

A crucible experience according to Bennis and Thomas is a transformative experience through which an individual comes to a new or an altered sense of identity. Bennis and Thomas go on to relate crucible experiences to leadership by explaining that an indicator and predictor of leadership is an individual's ability to find meaning in intense, often traumatic, and always unplanned experiences in one's life. As an Army officer I have had a crucible experience that has helped shape who I am as a leader. Leader's Lead, Develop, and Achieve, part of the Leadership Requirements Model is communicating. My crucible experience as a leader was in the communicating realm of the Leadership Requirements model.

I took over as an MLRS Battery Commander during OIF I while my battery was attached to another brigade and away from the battalion headquarters. I had been in the battalion for 27 months and had served as the Battalion Fire Direction Officer and the Battalion Assistant S-3. In my mind and in the eyes of the battalion leadership, I was ready for command. The Battalion that I was assigned to was having morale issues, the reality that we would stay in Iraq for a year had finally set in and the Battalion Commander, a fairly popular leader with the Soldiers, had just been relieved of command. The morale issues had spread to the battery as well, where my predecessor, while extremely competent, had been considered aloof and difficult to work with by many in his battery and the battalion.

Upon taking command I focused inwardly on the battery trying to improve the morale and the climate of my own little piece of the battalion. I was constantly on the ground with my Soldiers on patrols, at checkpoints, and observation points making myself available and being seen out with the troops. I was talking to the Soldiers and listening to their concerns, changing what I could immediately and gradually those things that took time. I was communicating by listening actively, by the time my battery was reassigned back to our parent unit things had started to improve in my battery and in the battalion as a whole.

By the time my battery rejoined my parent unit, a new battalion commander had assumed command and he was doing his best to improve morale across the battalion. One of the processes he implemented was an evening face to face battle update brief. Battery commanders would brief the

battalion commander on their unit's activities for the current day and what was planned for the next day, once again communicating.

Moving forward a year my battalion has redeployed and we are at home station resetting our equipment and experiencing post deployment personnel turbulence. All of my lieutenants from OIF had moved on to different jobs. Key non-commissioned officers had also departed, to include three who had briefly been assigned as my First Sergeant, through a combination of stop loss removal and retirements. Upon our return from OIF, myself and the other firing battery commander been dual hatted as port OIC and we had both spent several months immediately upon return ,TDY away from our units supervising the return of vehicles and equipment to the division. For various reasons I had spent an extra month at the port that my sister battery commander hadn't.

I was now back at home and working long hours trying to ensure my own equipment was being properly reset, attempting to mentor my new batch of lieutenants and dealing with the nonstop life of a battery commander in garrison. I was becoming beat down dealing with a succession of DUIs and positive urinalyses as well as maintenance issues that seemed to be out of my control as the contract reset maintenance was taking longer than anticipated to return equipment to units. Both my personal and professional life was suffered. The low point came when the battalion commander visited my office and told me he was concerned about both mine and my battery's current performance as compared to my sister battery commander and his battery.

I was shaken to the core. I was working so hard yet I was failing so miserably. Over the next few days, as I reflected, a dozen reasons came to my mind as to why my firing battery was so far behind the other firing battery in the battalion; all new lieutenants at once, three First Sergeants in a 4 month period, 50% turn over in platoon sergeants and soldiers, as well as the loss of my maintenance sergeant. The other battery almost the same level of post deployment turbulence, the only major difference was that I had spent more time at the port as compared to my fellow battery commander. All of these crossed my mind and seemed to justify my difficulties. It wasn't until about a week later that I had an epiphany.

I was sitting in my truck waiting in the long line to go through the gate into Post for PT and I was about half asleep and barely listening to some AM radio station talk about successful business managers and their techniques when something jumped out at me. One of the successful techniques mentioned was communication, listening to subordinate's issues and keeping superiors informed of progress. The light bulb went off. I had only been doing half of this I had been so focused on the issues within my battery that I wasn't taking the time to keep my battalion commander informed of what I was doing. Yes, I was attending the normal battalion staff meetings and providing updates to the commander but I really wasn't communicating with him.

During OIF I when morale had been low at both the battalion and battery levels communication had been the key to turning around those morale issues. I had reached out to my Soldiers daily through my actions and the battalion commander had reached out to battery commanders daily through the battle update brief. The battle rhythm had changed since our redeployment. I only reported progress to the battalion commander during the weekly training meeting followed by the command and staff brief. I decided that I needed to take time out of my day to stop into the battalion commander's office and just let him know what was going on in my battery that day and if I didn't have the opportunity to personally stop by then a quick email summarizing the day's events.

The change that occurred was gradual, I didn't get out of the battalion commander's doghouse immediately, things had gotten too bad for that to happen. There was an improvement though. The feeling of constantly failing began to fade as I began to outline the issues that I was seeing in my unit and the steps that I was taking to combat those issues. The battalion commander began to have an understanding of what I was seeing and how I was working to fix things and began to offer more constructive advice and help, rather than trying to tell me how to fix the issues that he thought he was seeing in my organization.

Communicate is defined as the exchange of ideas or information. By exchanging ideas and information as an organizational leader, Army officers are able to understand and visualize the situation is within their subordinate commands and how their superior commanders see the battlefield. This allows

them to assess the situation and describe and direct actions that allow them achieve results. As an organizational leader I am convinced that success lies in how well someone communicates.

Communication is not just telling someone something it is listening to what someone tells you.

Successful leaders will be able to understand the problem, visualize the end state, and describe how to use resources available, direct the war fighting functions all based on how well they communicate.