

Ep. 77: Breadth vs. depth

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.

Welcome to another episode of the Sword and Shield. I am chief master Christopher Howard 960 of cog SCL and today with me I have Master Sergeant Estes 960th Cyberspace Wing first sergeant and the 854th COS First Sergeant and Captain Jamillah Gonzalez, 960th Cyberspace Wing executive officer. Thank you both for joining me today and today. I would love to talk to both of you about breath versus death. When we talked about leadership. When we talk about experience when we talk about what we're looking for um for opportunities um what do you see as the most important services, breath or death? To me it's breath. Okay because and I can only speak for my um not career field but my career as a whole. Um active duty TR, a civilian, security forces. Um a first sergeant, just having those different experiences and opportunities um to prepare me to be the senior N. C. O. I am today as opposed to somebody with death who's been in the same wing for their whole career and having never moved to another squadron and or a special duty or even another base. Okay what about you can. So when I think of breadth, I think overall just experiences that kind have bring you to who you are and what you've developed to be. And then when I think of depth, I often my mind goes to like technical expertise, but there could just be depth of knowledge and mission sets and maybe even to say in leadership skills, if I try to think of it in that regard, how much knowledge do you have in, what particular function you're doing at the time? So I do think that over our breath of experience would be what I think is the most important, but both are necessary. You agree. Right? So when we talk about breath versus the argument always, especially within the reserves is uh you know, hey, I'm a one unit here. Um you know, the whole idea is that we're going to be the subject matter experts. So why is depth not a key perspective? Because there's a misnomer about breadth, as well. Right. So breath could be uh I have to move, I don't want to move. So how do you argue? How do I get breath of experience? Um when this is the only unit that holds my fc in this region, how do I grow? Right. So if I'm a tech sergeant wanted to be a command chief, um how do I get there from here? Right, let's use a unit? Like uh let's say uh off it, right. Where there's not a wing, there's one unit, maybe two units when it comes to other wings that have reserve units but there's no real development or opportunity as far as multiple units with the same ethnicity. How would you argue? How do I get breadth? You can get breath in a lot of different ways. You can apply for special duty; you can apply to become part of an honor guard unit, something like that. You can go on orders with another organization and learn some different types of skills. You can shadow someone in another career field or another office you can get mentorship from an individual and you can cross train to get breathe. Okay, those are some options there and kind of expansion on what

you had captain, what would you give visit advice? So advice if there was someone that particularly wanted to say in a location then breath of experience could come from volunteer opportunities, maybe deployments uh possibly looking to Agro with educational experience, going through reaching out to different levels of the chain of command to get inputs in perspective as to where maybe um those individuals would want to have them focus where sometimes when you're only looking at yourself, you may not see areas of where maybe you could benefit from certain experiences . So going to different levels of mentorship could bring ideas and something else will come back to me but I do have something else that um No worries. So I what I like to break this down to, so when this conversation comes up it's usually after stratification, um it's after selection boards for particular jobs. Um there are a lot of arguments and leadership about what are we looking for individuals and then there are misnomers about breath versus death. I think you two really hit on a number of things when we talk about some of the outside perspectives about breath, right? And the kind of pick up at that. Right? So internally to the wing, right? So we have some unique skill sets. So we definitely are looking for some depth and knowledge when we talk about cyber security, cyber domain and even from leadership wanted individuals that have some kind of depth and knowledge, right? If you're too shallow in that knowledge, um then there's going to be whole barriers or uh gaps that we have to cover it. So we want to get more depth in that knowledge, but we also want a breadth of experience. I would argue that there's a really good balance of both to get you there. Um we talked about reservists and staying within certain regions or certain areas before their job with their family. You know, it's one of the reasons why we joined more often than not. And uh kind of picking through that is internally to the 19 sixties, several wing for example, let's just say you're at G. B. S. A. Um your Intel or your cyber um maybe you don't have a lot of avenues but we want to look at depth and breath. What about wing prairies? Right. Right. How their I'm getting leadership and then depend on what the priority is. Then maybe I'm even getting some depth of knowledge right? When I take on other roles with inside of an organization, it's not always being um in the same job, in the same position, in the same work center. Right? How am I learning and expanding upon my depth of knowledge as far as my career, depth of knowledge as far as my leadership? I suppose getting a breath of experience right? At five for instance, I'm a sat comma by trade which is our transmissions and you know, it's kind of grown if I only did the same kind of sat com work? My whole career will be very siloed out and that's really what we're concerned about. Right. We get I think sometimes the confusion is that death equal silo going um And breath means flattening out. So that whole comment about Jack-of-all-trades, master of none, right. You want to have the masters? Did I silos amount or do I have that Jack-of-all-trades? Which did I, you know, breathe it out? Right. How do we find the balance? But would you, what kind of advice would you give start next to us on, you know, kind of tackling that balance between getting enough knowledge and enough experience across the board as far as depth and breath. So when the chiefs are the sales are having those conversations they're strapping or they're selecting individuals for positions I think conversation needs to be had at that level. Um And even in the N. C. O. Level where as we're developing leaders and we're leveraging

