5. Career Management in Practice

Introduction

The last section described officer personnel practices in terms of a general model. Using that model, we now review career management systems in operation. Such a review allows us to identify concepts to be considered when designing alternative career management systems and suggests criteria to be used in our evaluation of the various options. We gathered information from four sources:

- the military departments
- foreign militaries
- comparable public sector organizations (e.g., FBI, police, and Secret Service)
- the private sector.

The military departments were chosen because management of their officers is our subject matter and because Congress directed us to review their practices as part of the study mandate. Foreign militaries are in the same “industry” as the U.S. military and show us how other countries have addressed similar issues. Given that foreign militaries are just that—foreign—we also looked at how other U.S. institutions addressed career management. We chose public safety and paramilitary organizations because they share some characteristics with military organizations. We also researched private sector practices to better understand evolving national policy and business approaches to career management. Generally, we found that similar career management principles and concepts underlie practices used in the U.S. military, foreign military, public sector military-like organizations, and the private sector. However, we observed somewhat different applications of those concepts.

We first summarize our observations about the military services. Second, we discuss what we observed about military officer career management practices in foreign nations. Third, we highlight insights from reviewing practices of military-comparable organizations in the public sector. For these first three subsections, we organize our observations using the construct of career flow structures and personnel functions that was used in Section 3. Fourth, we summarize the results of our discussions with human resources management experts and our literature review of private sector practice. We focus on present and future objectives for human resources management in this part.
This section summarizes the research that is reported in detail in Appendices D, E, and F.

**Military Department Career Management**

This subsection identifies the major distinguishing features and differences among officer management systems of the four military services in terms of career flow structures and personnel functions (accessing, developing, promoting, and transitioning). A more detailed account is found in Appendix D.

**General Observations**

Our review of career management in the four services indicates that our evaluation scheme should address two different—and possibly conflicting—characteristics: flexibility and uniformity. The services have experienced substantial fluctuation in the demand for officers, and, in spite of congressional attempts at uniform management, considerable variation exists among the services. The period from 1940 to 1993 can be characterized as a series of continuing boom-or-bust officer management cycles, that is, several dramatic and rapid shifts in officer requirements and only occasional brief periods of relative stability.

It was also a period of congressional concern regarding officer requirements and management that witnessed the passage of the Officer Personnel Act (OPA) of 1947 and DOPMA in 1980, which sought to bring about greater uniformity of the officer management policies of the military services. Since World War II, all of the military services have used primarily an up-or-out structure, but some, particularly the Army, have used it more religiously than others. Further, some officer career systems have also been designed and operated to respond to different challenges. For example, the Navy management system attempts to be responsive to the demands of sea duty and its inherent rotational problems and to maintain a balance among the different elements of the line community (air, surface, and submarine) and the support communities. The Air Force career management system design, on the other hand, has primarily focused on managing pilots and coping with the problems associated with flight status.

The issues of flexibility and uniformity also appear in the execution of the various personnel functions.
Accessing

The services have adopted both long and short programs to meet their officer accession requirements. The former, typified by the ROTC and academy programs, traditionally take four years to complete, provide deep acculturation in “officership” and the service’s culture, and are structured to provide the majority of the projected officer needs of each service. These programs provide officers holding a credential—a college degree—that presupposes their potential for a full career. The shorter-response programs such as Officer Candidate or Training School provide the remainder of each service’s requirements, and they also serve as a hedge against future uncertainty in demand for officers. These latter programs, which provide officers at least able to meet junior officer needs, have traditionally assumed greater importance during the boom portions of the cycles because they produce officers more quickly.

Developing

Two aspects of developing relate to the issue of uniformity: an increasing need for specialization and the difficulty of sustaining traditional career patterns. The military departments, in efforts to design and implement effective officer management systems that comply with statutory requirements, have faced a need for increased officer specialization. This trend toward greater specialization was prompted in part by the fielding of technologically advanced systems and the computer explosion, which opened up entirely new mission areas and fields of expertise. This has resulted in the establishment of special officer management groupings or fields within each service—more in some services than others—and the limited use of lateral entry to satisfy the requirements in certain areas, particularly in the professions (e.g., doctors, lawyers, and chaplains). Yet, except for the professions, most officers within a service are managed in the same manner. In light of the desire to exploit technological opportunities and the congressionally mandated direction regarding joint duty assignments and the acquisition corps, the current management groupings could become increasingly more difficult to sustain as the size of each service is reduced.

