively resolve, for example, conflicting demands from diverse constituents. New approaches and tactics must be developed and old strategies applied in novel ways to meet the new demands of the post-Cold War era.

The CF is also unique in the geographic diversity of its senior leaders. Many of them currently occupy offices at the CF's headquarters in Ottawa, but originated from various locations across the country, with some remaining stationed on bases all over the world. Integrating these diverse perspectives and objectives is challenging and requires negotiation skills as well as the ability to compromise. A majority of CF leaders are white Anglophone males who were promoted along the officer ranks up to senior leader positions (Castonguay, 2000). The demographic characteristics of these leaders do not reflect the diversity of Canadian officers. For example, few Francophones occupy senior leadership positions and even fewer ethnic or gender minority groups are represented at the senior level. This demographic composition hinders the development of new perspectives and strategies within the military's top rank. Consequently, strategic decisions may not represent the interests of all Canadian soldiers. This so-called "old-boys" school of thought should be replaced to allow the CF to meet its new objectives and purposes (Castonguay). An openness to perspectives originating from officers of varying cultural, language, and gender groups is important. Their values, opinions, and viewpoints on military operations will provide the CF with increased flexibility for successfully managing new missions.

Increased Ethnic Diversity in Canada

The face of the Canadian population has also dramatically changed since the end of the Cold War and Canadian values reflect these demographic changes. Over the past half century, the number of immigrants to Canada has increased dramatically. Canada is now, more than ever

before, a true cultural mosaic. To adequately represent Canadians on the world stage, CF senior leaders must listen to and adopt these new Canadian values and perspectives. They must develop an open mind and tolerance of various cultures, ideas, and opinions. Canadians of different ethnic backgrounds, ages, and gender have different expectations for the CF that can pose serious conflicts for strategic decision makers. However, senior leaders must be open to all viewpoints, finding a solution that can capture diverse perspectives. The traditional methods of conducting missions and leading the CF are forced to change to meet these diverse, sometimes conflicting expectations.

The cultural diversity found within the Canadian population also leads to an increasing number of immigrant CF recruits. Canadian and American military forces are anticipating a large increase in the number of ethnic minorities and Aboriginal people joining their institutions during the next millennium (Castonguay, 2000; Yukl, 1999). Furthermore, the number of women entering the military and its higher ranks is on the rise. These increases in ethnic and gender diversity prompts a review of the appropriate leadership styles for CF leaders. Current CF leaders have adopted styles well suited for English-speaking white males (Castonguay). However, new approaches and strategies may be required for effective leadership of male and female officers of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

An example of leaders employing different leadership approaches was found in studies comparing English- and French- speaking leaders and officers. Not only were leadership styles found to differ between each linguistic group, but it was also found that English- and French-speaking officers significantly differed on a number of personality characteristics and behaviours. For example, French leaders were found to adopt a more people-oriented style, while Anglophone leaders adopted more task-oriented approaches to leadership (Castonguay,

2000). Leadership theories have indicated that effective leaders adapt their behaviours to both the situation and the personnel present during a particular situation. Thus, CF executive leaders must learn to potentially change their traditional leadership approaches, adapting them to both new situations and personnel.

Absence of Succession Management and Leadership Development Programs

To the present day, the CF has not developed tailored leadership training or succession management programs for its senior leaders, based on validated competencies. The CF's current promotion criteria are based on officer rank and performance in his/her area of expertise. Although this method of executive selection may be adequate for certain positions within some organizations, it may not lead to satisfactory outcomes for senior CF leaders. Individuals selected for these critically important positions should be chosen based on the qualifications and competencies required for these positions. The CF's new roles and missions require individuals capable of, for example, cognitive and behavioural complexity, social intelligence, and adopting a broad perspective in regards to their roles in missions conducted in Canada and abroad.

Based on a valid competency model, future senior leaders should be provided with extensive training and mentoring that will allow them to face the new responsibilities and challenges inherent in their new positions. Qualified executive talent is a rarity in the corporate world. Most middle-level managers are ill prepared to successfully fulfill executive roles (Howard, 2001). This is a frightening situation as the demand for qualified senior officers greatly outweighs its supply. To ensure the CF has a wealth of potentially qualified officers ready to enter senior leadership positions, prospective leaders should be exposed to a wide range of military operations and situations involving various stakeholders (domestic and foreign). This breadth of experience will allow future leaders to gain a better understanding of the multiple

functions and areas of CF expertise and provide them with an opportunity to highlight competencies needing improvement. Based on a validated competency model, succession management programs allow organizations to promote, with confidence, qualified individuals who are ready for the challenges of senior leadership positions (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). A more detailed review of how competency models are developed and integrated with various HR processes is provided in the next section.

SECTION 2 - Competency Modeling Methodologies

This section presents an overview of competency modeling methodologies to provide the reader with a better understanding of the definitions, processes, and uses of competencies. The Canadian Forces Leadership Institute (CFLI) can use this information as an introduction to commonly used approaches and uses of competencies for executive leaders, as well as other positions in the CF. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an exhaustive list of the steps and details involved in these processes. For a more detailed review, the reader is referred to *Effective Competency Modeling and Reporting* (Cooper, 2000), *The Art and Science of Competency Modeling* (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999), or *Competence at Work* (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Prior to discussing the process of competency modeling, it is necessary to first define what is meant by "competency" and why competencies are important.

Definition of Competency

The term "competency" has been defined in numerous ways in the literature (Ash et al., 2000). Catano (1998) reviewed many of these proposed definitions, and based on their commonalities argues that there are three common components to most definitions: 1) competencies are the KSAOs (knowledge, skills, abilities and other work attributes) that underlie effective job performance, 2) these underlying attributes must be observable and measurable, and

3) competencies distinguish between superior and other performers. Based on these findings, Catano (1998) recommends that competencies be defined as "measurable attributes that distinguish outstanding performers from others in a defined job context" (p. 58).

Importance of Competencies

Competencies have many benefits. They help align employees with their organizations' strategic directions, can be learned and developed, have the potential to integrate HR and management practices, and can distinguish and differentiate an organization (Intagliata, Ulrich, & Smallwood, 2000). Competencies also provide a common language across various HR processes and can be developed and reinforced to improve individual and organizational effectiveness.

Competency Modeling

Competency modeling is the process of creating a framework of competencies for an organization. This process involves gathering the appropriate data on the key strategic and tactical competencies for various jobs or job roles. The resulting competency model[2] describes the combinations of KSAOs needed to perform effectively in certain jobs (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Competency models are then used to support one or more HR processes, such as training and development, selection, performance appraisal, and succession planning.

There is currently no agreed upon specific methodology for identifying competencies (Catano, 2001). Scholars agree, however, on the general requirements for creating an effective competency model. This involves careful planning, development, validation, implementation, and ongoing evaluation and maintenance. Each of these general stages will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

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[2] In this paper, the phrases "competency model" and "competency framework" will be used interchangeably.

Planning

The first stage in competency modeling requires identifying the objectives and scope of the competency model (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). This includes defining the organizational problems to be solved by the competency model (Zwell, 2000). Strategic leaders should be involved in this process to ensure that the organization's priorities and strategic direction inform the competency modeling objectives. In other words, the business strategy should drive the competency model (Barner, 2000). Clearly defined business needs should be outlined so the purpose of the competency model is understood, allowing for focus on clear objectives. For example, the CF's competency model for executive leaders may be driven by the need to ensure that current and future strategic leaders are developing the competencies necessary to effectively lead the Canadian military in the new millennium.

Also, decisions need to be made about which jobs, departments, divisions, and/or business units to include in the competency model. Often one particular department or job family is used as a pilot in the implementation of the competency model. In the case of the competency model for the CF's strategic leaders, the exact position titles to which the model will apply need to be determined.

The HR processes (e.g., training and development, selection) to be addressed by the competency model also need to be determined. These decisions can impact the generality/ specificity of the competencies. For example, more specific competencies (i.e., knowledge and skills) that can be acquired or improved through training interventions will be more useful than general competencies (i.e., traits) if the purpose of the competency model is training and development (Wenek, 2002). A thorough understanding of the state of current HR processes is also necessary to determine how competencies can best be used to enhance the existing system

(Zwell, 2000). Once the current state is understood, a vision can be created for how the various HR processes will be improved through incorporating competencies.

Competency Model Development Data Collection Methods

Based on the information obtained in the initial planning, the objectives and scope of the competency model should be clear. This stage involves determining the most appropriate competency data collection method to meet these objectives. Depending on the purpose of the competency model, as well as resource and cost limitations, one or more data collection procedures will be appropriate. Three of the most commonly used data collection methods will be discussed: 1) Subject Matter Expert (SME) interviews, 2) focus groups, and 3) surveys.

SME Interviews

This approach involves one-on-one interviews with individuals who are considered to be high performers in their jobs. These interviews should ideally be 90 minutes in length (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999), but may range from 45 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the complexity of the job and time/resource constraints. Three important considerations for effective SME interviewing are described as follows.

Selecting interviewers. The individuals chosen to conduct SME interviews should be skilled interviewers who have been trained in the competency modeling methodology being used. These may be internal HR staff, and/or external consultants.

Selecting SMEs. To the extent possible, the sample of SMEs selected should be representative of the entire target position population, including a mix of geography, tenure, gender, age, and job level (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Other criteria that might be considered in selecting SMEs are: 1) level of experience (the more, the better – ideally five or more years in their position), 2) considered to be an expert, and the "go to" person in their area, 3) involved in

some aspects of hiring/training, better enabling the SMEs to understand the competencies required to be successful, and 4) is a high achiever/performer who is committed and passionate about their work (Hambley & Copithorne, 2002).

Data recording. It is important that information is captured as accurately as possible in a SME interview, so as to better understand the "how" of performance (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Methods such as taping the interviews, using two interviewers (one of whom takes notes), or extensive note taking by one interviewer should be considered (Lucia & Lepsinger). Extensive note taking by one interviewer is the most common and cost-effective approach, but not as accurate as the other two approaches.

