

The "So What" Behind KSBs

By LTC Greg Lockhart (article was originally published in the Infantry Newsletter, 1st Quarter FY21 addition) December 8, 2020

Talent Management is the buzzword behind all of the changes to officer personnel management over the last few years. Talent Management is about modernizing the Army's personnel management systems and methods, and it is about getting the right person in the right job, at the right time (over time).

The changes you are seeing include, but are not limited to, a new assignment process known as the Army Talent Alignment Process (ATAP), new initiatives to create flexible and stable career paths for officers, new assessments to test and validate the cognitive and non-cognitive skills of our officers, and new promotion authorities which allow for the merit-based promotion of our Officer Corps. Underlying these changes are data points and metrics within an officer's talent profile known as Knowledge, Skills, Behaviors, and Preferences (KSB-Ps).

The impact of KSB-Ps on both units and officers are pervading all facets of the Army to include how the Army acquires, develops, employs and retains talent. The goal of this article is to demystify KSB-Ps for officers, so they feel comfortable and confident using them during the ATAP market.

What are KSB-Ps?

To better understand KSB-Ps, a brief overview of their origins is helpful. KSBs are not new to personnel management. In the civilian world, they have been used for years under the moniker of Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Characteristics (KSAOs), and in terms of research and science, KSAOs have been the language of civilian personnel systems for the better part of a century. KSAOs have assisted the civilian sector in hiring actions as well as internal and external talent management efforts.

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The Army has made a conscious decision to deviate from the traditional KSAO lexicon and adopted KSB-P for our talent management purposes. The Army places great importance on preference within an officer or Soldier's career. This weighs so heavily within Army talent management principles; the Army included preference in the KSB-P lexicon as well as ensured that preference from both officers and units is a primary factor in slating officers during ATAP.

It is important to note; however, that a team of Army scientists and practitioners from multiple disciplines have invested a significant amount of time and resources to ensure our definitions and lexicon are linked with civilian talent management lexicon outside the Army, while also ensuring its linkage to our existing Army publications and doctrine.

WHAT I KNOW

Knowledge - A topically organized set of facts and information acquired by a person through experience, education, or training, which supports work related performance.

WHAT I CAN DO

Skill - a person's proficiency and ability to perform a job-related activity that contributes to effective performance or learning.

HOW I ACT

Behavior - a person's values, attitudes, and temperament as evidenced through their actions.

WHAT I PURSUE

Preference - Interests, career ambitions, and personal life goals.

KSB-Ps and the Market

The question we often get asked on the Army Talent Management Task Force (ATMTF) is “do KSB-Ps really matter in the market for officer and unit matching?” The answer is resoundingly “Yes,” but only if units and officers use them. Market interaction is one of the key aspects of ATAP, and if units and officers choose not to use KSB-Ps as a method of data sharing and communication, they return to a system very similar to what existed before ATAP, where assignment officers determined officer assignments with little to no input from the unit.

KSB-Ps allow officers to profess information about themselves, which cannot be captured on a Soldier Record Brief (SRB). Conversely, units can now highlight the KSB-Ps they both require and desire for vacancies in their unit. This allows officers and units to make educated preferences to meet their needs and requirements.

More importantly, and a topic for a future installment, KSB-Ps create a data rich environment and pave the way for post-ATAP analysis. This analysis is critical in identifying talent gaps across the force, which allow Army Senior Leaders (ASL) to make decisions regarding strategic workforce planning. These decisions can affect everything from accessions to retention as well as everything in between.

KSB-Ps for Officers

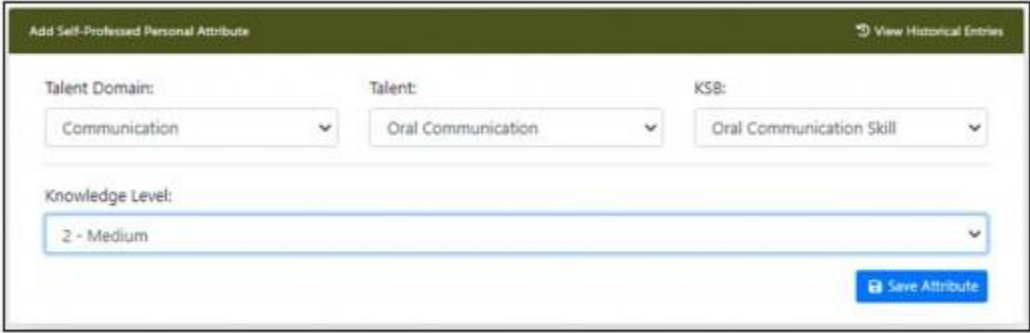
Before ATAP and KSB-Ps, officers relied upon HRC career managers, mentors, leaders and career progression models (e.g. DA PAM 600-3 and 600-4) to help shape their preferencing for future jobs. Self-marketing to secure a position was not a requirement. This point is critical, because officers often struggle with résumé development as well as identifying their own KSB-Ps prior to entering an ATAP market. This is not the fault of the officer, but it highlights a

cultural shift where officers are forced to self-evaluate and describe their experiences and KSB-Ps, which make them marketable to units.

