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COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

CAREER FIELD

OFFICER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE



U.S. AIR FORCE

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From the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications and Information



Through One Air Force... One Network, the Air Force is changing how we leverage information technology to improve combat effectiveness and daily mission performance.

The Air Force, understanding the value of information in its air and space operations, has acknowledged information superiority as one of its core competencies. The communications and information officer plays a significant role in achieving information superiority—by understanding the basic tenets of air and space operations, by understanding the warfighter's information needs, we apply the full range of information technologies and services to enable the Air Force to operate better, faster and cheaper. To ensure we remain the world's premier Air Force, our cadre of communications and information officers must be the world's best in doing their job.

This document lays out the strategies to develop our communications and information officers. These strategies will enable our officer corps to maximize their potential by matching their skills and desires with the needs of the Air Force. This document provides a framework for commanders and supervisors to use when mentoring their junior officers, and for individuals to use when assessing their own professional development. It is a quick reference document and is not intended to replace Air Force or DoD directives.

Every communications and information officer, commander and supervisor should read this, work this, and give me inputs for changing it. We are a high performing cadre of professional officers and this is our plan to sustain that capability—it will only help us if we read it, use it, follow it, and improve it.

*John L. Woodward, Jr., Lt Gen, USAF
Deputy Chief of Staff for
Communications and Information*

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Introduction

About this guide

This guide provides information for communications and information officers, commanders, and supervisors to facilitate effective professional development for communications and information officers--active, guard, and reserve. The guide lays out career progression guidelines, recommends training and education throughout each phase of an individual's career, lists education and training resources available in the specialty, identifies other sources of training, and discusses the importance of mentoring.

Typical career progression is shown in a revised and updated career pyramid. It is absolutely critical that every officer becomes well grounded in the operational employment of aerospace forces. An officer can achieve this through operational assignments, Professional Military Education, and self-study. As officers progress through their career, it is important that they keep their skill set sharp through refresher training and professional continuing education (PCE). To assist officers towards that goal, this guide presents a listing of education and training courses that are available to help each officer stay current. Finally, this guide addresses the process our community employs to keep the career field training current and applicable. A glossary of abbreviations and suggested readings supplement the guide.

Reservists are faced with many unique challenges in navigating their careers. In order to address these challenges, HQ AFRC/SC has developed a Reserve 33S Career Development Site. This site will keep Reserve 33S officer in touch, informed, and balanced with the Air Force, Reserves, and the 33S career field by organizing resources, tools, and opportunities and presenting it in an easy to use style. Reserve 33S officers are encouraged to use this professional development guide as well as the Reserve 33S Career Development Site.

Using this guide

Hyperlinks have been embedded in this guide to aid users who access this guide in its electronic format. For those users reading this guide in a paper format, a list of all URLs is located in Appendix 4.

Career Progression

Developing Tomorrow's Leaders

Future Air Force leaders will be those officers who fully understand the operational Air Force, can demonstrate breadth and depth in their career field, have proven their ability to lead, and think of themselves as aerospace operators first, specialists second. Becoming a future Air Force leader is an on-going process; successful senior officers built their careers one assignment at a time, always keeping in mind that their current assignment was the most important assignment for career progression. Officers should consider their current assignment their most important assignment, for the contribution the officer can make to the world's premier Air Force, and second, for the variety and breadth it can contribute to an entire career.

Specialty Qualifications

Knowledge, education, training, and experience levels required for award of the 33S AFSC are clearly specified in [AFMAN 36-2105, *Officer Classification*](#), pages 126-129. All 33S officers should take the time to review this manual which identifies all requirements for the 33S1, 33S3, 33SXA (electrical engineering specialty), and 33CO (group/deputy group commander) specialty codes.

A Balanced Approach

To experience the full breadth of opportunities in sufficient depth normally requires a variety of assignments. Professional development requires the following:

- A balanced approach in expertise—fixed communications, tactical communications, operational deployments, project management, maintenance, acquisition, architectures, information management, budget, etc. are examples of expertise; officers need experience in a variety of these, not narrow specialization.
- A balanced approach in tours of duty—CONUS, overseas, MAJCOMs, joint, unit-level and headquarters, executive officer, instructor, commander, fixed comm, deployable comm, special duty, etc., all contribute towards developing an officer's breadth of experience
- Completion of professional military education, advanced academic degree, and continuing technical training/education.

Successful professional development is essential for those who will eventually hold top leadership positions in the Air Force. A balanced approach to professional development will generate officers with specialty expertise, success in command positions, ability to apply the tenets of aerospace doctrine, and a record that validates these credentials.

Career Progression, Continued

Role of the Commander and Supervisor

Commanders, supervisors, and senior 33SX officers must take an active role in officer career development. Senior 33SX officers should provide advice in career planning. Officers should review career goals with their commander or senior 33SX officer at least annually.

Commanders or supervisors should guide and counsel officers during mentoring sessions and performance feedback sessions. They should discuss career progression using the 33SX career pyramid shown in Figure 1.

Mentoring

Air Force senior leaders recognize mentoring as an important aspect of personal and professional growth. [Air Force Policy Directive \(AFPD\) 36-34, Air Force Mentoring Program](#), instructs commanders to “formally establish mentoring in the Air Force and provide guidance for its implementation.” Commanders are responsible for promoting a robust mentoring program within their unit. The immediate supervisor or rater usually serves as the primary mentor, however this does not preclude military members from seeking multiple mentors. Officers often find themselves assigned to units in which they have few peers or individuals who may serve as suitable mentors who can provide guidance for development within their career field. Without proper career field guidance officers may experience indecision, confusion, and frustration when making career decisions. Career field guidance could be the determining factor of whether a 33SX officer stays active duty or separates from the Air Force. Appendix 1: Mentoring provides additional information about the role of the mentor and the mentoree.

