



U.S. Army Soldiers with the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, and 423rd Military Police Company take the Oath of Enlistment during a reenlistment ceremony near Ferizaj/Urosevac, Kosovo, Sept. 26, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Miguel Ruiz)

# Organizational Commitment

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*“The time is now to transform how we take care of our people, our doctrine, our organizations, our training, our equipment, and how we compete around the world.” —Gen. James C. McConville (Brading, 2020, para. 2)*

**U**.S. Army Soldiers are in constant daily connection with their peers and workplace; however, due to training/duty rotations, deployments, or completing their enlistments, these change often. In order to put *people first* and retain the top U.S. Army talent to prepare for the future fight, the Army needs to focus on organizational commitment, buy-in, building relationships, and creating distinct unit goals to create optimized and successful organizations.

## Commitment to the Organization

U.S. Army Soldiers are innately motivated, but this does not automatically translate to full organizational commitment upon arrival at a particular unit, especially if the unit has a toxic environment (Garamone, 2019; Zwerdling, 2014). To improve Soldier commitment, which ultimately enhances the Army as a whole, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profes-*



U.S. Army Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team track an unmanned aerial drone during a training exercise at Fort Polk, Louisiana, Nov. 19, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. Joseph Warren)

sion states that an organization must have both a positive *climate* (short-term experience reflecting how people feel about their organization) and *culture* (long-term set of shared attitudes, values, and goals that characterize an organization over time) (Department of the Army, 2019b).

According to *ADP 6-22*, the following six characteristics are present in an organizational environment with a positive culture:

- The unit climate fosters trusting relationships.
- The culture promotes and rewards Soldiers that create solutions and think outside the box.
- The culture supports the selection of leaders and rewards members who demonstrate the ability to understand the environment quickly understand opportunities or counter threats.
- The culture rewards delegation of authority and the execution of leader's intent by subordinates.
- The culture rewards leaders who provide clear priorities and focus their unit's time and organizational energy on their mission.
- The culture is inclusive and allows for diversity of knowledge and perspectives to accomplish missions ethically, effectively, and efficiently. (Department of the Army, 2019b, p. 6-5)

The difficulty for both the U.S. Army, and individual Soldier, is that even when units exceed all standards, Soldiers rotate out after a few years, never becoming permanent staff. This means they have to start the organizational commitment and trust process every time they change stations. While this broadens a Soldier's career and experiences, it also affects the unit by having to train up each incoming Soldier and leader to its expectations/standards.

### Soldier Buy-In

According to *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*, the word buy-in means, "acceptance of and willingness

to actively support and participate in something (such as a proposed new plan or policy)" ("Buy-in," n.d., para. 1). Rick Conlow at LinkedIn says that "If employees believe that their leader has integrity, then they will begin to buy-in to (commit to or own) their way of working together" (Conlow, 2016, para. 3).

So, how do Army leaders get Soldier buy-in? By supporting Soldiers, both mentally and physically, and making sure they have access to beneficial resources like financial readiness resources, the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program, Ready and Resilient performance centers, etc. When leaders demonstrate they care about their subordinates, and live the Army Values, it builds a relationship of trust between the leader and subordinate. This trust (buy-in) is necessary not just to build command climate and culture, but also to establish mission command philosophy and prepare for the next conflict (Department of the Army, 2019a).

### Building Relationships

Strong relationships build trust and camaraderie, making the workplace more than just a place to clock in and do the bare minimum. Martin Zwilling at *Forbes* states, "... even the best technology and business model won't succeed without successful relationships" (Zwilling, 2016, para. 13).

Building strong relationships within an organization helps achieve mission goals by creating a shared understanding and alignment of motivations. *ADP 6-22* states:

☛Effective leadership depends on the alignment of purpose, direction, and motivation among leaders and subordinates. Working with a shared understanding of the operational picture and higher intent generates the unity of purpose, unity of effort, and consistency essential to maintaining a positive leadership climate. Subordinates who see consistency will sense shared purpose and be less prone to distraction by confusing or conflicting guidance from different leaders. Those who align their decisions and activities with their peers, for example during garrison activities and training, may have greater influence than a leader who does not. (2019b, p. 5-2)☛

### Establishing Specific Goals

Setting goals gives units and Soldiers direction and purpose. Each echelon in the Army should have a clear mission and direct its personnel towards achieving that mission. Clear mission goals provides concrete direction for Soldiers



and will keep them striving for unit and personal success. According to ADP 6-22, “Leaders should clearly define the ‘what’ and ‘why’. Subordinates should be able to start the mission or task with the end in mind by knowing what success looks like and how they can track their own progress” (Department of the Army, 2019b, p. 5-5).

Oftentimes, unit goals not only help individual units, but also establish fluid communication and commitment between echelons, allowing units to more efficiently meet the commander’s intent and accomplish successful mission command (Department of the Army, 2019a).

## Conclusion

A command’s culture and climate is just as important as its equipment. By focusing on organizational commitment, buy-in, building relationships, and creating distinct unit goals, each individual Soldier will have the support needed to fully commit to the U.S. Army’s mission. The future fight will not just be focused on who has the largest weapons, but ensuring the nation’s top talent has purpose, direction, and motivation to compete and win in any domain. ■

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