

Trust is the Bedrock of the Army Profession

Army Ethics



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The 39th Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Mark A. Miley proclaimed, “Trust matters in three ways for us as part of the military profession. Trust matters with the American people. That’s the very essence of why we exist. Trust matters up and down and left and right. And most importantly it matters in combat. That’s the very essence of mission command, and it’s all built upon that single word that’s in the doctrine, the bedrock of the Army ethic, which is trust.”

Trust is the bedrock of the Army ethic, and trust is the most essential attribute in the Army. According to Demographics Interactive Profile of the Military Communities, Military OneSource in 2023, “there are 1,304,720 total active-duty members. The Army has the highest percentage of active-duty personnel with 461,657 active-duty members making up 35.4% of the United States Armed Forces.” Its members are citizens of this great nation, and trust and confidence are imperative between the institution itself, the families, and the rest of the American people. The American people also entrust us with the care of their sons and daughters who voluntarily join the Army.

Trust is demanded from one's superiors, peers, and subordinates. Trust is essential during combat operations. One of the Army's primary responsibilities is to fight and win our nation's wars. The Soldier must always be prepared to accomplish this. Subordinates need to know that their supervisors are always looking out for their very best interests. Army leaders at all levels obtain trust from their team when they lead by example.

The Army has gone to great lengths, not only to educate but also to build trust within its formations. Leaders create a climate of trust in the Army by building relationships and encouraging commitment. Trust begins when Soldiers share common experiences and shared understanding. All ranks share in building trust. Officers should commit to coaching, counseling, and mentoring their junior Soldiers to build relationships and promote trust. Senior leaders must make it a goal to set an example to build trust. They take direct action and aim to sustain a climate of trust. Army leaders are called to be professionals of character.

Practical Methods to Cultivate Trust as an Army Leader

Trust is demanded from one's superiors, peers, and subordinates. Trust is critical in the military for effective teamwork, communication, and mission control. Building and cultivating trust as an Army leader is an ongoing process that involves consistent characteristics and actions. Trust is a basic element in effective leadership, and when leaders cultivate trust, it fosters a positive and productive work environment.

The 38th Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond Odierno spoke to attendees of the Association of the United States Army during a forum about the Army profession on Oct. 26, 2012. He contended, “Trust is earned. It is not giving. It is not rank-oriented. It is deeds, not words. You have to be there for each other in the most stringent of conditions. You have to work as a team and that trust must be built over time, and it must be earned. Trust between Soldiers and leaders is fundamental and critical to the profession.”

Mutual trust enables teamwork and mission accomplishment. Army leaders cultivate trust when they consistently demonstrate character, competence, and commitment. Army leaders cultivate trust by setting the example, providing clear intent, expressing empathy, building transparency, and creating open communication.



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References

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