Focus Groups

A second method for collecting competency data is through focus groups with SMEs. Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) recommend that the focus groups used to collect competency information should be between five and nine people. The same considerations regarding interviewers, SMEs and data recording that apply to interviews are also relevant to focus groups. In the context of the CF's competency model for senior leaders, various stakeholders, such as the Minister of Defence, could potentially attend focus groups.

Surveys

A third approach, not nearly as effective as SME interviews or focus groups, is competency surveys. SMEs are given a paper-and-pencil (or computer-based) survey and asked to select or rank order competencies from a predetermined, generic list. This approach risks not identifying certain competencies that are critical and unique to the organization (Intagliata et al., 2000). The validity of these competencies is therefore suspect, as they have not been developed within the specific organizational context (Catano, 1998). The speed, convenience, and low cost of this

approach must be weighed against its lowered ability to identify competencies unique to the strategy and culture of the organization. The history, culture, and values of each organization can have a significant impact on the resulting competencies, which is why a more tailored approach is recommended (Intagliata et al.). Variations of the survey approach may be used, such as internally developing a list of competencies tailored to the organization, then asking SMEs to rate their importance and include additional ones. Although such variations may be more valid, the other more rigorous approaches should be used if possible. Thus, the next section on competency data gathering approaches will not include the survey approach.

Data Gathering Approaches

Gathering competency information from SMEs involves determining which competencies differentiate high from average and low performers. This entails collecting detailed information about the challenges faced by people in certain jobs, and the competencies needed to effectively carry out their work (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Each data collection approach, whether through interviews or focus groups, requires interviewing skills, such as establishing rapport, using open-ended questions, probing for specific information, and avoiding leading or directing the SMEs (Lucia & Lepsinger). There exist a number of different approaches to gathering competency data from SMEs, the combination of which needs to be determined based on the objectives of the competency model.

Core Competencies

Developing a set of core competencies that are applicable across jobs in an organization is often a starting point in designing a competency model. This is essentially a "one-size-fits-all" model, and is quick and inexpensive to develop, as compared to single job models (Newsome & Catano, 1997). These core competencies are required by every member of the organization,

reflecting its values, mission and culture, and ensuring everyone is working towards the same general direction and goals. The proficiency levels of core competencies may differ for executives, managers, and individual contributors (Intagliata et al., 2000). Core competencies can be used on their own, or in addition to identifying competencies for specific jobs.

Critical Incidents Approach

This approach is a variation of the critical-incidents technique used in job analysis, and is best suited to the SME interview approach. It involves asking high performers to provide particularly good and poor examples of performance (Gatewood & Feild, 2001). For each example of performance, the interviewer asks questions and probes to uncover the KSAOs that represent the competencies needed for success in the job or job role (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). An adaptation of the critical-incident approach is the Behavioural Event Interview (BEI) in which outstanding and typical (average) performers are identified and describe what they said, felt, and did in three positive and three negative performance episodes at work (McClelland, 1998). Competencies that are found to differentiate between these two groups become part of the competency model. These two groups may differ in the actual competencies that they display, as well as the levels of proficiency required.

Job Role Approach

Another approach, suitable for either SME interviews or focus groups, is to begin by identifying job roles, which are meaningful collections of competencies required to perform a role or function within a position (Hambley & Copithorne, 2002). Roles can also be thought of as "hats" that people wear in their jobs (e.g., project management), and are likely to remain more stable over time than jobs (Catano, Cronshaw, Wiesner, Hackett, & Methot, 1997). Job roles are important components of a competency model as they are the most stable clusters of

competencies. By combining several job roles (i.e., four to seven roles per job), one can define a specific position unique to an organization. As the job changes over time, job roles can easily be removed or added. Once the job roles are identified, the SME is then asked to provide the competencies and proficiency levels necessary to perform each role successfully (Hambley & Copithorne).

Strategy-Based Approach

This approach may be incorporated into any competency data gathering approach and is useful in identifying competencies not currently exemplified by high performers, but necessary for future organizational success (Briscoe & Hall, 1999; Intagliata et al., 2000). This approach requires carrying out interviews or focus groups with strategic leaders to determine competencies needed to meet the future strategic direction and goals of the organization. This might entail reviewing how other organizations are reacting to changing trends such as globalization (May, 1999). For organizations that are rapidly changing, a strategy-based approach may be the most beneficial method (Briscoe & Hall). Taking strategy into account has been noted as an advantage that competency modeling has over traditional job analysis methods, which tend to capture the content of jobs at one point (the present) in time (Ash et al., 2000; Catano, Cronshaw, Wiesner, Hackett, & Methot, 2001).

Competency Definition Format

Regardless of which approach is used to collect competency information for a given job or job role, a consistent definition format needs to be determined. Competencies should be clearly defined so as not to create confusion among the end users (Howard, 2001). Each KSAO needs to be defined and should include associated behavioural indicators (Newsome & Catano, 1997). According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), each competency should have a narrative

definition and three to six behavioural indicators, which are specific behaviours that demonstrate the competency. These behavioural examples describe instances of the competency in action to help the end user better understand its meaning (Zwell, 2000). The level of detail should be based on the purpose/goals of the competency model. Competencies should be clearly differentiated from each other, rather than overlapping (Byham, Smith & Paese, 2002). Competencies that overlap result in confusion in their application and use.

Rating Scales

An appropriate rating scale, or a combination of several scales, needs to be used to assess competencies. The reliability of a competency model can be diminished through using poorly defined rating scales (Byham et al., 2002). There is a variety of rating scale formats available, but using a consistent format is important for simplifying the assessment process. Each anchor on the scale should be clear, reliable, specific, and unidimensional (Byham et al.). An example scale might have five levels of proficiency, ranging from "no skill" to "expert." A scale designed to tap level of knowledge, for example, could include five proficiency levels: (1) no knowledge, (2) basic knowledge, (3) working knowledge, (4) thorough knowledge, and (5) complete knowledge. A third example is a scale to assess whether the level of competency displayed by the individual is acceptable (i.e., 5-point scale ranging from "much more than acceptable" to "much less than acceptable"; Byham et al.).

All competencies must be associated with required proficiency levels appropriate to the job in question. The managers of SMEs usually do this during the process of validation (Hambley & Copithorne, 2002). It is critical that the measurement of competencies be as objective and precise as possible (Zwell, 2000).

Competency Dictionary

An important component of any competency model is its central dictionary containing all of the competencies. Catano et al. (2001) define competency dictionaries as generic lists of standardized competencies that have been developed over time and across many occupations. The competencies in a dictionary are usually organized into a few or many relevant categories. "Off the shelf" competency dictionaries are available to anyone for purchasing (e.g., Exxceed Competency Dictionary, 2003), but generic definitions should be tailored to reflect unique organizational cultures (Wenek, 2002). For example, executives in the same type of work may demonstrate different types and levels of competencies due to significantly different organizational climates (McClelland, 1998). Relying solely on a generic competency dictionary may result in failure to capture those competencies not in the list but critical to successful performance in a given organization (Catano et al., 2001). Competencies required for effective strategic leadership in the CF will overlap to a certain extent with those required for private sector leaders. The CF will also have unique aspects to incorporate within their competency model.

Selecting an Appropriate Competency Management System

An important decision in implementing a competency model is determining the format in which and where it will be stored. Past competency modeling approaches relied on spreadsheets, which are difficult to update and access. Online systems, housed on the organization's intranet (or on the internet if hosted externally), are recommended because they are easy to access, update, and can be linked with other HR information systems. With online systems, employees can easily leverage competency-related information and applications (Intagliata et al., 2000).

These systems can be custom built or purchased from an outside vendor. One of the most important considerations with any system is that it is easy to learn and use (Zwell, 2000).

Validating Competencies

Once the competencies for each job are determined, it is necessary to validate these competencies. There are various methods used to validate competencies, each differing in their level of rigor. The intended uses of the competency model will dictate the extent of validation required (Dubois, 1993). For instance, if the competency model is to be used only for training and development, face validity may be enough to ensure that the KSAOs are appropriate for the job (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). However, if the model is to be used for selection, performance appraisal or compensation systems, a much more thorough validation will be required. When used for assessment purposes, the competency model must meet all necessary legal and professional standards (Catano, 1998). Four different validation approaches are briefly described below.

SME Validation

In the case of SME validation, SMEs are selected to present their opinions on whether the competencies representing the job or job role in question are accurate. These may be the same SMEs who were originally interviewed or participated in focus groups, but ideally should represent an independent sample (Dubois, 1993). These SMEs review the competencies to confirm which apply, which should be removed, and whether the proficiency levels set are appropriate for the job in question. Depending on time and resource availability, SMEs might validate competencies together as a group, or individually on their own time (Hambley & Copithorne, 2002).

Replicating Original Research Results

This validation method involves using another sample of average and superior performers to replicate the original competency modeling results (Dubois, 1993). Competencies that are not consistent across samples would need to be further examined and potentially removed. Although this method is more time consuming and costly, it is more thorough.

Alternative Methods

A third validation approach is to use research procedures different from those used to create the original competency model (Dubois, 1993). An example would be testing a sample of superior performers to determine whether they possess the competencies identified for their jobs.

360-Degree Validation

A fourth validation technique proposed by Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) involves identifying a cross-section of job incumbents who are deemed high and average or low performers, then having others (i.e., supervisors, direct reports, co-workers) rate their proficiency on each competency, and its importance. This data is then analyzed to determine which competencies significantly correlate with high performers, thereby demonstrating concurrent validity. Competencies that do not correlate with high performance may be removed from the model.

Implementation of Competency Model

Often organizations spend much time and effort developing competency models, yet little time ensuring that they are successfully implemented and evaluated (Intagliata et al., 2000). This may be due to a lack of time and resources to follow through, organizational politics, or potential resistance from organizational members. Thus, the organization must apply the competency model comprehensively and creatively so that employees at all levels realize its importance and

benefits to individual and organizational success. Two important components of implementing a competency model are the communication and change management strategies employed, and the model's integration with various HR processes.

