

# What the General Meant to Say

... and other stuff  
they never told you about

# If you want to be a general, start to think like a general

- ▶ Listen to what the boss (isn't) saying
- ▶ Understand big picture perspectives
- ▶ Are you a cog or a log
- ▶ “When can we make this happen”
- ▶ “Give me an honest assessment, not some answer that you think I want to hear”
- ▶ “You might be good at...” = “I’ve got your back.”
- ▶ “Maybe you’re not as good as you think you are.”

# So, What's Your Story....

- ▶ An open ended question meant to learn about how you think
- ▶ Usually follows a good result (but, sometimes a not so good result).
- ▶ It also meant to identify “What can I do for you”
- ▶ Or “What is within the bounds of my authority to help you accomplish”
- ▶ Interview Question 101

# **If you want to command or want a specific job position, you actually have to tell someone**

- ▶ Seek out increased responsibility
- ▶ They will almost never just come to you
- ▶ Let your boss know
- ▶ Identify the end game and the steps to get there
  - Do your homework
  - Just like running a project or program
  - Ask what you need to do to get there
  - Ask for assistance in filling the gaps

**Always - Give 100% in the job you're in**

# **Integrity first, service before self, excellence in all we do**

- ▶ Four individuals stand-out as mentors for me.
- ▶ Each shared a valuable lesson
- ▶ Each provided a leadership perspective now part of in my daily walk.

# “Tell the troops what you want and get the hell out of the way” \*

- ▶ Helped me understand the importance of providing good vision and direction and moving forward with the results, even if it is sometimes a little different than what you anticipate.

\* R.F.A. “Reggie Urschler, BGen, USAF (Ret)

# “Don’t be afraid of the consequences when you’re doing and defending what’s right.” \*

- ▶ Another boss lived by example, going toe-to-toe with corporate leaders and decision-makers on issues that most knew could be career limiting
- ▶ The respect earned from those he worked for, with, and over was built on a lifetime of doing what was best for the country.

\* Lawrence “Larry” Mitchell, BGen, USAF (Ret)



**“The only thing you have in life is your word.**

**You can accomplish nothing if people don’t believe that.” \***

- ▶ Everything hinges on whether others trust that you will do what you say.
- ▶ People (up/down/sideways) need to know that you’ll deliver on what you promise.

\* Eugene E Habiger, Gen, USAF (Ret), STRATCOM



**“Tell your people what you expect, work ‘em hard, put them away wet....but make sure you take care of them, feed them well, and let them know they are trusted, respected, valued, and appreciated.”**

- ▶ Understanding the value of the people who work for, with, and around you can never be understated.
- ▶ As a leader you set the vision, provide the direction, channel and focus the purpose of the organization, but all is accomplished by those you influence strongly enough to make it so.
- ▶ Respect, value, appreciate the team plowing the earth, tilling the soil, running the race
- ▶ Make sure you help place them in positions to continue to grow the vision you’ve planted.

\* Ronald R Fogleman, Gen, USAF (Ret) CSAF

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# Everyone gets one “But, sir....”

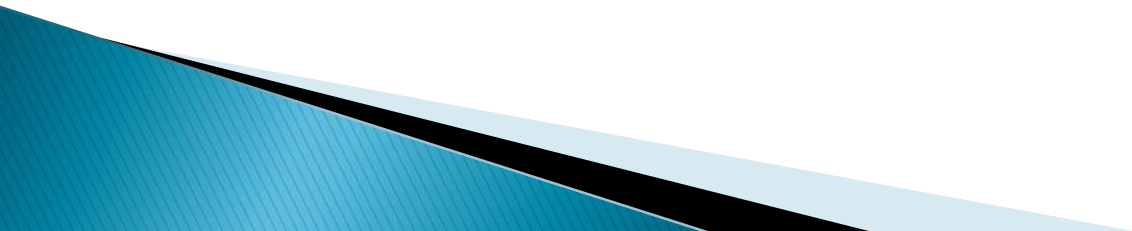
- ▶ If you're the smartest person in the room and it's not clear to you, it's probably not clear to the person sitting beside you
- ▶ State your case, succinctly and clearly
- ▶ This is not your opportunity to whine
- ▶ If you don't like the answer ≠ Stonewall
- ▶ Salute smartly, move on, and make it so

# Always have your 5 minute elevator pitch ready

*(personal or business)*

▶ *for me.... I am*

- *a data translator,*
- *left side/right side thinker,*
- *"why" diver needed to ID business/mission need,*
- *"intuitive intelligence" to businesses and people,*
- *find sense nuggets in data discoveries, data science, deep data dives, outlier analysis, artificial intelligence, and future what-ifs*
- *shape the landscape in 50 years.*



# There is no such thing as an informational briefing to a boss

- ▶ There to ask for a decision or their assistance.
- ▶ Know what decision-maker is empowered to do
- ▶ Know specifically what you need before going into the discussion.
- ▶ This is the first slide you prepare
  - If you have just one slide, this is it
  - No slides are better

# Always have your “ask for...” ready

- ▶ Never go into a discussion with a decision-maker without having one specific request for assistance if asked.

