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Enhancing Soldier Performance by Motivation

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Abstract

This paper examines how motivation enhances Soldier performance pushing them to achieve standards above and beyond the call of duty. Many people wonder why Soldiers conduct courageous feats on the battlefield when faced with fear, anxiety, and confusion. The fact is there are a multitude of reasons what motivates Soldiers to achieve superb that results in enemy defeat. Some contributing factors that increase motivation are leadership, unit cohesion, esprit de corps, Army values, warrior ethos, fear, the strong will to win. So why did these Soldiers perform these incredible feats? Is it for the rewards and recognition? The fact is, it's because of involved leadership and the motivated Soldier is the most versatile and lethal warrior in the world. When Soldiers hold a set of ideals, values, and beliefs to a high personal standard, they serve as motivation and push them to achieve high standards in combat.

Enhancing Soldier Performance by Motivation

Introduction

Motivation enhances Soldier performance pushing them to achieve standards above and beyond the call of duty. Many people wonder why Soldiers conduct courageous feats on the battlefield when faced with fear, anxiety, and confusion. The fact is there are a multitude of reasons what motivates Soldiers to achieve superb that results in enemy defeat. Some contributing factors that increase motivation are leadership, unit cohesion, esprit de corps, Army values, warrior ethos, fear, the strong will to win. Does patriotism motivate a Soldier to go above and beyond the call of duty? We will examine these factors and their relationship to moral and motivation on the battlefield. We also apply those factors to a couple of combat situations that motivated Soldiers encountered, putting their life on the line for the warrior next to them.

Leadership

Leadership and motivation are closely related and without daily motivation a leader is rather ineffective. The leader has a major role in motivating Soldiers to accomplish the mission. It starts in basic training upon indoctrination into the Army. Leaders enforce motivation in garrison assignments, field environments, and eventually in combat. Morale is the major driving factor of motivation in combat. Leaders are responsible for instilling moral by ensuring Soldiers are trained, healthy, well fed, and part of the team. Leaders must make Soldiers feel important and care for their family when Soldiers deploy to the field or combat. Leadership is one of the contributing factors for Soldiers performing at a high standard.

Creating an everlasting bond between leaders and Soldier is paramount. When leaders and Soldiers form a unique bond and trust in one another, they will do anything for one another, especially in combat. “When Soldiers are pinned down by enemy fire and are confused and

uncertain, they will follow a lead in any direction (backward as well as forward); thus panic is highly contagious.” (Kellet, 1982, pg 326) Leaders must provide motivation and encouragement when Soldiers find themselves in tough situations. Soldiers that develop trust and confidence in their leaders are easily motivated, thus will not hesitate to follow leadership in the midst of adversity to complete assigned missions.

Leaders must also develop a tight knit team and build strong cohesion among Soldiers in the unit. They must create a family environment among Soldiers within small teams, squads, and platoons. When Soldiers have a family environment they feel at ease with each other and will go the extra mile for one another. “Group bonds form fairly readily in many social situations, but they develop notably strongly in situations of danger, stress, and deprivation, particularly where military and social sanctions preclude escape from threatening situations.” (Kellet, 1982, pg 320) Soldiers commit themselves and will always look out for all members of the team regardless of the danger and circumstances involved. This also increases performance and pushes them to perform heroic feats on the battlefield.

Warrior Ethos

The warrior ethos is something every Soldier holds close to their heart. FM 6-22 (2006) highlights the warrior ethos as part of the Soldiers Creed in which all institutional and operational leaders require Soldiers to know and live by. It’s not something that we merely memorize, but what that we do without hesitation when faced with any task or mission. It reminds us off our responsibilities and that we stay motivated until completion of the mission. We strive to win and survive at all cost and that means giving your life for another. Soldiers use the warrior ethos as motivation to accomplish objectives and take care of Soldiers in the foxholes to their left and right regardless of the gender, cultural and ethnic background, or rank. They

always remember that the mission is first when making critical decisions. They persevere until the battle is won and will never accept failure or defeat. Quitting is not an option and has no room in the military; we see the task to end and to standard. The thing that makes Soldiers so courageous is not allowing a comrade to fall. However, when Soldiers see that a comrade has fallen, they will risk their own lives to save them and bring them back to safety. Therefore, the warrior ethos instills discipline in all Soldiers is another major contributing factor to combat motivation.

Motivational and Courageous Events

Motivation guided by natural instinct allows us to overcome insurmountable odds. When faced with fear, Soldiers tend to perform so called “miracles on the battlefield”. Soldiers don’t take fear into account and they will do whatever it takes to save a fallen comrade as depicted by an account in Korean War. Sergeant Ola L. Mize’s motivation led to his courageous and heroic actions for the defense of Outpost Harry. After finding out a Soldier had gone down at a listening post, he went to rescue the Soldier immediately, but he also kept in mind that the mission still had to be accomplished; to defend the outpost. He used an opportunity to lead a defense posture while knocking down several enemy bunkers even though his position was hit by grenade and artillery blasts. He set the example and motivated his men to continue the mission. “With the enemy assault temporarily halted, Mize and several men moved from bunker to bunker clearing the enemy. Upon noticing a friendly machine gun position being overrun, he fought his way to their aid, killing ten enemy soldiers and dispersing the rest. Securing a radio, he directed artillery fire upon the enemy's approach routes. At dawn, Mize formed the survivors into a unit and successfully led a counterattack that cleared the enemy from the outpost.”

(FM 7-22.7, p. 1-14)

This was an act of pure instinct and the warrior ethos put to use. Without regard of his own life, he chose to save a fellow Soldier and he would let nothing get in his way of achieving that task. He would not leave a fallen wounded comrade so Sergeant Mize immediately came to his aid. After doing so, he rallied and motivated his Soldiers to defend their post while they were under extreme fire. His persistence and leading by example attitude enabled him and his Soldiers to knock out several bunkers and killed adversaries on their way to pursuing a counterattack. Mize and his Soldiers never quit and found motivation to achieve their objective of defending Outpost Harry.

In another account, SGT Christine Roberts was motivated to rescue a fellow comrade that she didn't know because it was her job to do so. Even when the mission called for an out of the ordinary means to save a Soldier, she was still motivated and completely courageous to save a Soldier that had stepped on a land mine. She put herself in immediate danger and saved the Soldier's life without hesitation. It seemed that fear was not a factor and her actions were based on her commitment to saving Soldiers. She definitely went beyond the call of duty for this fallen Soldier. "Roberts rode a jungle-penetrator 200 feet down onto the steep hill to search by foot, disregarding the potential danger from other mines. After finding the casualty, she dressed his injured leg, tightened a tourniquet and then loaded him on the hoist. He was lifted out from the wooded, mountainous terrain into the helicopter and flown to the hospital at Camp Bondsteel." (FM 7-22.7, p. 1-14)

Conclusion

So why did these Soldiers perform these incredible feats? Is it for the rewards and recognition? Is it just plain courage? Maybe so, but the fact is, involved leadership and team cohesion drives morale and motivation in a unit and in the individual Soldier. The motivated

Soldier is the most versatile and lethal warrior in the world. When Soldiers hold a set of ideals, values, and beliefs to a high personal standard, they serve as motivation and push them to achieve high standards in combat. These Soldiers go above and beyond the call of duty because they of the cohesion and bonds created within their units. Motivated Soldiers will always be more valuable than any piece of technological equipment we can put on the battlefield because Soldiers find a way to win.

References

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