MANAGING PERFORMANCE IN INTELLIGENCE: THE 11 C'S FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Intelligence organizations regularly experience failures of analytic quality, command climate, and analyst dissent. These are typically diagnosed and addressed as analytical or technical problems, but they are rooted in management problems. This article introduces the 11 C's framework, a manager-facing diagnostic tool for intelligence managers responsible for performance, climate, and the conditions under which dissent is tolerated. The framework draws on performance management systems, goal-setting theory, the psychological contract, the job demands–resources model, and feedback intervention theory. It is informed by management practice in corporate security, military, and prison-service settings. Using the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Intelligence Directorate's complaints from 2014–2016 as an illustrative case, the article works through each of the 11 components and applies them to that case. It concludes with a structured checklist designed to operate alongside organizational guidelines. It demonstrates that managing intelligence performance is a unique skill set that requires tools and training beyond the technical intelligence skill set.

Keywords: *good intelligence*, *intelligence management, performance management, organizational culture, command climate, underperformance, U.S. Central Command, CENTCOM*

Nation-states, the military, law enforcement, and even large corporations carry out intelligence in many forms. Each of these approaches manages and uses intelligence differently, but one question persists across intelligence activities and in the academic literature on intelligence studies. What does good intelligence look like? For the purposes of this article, *good intelligence* is defined as a product that is timely, accurate to the best of the analyst's knowledge, clearly communicated, transparent about its sources and confidence levels, and ethically produced. This definition deliberately separates the quality of the intelligence from how decision-makers use it, since intelligence may meet every standard of good practice and still fail to prevent harm if it is ignored, misread, or acted upon too late.

Measuring the quality of analysis is far more an art than a science, and failure is a constant feature rather than a flaw (Marrin, 2012; Wirtz, 2024). Clearly, if an intelligence product provides timely and accurate warning of an imminent threat, and decision-makers avert the threat by acting on the warning, we can assert that this was good intelligence. However, this outcome-based definition is incomplete. Intelligence may be timely, accurate, and well-communicated, yet still fail to defeat, avert, or mitigate a threat because decision-makers do not act on it, act too late, or act in ways the intelligence did not support. Any working definition of good intelligence must distinguish the quality of the product from how its consumers use it. But what about an accurate and timely warning that decision makers ignore? A harder case is the assessment that is accurate to the best of the analyst's knowledge but is later overtaken by information that was unavailable, withheld, or deliberately deceptive. Here, the question is not whether gaps existed, since they always do, but whether the analyst applied appropriate confidence levels, source caveats, and structured analytic techniques to surface those gaps for the decision-maker.

While the intelligence literature addresses these problems at a conceptual level to improve its ability to provide warning and reduce failure (Dahl & Strachan-Morris, 2024), there is little on how to operationalize this in the day-to-day management of intelligence. Managing a team of analysts in an environment where it is almost impossible to assess performance quality, and where the response to perceived failure is constant reform, can be a Sisyphean task. This article presents a new model that managers and those training potential managers can use in what is arguably one of the most complex organizational environments.

The 11 C's framework set out in this article is intended as a manager-facing template: a practical, structured tool written from the perspective of the manager rather than the analyst, which sets out the questions a manager should ask and the actions they can take to create the conditions for producing intelligence that meets this standard. Analyses of intelligence failures often reveal structural or cultural factors. For example, in her work on the FBI and the 9/11 attacks, Zegart (2007) identifies structural issues that minimised the importance of predictive intelligence and only incentivised intelligence that could lead to a conviction rather than the prevention of a crime or act of terrorism, findings that broadly align with the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004), which catalogued failures of imagination, policy, capabilities, and management across the U.S. intelligence community. Looking at the 9/11 attacks at the national level, Marrin (2011a) argued that the strategic intelligence on the threat posed by Al Qaeda was largely accurate but, for various reasons, it had little or no impact on the formulation of policy to reduce or remove that threat.

Groupthink and the suppression of dissenting voices within the Intelligence Community in the U.S. and the U.K. were key components of the failure in the case of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. The overly collegiate approach of the British Joint Intelligence Committee led to a single report (the so-called "September Dossier") that gave a false impression of the British Intelligence Community's confidence in its assessment; the available evidence did not support the report's confident tone. In the U.S., the highly competitive and siloed nature of the

Intelligence Community enabled more cherry-picking of intelligence and direct political pressure on agencies, while also preventing the cross-pollination of information that could have led to more accurate assessments (Davies, 2004).