# Don't be afraid to ask why or where the requirement originated

- ▶ .... or how it was derived
- ▶ Ask the user/customer, “What is it you really need to accomplish”
- ▶ Also ask, “How would you accomplish that task today without this .....
- ▶ Ex - The width of a C-17.....



# Know the difference between (managing) projects and operations

- ▶ Projects are to attain an objective and then they terminate.
  - Projects conclude when specific objectives are attained.
- ▶ Operations are ongoing to sustain the business.
  - Operations adopt a new set of objectives and work goes on
- ▶ Projects are often used to achieve an organization's strategic plan.

# Strategic interests change little over time

- ▶ Laid out through a vision of what a future state should be.
- ▶ Vision is defined by goals to achieve the vision.
- ▶ Technology changes the way we approach the goals
- ▶ May enable us to alter our goals while keeping strategic interest and vision intact
- ▶ What was previously unattainable is re-evaluated by the ability to apply current methods and technology to make that happen better, faster, more efficiently.

# Set realistic expectations upfront

- ▶ Know your skillset and what you can offer.
- ▶ Intimately aware of what you can/cannot deliver.
- ▶ Don't over-commit
- ▶ Be first to tell boss if unable to meet a deadline, and have a plan detailing what doing to make it so.

# Great leaders bring multiple teams together to cooperate on common, compelling goals

- ▶ Goals must matter personally to the team
- ▶ Every team member has stake
- ▶ Every team member has defined deliverable

# Great leader's decisions start by first crisply defining problem, then gathering right pertinent data

- ▶ Eliminates gathering data that doesn't matter
- ▶ Pull enough relevant alternative viewpoints to test decision
  - Hint: if everyone aligns too quickly, probably haven't
- ▶ Enroll enough relevant perspectives to productively challenge pending decision.
- ▶ Factoring empathy allows/forces accountability to those affected by decision.
- ▶ Focus on objective, pragmatism vs perfectionism
- ▶ Not deciding dodges accountability and brings its own cost (time, energy, cost, momentum).

# Leaders who empower build trust, connections, and communications

- ▶ Cultivate collaborative teams that produce results faster and at lower cost
- ▶ These teams take risks, are all-in to succeed together
- ▶ If top-down bosses spread fear, employees don't take risks, use their full brain capacity, or perform at their best.

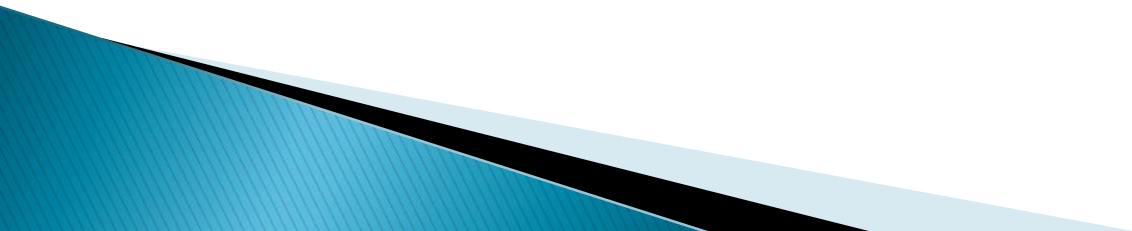
# Better is the enemy of good enough

- ▶ Know when it's time to move forward



# Sooner or later you have to shoot the engineers and get to work

- ▶ The last 20% is always toughest to achieve
- ▶ There is always the last 20%
- ▶ Pragmatism vs Perfectionism



# OK, boomer

- ▶ Just because you're a boomer doesn't mean you don't have good ideas
- ▶ Make time to listen to those who plowed the fields already

# Use your team's skills wisely

- ▶ Millennials and GenZ (generally) bring greater technical skills
- ▶ Baby boomers and Gen X bring greater business insight (again, generally).
- ▶ A leader helps the team see the benefits gained by working with each other's strengths

# Learn to leverage someone else's idea and make it better

- ▶ Nothing is original inside the beltway
- ▶ Plagiarism is the highest form of flattery as long as you add something to the thought that increases its value
- ▶ Acknowledge the source
- ▶ If someone is going anywhere close to where you want to go, climb on their bandwagon
  - Jump off when it's time
  - Tell them thank you for the ride

# Leadership emphases are cyclical

- ▶ It ebbs and flows every 15 - 20 years
- ▶ The guys in charge bring with them processes and ideas that worked when they were young captains

# Long-range strategy is not a two year plan.

- ▶ What do I want (me/life/the company/whatever) to be in 50 years?
- ▶ What foundations need to be started today



# Where's the next hydra

- ▶ If just fighting crisis after crisis, your plan sucks
- ▶ Prioritize
  - A – someone will die or worse
  - B – these are the next big, important issues
  - C – important, but lots of time
  - D – not too important, no time constraints

# There really is no black & white solution to any problem

Find a compromise that works in some way for everyone

- ▶ What is the real sticking point for each party and how can that itch be scratched?
- ▶ What can you give up with minimal impact?

Respect your adversary's position

- ▶ Put yourself in your enemy's shoes – why is this an impasse or bone of contention?

Everyone should be a little unhappy and a little glad at the result.

