Ep. 22: The importance of R-EDP and MyVector

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All right, welcome to another episode of the Sword and Shield. I'm Chief Master Sergeant Chris Howard, Superintendent of the 960th Cyberspace Operations Group. And today on the phone I have. - Hello. This is Chief Master Sergeant Billie Baber. I am the current Command Chief at the Air Reserve Personnel Center. - Awesome, Chief. I really do appreciate you taking the time today to speak to us, and kind of providing us some of your guidance and experience. And I was wondering if you could tell the audience a little bit about yourself. - Absolutely. Chief Howard, thank you for giving me this opportunity. Anytime I can say great things about the great things that people of ARPC are doing, I will jump at that chance. Like I said, I'm the current Command Chief of the ARPC. And a little bit about my background, I am a career personalist. I did 11 years active duty as a personalist, then I took some time out of that, period to be an ALS instructor. So, PME is a huge part of honestly of who I am and where I am, and highly recommended for anybody. When I'm separated at 11 years, had twin girls and just didn't wanna leave the air force completely, loved it but it just didn't fit the active duty lifestyle just didn't fit into my life at that time. So, I separated, became an IMA, I was an IMH, NCO Academy instructor at Laughlin as a matter of fact for a couple of years, and then came and did the TR. The TR did get the three 40th there at Randolph. And after that, I went to AFPOA, the Air Force Personnel Operations Agency, worked on some systems requirements for awhile, went to AFPC for a couple of years, and then ended up here at ARPC it's in the DPX directorate, is then that's where I met Colonel Eric, he was my boss there for a while, and went over to RIO, Readiness Integration Organization, and worked with IMH for quite some time. And that's what led me up to this position here at the Air Force Reserve Personnel Center. As a Command Chief serving, wider than it 1.3 million customers. So, what a lot of people don't know about ARPC is we are a truly total force integrated organization. You walk into ARPC, and you have absolutely no idea who's Reserve, who's RegAF, and who is National Guard. So, we are juggling a lot of hearts at ARPC and serving a lot of customers. But the men and women at ARPC do it so well. And I'm super excited to talk about just development and in the invested core and development at ARPC and the amazing things that they're doing to move us into the future. We've been kind of stuck on some of our developmental opportunities within the Air Force Reserve for a very long time. And Chief White coming into the picture, he is just a mover and a shaker, and he's just moving us forward and rocketing us forward. So, it's a really great time to be in the Air Force

Reserve especially right now when talent management is a focus from Chief White and our professional development is a huge focus on his plate right now. So, that's kind of me in a nutshell and where I am today. - Awesome, thanks Chief. I mean, that's a great background, right? And highlighting AFRPC is really good. I don't think most airmen at the tactical level understand how robust that program is and all the things that you guys do. So, thank you for bringing that to the forefront for these airmen to hear and kind of get a little bit better idea. I did have a couple of questions. You're talking about the future of airman development, and where we have been and where we're going. I was wondering if you kind of help me and our listeners understand where were we a couple of years ago, to where we are today and what the future might look like, right? Some of the programs that we're working towards. - Yeah, when it comes to professional development especially with the enlisted Corps we're always trying to make it better, right? 'Cause there's nothing more important in the Air Force Reserve than our people, and making sure that we're developing them properly. And making sure that they're filling the jobs that we need that to feel, right, at talent management. So, when I first started doing my REDP, and in providing all that information, it was kind of like, uh. It didn't feel like it was really going anywhere, and I didn't feel like I was getting any really quality kind of feedback. And that's what's important, especially with our airmen is that quality feedback, not just getting the standard or you need a decoration or you need to do this things that you know and things that you can't control. I would get things like you need to deploy. Great, I would love to deploy, I just don't have those opportunities, right. So, it's hard to fix yourself and to do better when you're