The intelligence studies literature is replete with arguments and suggestions for various frameworks. Still, it is almost completely silent on how team leaders, supervisors, and managers lead, train, and coach their teams. Managers play a key role in determining analytical behavior and competence. While education provides the body of knowledge required by intelligence analysts and helps to improve practice (Dexter et al., 2017; see also Marrin, 2020), and supports intelligence as a profession (Gaspard & Pili, 2024), technical training is provided by the employer, recalling a guild in which master craftsmen teach their apprentices a craft (Agrell, 2002; Marrin, 2011b). A better analogy might be a residency, where medical practitioners apply their theoretical knowledge under the watchful eye of an experienced physician (Gaspard & Pili, 2024). Managers are responsible not only for honing their team members' skills but also for disseminating and promulgating the organization's culture. While they are masters of their craft and highly skilled analysts, they receive very little management training, especially in techniques suited to an environment where performance indicators are highly subjective. As a result, the management of intelligence teams can be highly inconsistent and rely on managers' personal attributes, leading to major problems.

This article presents a new framework that offers managers a nuanced approach to addressing *underperformance*, defined here as the failure to meet established performance standards in ways that affect organizational effectiveness, morale, and productivity in intelligence organizations. The framework, represented by the 11 "C's," consists of interconnected components that address aspects of underperformance: choices and consequences; condone or confront; confidence, clarity, and control; coaching and code; and culture creation/correction. The framework emphasizes understanding and addressing the root causes of underperformance, including knowledge gaps, skill deficiencies, and attitudinal issues. It advocates an approach that combines coaching and training with formal measures when necessary. Furthermore, the framework underscores managers' role in shaping culture, distinguishing between creating a culture from scratch and correcting an existing one.

The next section examines the case of analyst complaints at U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) from 2014–2016 as an illustrative instance of intelligence underperformance with clear management dimensions. The article then sets out the theoretical foundations of the 11 C's framework, drawing on performance management systems, goal-setting theory, the psychological contract, the job demands–resources model, and feedback intervention theory. Each of the eleven components is then defined and applied, first conceptually, then in the CENTCOM case. The article concludes with a manager-facing checklist designed to embed the framework in everyday practice and argues that intelligence underperformance is best understood and addressed as a management problem rather than solely an analytical one.

Problems in Intelligence Management: The Case of the Complaining Analysts

On May 28, 2015, a whistleblower within the U.S. CENTCOM Intelligence Directorate filed a complaint alleging that senior managers within the Directorate "violated regulations, tradecraft standards, and professional ethics by modifying intelligence assessments to present an unduly positive outlook on CENTCOM efforts to train the [Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)] and combat [the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)]" (U.S. House of Representatives Joint Task Force on U.S. Central Command Intelligence Analysis, 2016, p. 3). The complaint, which originally surfaced through investigative reporting (Landay & Strobel, 2015) and was subsequently examined by both Congress and the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General (2017), demonstrates the need for a management framework broader than the intelligence process itself. It is not the intention of this article to make a judgment about the nature and accuracy of the assessments, but to examine the management failings and command climate within the CENTCOM Intelligence Directorate as a case study to demonstrate how the 11 C's framework can provide intelligence managers with an effective methodology for addressing perceived underperformance and improving organizational culture.

The CENTCOM case is one of a recognizable pattern of analyst whistleblower cases, alongside dissent over Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD) assessments (Jervis, 2010) and Central Intellience Agency (CIA) enhanced interrogation programs (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 2014). The Edward Snowden leaks might also provide a useful case study in managing a single individual. The House Intelligence Committee report on its investigation identifies several management interventions in response to his behavior and attitude before the leaks (Review of the Unauthorized Disclosures of Former National Security Agency Contractor Edward Snowden by the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 2016). This case was chosen partly for space constraints, but also because it provides the most publicly available details on issues within management and the workforce and most clearly exposes the management dimension that the 11 C's framework is designed to address.