Career Pyramid

The 33SX career pyramid in Figure 1 graphically displays the types of opportunities available at different times in an officer’s career. The following paragraphs describe the pyramid from the bottom up. Please keep in mind *the pyramid is only a guide*. It can’t possibly represent every single successful career path, and there is no single career path that guarantees success!

Career Progression, Continued

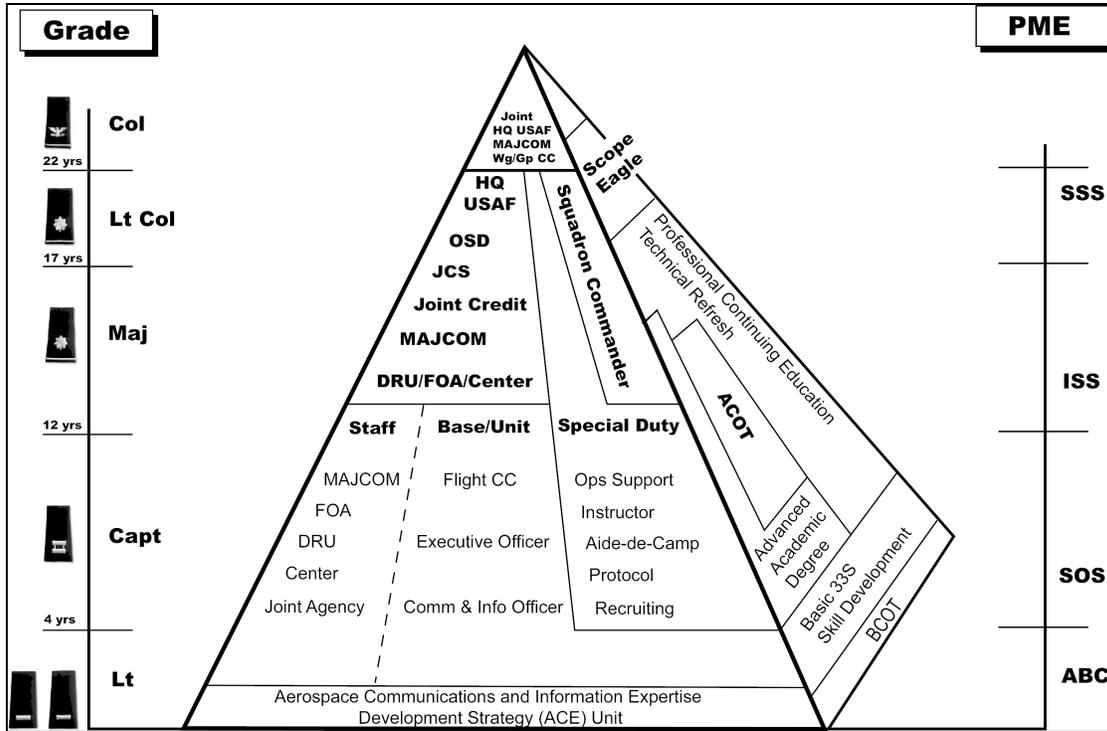


Figure 1: 33SX Career Pyramid

Initial Training When initially assigned to the communications and information career field, most officers attend the [Basic Communications Officers Training \(BCOT\)](#) at Keesler AFB, MS. BCOT provides a basic level of communications and information knowledge requisite for junior officers. Combining technical instruction with concepts of the Air Force's vision, BCOT introduces officers to the role of communications and information in the Air Force of today and tomorrow.

Your first assignment An officer's early years are best spent learning the basics of the Air Force communications and information business, particularly in an operational context. While officers are specialists in communications and information, they are airmen first, and must **take advantage of every opportunity to learn about the operational Air Force.** The Aerospace Communications and Information Expertise (ACE) initiative was designed to provide new accessions operational experience at the unit level. Follow-on assignments for ACE lieutenants will normally be to an intermediate level staff job (FOA/DRU) to

Career Progression, Continued

begin developing breadth. Appendix 2: Aerospace Communications and Information Expertise (ACE) provides more information about this initiative.

Additionally, most 2nd Lieutenants will attend the [Aerospace Basic Course \(ABC\)](#), which is the first rung of the Professional Military Education ladder. The course is designed for newly commissioned, active-duty Line of the Air Force officers to attend within their first year of commissioned service. Their mission is to inspire new USAF officers to comprehend their roles as airmen. Selection to attend ABC is made by the Officer Accessions Branch at AFPC. Students may volunteer to attend by contacting their Military Personnel Flight, Formal Training Section.

