

U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Lynn, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division crawls under a wire obstacle at the Jungle Operations Training Course at East Range, Hawaii, Oct. 1, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Angelo Mejia)

# **Developing the Leader Mindset**

By Sgt. Maj. Scott Schomaker

U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy

"A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be." —former first lady Rosalyn Carter (Goldin, 2018, para. 2)

eader development should be more than just a list of tasks preceding training events. Army Regulation (AR) 350-1: Army Training and Leader Development describes leader development as being "...achieved through the lifelong synthesis of the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained through the training and education opportunities in the institutional, operational, and self-development domains" (Department of the Army, 2017, p.3). Becoming a great leader is a lifelong process all service members and Department of the Army (DA) Civilians should actively pursue. This article will focus on understanding motivations, positively influencing mindsets, and how to develop leaders ready for a rapidly changing and ambiguous environment.

#### Motivation

Abraham Maslow, a renowned American psychologist and one of the founders of "humanist psychology," has a theory of human motivation that suggests all human needs can be arranged into a hierarchy of prevalent needs, where certain needs are connected to the satisfaction of other more dominant needs (McCleod, 2020). His theory is formed around four foundational pillars:

- 1. A human being should be viewed as an integrated unit.
- The needs of a human being are felt more unconsciously than consciously, thus cultural and social context do not play a significant role in the theory of needs.
- 3. Man is a perpetually wanting animal.
- 4. Behavior is motivated by a complex set of conscious and unconscious needs, as well as the socio-cultural



U.S. Army Paratroopers with the 173rd Airborne Brigade prepare for an airborne operation in Pordenone, Italy, Sept. 15, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Paolo Bovo)

context (Maslow, 1943b).

Maslow's theory also explains although people are mostly occupied with satisfying their urgent basic needs, it is the need for self-actualization that drives them to high-level innovation and satisfaction. This understanding creates two questions:

- 1. What specifically motivates someone to do something?
- 2. How much of that specific motive is needed for someone to complete a challenging task?

Professors Richard Ryan and Edward Deci speculate that it takes both an *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation to accomplish a difficult task (2000a). Intrinsic motivation is defined as that which causes someone "to behave a certain way for the satisfaction of the behavior itself" (Ryan & Deci, 2000c, p. 16). Extrinsic motivation is described as engaging in an activity or behavior for a reward or to avoid a punishment (Cherry, 2020). This means a leader must understand their subordinates' motivations and needs to draw out their best performance and accomplish difficult tasks and missions.

### **Mindset**

Mindset is the constructed beliefs about one's abilities. These beliefs could be a set of self-assumptions, or they could be the processed understandings of received information (Dweck, 2006). There are two basic forms of mindset: the *fixed mindset*, in which an individual has developed an idea regarding their capabilities, traits, etc. that they are certain cannot be changed (pessimist); and the *growth mindset*, where one believes their current skills and abilities are in a constant state of progress – not an indicator of skills, knowledge, and abilities, but rather an understanding that growth can always occur regardless of any situation (optimist) (Dweck, 2006; Mraz & Hertz, 2015).

It is the fixed mindset that should be avoided as a leader, as it results in low levels of motivation to excel since their belief is that they cannot improve any further in a subject (for example, saying "I am not a math person" instead of learning how to do new calculations when

necessary) (Dweck, 2015; Maslow, 1943a; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; 2000b). A successful leader should want to grow and continuously develop.

## **Changing the Mindset**

According to *Army Doctrine Publication* (ADP) 6-22: *Army Leadership and the Profession*, leaders should encourage ideas that will improve both unit and individual performance, as well as promote a positive mindset to increase effectiveness and efficiencies (Department of the Army, 2019b).

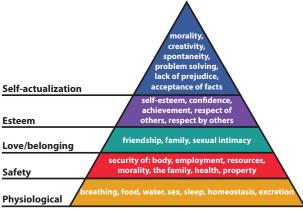
In order to embrace a growth mindset, and demonstrate a willingness to adapt to the Army's needs, leaders should do the following to improve overall performance:

- Ask questions about how to perform tasks better.
- Anticipate the need for change and action.
- Analyze tasks to determine better ways to achieve desired end states.
- Identify ways to improve unit or organizational procedures.
- Leverage technologies to improve effectiveness.
- Demonstrate and encourage critical and creative thinking. (Department of the Army, 2019b, p. 7-2)

## **Developing Future Leaders**

Developing leaders is an integral part of institutional and unit success. *Field Manual* (FM) 6-22: *Leader Development* states "...leader development is the deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process—founded in Army values—that grows Soldiers and Army Civilians into competent and confident leaders capable of decisive action" (Department of the Army, 2015, p. 1-1). Leader development programs should not be just a series of tasks; but, rather a dynamic and comprehensive process that targets the psychological foundation required to lead U.S. Army Soldiers in any environment while also following a mission command philosophy (Department of the Army, 2019a).

