



75TH INNOVATION COMMAND



Maj Charles Stewart on
**SOLDIER
EMPOWERMENT
THROUGH
TECHNOLOGY &
TRANSFORMATION**

Q&A

FACES OF INNOVATION

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MILITARY TITLE: INNOVATION OFFICER

CIVILIAN OCCUPATION: LEAD PRODUCT MANAGER FOR
DIGITAL EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

EDUCATION: MBA & BA IN HISTORY

HOMETOWN: OAKLAND, CALIF.



How do you and the Soldiers in your Group define success?

I define success when my fellow Soldiers with Mountain View Detachment produce clear evidence of a positive impact on Army transformation at the highest levels. In our civilian capacity, every Soldier in the detachment works or once worked for the world's most innovative companies such as Apple, Amazon, Meta and Microsoft. Some Soldiers also find inspiration through their spouses and partners. For instance, my wife, Whitney, helps transform how companies excel through cloud technology. The detachment's background in engineering, data science and product management solve the Army's toughest problems by applying our military training and education with the best practices used by our Fortune 500 employers. For example, some Soldiers in our detachment are engaged with redesigning the Army's recruiting initiatives. We have participated in multiple panels, workshops and thinking sessions, and we have received several invitations to attend similar events. I'm convinced that the Army's most senior leaders want to deploy our ideas that improve the Soldier experience and attract talented candidates to join our ranks.

What are the most rewarding and challenging aspects of your position?

As a member of the Army Reserve's Talent and Recruitment Task Force, I see firsthand greater recognition among the Army's most senior leaders for the need to embrace transformational change. This mindset shift is reflected on how the 75th IC Groups and City Detachments help corporate partners adapt their cutting-edge commercial technology to the Army's capabilities. Such digital transformations empower Soldiers with the tools they need to accomplish their missions. However, some of these technologically advanced solutions clash with the Army's hierarchical structure forged during the industrial age. The Army must upgrade this model so it may streamline procedures and flatline approval processes to rapidly develop a modern force that will dominate the physical and digital battlefield. That's why my role exists, and that's also why I love what I do and who I lead and serve.

Who or what inspired you to join the 75th Innovation Command?

When my part-time position in the Army Reserve was taking twice as much administrative time than my full-time civilian position, I knew I had to make a change. Impatient with the Army's sluggish attempts to modernize its personnel systems, I submitted my [Inactive Ready Reserve] packet. That's when Maj. Craig Robbins, the 75th IC's Chief Talent Management Officer, contacted me. [Robbins] was impressed with my skills and experience and encouraged me to transfer to the 75th IC. I accepted his invitation as the position offered opportunities to improve the digital experience for our Soldiers.

"I was a **TERRIBLE** lieutenant who was the butt of every **JOKE**... I was that officer with crazy ideas to find creative **ANSWERS**. Ten years later, senior **LEADERS** value my input and trust that I can help them develop feasible, **INNOVATIVE** solutions."

Maj. Charles F. Stewart



Why is recruiting a high priority for the Army and how can the 75th IC best support its recruiting efforts?

The Army missed its 2022 recruiting goal by 25 percent - about 15,000 Soldiers. That's the biggest miss in more than 50 years. Part of the problem is only 23 percent of America's youth between 16 and 21 are eligible to serve. Another alarming statistic is that only 9 percent of youth are interested in joining the military. Generation Z sees the Army as an antiquated organization. The 75th IC has talented Soldiers with a passion for human connection misconception through social and digital means. Several Soldiers from the Mountain View Detachment had the honor and privilege to join [Maj. Gen.] Debra Kotulich, director of the Army Recruiting and Retention Task Force, to participate in a pair of thinking sessions to tackle the Army's recruiting problem. Our ideas did not fall on deaf ears. In fact, the Army is on pace to exceed this year's recruitment goal of 65,000 Soldiers. While we can't take full credit, our collaboration offered insight on creatively using technology to connect candidates with the Army's intrinsic values, diverse culture and cutting edge career paths.

Besides recruitment, why is the 75th Innovation an integral part to Army Futures Command and the Army Reserve?

One of the greatest strategic advantages the Army possesses is direct access to the world's most technologically advanced companies and universities. No other country's military has innovation partners as inspiring as those headquartered along Silicon Valley. The 75th IC helps channel this immense talent pool brimming with creative ideas and practical solutions. The Army no longer needs to rely solely on traditional defense partners. Instead, it can seek solutions through a diverse network of technology firms and even individual commercial technologists. An Innovation Command can also change mindsets and offer new perspectives. The 'suck it up and drive on' motif doesn't apply to every situation. Instead, the 75th IC uses the 'let's fix it and make it better' approach by nurturing novel ideas that put the Soldier on the forefront of our problem-solving strategies.

What advice do you have for Soldiers who want to join the 75th IC?

Keep the faith and always push for positive change. Seize opportunities to influence the innovation ecosystem and flatline processes and procedures. The U.S. Army is the greatest Army on the planet because of our values. Infuse those values in everything you do, and communicate them to our corporate collaborators, academic partners and especially potential candidates. The Army needs new talent with a global outlook on a digitally connected world. We must attract these inquisitive minds by telling our stories of inspiration and innovation that will deliver Army 2030 and design Army 2040. 