United States Military Decisively more Effective with

MAYA’s Decision Community Software

When preparing to battle an adversary, confusion on the battlefield can be the military’s worst enemy. In order to be effective, everyone has to be on the same page. The United States military is marching towards that goal with the help of MAYA’s Decision Community Software.

Historically, the military has relied on radio transmitters to relay information between commanders and officers on the battlefield. Sharing information and painting an accurate picture of battlefield conditions without the benefit of visuals, however, has contributed to confusion and half-baked conclusions about enemy maneuvers. Previous attempts to use software to present a visual overview of battlefield conditions have come up short, because data was difficult to understand, and observations & opinions couldn’t be shared. The military needed a visual tool to help soldiers on the front line, in the command post, and all points in-between share opinions and draw conclusions about battlefield activity.

Block Party Five was an exercise designed to test the ability of military officers to share visual information and respond in critical situations. MAYA’s Decision Community software linked military leaders together via desktops and wireless monitors in the field. The software’s visualization interface fostered collaboration among officers involved in the exercise, and enabled them to instantaneously review one another’s data and information. The ability to visually share opinions and observations raised the level of communication among participants. Because everyone could actually see what each participant was thinking, translation problems commonly experienced over radios and the need to ask detailed questions were eliminated.

“The tool allowed you to get into other people’s heads, and them into yours,” said Keith Holcomb, a retired United States Marine Corp General participating in Block Party Five.

By visually displaying each Block Party Five participant’s unique perspective, Decision Community facilitated a new level of insight. It enabled officers to quickly zoom between macro and micro views of particular situations and easily extract meaning from data, giving them a better understanding of situations and possible outcomes of actions. In turn, the battlefield commander was able to determine common denominators among people’s thinking, and make better decisions about how to outmaneuver the enemy.

Alas, MAYA has given the United States Military the technological leap forward it sought. In the words of retired Army General Paul F. Gorman, MAYA’s Decision Community is the “greatest advance in technology for Command and Control in the past 30 years.”
Sidebar:

The participants in Block Party Five consisted of active Marine Corps soldiers and retired Marine Corps generals. Before the exercise commenced, participants were given MAYA’s Decision Community software and a paper map, and were instructed to use the paper map if the software proved too confusing. On the first day, exchanges between generals and officers were very formal and hierarchical, reflective of standard military decorum and getting used to the software. By the third day, however, communication among participants became very cryptic, indicative of how adept they had become using the software in a very short time due to its user-friendly, intuitive nature. At one point during the exercise General Keith Holcomb left his workstation to observe Block Party Five’s simulated battlefield activities on a team-member’s computer screen. It became quickly apparent to General Holcomb, however, that he had become very accustomed to envisioning what was going on in his colleagues’ heads based on what he observed on his own computer screen. Actually watching someone’s thought process in action on a computer screen other than his own was less beneficial. “It’s better than being there,” said Holcomb.