



**Leadership for Sustainable Installations**  
**By COL Charles Allen (Ret), U.S. Army War College**

The perpetual question for leaders is whether they or the organizations they lead matter. To answer such questions requires serious contemplation as to why their organization exists and how it remains relevant to its major clients and stakeholders. For garrison commanders, the first answer may be obvious based on the revised (in February 2011) mission of IMCOM to "provide Soldiers, Civilians and their Families with a quality of life commensurate with the quality of their service."

The latter question is much more elusive and gets to the heart of sustainability. Installations not only sustain the operational force; with their people, commanders provide essential support to community members in a responsible manner. It is therefore essential that garrison leaders consider the workforce as the enabling element of sustainable installations. This paper will provide the basic concepts of sustainability, explain why it matters to installation management, address the workforce as human capital, and then offer a set of skills for leading sustainable installations.

**What is Sustainability?**

Sustainability has its roots in the business world in the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Cynics may say the CSR was a marketing ploy to establish a positive public perception of businesses in the wake of several well-published accounts of environmental disaster, financial misstep, corrupt administration, and unjust labor practices. Over time, successful corporations realized that taking care of their image beyond enforced compliance to environmental laws and regulations was good for business. Such actions allowed organizations to endure and thrive in changing and stressful times.

Sustainability is defined as "the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (The Brundtland Commission 1987). Sustainability has since found its way into the lexicon of the Army and installation management (Warnock, 2009). Accordingly, the Undersecretary of the Army is the Senior Sustainability Official and Installation Management Command recently incorporated sustainability into its revised campaign plan (IMCOM, 2010).

The corporate and academic view of sustainability has evolved to three main components-the triple bottomline of Social, Environmental, and Economic. Adapting the business approach, the

Army established three parallel, if not equal, priorities: mission, community, and environment/energy. IMCOM has further evolved the construct into a unique triple bottom line of environmental, financial (aligns with economic), and human capital (a subset of social and community). Rather than maintain three distinct lines, the IMCOM Campaign Plan appropriately weaves them together-one line cannot operate in isolation from the other two. (IMCOM, 2010, p. 1)

### **Why does Sustainability matter to the Army and IMCOM?**

As with corporations, meeting regulatory requirements for environmental and fiscal accountability is important to the Army. More importantly, as the operational force adapts to conduct missions across the spectrum of conflict, it is essential for the generating force to be equally adaptive in its support. Installations are an integral part of the functional organizations that generate and enable units for Army missions. Over the past decade, restructuring of the Army into Brigade Combat Team-based Modular Force along with training support requirements to implement the new counterinsurgency doctrine necessitated changes in infrastructure and service delivery at Army installations. This also prompted the reconfiguration of installation footprints through the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process of 2005 and the initiatives of Global Defense Posture Review of 2004 for overseas installations. The result of which were the consolidations of TRADOC schools into Centers of Excellence (e.g., Ft Sill as the Fires Center), the emergence of joint bases (e.g., Joint Base Lewis-McChord), the return of forward-positioned Army units to the Continental U.S., and the movement of headquarters (e.g., IMCOM from the National Capital Region to Ft Sam Houston). Both BRAC 2005 and GDPR 2004 had substantial environmental components, whether the remediation of lands to be turned over or the assessment of the environmental impact of increasing operations at existing installations. During these periods of change and transition, an implicit goal was to maintain a positive reputation with the affected American and foreign communities.

Each of these actions reflects the continued turbulence our Army experienced over the past century and reminds us that uncertainty and change are part of the milieu. For the Army to remain relevant to the needs of the Nation requires that it embrace the principles of sustainability. As IMCOM anticipates reduced budgets in the near future and fiscal tightening of the garrison belt, it is prudent to remember the drawdown of the Army during the 1990s with its nearly forty percent reduction of the Department of the Army civilian workforce. During that decade, we followed the mandate of *A-76 Commercial Sourcing* and focused on developing the Most Efficient Organizations (MEOs) and determining which installation services would be better performed by another governmental activity or outsourced to a commercial provider (Allen, 2001). Subsequently, we have seen the implementation of Residential Community Initiative (RCI) for Army family housing, contracted facilities maintenance for installations, and outsourcing of recreational facilities to private corporations (e.g., Shades of Green in Florida and Edelweiss Resort in Germany).