The initial congressional task force report and subsequent Department of Defense Inspector General's report identified specific problems with the management and command climate at the CENTCOM Intelligence Directorate. The congressional task force identified three key issues. First, the management climate was described as toxic: "Constant leadership micromanagement, review, and editing of analytic products ultimately chilled analytic dissent and resulted in a workforce that felt obligated to seek outside support in improving a very challenging work environment" (U.S. House of Representatives Joint Task Force on U.S. Central Command Intelligence Analysis, 2016, p. 13). Second, senior managers in the Directorate were completely unaware of concerns among junior analysts until the Department of Defense Inspector General began its investigation, indicating a "severe disconnect" between managers and the workforce (p. 13). Finally, the Task Force found that dissent was stifled and that management within the Directorate was actively hostile to any bad news in intelligence reports (p. 13). Here, we can clearly see the relationship among management, management culture, and intelligence failure; the environment was ripe for groupthink and the cherry-picking of intelligence.

The much longer and more detailed Department of Defense Inspector General's (2017) investigation identified clear failings in the management style of the CENTCOM Intelligence Directorate. For example, it was clear that managers had an idea of how things should work but failed to communicate their thinking to their workforce. One analyst commented, "A lot of these folks [analysts] want us to just trust them," and described their attitude as, "Hey, I've been working this for 10 years. I know this is the answer." He continued, "But they can't provide the 'why.' So that's really what was being requested" (p. 109).

The Department of Defense Inspector General (2017) also found evidence of long-standing dissatisfaction with management among the Intelligence Directorate workforce, based on periodic command climate surveys conducted by CENTCOM. In interviews with analysts, the words "dictatorial" and "micromanager" frequently crop up when describing senior managers (pp. 115–136). In addition to the perceived inability to communicate with management, the 2013 command climate survey found a lack of communication or guidance from management. The summary of the findings of that survey stated, "[It is] evident respondent employees/analysts are not receiving guidance/priorities/intent intact from senior leadership" (p. 126). It was this disconnect between management and the workforce that led management to perceive some analysts as problematic and the workforce to perceive that management was altering their reports for its own purposes, which was the cause of the initial complaint to the Inspector General (IG). The IG concluded that, in fact, there was no evidence that assessments were being altered to fit a narrative; management was simply taking a wider view but failed to communicate this to the workforce (and even failed to care that the workforce held this misperception). As the report itself said:

> During our investigation, we identified several specific weaknesses and flaws in the [Combatant Command Joint Intelligence Directorate (CCJ2)] management processes for creating intelligence products, which we believe contributed to the widespread perception that CCJ2 senior intelligence leaders were distorting intelligence to present a more positive view of the success of the [Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)] and a more negative view of the success of ISIL. We also believe deficiencies in these processes, such as ineffective communication and guidance, lack of adequate feedback, ambiguity and uncertainty about certain CCJ2 policies, and the ambiguous status of [Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)] analysts assigned to USCENTCOM, hindered the effectiveness and efficiency of the CCJ2 and [Joint Intelligence Center, Central Command (JICCENT)], as well as affected the morale of the analytical workforce. (p. 190)

The Department of Defense Inspector General (2017) made specific recommendations for CENTCOM to improve its management processes and communication between management and the workforce. While the majority of its 29 recommendations addressed specific technical aspects of the intelligence process, the first four focused on communication, feedback, and performance management. However, there were no recommendations on how CENTCOM should proceed.

This is where academia steps in to bridge the gap between theory and practice and offer a practical solution for intelligence managers. First, education is a key requisite for intelligence managers; they must not only be technical experts in their field, but they must have that wider body of knowledge, including intelligence theory, to understand the full complexity of what they are doing and have the *language* to be able to communicate this to their team members. Second, an interdisciplinary approach that blends organizational and cultural explanations of intelligence failure with management theory can yield a tool for managers that is both readily understood and readily applied. The 11 C's approach outlined here can be used to address performance issues in specific cases, such as management perception that some workers are problematic, or to inculcate a climate in which management and staff are open and transparent with each other, and in which the craft of intelligence can be taught, and codes of conduct, codes of practice, and ethical frameworks can be instilled in the organization from top to bottom.

THE 11 C'S FRAMEWORK

Managing underperformance is a necessary aspect of organizational management and human resources. Left unaddressed, underperformance rarely stays contained to one individual: it lowers team output, signals to others that weak standards are tolerated, and normalizes the behaviors that erode analytic quality and command climate. In an intelligence setting, where degraded performance can translate into missed warnings or flawed assessments, identifying and correcting underperformance is a core managerial responsibility, not a discretionary one.

