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APPLICATION OF CONCEPT ESSAY

LEADER CHANGE: APPLYING THE KOTTER MODEL FOR CHANGE TO MINISTRY
IN THE STRATEGIC RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

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Leader Change: Applying the Kotter Model for Change to Ministry in the Strategic Religious Environment

As a minister to Army Reserve Personnel who are stationed globally, defending the U.S. Constitution from enemies foreign and domestic, Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) Chaplains defend Reserve Soldiers' right to practice religion freely while serving the country, unit, and family. AGR Chaplains plan, advocate, and resource Religious Affairs positions with the best personnel possible. Accomplished by recruiting, training, and support, they work tirelessly to streamline the ministry of the Reserve Chaplains across the unit and world. AGR Chaplains work – primarily – to allow a ministry of presence in a geographically disperse, resource-constrained, constantly-changing environment which is the United States Army Reserves.

The primary focus of this ministry is to provide personnel and ensure that religious support training is tailored to the needs of the force. The AGR Chaplain ties the UMT to local resources to enable their ministry, but they do not work alone. Merely putting the right resources with the right people and be in the right place at the right time is not all that an AGR needs to do to support Soldiers and Families; they must be agents of change.

John P. Kotter, Ph.D. is an internationally known Professor of Leadership at the prestigious Harvard Business School in Massachusetts. He has developed an eight-step model for leading change which the United States Army now incorporates into the leadership curriculum at the Command General Staff Officer College in Leavenworth,

Kansas.¹ Integrating the Kotter model for change seems an ideal approach to gain the benefits of a renowned model, tested and proven for over 20 years in the business world, and cross-cultural communication with other officers familiar with the process. Using the Kotter model for change and the military decision making process, an AGR Chaplain can engage the Officer Corps of the U.S. Army Reserves to propose and enable change. What changes may be needed?

The U.S. Army is a member of the profession of arms and has recently renewed its commitment to ensuring its members are professionals.² Professionals recruit according to a standard. Professions have schools to indoctrinate and inculcate the individual into the culture of the profession. The cultural norms of a profession often have a basis in laws, rules, policies, standards, practices.³ Inculcation's basis is through intellectual processes, values, uniformity, and subordination of the individual in favour of the organization.⁴ The profession of arms measures its success by retained autonomy to self-govern, and the public trust, earned through mission success and professional conduct. Recently, the Army has taken a hard look at itself as a profession and found areas requiring improvement to earn and maintain the republic's trust which is necessary to fight and win the nation's wars.⁵

¹ Farren, K. Brogan, LTC. In-class lecture "L104: Leading Organizations in Change". Fort Leavenworth, KS: Command General Staff Officer College Delivered 09/12/2016, transcribed as a note-taker to personal notes for the lecture.

² Vermeesch, John A., Col USA. "Trust Erosion and Identity Corrosion". Washington, D.C.: Military Review, September-October 2013, (p 1).

³ Merriam-Webster Online. Search: "Indoctrinate". <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indoctrination>. Last viewed 1757 CDT 03/22/2017.

⁴ Merriam-Webster Online. Search: "Inculcate". <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inculcate>. Last viewed 1757 CDT 03/22/2017.

⁵ Vermeesch, (pp 1-3).

From the beginning of the American profession of arms, the Chaplain served and serves as special staff – reporting only to the Commander – as a moral and morale expert of that unit.⁶ Chaplains actively seek the trust of both the commanders and soldiers they serve, legally and virtually. Members of the unit may speak in confidence with their Chaplain, regardless of rank, knowing there are legal protections of privacy.⁷ Chaplains circulate through the unit and observe interpersonal interactions related to morale and ethical behaviour. Through these observations and conversations, Chaplains assess morale and unit cohesion and then report this to the commander. With privacy preserved, AGR Chaplains monitor morale reports, acting on these findings by enabling subordinate Chaplains with training and resources to affect their units on behalf of the Chain of Command.

Regularly charged with helping improve the ethical and moral climate of the units, Chaplains create higher morale and a culture of trust when successful in this endeavour.⁸ As defenders of the United States Constitution, Chaplains often focus on enemies within the force. These enemies are often in the form of distractions from the mission or inhibitors of teamwork. Specifically, Chaplains teach the force to work together to resolve interpersonal conflicts all while protecting the free exercise of religious beliefs.⁹

⁶ FM 1-05, (p 1-1).

⁷ Department of Defense. Army Regulation (AR) 165-1, Army Chaplain Activities. Washington D.C.: Office of the Secretary of the United States Army, June 2015, (p 9, para 3-4).

⁸ Ibid., (p 8, para 8-11).

⁹ Ibid., (p 1, para 1-6 to 1-7).

Observed behaviour and espoused beliefs in an Army unit should match the Army Values. When unit or personal values conflict with the Army Values, conflict arises and often presents in the form of indiscipline. Individuals are either re-trained, disciplined, or invited to leave the Army if reconciliation is not possible. Thus, early interception on part of the Chaplains can be critical to sustaining the unit and building trust within the team. The ability for a Chaplain to help teach value alignment to a Soldier with different values than the Army Values can be a force multiplier; having a model to effect this change is vital. Chaplains are the logical conduit to effectively identify value misalignment, and retrain Army Values.¹⁰

Using the Kotter model for change, AGR Chaplains can influence their units' leaders of change. Kotter begins by looking at the agents of change and their failures.¹¹ He places particular importance on vision necessitating understanding, communication, and deliberate action.¹² Before outlining his process for leading change, Kotter proposes that changes were not as necessary in times past, nor where their implementation expected to develop so rapidly.¹³ In today's environment, all this has changed to require steady, frequent, and sequential changes to demark growth.¹⁴ The AGR Chaplain must adapt to a relentless operations tempo, high Soldier turnover rate, and fixed time (usually about three years with a Command) to effect change. Dr. Kotter's model looks at the issue of time as being especially important, and is therefore prescient in meeting

¹⁰ Ibid., (p 21 (para 8-21)).

¹¹ Kotter, John P. *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012, (pp 3-7).

¹² Ibid., (pp 7-8).

¹³ Ibid., (pp 20-21).

¹⁴ Ibid.

the particular needs of the Chaplain ministry. The Kotter process is both straight-forward and military-friendly. The steps are: establish a sense of urgency, create a guiding coalition, develop a vision and strategy, communicate the change vision, empower employees for broad-based action, generate short-term wins, consolidate gains to produce more change, and anchor the new approach in the culture.¹⁵ Through these steps, one can begin to realize the future unit envisioned when the process of change started.¹⁶

AGR Chaplains may use the Kotter model for change to identify specific areas of value misalignment within their units and advise the Commander to begin the process of change. A coalition of leaders within the unit – from Commanders, Non-commissioned Officers, and Chaplains – can lead this change. The command vision is a staple of Army culture; invoking, broadcasting, and enacting it are expected.

By linking observed trends to the Army Values and Commander's Vision, AGR Chaplains can empower and fund begins subordinate Chaplains to teach values alignment. Using the Kotter model for change communicates in a meaningful way through a common language. AGR Chaplains should constantly seek to better their units, subordinate UMT teams' capabilities, and moral environment within their ministry. Delivering Religious Support to diverse regions and peoples throughout the force can be difficult, but using the Kotter model for change will make it an attainable goal!

¹⁵ Ibid., (pp 37-39; 53-57; 69-75; 87-93; 105-107; 121-125; 137-144; 153-160.

¹⁶ Ibid., (pp 169-177).

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