

In May of 2003 I was given the honor of commanding D/5-52 ADA. Looking back at my command experience and reflecting on my time spent as a commander I realized I was not as good as I could have been and I believe I hampered the unit from having future successes after I left command in 2005. After much reflection I believe I could have better commanded D/5-52 by being myself and not an arrogant Patriot Missile SME who equated technical and tactical competence to being a good leader. The following reflections of my command time will address how my coercive approach, not allowing small victories, and high prolonged levels of stress forced Delta 5-52 to be compliant with my vision statement instead of committed to it. These behaviors resulted in a unit that was never dedicated to the commander's vision and was not prepared for prolonged success.

Delta battery had not passed a Battery Table VIII Gunnery certification in two years. The perception I had of Delta Battery was a group of NCOs and Lieutenants that were ignorant, lazy, undisciplined and were failing to lead by example. As the commander I was going to fix this. I gave my mission statement to the unit in a nice power point package and I truly thought that after one brief I would have buy-in or compliance from the battery. What I failed to realize is I used my position as a source of power upon taking command. My tactics and approach upon taking command were very coercive and toxic. I thought being hard, using scare tactics, firing, and publicly embarrassing my Platoon Leaders would motivate my Soldiers in seeing their PLs getting discipline. These antics never formed a good command team. My lieutenants never really bought in to my vision; instead they were just going through the motions to make me happy.

Upon our arrival home from the deployment we did the usual block leave and equipment RESET. Once RESET ended I implemented a vigorous training plan to get Delta Battery Table VIII certified in 30 days. The 30 day train-up encompassed long duty days, weekends and no real family time. After the 30 day train-up we passed our first Battery Table VIII Gunnery Certification in over two years. The unit was excited and proud of their accomplishments. As a

commander I felt we could do more as a unit so that following Monday training for the Battery Table XII Gunnery certification began. We trained with the same vigor as we had experienced the previous 30 days for another two weeks. After the two weeks of training for the Battery Table XII Gunner Certification we failed our Table XII gunnery certification miserably and at the time I was angry and blamed the PLs for their inability to keep their Soldiers motivated and focused.

I continued with that same coercive, hard power approach with my battery for two years. We became Table XII certified and eventually became the "Go To" battery of the Brigade. I thought I did everything perfect in transforming an underachieving battery to the best in the brigade. After I came out of command Delta battery fell apart. Article 15's increased, LTs got out after their commitment, and the battery failed a Table VIII certification. I initially thought it was the incoming commander's fault but in reality it was my fault. I failed to never take my foot off the gas; I was a toxic leader from the day I took command. The prolonged stress I put Delta battery under was too much for them to take over such a prolonged period of time. I essentially took a battery and made it worse through my micromanagement and continued stress.

As I move forward after ILE I will become the Executive Officer of an Air Defense Battalion. I have realized that the power of a field grade officer pulls a lot of weight within the organization. That is a position of power and if not applied correctly it can easily become toxic. I must use my SME knowledge in Air Defense tactics and allow myself to lead with personal power for the betterment of my future BN. I will also have to sell the BN CDR's vision and help build a team that is committed to the commander's vision instead of a BN that is just complying with it. This, I believe, can be accomplished by applying the proper influencing tactics appropriately as situations dictate themselves.

Building a team that supports the commander's vision and allows subordinates to become committed to the BN CDR's vision can be better achieved when balancing tactics. The leadership dynamic is knowing when to apply each approach. There will be times as a BN XO

that I will have to use my position to exert my power in a hard approach. The lessons learned from my command experience will allow me to know when to let up and revert back to using personal power in a softer approach.

Kotter's Model explains that in order for a transformational change to occur in an organization 8 stages must occur. I failed miserably as the battery commander by not allowing my battery to generate short term wins, or Stage 6 in the Kotter model. Granted they achieved their Table VIII certification but I never allowed them to see proof that hard work pays off. On a Friday they passed and on Monday they were back at it for another certification. The unit never saw the fruits of their labor because I kept pushing and pushing. As a field grade officer it is imperative to let off the gas and allow the unit to be excited about their accomplishment before moving on to the next task.

Knowing when to apply stress and knowing when to let off is essential in ensuring the unit is given ample time to recoup from missions, taskers, or training. Stress is a good thing when applied in the proper dosage. Two years of constant stress ran a battery into the ground. These same mistakes cannot be repeated to a BN size formation. As the XO for a BN it is my duty to help the BN CDR to ensure the BN does not become a casualty of stress. It is my goal to mentor battery commanders on my past mistakes and the negative effects of coercive tactics and prolonged stressors will only produce short-term success.

In conclusion, command was a rewarding time for me and it was not all gloom as my crucible portrayed. My leadership approach toward Delta battery was definitely flawed in three areas. The constant hard power with a coercive approach was not successful in getting full commitment from the battery toward my unit vision. They were only compliant to my vision in order to keep me happy. Delta battery was never given the opportunity to celebrate their short-term victories which never gave the unit a sense of accomplishment before moving on to the next mission. Coercive tactics and never celebrating short-term victories put Delta battery under two years of prolonged stress after coming home from a deployment. The breaking point

came after I left command. The prolonged stress eventually took its toll on the soldiers and leaders. When they got a new commander that let off the gas, everything "I" had built fell apart. If I were to take the lessons learned from command and correct my deficiencies I believe Delta battery would have continued to grow when I left because it would have been an organization "We" built through commitment instead of compliance reinforced by toxic leadership traits and stress.