

Talent and Non-Inspirational Leadership

PVT Anderson was an Initial Entry Military Intelligence Soldier, with some college experience, who joined the military to be part of something bigger than he could be on his own. Because of his high entrance exam score, he was selected for rigorous training often found to be mentally challenging by the most scholarly students.

Due to mounting frustrations regarding his training environment, he approached me, his chaplain, following a military resiliency class. After he completed his StrengthsFinder assessment, I scheduled a coaching session to include PVT Anderson's platoon sergeant-instructor and his battle buddy. My hope was that the new awareness of PVT Anderson's signature strengths would aid him in building his support system as well as assist him in deciding whether or not he could continue to serve in the military community in his current role. His signature strengths were: Adaptability, Analytical, Includer, Harmony and Deliberative.

Although his top strength was "Adaptability," I believed his other four signature strengths were in conflict with his perception of the low-level motivational techniques (non-inspirational leadership) often employed in military training situations. What works for many others, i.e. threats, ridicule and verbally berating someone, would not likely work with this Soldier who had quickly drawn conclusions regarding existing trends in his training environment.

We discussed ways in which he could build his support system outside of class to compensate for the diminished experience he was having in class. Additionally, I affirmed my ongoing support for the duration of his training. We discovered that he viewed his First Sergeant as an inspirational leader and arranged to build that professional relationship. He continued to work within the existing framework of the military, which aided in obtaining an agreed upon military discharge without compromise to his values, military law, and desire to make a difference where he might be better suited.

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Strategic | Positivity | Includer | Activator | Maximizer