Life as a Captain

Between the 4th and 11th years of commissioned service, a variety of new options become available. Officers will have the opportunity to:

- **Become schooled in the operational art of war.** Not every officer will be assigned to a deployable unit, but every officer is an operator and must be schooled in the operational art of war--the employment of Air Force forces. An officer's operational focus is best developed and maintained through hands-on experience. The ACE initiative provides the foundation for building operational expertise. To become an expert in this area requires follow-on experience through more senior grades at other operational assignments. Jobs focused on operational art in the 33S arena might include Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) squadron mobility officer, AEF deployment commander, AFFOR/A6 planner, combat comm flight commander, joint operations officer at a regional CINC, and AFFOR/J6. Professional military education supplements, broadens, and rounds out the direct experience gained through practical application in "line" assignments. Those who successfully work these jobs must also balance their career by spending tours working other facets of our career field.
 - **Build depth by managing a flight or branch.** Leadership skills will be tested and enhanced.
 - **Instruct at the schoolhouse at Keesler AFB.** This duty will enhance understanding of the career field, and hone speaking, writing, and
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Career Progression, Continued

briefing skills, while positively impacting hundreds of other communications and information officers.

- **Complete Squadron Officer School (SOS).** Promotion to captain affords the opportunity to attend SOS in-residence between the 4th and 7th year of service. The current Air Force expectation is that approximately 75-80% of officers will have the opportunity to attend SOS in residence. Many senior leaders recommend officers complete SOS by correspondence as soon as an officer is promoted to captain.
 - **Compete for an Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) Degree Program.** AFIT offers a number of technical master/doctorate degree programs suited for 33S professionals. The Air Force Personnel Center assigns officers graduating from AFIT to advanced academic degree (AAD) coded positions directly supporting Air Force requirements at all organizational levels. The assignment is a 3-year controlled tour. AFIT graduate degree programs include Information Resource Management, Computer Engineering, Information Systems Management, Electrical Engineering, and Computer Systems. If attending AFIT is not possible, complete a master's degree program during off-duty hours through a civilian institution.
 - **Complete a special duty assignment.** Officers between their 4th and 12th years of service should plan to complete one special duty assignment. These include opportunities to serve as instructors at a Reserve Officer Training Corps detachment, Basic Military Training, Officer Training School, Squadron Officer School, or the United States Air Force Academy. Other assignments include positions in recruiting, command posts, courier, or protocol. The best timing for these assignments is after achieving career field depth and breadth.
 - **Be an executive officer.** Executive officers bring communications and information expertise directly to the wing and group mission areas. They are responsible for inter- and intra-wing/group communications and serve as a liaison to the communications squadron. Executive officers work directly for the wing or group commander, benefiting greatly from the opportunity to observe senior leadership in action.
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Career Progression, Continued

Major and beyond

Officers should complete the **Advanced Communications and Information Officer Training** (ACOT) course between the 8th and 13th year of commissioned service. This course is a forum for shaping intermediate-level Air Force communications and information leaders by enhancing knowledge of current interdisciplinary technology and policy employment applications to optimize C4 support to our operators and commanders. The opportunity to attend ACOT is 100 percent for both officers and civilians.

When selected for major, officers are eligible to enroll in **Intermediate Service School** (ISS). The Air Force designates about 20 percent of the officers selected for major as in-residence ISS candidates. If not afforded the opportunity to attend ISS in residence, officers should complete the course by correspondence or seminar within 2 years after pinning on major to remain competitive. Most AF officers enroll in the **Air Command and Staff College**, however there are other sources available that satisfy this training requirement. [AFI 36-2301](#), *Professional Military Education, Attachment 2* provides information about ISS options.

Staff billets above the wing level for communications and information officers are located at many Numbered Air Force (NAF) headquarters, and every MAJCOM, agency, HQ USAF, SAF, and joint service organizations. Experience in more than one command is desirable.

Technical expertise coupled with staff experience and positions in leadership roles prepare selected officers for command. Majors and lieutenant colonels compete for squadron commander jobs. Squadron commanders are selected through a board process that meets once per year. Assignments for senior lieutenant colonels also include opportunities to serve as ROTC detachment commanders or deputy communications group or support group commanders.

Scope Eagle is the USAF capstone professional development course for the communications and information career field. As such, it provides an opportunity for our senior executives to discuss corporate policies and issues and refresh technically. The forum is for colonels, select lieutenant colonels, and civilian equivalents in the career field. The five-day course is offered five times a year.

Career Progression, Continued

About 15 to 20 percent of officers selected for promotion to lieutenant colonel or colonel will also have the opportunity to compete for in-residence attendance at Senior Service School (SSS). Most AF officers enroll in [Air War College](#), however there are other sources available that satisfy this training requirement. [AFI 36-2301](#), *Professional Military Education, Attachment 2* provides information about SSS options.

Upon graduation from a SSS, many officers are assigned to the Air Staff or a joint-duty billet, while a select few are chosen for command at the group level. If not afforded the opportunity to attend SSS in residence, officers should complete the course by correspondence or seminar within 2 years after pinning on lieutenant colonel.

The Bottom Line

There is no one ideal career path for communications and information officers. However, a successful Air Force career normally includes a strong technical base, solid staff experience, and challenging leadership positions. Squadron commander, joint duty, and Air Staff tours are key building blocks for promotion to senior leadership positions. The often-used phrase still holds true: “How well you do in your current job is the most important factor in determining your future success.”

Information Technology is a rapidly evolving medium consisting of various operations. Today’s communications and information officers need an awareness of financial management, security considerations, and legal constraints to help round out their capabilities. These topics are included within curricula of several of the schools and courses referenced in this guide, however, these subjects are critical elements of day-to-day IT operations and warrant special emphasis.

