Methods for improving performance in the military

military-Earth thinking notebook

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Published on 26/06/2018

Défense & management

Methods of improving the performance of armies can be inspired by those of civilian activities in the functional area, but not in the operational area.

The Organic Law of the Finance Law (LOLF), implemented in 2006, modernized public finance management, moving from a logic of means to a logic of results. As a result, the allocation of resources for the following year is now subject to the performance evaluated the previous year. Now that performance indicators have been established and monitored, what methods could be implemented to ensure that this performance is improved within the armed forces?

Performance can be defined as the fit between the objective and resources, results and objective, and resources and results; that is, the combination of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Within this framework, the search for improved performance is highly developed in civilian enterprises, as it conditions their economic survival by their profitability. This context has led to the development of proven performance improvement methods. In the armed forces, i.e. for organisations under the command of the Chief of the Defence Staff (CEMA), economic profitability does not occupy the same (central) place as in the business world. However, performance indicators are defined and cover the operational and functional areas of the armed forces. Could civilian methods of improvement then be applied in the military institution?

The measurement of the functional performance of the armed forces is similar to the measurement of civilian activities, but distinct from operational performance, and civilian improvement methods can therefore be used to optimise the performance of the organic function of the armed forces.

In addition, the differentiation between operational performance and functional performance will first be presented, followed by a discussion of methods for improving performance in the civilian environment, and finally, the application of these methods in

the functional area of the military will be discussed.

What performance should be measured in the armed forces?

In 2008, the general review of public policies, in conjunction with the publication of the White Paper on Defence and National Security, led to a wide-ranging reform within the Ministry of Defence. The organic (or functional) domain, whose resources are grouped together in the Administration and Common Support (AGSC), has been reorganised outside the operational domain, even though the EMA retains overall coherence by being both the operational and organic head of the chain. This organic/operational separation at the tactical level has resulted in the creation of the Defence Bases (DBs). It makes it possible to differentiate the performance of the operational area from that of the functional area.

On the one hand, operational commitment, the raison d'être of armies, remains a military specificity. In an operational context, the mission given by the hierarchical commander is "sacred" and the commander who has received it must carry it out with the means at his disposal and with any available reinforcements he may have requested. Performance here is measured by the effect on the enemy or on the ground, by the capacity to adapt to the situation, and also by the preservation of the human resources and equipment involved. Environmental variables (politics, population) make this measure even more distant from that of civilian enterprises. In logistical terms, for example, a strategic medical evacuation is not triggered when the aircraft is full, which would reduce transport costs, but according to the medical emergency under consideration. Efficiency is then negligible compared to the relevance in this situation.

On the other hand, staff in the functional area, the AGSC, do not have the same urgency to deal with in BdD. When they are not projected in an operational mission, these staff work in an environment in which there is a client-supplier relationship similar to that of the civilian environment, materialized by a contract. The manager who contracts with his supplier then expects a performance quantifiable by the result according to the precise definition of the requirement. This relationship, which is commonplace in the civilian environment, is nevertheless still difficult to set up in the armed forces because it is not based on traditional hierarchical relationships. To improve functional performance, therefore, methods proven in the civilian environment can be exploited.

In the civilian environment, performance is defined by responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, as shown in the figure opposite. They form the sides of a triangle, the vertices of which are quality (aim: to guarantee a high level of service to the customer), time (aim: to reduce waiting times for the customer) and cost (aim: to reduce the cost of production). Performance optimization methods use two concepts: improving the whole triangle as a whole and tackling the vertices one after the other.

The overall improvement of an organization, by playing on cost, deadlines and quality at the same time, is often achieved by improving organizational structures. Typically, the redeployment of an activity is decided at the strategic level of the organisation in question. It involves heavy implementation logistics and associated costs, for example to close a facility. But the entity can also reorganize itself internally by grouping together functions. However, more and more companies are creating "supply chain" departments. These departments usually include planning, procurement, logistics, distribution and after-

sales service functions, but may also include research and development, purchasing, sales, quality, etc. They enable the supply chain to be steered from the supplier to the customer's customer. This global vision enables significant overall gains to be made and increases performance.