The officer career patterns of each service tend to reflect traditional expectations. Officers have come to accept these patterns, which generally include command opportunities and schooling at certain grades and times in one’s career. The services are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain these patterns as the size of the force is reduced, command opportunities dwindle, and pressures for longer tour lengths mount as a means to incorporate added assignments, to improve development, or to reduce or contain costs.
Promoting

Although both OPA and DOPMA supposedly imposed up-or-out constraints using military promotions, service promotion practices differ considerably. The Air Force used a fully qualified promotion system for selection to permanent ranks of major and lieutenant colonel until 1959 and in reality only separated officers who were regarded as truly not fully qualified for promotion. Most officers failing promotion on a best qualified basis were continued until at least the first retirement point. The Army, in contrast, embraced the up-or-out policy provisions and aggressively used them. The Navy and the Marine Corps, which historically had higher natural attrition among company-grade officers, made less use of the “out” provisions because promotion opportunity to field grade was typically greater.

The objectives that have been advanced for up-or-out in the U.S. military are to have a youthful and vigorous force\(^1\) and to maintain promotion flow.\(^2\) However, no formal definition of youth and vigor has existed for the military. Historically, the meaning of youth and vigor has been addressed in subjective terms.\(^3\)

Service differences in proportions of officers by year of service result from pre- and post-DOPMA era retention rates.\(^4\) The data, highlighted in Figure 5.1, show that the Air Force has the highest proportion of officers continuing to serve from year to year in the preretirement field-grade years (years of service 12 through 20), while the Navy has the lowest. The Army’s aggressive approach to up-or-out is also evident in the large drop in proportion of officers continuing to serve from years of service 11 to 12.

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1Because there were “ineffectual ways of eliminating a man,” General Eisenhower supported the OPA to keep the officer corps “vital and youthful.” *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate on H. R. 3830*, July 16, 1947.


3R. A. Holmes, T. C. Hillsman, E. M. Small, and R. B. Borthwick, *Military Retirement: The Role of Youth and Vigor, Volume 1*, Presearch Incorporated Technical Report No. 370, 1978, p. 29. See also *Fifth Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation*. General Eisenhower also recognized the relativity of youth over time by citing his own experience of being called a “boy general” when he went to Europe. He reflected that “when you talk about ‘youth’ you are talking about ages that 60 years ago or 80 years ago had been called old men.” *Hearings on H.R. 3380*.

4These retention rates represent average behavior for line officers over the period from 1987 through 1989. Data are from the QFAX database maintained by the Defense Manpower Data Center. This period was selected because it provides the most recent data that were not corrupted by stop-loss programs implemented to support Operation Desert Shield/Storm or by voluntary separation programs supporting the current drawdown in forces.
Figures 5.2 to 5.4 examine this same data by career segment. In these figures, a career is divided into three segments of 10 years each. The figures now show the proportion of a group that remains at the end of each year and restarts the new career segment at 100 percent. Figure 5.2 shows the Air Force with the highest retention through 10 years of service as before. The Army, which has the steepest drop in retention after 3 years of service, keeps most officers who get to 7 years of service. The Marine Corps and the Navy have the least retention through 10 years of service.

However, as seen in Figure 5.3, Marine Corps and Navy retention in years of service 12 through 20 is as good as any service. The reason for the lower apparent continuation of Marine Corps and Navy officers in these years in Figure 5.1 is due to losses before 10 years of service. As shown in Figure 5.3, officers in the Marine Corps and Navy who reach 10 years of service stay beyond that at a greater rate than either Air Force or Army officers, both of whom stayed in higher proportions until 10 years. (The separation of Army officers between 11 and 12 years is again observable.)

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5To counter the scale compression occurring in the later years of service, it is useful to examine the same data rescaled to unity at years of service 1, 11, and 21.
In the third segment of a career, as shown in Figure 5.4, Army and especially Navy officers tend to stay to 30 years more than Air Force or Marine Corps officers.
Despite the uniform, steady-state prescriptions intended by DOPMA, the individual service-grade tables have provided markedly different proportions of field-grade officers. These differences, highlighted in Figure 5.5, reflect the DOPMA and the grade authorization changes approved for the Marine Corps by the Congress during the annual authorization and appropriation review process for FY 1986 and FY 1994.6

DOPMA provided the highest content of field-grade officers for a specific number of officers to the Air Force. Yet DOPMA gives the greater rate of change in field-grade content to the Marine Corps as shown in the greater slope of the authorization lines. And more recent grade authorizations have progressively increased the field-grade content for the Marine Corps throughout the range of expected officer force size. Additionally, the grade table serves only as a binding constraint during periods when larger-than-normal cohorts approach promotion windows and overall officer size is stable or declining. In other times it allows “windfall” promotions—more promotions than would be expected.

**Transitioning**

The U.S. officer career management system does not provide a life-long career. Retirement is possible after 20 years and mandatory after 30 if not before. The

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6Congress approved temporary changes to the USMC grade table in the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1994. We have incorporated in Figure 5.3 the effect of the USMC plan to which the Congress refers.
up-or-out structure has intermediate grade-based separation and retirement points. This aspect does ensure an upward flow, but it also means that being an officer is, for most, only the first career. As we shall see later in this section, the U.S. military is unique in that regard. This characteristic suggests that longer maximum career lengths should be one of the alternatives explored.