getting feedback that you have no control over. And so, as we move forward, and one of the great amazing things that Chief White has initiated, was he decoupled the E8/E9 Development Team Board, right? So, we gave the Senior Master Sergeant back to the functional community. Because really that's where they still need to be, right? So, our MFMs are in positions where they're providing exceptional functional feedback but also that exceptional leadership feedback, because our Senior Master Sergeants that our Master Sergeant are in a very important time in their career where they are the functional experts. But, as they're transitioning into be that strategic leader and the leaders that we need them to be in their Air Force Reserve. So, sending the E8, the Senior Master Sergeant back to the functional community, this allows the functional community to more deliberately develop these individuals, and get them on the right track, right? 'Cause not everybody in the world is meant to be a command chief. Not everybody in the Reserve is meant to be an MFM. And I think that's what we were kind of missing in the past is you know what, here is a track that you need to be. You are this amazing smart person, nobody knows more about the job that you do, you need to go be an MFM or a CEF. Deliberately developing these guys. A few years ago we had advertised for the personnel CEM position, and we couldn't get any applicants, which was the craziest thing ever in my mind 'cause people should be chomping at the bit to want to be the Personnel Career Field manager. - Right. - And so, that kind of let off a lot of red flags, like what is going on? Why aren't we having more talent competing for that very important position? So, and that's where I think this is going to lead us. Right, to get us the best talent that we possibly can and to lead people down that right path, that's right balance for

them. What does that look like in the career field? What does that look like a family? The different statuses that they can perform. I'm sure you've seen the same transition I have seen and just being a TR on the same base for 20 years it's not the same in the Air Force Reserve now. So, and giving that quality feedback to our guys and getting them ready. Hey, this is where we need you to go. You might have to come in and out of different statuses. Hopefully you can make that work but if you can't heck, we can work something else for you. So, 'cause we are still a Reserve, we're also a volunteer force, and we want the goodness of the Reserve. Balanced with that deliberate talent management and getting people in the right place at the right time. - Right, Chief, I mean, what I liked about the REDP, especially when it first came out was the promise of our REDP, right? Here we have an avenue to go straight to our functional manager and say, "This is what I wanna do. "This is what my goals are, one to three, "five years," right. When I first started doing this, I was a Master Sergeant and I wanna go this route, I wanna do this, and then I was, anxiously awaiting that first vector and much like you said, Chief on those first vectors where like as head slappers. Like, do they read this? (Chuckles) Did they get there? Did they miss something? 'Cause I've been deployed and you're telling me I need another deployment or I need to employ and I can't deploy in this current position where you need to get this school done. Well, it's in my record, so what are you talking about? So, I think that we've had a lot of missteps along the way, but I definitely know that was with Chief White's doing and the work that you're doing that we're getting a little bit more focused vectors. And from your personal experience, how do you see that those vectors changing and being focused a little bit more? Are we adding more people to the board? Are we adding more time, or is it just a breakdown where we're putting the right buckets in the right place at the right time? - So, that is a great question. And, as I've been in this position, I have seen these developmental team boards evolve. Because I do go and I go observe and I talk to the MFM and the CEFs, and they are getting really good, they come in with a list now of positions that they know that are coming up, maybe key positions, important positions that they can start deliberately vectoring people into that. Like say, hey, the MSM position is coming up. This guy and this guy, man, they would be great. So, that's the kind of deliberate feedback that they will be providing these folks. And this is also a really good transition into MyVector, right now, our folks are working in an antiquated access database. And I don't even know, I want to say that publicly, but that's what they're doing. And you say access now, if you're like what that's