



4th Infantry Division and Fort Carson Command Sgt. Maj. Alex Kupratty addresses Soldiers at the opening brief of the DCSM Solution Summit in Fort Carson, Colorado, Sept. 25, 2024. The DCSM addresses Soldiers on the goals of the summit, focusing on teamwork, overcoming challenges, and the impact of key talking points on the installation and Army. (U.S. Army Photo by Pfc. Cecilia Ochoa)

# Soldiers Take Ownership in Summits Aimed at Solution-Based Outcomes

*By Command Sgt. Maj. Alexander Kupratty*

4th Infantry Division and Fort Carson

**F**rom the newest private to the most seasoned command sergeant major, every rank observes problems through a particular lens: how those issues affect them.

Senior leaders use their experience to connect and relate to today's Soldiers. However, the further they get from the trench line, the harder it is to see all the details.

As the command sergeant major for both a division and installation, I recognize the importance of closing the gap on key Soldier issues and consolidating them into shared understanding.

To help our team, I implemented quarterly Solution Summits. For these get-togethers, I bring in separate

cohorts of Soldiers from across the installation, based on rank bands, to focus on solution-oriented outcomes.

These summits differ from sensing sessions because they're proactive endeavors led by the division command sergeant major to engage the formation with informed problem areas.

In line with the Army's push for data analytics, we leverage extensive survey data to identify common issues Soldiers and their families experience before each summit. This approach creates a deliberate azimuth for discussion, providing Soldiers more time to validate findings and allowing us to understand their perspectives better.

Another distinct aspect of the summits is their

intentional, foundational premise of ownership and empowering Soldiers to develop viable solutions as they see them—not as other senior leaders or I do.

Encouraging Soldiers to take ownership of their situation affords them—particularly junior-enlisted—the opportunity to apply critical thinking, collaborate with their peers, and embolden themselves as future leaders.

Taking care of Soldiers is one of our most sacred responsibilities as NCOs. Equally important is developing them as capable leaders who advocate for themselves and others.

Identify, understand, and empower: the three approaches I use to engage in these unique dialogues with Soldiers. Discussion alone doesn't get us to the objective, though.

The two remaining requirements instrumental for Solution Summit success are taking action and instituting feedback mechanisms.

After listening to Soldiers' input, we thoroughly analyze the information and develop a clear action plan.

One of the best practices we've established is categorizing issues and concerns into short-term, mid-term, and long-term solutions. This ordering allows us to attack "quick wins" while creating space to apply resources for more complex and challenging problems.

For items that aren't feasible, we provide feedback to Soldiers in the moment. It's essential to validate their

concerns while explaining why something isn't possible, at least at that time.

Finally, communicate progress regardless of whether it's good or bad. That's where the credibility for what you're doing lies. You *must* follow through.

As leaders, we should be comfortable with being held accountable by our Soldiers, and that starts with me as the division command sergeant major.

A month after our initial Solution Summit, I brought every Soldier back as a group to discuss actions taken and what we were working on. Soldiers appreciated the candid feedback and shared the updates with their peers, which was a measure of success.

Solution Summits can improve the quality of life and operations for everyone at an installation, and they can also increase morale and motivation for Soldiers and families at a critical time in their Army careers.

More importantly, the summits represent an opportunity for professional development and to build a culture of learning. The discussions and active approach to problem-solving found in the summits are the same ones I want Soldiers to have when attacking problems at the company, troop, and battery levels.

These summits show Soldiers that we want to hear and understand them. This display of interest, in turn, cultivates a special kind of trust—and that's exactly what committed leaders do. ■



Soldiers discuss talking points about ongoing issues throughout Fort Carson with 4th Infantry Division Command Sgt. Maj. Alex Kupratty. (U.S. Army Photo by Pfc. Cecilia Ochoa)

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**4th Infantry Division Command Sgt. Maj. Alex Kupratty** enlisted in the U.S. Army as an Infantryman in 1997, and he has served in every leadership position from Team Leader to Command Sergeant Major. Kupratty deployed multiple times throughout his career, supporting operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Freedom's Sentinel.

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