Additionally, the underlying premise of youth and vigor and ability to perform satisfactorily being synonymous has been challenged because of gender issues. This premise has guided separation and retirement policy that has been applied as a group standard based on age or age-related service. Ability to perform physically must now be determined by individual rather than group measurement. The Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces made this recommendation:

- The services should retain gender-specific physical fitness tests and standards to promote the highest level of general fitness and wellness in the Armed Forces of the United States, provided they do not compromise training or qualification programs for physically demanding combat or combat support [skills].
• The services should adopt specific requirements for those specialties for which muscular strength/endurance and cardiovascular capacity are relevant.\(^7\)

Moreover, Congress recently adopted this provision for the military:

> For any military occupational specialty for which the Secretary of Defense determines that specific physical requirements for muscular strength and endurance and cardiovascular capacity are essential to the performance of duties, the Secretary shall prescribe specific physical requirements for members in that specialty and shall ensure (in the case of an occupational specialty that is open to both male and female members of the Armed Forces) that those requirements are applied on a gender-neutral basis.\(^8\)

This suggests that the traditional relationships between age, grade, and length of service as a standard for determining transition points for groups should be reviewed.

**Potential Future Evaluation Criteria and Design Features Derived from Military Department Career Management**

The cyclical boom-or-bust officer requirements patterns experienced by all of the services created tremendous instability and uncertainty in each planning system. This experience supports the argument that officer management policies must be flexible and capable of dealing with a wide spectrum of possibilities and rapid shifts in direction. Further, the extent and rapidity of the variations in requirements experienced throughout the period lead to questions about the viability of steady-state prescriptions like those found in DOPMA, especially when the variables of the system are tightly constrained. The question here is whether such prescriptions are the most appropriate tools for coping with volatile swings in requirements.\(^9\)

Each service has retained some individuality under DOPMA, despite the explicit goal of uniformity. Thus, any effort to design and evaluate the relative merits of alternative officer management systems must consider the need for and degree of uniformity that is desired in each system and the fact that each service must transition to a new system from a different starting point in terms of the years of service and grade structure of its officer corps.

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\(^7\)Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces, *Report to the President*, November 15, 1992, pp. 5–8, Appendix C.


The fact that most career officers depart between 20 and 26 years of service to pursue second careers suggests that the alternative systems we construct to evaluate should include one with a longer maximum career length. Additionally, congressional direction to make individual rather than group fitness determinations, if such standards are required in certain skills, suggests that we consider other objectives for organizational control of attrition for groups.

Foreign Military Career Management Systems

We researched the military officer career management systems for six NATO countries to identify differences between and similarities with the existing U.S. military system that could inform our development of alternative future officer management systems. The countries were the Netherlands, Denmark, Canada, Norway, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the United Kingdom. Most of the information was obtained through interviews with serving members of the armed forces of the respective countries. The research effort for the United Kingdom was more intensive and included discussions with staff, personnel managers, and policymakers for each of the three military services and each of the three corresponding service military or officer study groups that were preparing recommendations for future changes in their respective services. The full scope of the research encompassed the militaries of some 20 foreign countries. The further information covering our research on foreign military officer career systems can be found in Appendix E.

Accessing

In general, the countries reviewed use either conscription or volunteer-based militaries, but the accessions for the officer systems in most of the countries examined are based upon selection of qualified applicants at youthful ages, often ages 18 to 26, to support up-and-stay officer career flow structures. These applicants usually include both in-service and direct voluntary applications for

\footnote{We also examined the completed research of the study groups in the United Kingdom, which expanded our research base. The British Army “Grove Study Group” researched some 20 foreign armies including those of the United States, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Australia, Canada, Italy, Ireland, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, India, Israel, New Zealand, Japan, Spain, Turkey, Pakistan, and Portugal. While there are variations in aspects of the characteristics of each of these militaries, many items were found to be common among the vast majority.}

\footnote{These applicants might be evaluated as best qualified to serve in entry positions only (career potential judged later) or best qualified for overall careers. The latter practice is that of the U.S. military in peacetime.}
commission. The officer applicants with university degrees are in the minority in most of these countries, and many countries—Germany is an exception—commission their officers without regard to university credentials.\textsuperscript{12} For example, in the United Kingdom, the proportion of university graduates in the officer corps of the three armed services is less than half of the total.\textsuperscript{13} Several countries employ broad-based officer recruiting programs that include efforts to attract university graduates, but most place a higher value on military leadership potential over general education level for their junior officers.

Several of the continental European countries have a two-track officer system that targets one group of officers for senior leadership and another group for lower-ranking positions, often imposing grade ceilings on members of this second group. The commissioning process formally segregates officers with university degrees from those without, and they develop the former group to become the senior leadership of their respective armed forces. Some foreign militaries offer limited or specialist-type commission opportunities to members of their noncommissioned officer (NCO) ranks. Those selected for commissions are usually senior sergeants or warrant officers (which are NCO ranks in most foreign militaries) with 10 to 20 years of military experience. Most foreign countries limit the level of advancement to either captain or major for these late in-service commissions (Germany is an example of the former and the United Kingdom an example of the later).\textsuperscript{14} Foreign military officer systems widely prohibit any form of lateral entry into the officer career from either the civilian sector or from their respective reserve military (which in most cases is different from the reserve model of the United States), with the exception of medical, legal, and religious officer requirements.