Communication and Change Management

Implementing a competency management system constitutes a major organizational change (Zwell, 2000). As such, it needs to be accompanied by a carefully designed and well-executed communication and change management strategy that will ensure end user buy-in and adoption. It should present, both through written and oral communications (i.e., presentations), the need for the model's application, its benefits, and ease of learning and use (Zwell). All users must thoroughly understand the benefits of integrating competencies into their existing HR processes. This includes obtaining management buy-in, as their support and leadership is critical to the success of the competency model (Zwell, 2000).

Integration with Various HR Processes

Competencies offer the ability to align and integrate multiple HR processes (Catano, 1998). Important competencies can therefore be reinforced and developed to improve individual and organizational effectiveness. A competency model can be integrated into various HR processes, including training and development, selection, performance appraisal, and succession planning.

Training and Development

The most common use for competency models is in training and development. In this case, competency assessments identify "gaps," which are areas that require training and development interventions. These programs can be tailored to close these competency gaps (Catano, 1998). Recommending practical development or training options to close these gaps is

an important aspect of whether the competency model is successful (Intagliata et al., 2000). Employees can create a development plan, based on these competency gaps, to change and improve their behaviour (Zwell, 2000). By examining the competencies with the largest gaps, organizations can determine which training investments are most timely and important for increased performance (Intagliata et al.).

Selection

Another use of competency models is for selecting people into organizations or positions through rating them on the critical competencies associated with superior performance on the job (Catano, 1998; Intagliata et al., 2000). Competencies can be useful for selecting either internal or external employees, and establish a closer connection between organizational success and individual performance. Applicants or employees could assess their competencies in a computer-based or written questionnaire, or competencies could be asked about in an interview. Using competencies to guide interview questions can increase consistency among interviewers by providing a common set of KSAOs about which to inquire (Zwell, 2000).

Dubois (1993) describes two types of competencies used in selection: threshold and differentiating competencies. Threshold competencies are the essential KSAOs required by all job incumbents, whereas differentiating competencies distinguish superior from average or low performers. Depending on the goals of the selection system, one or both of these types of competencies may be used.

Performance Appraisal

Another use for competency models is assessing performance by measuring an employee's proficiency in the competencies required for the job. If the competency model is to be used in performance appraisal, it is recommended that the competencies correlate with

measures of performance, such as productivity or sales (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Also, a person's competencies could be compared to those in other positions, which might determine their eligibility for promotion. For example, the RCMP has adopted a competency-based performance assessment system providing information for use in promotional decisions (Catano, 1998).

In addition to feedback from one's supervisor, performance can be assessed by multiple raters, including subordinates and peers, through 360-degree feedback. This type of multi-rater feedback provides a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of performance compared to traditional supervisory feedback (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). The effectiveness of multisource feedback, however, depends on how it is assessed and presented to leaders (Yukl, 2002). Currently there exists little empirical research on integrating leadership competencies into 360-degree feedback, so not a lot is known about the types of competencies best suited for this type of feedback system (Yukl, 2002). Thus, competency ratings and feedback through a 360-degree approach must be carefully managed and new research findings incorporated, so as to ensure it is beneficial and promotes development.

Succession Planning

Organizations can also leverage competency models to determine which competencies are most critical to replace as workers leave the organization (i.e., retire). Competency models can be used to assess and identify employees with the potential to fill key leadership positions in the future (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Consequently, development plans and appropriate training to build required competencies can be formulated. For a competency-based succession planning process to succeed, it must be closely tied to selection, training and development, and performance appraisal systems. Competencies across these HR processes create a common

language and the necessary consistency and continuity to make succession planning a success (Lucia & Lepsinger).

Keys to Successful Implementation

The pioneering work to date on the implementation of competency models has provided key success factors and best practices. A sampling of some of these best practices follows.

Senior Executive Involvement

Senior executives should be involved in as many stages as possible throughout the development and implementation of the competency model. If senior executives stay too distant from its development, they will not use it and continue using their own "shorthand and shared perspective about what makes leaders effective" (Intagliata et al., 2000, p. 6). Also, leaders that do not use it will be less likely to encourage all employees in the organization to adopt it.

End User Buy-In

Another important key to the success of a competency model is that end-users understand the value, and are therefore willing to put in the time to learn and utilize the application (Zwell, 2000). The end users must understand and appreciate the benefits of using the system in their daily activities.

Easy to Use

The competency management system should be easy to learn and use. This includes language that is understandable to all users (Zwell, 2000). Employees, and especially managers, seldom have extra time to spend learning a system, so training should be as brief and succinct as possible.

Manageable Number of Competencies per Position

Another important success factor is to limit the number of competencies for each job to a manageable number. Too many competencies can be impractical and time consuming, resulting in less use; conversely, too few competencies result in an incomplete job profile (Byham et al., 2002). For executive level positions, Byham et al. recommend 10-18 competencies, but this is just a guideline and will depend on the level of specificity and target uses of the competency model.

Sustainability

Once initial excitement about the competency model subsides, it is important that the application continue to be maintained and sponsored by people in the organization (Zwell, 2000). A system should be put in place to transmit knowledge to new trainers and advocates so expertise does not disappear with turnover. Developing and maintaining practices, policies, and customs regarding the use of the competency model is important (Zwell) and will ensure its continued utility.

Ongoing Evaluation and Maintenance

Periodic evaluation and maintenance of the competency model is critical to ensure the ongoing success and return on investment of this HR initiative. The following are a list of recommendations on ways to evaluate and maintain the competency model.

Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of a competency model for the various HR processes for which it is used can be done in several ways.

Employee Feedback

One means of evaluation is to create a feedback form that enables employees to provide their feedback and suggestions. Suggestions can then be reviewed and possible enhancements to

the model or associated HR processes can be implemented. Alternatively, discussions can be held with managers and incumbents to assess how well the competency model is being accepted and applied (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999).

Validation Studies

Various methods of validating a competency model were presented earlier. Further validation studies can be conducted over time to determine if validity of the competency model. Scientific validation of a competency model requires more rigorous methods, such as comparing an experimental and control group to determine if the differences in performance are due to the competency-based HR process (Zwell, 2000). Baseline data should be collected prior to the project beginning, during and after the competency model is created and implemented (Cooper, 2000). Data can range from simple satisfaction feedback to more detailed individual and organizational performance measures. The time and cost associated with assessing the effectiveness of a competency model varies depending on the goals of the model. Return on investment (ROI) information can shed light on the effects of the new competency management system on revenue and productivity through carefully designed research.

Maintenance

The competency model should be revised periodically by in-house competency specialists or external consultants to meet the changing strategy, needs, and direction of the organization (Catano, 1998). In other words, the competency model needs to be periodically revisited to determine if it is still a valid predictor of successful performance (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). In particular, when the organization has undergone significant change (i.e., restructuring), or when the competency model is being applied to new HR processes, a revision may be

necessary. A plan needs to be formulated for how the extent and effectiveness of usage are to be evaluated (Zwell, 2000).

The specific competencies, job, and jobs roles captured in the competency model will need to be revised periodically (i.e., annually) to ensure their accuracy and currency (Hambley & Copithorne, 2001). Competencies representing technologies that may change rapidly should be updated more often.

Summary

The purpose of this section was to present the CF with an overview of competency modeling, including recommended processes for developing an effective competency model. The CFLI can use this information as an introduction to commonly used approaches and uses of competencies for senior leaders, as well as other positions in the CF. The following section focuses on some specific leadership competencies that have been found to be characteristic of successful executive leaders.

SECTION 3- Review of Strategic Leadership Competencies

Defining Leadership

The concept of leadership has been widely studied in non-military organizations (Hawkins & Tolzin, 2002; Yukl, 1999; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001). Thousands of empirical studies have been published on organizational leaders. This number significantly decreases for studies conducted with military leaders (Yukl, 1999). Thus, relatively less is known about the processes military leaders employ to guide their followers, the situations and challenges they face, the decisions they make and their effects on stakeholders. Despite this restricted knowledge, the current paper will draw from both the military and non-military leadership literatures to identify and define the major competencies thought to be associated with effective

leadership in the military. Literature reviews have combined results of leadership studies conducted with military, financial, health-care, and manufacturing organizations (Spencer & Spencer, 1993), highlighting the similarities between the leadership competencies required in these various types of organizations. Thus, competencies empirically supported in non-military contexts are also deemed relevant to military settings.

The academic and practitioner-oriented literatures provide numerous and diversified definitions of leadership. Experts have yet to concur on the most appropriate definition across leadership situations (Northouse, 1997). Leaders are present in various hierarchical levels, each requiring competencies that are quantitatively and qualitatively unique. A particular challenge in the military is to determine the competencies required for senior officers occupying executive level positions of leadership. Traditionally, the CF's definition of leadership has been applied across all of its ranks (Horn, 2000).

Leadership has been defined by the Canadian military as, "the art of influencing others to do willingly what is required in order to achieve an aim or goal" (Canada, Land Force *COMMAND*, 1997 in Horn, 2000, p. 124). Wenek (2002) also proposed a definition of leadership in the CF, "The direct and indirect purposeful exercise of formal authority or personal influence" (p.1). It is unclear if this latter definition has been formally accepted and implemented within the CF, but what is certain is that these traditional definitions of leadership, such as that offered by Land Force *COMMAND*, are inadequate for meeting the CF's new social, political, economic, and personnel needs (Horn). These definitions highlight the top-down approach to leadership where the authority dictates officers' actions. This definition encourages leaders to be evaluated on the basis of their effectiveness in command and success of their missions (Horn). These results-oriented, as opposed to process-oriented, definitions of

leadership equate mission success with effective leadership, promoting qualified field commanders to executive leadership positions for which they are ill-prepared and under-qualified. Although experience is important for executive leaders, it is insufficient for successful performance in complex, dynamic, and critical organizational positions, such as those of senior CF leaders. These selection criteria may not engender the desired outcomes for both mission and strategic organizational ventures.