Grounding the Framework in Theory and Practice

The 11 C's framework draws on five well-established bodies of work in performance management, organizational behaviour and applied psychology. Performance management systems (PMSs) provide the cyclical structure within which the framework operates; goal-setting theory underpins how expectations are set and judged; the psychological contract explains how perceived fairness shapes engagement and dissent; the job demands–resources model distinguishes capability problems from motivational ones; and feedback intervention theory shapes how managers correct course without damaging trust. Each theory is summarised in turn below and then applied to specific Cs, before the section closes by integrating the five into a single management logic.

- PMSs view performance as a continuous cycle of goal setting, monitoring, review, and development aimed at enhancing the capability of individuals and teams. Within the 11 C's framework, PMS provides the overarching cycle, while the C's specify how managers respond at each stage—from setting expectations (*clarity*) and monitoring (*confidence*, *control*) to development and escalation (*coaching*, *code*) (Armstrong & Baron, 2005).
- Goal-setting theory proposes that specific, challenging, and accepted goals lead to higher performance when individuals have the skills and resources to achieve them. Where goals are vague, unrealistic, or disconnected from organizational priorities, underperformance and frustration are more likely. Within the 11 C's, the theory

underpins *clarity* in defining standards and objectives, supports *confidence* in judging whether performance gaps are real, and informs *control* through monitoring progress against agreed-upon goals (Höchli et al., 2018; Locke & Latham, 2002, 2019).

- The psychological contract captures the unwritten expectations that employees and employers hold about obligations, fairness, development, and support. When employees perceive that this contract has been breached or is one-sided, motivation and performance often deteriorate and attitudes harden. In the 11 C's framework, the contract is central to *choices* and *consequences* (how employees interpret what has been promised), *code* (how formal processes respond when expectations are repeatedly violated) and *culture creation/correction* (how shared expectations are embedded or reset across the organization) (Rousseau, 1995).
- The job demands–resources (JD-R) model emphasizes that performance depends on the balance between job demands (workload, complexity, emotional strain) and job resources (autonomy, support, tools, skills). When demands chronically exceed resources, burnout and underperformance become more likely, even among motivated staff. Within the 11 C's, JD-R helps managers distinguish "can't perform" from "won't perform," guiding *confidence* (understanding the true demands of a role), *control* (adjusting workload, structure, and resourcing) and *coaching* (building the skills and support that restore balance) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017; Lesener et al., 2019).
- Feedback intervention theory argues that feedback improves performance when it is specific, task- and process-focused, and oriented toward problem-solving rather than personal criticism. Poorly delivered feedback can distract, demotivate, or damage trust, especially in high-stakes environments such as intelligence agencies. In the 11 C's, this theory informs *clarity* (using feedback to make expectations and gaps explicit), *coaching* (framing feedback as developmental and collaborative), and *culture correction* (using feedback loops to challenge unhelpful norms and move teams towards open, learning-oriented climates) (DeNisi, 2018; Gnepp et al., 2020; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Taken together, the five theoretical traditions converge on a single management logic: performance is a system, not a personal attribute. Performance management systems provide the cycle; goal-setting theory the standards; the psychological contract the relational basis; the job demands–resources model the diagnostic lens for distinguishing capability from motivation; and feedback intervention theory the corrective mechanism. The 11 C's framework operationalizes this convergence by translating each theoretical insight into a discrete decision point that intelligence managers can recognize, name, and act on, rather than leaving the underlying logic implicit in day-to-day practice.

Development of the 11 C's Framework

The 11 C's framework was developed by two of the authors, drawing on many years of management practice and observation across distinct but complementary environments: corporate security and intelligence functions, and military and prison service leadership roles. Across these settings, the authors repeatedly encountered similar decision points when dealing with underperformance and difficult team dynamics: how far to tolerate behavior, when and how to confront it, how to distinguish "can't" from "won't," and how to set or reset culture. These practical observations were then systematically compared with the performance-management and organizational-behavior literatures described above and clustered into conceptually distinct yet connected categories, yielding the 11 C's. The result is a manager-facing model, designed to be used at the point of decision, rather than a new theory of performance: it organizes existing insights and practitioner experience into a sequence of questions and options that intelligence managers can use when addressing specific cases of underperformance, in a way that can be iterated over time.

Intended Users and Practical Application

The primary intended users of the 11 C's framework are managers at any level who are responsible for supervising staff and shaping the local command climate. It can also support those designing management development programs by providing a structure for case studies and scenario-based exercises. In practice, managers can use the 11 C's as a structured checklist of questions when they first become aware of an apparent performance or climate problem, helping them to move from a vague sense that "something is wrong" to a more deliberate sequence of diagnosis and action.