Unit commanders and leaders should assist officers with résumé development skills to ensure they have the best possible experience within ATAP.

When developing their résumé, officers should select KSB-Ps which underscore their capabilities to perform in the desired position and which highlight their unique qualifications and experiences.

KSB-Ps are not a tool to inflate yourself or to impress. They are a means to highlight skills you may have that uniquely qualify you for a position. Officers should use KSBs as a tool to initiate dialogue with a unit and market their capabilities to perform successfully. Officers should be honest with their self-professions, and only select KSB-Ps in which they have proficiency.



The image shows a screenshot of a web form titled "Add Self-Professed Personal Attribute". The form is set against a light gray background. At the top, there is a dark green header bar containing the title and a link to "View Historical Entries". Below the header, the form is organized into several sections. The first section contains three dropdown menus: "Talent Domain" (set to "Communication"), "Talent" (set to "Oral Communication"), and "KSB" (set to "Oral Communication Skill"). The second section contains a "Knowledge Level" dropdown menu (set to "2 - Medium"). At the bottom right of the form, there is a blue button labeled "Save Attribute".

A good tactic, technique and procedure (TTP) when filling out a résumé is to address professed KSB-Ps in the text portion of the résumé. By doing this, an officer provides context behind their professed KSB-Ps, allowing units the ability to dialogue with potential officer-hires and validate the officer's proficiency level.

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Attained proficiency in combined arms operations at the company level, while assigned to 1-66 AR, 3ABCT, 4ID**
- **Participated in two NTC rotations as a platoon leader and assistant operations officer**
- **Deployed in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, conducted partner training in combined arms operations with the Polish Armed Forces**

KSB-Ps for Units

Giving units the ability to conduct hiring actions is a major step forward in allowing commanders to build their own teams with the precise talents they need to meet their unique requirements and mission set. The process may appear time consuming and labor intensive; however, if commanders and unit strength managers develop a plan to address vacancies early, they will be successful.

It is highly recommended that unit hiring authorities review “The Commander’s Guide to ATAP,” located on the resource page at [talent.army.mil](https://www.milsuite.mil/book/docs/DOC-681113) (also located on S1NET at <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/docs/DOC-681113>). The guide serves as a resource for commanders and strength management personnel (S1s) to navigate ATAP as well as to advise their officer population. Embedded within the guide are TTPs, which will guide units through the KSB-P selection process.

Identifying KSB-Ps prior to submitting a mission essential requirements (MER) list to HRC will give strength managers enough time to enter KSB-Ps into vacancies prior to the market opening. In cases where this is not possible (e.g. operational deployment or CTC rotation), KSB-Ps can be updated anytime throughout the market.

Units have the same KSB-P and experiential lists available to them as the officer population, and when selecting KSB-Ps for unit vacancies, units should think in terms of “required” vs “desired” KSB-Ps.

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In terms of experience, AIM 2.0 provides various lists such as additional duties, civilian and military employment, licenses and certifications, cultural experience, and self-study knowledge. Recognizing that not all experiences can be captured within a list, if there are specific experiences that units require or desire for a position, they can use the unit’s comments section in AIM 2.0 to advertise for these requirements (see Page 63, Appendix VIII: Our Vacancies, [CDRs Guide to ATAP](#)).

Conclusion

The impact of KSB-Ps are permeating through all facets of the Army from acquiring talent to its retention. Furthermore, KSB-Ps will continuously evolve to ensure they remain relevant and useful to the Army. This article just scratches the surface of the impact KSB-Ps will have on talent management. Future installments of the KSB series will address other KSB-P related topics.

In terms of KSB-Ps within the ATAP market, education will be key to understanding KSB-Ps and using them effectively in the future. Numerous resources exist on the ATMTF website as well as the Army Talent Management S1NET Page:

<https://www.milsuite.mil/book/community/spaces/apf/s1net/armytalentmgmt>.

Officers and units are encouraged to review these resources to better prepare themselves for an ATAP market. When in doubt, ask a question. Career managers, account managers, and the ATMTF are great resources for officers and units.

Lockhart, Paul G. (ed.). (2020). The Commander’s Guide to ATAP: The Army Talent Management Task Force. US Army.