

Ep. 6: Professional Development

Welcome to Sword and Shield, the official podcast of the 960th Cyberspace Wing. Join us for insight, knowledge, mentorship and some fun, as we discuss relevant topics in and around our wing. Please understand that the views expressed in this podcast are not necessarily the views of the U. S. Air Force, nor the Air Force Reserve, and no endorsement of any particular person or business is ever intended. (Light music)

Hello, this is Chief Howard and this is the Sword and Shield episode six. And today with me I have... - Senior Master Sergeant Kevin Hunter, 426th Network Warfare Squadron operation superintendent. - Tech. Sergeant Anthony Luna, 960th Cyberspace Operations Group Training Manager. - Welcome gentlemen, I appreciate you guys taking some time today. What I wanted to kind of dive into is, professional development. And the question I had for you, Senior Hunter was, what program are you currently working with? - So, I'm currently working with the professional development committee. We've been standing it up and starting to offer a lot of courses for the airmen that are available virtually, so that they have an opportunity to come in and develop and make good use of their time. And hopefully, further their knowledge in their careers, and provide them with resources that are a little outside of the standard PME type development courses. - Okay, so like what kinda courses are being offered and what kind of frequency? - So, right now we're partnered with 433rd wing and their professional development committee and we're standing ours a much more robustly as well, but they are offering two courses. Well, in conjunction with us, we're offering two courses a day, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and one on every Friday. So, they're every day at noon and every day at 18.30. So, we have seven courses a week, and then two to three courses on the UTA's. They cover any, a wide variety of topics. We try to balance it out between a mix of resiliency and technical. So, resiliency a lot of them are just... There was one yesterday it was the art of gratitude or self care or a lot of different types of resiliencies. And not necessarily just all the, the mental aspects, some of it is, they did a nice family workout one the other day. Just a good way to go out and relieve stress, kind of get everything going, clear your head type resiliency. And then on the technical side, we go anywhere from an Excel sheet, how to really work with Excel, in. from a 101 and a 102 and developing different levels of Excel. We're looking at Outlook courses. We're also going in, we consider the technical side when you start getting into a little more of the actual Air Force training stuff and so we'll cover some of the career progression slides and other issues where you, on how to develop in bullet writing and decoration writing and a lot of other air, really Air Force C type classes on the technical side. - Okay, so, not necessarily like you said, you differentiated between PME, which is a professional military education, which a Sergeant Luna will talk about in a minute. But we're talking about enhancement courses predominantly really talking about bullet writing, using some of the tools that we have on hand through Microsoft Office, Excel, - Hmm. and then those other self-development courses, right? Where the resiliency I saw emotional intelligence ones. - Yes. As well

I know that there were some things with using, was it the Air Force, no, Military OneSource? - It was a Military OneSource 101, yeah. - Right, and then also there was a retire, a couple of retirement and planning for retirement courses. So, some of the other processes that we develop into over our careers. Things that are not traditional courses offered, correct? - Correct, there, those are a couple good examples. We also had a career progression course, which we kind of went off. We hit the PME bullets, this, that and the other but the whole real focus of the briefing, was more of what outside of PME? What should your troops be doing at this level? Like, as an NCO, what should, how, what kind of community involvement should they have? What kind of additional duty should they have? What kind of other things outside of PME, help shape them into the future leaders for the unit? - Okay. - And we also had a (mumbles) I'm sorry, I've come back a little later. - Attention Sir Hunter, I got a question, sir. So, I'm just a regular NCO, if it were, I'm a TR, where can I go to like, find out the schedule for these events? Like, how do I know, hey, this is a, very professional development one, it's going to be talking about my career progression. So, where do I need to go to find out the schedule for this, for these classes? 'Cause I personally haven't seen anything. But I want to know, like, if I need to get to, be online at a certain time, or just set up my schedule, so I can attend one of these, how do I do that? Where do I go to find that? - So, publicity is one of our biggest challenges that we're working with right now. I do try to put every one of them onto the 960 Cyber Wing Gladiators Facebook page. So, they are posted there. I do also push them out through the top three, and I push them out through for to my unit, at least individually through our different communication channels. So, there should be somebody in every unit that is getting this and seeing this and being able to offer down to their people. - I think a great person to send something like that out, would be through Captain Jean. I'll just send her a weekly schedule or something like that, just because, hey, she has a great reach being the Wing Exec. So, it's a great person to send that out to. - That would be my suggestion, but... - Good point does I'm gonna really, it really does kinda tie in, talking to Senior Honor that publicity piece is key, and then timeliness, right? So, I know that the Professional Development Committee has worked on a monthly schedule. That schedule is a little bit fluid. That schedule is posted on the Air Force Connect app. Predominantly through the 433rd's page right now. And then, what we're doing is on demand is the posters, that for each one of those courses get solidified. We are pushing that, as he said, through other social media to include GroupMe. We include the superintendence and the first sergeants too, I believe, right? - Yes Chief. - But getting an email out through the exec is not a bad idea. So, definitely something for us to dive into. But if you're looking for that schedule, short term, before that email gets out, the Air Force Connect app is the one that we're looking at as well. - And the Air Force Connect app does have it, and as chief said, we do about a month and a half advance and we're actually going to be this afternoon setting up the August schedule. So, the August schedule should be pretty out within the next week or so. So, you have a good idea and availability. The Air Force Connect app, you kinda, you do kind have to dig into it a little bit to actually get down to where the calendar is. But I also have a little PowerPoint that I can send out for where to find that as well. 'Cause I've put that together, and then I know that we're looking at doing that for the