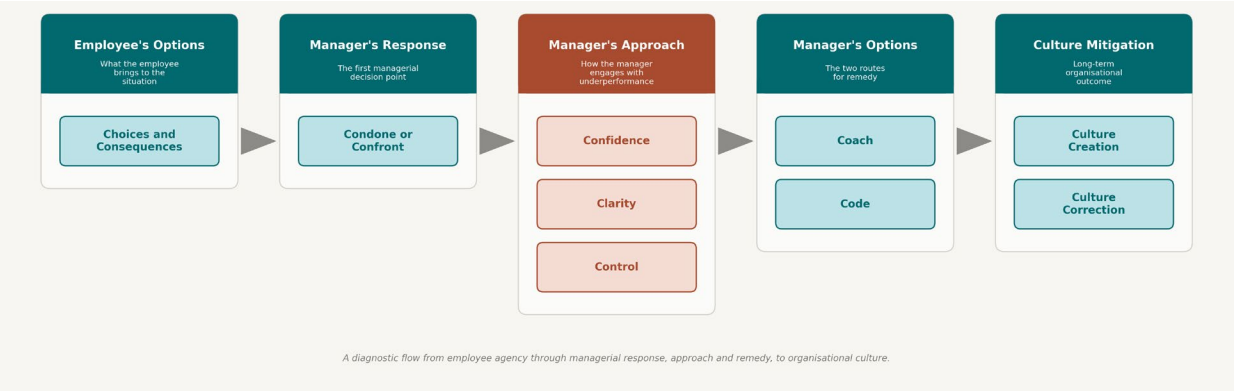


Figure 1. The 11 C's Management Framework

COMPONENTS OF THE 11 C'S FRAMEWORK

Employee's Options: Choices and Consequences

Autonomy, the degree of self-direction an employee has over how, when, and with whom their work is carried out (Deci & Ryan, 2000), plays a particularly important role in intelligence work, where analysts and operatives are routinely expected to exercise judgment under uncertainty (Marrin, 2011b). Managers and team members alike need to recognize and appreciate this autonomy, as it underscores the importance of agency in the workplace.

When employees exercise their autonomy, they embrace the power of choice. Every decision they make, whether it involves task execution, time management, collaboration, or professional development, carries consequences that can significantly affect both their performance and the team's overall effectiveness. These choices are not isolated incidents; rather, they accumulate over time and help shape one's identity and career trajectory. Recognizing these choices and their consequences is essential for managing underperformance in the workplace. When employees understand and accept that their actions have implications, it promotes a sense of responsibility and accountability. This awareness is crucial, as it shifts focus from blaming external factors for performance issues to fostering self-reflection and personal ownership. Employees who grasp the significance of their choices are more likely to take steps towards their personal growth.

When addressing underperformance, the focus is on guiding employees to understand their choices and the consequences. This guidance aims to create an environment where employees can reflect on their actions, recognize their impact, and learn from both successes and setbacks. The goal is to foster dialogue that encourages team members to reflect on their decisions and how they contribute to their overall professional journey. For managers, this means that when they observe underperformance, they should first clarify the realistic choices available to the employee and ensure that the consequences of those choices, both positive and negative, are explicit, fair, and understood.

Manager's Options: Condone or Confront

How managers handle situations when employees do not meet expectations plays a significant role in shaping the team's direction and the organization's overall culture (Detert & Burris, 2007; Schein & Schein, 2017). When faced with the consequences of employees' choices that lead to underperformance, managers must decide whether to overlook the issue or address it. Ignoring or accepting underperformance as a part of workplace dynamics can create an environment that tolerates mediocrity. This passive approach not only hampers the team's potential but also diminishes the morale of high-performing individuals who may feel undervalued or demotivated when their efforts are not distinguished from underperformance. Conversely, confronting underperformance proactively is a hallmark of effective management. This approach involves addressing underperformance constructively. It requires managers to engage in conversations and provide honest feedback about observed performance gaps. The objective here is not to penalize

or demoralize employees, but to highlight how poor performance affects outcomes and to collaboratively work towards improvement.

