



Staff Sgt. Emily Demmel instructs her Soldier while leading a simulated mass casualty exercise during Combined Resolved 24-01 near Hohenfels, Germany. Direction is the compass guiding Soldiers to their objectives. They may feel lost or unsure about their role in the larger mission without clear direction. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Nicko Bryant Jr.)

# Purpose, Direction, and Motivation: A Guide for Army Leaders

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**I**n the Army, one of the instrumental principles of leadership is providing Soldiers with purpose, direction, and motivation. This approach is essential for maintaining a highly motivated and cohesive force.

When Soldiers understand the intent behind their actions, have a clear direction to follow, and are motivated to give their best, they can overcome any challenge. This article examines the significance of this strategy and the reason for striving to prevent Soldiers from asking “Why?”

## The Power of Purpose

### For Leaders

In Training Circular (TC) 7-22.7, Noncommissioned Officer Guide, the Army defines leadership as “influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization” (2020). Knowing the purpose behind actions is a driving force propelling Soldiers to excel in their duties. A clear understanding of the broader mission

and its significance is crucial in establishing purpose.

Leaders must effectively communicate the purpose of the Army's mission to their Soldiers. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces, states leaders create a sense of shared understanding, a critical mission command principle, through this.

Soldiers need to grasp how their contributions fit into the bigger picture and how their actions directly impact the mission's success. When leaders articulate the purpose with clarity and conviction, it becomes a rallying point motivating Soldiers to give their best and overcome challenges.

### **For Soldiers**

Understanding the purpose behind their actions enables Soldiers to see the significance of their role in mission accomplishment. It instills a sense of pride and ownership in their work. When Soldiers believe in the importance of what they do, they are more likely to invest their energy and effort into their tasks. When they employ this effort and energy, it fuels their motivation and dedication.

Purpose provides a sense of direction and focus. It helps Soldiers prioritize their efforts and make informed decisions. When Soldiers understand the purpose, they can align their actions and decision-making processes with the mission goals. This clarity allows them to navigate complex and demanding situations confidently and determinedly.

Purpose is a powerful force that drives Soldiers in the Army. It provides meaning, direction, and motivation. ADP 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession, instructs leaders to "provide clear guidance so subordinates and others understand the mission and their commander's intent" (2019).



Staff Sgt. Erik Bieberdorf directs Pfc. Levianna Johnson as she pulls security for a potential threat at Fort Hunter Liggett, California. To provide clear direction, leaders should communicate the mission's purpose, desired outcomes, and each Soldier's role in achieving the objectives. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Carlos Parra)

Influential leaders understand the significance of clearly communicating purpose to their Soldiers, ensuring they know how their actions contribute to the mission's success.

Soldiers with a strong sense of purpose are motivated to give their best, make informed decisions, and remain resilient in the face of challenges. Leaders cultivate a highly engaged and effective force capable of accomplishing any mission by nurturing purpose in the ranks.

### **Providing Clear Direction**

Direction is the compass guiding Soldiers to their objectives. They may feel lost or unsure about their role in the larger mission without clear direction.

Leaders establish an action framework by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, as well as offering detailed plans and schedules. By setting specific objectives and tasks, leaders give their subordinates tangible guidance, ensuring they understand their roles and responsibilities within the larger mission.

TC 7-22.7 states NCOs' approach to leadership should be to "take charge, build the team, and accomplish the mission" (2020). Clear guidance helps Soldiers understand their responsibilities, contributing to a cohesive and efficient unit capable of navigating any challenge.

To provide clear direction, leaders should communicate the mission's purpose, the desired outcomes, and the role each Soldier plays in achieving the objectives.

According to ADP 6-22, regular briefings and training sessions help reinforce the direction and ensure all personnel know the tasks. These meetups also build confidence and competence. Confidence and competence are catalysts of excellence, a critical component of mission success.

I found it beneficial to conduct informal team meetings twice a day to discuss what was accomplished and what needs to be accomplished (and why). These meetings can also clarify or expound on any expectations or objectives. By maintaining open lines of communication and actively involving Soldiers in the decision-making process, leaders can prevent confusion and foster a sense of direction.