\textit{Developing}

Foreign militaries use a range of approaches to formal development. Some use formal military academies to initiate the acculturation and development of their new officer candidates with courses of various lengths from a few months to two years. Others, such as Germany, use a combination of civilian university and military education lasting up to four years to obtain initial officer commissions.

\textsuperscript{12}In Germany all officer candidates must have a period of enlisted service before selection to attend one of the two armed forces universities for three and a half to four years of education and military study that culminates in a university degree incidental to the commissioning process.
\textsuperscript{13}Interviews with the military personnel staffs and study groups of the three armed services in the United Kingdom, August 1993.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.
Almost all of the foreign militaries reviewed employ a blend of extended and repetitive service in lower-echelon tactical units and progressive attendance at various military development courses to prepare junior officers for leadership and staff positions at the longer-serving grades of captain and major. In many of the nations reviewed, experience and maturity are the objectives of the development process because they are perceived to affect ability to perform satisfactorily. Often at the career timing of senior captain or junior major, the selection to attend key field-grade officer development courses is determined. This important selection serves to divide career officers into one group with potential for advancement to the highest ranks and another group of officers that have little or no further promotion potential. In many cases, this course is used as a requirement for promotion to field-grade rank or, in a few, a prerequisite for promotion beyond O-4 or major. In some countries—Germany is a prime example—a subsequent selection for a general staff officers course serves to further divide the remaining career officers into fast-track and normal course careers.15 Most countries also employ various higher-level military courses similar to the U.S. senior service college level as the final stage of career development for their senior field-grade or flag officers. The objectives of the foreign military officer development courses appear similar to those in the U.S. military service, but the career timing of development schools and courses was usually one or more years later in foreign militaries.

**Promoting**

Almost all of the foreign military officer systems reviewed have a rank structure similar to the U.S. military; this structure provides for six substantive grades below general/flag rank. The titles of grade may differ by country, but the levels of responsibility at comparable grades appear similar. For the most part, the foreign military officer systems promote their officers through the junior ranks almost automatically, with only those not recommended being slowed in promotion timing or removed from the service. This is similar to the U.S. system of promoting all fully qualified officers through the company grades, O-1 through O-3. In the several cases where foreign militaries use multiple types of commission, promotion timing may vary between types of commission with the regular or career officers often receiving somewhat faster promotions.

Generally, the first merit promotion occurs at the transition to field grade at O-4 (major, lieutenant commander, or squadron leader), although there are a few

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examples of this being delayed until O-5 (e.g., in the Royal Navy). Here the U.S. comparison to competitive promotion would be the selection of the best-qualified officer, which begins at O-4. Promotion timing varies widely by country, but promotion to field grade is usually later in an officer’s career than for a U.S. officer. In general, there is less emphasis on numerical promotion goals. In many foreign military officer systems, field-grade officer ranks are populated only by officers with career commissions, and these officers are expected or required to remain in service for a full career culminating in retirement.

Promotion to ranks above O-4 in the vast majority of foreign military officer systems follows an up-and-stay structure that retains majors and higher ranks to their respective retirement points. As a result, grade structures can take on various shapes. In the British Army with a current retirement age of 55, the most populated officer grade is major, which seems to strike a balance with the grade structure of their officer requirements. Promotion potential in the higher field-grade ranks and to flag rank often depends upon achievement of established qualifications that include selection for and successful completion of career-enhancing military schooling and more importantly, successful experience in command and higher-level staff at multiple echelons.

**Transitioning**

All of the foreign military officer systems reviewed provide a long career expectation for officers receiving regular or career commissions. In general, the long career is to age 55 or longer for officers in grade of captain (O-3) or higher. This latter grade aspect seems to transcend the type of commission in many countries. For example, in Germany, specialist officers, those promoted from the ranks later in their careers, cannot advance beyond the grade of captain but are given tenure to age 55. Most countries reviewed allow for voluntary separation of officers upon completion of initial obligations, often six or more years, and later in service up to career selection points. In the Royal Air Force (RAF), officer pilots and air crew can apply and be selected for career continuation in the Special Air Service at 16 years of service or about age 38, even at the grade of captain, but all other officers not selected for career status (promotion to major assures this transition) are separated.