Mentors and instructors who understand the barriers of a fixed mindset, and can model behaviors consistent



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Graphic courtesy of SimplyPsychology\*)

with the change mindset, will more effectively develop future leaders who are adaptive and agile. In doing so, they will not only increase the change mindset of their subordinates and students, but also competently deliver the U.S. Army's goals of providing purpose, direction, and motivation to their Soldiers (Department of the Army, 2019b).

## Conclusion

Leaders need to take the opportunity to understand what motivates their subordinates, both intrinsical-

ly and extrinsically, in order to promote their best performance. Furthermore, a targeted, progressive development program can facilitate the growth of key attributes and competencies within each leader in an organization. It is through this approach the U.S. Army will continue to develop agile and adaptive leaders that are able to make autonomous decisions in ambiguous environments, while simultaneously positively influencing their subordinates to succeed.

\*All graphics by SimplyPsychology are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International except where otherwise noted. Link to the Creative Commons License: <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en</a>

## References

Cherry, K. (2020). Differences of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. VeryWell Mind. https://www.verywellmind.com/differences-between-extrinsic-and-intrinsic-motivation-2795384

Department of the Army. (2015). FM 6-22: Leader development. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\_pubs/DR\_a/pdf/web/fm6\_22.pdf

Department of the Army. (2017). *AR 350-1: Army training and leader development*. <a href="https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\_pubs/DR\_a/pdf/web/ARN18487\_R350\_1\_Admin\_FINAL.pdf">https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\_pubs/DR\_a/pdf/web/ARN18487\_R350\_1\_Admin\_FINAL.pdf</a>

Department of the Army. (2019a). *ADP 6-0: Mission command: Command and control of Army forces*. <a href="https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR">https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR</a> pubs/DR a/pdf/web/ARN19189 ADP 6-0 FINAL WEB v2.pdf

Department of the Army. (2019b). ADP 6-22: Army leadership and the profession. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\_pubs/DR\_a/pdf/web/ARN20039\_ADP%206-22%20C1%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success* (1st ed.). Random House.

Dweck, C. S. (2015). Carol Dweck revisits the 'Growth Mindset'. *Education Week*. <a href="https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/09/23/carol-dweck-revisits-the-growth-mindset.html">https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/09/23/carol-dweck-revisits-the-growth-mindset.html</a>

Goldin, K. (2018). Great leaders take people where they may not want to go. Forbes. <a href="https://www.forbes.com/sites/karagol-din/2018/10/01/great-leaders-take-people-where-they-may-not-want-to-go/#170cf8051421">https://www.forbes.com/sites/karagol-din/2018/10/01/great-leaders-take-people-where-they-may-not-want-to-go/#170cf8051421</a>

Maslow, A. H. (1943a). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396. <a href="https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.html">https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.html</a>

Maslow, A. H. (1943b). Preface to motivation theory. *Psychosomatic Medicine* (Vol. 5). <a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285843514">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285843514</a> Preface to motivation theory

McCleod, S. (2020). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. *Simply Psychology*. https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html

Mraz, K., & Hertz, C. (2015). A mindset for learning: Teaching the traits of joyful, independent growth. Heinemann.

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000a). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 54–67. <a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0361476X99910202">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0361476X99910202</a>

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000b). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist 55*(1), 68-78. <a href="https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000">https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000</a> RyanDeci SDT.pdf

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000c). When rewards compete with nature: The undermining of intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. In *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: The Search for Optimal Motivation and Performance*, C. Sansone & J. M. Harachiewics (eds.). Academic Press.

**Sgt. Maj. Scott Schomaker** is a former field artillery battalion command sergeant major and is currently serving in the department of command leadership at the Sergeants Major Academy (SGM-A). Schomaker is an SGM-A class 66 graduate and holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Science in management from Excelsior College, as well as a Master of Education in lifelong learning and adult education from Penn State University.



**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.