



(U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Amanda Hunt taken Sept. 11, 2019) U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Giancarlo Macri, 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade, provides guidance and motivation to a Soldier conducting field training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Sept. 11, 2019.

# Purpose, Direction, and Motivation

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**L**eadership, according to *Army Doctrine Publication 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, “is the activity of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization” (Department of the Army, 2019b, p. 1-13). *Purpose* and *direction* are important, because they give a reason to accomplish the mission as well as communicate how to accomplish the mission. But *motivation* is arguably the hardest leadership principle to master. It requires a relationship of trust throughout the unit and a positive environment to draw the best performance out of the team. This article describes scientific research into human nature to understand what conditions must be met to increase subordinate motivation and unit achievement.

## Leadership Styles

Transformational Leadership (TL) is regarded as the most effective leadership style in the Full Range of Leadership (FRL) model. Northouse (2018) states that TL “is concerned

with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings” (p. 163). This style lights a fire *within* subordinates, thus, motivating them intrinsically and bringing out their best performance.

The next effective leadership style is transactional leadership, which is viewed as an exchange of reward for compliances. This style lights a fire *beneath* subordinates, consequently motivating them extrinsically. And finally, the most passive and ineffective form of leadership, or lack thereof—*laissez-faire* (Northouse, 2018). These leaders are dead matches—no fire can be lit; and therefore, no motivation obtained. The TL style of leadership should be the goal for military leaders at all levels.

## Interaction of Needs

Before high-level team and unit motivational goals can be accomplished, elemental individual needs must be met. A leader must make sure their subordinates’





(U.S. Army photo by Capt. Ellen C. Brabo taken Aug. 22, 2019) U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to 2d Cavalry Regiment enter a shoothouse to clear rooms using their assigned M4 rifles at Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, Aug. 22, 2019.

basic needs such as food, water, and security are satisfied before they can ask their unit to go above and beyond to accomplish complicated tasks. Since individual needs are linked to motivation, ensuring these needs are fulfilled allows for higher unit success.

### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow is known as the father of Humanistic Psychology and he developed a five-tier classification system of needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. The foundational needs (physiological and safety) must be in place before higher-level needs can be realized.

#### Physiological

Physiological needs consist of things like thirst, hunger, sleep, and breathing. These needs come before higher-order needs because they are essential for life (Nathan, 2020). For example, if a person becomes chronically short of food and water, they will become dominated by the desire to eat and drink above other needs. Similarly, if someone is sleep-deprived all they would want to do is rest. Therefore, do not deprive Soldiers of essential physiological needs unless absolutely necessary. To do so risks their motivation (and ability) to perform assigned high-level tasks.

#### Safety

When a person's physiological needs are met, they will look next to security, stability, structure, and a freedom from fear ("Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," n.d.). Although military training must be rigorous and simulate mission conditions, leaders must demonstrate genuine concern for the health and welfare of their Soldiers. Not only will this generate motivation and inspiration—it builds trust, the backbone of the mission command philosophy (Department of the Army, 2019a). Sgt. Maj. of

the Army Michael Grinston promotes safety, especially health and living conditions, as cornerstones to his "This is My Squad" initiative (Crockett, 2020).

#### Social

If the physiological and safety needs are met, then the need to build social relationships with others becomes important. Humans are social beings; therefore, they look for companionship, friendship, and social interaction (McLeod, 2020). Army leaders are responsible for creating a positive environment that promotes morale and engagement. The collective camaraderie and cohesion within an organization will determine each individual's level of morale. And morale is aligned with an individual's sense of well-being (Department of the Army, 2019b; Whitehurst, 2019).

#### Esteem

Humans operate better from a place of self-confidence. Leaders should make an effort to expand their subordinates' self-confidence because it contributes to them being value-added to the organization. Displaying respect towards others and giving proper recognition for one's efforts are essential components to building esteem. Leaders can give recognition and show appreciation in a variety of ways; for example, a sincere "great job" or "thanks for all your hard work" can boost a subordinate's morale. According to Courtney Ackerman, "Typically, when you are confident in your abilities you are happier due to your successes. When you are feeling better about your capabilities, the more energized and motivated you are to take action and achieve your goals" (Ackerman, 2020, para. 12).

#### Self-Actualization

Self-actualization refers to growth, personal development, and accomplishment—and can only be pursued after all other needs are met. According to psychologist Joaquin Selva, "Self-actualization can generally be thought of as the full realization of one's creative, intellectual, and social poten-



U.S. Army Sgt. Lorelyna Sierra, a transportation management coordinator with 4th Infantry Division Sustainment Brigade, inspects paperwork and provides feedback to a Soldier in preparation for a training rotation at Fort Carson, Colorado, July 16, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Daniel Parker)

tial through internal drive (versus for external rewards like money, status, or power)” (Selva, 2020, para. 9). Leaders can promote personal and career development by counseling, coaching, and mentoring subordinates. By investing time and energy into their growth, leaders can improve their Soldiers’ purpose, motivation, and resiliency.

### Framework for Motivation

Leader behavior creates the environment upon which subordinates will flourish or struggle. The following tips can be used to create a positive environment where Soldiers can succeed:

- **Be a motivated leader.** Subordinates are often a reflection of their leadership (Craig, 2017).
- **Establish a dialogue with each member of your team.** What motivates one person may not motivate another. They should also be confident that they can bring up any personal or professional issues to their leader. (Crockett, 2020).
- **Build trust.** Do not overemphasize control measures or reduce people to passive roles. Let Soldiers solve problems without micromanaging them. Challenge

them and utilize a decentralized command when possible (Department of the Army, 2019a).

- **Include team members in the decision-making process.** The more involved team members are, the more likely they will be motivated to accomplish the mission (Department of the Army, 2019a).
- **Provide proper feedback.** Without it, Soldiers will not know if they are accomplishing their mission (Signore, 2018). A lack of feedback will likely result in a lack of motivation.
- **Provide fair rewards and recognition.** Performance should be linked to rewards, just as promotion should be related to merit. When people know that their work is valued, there is always motivation to do more—and to do it well (Suits, 2019).

### Conclusion

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is a useful model for leaders. It lays a framework to understand human nature, needs, and motivations which creates a positive environment for transformational leadership. This builds trust and motivation and allows the unit as a whole to succeed. ■

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