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17 Strand, Military Career Paths in Transition, op. cit.
18 Discussions with RAF staff personnel officers, August 1993.
Generally, foreign military career officers, especially those in the field-grade ranks, are expected to remain in service until established retirement points. The earliest career mandatory retirement point noted was at age 55, and this was often for officers in the grades of major and below. In many cases, there were provisions for extended service up to age 60 for career officers in ranks higher than major. Completion of commissioned service to the mandatory points usually resulted in retirement with immediate pensions ranging from 70 to 80 percent of highest salary depending on the country. Voluntary early separation by career officers usually provided some form of outplacement and relocation allowance and retirement at a reduced portion of salary dependent upon years of service; sometimes the availability of the retirement pension was delayed or transferred and accumulated into civilian retirement plans. However, retirement at midcareer, such as with the U.S. military’s 15- and 20-year service retirement options, was seldom encouraged by the foreign military officer career systems.

Summary

Key common characteristics exhibited in these foreign officer systems include:

- Generally closed systems: no reserve entry or lateral entry except for the professions. (The concept of reserves is not the same as in the United States; it is usually a form of territorial army with restricted local service or individual emergency standby reserve for each military service.)
- Generally, long, one-career systems: Retirement age at 55 (or later) with sufficient annuity so that a second career is not needed unless an officer chooses to do so.
- Some form of multiple commissions or tenures: short service for some, career for others.
- Career status often related to promotion to major or lieutenant commander (O-4).
- College degree not usually required for commission or promotion.
- Fast-track careers related to military/civilian education (e.g., general staff officer course completion) and command experience.
- Generally, six officer grades below flag rank (O-1 through O-6 equivalent structure).
- Experience and maturity valued because of potential mission requirements (e.g., peace operations or other independent small-unit-type actions).
• Officer career management systems not necessarily uniform across all services.
• Military “officership” as a career fits with the corresponding national views about careers.

Potential Future Design Characteristics Derived from Foreign Military Officer Systems

The foreign military officer career systems provide some interesting characteristics for consideration in development of alternative future officer career management systems. Several characteristics found in a majority of these foreign military officer systems parallel those of the existing U.S. officer career system. The general use of closed officer systems, except for the professions, follows the U.S. pattern. Use of promotion to field-grade rank to define career status for officers and establish tenure to retirement seems prevalent in many foreign systems and is similar to the U.S. practice. Lastly, there are differences and similarities in the retirement pension plans offered career officers, with pensions of up to 80 percent of officer salaries but different timing of retiring.

However, other characteristics in foreign militaries differ significantly from the U.S. system, and they may provide a basis for constructing a broader range of future alternative officer career systems. The use of an officer system that follows an up-and-stay structure, particularly for the field-grade ranks, offers one such major variation from the U.S. up-or-out structure. Another major difference would be to develop an officer system that does not require university degrees for officers. However, for such a system to be viable, it would have to reconcile the related difference in U.S. societal values that place major emphasis on civilian education level as a credential of future potential, especially within a system that sees itself as a profession. Designing an officer career system that parallels the foreign militaries’ longer careers to age 55 and considers later retirement points that provide for immediate pensions only after reaching 30 or more years of service is another possible major system variant. Next, an alternative officer career system that provides multiple commissions with appropriate differences in tenure should be considered. These commissions could provide for officers to serve a short or temporary tenure, with potential for later transition into a career or regular commission at appropriate transition points; specialist commissions for enlisted midservice and civilian lateral entry officer accessions; and career or regular commissions providing long tenure to retirement at accession or some later career transition point. However, the experience in the United Kingdom of using multiple types of officer commissions has resulted in service study group recommendations to simplify, standardize and reduce the number of types of
officer commissions in the future. These findings notwithstanding, a system using multiple commissions (contracts) may offer a substitute for the U.S. up-or-out structure for limiting tenure in a future career officer management system. Lastly, one might follow some of the foreign examples and consider a departure from the historically recent U.S. practice of using a uniform officer system for all military services. Such an alternative officer system would allow for the unique differences in operation and function that continue to define the four U.S. military services or the multiple skills within them.

Public Sector Organizations

Four federal organizations (Federal Bureau of Investigation; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Secret Service; and Bureau of Prisons) and one nonfederal organization (Fairfax County Police Department) that have similarities to the military were studied to determine prevailing personnel policies. The findings are summarized below; detailed reports are in Appendix F.

Accessing

All five organizations operate up-and-stay structures that have thorough screening programs before candidates are accepted and personnel policies that encourage retention. Recruiting and accession procedures vary—some require college degrees and others want some previous job experience that could be prior service at another level in the organization; some are nationwide and others localized. All, however, allow only very limited lateral entry at lower levels and none at middle and upper management. Recruiters seek individuals who share organizational norms and values.

Developing

Each organization conducts its own entry-level training program (8 to 17 weeks) that begins the acculturation process that all regard as important. While subsequent training is technical and job related, the bonding continues throughout the development process. (It should be noted that each organization views its law enforcement officers as members of a profession, although it does not meet all the traditional defining characteristics of a profession.)