In the 1970s, Burns and his colleagues proposed that leadership is a relationship between followers and leaders. This relationship is characterized by leaders having non-coercive influence on their subordinates' actions. True leadership should not be imposed by those chosen as leaders and followers should welcome this individual and his/her leadership (Northouse, 1997). This approach to leadership emphasizes the extent to which leaders use their influence on followers to provoke change and instil their vision for a new organization. According to this school of thought, leaders are agents of change and should be prolific in transmitting to followers their vision for the organization and how it should be attained. Effective leaders are those who listen to their subordinates, open two-way lines of communication, value the relationships they hold with their subordinates, and use non-coercive methods of influence to realize their visions. According to Rost (1993) and others (e.g., Horn, 2000; Zaccaro, 1999; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001), the most important aspect of leadership is the influential relationship between leaders and followers for the achievement of shared goals and purposes.

It is crucial for organizations to establish a clear and precise definition of what leadership constitutes for them. This includes identifying what leadership is and is not as well as making distinctions between often overlapping concepts (e.g., leadership and management). Consistent with this new perspective on leadership, a definition was offered by Horn (2000). It includes

viewing leadership as a process by which subordinates voluntarily work together towards the attainment of commonly held objectives and outcomes, under the direction of a leader to ultimately achieve a vision. The CF should develop a specific, customized, meaningful, and practical definition of executive leadership suitable for the 21st century. A change in philosophy towards leadership, the organization as a whole, and the means to achieve organizational objectives is required for success. The adoption of this definition will be crucial for integrating leadership development into HR systems (e.g., selection, training and development).

Roles of Senior Military Leaders

The challenges of the new millennium require senior leaders to adopt new roles to ensure their organizations remain effective and competitive. Traditional military strategic leadership roles have included manager, strategic decision-maker, and disseminator of orders. Organizational leaders, including military leaders, should be visionaries and change agents; champions, advocates and supporters of their constituents and of every aspect of their organizations, at home and abroad; and coaches and mentors to their subordinates. According to Nanus (1992) and Howard (2001), effective senior leaders should adopt all of these roles simultaneously. Indeed, leaders with a larger number of leadership roles at their disposal and who know when to discriminately apply these roles are more successful and effective in bringing about change within their organization (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Specific to military organizations, the roles of peacemakers and peacekeepers should also be added to this list. We will describe these new roles in detail below.

Visionary

The first new role leaders should adopt is that of a visionary. This role requires leaders to first recognize that their organization is in need of change and requires new strategic direction.

Many organizations, including the military, have recognized this need and are developing and implementing new visions to ensure a successful future for their organizations. As indicated by Canada's Defence Minister's Monitoring Committee on Change (MCC), it is up to the executive leaders to develop a vision of the future: "What will the military look like in the future? What will be its objectives, missions, mandates?" Developing and working towards the achievement of a vision is widely recognized as being a hallmark of executive leaders (e.g., Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Horn, 2000). Leaders should possess a clear vision of what the organization should look like in the future, its mission, and value system. This image should be attractive, realistic, and attainable. In addition, it should be compelling to followers, persuading them to support and contribute to the organization's vision. The vision should grow out of the needs of the entire organization and originate from a collaborative effort between followers and leaders (Northouse, 1997).

Change Agent

Accompanying a new vision is change, insecurity, and confusion for all constituents. The leadership vision not only provides a long-term goal, but also guidance to organizational members during times of ambiguity (Ticky & DeVanna, 1990). Thus, leaders must also be agents of change, promoting new behaviours that reinforce the vision. Leaders must take advantage of every opportunity to promote their vision through their actions and communications. These behaviours must at all times be consistent with the vision, bringing the organization one step closer to its realization. Leaders must provide an environment conducive to achieving the vision and make the necessary changes to achieve new goals. This is a constant struggle as policies usually applaud innovation, but continue to reward the status quo. Although

a vision can be built from the bottom up, the leaders must own the vision and be accountable for its design and implementation (Horn, 2000).

Champion and Advocate

Important in the accomplishment of the vision, is senior military leaders' advocacy of the CF's vision and behaviours of its constituents to internal and external parties. Executive leaders must be proud champions of the CF, praising its values, personnel, military and peacekeeping capabilities, actions, and decisions to its Canadian stakeholders and international partners. Leaders play a crucial role in acquiring resources for their organizations. They negotiate and lobby with the government to obtain the necessary financial resources to accomplish missions and fulfill CF mandates. In addition, leaders act as representatives in their interactions with the media and Canadian citizens. They must convince the Canadian public of the importance of having adequately funded military units and gain support for their operations and missions on Canadian soil (e.g., Oka crisis of 1990) and overseas (e.g., Missions in Afghanistan). Moreover, during overseas missions and international conferences, leaders are responsible for adequately representing the CF as a capable military body and portraying Canadians' values to the rest of the world. Globalization, as exemplified by the increased importance of the UN in all military operations, has increased the exposure of military leaders on the world scene. Thus, leaders must recognize the extent of the responsibilities and consequences associated with being champions of the CF.

To fulfill their roles as advocates, senior leaders should adopt an organization-wide perspective. This is particularly important when members of the CF make mistakes. Leaders must stand by their subordinates and promote an environment where lessons can be learned from mistakes. Leaders must be willing to take some responsibility and admit to making errors. This

type of environment will also promote innovation and change for accomplishing the military's vision. Thus, in the face of controversy and crisis, leaders must abandon the politically correct, risk aversion, and "mistake free" culture for one characteristic of a learning organization. Mistakes cannot be eliminated, but important lessons can be learned from them, even in the military where lives are often at stake (see Baird, Henderson, & Watts, 1997).

Coach and Mentor

Organizational leaders are increasingly expected to adopt the roles of coach and mentor of organizational members. Military officials have traditionally remained distant from their subordinates (psychologically and sometimes physically), giving orders based on their legitimate power. Instead, executives should provide their subordinates with constructive performance feedback on their strengths and weaknesses and help them set performance as well as career goals. Senior leaders possess a wealth of organizational information and experience that can benefit others. Leaders are also capable of removing barriers and obstacles that prevent employees from performing at their best. Leaders' continual encouragement, support, and communication of high expectations pushes followers to exert maximum effort and reach superior performance levels (Zwell, 2000). Senior leaders have been found to seldom adopt this role or if they do, to struggle with its performance. Not surprising, however, is that executive leaders who are coaches and mentors to their subordinates have been deemed very successful compared to leaders not exhibiting these roles (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Through their inspirational influence, leaders can substantially increase subordinates' productivity levels and effectiveness, leading to positive outcomes for the entire organization (see Brennan, Ferris, Paquet, & Kline, 2003).

Peacemaker and Peacekeeper

Changes in CF mandates prompt leaders to develop skills as peacemakers and peacekeepers. The CF is increasingly urged by Canadians and their international allies to perform missions of non-military nature, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. These missions require leaders and their subordinates to adopt different strategies for resolving conflicts and/or providing the required aid and protection to civilians. In addition, these missions are often conducted in collaboration with military and/or civilian agencies, presenting challenges in diplomacy, negotiation, and cooperation. In accordance with the CF's new vision, leaders must demonstrate behaviours aligned with these new roles. Leading by example will encourage soldiers and officers in the field to abandon combat mentalities for attitudes and behaviours conducive to these non-military missions and to collaborate with the various participating agencies.

Strategic Leadership Competencies

Several important roles required by senior leaders in the new millennium were described in the previous section. Effectively carrying out these roles requires certain competencies. As defined in Section 2, competencies are observable and measurable KSAOs that distinguish outstanding performers in a particular job context (Catano, 1998). The purpose of the current section is to describe the competencies required of senior leaders to effectively carry out these roles. Determining exactly which competencies fit with each role would require carrying out the job role approach (see Section 2) to gathering competency data. Thus, for the purposes of this paper the recommended competencies will be discussed in general terms. In addition, the competencies presented below do not constitute an exhaustive list of the KSAOs required by senior military leaders, but only a subset of those presented in the literature as leading to

successful executive leadership. To obtain a complete list of required and behaviourally defined competencies tailored to senior CF military positions, a competency model should be developed using one of the approaches recommended in Section 2.

Distinguishing the Strategic Leadership Environment

Leadership scholars, as well as Canadian and American military experts have indicated that because of the unique environmental conditions under which senior leaders operate, they require skills that are quantitatively and qualitatively different from those required in lower-ranking leadership positions (e.g., Horn, 2000; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2001). Howard (2001) has indicated that leadership competencies at all organizational levels tend to cluster under the same general domains (e.g., decision-making, administrative skills, interacting effectively with others). However the scope (i.e., extent of influence) and scale (i.e., complexity level) of responsibilities differ between organizational levels. In response to these unique challenges faced by organizational leaders, theoretical approaches have emphasized the need for senior leaders to be proficient in high-functioning cognitive competencies (Zaccaro, 1999). Highly complex cognitive competencies such as meta-cognitive problem-solving, the ability to differentiate between conflicting elements influencing the organizational environment and the ability to integrate initially opposing elements in original ways to increase effectiveness and productivity, are hypothesized to assist leaders in overcoming diverse and novel obstacles (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Fleishman, & Reiter-Palmon, 1993). Another striking difference is in the extent to which senior military leaders depend on their conceptual skills and much less on their technical knowledge, compared to lower ranked leaders. At the senior leadership level, problems and their parameters are often ill-defined and highly complex. Solutions are ambiguous and unspecified, often requiring a long-term perspective (Zaccaro). To provide strategic direction for the

institution, senior leaders must be capable of assimilating, processing, and integrating complex information, allowing the organization to remain effective and to realize its vision. Interpersonal skills are crucial at all levels of leadership; however, the complexity level of social interactions is also heightened as one moves up the organizational hierarchy.