that talent management we're looking at people's documents and we're saying okay this individual doesn't have this but if we if they go and work this priority if they go and do you know become an exact council on the top three um This will get them where they need to go to make that next step. And so it's not a matter of looking back after the fact and saying oh well this individual didn't get this position because of this reason. Why don't we look at their packages ahead of time and I know that's a lot of work and you know we don't have time on their hands but I think that it would be a great opportunity to develop our people and mentor them to get them to that position um For when the time comes for them to apply for it right? And it goes back to a conversation that you and I have often and then we've had in the past is that mentorship piece right? So as we go through um interested process bringing down the C. D. B. Which is a career data brief, right? Um looking at what's on those records, right? Um looking at whether their experiences are and also identifying where in their AP ours um we're showing some of that both breadth and depth right? Uh and making sure that were captured and appropriately to show. Now even if I stay within this organization, I can still show both based on job title changes. Um not just to change it for whatever reason but honest job changes um Taking on and tackling priorities, taking on especially as a younger airman, different additional duties and conquering those things and moving forward. Mg you know you have a wide breadth of experience being prior enlisted and your rules is an officer as well. What else could you add to this? So circling back to when we were talking about ways to gather breath of experience that came up in what you were saying, sergeant Estes and that was memberships and private organizations. So finding opportunities to participate in private organizations, I wanted to mention that as well as what you mentioned a couple times chief which was participation in the strategic alignments and the priority uh developments that come from those strategic alignments. So that terminology is used frequently in the reserve and also in active duty. So those two areas would be opportunities where someone could obtain breath of experience then from there when it comes to tackling the balance between breath and depth I think of what she said with mentorship because in certain roles in some areas you may need to focus on breadth, but then there may be skill sets in that role where you need to focus on depth and when I think of depth, I think how you gather that will be more through education, uh and sometimes what you had said, sergeant Estes which would be shadowing , what is it that someone is already doing , so that you can again maybe see that technical expert level that you may need in your current role . So when we talk about obtaining that balance, I think it comes to understanding what your role is at the time and that organization and knowing where you need to focus on for the breath and where you need to focus on for the depth. So I just think every function that we have does require both and finding that balance can come through mentorship right? And it's always a, it comes down to commitment, right? Um whether you're driving towards different types of jobs or breadth, whether it's putting forth the effort to educate yourself to get the experiences and knowledge for the depth and then leveraging both. Right? Um and that's the thing, I think we're we get kind of mixed signals and not and not a clear understanding why I want to tackle the subject is uh you know, there's ways to get both of these and it's really about reflection. If we're talking about a hiring board, you get a couple of looks, you get the

initial application package and then you get the interview. So how do I capture all that? Right. Um If I'm looking at for progression or development boards, then how has that been captured in my records appropriately? Right. So showing that breadth of experience in different leadership roles, like you identified uh shirt that being in first sergeant or taking on additional types of rules like honor guard or special duties all come into some of the breath, you know, going on exercises and deployments uh Captain point as well. Uh for some of that depth of knowledge and experience and making sure that's all captured in records and then really being able to then tailor that that knowledge right, making the time and effort in taking the time to cognitively thread all these pieces together. No come into play because like if I was to go to a an interview board for a job, I have to be able to show that I have both breath of knowledge and experience and a depth of knowledge and experience. And then how do I leave that together? And that takes a lot of time. I'm not that smart. I just spent a lot of time thinking about how do I put this piece to this piece to this piece. That piece and weave it all together to show that okay, all these years of just getting the poop kicked out of me from my job. What did I learn from it? And why is it useful to you as a hiring official or why is it useful for me to become the next chief or next senior or the N. C. I. C. Of this book center? Right. Um so what are your thoughts to analysis? So I like to think of things kind of backwards sometimes and you know being a civilian, I've had to be that individual applying for a position and understanding do my documents or do my that's my resume or whatever. Line up with what the K. S. S. R. And so a lot of times if you want to I guess measure where you're at to where you want to go. You actually look at those job announcements and you, you know you reckon stack based on what you have and so if you don't have those things then those are the those are the goals that you go for. And so if I am a Syrian feel like I am and I want to look at a senior master sergeant position within this wing or somewhere else. Um I need to be looking at what those uh KSAs are for that position and see if I'm ready for it or not. And so I think it's like you said it takes a lot of time. One important thing that I thought about why everybody was talking is that um not only do you need to be able to speak to that breadth and depth, but you have to make sure your records are going to go to because a lot of times um if in person interview is not an option, uh those packages are the only thing that those hiring officials are looking at. And so if your documents are not right or accurate, then you're already pulled out of the pool to begin with. So the documents, it would, it would be very beneficial for that individual to make sure that the documents are right there as they move forward. And then the next piece would be, how do I articulate my knowledge and experience? Mhm. Yeah. Looking at kind of what we've talked about so far. Some of the things that I think about when, when breath is mentioned are like you said, maybe status is uh possibly enlisted officer, sometimes active duty R. T. R. I am a gr um-different types of assignments. All of those things I think often get brought up are what is breath of experience. But I think earlier on we kind of gave a lot of examples as to how you can obtain breath of experience whether or not, you know, you've gone through those different statuses or have those different assignments. But I definitely think what sergeant Estes mentioned as far as having that ongoing reflection of what's in your records and looking ahead when it comes to your knowledge, skills and abilities of that next