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19 Interviews with U.K. military officer personnel officials, August 1993.
20 Similarities include organizational structures (bureaucratic hierarchies with a defined chain of command), objectives (public safety), orientation and environment (team effort, intense training, and hazardous activity), and strong shared values associated with putting one’s life at risk.
Following an initial assignment, individual law enforcement officers in each of the organizations studied select either a management (command) or a journeyman officer track. While those choosing the latter track have fewer promotion opportunities, they are allowed to increase their skill expertise and in some cases remain in the same position and location throughout their career. One organization (Fairfax County Police Department) has a program in which officers who increase their skill competencies to a high level are given additional status and compensation.

Among those officers choosing the management track, emphasis is on developing a broad base of experience in different skill areas—i.e., developing generalists. This is achieved through frequent career-broadening reassignments that alternate between the headquarters and the field and by short management-related courses. Most law enforcement agents must sign mobility agreements; thus, reassignment and relocation is often as frequent as for military officers. None of the organizations emphasized additional civilian education for development or advancement.

Each organization also has an executive development program that identifies potential senior leaders early and provides special leadership training, frequently through a private training group. While reassignment is managed by the headquarters, career development is perceived as an individual responsibility.

**Promoting**

In the management track, promotion is often directly tied to selection for a specific position. The candidate pool is defined through a post-and-bid process. Rank is in the job for the most part. The processes vary, however, from boards that include peer representatives, to an assessment center evaluation by outside experts, to centralized promotion boards similar to the military departments. All are centrally managed with emphasis on the general ability rather than on the specialized expertise. In the Bureau of Prisons, for example, wardens are selected from among qualified managers who have been developed in their various skills and include chaplains, psychiatrists, and doctors as well as correctional officers.

Although in many cases the individual officers are general schedule employees, none of the promotion systems allows the supervisor the selection autonomy prevalent in other organizations. Senior managers play an active role in both the assignment and promotion processes in all five organizations.
Transitioning

All of the systems studied tend to keep people until they retire. All federal law enforcement officers now entering government service become eligible for early retirement at age 50 and have mandatory retirement at age 57. However, age is no longer a basis for mandatory retirement in state and local public safety occupations, which brings these systems into line with national policy on age in the private sector. Amendments in 1986 to the ADEA had contained temporary exceptions (until December 1993) at the state and local level for, among others, public safety occupations such as police and firefighters. Congressionally directed research has been sponsored on the issue of age as a mechanism in public safety occupations. The Center for Applied Behavioral Sciences at Pennsylvania State University recently conducted a large, comprehensive study on age-based policies for public safety officers. This study concluded that

- Age associated declines in many of the principal physical abilities involved in successfully completing routine and critical . . . tasks are highly modifiable depending upon one’s lifestyle.
- There is evidence for substantial variability in the physiological status of older adults.
- Depending on their structure, health promotion and physical fitness programs . . . can sufficiently modify age associated declines in many of the relevant physical abilities such that a significant percentage of older employees would be likely to pass physical abilities testing.
- Physiological requirements of critical . . . tasks can be documented and physical abilities tests are available to assess the probability of successfully meeting such physical challenges.

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21The ADEA of 1967 made it unlawful to discriminate based on age “except where age is a bona fide occupational qualification reasonably necessary to the normal operation of the particular business or where the differentiation is based on reasonable factors other than age.” (Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967, 29 U.S.C. Section 621.)

22Federal employees in these occupations and military personnel were not subject to ADEA or its amendments. Such laws are made to apply to the military either through Executive Order or further legislation by the Congress. In some cases, implementation lags the private sector; in other cases, it leads. Sometimes, it is never made to apply. Increasingly, we would expect laws and national policy affecting society at large to apply as well to the military absent a demonstrable, valid basis for the contrary.

23Previous research in this area by the National Academy of Sciences had shown that age 60 was an age of no particular medical significance for piloting and that adequate tests existed to determine an older individual’s fitness to fly. Institute of Medicine, Airline Pilot Age, Health, and Performance: Scientific and Medical Considerations (IOM 81-03), 1981.

24Alternatives to Chronological Age,” p. 15. The study was a massive undertaking that involved more than 400 police, fire, and correctional departments and 25,000 entries.
• Comprehensive physical abilities testing is likely to be at least as effective as chronological age in assessing physical performance capability.\textsuperscript{25}

In reviewing this study, the House Committee on Education and Labor framed the choice as between maintaining a fit, effective workforce in public safety agencies by using age-based policies for groups that might be unfair to particular individuals or by developing physical performance standards for individuals and testing their use.\textsuperscript{26} As of this writing, the ADEA exceptions for state and local public safety occupations were not extended by the Congress.

