

Hello. My name is Mike Flentje, and I serve as a senior consultant here at The Family Business Institute. Wayne has asked me to share a story with you of some of my experience from the past. In my first career, I had the great privilege of serving as a submarine force officer for 20 years. I served on five submarines, including command of the newest one we had at the time, but I wanted to share a story sort of in the mid part of my career.

After I served my tour as chief engineer officer on my third submarine, I was assigned as the chief engineer for a squadron of submarines. This was seven or eight submarines, and in that role, I was required to actually ride on the submarines and go out to sea with them from time to time, spend two or three days at sea, and obviously observing engineering operations, but really it gave me an opportunity to observe how the crew worked together and how they really performed. The good news is the performance level of our submarine force is very high. You'll all be glad to know that, but there still is a difference in performance.

What is it that causes one submarine and crew to perform at a high level and another crew and submarine to perform at a really superb level? I was able to think this through, and when you look at it, a squadron of submarines, the submarines are all the same pretty much, the design, the construction, the systems, the procedures are the same, even the crew itself, it's very homogenous. The crew comes from the training pipeline, both enlisted and officer, and the captain or the executive officer, the leadership of a submarine, there's not an NFL draft, you don't get to draft people to come on your submarine. You get the next ... When you have someone leaving, you have the next person up out of the pipeline comes onto your submarine, and you really don't have a whole lot of say about it.

The crew is a very homogenous population. Here, we've got the hardware, we've got the procedures, we've got the personnel all very homogenous. Why is it that some of the submarines perform at a higher level than others? It came very clear to me from riding these different submarines and seeing how the leadership on the submarines interacted with the crew and the enlisted men, how they work together, it was clear to me that the difference in the performance level clearly came from the brand of leadership that the leadership team brought to each one of those submarines and each one of those submarine crews.

What did they really do differently? What they really did was you could tell the really top performers, the leadership and the crew, they were fully engaged with each other. It was clear that the enlisted members or the junior members of the crew really wanted to do a great job for their leaders because the leaders had really established a great connection with them, had engaged with them, and the personnel really wanted to perform. They didn't want to let down the leadership.

I think it's just a great example that really points out the value and the difference that leadership and solid leadership can bring to an organization, whether it's a submarine or a company or a government agency. Leadership really makes a big difference, and I think, instinctively, we all know this, but I just wanted to share the story with you where I actually got to see it and it was very clear that leadership was the real differentiator in performance.

Again, this is Mike Flentje with The Family Business Institute. If you have any comments, please get back to us and look forward to seeing or speaking with you soon. Thanks.