Building Trust and Fostering Innovation Through Army Leadership: Insights From ADP 6-22

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In today's dynamic and rapidly evolving global environment, U.S. Army leaders face complex challenges that test their resilience, adaptability, and decision-making capabilities. The Army Leadership Requirements Model, presented in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, provides a framework for nurturing these qualities through the core leader competencies of—

- **Lead**, which emphasizes the ability of the leader to inspire, motivate, and influence others.
- **Develop**, which focuses on the growth of subordinates through mentorship, training, and the creation of a positive command climate.
- **Achieve**, which highlights leader actions that result in the success of a mission or task.[1]

The model also addresses the following three core leader attributes:

- Character.
- Presence.
- Intellect.[2]

A significant distinction between the core leader competencies and core leader attributes of the Army Leadership Requirements Model is that core competencies are skills that can be trained and developed, while core attributes encompass enduring personal characteristics, which are molded through experience over time. This article discusses the importance of implementing Army Leadership Requirements Model strategies to develop core competences, build trust, and foster innovation in order to achieve mission success.

As challenges become more complex, leaders must develop the core competencies outlined in the Army Leadership Requirements Model, as these competencies contribute to a leader's ability to build trust and foster innovation. Trust and innovation are not merely obscure ideals; they are essential aspects of enabling units to maintain cohesion during adversity and respond effectively under pressure.

Building trust is fundamental to a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and influence others. Through formal or informal positions of authority, leaders can cultivate trust by exhibiting transparency, engaging in effective communication, demonstrating integrity, and accepting accountability for their decisions and actions. Some specific examples of ways that leaders might build trust with, and make a tremendous impact on, their units include—

- A command team might foster open dialogue with its subordinates, providing context and explaining the reasoning behind missions, creating a shared understanding, listening to concerns, and encouraging feedback.
- A platoon leader or platoon sergeant might stand up for subordinates during higher-level discussions or might ensure that they have adequate resources.
- A squad leader might be actively engaged in training the squad, empowering team leaders to lead by example.

Fostering innovation requires a command climate in which continuous learning, creative problem solving, and professional growth are actively supported. Leaders should be approachable and should encourage and empower subordinates to seize initiative, conduct experiments, and take risks within safe boundaries. Approachable leaders respect others' opinions—even if they are contrary or nondoctrinal. This creates a positive environment and allows subordinates to explore new ideas without fear of failure. Providing the necessary resources and recognizing innovative contributions are crucial steps that leaders can take to motivate their subordinates to think critically and propose viable solutions. Leaders can also provide continuous feedback regarding proposed solutions, thereby refining the process. And after action reports can be used to sustain and/or improve those solutions. Through these practices, leaders establish a culture of adaptability and forward thinking, which significantly enhances the resilience and success of the command.

ADP 6-22 states that "A leader's primary purpose is to accomplish the mission."[3] Achieving results while

building trust and fostering innovation requires a delicate balance between setting clear goals and promoting a creativity-supportive environment. Leaders must provide direction and maintain high expectations, ensuring that objectives are met, while also encouraging their teams to develop innovative solutions. By balancing accountability with empowerment, leaders can create a climate in which subordinates feel trusted and valued, enhancing cohesion and morale. There is often a ripple effect associated with success in this area, as achieving results tends to reinforce trust in leadership and boost confidence in team capabilities. Leaders who prioritize mission success and a positive command climate demonstrate that building trust and fostering innovation does not compromise results but, rather, amplifies the overall team effectiveness.

The Army Leadership Requirements Model provides a critical framework for building trust and fostering innovation within a command. By emphasizing the core leader competencies of lead, develop, and achieve, the model empowers leaders to balance operational success with the development and well-being of their teams. Leaders are encouraged to implement these strategies to build trust, foster innovation, and ensure mission success. By doing so, they can create a culture of excellence that meets and exceeds expectations, preparing their teams to tackle challenges with confidence and creativity.

Endnotes:

[1]ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 31 July 2019.

[2]Ibid., p. 1-15.

[3]Ibid., p. 7-1.

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