While the organizations studied had some separations for poor performance or disciplinary problems, all had aggressive programs to retrain and retain officers. None had forced fully qualified officers to retire involuntarily. Separation data were inconclusive about departure patterns; some officers retire at the earliest opportunity and others stay as long as possible. (Retirement from the Bureau of Prisons is bipolar—about half retire at age 50 and the rest at age 57.) These retention patterns are not considered a major problem; most organizations determine accessions based on projected retirements. More retirements mean more accessions and more promotion opportunities, and vice versa. Rapid growth in two organizations has created a cohort imbalance that could cause future problems. Nearly all retirees went on to second careers, regardless of retirement age.

While the physical fitness of officers was important to all organizations, there was no consistency regarding either fitness or programs of testing. Some provided regular fitness training and tested often; others did neither. None reported any degradation in performance because of age.

\textit{Potential Future Design Characteristics Derived from Comparable Organizations}

The career systems of public sector organizations with military-like functions we investigated revealed a high degree of similarity among the organizations and with current military processes. Three aspects of the personnel systems of these organizations suggest design considerations for our alternative models. First, up-and-stay structures provide motivated individuals who can operate in a


\textsuperscript{26} \textit{House Report} 103-314, November 1, 1993, p. 10. The report also reviewed issues of testing that might be problematic.
physically stressful environment. These systems barred lateral entry in middle- or upper-level positions. Second, two-track systems (management and agent/officer), where one offered greater opportunity for promotion and compensation and the other offered continued service, functioned smoothly. Finally, mandatory retirement at age 57 for federal law enforcement officers, with earlier retirement allowed, did not adversely affect performance or promotion opportunity. Public safety occupations at the state and local level must now conform to national policy that procribes age as a standard for retirement.

**Private Sector Practices**

We examined the career management practices of the private sector to determine what important design or evaluation criteria we could adapt to our evaluation. We were fortunate to have access to a human resource study conducted by Towers Perrin. Not only did this study provide important insights about human resources management, but it also suggested how these practices might change in the future. The comprehensive worldwide survey included the perspective of human resource managers, line managers, consultants, and academic experts. The survey found that the top current challenge—providing high productivity, quality, and customer satisfaction—would also be most important in the 21st century. Linking human resources to the corporate strategy was also high in importance in both time periods—1991 and 2000—and becoming more important by the latter year.

The Towers Perrin study director offered detailed insights about four important human resource objectives dealing with business strategy, organizational culture, management development, and workforce flexibility, which are congruent with other views (cited below) about private sector human resource management.

**Business Strategy**

Human resource management must be linked to the business strategy and must focus on business goals and on user satisfaction, with less emphasis on traditional human resources objectives such as attraction, retention, and

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27 Towers Perrin is a human resources (HR) consulting firm. They undertook a study that obtained information from CEOs and other line executives, HR executives, university HR faculty, and consultants in 12 countries. Andrew S. Richter, Ph.D, was the project manager for the study. He graciously gave us access to the study and its results and explained their meaning. This section draws on the study itself and our discussions with Dr. Richter. Towers Perrin, *Priorities for Competitive Advantage: A 21st Century Vision Worldwide Human Resource Study*, 1993.

28 Other objectives from this research—relating to reputation, attraction, satisfaction—will be used in developing the purpose and objectives of officer career management.
promotion. The emphasis should be on “build and sell cars” as the primary purpose and not “attract, retain, promote.”

Emphasis on the business strategy and not the human resource strategy is becoming widely shared as a needed organizational purpose. Current thinking is that “the most persistent causes of management layering and excess headquarters staff are the human resource policies employed by many American corporations. Their consequences are unintended, but unmistakable. The three most problematical areas of human resource policy are compensation, career development, and corporate culture.”

These shifts are important to officer career management because military practices are in many ways similar to corporate practice:

- Promotion is a form of compensation, and the two are closely related in that a person must be a manager to achieve higher compensation through promotion.
- Career paths premised on steady advancement up the hierarchy build disappointment into their organizational structures because fewer and fewer can be promoted in the hierarchy absent removal of the experienced.
- Cultures are built on bureaucratic behaviors that lead to promotion.

These insights about the connection between career management systems and the business strategy suggest that a primary consideration for evaluating the effectiveness of a management system is the extent to which it accomplishes the organization’s purpose.

**Organizational Culture**

Corporate or organizational culture—the norms, beliefs, and values of the organization that define the roles and activities of the people in the organization—is becoming a variable. Organizations with a strong culture want people throughout the organization to have a consistent set of values and standards; high turnover and lateral entry are perceived to damage this focus and consistency of purpose. Organizations without a strong culture generally welcome entrants with different or diverse values and standards through lateral entry, turnover, or both because such change best meets the needs of their

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30 Ibid., pp. 17-22.
business strategy.\textsuperscript{31} (There is some evidence that such nonconformers are best at identifying major shifts in the environment that might affect the success of the business strategy.)

The new paradigm suggests that organizations are choosing the type of organizational culture that they believe best accomplishes their business strategy in a future environment, rather than unconditionally accepting the culture that has historically existed. For example, in a General Accounting Office review of nine major U.S. corporations, only three were attempting to perpetuate their cultures while six were trying to change their cultures.\textsuperscript{32} In the United States, some organizations with previously strong cultures are “smashing eggs.” IBM, General Motors, and Kodak are good examples of organizations that are moving to open themselves to more outside hiring, including for the most senior levels.

