

NEWS FROM THE FRONT



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LTC Scott Hammond

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Knowledge Management in the CJTF-OIR

In the year 2016 III Corps Headquarters deployed in support Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR) providing the core of the CJTF staff. Soon after assuming the CJTF mission, III Corps leaders identified some issues with knowledge management throughout the CJTF headquarters. How to proceed with correcting these issues was an immediate challenge to the Corps. The Combined Joint Knowledge Management (CJKM) section had the difficult task of ensuring that CJTF-OIR had the systems in place to input, find and exchange information in a very complex contingency operating environment throughout the Combined Joint Operations Area (CJOA).

This News From The Front discusses how the III Corps addressed gaps in the knowledge management process within the CJTF. It illustrates some practical steps to address sharing of information in a combined joint headquarters that maybe adopted by knowledge managers and leaders in similar situations.

At the beginning the Chief of Knowledge Management (CKM) did a lot of battle rhythm analysis identifying which meetings generated information used in other forums and how that information flowed. The CJTF-OIR Chief of Staff's (CoS) primary concerns were; making sure that products were available, what information can be found on SharePoint portal (within the information sharing restrictions), and that information flowed optimally to the many nations that comprised the CJTF.

In that time also, the Commanding General (CG) was interested in the SharePoint portal and the location of information. He was interested in looking at historical usage data and implementing his guidance for the SharePoint portal. His guidance to the CJKM included use of the “3-click rule”ⁱ for any new site design development. CJKM adhered to that guidance, making it simple, quick and intuitive for someone to go in and find products or the information that they were looking for.

Headquarters battle rhythm was another problem. When the III Corps CKM first arrived in CJTF-OIR there was absolutely no white space on the calendar. The CKM found that tying up the senior leaders and the staff directors constant back to back meetings left nobody back in the office to provide guidance and actually work with the staff. Consequently very little real action on tasks occurred. The knowledge management staff put a lot of effort into analyzing what information flowed into what meetings. CKM went through the 7-minute drills to analyze what critical information was conveyed and what was not. If a working group meeting didn't feed information critical to the Chief of Staff, then the recommendation was to eliminate it. This subsequently killed redundant or superfluous meetings freeing up more planning time for the directors with their staffs.

All this change by the CJKM was not universally embraced. One big challenge the task force CJKM faced was getting support throughout the entire headquarters staff. A common problem in a lot of organizations, CJTF-OIR included, is the perception held by many staff members that knowledge management is something somebody else does. Staffs just did not look at knowledge management as a shared responsibility. None of the staff section Knowledge Management Representatives (KMRs) assigned by III Corps had completed any formal training. To remedy

this, the CJKM used the knowledge management working groups. These working groups provided a venue for reviewing SharePoint training and best practices, battle rhythm analysis, and other training with the KMRs. The CJKM employed the KMRs to identify the knowledge management gaps within the task force and recommend methods to close those gaps.

Still, several directorates did not send their KMRs to the knowledge management working groups. To the CJKM this oversight spoke volumes regarding that directorate's interest understanding information sharing inside a multinational headquarters. The directorate leaders within the CJTF had a responsibility to share their information throughout the headquarters ensuring the information was accurate and available to the appropriate Coalition partners. Although the CJKM brought this up to the CJTF Chief of Staff, the Directors, and the Deputy Chiefs of Staff, some of the directorates continued with the attitude "Hey, it's not our responsibility." Moreover, if information needed to go from one network domain to the next, some of the directorates saw it solely as the knowledge management's responsibility to publish that information, not theirs.

Another problem was that only 10% of the organization had access to 90% of the information. Many of the coalition partners were unable to access information and data via the network domains. The key questions were; where does the information begin and where does the information need to go? Just as important was getting that information moving to locations (on a SharePoint portal) so others have access to it. There was very little on any of the SharePoint portals hosted on the Secure Internet Protocol Router network (SIPRNET)-REL, the Battlefield Information Collection Exploitation System (BICES) or the Trusted Network Environment (TNE). Due to the lack of information being pushed onto the any or all of the networks, some coalition partners were unable to get a common operating picture or maintain situational understanding to the same detail as the rest of the CJTF. This effectively marginalized a lot of the coalition members by keeping information from them.