960th wing too, right? - Correct, we're working towards that, right. So, the 433rd taking the lead right now, as a combined effort. The 960th will continue to be good mission partners and work towards that. But eventually, you'll see some split off with a 960th. Which leads me to the next piece, right? How do you select courses? So, it's a two part question, I apologize. How do you select the courses that they're going to teach for the PDC? And then who actually teaches them? - So, right now, it's been kind of a, it's a volunteer, it's an entirely volunteer effort, and it's what are you comfortable with? What are you teaching, and then that's presented to the committee, and we will evaluate and see what the worth of it is, if it has a good value to the airman, which all of them usually do. I mean, if you've got something to say, don't be discouraged come up and say it. We may kinda guide you into it a little bit on where the direction will be. We think the direction of it may go. But we've never actually shut anybody down on any kind of idea. 'Cause everybody's got something valuable to say. So, we highly encourage anyone, from the brand new airman that just got out of basic training, and wants to provide perspective on what they're teaching at the lowest levels now, to the crusty old chief, that's on his way out the door, that can tell us how things are changed and where they see it going. But it's totally completely a volunteer force. The, as we're developing more within the wing, I'm starting to get more and more volunteers and we are taking on a lot of them ourselves. As Chief said, that we've been highly reliant on the 433rd. We really want to be, we don't want to be reliant on them, we want to be an equal partner with them. We want to make sure that we're doing our share, and providing stuff that's really kinda specific too for our cyber members. 'Cause a lot of the cyber members have different issues and different developments. We want to make sure that we're going to hit those, as well as the general courses. - Right, some good points, right. Both wings reside in the same area, here in JBSA. When we talk about the 960th, we talked about a number of different weapon systems. We talked about GSU spread across the continental US. I think that this PDC, thing is one of those items that can help bridge some of the gaps that we have across all the GSUs. Because, you don't have to be local, to provide this, right? 'Cause it's all online. - Correct. - What kind of medium are you using, to actually provide the courses? - So, right now all the courses are being provided on zoom, the 433rd is being very, very gracious and allowing us to use their actual page zoom account so we can have the different resources and accessories that come with that account. I think as we move forward, if teams decides to be a long term Air Force standard issue, it might be something that we look at moving toward because it allows a little more flexibility with some of the FOUO issues and some of the other issues. But we are definitely going to want to make sure that we're open to the different platforms as they evolve. I know there's a lot of concern, especially in the cyber world with the zoom, because it has had security issues, they also have developed quite a bit. And there are ways that you can watch the zooms without actually downloading the app to your computer. So, it can help alleviate some of that. But you are right, Chief, everything is completely virtual. So, my next one that I have, I've got a member out of the 689th out of Alabama, that's gonna be helping us teach a class. - Nice, so Luna, question for you. If you could get any kinda course offered to you, as an NCO right now, what course would that be? - I think it'd be the NCO Leadership Development course. Just so