still around like, we still use it. - I remember when I was close to that, on the side is a joke. Yeah, I'm with you. - Yeah, and so these poor guys, that's what they've been working with. And so access is just the database, right? They have to pull from other databases and from other systems to get what they need. And right now, I don't even know how many systems they pull from, but they do pull from a lot. And in VPC as well, is a great tool, it's just not where we would like it to be. - Right. - And so right now, so, MyVector is the new platform that is coming up forward. General Scobee saw the demo and he loved it. And, he has given us money to say, hey, go forth and conquer and get it right. So, that's what we're doing right now. So, MyVector is right now, we're on the enlisted side. We're dabbling in it. We are going to adopt it, just right now we're dabbling in it. On the officer's side, it was a lot easier for them to

adopt it because the officer's side on the Recap, who's already been using it has already the requirements, a lot of the requirements in there that our officers can utilize in the reserve. For enlisted, it's a little bit different, right, because our rules are so much different when it comes to you enlisted in the Recap. So, there's a lot more intricacies that we have to develop as far as requirements though. - Okay. - But it's all going to be worth it, and we're already working on it. I believe February is when they're going to test it with the special duty, DT. - Okay. - So, we're very hopeful. But what this does is that it houses everything in one location. So, when you go into VPC right now, everything kind of has to be routed, you send something out to your mentor and you're like, can you help me? Here's what I have. What are your suggestions for me in the future, and that's kind of hard, right. Based off of just, this is my one-year goal, my five-year goal, my 10-year goal, or however it's a CPC. And right now, in MyVector all of that is in there but you can also pull up EPR, you can pull decorations, you can pull up basically a serf on that individual. So, you can really get a good feel on the history of that individual. What they've done in the past, is that conducive to what they want to do in the future and actually provide good mentorship feedback. And so, that's all going to be housed in there and that's where they're, when we do the actual Developmental Team Board, that's the only system we will need. And then you provide that specific in that quality feedback to that individual person. So, really, I mean, I'm not saying this is how it's going to be done, but as you're going through the board, you can give them real time feedback. - Okay, awesome. - And it goes directly to them. So, I mean, it's amazing what the system can do. And we're looking at it to maybe do assignments. Just a whole other slew of things that we could do in MyVector, but I'm super excited that this is coming on board and once we get rid of access, oh my gosh, we will have a huge party at ARPC. (Chuckles) Until we're still utilizing the access, but MyVector is just around the corner and we're super excited to bring it on board. - Right, now that's awesome. Really thinking about it from a cyber perspective, you think about all these different databases that I got to pull from them, then I got a co-locate all that information into another database that then I can make accessible to that DT board. So, clearing that up, there's probably things that get lost when we pull things or corrupted portions of those files, that they get moved over. So, that's where looking at previous DT vectors, that could be some of the concerns that people get flagged up. And now MyVector being able to bring that all under one house and all accessible on the same back plane, that's, awesome, I think that'll definitely clear up a lot of issues. I know me personally, I've been starting to dabble with MyVector, I've got a couple of mentees that have reached through there, so, using it as a user, I found it pretty neat. For someone that's not in my direct chain to leverage me as a mentor and ask me questions and provide daily feedback through that portion of it. That's awesome. - Yep. - Okay. - Absolutely. And, there's another feature in there as well, where the functional managers and the CEN, can send out career fields specific guidance. - Okay. - To the career field. So, I mean, there's so much capability within MyVector and I've just barely touched on what that system can do. So, we're super excited and hopefully, even in the personnel world, we know that there's so many systems out there that we use to pull data. And we get frustrated just to produce a retirement order here at ARPC, you've got like 10 systems going at once, which is just crazy.