While global improvement is a sharp break, local improvement is continuous. It is about involving all the actors in a process to improve the process little by little and at low cost. The actions to be carried out are then prioritized according to the gain to be made. A Japanese philosophy invented by Toyota at the end of the Second World War, this method is based both on common sense actions and on a significant involvement of managers. Theorised by American academics and called "Lean", itwas first used for production in industry, particularly the automotive industry, before being applied to the production of cars.It was first used for production in industry, particularly the automotive industry, before being generalised to other departments of a company, including research and development (Lean processing) andadministration (Lean Office). The Lean continuous improvement method is defined as follows:

This method is based on the following statement: "you can only improve what you can measure". This is why visual and statistical tools are associated with it to carry out continuous improvement projects. Their detailed description is not the subject of this article.

Possible applications for improving the functional performance of armies

With the LOLF, projects and annual performance reports define indicators that are monitored by the Ministry of Defense for its missions and programs. Within the armies, the steering units of the different levels provide information on these indicators. Performance is evaluated by management controllers. Broadly speaking, army or service inspectorates have powers in operational areas, while the general inspectorate exercises its powers in organic areas. The aim of this article is not to describe them, but it must be noted that this organisation is focused on control and curative and little on preventive action. The good practices observed have difficulty being exported for the benefit of all. The measure has been taken, but the improvement can be amplified. In the functional area, methods for improving the performance of civil enterprises can be used by similarity.

Overall improvements, such as structural transformation, have been implemented several times in the armed forces, particularly after the last two white papers of 1995 and 2008. While these reforms represent a consolidation of performance, their gains are difficult to measure over the long term. Indeed, the strengthening of expected performance must be compared to the actual gain measured over the long term. The results, which will be monitored, will then be stabilised to ensure that the gains are sustainable. This is the standardization phase of the DMAICS method presented above. The pace of succession of structural reforms and the political need for rapid gains do not allow for this stabilisation. The most blatant recent case is that of the BoDs, whose deployment was initially scheduled to be completed in 2014, and which has been brought forward to the end of 2011. If long-term sustainability is difficult, then the focus must be on continuous improvement.

Continuous local improvements include field staff in a team process that encourages self-reliance and accountability. Army personnel are already aware of change management,

which gives impetus to continuous improvement. This military quality is called adaptation. The Lean method can be implemented within the armies to improve functional performance. Moreover, visual management, group adherence to the common project or standardisation of procedures are tools that are already in use without being linked to Lean. As in the case of global improvements, capitalizing on these improvements and stabilizing them over time would allow us to climb the slope of continuous improvement without the risk of going backwards. It is the role of the S to "standardize" that serves as a wedge to the continuous improvement wheel (DMAIC). This milestone in the method can, for example, be translated in armies by the development and exploitation of feedback and centralised procedures.

Within the armed forces, the duality between the operational and the organic, which has been further underlined by the latest support reforms, is also present in performance measurement. Functional performance, unlike operational performance, has similarities in measurement with the civilian environment. Civilian improvement methods can therefore be used. These methods can relate to the overall improvement of an organization, through disruption, or to continuous improvement, which is less abrupt and more localized. The organic domain of armies can take over the Lean method. However, it is necessary to ensure that the global or continuous progress made is stabilized in order to continue on the upward slope of continuous improvement. Concrete implementation of this optimization would require training on Lean tools, some of which are already used in armies without knowing it. Above all, it requires significant individual involvement of all the players in the chain, in an environment that must be characterised by a better understanding of the notion of contract between customer and supplier. In fact, it is a question of carrying out missions according to the functional letter (the contract) and the operational spirit (flexibility).

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Release date 01/06/2018