Figure 1 IMCOM Commander's Intent

Since its inception as the Installation Management Agency, IMCOM has been aggressive in adapting its strategy and structure to meet the needs of its customers. While sustainability has been added as a separate spoke to support its lines of effort, (see Figure 1); it also was integrated with the other elements. However, its application to the workforce is curiously limited to wellness with its supporting goals and metrics.

**LW6: A Resilient, Sustainable and Healthy Workforce Goal:** Create a culture of wellness which fosters and encourages all to participate in and promote healthy living as a priority. Physical fitness and resiliency are a foundation of health, decrease likelihood of workplace injuries, enhance workforce performance, and increase spiritual and mental well-being for all personnel. Leaders will serve as role models by participating in fitness activities and providing group events that inspire others to do so. (IMCOM, 2010, p. 23).

### Why a Human Capital Mindset?

We must realize that members of the garrison workforce, like Soldiers, are the centerpiece of our installation formations. The civilian workforce members are involved in the planning, coordination, and execution of IMCOM's Campaign Plan strategies at the local level. In fact, they are the point of service delivery to our customers and constituents. We need a workforce that is talented, innovative and motivated to meet the myriad challenges of base support operations. Thus said, we should be developing the workforce of the future as captured in the IMCOM Campaign Plan (see Figure 2) and recognize that we are in competition for talent.

### **LOE 3: Leader and Workforce Development**

#### **Keys to Success**

**LW1 – Multi-Skilled and Adaptive Leaders**

**LW2 – Constant Communication and Continuous Feedback**

**LW3 – Teamwork, Professionalism and Selfless Service in All Things**

**LW4 – Empowered Workforce Focused on Collaboration and Innovation**

**LW5 – Continuing Education and Training Opportunities**

**LW6 – A Resilient, Sustainable and Healthy Workforce**

Figure 2: IMCOM Campaign Plan Line of Effort 3

The same quality individuals that we seek for our uniformed servicemembers are also desired by the private sectors of our society. We have to attract new members with the knowledge, skill, and abilities to meet our current needs as well as retain those with the potential to fulfill our future requirements. Those individuals with talent have a choice and we would like them to consider us as employers. Those we seek are a combination of personnel who "know what" and who "know how"-managers, knowledge workers, and technicians. We should acknowledge the trend in American society for people to have multiple jobs and careers over the course of their working lives. It is unlikely that the majority of the workforce will spend their entire career with us. While turnover is to be expected, IMCOM and local installations should seek to be the employer of choice with our existing workforce and those employees should be proud enough of what they do to recruit potential employees. Accordingly, the Line of Effort 3 "Keys to Success" provide for taking care of people in the installation workforce. This aligns with the Army adage, "Mission First, People Always" and ties back to the triple bottom line of sustainability. It is the installation workforce-its human capital-that serves and collaborates with the community by being environmentally and economically responsible.

Key to having a high-performing garrison organization is to have a workforce with diverse functional expertise. First, we need to attract those whose talents are aligned with the needs of our garrisons and the Army at large as documented in the manning authorization documents. Then, as with uniformed members, garrison leaders must ensure that development opportunities are provided to workforce members to gain relevant competencies for the installation mission as well to realize their potential. The model and framework in *A Leader Development Strategy for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Army* (2009) apply equally to our installation workforce-garrison commanders should provide them with the pillars of training, education, and experiences.