Social Complexity

Social interactions in senior leadership levels are characterized as being multifaceted. The social demands are much greater for senior leaders as the number and nature of interactions (with individuals inside and outside the organization) increase exponentially for executive leaders (Zaccaro, 1999). For example, senior leaders often manage multiple units, each with different missions, objectives, requirements, social dynamics, and who interact with each other in different ways. In addition, these leaders must interact with diverse stakeholders (Howard, 2001), including their own subordinates, Canadian citizens, and international partners. Furthermore, the implementation of their organizational vision may require careful negotiation in changing the social dynamics of organizational units. This increased diversity and complexity of social situations is coined *social complexity*. This concept refers to "the degree of intricacy in social dynamics and interconnections presented by combinations of individuals, groups, systems, and organizations located in this environment" (Zaccaro, p.132). In other words, social complexity can be characterized as deriving from the sheer number, diversity, and unique interconnectiveness that exists among various social elements present in the leader's environment. To effectively operate within a socially complex environment, leaders must possess both social cognitive and behavioural competencies. As the level of social complexity increases, it is more crucial for leaders to possess these social competencies. Unlike senior level positions, middle- and lower- level leaders encounter only low levels of social complexity. The

following social cognitive and behavioural competencies are associated with successful performance in socially complex situations (Spreitzer, McCall, & Mahoney, 1997).

Social Intelligence

Senior military leaders should be proficient in what scholars have called *social intelligence* (Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991). Defined as, "the ability to a) accurately perceive and interpret social requirements, and b) to select and enact appropriate social behavioural responses" (Zaccaro, 1999, p.137), social intelligence includes a cognitive and behavioural component. Previous theorists have similarly defined *social intelligence*, consistently emphasizing its dual cognitive and behavioural components and distinguishing it from abstract reasoning[3] (e.g., Hooijberg & Schneider, 2001; Zaccaro). As mentioned previously, individuals' technical skills and abstract intelligence become less important as they enter executive leadership positions. Leaders with strong abstract reasoning skills, but who are inept in social situations and lack *social intelligence*, are thought to be unsuccessful in these top leadership positions and better suited for middle-level managerial positions. *Social intelligence* allows leaders to effectively deal with the highly complex social situations characteristic of senior level positions. This effectiveness is achieved through their understanding of the current and long-term influence various stakeholders have on their organizations (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). We will now turn to a more detailed description of the two components of *social intelligence*: *interactional complexity* and *social reasoning* competencies.

Interactional Complexity

[3] Theorists have offered numerous definitions and conceptualizations of social intelligence (e.g., Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Gardner, 1985; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The authors of the current paper chose to discuss Zaccaro's definition and conceptualization of social intelligence because of their development in and applicability to a military context.

Senior leaders operate in complex and dynamic organizational environments. These conditions require behaviours and solutions to problems that are appropriate for each particular situation. Thus, interactional complexity is the ability to choose the appropriate behaviour depending on the present situation (Hooijberg & Schneider, 2001). For example, leaders need to be able to draw on a broad behavioural portfolio to effectively convey the same message to different constituents (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Leaders demonstrate this behavioural complexity as a result of their knowledge of the organization's social structure and exposure to a wide range of leadership behaviours performed in response to multiple problems, scenarios, and situations that can occur in organizational and specific (military) settings. The positive relationship between behavioural complexity and leadership performance has been empirically supported (e.g., Dobbins, Long, Dedrick, & Clemons, 1990; Ellis, 1988; Zaccaro, Foti, & Kenny, 1991).

An important aspect of senior leadership positions is their exposure to multiple and conflicting demands and requirements from various subordinate units and stakeholders. The onus on senior leaders to resolve these conflicts emphasizes the importance of negotiation, conflict management, and persuasion skills. These interactional competencies have been found to be maximally utilized in senior leadership positions, where 25% of their time is spent engaging in these resolution activities (Zaccaro, 1999).

Negotiation and conflict management. These skills involve the ability to implement any or all appropriate problem resolution tactics available to the leader and the ability to discern the most effective tactic for resolving the conflict at hand (Zaccaro, 1999). There are multiple problem solving tactics available in any given situation (e.g., Bass, 1990; Kabanoff, 1985). Effective leaders should be able to make use of the various problem solving strategies available

and apply these with discretion to resolve the conflict. Among effective strategies is the ability to behave in a way that makes the quarrelling parties take ownership of and credit for the negotiated resolution (Zwell, 2000). This strategy may be effective in the context of certain politically-based conflicts, where parties are concerned with "saving face."

Persuasion. In conflict situations, the resolution will most likely be perceived as disadvantaging one or all parties involved. The importance of persuasion is crucial to satisfy all parties. Similarly, transformational leadership researchers have indicated the importance of persuasion in convincing subordinates of the appropriateness of the leader's vision and to adopt this vision for a new organization. In addition, at senior levels persuasion is crucial when working with other senior leaders and the executive team. In the CF, senior leaders must collaborate with each other and with other leaders from civilian and military agencies (e.g., civilian police force, allied military forces). The use of authoritarian and position power are ineffective influence tactics, making persuasion the preferred means for exercising influence and control over military affairs and operations. Effective persuasion tactics commonly used by leaders include pointing out the benefits of a particular position, and appealing to logic and reason (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

Social Reasoning

Thus far, this subsection has presented a list of competencies related to leaders' social intelligence behavioural repertoires. Leaders not only require the ability to utilize a variety of behavioural responses such as conflict resolution and influence tactics, but also the ability to perceive elements within the social environment that allow them to determine which behaviours or tactics are appropriate in each specific social situation. *Social reasoning* skills include the

effective perception, judgment, and diagnosis of social situations' needs, demands, and requirements (Howard & Bray, 1988; Yukl, 1994; Zaccaro, 1999; Zaccaro, Foti, et al., 1991).

Social perceptiveness. One such *social reasoning* competency is *social perceptiveness*. When faced with a complex social problem, senior leaders should focus on the needs and goals of the organization. Employing a systems perspective allows leaders to take advantage of the opportunities presented within the environment, bringing their organization one step closer to achieving its goals and vision (Zaccaro, 1999). Although leaders occupying positions in lower hierarchical levels should focus on recognizing the needs and problems of individual organizational members and adopt interpersonal perspectives, senior leaders should take a broader perspective, considering the consequences of decisions and actions on the organization as a whole. In problem resolution, senior leaders should search for organizational indicators of the presence of a problem and focus on system level dynamics. In addition, leaders should attend to social factors that may influence the implementation of problem solutions. After considering these obstacles, initial problem solutions will be revised or others will be implemented. The final decision will be based on the social information perceived by the leader (Zaccaro).

Environmental scanning. Social reasoning can also be applied to the broader macro-organizational environment. Effective leaders should be capable of scanning the environment for "affordances" or information that can be beneficial or detrimental to the organization (Zaccaro, 1999). For example, information pertaining to the harsh climate and poor physical conditions associated with a particular mission in the desert may prompt leaders to reconsider their initial choice for battalion commissioned to complete the mission. This information helps senior leaders adapt decision-making processes and problem solutions to correspond to the

organization's current environment and help the organization progress towards its goals. *Environmental scanning* has been deemed as one of the most important executive competencies (Yukl, 2002). The monitoring of the external environment includes several sectors relevant to the organization. For the military, these sectors include political and regulatory bodies, international policies, economics, demographic characteristics and socio-cultural aspects of the Canadian population.

The information gathered through environmental monitoring can be achieved in numerous ways (e.g., attending meetings with the government, staying abreast of international political conflicts by participating in UN meetings and reading UN reports, developing partnerships with key informants of civilian opinions, talking to professionals in the fields of international relations and military technology). This competency is particularly important for organizations experiencing rapid change and operating in a dynamic and volatile environment (Yukl, 2002). Indeed, the Canadian military is experiencing significant changes in a number of areas. Consequently, its senior leaders should engage in consistent scanning of the environment to increase the CF's flexibility in responding to new challenges and overcoming obstacles. The outcomes of *environmental scanning* are crucial in guiding strategic decisions and planning, as well as crisis management (Yukl, 2002).

In summary, *interactional complexity* and *social reasoning* constitute an individual's *social intelligence.* These competencies allow leaders to attend to similarities and differences among social elements and to efficiently acquire and effectively utilize social information. This increased understanding of the social and organizational environment should lead to more effective solutions and decisions in complex situations (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; Zaccaro, 1999).

We now turn to other competencies found to be important for success in senior leadership positions.

Other Strategic Leadership Competencies

Flexibility

The preceding discussion of essential senior leadership competencies underscores the importance of *flexibility* in behaviour and as a general disposition. For example, evidence of *behavioural flexibility* is seen in leaders' choosing from a repertoire of actions the most appropriate for a particular situation. The leader is familiar with this repertoire and varies his/her actions depending on the social situation's elements, requirements, and potential organizational consequences. Furthermore, executives are often called upon to engage in high level *strategic thinking*. This competency is favoured by the ability to integrate multiple conceptual dimensions characteristic of their organizations (e.g., characteristics of their competition, allies, changes in stakeholder opinion and expectations) and its operating contexts. Facilitated by *cognitive flexibility*, this integration by leaders allows their organizations to form a coherent whole that can remain adaptive to changes in the environment (Zaccaro, 1999).

Executive leaders are faced with continually changing social, economic, and political environments. Cognitive and behavioural flexibility is heightened when leaders possess a flexible disposition. Possessing an openness to novel experiences, being capable of *tolerating ambiguity* and *uncertainty* encourages adaptation to the demands and requirements of diverse situations (Zaccaro, 1999). This dispositional orientation allows leaders to respond in various ways to different social situations. However, to ensure effectiveness, leaders must also be *self-disciplined*. Otherwise, a leader may indefinitely cycle through potential resolutions and decisions, without ever settling on an appropriate action plan.