Education and Training Courses and Resources

The Challenge Communications and information officers face a difficult challenge staying current in a career field so heavily involved in rapidly changing technologies. This section identifies training programs currently available (beyond ACOT and BCOT) for communications and information officers to further their knowledge of the career field. Professional Continuing Education (PCE) and technical refresher training are additional education and training options, either in residence, or through exportable courses and on-the-job training. This training is available to personnel to increase their skills and knowledge beyond the minimum required. While there is no formal professional continuing education program for comm and info officers, officers should consider completing courses appropriate for the job they hold or anticipate being assigned to. The list is not all-inclusive and will be updated periodically.

**Air Force
Institute of
Technology**

A number of communications and information-related courses are available through the [Air Force Institute of Technology](#) (AFIT), Wright-Patterson AFB, OH. Graduate programs include the Information Resource Management, Computer Engineering, Information Systems Management, Electrical Engineering, and Computer Systems. These are in-residence courses requiring a PCS move.

The [AFIT Distance Learning Directorate](#) offers courses on software development and management. The objective of the program is to provide continuing education for USAF members involved in any aspect of software engineering, including acquisition, writing, or modification of software. Specific topics include Software Engineering, Software Requirements and Design, Object-oriented Analysis and Design, and Software Creation and Maintenance.

**Information
Resource
Management
College**

The [National Defense University's Information Resource Management College](#) offers leading-edge training in information resource management for lieutenant colonels (and civilian equivalent) and above. Applications for the course meet a selection board. Several courses, seminars, symposia and workshops are offered with differing lengths from 3 days to 14 weeks.

Education and Training Courses and Resources, Continued

USAF Special Operations School The [USAF Special Operations School](#) (USAFSOS) at Hurlburt Field, FL sponsors a variety of courses, which further knowledge of operational art. There are no tuition or registration fees, but TDY expenses are unit funded.

Air Force Communications Agency Seminars The [Air Force Communications Agency](#) at Scott AFB, IL offers the following 5-day seminars:

- Information Management
- Information Protection
- Maintenance Management
- Planning and Implementation
- Network Management
- Personal Wireless Communications Systems and Installation Spectrum Manager (PWCS/ISM) Seminar

The target audience for most seminars are Air Force officers, senior NCOs, and DAF civilians (GS-09 and above). Personnel must be performing duties, or about to assume duties within 90 days, where they are responsible for the operation of base-level communications and information functions.

Computer Based Training Over 1,000 computer based training courses are available for use by Air Force military and Department of the Air Force civilian personnel at the [USAF CBT System](#) central site. These courses cover both technical areas and widely used end-user applications. A sampling of the courses available include the following:

▪ Cisco	▪ Java Programming
▪ COBOL Programming	▪ UNIX
▪ Managing Information Systems	▪ Microsoft Networking Essentials
▪ Novell Internet Technologies	▪ Microsoft Office
▪ Intel	▪ Microsoft Windows
▪ Netscape	▪ Microsoft Visual Basic
▪ Technical Support	▪ Oracle

Education and Training Courses and Resources, Continued

Naval Postgraduate School

The Navy has developed a unique academic institution at the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) (NPS) whose emphasis is on education and research programs that are relevant to the Navy, defense and national and international security interests. NPS provides a continuum of learning opportunities, including Graduate Degree Programs, Continuous Learning Opportunities, Refresher and Transition Education..

Professional Societies¹

The following is an example of the several courses are available through the [Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association](#) (AFCEA):

- Command, Control, and Communications
- DoD Acquisition for Government and Industry Managers and Engineers
- C4ISR Architecture Framework Implementation
- Data Management Systems
- Digital Data Communications and Emerging Technologies
- Global Command and Control System
- Military Satellite Communications

The [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers](#) (IEEE) is another professional society offering communications courses. An electrical engineering degree is not required to participate.

Other Courses

The [Acquisition Professional Development Program](#) (APDP) offers the opportunity to become certified in communications-computer acquisition.

The [Association for Computing Machinery](#) (ACM) offers an extensive listing of practical courses.

The Air Force offers a number of courses via distance learning through the [Air Force Institute for Advanced Distributed Learning](#).

¹ "The appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the U.S. Air Force of this Web site or the information, products or services contained therein. For other than authorized activities such as military exchanges and Morale, Welfare and Recreation sites, the U.S. Air Force does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations. Such links are provided consistent with the stated purpose of this DoD Web site." (DoD Web Policy, 7 Dec 98)

Career Field Training Review Process

Air Staff

The Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications and Information, AF/SC, has overall responsibility for the 33SX officer communications and information specialty. The communications and information Air Force Career Field Manager (AFCFM), assigned to the Headquarters Air Force Communications and Information, Directorate of Plans, Policies and Resources Force Management Division, HQ AF/SCXFD, conducts Utilization and Training Workshops (U&TWs) to identify training requirements and develop/update this guide. Additionally, HQ AF/SCXFD assists commands/agencies and HQ AETC Technical Training to obtain resources for identified training. AF/SC approves communications and information officer training requirements.

The AFCFM will periodically call together MAJCOM Functional Managers (MFMs) for a U&TW. The U&TW is key to developing the training requirements for the communications and information courses. They review current course training standards to determine if the current course content is adequate to prepare our officers for the challenges they will face in the career field.

MAJCOM Functional Managers

Communications and Information MFMs participate as voting members of U&TWs. MFMs are requested to review this guide biannually to ensure currency and accuracy, then forward recommended changes to the AFCFM. MFMs must program command training requirements and be involved with obtaining and allocating training quotas for the Advanced Communications and Information Officer Training (ACOT) course. MFMs identify eligible officers and distribute ACOT quotas to their units. HQ AFPC/DPASC centrally manages quotas for the Basic Communications and Information Officer Training (BCOT) course since this course is an integral part of the accession pipeline.