Confronting underperformance also entails establishing clear expectations for employees. They must understand what is expected of them in terms of their roles, goals, and the standards to which they are held accountable. Addressing underperformance directly promotes a culture of accountability and responsibility. When employees see that their actions and performance have consequences and watch management consistently address issues, it fosters an environment where everyone feels motivated to hold themselves to high standards. For managers, this means that when they observe underperformance, they must ask: "If I do nothing about this pattern, what behavior or climate am I effectively condoning?" and be prepared to confront the specific issues directly.

Manager's Approach: Confidence, Clarity, and Control

Dealing with underperformance is a significant challenge that requires a thoughtful approach balancing empathy and effectiveness. A structured method encompassing three elements—confidence, clarity, and control—plays a significant role in effectively navigating underperformance issues.

- Confidence forms the foundation of this approach, enabling managers to supervise and evaluate their teams efficiently. It stems from a thorough understanding of each employee's role, responsibilities, and tasks. When managers demonstrate confidence in their understanding of an employee's role, they establish themselves as well-informed authorities, creating an environment for relevant and respectful interventions. This confidence is vital to ensuring performance evaluations tailored to the dynamics of each role within the organization.
- Clarity involves open and honest communication between managers and employees. Establishing clarity is essential for creating understanding regarding performance issues at hand. This process involves addressing underperformance in a way that enables identification of its root causes, whether they are skill gaps, resource limitations, or personal challenges. Additionally, it is important to have clarity in setting and communicating performance standards and organizational expectations. This transparency ensures that employees know exactly where they stand and what is expected of them for improvement.
- Control refers to the manager's role in guiding the improvement process. Control in this context means providing guidance and resources to employees rather than micromanaging their every move. It entails overseeing the development and implementation of performance improvement plans while establishing mechanisms to monitor progress. This level of control is crucial to ensure that corrective actions are appropriate and effective while also providing support throughout the employee's journey toward improvement. When exercised wisely, control empowers employees to take ownership of their growth while offering them invaluable support and essential resources.

By integrating confidence, clarity, and control, managers establish a framework for managing underperformance. Together, these components create a rounded approach that addresses both concerns about underperformance and the long-term growth of individuals and teams. The true strength of this framework lies in how these components interact and reinforce each other, creating a comprehensive approach to navigating underperformance. For managers, this means that before intervening in an underperformance situation, they must ask: "Do I understand this person's role and workload well enough to judge their performance confidently? Have I clearly communicated expectations? Am I exercising the right kind of control?"

Employee's Issues: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude

Before deciding whether to emphasize coaching or to invoke a formal, code-based response, managers need to understand whether an instance of underperformance arises primarily from gaps in knowledge, skills, or attitude. Knowledge concerns whether the employee understands their role, tasks, and how their work contributes to organizational goals. Skill relates to whether they have the capabilities to perform the role effectively. Attitude reflects their willingness to engage positively with the work, feedback, and colleagues.

A structured diagnosis across these three dimensions ensures that coaching efforts are directed at the right problem (for example, training to address a knowledge or skill gap) and that recourse to formal procedures is reserved for cases where attitude-based underperformance persists despite clear expectations and support. In practice, managers can carry out this diagnosis through structured one-to-one conversations, observation of task performance, review of relevant outputs, and comparison against documented role expectations, distinguishing "can't do" (knowledge or skill) from "won't do" (attitude) problems (Aguinis, 2019; Mager & Pipe, 1997).

Manager's Options: Coach and Code

Once managers have diagnosed the root cause of underperformance, whether knowledge, skill, or attitude, they must decide whether the appropriate response is coaching or whether formal code-based (disciplinary) procedures are warranted. The diagnosis above provides the criterion: knowledge or skill gaps point to coaching; persistent attitude-based issues point to the code (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2024).

- Coaching is the response when underperformance is rooted in knowledge or skill gaps. It involves a developmental, supportive approach. Managers share resources, provide training sessions, clarify job expectations, and foster a partnership in which employees can build competence and confidence. Coaching is collaborative, focuses on the future, and assumes the employee is capable and willing to improve. These interventions not only bridge knowledge or skill gaps but also empower employees to carry out their responsibilities with greater confidence and competence.
- Coding is the formal disciplinary response when underperformance is rooted in an unwillingness to engage positively with attitude-based issues and when coaching or support has been tried without success. The code of discipline is a transparent,

documented process that makes clear to the employee that expectations have been set, that informal support has been offered, and that their persistent noncompliance now triggers formal procedures. This formal process ensures a transparent approach to addressing conduct-related underperformance while emphasizing adherence to the organization's standards and code of conduct.

