

The purpose of this assignment is to identify a crucible experience; a point in my life which has subjected me to a severe test and which has challenged me to examine myself and reexamine my mental models or paradigms. The truth is I have had many crucible experiences in my life. However, one which posed a significant challenge professionally and has truly prepared me with how to cope with other storms stands out the most.

As a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division's 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Air Defense Artillery, I came face to face with extreme career disappointment. After successfully serving more than 18 months as a platoon leader of both a Stinger and Avenger platoon, I was denied the opportunity to serve as a Battery Executive Officer. Although I had received high marks on all of my evaluations, I was initially told flat-out no without any rationale. Without providing any justification whatsoever, the battalion commander was not only unrelenting in giving me the opportunity to advance but he also assigned other lieutenants to the positions who were junior to me in both time-in-grade and rank.

After consulting with my battery commander, my mentor (a Lieutenant Colonel in another battalion), a few peers, my platoon sergeant and my wife, I finally petitioned the brigade commander for guidance and answers. When I was told by the brigade commander that the battalion commander was free to assign the officers in his command to whatever positions he deemed necessary for their professional growth, I was confronted with a challenge and had to make a decision which has turned out to be one of the most fulfilling I've had to make in my life. Dealing with the decision to remain in the military and confronting the issue instead of running away was an experience which I do not have the luxury of time to explain. Suffice it to say that it was an experience which has led me to challenge not only my own way of thinking, living, and acting but also instilled in me the intestinal fortitude to confront situations that may be uncomfortable for others when the greater good of all is at stake.

I used to believe that as long as I was putting forth a 100% effort into getting the job done I would be taken care of professionally. I believed that although I was never pulled aside and coached and mentored that I was squared away and that the only thing that mattered were results. As a junior officer, I always felt subjectivity didn't factor into career development. Those were severely flawed assumptions that were perpetuated by failed leadership through the lack of one-on-one interaction and professional development. I was shocked to discover much later as I was departing the command, that the battalion leadership failed others as well.

According to Knutson and Miranda, planned and unplanned human interactions facilitate organizational effectiveness.<sup>i</sup> Although Army leaders are self-managed, feedback, which Knutson and Miranda also pointed out, is very much needed.<sup>ii</sup> My command failed to provide me, as well as others, with feedback which would have ensured not only individual success but long-term organizational success.

Leaders in learning organizations are responsible for building organizations where individuals continually expand their capabilities to shape their future—that is, leaders are responsible for fostering learning and are themselves learners.<sup>iii</sup>

Leader facilitation didn't exist within the battalion, at least not enough to ensure organizational growth and individual professional development. As an organizational leader, I will place emphasis on counseling which will serve to eliminate miscommunication, misunderstandings, and lack of information flow. Leading by example, I will ensure I conduct quarterly counseling with every individual I rate and senior-rate. By doing so, I will demonstrate my commitment to their professional growth and career development thereby instilling in them the sense of commitment to do the same. I will also ensure I help facilitate the coaching, mentoring and teaching in the other direction by scheduling counseling sessions with my rater.

As an organizational leader, I will strive to destroy the flawed paradigm which I held that led to poor assumptions about individual performance and professional development. If situations

arise which could potentially lead to missed opportunities based upon an individual's attitude, performance, lack of social interaction, etc, then that will be communicated directly. As an organizational leader, I will not lack the intestinal fortitude to look a person in the eye and tell them why they are in jeopardy of making a career faux pas. As an organizational leader, I refuse to allow myself to cower while allowing my boss, peers or subordinates to perpetuate conditions which are not conducive to a member of the team's professional development.

As a result of this experience, it has become my passion to ensure I convey to my peers and subordinates the importance of leadership involvement with members of the organization. As an organizational leader, I will help facilitate interaction between seniors and subordinates to ensure lines of communications are established and remain open to enhance the growth of the organization. My intent is not to set out on an after-action type mission of showing and telling others where mistakes were made but to conduct pre-emptive, thought-provoking dialogue which will serve to demonstrate a genuine concern for everyone's growth and well-being; to foster a command climate where even the most junior member can feel comfortable asking questions as well as being kept informed.

I now know the importance of building teams as an organizational leader. To this day I have no idea why I was denied the opportunity to serve as a battery executive officer. Regardless of the reason(s), I have come to the conclusion that my role in the whole experience played a significant part of the decision. As a result of not initiating interaction with my boss on issues of career development, long-term organizational growth or non-work-related social issues, my goals were not aligned with the team's goals. I've learned that results alone do not guarantee success. Apparently my goals of mission accomplishment, which I pursued by being solely task-oriented wasn't aligned with the command's mission accomplishment goals. It is my contention that the leadership's approach to accomplishing organizational goals should have been facilitated through its subordinate leaders initiating contact with its senior leaders. Taking

lessons learned and using *The Rocket Model of Team Effectiveness* as a guide, I can feel assured that I'm at least equipped with the tools needed to build successful organizational teams. As an organizational leader, I will ensure individual and team goals are aligned and that the team is going in the same direction.<sup>iv</sup>

In conclusion, the decision I made as a result of this experience has shown me that by facilitating interaction within the organization and ensuring the organization remains a learning one, not only will the organization be successful at its mission but individuals within the command are developed properly and provided with feedback which would serve to develop them professionally. Ensuring goals are established, measures of performances are emplaced and constant and consistent interaction is maintained is vital to effective organizational growth.

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<sup>i</sup> Knutson, Kimberly A. and Miranda, Alexis O. "Leadership Characteristics, Social Interest, and Learning Organizations" p.207  
<http://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=9054995&site=ehost-live> 31 Jan 2010.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid, p.209

<sup>iv</sup> US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), "L107: Building Organizational Teams Reading L107RA; Building High Performance Teams: The Rocket Model," CGSC AY 09-10 L100: Developing Organizations and Leaders, (August 2009), p.253