333d Training Squadron

The 333d Training Squadron personnel at Keesler AFB develop and revise formal resident training based upon requirements established by users. 333d TRS personnel work with the AFCFM and MFMs to develop procurement and acquisition strategies for obtaining resources needed to provide the identified training. 333d TRS personnel advise U&TWs and provide MFMs with evaluation feedback on all courses.

Maintenance of the Guide

Air Staff The 33SX AFCFM reviews the guide at least quarterly and after HQ USAF/SC and HQ USAF/SCX approve any updates, posts the changes to the guide. The guide will remain in electronic format to facilitate updates.

MAJCOMs The communications and information MFMs will review the guide biannually ensure currency and accuracy and forward recommended changes to the AFCFM. The AFCFM will notify MAJCOMs to initiate the review process.

333d Training Squadron As AETC training personnel develop/revise formal resident and exportable training based on requirements established by users, they will coordinate with HQ AF/SCXPF to incorporate the results in updates to this guide.

Appendix 1: Mentoring ²

Mentoree responsibilities

To make the mentoring connection successful, mentorees should consider the following suggestions:

- Be an active participant in the mentoring team
 - Be prepared to do the appropriate "homework" for meetings with their mentor
 - Flexibility--listen to your mentor, and consider new options
 - Take initiative, seek the mentor's advice when needed
 - Focus on your goals--don't get lost in the process
 - Know and be able to discuss your needs and objectives with your mentor
 - Take responsibility for your career and goals
 - Although you have the benefit of your mentor's guidance, you are responsible for your own path
 - When receiving feedback, look at the situation from the mentor's perspective to gain a more objective viewpoint
 - Be willing to try new things, to consider different ways of "getting there from here"
 - Periodically assess the progress of the relationship, let the advisor know when priorities must be reset
-

How to be an Effective Mentor

A mentor should take pride in their organization, relish new challenges, and understand and support the mission, vision, and values of the organization.

A mentor should be:

- Supportive
 - Patient
 - Respected
 - People-oriented
 - A Good Motivator
 - Respectful of Others
 - An Effective Teacher
 - Self-confident
-

² Langhals, Brent; Kelley, Don; Phelps, Orval; Franke, Albert; Voyer, Elizabeth; Shingledecker, Dan. (AFIT IRM students, 01M). Communications and Information Officer Career Guidance System (COGS) Systems Specification Report

Appendix 1: Mentoring, Continued

As a mentor, you should be aware of the stages of advising:

- Laying the foundation--set expectations

 - Clarify direction--in this phase, the mentor helps the mentoree look at realistic possibilities and options. Together they develop a plan to help the mentoree reach his or her goals and aspirations. The mentor's roles in this phase are primarily as coach, motivator, and teacher. It helps to give examples of good and bad experiences, share what did and did not work along the career path, and suggest pitfalls to avoid. During this time, the mentor gives a lot of praise and builds the mentoree's self-confidence.

 - Helping the mentoree grow--in this stage, the advisor serves most as a counselor, guide, and door opener. Persuades the mentoree to find answers on his or her own and challenge to take risks, try new strategies, ask questions, and make discoveries. Some of the activities a mentor might recommend to his or her mentoree during this period are:
 - Formal training that could help the mentoree become well-rounded and aid in advancement
 - Reading books, articles, journals, and other publications to enhance knowledge
 - Trying new projects or special assignments
 - Giving presentations
 - Involvement in AF projects, working groups, or special events
 - Temporary details to other positions
 - Assuming lead person responsibilities
 - Representing the supervisor at meetings
 - Joining a professional society, subscribing to a professional journal, and participating in the society
 - Attending conferences and symposiums
 - Writing an article for a newsletter, magazine, or professional publication
 - Advising a junior employee
 - Shadowing a senior person for a day
 - Involvement in community service
-

Appendix 1: Mentoring, Continued

Types of Mentoring Relationships

It may be helpful to know and recognize the four kinds of mentoring relationships:

- Supervisory: All good supervisors advise their subordinates to a degree, but usually only in regard to their current job. Due to time constraints, it is increasingly difficult for supervisors to devote the time needed to advise all their subordinates, and if they can't spend equal time and dedication with each subordinate, perceptions of favoritism can occur and morale can deteriorate. Also, supervisors today are often not "subject matter experts" in the career field of all their subordinates. Another consideration--it can be difficult or awkward for people to talk openly and honestly with their boss or another person in their chain of command if the issue is difficulty on the job or the desire to explore job changes. The most important thing to remember is that all good supervisors do advise their subordinates ... to a degree. We recommend that as leaders, supervisors encourage outside advising partnerships and allow employees the time to work on them.

 - Situational: Providing the right help at the right time by someone when a mentoree needs guidance and advice. It is usually short term addressing an immediate situation but can transition to a more long-term connection.

 - Formal: Four characteristics of formal advising are:
 - It has a beginning and an end
 - It has a method for no-fault termination
 - It has some type of formal process to match participants
 - It has one or more checkpoints during which the partners can discuss how the connection is going and reset goals or terminate

 - Informal: This partnership usually occurs when the mentoree seeks another for career advice or to be their career guide. It can also occur when the mentor reaches out to someone they know could benefit from their experience. These relationships tend to grow over a long period of time and are very effective and rewarding.
-

Appendix 1: Mentoring, Continued

What to Look for in an Mentor

Research reveals that the best mentoring relationships are those in which mentorees select their mentor themselves. However, in an organization spread across the country, it is sometimes difficult to find someone with the characteristics you desire. Research is also revealing that e-mail connections are also proving successful, which can be helpful for people in different geographical locations.