But, we just kind of backed ourselves into this technology nightmare. Whenever we have the newest and greatest thing, I mean, that's awesome and we need to keep moving forward, but we forget. We've got so many other systems out here, now you're just adding another one. Whereas this one is actually going to consolidate a lot of that and just make it easier across the Air Force Reserve. - Right, and from an understanding perspective, and it seems almost like in some cases, these were Band-Aids to significant problems, but they never really cured what the overall ailment of getting all that big data together so that it could be easily cross-referenced and used. Is that what we're looking at then? - Exactly. We have in the past, like you said, we've done a lot of Band-Aid systems that are out there. And they, to the credit, they are the latest and greatest things, but there's so much, and you know when anytime you bring a system online, there's so much red tape. - Yes. - And there's so many hoops and obstacles you have to go through just to get something on my network. And so a lot of times by the time you get it on the network, it's already outdated or we no longer have the contract for it. Or something always just seems to happen. And so, having one system, I'm not saying this is going to house every system out there. I wish but that's wishful thinking. But to have a system that not only the user can use, but headquarters can also use, and to have that one big system where everybody can communicate, I think is a huge win. I mean, for the Air Force as a whole. - Yes. Well, just based on what you told me, I look at it as a really good time-saver and ease of use thing, right? When you're telling me you had all of these other sub databases that you're gonna pull into an access database, and then provide that to the DT board, having it more of the fingertips where they can access product, they can access the EPRs, and all these other parts and pieces right there, and then provide feedback. We're saving a lot of man-hours here, we're also making it easier for the members on the board to get a good solid picture of these airmen, and then provide something meaningful to them, right? So, I see that the tool is going to be a really good asset to that process. - Yeah, I mean absolutely. The foundation of who we are as airmen is feedback. - Right. - We can look at to our successes and our mistakes and it's because we took feedback or we didn't take quality feedback. And I truly believe in these developmental teams, I truly believe in these boards. I think of myself as a product of them, right. I've had good mentors. Even though I've gotten feedback from these boards like you said, go get your certification, what is that? Your PMC, and you're like, well I did, and it's in my record. Did you not look? So, those things that are right there at fingertips, you just wasted time, you wasted that board members time giving that feedback, and then you wasted the member's time looking and seeing, "Yeah, I already did that." So, having it all housed in a readable database, 'cause one thing about access to, right? You're pulling from other locations. - Yeah. - And some of it's easy to read and some of it is not, right? Some of it you have to kind of look through and find the information that you need. So, it's just a convoluted process right now, and it's so time-consuming. Not just on the team members at ARPC that are putting it on, but also the board members who have to sift through that. - Right. - Right. And wait for the PDF document to populate. So, it absolutely is going to be great all the way around. But like you said, unless we give that quality feedback, it's, we're not. We as board members, as Chiefs, as senior NCOs, we need to start being more deliberate

within our career fields too, and making sure people understand that you don't have to be a Command Chief to be successful. Not everybody is made to be a Command Chief. - Right. - I need you to run the career, the career field because you are so damn smart and you know all these things, this is where I need you to be. And developing folks in these different roles, there's nothing wrong with that, because one of the things that when I came into the Reserve was my definition to me as success was a Command Chief, which absolutely is for some people, but it's not for everybody. - Right, yeah. - And we as leaders need to make sure that we are deliberately letting our folks know like, hey, this is the path that you need to be on. And if this path isn't what you need to be on or this is not the path you wanna be on, then hey, let's try and get you on another path, but that may not work out. Giving that honest feedback. And the functional community, I think that's where that honest feedback needs to start. - Right. - The functional of getting them the functional feedback that their folks need to be successful, but also giving it at leadership, the leadership feedback, right. Because in the personnel community, we kinda got stuck for awhile because man, we have got a great group of functional experts in our Senior Master Sergeants in the personnel world. But what have we been doing to develop them on the leadership side? - Right, yeah. Where are we pushing them towards that greater expansive experience, right? - Exactly. So, hopefully this will kind of bring it all together. I'm not saying it's going to be the magic solution because it's always going to take our people to make it successful, and our leaders. And really start investing. Now we have this great tool to really help us start investing in our, in our folks, in our young folks, and that's really what it is designed to do. - Right, the next step on that too, or it's really the startup step for most people is how much as an individual are we engaged in these programs, right? As the member looking for that mentorship and looking for that back drain. It's gonna be key for me to be clear and precise in what I'm looking for when I put in my goals, and what I'm looking for, as well as making sure all of those records are up to date and that I've done the parts and pieces that I'm supposed to do, correct? - Correct. Absolutely. This isn't just a system where you rely on the mentors