position that you want to have and pulling that up in advance and reflecting on that and using that uh kind of gives you that area maybe where you do want to focus on getting more depth because there's something in that role that you're looking to obtain, that maybe you're not as strong in or there may be indicators of where you need to obtain more breath and it will also guide you . So I think that's a great tool to use to help focus on where you may be needing more breath or death and one more piece I want to throw in that before we close out two is um comfortable. Right, right. Are we challenging ourselves both from a breath and depth perspective to challenge what is comfortable? Am I challenging myself to be a better technician, a better analyst, and a better leader? Right, and how am I doing that? Am I driving to be uh getting this knowledge either through um more diving into the career field or in that particular job for the depth or am I driving myself to more breath as well um to challenge my comfort zone. Right? So for me personally, I was kind of a crusty maintainer operator, right? I did tactical expeditionary, um you know, I did uh fixed comm, I did all these different things and it was, you know, always, you know, stop him upside the head, just get after it rumble, rumble of knuckle dragon, uh cussing and fussing type of person. And uh, one of the roles I took on after that, the turning point of my group was to be a first sergeant knowing it was going to challenge me not to be so harsh. Right? I think that I mentioned before that I was kind of known to be as the bulldog or the meat grinder when it came to developing the leadership and handling certain things. So I was that rough person. Uh, and being a time to say I'm not now. But anyways, but there's a first sergeant, I challenged my skill set. So are you as individuals challenging yourself? Right, chief. You definitely softened up if you're at the bulldog, just know that actually got, I had a leader, a captain say, I wish I never let you off the leash at one point in my career. Yeah. So one of things that I want to add to this conversation and I think you said it in the beginning is that you might find that you think a little bit differently after we have this conversation because I was thinking, you know, breath was more important. Um, and, and so we've heard, you know, right, um, I've been told before the breath is more important, but you, there's a lot to be said about death, death being important as well because when I think about um, how often we move around as reservists or some of us do, depending on, hey, you got to get that breath or my spouse is moving and now have to find a position at Robin's or whatever the case is. Um, we lose a lot of continuity in, in those positions when people move around. And so to me, death is also as important for the individual that's in the seat and the person is coming in afterwards because continuity is so important. And so, um, I think initially when a person moves into a position, they need to, they need to look at, you know, what goes, they want to sit and where they want to be six months a year to two years and whatnot. But they also need to make sure that they're setting up the individual that's coming in next to have a seamless program. I know that people might talk and laugh about that because a lot of times becoming these positions and we're cleaning up everything that happened before or there was no program to begin with and now we're starting from scratch. But continuity is very important. And I think it says a lot about death and in the individual's career and what they leave behind. So I mean, yeah, some great words there, right? Um, and some thought process. So I think just to kind of summarize it right. Um, there's a balance and there's a benefit to, um,

boat, right? If you're spread too thin. Um then is that uh that is that going to be a problem probably if you're siloed out, is that going to limit your options? Probably. So if you're challenging yourself consistently to drive a little bit more um and you know widen your experience deepen your knowledge, you can kind of get that breath and depth, piece that balance. Um and making sure that those records reflect. And then also working on being able to articulate how that all we used together. Because when it comes to those leadership roles and to this unique opportunities it's going to be about. Um Did I have the right level of experience and knowledge and capability and was able to articulate it to whatever panel to whatever person or whoever job that I was trying to obtain from that, right? And then when you look in the mirror at the end of the day, when you hang up the uniform is when did I get out of it? Right? As far as personal perseverance and personal accomplishment as well. So do all the gladiators out there. I challenge you to um stay a little bit uncomfortable by taking on challenges that are abnormal challenge yourself to learn something new every day about what you do and why you do it. Um And then what you'll find is that uh you'll learn something about yourself, You learn something about your job and then you'll have something more to give back uh to big blue there. So um thank you for your time, Sgt. Estes, Captain, you also, I appreciate it. All right. Thanks. Thank you for the conversation. I thought it was definitely helpful. Um and two gladiators out there. Thank you for your sacrifice. Thank you for your dedication. Thank you for all that you do for your nation and for this wing. Um Remember stab your enemies in the face through cyberspace.