

Running Head: TRAINING TO INSPIRE

**Training to Inspire**

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**Years of Inspiring Soldiers to become Tomorrow's Leaders**

**92YXP5S Serving as ROTC PLT Tactical Officer/Drill Sergeant/First Sergeant**

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### Abstract

This paper was written on my personal experiences as a leader in the Military. It includes my tenures as Platoon Tactical NCO at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, a Drill Sergeant at Fort Sill Oklahoma, and a Basic Training First Sergeant at Fort Jackson South Carolina. My intent is to enlighten all whom shall read, on my experiences as a Leader of Soldiers. Transforming Soldiers into leaders and inspiring Soldiers to excel, has truly been my focus throughout my career. It has been an everlasting memory to have mentored and guided others on the Army's way of life.

### Training to Inspire

Nothing is more rewarding and prestigious than becoming a Non-Commissioned Officer. From the day I pinned on E-5 Sergeant Rank, back in 1992, up until the present, here at the United States Sergeants Majors Academy 2006. My experiences as a Soldier have been nothing less than spectacular. I've enjoyed the highs and learned from the lows. Life in the military has not always been what I expected, but my expectations were shallow and immature at times. Military life is abundant in knowledge and sincerity for others. When I think about the knowledge shared amongst Soldiers and our civilian counter parts, I'm at aw with how much I've inherited from this life of excitement. Leaders are expected to give 100% at all times. We are bond by our love for inspiring Soldiers to be the best they could be. All Soldiers are entitled to superior mentorship and guidance, and this of course is my drive. I'm truly grateful to all the Senior Non-Commissioned Officers that helped shape and mold me into who and what I am today. If it weren't for the respect and knowledge instilled in myself, the Soldiers I come in contact with would be deprived. I haven't always agreed with those appointed over me, but again primarily due to a lack of maturity. If it weren't for the SSG Johnsons, Fuquas, Custis, Roberts, Merkenson, and Herrons, I would not be sitting here today after 18 years of service, at the United States Sergeants Majors Academy.

As an E-5, stationed in Bad Kissingen Germany, I served as the unit Armorer/Supply Clerk. During my tenure in Germany, form 1989 thru 1991, I wore many titles. Not one job was more important than the next. From those cold evenings manning a 50 caliber machine gun, during reforger 1990, to proper accountability of our Stinger Missiles and unit ammunition. All these

things are a part of who I am today. A lot of my career has been associated with training  
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tomorrow's leaders. Nothing can replace the gratitude given to you by those you've lead and mentored during your career. My training of Soldiers started in 1996 as a Supply Sergeant at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. While serving as a Supply Sergeant, I was also a Platoon Tactical Officer for collage Juniors/Seniors enrolled in the Reserve Officer's Training Course. These Juniors and Seniors of VPI & SU are Commissioned Officers in the Army today. Again, touching and mentoring the lives of future leaders, has been my calling. I can look back on my tenure as a Tactical Officer and reminisce on the proud service I provided, leading and educating young Officers on the life of a Military Soldiers. It was truly an overwhelming experience to share in the impact of so many young Soldiers lives and have them impact mine. This assignment and the opportunity to inspire young officers, was one of many prestigious Soldier mentorship programs I've had the privilege of participating in.

From 1999 thru 2001, I encountered the most rewarding experiences of my career. This experience is accredited to the Army's trust in me to transform civilians into Soldiers. I am referring to the prestigious job of a Drill Sergeant. This job was truly an experience I will never forget. Imagine yourself inspiring and nurturing young men and women to excel as Soldiers. To prepare young people for the most demanding and patriotic jobs of their lives was an unforgettable adventure. I served as a Drill Sergeant to fellow Soldiers, but I served as a mentor and inspiration to the thousands of civilians I had the pleasure of training. Not all leaders can proclaim that they've transformed civilians into Soldiers. The ability to teach new Soldiers the way of the Army, ranged from precision drill and weapons introductions to executing Convoy Live Fire, and Contemporary Operating Environment lanes. As a Drill Sergeant, I encouraged

initial entry trainees to excel and never accept defeat. I had to instill in them a sense of courage and team spirit. Explaining to these young people that the Army is a family of Soldiers fighting to protect our Nation, was truly an honor. I Embedded into their minds, that there was no Soldier more important or trusted more than the next. Instilling the Moto “One Team, One Fight.”