Culture Mitigation: Creation versus Culture Correction

As managers navigate managing underperformance, two crucial factors come into play: *culture creation* and *culture correction*. These processes recognize that individual performance is deeply influenced by the prevailing workplace culture.

- Culture creation involves establishing a high-performance culture from the ground up, especially in new or evolving organizations. It involves establishing the values, norms, and expectations that align with the organization's goals from the beginning. The advantage of culture creation lies in its proactive nature; it involves designing and instilling a desired culture before any unproductive norms or attitudes take hold.
- Culture correction is necessary in established organizations where harmful norms have taken hold. This can be a lengthy process as it involves changing deeply ingrained behaviors and attitudes. However, both processes require effective leadership, consistent communication, and a strong commitment to aligning workplace practices with the organization's values and objectives. For managers, this means asking: "What norms or signals (spoken or unspoken) are contributing to this underperformance, and how can I start to challenge or change them?"

Applying the 11 C's to CENTCOM

The CENTCOM Intelligence Directorate whistleblower case is used here as a case study to illustrate how the 11 C's framework can help managers analyze and respond to performance and climate problems in an intelligence organization. Rather than revisiting the substantive accuracy of CENTCOM's assessments, the analysis focuses on documented issues of command climate, communication, feedback, and perceived hostility to dissent, and shows how each element of the 11 C's suggests alternative managerial responses that might have mitigated those problems. The 11 C's suggest a structured way to understand how managers, in cases such as CENTCOM, might have responded differently to emerging problems in the command climate and performance. Rather than treating analyst dissent as a disciplinary problem or a question of loyalty, the framework encourages managers to ask, in turn, what choices analysts had, how management responded, and what culture this interaction created.

Table 1 sets out, for each of the 11 C's, how the problem appeared at CENTCOM and how the framework suggests a manager might have acted instead. Read together, the rows reveal a consistent pattern rather than eight isolated failings. The recurring theme is a command climate in which dissent was treated as disloyalty and "bad news" as professional risk, so that analysts perceived few safe choices, leadership condoned rather than confronted the resulting hostility,

and control was exercised through intrusive editing rather than clear standards. What the framework offers in response is not a single corrective action but a coordinated shift: making respectful dissent an explicit and protected choice, using climate data as a trigger to confront harmful behavior, moving control toward process and standards, and treating disagreements as coaching opportunities. Taken as a whole, the table shows that the components of the framework are interdependent, and that addressing analytic performance at CENTCOM would have required managers to act on climate and culture, not on product content alone.

A legitimate question at this stage is whether or not this framework would have resolved the problem at CENTCOM. Our claim is that if it had been in place, the problem would not have occurred—or at least not in the same form and with the same severity. Intelligence analysis and assessment will always involve a competition of ideas, and in that competition, some ideas will be discounted. What matters is the environment in which that happens. An environment in which dissent is managed as part of the process rather than as a behavioral or disciplinary issue from the start (acknowledging that it still may become one or both of these) significantly reduces the risk of crisis, either in the form of a complaint such as that in the CENTCOM case or in the form of a long-term disgruntled employee who becomes a security risk. In this case, use of the 11 C's framework as a response to the 2013 command climate survey, which first identified problems in the relationship between analysts and managers, would certainly have reduced the tension within the organization and corrected the perceptions both sides had of each other. It would also have opened up the important and necessary conversations about why managers were taking certain analytic decisions.