While civilian members can expect to receive functional training and gain on the job experience for some skills and competencies, one necessary developmental component is generally lacking. Garrison leaders have an obligation to help employees grow professionally by giving them educational opportunities equivalent to those provided to uniformed members. Officers and noncommissioned officer attend professional military education that includes leadership and management curricula. Extending the same type of education to civilians is an investment in the up and coming leaders of the garrison and should not be considered as a tax or penalty to the

organization.

This requires breaking away from the old paradigm of human resource management. The term, human resource, indicates a lack of appreciation of the sustainability mindset. A resource is something that is gathered, consumed, and must be replaced. Consider an energy metaphor. Traditional energy production requires the consumption of raw materials-wood, oil and coal-that are non-renewable and which has environmental consequences that must be mitigated. The increasing demand for energy has caused Americans to modify how we think about energy. We have experimented and turned to other sources -geothermal, solar, and wind-that are renewable and have lesser environmental impact. Within garrisons, the indispensable energy that we require comes from our people-the ultimate renewable resource (Doppelt, 2010). Human capital mindset is needed as we consider workforce development. Doing so will transition to a paradigm of investing in people to generate value, a human capital, which can be reinvested to create new value. Hence, human capital development in the workforce adds to its sustainability and to the garrison bottom line.

### **What are the skills to lead for sustainability?**

Leading garrisons for sustainability follows the same principles from Field Manual 6-22 *Army Leadership*, where leadership is defined as a process of influence to "provide purpose, motivation, and direction to accomplish the mission and improve the organization." The general leadership tasks for garrison commanders are to clearly state the garrison mission, establish and communicate the vision, build the garrison team, and execute the strategy (Allen, 2007). The leadership definition and tasks are as appropriate for predominantly civilian garrison organizations as they are for operational units.

Garrison commanders should examine their installation's mission statement to ensure it provides sufficient direction toward relevant and enduring support for its customers. Commanders must develop their own vision of how their garrison interacts with its tenant organizations, its workforce, and on and off post community members. That vision should incorporate the essentials of sustainability for garrison operations and be clearly communicated to the workforce. It is important for garrison employees to have clarity of purpose from the mission statement and be able to "see" how they contribute through the vision of the commander. The garrison commander must lead in building the teams of the internal workforce, which cooperate with tenant organizations, contractors, and volunteers. Effective teaming also includes collaboration with external public and civic organizations of the local community.

The spirit of cooperation and collaboration can emerge from three supporting cultures: service, innovation, and stewardship. Service to others is a unifying goal across the garrison teams and establishes relevance to customers. Creativity and innovation are required to accomplish the installation mission in the face of challenges while recognizing opportunities. Perhaps, the most important culture is stewardship of that which is entrusted to installation management professionals-funds, equipment and facilities, and most importantly, people. Each of these cultures is aligned with the principles of sustainability that will enable installations to endure. Commanders translate their vision into actionable plans-the local installation strategy. An

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[http://www.imcom.army.mil/hq/publications/journal/journal\\_plus\\_spring\\_2011/leadership\\_for\\_sustainable\\_installations/](http://www.imcom.army.mil/hq/publications/journal/journal_plus_spring_2011/leadership_for_sustainable_installations/). Accessed 15 April 2011)

effective strategy provides a statement of how to achieve the desired goals and objectives with the commander monitoring the execution. The key for commanders is to monitor the execution of the strategy and to take action when appropriate to modify or bring it to fruition.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding and embracing the principles of sustainability are essential for garrison leaders. In order to support the mission of operational forces, the garrison must provide relevant services to service members and family members. This support is ultimately provided by the civilian workforce that engages daily with customers at the point of service delivery. The workforce also maintains strong relations with members of the local community as a good neighbor. It is essential that garrison commanders lead in a manner that is fiscally and environmentally responsible as stewards for the nation.

COL Charles D. Allen (Ret.) is a faculty member of the US Army War College. He is the former director of Leader Development and currently the professor of Cultural Science.

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