Here are some tips on what to look for in a mentor:

- Select someone you respect
 - Look for someone who is patient and has the time to go over your goals and work with you on a career development plan
 - Look for a person who will encourage you to accept challenges and overcome difficulties, and who will motivate and inspire you to reach your full potential
 - Look for someone who is genuinely interested in people, has a desire to help others, and knows how to effectively communicate and actively listen, and is able to resolve conflict and give appropriate feedback.
 - Seek someone who takes pride in their organization, who relishes challenges and understands the mission, vision, and values of the organization
-

Appendix 2: Aerospace Communications and Information Expertise (ACE)

The Initiative The ACE initiative was established to provide a common operational foundation for new communications and information officers. The Air Force needs officers who understand the basic Air Force operational mission, and who understand how communications and information technology and services enable the war fighting mission. To accomplish this, the ACE initiative assigns accessions to operational units for their initial tour of duty to help ensure that accessions have a thorough grounding in the operational aspects of the career field. ACE officers are assigned primarily to base level communications units, as well as MAJCOM-level communication groups, combat communications units, combat camera units, air communications squadrons (ACOMS), and the 738th Engineering and Installation Squadron (738 EIS).

Commander Responsibilities Unit commanders are critical to the success of this initiative. The mentorship and training they provide, in conjunction with the guidelines discussed below, will help ensure our future communications and information leaders obtain the operational experience critical to their officer professional development.

Air Force Career Field Manager Responsibilities The AFCFM maintains overall responsibility and oversight for the ACE initiative. The AFCFM and the Chief, Communications-Information Officer Assignment Branch, HQ AFPC/DPASC, will conduct an annual review of ACE allocations. They will review the list of approved units, allocation of ACE candidates to each unit, and current ACE manning, and send annual projections to the MAJCOM/SCs and MAJCOM functional managers for their review, adjustment, and approval.

ACE Lieutenant Responsibilities ACE lieutenants must pursue their professional development by taking full advantage of the opportunities the assignment has to offer. Officers should expect to serve in various positions, each providing valuable experience in different facets of the operational communications and information mission.

HQ/AFDPASC Responsibilities HQ AFPC/DPASC is responsible for assigning accessions to approved units.

Appendix 2: Aerospace Communications and Information Expertise (ACE), Continued

ACE Tour Progression

Accessions going to CONUS front-line operational units will serve a 2-year tour with the entered active duty date (EAD) as the start date. OCONUS accessions will serve a normal tour length starting when the ACE lieutenant reports for duty at the front-line operational unit. ACE lieutenants must attend the Basic Communications and Information Officer Training Course (BCOT). For CONUS tours, the normal time to attend BCOT is within the first 6 months of the ACE tour. Sometimes BCOT quotas are not available and attendance must be delayed, however every effort is made to send officers no later than the first year of the ACE tour. Accessions serving OCONUS will attend BCOT en route to duty. In the event a projected OCONUS ACE accession does not have BCOT scheduled en route, notify HQ AFPC/DPASC immediately.

There are two key reasons why lieutenants must move 2 years after entering active duty (EAD):

- The ACE lieutenant must move at two years to make room for the new accessions, and to provide officers for non-front-line operational unit requirements. The only other option to sending these units graduating ACE lieutenants is to send them accessions which defeats the purpose of this initiative.
- AFPC must move ACE Lts after 2 years to ensure retainability of officers for a PCS move. An officer must have 2 years retainability for CONUS to CONUS, or CONUS to OCONUS Long assignments.

Movement at the 2-year point is imperative to the success of ACE. Follow-on assignments will normally be to a FOA, or DRU where they will have the opportunity to apply the operational experienced gained during their ACE tour.

Guidelines for Commanders

The goals of the ACE initiative are to operationalize our future communications and information leaders, provide a common first step in officer professional development, provide leadership opportunities, provide mentoring opportunities, improve retention rates, and produce experienced/operationally oriented officers. There are nearly as many approaches to meeting these goals as there are front-line operational units. Any game plan that successfully meets the goals of the ACE strategy is

Appendix 2: Aerospace Communications and Information Expertise (ACE), Continued

acceptable. Game plans need to be flexible enough to take advantage of the particular backgrounds of ACE lieutenants and unique missions of the front-line operational units.

Commanders should try to provide ACE lieutenants formal leadership opportunities within squadrons, making them responsible for a piece of the mission as well as people and resources. Flight commander leadership may not be appropriate, but work center level leadership under a flight commander is a sound alternative. ACE lieutenants should stay in one position long enough to become proficient in that position, so the squadron can reap the benefits of having a fully trained officer occupying the position. At the same time, their participation in additional duties, special projects, or other operational duty across the wing is not contrary to the intent of the ACE initiative as long as the duties are within reason. A broad spectrum of diversified jobs creates an officer well versed in aerospace operations and increases their chances for promotion.

BCOT provides lieutenants with a solid foundation in the communications and information area of expertise. However, each MAJCOM and each base has its own perspective, challenges, and limiting factors as they relate to supporting the Air Force mission. Commanders should tailor on-the-job training in light of these differences on an individual basis to augment BCOT.