because you get to interact with a lot of NCOs, from different career fields, different walks of life, and it's not as rigorous as the NCOA course, in-residence, per say. But really, you just get to have a lot of conversations that you need as an NCO being a frontline supervisor. And I think those conversations differ from individual to individual strictly because everybody has different styles of leadership. And they're, it's more of a talking forum and you get a lot of ideas together. And it brings out certain leadership styles from people. And it just gives you a overall, it's way less stressful than NCOA because NCOA is PME and you gotta do all the PME, you have. 'Cause it's like a career progression type of deal, like you can make martial without going through NCOA. So, NCO, LDC leadership development, it offers you a less stressful environment and the conversations go a little bit smoother, I think. - Okay, and so no, I've lucked out, all right in my career. I've been able to do not only the NCO LDC course, when I was still Reg AT. But I also was able to do senior NCO LDC as a reservist. So, you bring up a good point, that it seems a lot less stressful. It's not as stringent as classic PME. I guess the question I would think that some of the audience might have is does NCL DC, count in place of NCOA? - It does not, so is not, long story short, it does not take the place of NCOA or senior NCOA for senior NCO LDC. Those do not, you still have to have to go to PME. Luckily, there is a new version of PME that's come out for the NCOs. I advise everybody to look into that if you have not completed NCOA. I've had one member complete it within nine hours, all the way through. But they were on it the whole time. The whole nine hours. It was not a joke. - Gotcha. - So, shout out to that guy who did that, congratulations. Got it done. Right, but everybody still has to go through NCOA. It's still a good course. There's a lot of info you can get out of it. I'm currently going through it right now. - Okay. - So, I'm looking forward to finishing it. - Gotcha, so, we kind of we just talked a little bit about the Professional Development Committee, which is not PME based, and it's not anything that gets rolled up in your records. Now we can capture some of those courses and put them into EPRs and other reports. And two of our Six is a for our quarterly awards, right? But really, you as the Unit Training Manager, at the group level, right. Now we're talking about formal courses, we're talking about formal PME, and then of AFSC awarding courses, that's what you manage. Can you kind of tell me what PME is required from nuts the bolts basically. Airman basic through chief, on the enlisted side of what courses that we have to take and then maybe if you know the officer ones, if you get through those one as well. - Not too familiar with the officer ones, I'm going to send it over to ... - That's all right. - For airman it always starts out, as airman of course, you go to basic, we get out of basic, we go to ALS, we want to put on staff. - So as a Senior Airman prior to maybe separation - Yes. Yes from Senior Airman. And that is the rank that you have to be at. - Well, how can we do that? So, with it ALS can I, is that all in-residence is that correspondence? - So, luckily, as a reservist, all of our PMEs are in residence or correspondence. Personally, my point of view is always great to go in-residence, because there's nothing like that peer to peer action that you get, my ALS class was done in Korea when I was still active duty. And I met so many different AFSCs, and we had so many different points of view of the Air Force. It was like really good to go through. So, I would always go for in-residence. - Oh, Sir Luna. - Sir Luna. - Yes sir. - So, I absolutely 100% agree Sir Luna, the in-residence is by far the best value you're