to get you to where you need to be, right? It's going to take a lot of self. Alive on our part, because I think sometimes we do rely on outside sources to help us be successful, which is great. - Yeah. - We, as an Air Force Reserve, we do, we try really hard to provide you those outside sources to make you successful. But the most important person in this equation here is you. Right, is your ability to invest in your career. Are you going in and making sure your records are updated? Is it the most updated to meet the developmental team? So, and as we go on in technology, that's going to be more and more important, right? - Yeah. Because we're really relying on the user to make sure that their information is correct. And that's just a product of just finding right, less manning, we can go into that. That's a whole different subject. - Yeah, it's a whole different subject, all right? - Yeah. (Laughs) But I mean, what more than ever is so important to make sure the individual is checking to make sure that their records are where they need to be. - Yeah, agreed. I tell a lot of the individuals that I talk to, on a regular basis is, if you're willing to invest in yourself, I'm willing to invest equally if not greater into you, right? If you're willing to put forth the effort make the moves, do what you need to do to set yourself up, I'm willing to then invest

in you to make sure that you're getting the right direction that you're getting developed the correct way and that I'm there to help you. But if you're not willing to put the effort forward as much as you're gonna put it into your Facebook if you can't put that much into my back yard, we're set, right? That's all the level of investment I'm looking for to start with, and then we can grow from there together. It's our portfolio from a management perspective, you've taken the time here and I'm going to take the same amount of time to make sure you're just as successful. - Absolutely, I could not have said it better myself. That is absolutely perfect. Because I think, one of the things that is a hard, one, is to take that critical feedback. I think since I've been in this position trying to give people that honest quality feedback, sometimes it's not taken very well, right. And I have those conversations with them too, like, wow, you're gone a long time in your career, to be in a position where you are not able to take feedback. - Yeah. - So that tells me, okay, what are we doing as leaders that our folks are getting today, E8/E9 positions and they're not willing to take feedback. So, again, it's foundational, right? It's foundational. We have to be good with feedback from day one. - Agreed, that's right. - Yeah, when that airman comes into the Air Force Reserve, we have to be good with that feedback, all the way up until if and when they become Chiefs, the command chief, senior master sergeant, master sergeant. But we have to be able to... I'm a firm believer of feedback is foundational. And I've been given that hard tough feedback, that's been hard to take at times, but that's something we've learned to do, right? As a young airman, you kind of shake it off whatever, but then you learn, right, you learn, people are giving you feedback because they want you to be better and they're investing in you. And so that's hugely important. And systems like MyVector, and in our development teams, I think are perfect. Perfect ways of getting those things done. - Agreed chief, fully. Some great items there to take away. I think that we could probably talk about this for another two hours, if we were given that-- - Right. - But I was wondering if there was anything that you might want to part with to our airmen out there. - One of the many things that I've learned throughout my career is change is inevitable, and I know everybody has heard that. Change is inevitable because we are always just trying to be better. And it's no different with the DTs, the Developmental Teams changing, and rules kind of change it from year-to-year because we're learning, and we're learning how to make this better for the airmen. So, I know I get so frustrating. New systems are frustrating, and trying to keep up with technology is frustrating especially for our first old folks, but it's necessary. And as long as you go into it with a good frame of mind knowing that the Air Force Reserve has the best intentions of their people in mind, always, 'cause I think some people get discouraged sometimes, create another system, create another way we're doing things. - Yeah. - But just to always keep it in perspective, we'd only do changes and we only do these things because we're investing in our airmen. And no matter how the frustration gets just always remember that we are always in the background just trying to make it better, and feedback is always welcome. We try and solicit feedback from the folks after DT. Hey, were the vectoring is a little bit better? 'Cause that's something that takes time, right? Because it does, it takes a lot of time to be able to give people individual vectors. And so, we're really working on those, and we know how important that feedback to our airmen are. And so we are working every single time after every DT,

to make that better. Like I said, with Chief White, he is working hard to make sure that we have the right people in the right positions to make sure that it does get better. So, lots of change is coming, a lots of great change is coming and just keep it in all perspective, but it's because we want to make our airmen better. - Awesome Chief. Thank you so much. Thank you for your time. I appreciate your passion, right. It definitely comes out in talking to you how much you care about our airmen. And I know you're putting a lot of effort out there on their behalf, so, I definitely want to tell you thank you so much for that. And thank you for spending some time today to discuss MyVector and our EDPs... and just FRPC in general. So, thank you so much, Chief. - Thank you. Thank you Chief Howard, absolutely for having me. I appreciate it. - Thank you Chief. And for our gladiators, thank you so much for taking the time to listen today and best wishes to you and hope you have a great Gladiator Day. (Bright upbeat music)