The CJKM perceived that the main contributing factor resulted from a bit of staff officer lethargy combined with a lack of understanding of what was releasable and what wasn't releasable to the Non-U.S. and Non-FVEYⁱⁱ coalition partners. Many of the CJTF-OIR's staff officers' business practices had not evolved from a tendency to manage everything via email and while storing information exclusively on their desktop. Others wanted store everything inside private folders buried on an internal "common drive" as opposed to putting it onto a share portal and using meta-tagging navigation to improve the search-ability of those documents.

The CJKM began migrating a lot of the management and unclassified processes (7-Minute Drill library and the battle rhythm were two good examples) down to the Non-Classified Internet Protocol Router network (NIPRNET). Directorates' information was now available to the whole coalition because, within the CJTF headquarters, NIPRNET was shared by everybody through the depth of the CJTF-OIR. CJKM created portal libraries and began managing those on NIPRNET. A conference room management requesting processes was developed and placed on the NIPRNET portal for all the headquarters to use. (Prior to the CKM's arrival, the conference room had been managed on SIPRNET, meaning only the U.S. could view a conference room calendar or schedule a conference room for a meeting.)

Eventually there were positive signs that staff officers and staff sections took the initiative to

regularly transfer products to the SharePoint portal. The CJ33 outshined almost all of the staff directorates at transferring information consistently, despite having very few Non-U.S. Coalition members in their directorate. The process used by the CJ33 was simple but effective. Every time the CJ33 published an order they would go through it, redacting content as needed, and publish it on SIPRNET and SIPRNET REL, BICES and TNE networks. CJ33 was perhaps the most regimented directorate at publishing their products on a daily basis. The CJ34 Non-Lethal Fires (NLF) also directed their Current Operations (CUOPs) personnel who were in the CJOC maintaining situational awareness of the current battle to put anything releasable onto BICES.

Recommendations

1. Each Directorate/Cell Designate Personnel to Share Information.

Each Directorate/Cell in CJTF-OIR must make it a priority to designate personnel (3-4) on each team as responsible knowledge managers. Those personnel are responsible to push any and all information releasable data into BICES. This empowers all the coalition partners with as much information about the operation as the US and FVEY members. The practicality of this was clearly demonstrated by the CJ34 NLF CUOPs team that put all releasable information on the share point portal on BICES. Similarly, the CJ33 CUOPs staff monitoring the battle in the CJOC transferred information to BICES. This way all the coalition members had shared access. These efforts maximized the opportunity to ensure our coalition partners received as much information as possible.

2. Provide Clear Guidance to Team.

Guidance should include that each directorate push as much information as possible onto BICES, as this is the network of choice between all the coalition members. Next, provide clarity on who's responsible for what. Who's responsible to go to what meetings? Who's responsible for writing what briefs? Who is designated to insure information is pushed to the appropriate network portal. Give people forewarning so they're ready for what this with their battle rhythm.

3. Make Knowledge Management Part of Home Station Training.

Headquarters need to provide basic knowledge management education to new, incoming staff officers or staff personnel on CJTF-OIR like missions. Most people are accustomed to working in a headquarters where they work on one, maybe two different domains, not 6 different SharePoint site collections. It would be a very good idea to send several members of the present CJTF-OIR knowledge management team to the incoming unit's training to give a very intensive overview of all the systems that CJTF-OIR works with in day to day operations.

4. Include knowledge management in the Pre-Deployment Site Surveys (PDSS).

As part of the Pre-Deployment Site Surveys (PDSS) provide the CJKM Standing Operating Procedures (SOP), guidance-policies-best practices, including the 7-minute drills, battle rhythm, battle rhythm analysis and various documents and lessons learned through informal interviews and discussions to the incoming staff sections. Convey understanding the various coalition networks and how to share communicate across the domains. Consider that BICES may provide the best option because it is a federated network.

Endnotes

ⁱ The “3 click rule” is an unofficial website design rule that suggests a user should be able to find any information with no more than three mouse clicks.

ⁱⁱ FVEY is the acronym for the FIVE-EYES coalition; members are US, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.