

Hope is Not a Method
What Business Leaders Can Learn from America's Army

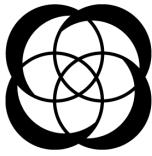
Gordon Sullivan and Michael Harper
Random House (1996)

America's Army has become a premier learning organization. How did this happen and what are its implications for other institutions? This excellent book by the former Army Chief of Staff General Gordon Sullivan and his strategic planner, retired Colonel Mike Harper, shows how they helped bring the Army into the information age. There are many lessons for regional stewards.

The U.S. Army is one of the world's largest, most complex organizations with nearly 1.5 million employees and an annual budget of \$63 billion. Most people--both inside and outside the organization—would say it did not perform well during the Vietnam War. Since then, it has been transformed. The Army faced a number of challenges: the competitive environment was changing rapidly, emerging technologies posed new opportunities and difficulties, technical skills and teamwork abilities needed constant upgrading, increasingly demanding stakeholders assigned unexpected new tasks, and financial pressures forced massive cost cutting and downsizing. Faced with these daunting challenges, the Army leaders “discovered that we must not only change, we must *change the way we change.*”

Our experience led us to reshape our thoughts about leadership—strategic leadership, that is, directing and controlling rational and deliberate change—what we call “creating the future.” It is possible to create your own future—to break down outmoded structures and create organizations that can thrive in tomorrow's uncertainty. It is a process grounded in values, shaped by vision, guided by strategy that is rooted in the critical processes of an organization, focused by deliberate action and matured through structured learning. We think of it as being like a military campaign. Some facts are known, many unknown—yet we have to go forward. The key to success is the resoluteness of the leader and how he or she integrates the available means, moving from objective to objective, leveraging, learning and growing.”

The book's chapters describe the remaking of America's Army by focusing on strategic leadership, creating a vision and a strategic architecture to implement that vision, building a team, campaigning, overthrowing success, growing a learning organization and investing in people through leadership training.



The authors make an important distinction between management and leadership. “Management has to do with an organization’s *processes*—performing them correctly and efficiently; leadership has to do with the organization’s *purposes*.”

Learning occurs through the systematic use of “after action reviews”. After a training exercise, all participants engage in a formal review of what happened to promote learning. This innovation is credited with major improvements in the Army’s performance.

The book ends with a set of rules for guiding change

- Change is Hard Work
- Leadership begins with Values
- Intellectual Leads Physical
- Real Change Takes Real Change
- Leadership is a Team Sport
- Expect to be Surprised
- Today competes with Tomorrow
- Better is Better
- Focus on the Future
- Learn by Doing
- Grow People

This outstanding book reinforces the belief that leaders can be grown. Having heard both retired Generals Colin Powell and Wesley Clark speak, it is clear that both were the outstanding products of one of the most sophisticated leadership development organizations in the world. Colin Powell’s excellent biography suggests that he received the equivalent of two graduate degrees, along with his White House Fellowship, on his way up.

If we know how to prepare our military leaders using the most sophisticated leadership strategies, why can’t we develop ways to prepare our civic leaders for some of the most complex challenges in the world today?