When it comes time for the ACE lieutenant to PCS, commanders must be careful about the expectations they create in their officers. Experience has shown when these expectations are not met, officers become discouraged and disheartened. As discussed in the ACE Tour Progression section above, the expectation should be that the officer would go to a MAJCOM, FOA, or DRU staff, versus another unit-level job. One of the main tenets of ACE is to provide experienced/operationally-oriented officers to non-operational units. This was the primary selling point for the non-front-line operational units. If AFPC doesn't send the ACE graduates to non-front-line operational units, those non-front-line operational units will have no choice but to stop supporting front-line operational since we will be unable to fill their positions to manning entitlement.

Mathematics is the driver. There are more CGO positions in front-line operational units than there are in front-line operational units. To maintain all units at CGO entitlement, the vast majority of ACE graduates must move into non-front-line operational units or executive officer billets. Officers who have never had the opportunity of a tour in a base level squadron need to have priority in gaining that type of assignment to help round out their officer professional development.

Appendix 2: Aerospace Communications and Information Expertise (ACE), Continued

Mentoring is key here. When counseling their ACE lieutenants, squadron commanders must show their officers that the key to a successful career is to do all types of jobs in different types of units to round out their officer professional development. Front-line operational unit commanders must know the big picture when mentoring their young officers. Commanders and ACE lieutenants must understand that a "shiny penny" will be a "shiny penny" no matter where they are sent, and there is no one correct path to ensure future success. A broad spectrum of diversified jobs creates the best promotion recommendation form.

There are opportunities outside the front-line operational unit at the base for ACE lieutenants to gain operational experience and leadership opportunities. front-line operational unit commanders can continue to mentor these officers while they work outside the comm unit. They should work with their leadership and other squadron commanders to create a game plan that meets the goals of ACE and those of the wing. Also keep in mind that exec duty, with its focus on information management, is part of the communications and information career field. It provides an excellent opportunity to gain information resource management experience while at the same time offering insight to senior leadership challenges.

AFPC will not oppose ACE lieutenants being matrixed to work outside of their front-line operational unit, however the front-line operational unit commanders should continue to mentor these officers in their capacity as the 33S career field functional manager at their base.

Expected Outcomes

ACE lieutenants should gain a solid foundation in aerospace operations during their 2-year tour. More specifically, their exposure to squadron operations should result in skill sets that are a function of the unit mission. The behavior statements outlined in the Basic Communications and Information Officer Course Training Standard are tied to core competencies. These behavior statements represent what each ACE lieutenant can expect to have reinforced during his/her 2-year tour at the unit. They also serve as metrics commanders can use to measure ACE lieutenant development and performance.

Appendix 3: Abbreviations/Terms Explained

Accession	Someone newly entered into the Air Force, i.e. one who entered the Air Force in 1999 is a 1999 accession.
Air Force Career Field Manager (AFCFM)	A person who directs the development and coordination of courses and standards for training and educating personnel in a specific career field.
Advanced Communications Officer Training (ACOT)	Formalized communications and information course provided to a fully qualified mid-career officer, between 8 and 13 years from commissioning (or between 11 and 17 years for officer grade civilian equivalents). The course is aligned under the 333 rd Technical Training Squadron, Keesler AFB, and runs for 23 days. The primary focus of the course is technology refresh.
Aerospace Communications and Information Expertise (ACE) Initiative	A career development strategy for new communications and information officer accessions that focuses on early exposure to operational assignments at the wing/base level.
Basic Communications Officer Training (BCOT)	Formalized communications and information course at Keesler AFB for new accessions that have completed a commissioning program. BCOT attendance is either en route to an officer's first assignment, or within the first year of commissioned service. The course is aligned under the 333 rd Technical Training Squadron and runs 65 days. The primary focus of the course is to provide a broad brush of basic communications fundamentals.
Career Guide	A comprehensive, multipurpose document encapsulating the major areas of education and training for a career field. It outlines a logical development plan including training resources and identifies career field training to eliminate duplication and ensure a defensible training budget.
Course Training Standard (CTS)	A training document identifying the training content and level members will receive in a specific course.
Initial Skills Training	A formal resident course resulting in award of the entry-level Air Force Specialty (AFS).
Intermediate Service School (ISS)	Prepares field grade officers (primarily majors and major selects) and US civilians to assume positions of higher responsibility within the military and government arenas.

Appendix 3: Abbreviations/Terms Explained, Continued

MAJCOM Functional Manager (MFM)	A person who directs the development and coordination of courses and standards for training and educating personnel in a specific career field at the MAJCOM level.
O-6 Steering Group	A team chaired by HQ USAF/SCX and composed of the MAJCOM/SC deputies, an AFPC rep, and a senior civilian rep. Team meets semiannually (Jun and Dec) at Keesler AFB to discuss education, training, and career field management issues concerning communications and information officer, civilian, and enlisted personnel.
Resource Constraints	Resource deficiencies, such as money, facilities, time, manpower, information, and equipment precluding delivery of desired training.
Scope Eagle	Course for communications and information Colonels, Colonel selects, select Lieutenant Colonels and civilian equivalents. Scope Eagle is aligned under the 333 rd Training Squadron and runs for one week. The course consists primarily of guest speakers from the senior leadership ranks of the Air Force communications and information community and provides attendees with an update on numerous programs and career field issues.
Senior Service School (SSS)	Educate senior officers to lead at the strategic level in the employment of aerospace forces, including joint, combined, and coalition operations, in support of national security.
Special Duty Assignment (SDA)	A duty assignment outside an individual's primary career field, such as Squadron Officer School instructor.
Squadron Officer School (SOS)	Stresses leadership and teamwork, which are essential tools for the developing career Air Force officers at the grade of captain.
Utilization and Training Workshop (U&TW)	The forum a career field uses to identify utilization patterns and define training requirements and responsibilities for a specialty. Chaired by the AFCFM and includes representatives from field organizations.