going to get out of the course. However, the one thing I would caution is don't let that hold up your career. - Oh, of course. In our current physical environment, those in-residence slots are really difficult to come by. So, if nothing else, if you're in that position, my suggestion is to sign up for the correspondence, but still push on your supervisors and leadership to try and get that in-residence course. - I completely 100% agree with you. - So, to tie those two in right? So, I mean, (clears throat) tell me if I'm wrong. If I do the by correspondence course, whether it's ALS or NCOA, or even senior NCOA, if I do have my correspondence, I can still go to the in-residence after completing it, right. So I can meet the requirement for AFI for promotion, but still get the benefit down the road, of that interaction and networking of an in-residence course, right? - That's 1,000% correct, sir. - Okay. - Yes, sir. And so, great points, both ways. Do not let PME hold of your career there like, we have so many options for PME, it should not hold you back from progressing in your career. Like myself, so bring it on to the NCO tier. When you become an NCO, you've been in for a little bit. Let's say you haven't gotten NCOA yet. There is that NCO LDC leadership development course that you can go that you can go to. But then you. The must go-to is NCOA. You have to get that under your belt to progress into the senior NCO tier. Gosh, (mumbles) - I had a question that was brought to me the other day, when's the best time for you to sign up for these different PMEs? Right, so, I am a brand new tech sergeant or brand new staff sergeant, when should I look at taking the NCOA and then maybe NCO LDC? - I think a great thing to do. And a good rule of thumb would probably be, we all have feedbacks every year with our supervisors that we should. We definitely should, I think it's part of the EPR now. So, I wanted to have a sit down with your supervisor. See where you... Not necessarily where you fall in their eyes, but where they can guide you or help give you direction on. For everybody it could be different. You could have a older NCO who kind of gets it already and their supervisor could see them progressing quickly. So, they could want you to hurry up and get to get NCOA knocked out. Just so you can focus on being the leader that the Air Force is going to need you to be. Or they could also offer you the NCO LDC. - Okay. - Oh. - Specifically, one of the questions I got in one of my forums was, so I'm waiting IST, right. I'm waiting for that tech school. And I used to be a FSC, blah, blah, blah. And during that time, can I go ahead and knock out NCOA or senior NCOA, during that period waiting for IST? Right, it comes down to, so you as an OB superintendency, Your Honor, and a prior for sergeant, what would you recommend in that scenario? - My recommendation is if you've got the availability and the time do it. The second that's available to you, the second you have the opportunity, I would say sign up and go. That being said, you do have to be careful if you get a short notice, offering for an ISD course, 'cause as we all know that especially in our career fields, we have some pretty lengthy waits and pipelines. So, every once in a while, we'll get a short notice. So, you have to really balance out, are you going to be able to handle both of those, if all of a sudden you're halfway through NCOA and you get an IST course dropped the next day? - Right. - That being said, though, I still think you should do. - And you as a training manager, what do you say? - So as a training manager, I would say, learn your job. Learn your job, do your job, get good at your job, and have your leadership notice that you're good at your job. And then prepare yourself to be the next level NCO, by going to the NCOAs,

or the senior NCO of course, things like that, but learn your job first. I think that's important as Air Force members that we are professionals and what we are getting paid to do. So, from my perspective, I completely understand what Sir and Hunter are saying. But from my perspective, as a training manager, I want to send you to school, I want to get you off of our red list and not being able to do what we are paying you to do. We need those operators. We need those support individuals, helping us out and being fully qualified. So, learn your job as much as you can, before you go to school, while you're waiting for school. Because that makes tech school that much easier, when you go there prepared. - So, to look back to the point you were making, right? That really it comes down to having that conversation with your supervisor and see where we're at, right? If we're talking about a an AFSC that's fairly close to your new AFSC, let's use 3Bs on 1B Force, right. So, if you had 3B with a large cyber background, and you're waiting one before school, maybe that gap fills not so great. And IST, so while you're waiting for IST, maybe you knock this out. But let's say you came from a different AFST background. Whether that's, not picking on any AFSC, but something that's less technical. Maybe we need to spend more time doing that spin up prior to that, but really it comes down to what that supervisor and what the unit needs are and the individual specifically and what that supervisor believes that individual can handle. And then you as an airman being able to articulate that to your supervisor. That yes, I know that this is a big chunk. I believe I can take this piece on. Before IST, I think I can accomplish this, we already know that I'm projected to go out and six months, I can handle this PME during that timeframe, right? So, we've covered ALS, NCOAs, pretty much the same thing, just a different tier, a little bit different focus, but same offerings, right? And with a correspondence or in-residence, when we talked about senior NCOA the same way. What other courses would be professional Military education that we can get knocked out, to help develop ourselves out? - So, I believe there's also a chief's orientation course that you'd have to complete. - Right, that's if you've been selected for chief. So, you've gone through that whole process, which we covered in, I believe, Episode Two and episode three of our podcast, Chainless plug. Gotta love it right? (Chuckle) And then once you're selected, then you're part of the prior to actually putting on chief you have to go the orientation course. But there's also another course that seniors can take and I think you've taken it didn't you Senior Hunter, a Chief leadership course? - I have not yet Chief, but I'm looking for that first opportunity to take that one. - Okay. We tried to get me into a one on a short notice. Not too long ago, but it didn't it didn't quite work out. - So, another one for specifically our wing is the Cyberspace Superintendent Course that a lot of our members go to as well. Is that 3B only or can 1Bs take that as well? - I believe 1Bs can still take that course as well. - I'm actually in that course right now. - Okay. - That is a, it's a distance learning course. - Right. - And it's all done through ATLS, and I'm enrolled in at the moment. - That's great, and I remember that, 'cause I saw that come to my office. - Right, yeah, I've done it in the past as well. One other one that we really haven't hit on that a good key, and I think I heard there was a recent change to, was senior enlisted joint PME. There used to be one and two I heard it's just all rolled up into number two. Can you confirm or deny that? - I have not seen that yet sir, - Okay. - I've not seen that yet. - I got the hot I got the hot light on you,