Table 1. How the 11 C's Suggest CENTCOM Managers Might Have Acted

C	How it appeared at CENTCOM	How the 11 C's suggest managers might have acted
Choices and Consequences	Analysts perceived few safe choices: Dissent was informally penalized, and formal channels were seen as ineffective.	Make explicit that respectful dissent is a legitimate choice, provide protected channels for raising concerns, and set clear, fair consequences for repeated poor performance, not for disagreement.
Condone or Confront	Leadership effectively condoned a toxic climate by failing to confront micromanagement, hostility to "bad news," and survey results that flagged problems.	Use command-climate data and informal feedback as triggers to confront behaviors undermining analytic integrity, rather than focusing solely on product content.
Confidence	Managers had a "big picture" view but did not demonstrate confidence in explaining their reasoning or the basis of changes to assessments.	Show informed confidence by articulating how strategic assessments are constructed and by modeling the "why" behind judgments to analysts.
Clarity	Policies, priorities, and expectations for analysts were ambiguous; surveys showed analysts were not receiving guidance, priorities, or intent intact from senior leadership.	Clarify intent, priorities, and thresholds for analytic change in regular briefings, and link edits to explicit standards rather than implicit preferences.
Control	Control over products took the form of intrusive micromanagement and extensive editing, which chilled analytic dissent.	Shift control toward process and standards (review criteria, quality thresholds) rather than line-by-line content edits, preserving analyst ownership while maintaining rigor.
Coach	Management actions were largely experienced as top-down corrections rather than developmental support.	Use disagreements over assessments as coaching opportunities in which supervisors explain reasoning, invite alternative views and jointly identify development needs.
Code	Formal processes for raising concerns culminated in a whistleblower complaint, signaling limited trust in internal mechanisms.	Strengthen internal performance and grievance procedures so that staff can address perceived distortion of intelligence within the organization before resorting to external escalation.
Culture Creation/ Correction	Over time, a culture emerged that associated "bad news" with professional risk and equated loyalty with optimism in assessments.	Use climate surveys, feedback and visible leadership behavior to correct norms that penalize dissent and to create a culture where candor and analytic challenge are expected.

The 11 C's in Practice: A Checklist for Managers

The 11 C's framework can be used as a quick diagnostic tool when managers first become aware of a potential performance or climate problem. The questions below are intended to guide reflection and structure conversations, rather than to prescribe a single "correct" response in every case.

- **Organizational context –** Which of my organization's HR policies, disciplinary codes and reporting lines apply here, and at what point must I engage HR, my chain of command, or other governance functions before deciding what action to take?
- **Choices and Consequences** – What realistic choices does this team member have, and have I made the consequences of those choices explicit and fair?
- **Condone or Confront** – If I do nothing about this pattern, what behavior or climate am I effectively condoning, and what specifically do I need to confront?
- **Confidence** – Do I understand this team member's role and workload well enough to judge their performance confidently and credibly?
- **Clarity** – Have I clearly communicated expectations, priorities, and standards in a way this team member could reasonably understand and act on?
- **Control** – Am I exercising the right kind of control here (process, standards, resources) without slipping into unhelpful micromanagement of content?
- **Coach** – If this is primarily a knowledge or skill issue, what coaching or support can I offer, and how will I know if it is making a difference?
- **Code** – If this is primarily an attitude or conduct issue, have I reached the point where formal procedures should now be invoked, and have I signposted that clearly?
- **Culture Creation** – In this team or unit, what norms and behaviors am I deliberately trying to create, and how do my actions in this case reinforce them?
- **Culture Correction** – What existing norms or signals (spoken or unspoken) are contributing to this underperformance, and how can I start to challenge or change them?

CONCLUSION

The problem this article addresses is well established but persistently under-theorized. Intelligence organizations repeatedly experience failures in analytic quality, command climate, and analyst dissent, and these failures are routinely diagnosed as analytical or technical when, at root, they are failures of management. Existing intelligence-studies literature offers rich *post hoc* accounts of intelligence failure but limited forward-facing guidance for the managers whose decisions shape whether such failures occur or are caught early.

This article has presented the 11 C's framework as a practical tool for intelligence managers dealing with underperformance and command climate challenges. Grounded in established performance-management and organizational-behavior theory, and informed by decades of practitioner experience in challenging operational settings, the framework offers a structured yet flexible approach to diagnosis and intervention.

The CENTCOM case study demonstrates how the absence of clarity, confidence, and constructive coaching, combined with a command climate that did not safely allow dissent, created conditions for both actual underperformance and widespread perception of distortion. The 11 C's suggest that had managers engaged with this framework, they might have distinguished between content disagreement and conduct issues, used feedback as a coaching tool rather than a compliance mechanism, and deliberately worked to create a culture in which analytic challenge and dissent were valued rather than feared.

Intelligence organizations cannot improve performance or quality without attending to the human and organizational dimensions of intelligence production. Managers bear primary responsibility for shaping the conditions under which their teams work. By using the 11 C's framework, they can move beyond inconsistent, personality-dependent approaches to performance management and adopt a structured, evidence-informed methodology that is both rigorous and humane. This, in turn, creates the conditions for the kind of open, learning-oriented intelligence organizations that produce better analysis and serve democratic oversight more effectively. In short, this article has argued that managing intelligence underperformance is itself an analytical task, and that the 11 C's framework offers managers the structured questions through which to conduct that analysis.

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