- ▶ If someone walks away with 100% of everything they wanted, it will not end well.

# Respect those that get you in the door

- ▶ The way you treat the admin staff and janitor reflects greatly on your attitude toward the people that work for and with you.
- ▶ Do you know their name...
- ▶ Take the time to say thank-you to the people who make it possible.

# You build face-to-face relationships

- ▶ It's hard to work virtually without some real water cooler moments
- ▶ Learn about the people you work with and for
- ▶ Relationships build trust
- ▶ Phone down and look up at the world more

# Give people your full attention

- ▶ Pay attention to their story
  - Mute the phone
  - Close the laptop
  - Put down the i-pad
- ▶ Listen to their perspective
- ▶ Ask questions and use their name
- ▶ Stop trying to think of the next smart comeback
- ▶ Find commonality

# Life is about giving back

- ▶ Find something that you are passionate about.
- ▶ Leave the world/the job better than you found it.

# Before giving advice, make sure the person asking really wants guidance, and that they are not just venting

- ▶ If they do, try to relate your own experience.
- ▶ People tend to be more receptive when you can say, “I’ve been there, and here’s what I did.”



# If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there

- ▶ Corollary: If you do know where you're going, there is more than one road that will get you there.
- ▶ Corollary2: Don't start a trip until you've checked the map, filled the gas tank, and emptied your own

# Good judgment comes from experience

- ▶ Experience  
comes from bad judgment
- ▶ Learn from your mistakes

# Nothing is free (forever)

- ▶ There is always a cost
- ▶ FYI, Google is now charging for upping storage limits)

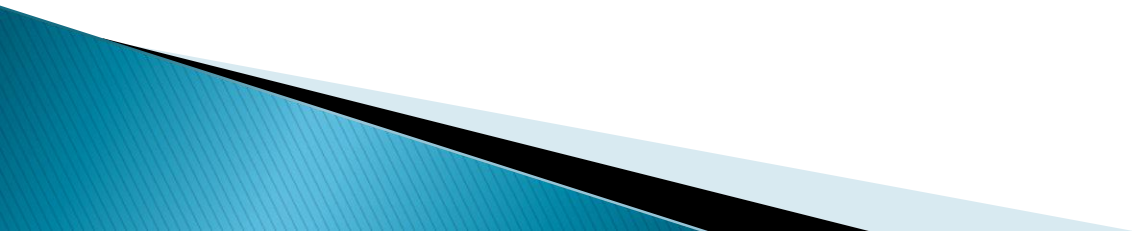
# Action Verbs and Specific Results

In Writing or Presentations:

- ▶ Eliminate passive tense
- ▶ Make sentences with action verbs
- ▶ Bullets points/sentences that deliver impact

Related: Resumes and Sales Pitch

- ▶ Persuade an employer to hire you or a customer to buy your stuff because of benefits you can deliver:
  - Quantifiable success
  - Numerical accomplishment



# Take care of yourself, your family, your team first

- ▶ Everything else will take care of itself.

# Make your decisions based upon doing what's right

- ▶ First, what's best for the country
- ▶ Then what's best for the Air Force
- ▶ Then what's best for the program

# You can't do it all yourself.

## Learn to delegate! Then....

- ▶ Trust –
  - give them the stick, get out of the way, accept the result if it's mostly going where you need to be, lots of praise (and listen)
- ▶ Teach –
  - share insights, what works/ doesn't work, be open to ideas, keep end game in mind (and listen)
- ▶ Tell –
  - set expectations, who has what tasks, what they need to get the job done (and listen)
- ▶ Talk –
  - about where you need to go - share your vision, goals (and listen)



# Don't do stupid

- ▶ Integrity is what happens  
when no one is watching
- ▶ Ask “what if”
  - ... if this ended up on the front page of the Washington Post, how would it look?“
  - ... if my mom saw me

# What keeps us happiest as we go through life?

## -- Good Relationships \*

- ▶ Life is relationships.
- ▶ It's the quality, not the quantity.
- ▶ Communicate the hard things.
- ▶ Get over grudges.
- ▶ Work is intrusive -- work-life integration has replaced work-life balance.
- ▶ Integrating work into your life does not mean it becomes your life.
- ▶ Redefine what success really is for you -- it's a choice. If success starts and ends with nurturing relationships, everything else gets re-prioritized.

\* *ref: 81 yr old Harvard study started in 1938*  
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# Life (and business) is based upon relationships

- ▶ You're not actually sell a product -- you're selling yourself.
- ▶ People have to trust you and that what you say is worth listening to before they'll buy your services or any box that you're pushing.
- ▶ You don't have to be best buds, but your network has to believe you.

# **Do not under-estimate the significance of your spouse and family in your career success**

- ▶ Thank-them every day
- ▶ Share your dreams, plans, and successes, communicate where you need each other's help, be passionate about growing your relationship.
- ▶ It is exceedingly difficult to overcome what accompanies an ugly split at home (financially, emotionally, career momentum)

# Before leaving a meeting, ask what you can do to assist

- ▶ .... if not already assigned an action item/task
- ▶ Always mean it.
- ▶ Follow through