Soldiers must learn to listen, not just hear. Leaders must learn to communicate, not just speak. Leaders and their subordinates must learn to communicate effectively to ensure accurate directions transfer so they can accomplish the mission.

### **Motivating Soldiers**

Leaders play a crucial role in fostering motivation by creating a positive and empowering environment. Recognizing and rewarding achievement, providing opportunities for growth and development, and promoting teamwork and camaraderie are effective ways to motivate Soldiers.

According to TC 7-22.7, leaders should use reward power to encourage their Soldiers. Providing opportunities for professional development, such as specialized training or educational programs, not only enhances Soldier skills but also shows their growth is valued and supported. Additionally, leaders can create a sense of camaraderie through team-building exercises, mentoring programs, and unit cohesion activities, fostering a supportive environment where Soldiers feel connected and motivated.

## Leading by Example

Leaders must lead by example. Soldiers look to their leaders for guidance and inspiration.

According to ADP 6-22, leaders should project assurance and capability and set a constructive precedent through their behavior, speech, and demeanor, inspiring others to follow suit. Leading by example is not merely a suggestion but a fundamental expectation.

Leaders with solid work ethics set the tone for the unit. Soldiers are more likely to be motivated and dedicated when they see their leaders actively engaged in their duties. By consistently displaying a solid commitment to excellence, leaders establish a culture where high standards are the norm. When Soldiers witness their leaders continually improving their skills and knowledge, it inspires them to do the same.

Integrity is another crucial aspect of leading by example. ADP 6-22 directs Soldiers to be professional and uphold the Army ethic. Subordinates rely on their leaders to make morally and ethically sound decisions. Those who exhibit integrity in their interactions, both on and off duty, foster an environment of trust and respect. Soldiers are more likely to follow leaders they trust and see as role models.

Leading by example is a fundamental Army principle. Leaders who exemplify Army values, demonstrate a strong work ethic, uphold integrity, prioritize the welfare of their Soldiers, and promote diversity and inclusion set the standard for their subordinates.

Leaders establish a culture of excellence, trust, and respect by consistently modeling the behavior and values they expect from their Soldiers and being present for them. Soldiers are inspired to follow their leaders' example, resulting in a motivated, cohesive, and high-performing force.

## Minimizing the Need to Ask 'Why?'

Soldiers may occasionally question the reasons behind specific tasks or decisions, even in the most cohesive units. To prevent the "Why?" from becoming a significant hurdle, leaders must maintain open lines of communication.

TC 7-22.7 emphasizes the importance of communication because "leaders cannot lead, supervise, counsel, coach, mentor, or build teams



Influential leaders understand the significance and importance of clearly communicating purpose to their Soldiers, ensuring they know how their actions contribute to the mission's success. (U. S. Army photo by Pfc. Lynnwood Thomas)

without the ability to communicate clearly" (Department of the Army, 2020, p. 2-3).

Encouraging Soldiers to voice their concerns and providing transparent explanations can help address doubts and alleviate confusion. Soldiers are more likely to stay motivated when they understand the rationale behind their actions and their impact on mission success.

Additionally, leaders can emphasize the importance of trust and teamwork, reinforcing that every action contributes to the mission's overall success. They create an environment that minimizes doubt and promotes unity by cultivating a culture of trust, wherein Soldiers feel comfortable discussing their concerns and contributing ideas.

Regular communication through unit meetings, one-on-one discussions, and feedback sessions allows leaders to address any uncertainties and reinforce the mission's purpose and direction.

## Conclusion

Army leaders are critical in providing purpose, direction, and motivation. By drawing insights from Department of the Army publications TC 7-22.7, ADP 6-0, and ADP 6-22, leaders can instill a sense of purpose, provide clear direction, foster motivation, and lead by example.

Minimizing the need to ask "Why?" requires effective communication, transparent explanations, trust, and a culture of excellence. When Soldiers understand the importance of their actions, have a clear roadmap to follow, feel motivated to give their best, and witness their leaders' commitment, they become unstoppable.

By consistently nurturing purpose, direction, and motivation, Army leaders empower their Soldiers to reach their full potential and ensure mission success. ■

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