Technical Knowledge and Skills

Although many leadership scholars have indicated that executive leaders' *technical knowledge and skills* play secondary roles to *conceptual* and *interpersonal skills* (Hooijberg & Schneider, 2001; Mann, 1964, Zaccaro, 1999), technological and professional knowledge of the industry, competitors, and their businesses are important competencies for senior leaders. The top management team, usually comprised of experts in various organizational domains (e.g., finance, operations, production) act as advisors to senior leaders. However, knowledge of the industry and how the organization contributes to its environment, will allow the attainment of strategic goals and vision. *Technical expertise* is the basis for judgments that inform the use of other competencies. For example, *business and financial acumen* are competencies essential in shaping effective strategic decisions. Exercising conceptual and interpersonal skills would not be as productive if senior leaders were not knowledgeable in various technical aspects related to their organization. *Business knowledge* includes such notions as task competence, broad industry and company knowledge, breadth of awareness, and basic knowledge of the organization's products, functions, and policies (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Related to the CF, senior leaders must be familiar with their current weaponry, costs, and likelihood for future use prior to purchasing additional weaponry. In addition, prior to giving the order to begin a peacemaking mission, senior leaders should be aware of enemy troops' military capabilities, compared to those of the CF's. This information will instruct leaders on how much diplomacy and verbal negotiation (as opposed to force) may be needed to successfully accomplish the mission.

Cognitive Abilities

In addition to conceptual thinking and analytical abilities, cognitive abilities are one of the most reliable and valid predictors of job performance, particularly for executives (Spreitzer et

al., 1997). Executives are faced with large amounts of conflicting information that they must synthesize. Cognitively complex individuals process information differently and more effectively compared to individuals who are less cognitively complex, because they use more categories or dimensions to discriminate among stimuli. This increased cognitive complexity allows leaders to better understand how changes occurring within their environment (e.g., socio-political and technological changes) can affect their organization and its operations.

Creative Problem Solving

Related to analytical abilities, *creative problem solving* is required to solve novel, complex, and ill-defined problems presented to senior leaders (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). These cannot be solved through routine applications of extant knowledge. Instead, experiential and abstract knowledge are recalled from memory and used to define the nature of the problem and to search for additional problem-relevant information and concepts. Based on the information gathered, concepts are reshaped and reorganized to form the basis for better understanding the problem and to generate new alternative solutions. Finally, alternative solutions are evaluated and an action plan is formulated to implement the chosen solution (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al.). Researchers have provided evidence of a strong positive relationship between senior leaders' *creative problem solving* abilities and performance (e.g., Mumford & Peterson, 1999; Mumford, Zaccaro, et al.).

Trust and Integrity

The recent actions of prominent CEO's have decreased employees' and stakeholders' already diminished levels of confidence in their executive leadership. The collapse of Enron and WorldCom have resulted in employee and stockholder distrust, suspicion, and resentment towards most organizational senior leaders. The CF has not escaped these negative perceptions.

The recent budget cuts have increased officers' feelings of resentment towards leaders and reduced their credibility in effectively obtaining required resources. In addition, scandals such as the Somalia and Bosnia incidents have stripped many leaders of their trustworthiness (Horn, 2000). The leaders of the 21st century are required to re*build trust* and *commitment* from their various stakeholders (e.g., military officers, citizens, stockholders, and/or employees). Leaders must demonstrate *integrity*, and lead by example. Michael Zwell (2000) has proposed that one of the most important leadership competencies is what he called "Purpose, principles, and values." This competency refers to leaders who live by these three concepts, acting and making decisions aligned with their personal value systems. Acting in accordance with one's values and taking responsibility for one's actions allows leaders' actions to be consistently aligned with the organization's vision and provides direction and purpose to all constituents. Re-establishing credibility and confidence in the military's leadership will be crucial to attain the CF's goals and vision.

Included in the category of interpersonal competencies, *integrity* has been found to predict executive success (Kotter, 1988; Spreitzer et al., 1997). Ethically led organizations report increased effectiveness and employee performance, and lower turnover. In addition, a positive relationship has been found between leaders' *integrity* levels and leadership effectiveness ratings. Some scholars have noted the indispensability of leadership *integrity* in today's organizations (Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2002).

Communication

Daily activities require various forms of *communication*. This competency is potentially the most widely and frequently used by any organizational member. Senior leaders also depend on their *communication* skills to perform many of the competencies discussed thus far. To enact

their vision, leaders must first communicate it to subordinates (Northouse, 1997). Sharing of the vision and inspiring to work collaboratively towards its achievement is communicated through verbal and non-verbal mediums (e.g., written statements, behaviours). Transmitting the organizational vision is crucial to gain commitment from subordinates and motivate them to exert high levels of performance. In turbulent and ambiguous times, organized action is only possible through verbal or written *communication*. It provides a sense of common direction to subordinates (Hawkins & Tolzin, 2002). Leadership scholars have indicated that "communication *is* what makes an organization" (Hackman & Johnson, 1996) and emphasized its centrality to leadership (Bergquist, 1993; Nanus, 1992; Witherspoon, 1997). *Communication* plays a key role in all social interactions and this competency becomes particularly important when forming partnerships with domestic and international allies

Commitment

A strong sense of *commitment* and dedication to the organization's vision and objectives have been found to be crucial competencies for successful leadership (Spreitzer et al., 1997). The difficulty and challenges posed by senior leadership positions require individuals who are devoted to the attainment of the CF's vision and to upholding the military profession's principles. As visionaries and motivators to officers, senior leaders must demonstrate a profound sense of commitment to their work and mission. Related to their role as mentors, senior leaders must demonstrate passion for the military profession, worthiness of the military cause, adherence to the profession's regulatory principles, and successful accomplishment of missions. This attitudinal and behavioural commitment will further officers' own commitment towards the military profession and the CF's vision.

Courage

On the road to accomplishing a new vision, obstacles are inevitable. Overcoming these barriers will require leaders to demonstrate *courage* by challenging the status quo and taking action to reach goals. Successful senior leaders possess the self-confidence to take risks and "go against the grain" when it is deemed necessary to reach their goals. This action-orientation is particularly important for leaders charged with the mandate of changing the status quo of their organization (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Inherent in any organizational change is resistance and ambiguity. Successful leaders require *courage* to overcome this resistance, take action, change inconsistent policies, and persist towards the achievement of the vision.

Cross-Cultural Skills

Cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication. The changing nature of CF missions, their partnerships with international civilian and military agencies, and participation in global operations requires new social competencies from CF leaders. These senior officers are called upon to represent their institution and their country in political, military, and humanitarian operations. In today's global environment, executives' work is becoming increasingly international in nature (Spreitzer et al., 1997). CF operations often require collaborating with culturally diverse individuals and institutions, requiring leaders to be aware of diverse cultures and their respective values, religions, morals, and customs. *Cultural awareness* and *openness* are, therefore, key competencies for effective military leadership. Leaders must demonstrate a certain level of knowledge of the cultures surrounding them, respect, and appreciation for their beliefs and practices. An understanding of diverse attitudes, interests, needs, and reasons for others' behaviours are skills senior leaders should exercise particularly when involved in international projects (Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

Closely tied to culture is language (Castonguay, 2000). Leaders should be fluent in at least two languages (this recommendation should not be problematic for CF officers and leaders because a majority may already be bilingual in Canada's official languages). The ability to communicate with individuals from various cultures who speak different languages is crucial for establishing understanding, trust, and cooperation between the CF and their international partners. Although linguistic fluency is usually limited to only a few languages, acknowledging differences in language and linguistic customs, as well as the amount of effort exerted to establish communication with foreign partners are crucial (Spreitzer et al., 1997). Leaders should modify their behaviours and communications (e.g., speed, use of jargon or slang) while in the presence of individuals not fluent in the spoken language (Zwell, 2000). Furthermore, awareness and attention to non-verbal behaviours are often crucial for understanding others' perspectives and opinions. This recognition and sensitivity to differences in languages, ideologies, and customs will allow CF leaders to effectively represent Canadians as acceptant of cultural diversity on the international scene, not to mention encourage the achievement of the CF's vision.

Cross-cultural interpersonal skills. Research conducted with expatriates highlights several other competencies required for effective assignments abroad. *Interpersonal skills* are repeatedly emphasized as crucial for success, namely *flexibility*, *curiosity*, *openness* towards other ways of living, thinking, and speaking, as well as their non-judgemental acceptance. As indicated above in our discussion of *social intelligence*, *flexibility* and *openness* are key competencies for international operations (Lobel, 1990; Spreitzer et al., 1997). Senior leaders must refrain from judging other cultures and should not be ethnocentric. International missions are intolerant towards racism and domestic or rigid mindsets. Although instruction about other

cultures' customs, languages, and values can enhance *cross-cultural knowledge*, this information may not be sufficient for developing *flexibility* and *open-mindedness*. Senior CF leaders who will be called on duty overseas to resolve cross-cultural conflicts and make decisions affecting individuals all over the world should be flexible, open to, and aware of differing ideologies.

Social capital and building networks. A concept that has received renewed attention is *social capital*. Originally used by sociologists in the 1960's to describe networks of personal relationships within a community, it can also be applied to the network of relationships formed within and between organizations and their members (Brass, 2001). The central principle of *social capital* is its complex web or networks of inter-relationships that can be valuable to all groups and individuals involved. Benefits associated with having *social capital* include the advantages of reciprocal relationships, the sharing of important information, and the exchange of favours without official transactions (Brass). Building these networks is important for the CF in conducting its missions abroad, as well as at home (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). As indicated earlier, the CF is consistently required to collaborate with civilian and military agencies for the successful accomplishment of its missions. Including such agencies in the CF's *social capital* networks will foster collaboration, the exchange of information and reciprocation of favours. A large *social capital* can help the CF achieve its vision for international relations and objectives as an international peacemaker and peacekeeper. These relationships may also help Canada gain referent power within the UN and among the most powerful players on the world stage, promoting Canadian values and culture. In addition, this network can help the CF obtain the resources needed to meet its objectives and achieve its purposes in Canada. For example, healthy business relationships between the CF and the media can lead to more positive views of the military from citizens. CF senior leaders must be proficient in *building networks* and

partnerships and in using their *persuasion* and influence skills to foster these mutually beneficial exchange relationships.