My unforgettable tenure as a Drill Sergeant will forever serve as memories of transformation and change. While it was my job to transform civilians into Soldiers, those civilians also helped transform me into the leader I’ve become. To direct one’s life, you must first experience life. I trained and lead over 6200 Soldiers, and I would not trade the experience for anything. As a Drill

Sergeant, I placed my personal and family life on whole. Working extensive hours didn’t leave much free time. The young people I had the pleasure of mentoring were all worth it. There are many leaders in today’s Army, but it takes a special leader to sacrifice so much and gain so much more. Drill Sergeants gain a sense of dignity and respect for their jobs as trainers. Drill Sergeants are those lone heroes that bury themselves in the hearts and memories of all they’ve come in contact with. Mind you, not all memories of Drill Sergeants are great, but they are truly unforgettable. You will never forget your first impression of a Soldier, of the Army, a United States Army Drill Sergeant.

I would like to share another experience in my military career. This experience taught me to be patient and courteous. This experience taught me to be firm and demanding. This experience showed me that I had no limits and always had room to grow. This experience sharpened my people skills and strengthened my weaknesses. This experience challenged my traditions and encouraged my leadership efforts. This experience taught me to strategically

monitor and assess training. This experience taught me what it really meant to “lead by  
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example”. This experience was that of a United States Army First Sergeant, the capstone of a leader.

A First Sergeant is referred to as “Top Sergeant” and wears many titles. Some titles include Senior Non Commissioned Officer in a company, advisor to the Company Commander, Master Trainer for the company, counselor, and Subject Matter Expert (SME). As stated previously, this job allowed me to inspire not just junior enlisted Soldiers, but Senior NCO as well as Commissioned Officers. As the First Sergeants of a Basic Combat Training company, I was Called upon for my expertise and experience, by numerous leaders. I learned to look at the “Big Picture”, and realized that we succeed as a team and not as an individual unit. First Sergeants of my battalion, worked together for the mission accomplishment of the entire team. The information shared can not be replaced, you learn from both fellow first sergeants and senior officers. As a first sergeant, I concentrated more on becoming a well-rounded leader, placing no task above the next and taking none for granted. I inspired Initial Entry Training (IET) Soldiers as well as the NCOs in my company. I was the experience for my Executive Officer and Company Commander.

I will elaborate on an issue that helped me grow as a Senior Leader. My commander was an over achiever and believed that things should happen now. I had a hard time explaining to him that, with Initial Entry Training Soldiers, there is a crawl, walk, and run phase. An IET Soldier will not run without some guidance on how to walk first. I tried to use tact and conduct myself professionally when addressing my commander on this issue. My patience grew short because of his stubbornness and unwillingness to take advise from his senior advisor. In a moment of

darkness, I snapped and lost my military bearing. During this episode I informed him of his  
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actions and tactics as a commander in the unit. I also explained to him what was expected of the Chain of Command in a BCT unit. This conversation did not go well, especially because it took place in the company area. Through this controversy, I learned that communication amongst leaders and the growth of leaders must continue throughout your career. Never assume you or your fellow leaders or team members have all the answers. Realize that a team works together and communicates effectively, often. As the leaders of this company, I realized my commander was young and eager to excel. What I failed to realize was that he as well as the Soldiers needed guidance from the senior noncommission officer, the First Sergeant.

From this experience, my commander and I developed a plan to make our working relationship better. One thing we implemented was a daily huddle to discuss the lessons learned and upcoming training. This experience helped me grow a little bit more and I'm still growing today.

### Conclusion

Understanding the importance of leading from the front, as leaders we should continue to share our knowledge and seek advice. Inspiring Soldiers is something we do on a daily basis and it will continue to manifest itself in others. I would remind you that Soldiers are looking to leaders for guidance and mentorship. We must build a foundation from which we grow and inspire others to grow and become the best they can be. Life in the military as a trainer has been very beneficial and noteworthy. I would not trade my experiences for nothing and accept all the shared experiences of my peers. I am growing and training is my strength.