Appendix 4: Suggested Reading

The Air Force Chief Of Staff Professional Reading Program	Access the complete list of books in the program at http://www.af.mil/lib/csafbook/index.shtml
Education and Training Course Announcements	Education and Training Course Announcements web site contains course descriptions for the various training courses available and the procedures for obtaining the training. https://hq2af.keesler.af.mil/etca.htm
AFPD 36-34, Air Force Mentoring Program	Mentoring is a fundamental responsibility of all Air Force supervisors. They must know their people, accept personal responsibility for them, and be accountable for their professional development. http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afpd36-34/afpd36-34.pdf
AFI 36-2105, Officer Classification	Describes the various officer specialties, the coding system used to differentiate them, and the knowledge, education, training and experience requirements of each specialty. http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afman36-2105/afman36-2105.pdf
AFI 36-2110, Assignments	Contains the policies and prescribes the procedures for moving officers between organizations, bases, and commands. It also provides information on assignment limitations, tour lengths, and various waivers. http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afi36-2110/afi36-2110.pdf
AFI 36-2406, Officer Evaluation System	Assists raters and ratees in giving and receiving performance feedback and in preparing officer performance reports and promotion recommendation forms. http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afi36-2406/afi36-2406.pdf
AFI 36-2501, Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation	States the actual procedures for promoting active duty officers below the grade of brigadier general. This document explains how the Air Force conducts selection boards and makes promotion selections http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afi36-2501/afi36-2501.pdf
AFI 36-2611, Officer Professional Development Guide	Provides general information on professional development common to all officers. It provides an excellent means for organizing your professional development notes and references. http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afi36-2611/afi36-2611.pdf

Appendix 4: Suggested Reading, Continued

AFI 36-3401, Air Force Mentoring Provides guidance on how to carry out Air Force Mentoring, which was established to bring about a cultural change in the way we view professional development.
<http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afi36-3401/afi36-3401.pdf>

CFETP for specialties within the 2EXXX, 3AXXX, 3CXXX and 3VXXX enlisted career fields Career Field Education and Training Plans (CFETP) provide guidance for the planning, development, and life-cycle training requirements for airmen within these communications and information specialties. Each plan identifies mandatory skills airmen should obtain during their careers as communication and information professionals.

Air Force Civilian Training and Development Guide Lists approved training, PME, and executive development courses for members of the AF Civilian Careers Program.
<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cp/docs.htm>

Appendix 5: URL Reference List

Career Progression

AFMAN 36-2105, <http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afman36-2105/afman36-2105.pdf>
Officer
Classification

Mentoring

AFPD 36-34, Air <http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afpd36-34/afpd36-34.pdf>
Force Mentoring
Program

Professional Military Education

Aerospace <http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/soc/abc/index.htm>
Basic Course
Squadron <http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/soc/sos/mission.htm>
Officer School
Air Command <http://wwwacsc.maxwell.af.mil>
and Staff
College
Air War <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awchome.htm>
College
AFI 36-2301, <http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/36/afi36-2301/afi36-2301.pdf>
Professional
Military
Education

Appendix 5: URL Reference List, Continued

Air Force Communications and Information Officer Training

Basic Communications and Information Officer Training <https://wwwmil.keesler.af.mil/ACOT/bcot.html>

Advanced Communications and Information Officer Training <https://wwwmil.keesler.af.mil/ACOT/acot.html>

Scope Eagle <https://wwwmil.keesler.af.mil/ACOT/se.html>

Education and Training

Air Force Institute of Technology <http://en.afit.af.mil/>

AFIT Distance Learning Directorate <http://dl.afit.af.mil/>

National Defense University's Information Resource Management College <http://www.ndu.edu/irmc/>

Naval Postgraduate School <http://www.nps.navy.mil/>

USAF Special Operations School <http://www.hurlburt.af.mil/usafsos/calender.html#Courses>

Air Force Communications Agency Seminars <https://www.afca.scott.af.mil/seminars/>

USAF CBT System <http://afcbt.den.disa.mil/usafcbt/default.asp>

Appendix 5: URL Reference List, Continued

Education and Training, Continued

Acquisition Professional Development Program <http://www.safaq.hq.af.mil>

Air Force Institute for Advanced Distributed Learning <http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/afiadl>

Professional Societies

Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association <http://www.afcea.org/>

Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers <http://www.ieee.org>.

Association for Computing Machinery <http://www.acm.org/education>

Miscellaneous

Air Force Comm and Info Officers Web Page <https://www.afca.scott.af.mil/33sx/>

Feedback

This publication of the Communications and Information Officer Professional Development Career Guide is the first step in ensuring that force management issues remain visible to all personnel working in the communications and information career field.

This guide will be reviewed annually by the Force Management Division, HQ AF/SCXPF (HQ AF/SCXF) and the O-6 Steering Group, for approval by HQ AF/SC. Please take the time to provide any recommended changes, comments, or suggestions to HQ AF/SCXF so they can be included in the annual update.

Send
Comments to: HQ AF/SCXF
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