The above discussion highlights the need for CF senior leaders to be proficient in numerous behavioural, cognitive, interpersonal, and technical competencies. The sheer number of competencies required can be overwhelming. A well developed competency framework can help organize and highlight the most important competencies as well as those lacking within the leadership ranks. This paper now turns to a discussion of how the CF can integrate a competency model to increase the effectiveness of its senior leaders and facilitate the attainment of its objectives.

SECTION 4 – Implementing a Competency Model for Executive Leadership Positions in the Canadian Forces

This section provides recommendations for how a strategic leadership competency model can be integrated into certain HR processes for current and potential senior leaders. By no means is this an exhaustive list of the HR processes to which the competency model can be applied, but rather a sampling of some effective ways of utilizing competencies. Selection and training and development are the two broad areas of competency application that will be discussed. A brief review of how these processes are currently carried out in the CF is presented, along with recommendations on how a competency model can be integrated. Finally, some of the economic, political, social and institutional implications of implementing a competency framework will be discussed.

Officer Performance Appraisal and Executive Selection

Selection at the senior leadership level in the CF generally involves promotion to Commodores/Brigadier Generals and is a result of an annual military-member merit board file

review (R. Walker, personal communication, March 7, 2003). The contents of each officer file reviewed for these promotion decisions includes training records, education, postings, experiences, letters, and commendations as background material. Additionally, annual performance appraisal assessments are read and scored individually. Next, members of a senior officer board, who are senior to and/or occupationally representative of the members being considered for promotion, meet to review files and create a merit list for making promotion offers. Based on officers' rank order on the merit list, promotions are given to officers starting with the most highly ranked.

Integrating a competency model into the internal selection system for senior CF leaders involves careful planning and execution. The competencies representing these positions need to be incorporated into the annual military-member merit board file review. Competencies can provide a means of consolidating the multiple performance information used in annual reviews. An assessment form representing the competencies tailored to these positions must be created (or generated from an online competency management system). Differentiating competencies, described earlier as those distinguishing superior from average or low performers, are most useful for promotion purposes (Dubois, 1993). Supervisors would rate officers' competency levels, followed by discussions about strengths, weaknesses (competency gaps), and establishing development goals. For example, rather than considering postings and experiences, the competencies gained through these would be depicted in each officer's competency profile. Also, rather than examining various educational attainments, these could be translated into resulting competencies. Competencies, therefore, represent a centralized database of performance information and can integrate multiple assessment processes.

An online system allows for competency data across numerous officers to be analyzed and compared. Centralization of competency data can allow for useful comparisons between various departments, locations, and officers (Zwell, 2000). A ranking system, similar to the merit list used to make promotion offers, could be automatically generated depicting who possesses most of the critical competencies and is therefore the best candidate for an executive leadership position.

In addition to utilizing supervisory competency ratings in assessing performance, peer and subordinate ratings of competencies could also be used to inform promotion decisions. The use of multiple ratings for performance evaluations and promotions, known as 360-degree performance appraisal, is recommended for use with leaders in military settings (Wong & Duran, 1999; Yukl, 1999). Leaders can obtain performance ratings and feedback about their competency strengths, weaknesses, and developmental requirements, which can help drive an action plan for their training and performance goals.

Succession planning. Related to selection within the CF is the need for succession planning. Succession planning involves developing a process to ensure an organization has sufficient, capable, and experienced people to fill senior management and executive positions (Byham et al., 2002). Competency models can be used to assess and identify officers with the potential to fill strategic leadership positions. A centralized, online system allows for analysis and tracking of internal candidates in terms of their proficiency in various competencies (Zwell, 2000). This allows for a detailed assessment pinpointing which specific areas need to be developed that are related to leadership success (Byham et al.). Developmental interventions can then be targeted to those individuals viewed as "high-potential" for senior leadership positions.

Training and Development

Training and development is of paramount importance for current and future senior leaders in the CF. Criticism of CF leadership beginning in the late 1990s is due, in part, to inadequate education and development of senior officers (R. Walker, personal communication, March 7, 2003). Both formal and informal training, such as classroom learning, foreign postings, special stretch assignments, foreign war college courses, special committee work, exchanges with other government departments, tours in the Privy Council office, private sector tours, understudying and mentoring, have been very limited or nonexistent. Clearly, leadership development in the CF needs to include more of these types of diverse experiences (R. Walker, personal communication, March 7, 2003). Officers are mainly limited to military experiential learning in preparing for the highest levels of leadership within the CF. The level of learning gleaned from military experiences is related to the amount of challenge, variety of tasks and assignments, and quality of feedback (Yukl, 2002). Although experience is important for success in leadership positions, it is insufficient (Horn, 2000).

The competency model created for senior leadership positions needs to be clearly linked to suitable training and development programs, such as formal training programs, developmental opportunities during operational assignments, and self-development activities (Yukl, 1999). Certain competencies are better trained or developed via classroom courses, while others are better learned through action learning (experiential) methods. Linking specific competencies to the most applicable types of training will maximize developmental opportunities, and close competency gaps. Also, training can be tailored to developmental needs so that it has optimal effects on the acquisition of requisite competencies (Mumford, Marks, Connelly, Zaccaro, & Reiter-Palmon, 2000). Officers and their leaders can create personal development plans and

goals based on these competency gaps to change and improve their performance (Zwell, 2000). There may be more than one training or learning intervention possible for developing a certain competency, so the appropriate training intervention, or combination thereof, needs to be determined at both the individual (officer) and group (organizational) levels. A few of the *many* types of training and development that can improve senior leadership competencies are formal classroom training and mentoring, which will be discussed in the following sections. Additionally, the more general, but highly relevant topic of fostering a learning organization in the CF will be addressed.

Formal classroom training. One method through which senior leaders in the CF receive training is formal classes. Currently, strategic leaders at the one-star level (and one or two ranks below) obtain most of their classroom training at the Canadian Forces College (CFC) in Toronto. Relatively few courses exist for senior leaders at the CFC, and most senior officers do not undertake additional training opportunities (R. Walker, personal communication, March 7, 2003). The leadership training offered through the CFC may be more operationally than strategically focused. A limited number of leadership courses are also offered through the Military Psychology and Leadership department of the Royal Military College (RMC) in Kingston.

Oftentimes, officers who teach courses in these types of settings are thought to be qualified to teach leadership simply because they have experience in military leadership roles (Wong & Duran, 1999). The assumption that every officer is capable of training leaders can result in poor quality formal leadership training. For example, rather than being based on sound leadership theory and principles, courses may be limited to "war stories" and experiences of the instructing officer. It is assumed that lower-level command and assignments are quantitatively

and qualitatively sufficient experience to provide individuals with the required skills and knowledge for senior leadership positions. Although these types of experiences and lessons learned are important to pass on to future leaders, they are only one aspect of learning effective leadership. There is a need for leadership training from individuals with pedagogical skills and knowledge of the competencies required for successful leadership in the CF.

In addition to using skilled instructors, the curriculum of formal courses should be standardized, sequential, and progressive (Wong & Duran, 1999), and linked to various competencies identified as important for success in a senior leadership position in the CF. "Training should not overemphasize data, technology or analysis at the expense of relationships, trust, respect, and the intuition that comes from studied practice" (Wong & Duran, p. 280). Many of the competencies identified in Section 3 of this paper are social/interpersonal in nature, and should be focused upon in formal training objectives and curricula. Also, follow-up studies should be conducted to determine if leadership competencies have actually been learned from a given training program, and the extent to which they are successfully being applied (Yukl, 1999). Findings from such studies can be used to improve existing training and create new training programs to better develop leadership competencies in the CF.

Mentoring. Mentoring has been described as key to the current and future health of the military (Reimer, 1999). It can be defined as one-on-one, face-to-face coaching and preparing junior leaders for increased levels of responsibility. This includes building upon their knowledge of the profession as well as their trust in leadership. Mentors have been found to perform two distinct functions: 1) psychosocial (acceptance, encouragement, coaching, counselling), and 2) career facilitation (sponsorship, protection, challenging assignments, and visibility; Zwell, 2000). Unfortunately, mentoring has been described as close to non-existent in the CF (R. Walker,

personal communication, March 7, 2003). Time must be set aside for this important and invaluable type of learning so that leaders can develop based on the experiences and insights of more senior leaders. Leaders can guide followers to learn from both successes and mistakes, constantly striving to improve.

The competency model for senior CF leaders can be used to identify which competency gaps would be best addressed through mentoring. A formal mentoring system could be set up so that future CF leaders are coached by current senior leaders, focusing on those competencies most critical to success in these top-level roles. Performance assessments would need to update the proficiency levels of those competencies that have been improved through mentoring, thereby rewarding their development (i.e., through promotions). Due to the lack of a formal mentoring system in the CF, such a system would require time to plan and implement, but should be a priority given the importance of mentoring to the success of future CF leaders.

Fostering a learning organization in the CF. The above types of training/learning are merely a sampling of the numerous ways in which current and potential senior leaders can develop their competencies. The CF needs to view itself as a "learning organization," providing encouragement and systematic support for continuous learning (Wong & Duran, 1999). Leaders need to be recognized and rewarded for their own development, as well as for mentoring subordinates (Zwell, 2000). A learning organization has been described as one that "discovers how to tap its soldiers' commitment and capacity to learn." (Reiner, 1999, p. 294), and devotes more effort to explicitly measure and reward training (Yukl, 2002). In such an organization, leaders should treat their subordinates' mistakes as learning opportunities rather than personal failures (Yukl, 1999).

