



CARNIVORE LEADERSHIP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Silver Bullets for Effective Leadership

Volume 4: 'Calling The Baby Ugly'

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OVERVIEW

Growing up a Pararescueman in the United States Air Force taught me a lot about maintaining a true bearing towards excellence. It was a hard life with hard choices, a game of life and death where only winners got a chance to advance. In order to be considered a winner, you had to exceed your capabilities everyday. It was a non-negotiable mindset; pass or fail, black or white, and very little gray area for interpretation. As students we always knew our expectations.

The program was not easy and many came up short of the goal. The sad part of it all is most had the potential to accomplish the training, but not all had the drive. The path of least resistance seemed more appealing to those who did not dare push themselves to the limit, and never truly found out whether they could be Pararescuemen.

I have crossed paths with some of those men and more often than not, they place blame on outside circumstances for their shortcomings. Some say injuries led them to quit the program while others placed the blame on family situations, etc. Few come forward and say what truly happened: they gave up their drive and quit. Maybe it wasn't in their hearts at all to accomplish the feat.

The above is not exclusive to the pararescue training pipeline, it is all around us and across the Air Force. Somebody somewhere is always looking to shirk responsibility for their actions--'it is always someone else's fault'. At the same time, somebody elsewhere is lacking the moral courage to correct others who are falling short of the mark--'it is not my problem, someone else will fix it eventually'.

This lack of accountability--and those who ignore it--have nearly driven our USAF standards to the ground. We must take ownership, responsibility, and pride in fixing this problem by "calling the baby ugly".

Our time is now.

This paper will provide you insight on combating this substandard mindset. This battle needs warriors and I am in full recruitment mode. Let's check equipment and get ready for battle...

~ CZ

CALLING THE BABY UGLY

Standards: 'Not everyone gets a trophy'

Bottom line up front: If a leader ignores top performers, they lose their winning edge. If a leader rewards weak performers, they never develop a winning edge.

We have sunk down a slope of entitlement and selfishness that has eroded the honor of being a U.S. service member. This false sense of self-worth and value to the organization is a product of many years of leadership ignoring weak performers and failing to help them become productive Airmen. In the meantime, our star performers wonder why they should continue to give it their best everyday when even the mediocre get the same rewards. There is only one way to look at this: it is flat-out wrong.

People are receiving EPR ratings they have not earned and decorations based on the sole achievement of existence. What is the incentive on having these rewards if they are so easy for the taking? What incentive do we then have to push the mediocre towards excellence? We are handing out our sacred rewards and EPR ratings like towels at the gym; you show up, you get one.

How do we kill substandard behavior when our weapons are already low on ammunition? The answer, my fellow warriors, is in front of us: we must regroup, do an ammo check, re-distribute the remaining bullets to our warriors and have them shoot when it counts.

We need our leaders to be selective with rewards and EPR ratings. Our Air Force expects us to do so, and hard times will soon call for only the best to step forward and continue to serve. What a tragedy if we cannot properly distinguish those who rise above from those who fall below. We are not talking on paper, but in reality. Who is truly amongst the best? Who is above average? And lastly, would you *honestly* rate the ones who fall short of the standard? In order to do so, you must first look the part and be the best at what you do.

Supervisors, you are our frontline warriors and you need to dig your trenches, fix bayonets, and get ready to kill the issue(s) on first sight. The method to the battle is up to you, but you must fix it while it is yours and not shove the problem to the next assignment. *Mediocrity* must be killed and *mediocracy* overthrown.

The Remedy for Mediocrity: 'Call it like you see it'

Many of our personnel need help improving, but not everyone has the drive to do it on their own or the courage to ask for help. This is when supervisors need to step in and give people constant feedback on all facets. Discuss the good and the bad all the time. Maximize every opportunity to help someone be better than who they are today.

Communication--frequent and candid--will ensure your personnel know where they stand and how you view them as Airmen. Daily interaction will also help identify problems that otherwise would be overlooked. If reaction becomes your method of leadership, you will always be doing damage control. Be proactive and maximize resources to put out fires while they are manageable.

Always remember that only a mediocre person is always at his/her best. Seekers of excellence are never content and always look for ways to improve. Complacency and laziness are easy. If we become too comfortable in our daily duties and supervisory responsibilities, then we are complacent. This opens the door for substandard behavior to our area of responsibility. Do not allow that to happen. Keep yourself and your personnel busy working towards the mission.

Remember, amateurs train until they get it right, but professionals train until they cannot get it wrong. We also should not dump trash in someone else's doorsteps. Send your people to their next assignment better than how you got them, or don't send them at all.

Final Thoughts: 'It will not be easy to be candid, but it will always be right'

To put this into perspective, ask yourself a few questions:

Which Airman do you want calculating your pay, entitlements, and benefits?

Which Airman do you want performing medical care for you and your family?

Which Airman would you choose to assist your family during a newcomer's brief?

Which Airman do you want next to you outside the wire in combat?

The most truly qualified Airman, or the average one that only looks great on paper?

You can make a difference in ensuring the best qualified are at the forefront. Bring them awareness on paper in order to fix their living actions.

Your Chief,

~CZ