The Towers Perrin study results indicate that globally, however, strong cultures remain important. As organizations move toward the future, the importance of a strong, but flexible, organizational culture will approach the level seen in the United States. While strong organizational cultures remain an important objective for human resource management, organizations must now anticipate requirements and choose that culture that is best for them in the future environment. They are no longer bound by tradition or history of the organization.

This insight about organizational culture has relevance to officer career management. Certainly the military has a strong culture whose effect is similar to that in the private sector. As seen by one observer:

Living within the military culture bonds people together. Such things as sharing hardships over the years in strange and often inhospitable places, being on call twenty-four hours a day, and all too frequently flying away in the dead of night for an undetermined stay creates enduring ties. Strong teams and strong feelings develop. This cohesion—essential, a source of satisfaction and comfort, and a wonderful catalyst for teamwork—is also recognized as a potential hindrance to requisite individual and organizational growth, change, and adaptation.\textsuperscript{33}

If strong cultures tend to inhibit change and if they seem more likely to become a variable, our evaluation process should consider the extent to which a particular alternative promotes strong organizational cultures.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 192.
\textsuperscript{32}General Accounting Office, \textit{Organizational Culture}, op. cit., p. 1.
Management Development

Technology is forcing important choices about how to develop people for careers. The ability of an organization to change—if that is necessary and desirable—is the issue of interest for career management. The choices include (1) hire more frequently from outside the organization (an approach that works well in organizations without a strong culture) or (2) redevelop or retrain existing members of the organization (a more suitable approach in a strong culture). This is an important issue in officer career development because “A normal officer’s career . . . spans some three decades; a fact that, in an age of rapid change, . . . makes some kind of refresher training not only possible but desirable.”34

Workforce Flexibility

Most companies facing “downsizing” recognize that smaller size requires greater workforce flexibility. Internal business units want more control over their own destinies in terms of hiring, promoting, and developing. The Towers Perrin study director concluded that long-term strategies for human resource management should focus on developing flexible workforces rather than hiring and firing based on short-term requirements. Similar views have been expressed for the military about retraining and refocusing every few years to develop a more flexible future force.35 Additionally, employee commitment increasingly will be based on career satisfaction rather than just on rewards, and business units want the flexibility to provide satisfactory careers. Overall control of careers is shifting to lower organizational levels; corporate control is at the executive/nonexecutive interface.36 As a result, subordinate business units have more control over precise policies on hiring, advancing, developing, and position control. This insight affects officer career satisfaction, flexibility, and control of the career management system.

A recent study by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) (“Federal Personnel Offices: Time for Change?”) provides an interesting government perspective on many of the issues addressed in the Towers Perrin report for the private sector. The MSPB report sought to evaluate how federal managers

34Martin van Creveld, The Training of Officers, New York: The Free Press, 1990, p. 4. Ulmer also asserts that “Army officers spend at least twice as much time in classrooms over their careers as do their civilian equivalents” (p. 7).
36In the public sector, the National Performance Review recommended that the Federal Personnel Manual be eliminated with agencies allowed to determine their own rules.
perceive the causes of current personnel problems.\textsuperscript{37} The MSPB study concluded that “Federal personnel offices, and the services they deliver, are often held in low esteem by the managers who depend on them for help with human resources management.” A primary reason was because “much of their work was thought to contribute little to accomplishment of the agency mission.”\textsuperscript{38} This is understandable since “personnel offices have traditionally been evaluated by their success in compliance with law, rule, and regulation.”\textsuperscript{39} Government managers perceived a focus on internal personnel processes rather than serving client organizations. A future conceptual role included such things as “concentrate on the big picture” and “be oriented toward the mission and toward service.”\textsuperscript{40}

Our analysis of the U.S. career management systems suggested that flexibility would be an important evaluation criteria. The Towers Perrin data reinforce that suggestion. Other potential evaluation criteria and system design characteristics that were highlighted in this subsection on private sector practice are the extent to which a human resource system accomplishes the organization’s purpose and promotes strong organizational cultures, the ability of an organization to change by hiring from outside or retraining inside, emphasis on career satisfaction and not just on rewards to motivate people, and providing more control to subordinate business units. Moreover, in designing alternatives one should consider bringing in first-rate applicants at any point in a career and consider reduced emphasis on promotion.

\section*{Summary of Career Management}

The previous section reviewed career management principles. This section reviewed the practice of career management in military organizations, in military-like organizations, and in private and public sector organizations. The objective of this section and the previous section was to identify concepts for career management to use in designing alternative future career management systems and in developing objectives, criteria, and measures. The alternatives are presented in the next section and the objectives and criteria in the following section.

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid., p. vii.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 8–9.