Leaders need to view themselves as learners, being constantly engaged in the development and refinement of their competencies (Reiner, 1999). Senior leaders should espouse the view that they are *never* finished learning, which may be contrary to the thinking that they have learned all that is needed in having reached a top-level position. Indeed, the power, isolation, and autonomy afforded to senior executives can discourage ongoing development and feedback from others (Zwell, 2000). In particular, they may be hesitant to ask for technical help or ideas from lower-ranked officers who can provide certain expertise due to more recent training. Without asking for the technical expertise of lower ranked and advisory officers, senior officers may spend too much of their time focusing on technical matters as opposed to the important social/interpersonal competencies described in Section 3. Also, their fast-paced jobs may allow little time for reflection, introspection, or attending formal training. Although these represent hurdles, they are by no means insurmountable provided that the CF values, encourages, and rewards ongoing learning.

In addition to promoting ongoing learning, the CF must create mechanisms for transferring knowledge and experience from one part of the organization to another, a model being successfully deployed by the US Army's Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL; Baird et al., 1997). One example of this type of organizational learning is termed "learning in action" and involves "after action reviews" constructed around four steps: 1) review the intent of an operation, 2) analyze what happened, 3) capture the lessons learned and their implications for future action, and 4) apply the lessons quickly back to action (Baird et al.). The lessons learned can be translated into competencies, thereby ensuring officers and leaders develop what is needed to be successful. Training offerings can be created or tailored to include these new competencies, so as to ensure they are developed. Competency gaps can then drive a proactive

approach to ensuring leaders develop what is required for future success. Such a learning strategy ensures that knowledge is captured, consolidated and deployed quickly where needed in the organization (Baird et al.).

Implications of Implementing a Competency Model for Senior Leaders in the CF

A competency model is a major change initiative involving a new conceptualization of how performance is assessed and changes to various HR processes. An implementation plan for the competency model needs to be customized based on the organization's culture (Zwell, 2000). Also, support from key stakeholders is vital to the success of the competency model (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; see also Section 2). Additionally, a carefully planned communication strategy needs to be executed so that the purpose and uses of the competency model are made clear to everyone whom it will affect. If people do not understand the purpose or intended uses of the system, they may become sceptical and suspicious, and therefore resistant to using it (Lucia & Lepsinger).

In the context of the CF, a competency model created for senior leaders will have various implications that need to be anticipated and effectively managed to ensure successful implementation and ongoing use. These specific implications will need to be carefully thought through and addressed at all stages of developing the competency framework. Based on the review of the current CF leadership environment presented in Section 1, as well as the leadership roles and competencies discussed in Section 3, some possible implications of implementing a competency model for senior leaders will be discussed. These implications are merely a sampling of the many considerations around the economic, political, social, and institutional effects of implementing a competency model in the CF.

Economic implications. Creating and implementing a competency model can be costly, depending on the scope of the model and the degree to which internal or external resources are utilized. Costs associated with a competency model, however, can be more than offset by direct and indirect cost savings. Direct cost savings, for example, may be decreased training costs as a result of tailoring training options more specifically to required competencies, thereby decreasing time spent on unnecessary information. Indirect cost savings may be in the form of increased job satisfaction, decreased turnover, more effective leadership and improved performance of subordinates (Zwell, 2000). There are many other possible cost savings as a result of integrating various HR processes, increasing the CF's effectiveness in selecting, evaluating, training, and promoting the best candidates to executive positions. The specific economic implications for the CF senior leadership competency model need to be carefully considered, assessed, and reviewed to ensure the model can be supported and is reducing costs over the long-term. Given the budget cuts and downsizing faced in recent years by the CF, the competency model will need to be cost-effective and show clear and measurable return on investment (ROI) in achieving organizational objectives.

Political implications. Implementing a competency model for senior leaders in the CF has certain political implications. As discussed in Section 1, the political climate in which CF leaders must operate is increasingly global, with a shift in focus from military missions to peacekeeping and peacemaking. The competency model will need to emphasize the KSAOs that are important for successful leadership in this changing political climate. Senior leaders will be more accountable to develop these competencies when they are clearly defined, linked to behaviours, and integrated into selection, training and development, and other HR processes.

Another point raised in Section 1 is that CF leaders have been perceived by various stakeholders to lack professionalism and integrity. The implications of the competency model will be increasing leaders' competencies so that they are more effective in their roles, which should presumably lead to increased perceptions of professionalism. In regards to integrity, this competency was addressed and recommended as important in Section 3. By defining integrity and describing how integrity is translated into specific behaviours, current and future senior CF leaders will be provided with a behavioural road map allowing them to lead with greater integrity.

Social implications. The implementation of a competency model has certain social implications as it affects individuals and relationships in the workplace. Individuals may view a competency model as a threat to the status quo and as a demand that they change their behaviours (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). They might perceive competency requirements as a form of losing their freedom to make their own choices and decisions regarding how they lead the CF, and as causing extra work (Lucia & Lepsinger). For these reasons, CF leaders may be resistant to using the competency model.

These types of social implications are likely to be experienced by the CF in implementing a competency model for senior leaders. CF leaders have been accustomed to certain processes that have been the same for many decades, and may be resistant to new ways of doing things. The changes associated with implementing a competency model may be perceived as threats to their seniority or ways of thinking. For example, senior leaders may view competency ratings as pointing out their weaknesses and become defensive about their past successes and experiences. Thus, the competency model should be presented as an opportunity, helping leaders better understand what is expected of them, how they can develop their strengths, and what elements of

their jobs require attention to further improve their performance (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). For those who may see the competency model as a threat to their decision making power, it is important to present it as a tool for improving their job performance, as well as a method of communicating what is important to the organization (Lucia & Lepsinger). Its purpose is to aid, not replace, individual decision making. It can also clarify senior leaders' responsibilities and behaviours, thereby reducing role ambiguity and conflict. Senior leaders will better understand their positional requirements, focusing their efforts on what is most important.

Many of the competencies identified as important for senior leaders in Section 3 are social in nature (i.e., social intelligence, social reasoning, social perceptiveness, cross-cultural communication). Interpersonal skills are extremely important for senior leaders as their social demands are much greater due to the increased number and complexity of interactions with individuals inside and outside the organization (Zaccaro, 1999). The competency model will require certain levels of proficiency in social and interpersonal competencies, which will formalize the increased importance of social abilities. Years of experience or mission success will no longer be sufficient to be considered an effective senior leader in the CF, which will indeed require a shift in expectations regarding the required competencies.

Institutional Implications. Implementing a competency model for senior leaders in the CF has additional implications that affect how priorities are set at the institutional level. As discussed in Section 2, a competency model should clearly be linked to organizational strategy. The competencies selected as important to success in senior leadership roles need to be supported, encouraged, and rewarded. With smaller defence budgets, decision makers in the military may be pressured to cut funds for training and development (Yukl, 1999). However, not

ensuring leaders develop the required competencies can be detrimental to the success of the CF in achieving its goals.

A second implication at the institutional level will be the increased willingness to give senior leaders more flexibility and empowerment in creatively dealing with unique, unforeseen problems (Yukl, 1999). Empowering leaders to deal with problems in unique ways is inconsistent with the military's reliance on standard operating procedures for all types of activities and situations. A major shift in thinking will be required for senior leaders to adopt some of the competencies suggested in Section 3, as they represent new ways of thinking and leading.

Finally, the successful implementation of a competency model often requires a shift in the organization's culture. Organizational culture is a term used to describe the shared values and beliefs of members about the activities of their organization and interpersonal relationships (Yukl, 2002). Indeed, thinking in terms of competencies and job roles as opposed to job descriptions represents a change in the CF's culture. The policies, procedures, and practices that affect performance will be changed in ways that facilitate, encourage, and reward competencies that support the organization's strategic goals (Zwell, 2000). Moving to a leadership competency model will change many aspects of the organization. This will result in a major cultural shift for the CF.

CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on those competencies required for senior CF leaders at the pinnacle of their careers, at which the inter-relationships among military, diplomatic, economic and political domains are of critical importance. It is clear from the review of the current leadership environment that recent social, political, economic, and demographic changes have

forced the CF to modify its mission, values, culture, and philosophy regarding its role in an increasingly global environment. Consequently, to successfully adapt to this rapidly changing environment, senior leaders will need to develop new roles and competencies.

Developing a competency model for senior leaders in the CF will require following certain methodologies that have been described by researchers in this emerging area. A review of methodologies was presented to provide a current representation of the best practices that the CF should consider adopting to create a useful and valid competency model. In this review the stages of planning, development, validation, implementation, evaluation and maintenance of competency models were discussed in detail. The importance of developing a carefully designed communication and change management strategy, and attaining executive support and buy-in were emphasized as critical in creating a context where the competency model can be successfully implemented.

Following the review of competency modeling methodologies, the reader was provided with a discussion of strategic leadership competencies found in scholarly and practitioner-oriented literatures. The CF's dynamic environment requires senior leaders excelling in highly complex social, behavioural, and cognitive skills. It is likely that many of the competencies discussed in this paper, as well as others, will be identified in the development of a competency model unique to CF senior leaders. However, definitions and behavioural anchors will need to be tailored to the CF so that they are relevant to the culture and responsibilities of their senior leaders.

The final section of this paper discussed how a strategic leadership competency model can be integrated into HR processes for current and potential senior leaders in the CF. Finally, a review of several economic, political, social, and institutional implications was provided to give

the reader an understanding of some of the issues that the CF could face during the design, implementation, and maintenance phases of a senior leadership competency model.

In summary, this paper has covered a lot of territory related to senior leadership competencies. The reader was provided with an overview of the strengths and capabilities of such a competency model to increase both individual and organizational effectiveness. Conversely, many of the challenges and implications of implementing a competency model were also described to paint a realistic picture of integrating competencies into the CF. Despite the challenges involved in creating and implementing a competency model for strategic leaders, the benefits are many and the development of these competencies is exceedingly important as leaders continue to face new challenges in an increasingly complex environment. The growing need for new leadership competencies is echoed throughout organizations worldwide. This need is felt to its greatest extent in the military because it must modify century-old traditions of command and leadership. One of the best methods of achieving this cultural and leadership transformation is through the development and implementation of an effective competency model.

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