

Using Sustainment Tables for Supply Team Certification

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Sustainment requires simultaneous and continuous synchronization at all echelons of command. The sustainment warfighting function can be both complex and complicated when not handled appropriately. Sustainment warfighting requires a holistic and balanced viewpoint at all echelons for a unit to be successful. Looking at sustainment throughout the years, specifically property accountability, there are multiple challenges and a lack of synchronization at the company supply level. Company supply rooms must have trained supply personnel who stay nested with each other on day-to-day responsibilities to be successful. Supply teams must understand and share a balance of roles and responsibilities. To better set conditions for success, units need to invest time in developing company supply teams with the appropriate training and certifications/qualifications. Sustainment team certification would establish a common language and understanding of standards, allowing commanders to understand the risk they are assuming in their supply rooms.

Supply Team Certification

A company supply team typically consists of a company commander, supply sergeant, supply clerk, and executive officer/supply officer. Given that the Army is commander centric and that the Command Supply Discipline Program (CSDP) is the commander's program, commanders must stay involved with daily supply transactions to enforce appropriate supply measures. Company commanders and their small team of Soldiers can only be fully functional if all Soldiers get the appropriate training and know their roles and responsibilities.

Considering that the workload of a supply team can sometimes be overwhelming, each supply representative must be diligently and consistently involved with daily supply contributions. A supply team certification model similar to an Integrated Weapons Training Strategy (IWTS) certification concept could be extremely beneficial to company supply teams. IWTS tables build relationships, increase maneuver understanding of how to provide sound guidance, and raise understanding of the capabilities and limitations of maneuver unit systems. Training Circular 3-20.0, *IWST*, states, "Fundamental Soldier and military occupational specialty [MOS] specific skills serve as the foundation of IWTS and must not be overlooked. Soldiers, crews, teams, squads, platoons, companies, and battalions achieve the highest level of proficiency when building upon mastery of those foundational skills." A similar supply team certification concept would help synchronize needed training for supply teams and provide a shared experience for Soldiers to be better involved as sustainment leaders.

Though some might think the notion of supply team certification is bit unconventional, it is not too far-fetched to lean towards a process of table certification for supply teams, especially given the fact that supply teams will have more supply transactions in future modernization efforts, like StoreFront, changing the way sustainment does business. Supply team certification would further prepare supply teams for success by giving them the experience they would need for future supply transactions. So, what would a supply team certification table look like? My proposed concept incorporates all the essential elements of supply. Supply team members would need to understand the basic knowledge of sustainment within their unit to be successful. This would include knowledge, training, and understanding in cyclic inventories, change of command inventories, lateral transfers, Total Equipment Management Strategy (TEMS), and

Sustainment Tables (ST) I through VI	
Table	Description
ST I	Property book officer/battalion S4 team in-brief (1 hour) and Global Combat Support System-Army (GCSS-A) Supply Management Course (40 hours)
ST II	Army Records Information Management System (ARIMS) filing system (2 hours) Unit-level publications (2 hours) electronic Financial Liability Investigations of Property Loss (eFLIPL) (2.5 hours) Test, measurement, and diagnostic equipment (TMDE) (2 hours)
ST III	Organizational clothing and individual equipment (OCIE) and initial inventories (2 hours) GCSS-A change of command inventory class (2 hours)
ST IV	Modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) class (1 hour) GCSS-A bill of materials (BOM)/PB01/documenting and ordering component shortages (2 hours)
ST V	GCSS-A Class IX management and Command Maintenance Discipline Program (CMDP) Success Course (24 hours)
ST VI	GCSS-A Hand-Held Terminal (2 hours)

Figure 1 — Proposed Sustainment Tables I through VI

*Commanders must complete installation company commander/first sergeant course prior to sustainment table certification.

maintenance operations. I recommend a two-week (81.5 hours) certification block consisting of the supply course sustainment tables seen in Figure 1 to train and certify supply teams.

Supply Team Certification Training and Resourcing

Supply team certification is not a bridge too far, given the fact the Army had a similar proficiency program concept in the late 1970s called the Skill Qualification Test (SQT). It might not be too hard to even fathom a similar MOS proficiency testing concept extending to all the other MOSs across the Army as well. Professional military education (PME) is not something that should be taken lightly, especially if we intend on having leaders lead effectively at the speed of war. Though resourcing may have hurt previous program concepts, resourcing for supply certification training would come from the battalions to the companies with assistance from Command Maintenance Evaluation and Training (COMET) team representatives. COMET team reps would conduct the training, with battalion S4s performing the final certification after training is complete. Hands-on testing consisting of supply reports, financial liability investigations of property loss (FLIPLs), Army Records Information Management System (ARIMS), and normal supply transactions could be used for certification test out. A more internalized resource concept might prove to be a move in the right direction.

Final Thoughts and Considerations

By focusing on synchronization, we can change the cultural misunderstandings at the company supply level. Synchronization at all echelons is critical when understanding required training. I recommend that company supply teams receive training immediately upon arriving at their unit and then immediately complete certification. If Soldiers fail certification, they retrain, and if they fail again, the argument should be made that those Soldiers need to reclass or be flagged. Also, given the frequency of personnel changes, supply teams need recertification annually. The consistency of required training on a routine basis ensures the supply synchronization needed for unit sustainment success. Furthermore, it's time to ask the hard question: If Soldiers cannot demonstrate proficiency in their MOS, especially with something as extremely technical as sustainment, then maybe Soldiers need more self-development or the Army needs a stronger stance on PME certifications.



Soldiers in the 7th Infantry Division's Headquarters and Support Company supply room complete GCSS-A supply actions. (Photo by CPT Tai Nguyen)

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