confirm or deny? - Yeah, I'll deny that right now, because I can't confirm it. So. - Okay, - But I'll let you know. - Gotcha, didn't mean to put you in the box, man. - All good, sir, all good sir. I've not seen any of those. As much information, has been coming through my office right now, I've not seen that one yet. - Again, did hear that last week as well. But again, I think I'm on the same page as you Chief. I haven't seen it confirmed, that's just maybe kinda... - Okay, now listen, this is some great conversation right, some great pieces that you guys were able to bring in regards to professional development. I really do appreciate your time. If you could give a Chainless plug to professional development committee, what would you tell everybody out there, senior Hunter? - I would actually tell, that you have no idea the amount of value and resources you're missing till you actually sit into one of the classes. 'Cause you look at a class, and you might say, "Oh, I know all about Excel." But that one little trick that you didn't know could save you a ton of time. Or that one little resiliency piece that you did, that you might have missed, could really impact one of your airmen. So, take the time, take the opportunity. And look at some of these courses, there's a ton of value. And if you don't think there is value, please recommend something for us and help us develop it and help us get it better and come contributing, come work with us. - Awesome, I know we didn't get a chance to really cover some of the timelines in Saint Louis and maybe sometime down the road, we can cover down on what those timelines are for someone in schools and some additional schools and some of that process. But if you had an opportunity to kind of get out to the community, something that you felt it is important as the Unit Training Manager, what would that be? - I would definitely speak, speaking from a supervisory level as far as NCO tier. I would definitely get outreach to our NCOs and tell them, to look after the people coming after them. Guide them, teach them the ways that you want it to be taught, the ways that would have benefited your career. Always mold and shape the leaders of the future, into the leaders that you want to have leading you. - Some great points, right. I think we hit some great things here, when we talk about mentorship and development of our airmen, right? Both of these programs, whether it's formal, like the PME's or the informal with the PDCs that we're talking about. That mentorship fees, that conversation from supervisor to supervisor, supervisor. The development, the purposeful development is two pieces that you both hit on throughout this conversation. That's been key, right? Having that conversation with them and getting that information out from the PDC. So, we've been supervisors, looking for that information in the Air Force Connect. Looking for that information in social media, or other communication means emails or whatever, and then getting that out to our airman. Then, as you put it Luna sitting down with our supervisors. And then the supervisors actually providing here's a pathway, here's some options, and then that constant communication, letting that stuff go out there. So, you guys are phenomenal gladiators. I appreciate the hard work that you guys have put into it. Senior Sir Hunter the work that we are seeing at the PDC is great. I really appreciate you heading that up, at solid work, on the constant work that you're doing, Sir Luna and the E66 side of Boha, (clears throat) from both put a lot of hours into getting these courses lined up, talking to the functional managers and to the schoolhouse as they get that said, if it wasn't for the work both of you guys do, and by proxy boss and so we don't have them here. I want

to give them a shout out as well. All that hard work he has put into it is phenomenal and our airmen are directly benefiting from the work. So, thank you for that hard work. And thank you for being great gladiators. And I think with that I definitely want to tell the gladiators out there that are listening. I hope you have a Great Air Force Day, thank you. (Upbeat music)