

Hello, this is Mike Flentje from Family Business Institute, and *We Build Better Contractors*. Coming to you this morning to talk a little bit about some leadership items. Those of you that know me, work with me in my roundtables and in the Boot Camp, know that I've had the great good fortune to serve in leadership roles in the military and in business world for over four decades. So, I'd like to think I've picked up a few tips.

One thing that I have that has sort of withstood the test of time is when I became a commanding officer of submarine, every commanding officer issues their commanding officer's policy or commander's intent, whatever they're calling it these days. And some of them would issue sort of a thick book of the directives to their crew, but I felt like we had enough of that in our manuals already. So, I just wanted to have a document that was one page that really sort of set the tone for how the crew was going to operate and work in general and what the focus was going to be.

So, I wrote this thing and it's been 30 years, but it's still good stuff. I go through it a little bit in the Boot Camp session, one of my leadership Boot Camp sessions, but I want to run through the whole thing with you all today.

So, the first thing that I indicate when here is that superior performers obtain the maximum from themselves, their shipmates and their gear. This is our goal. So right off the bat, I wanted to set the tone that our focus was going to be on achieving peak performance and not settling for average or even above average. We wanted to perform at our peak, and I wanted to set that tone right out of the gate with the first sort of directive to the crew. And as I go through these, now that I've been working with construction industry folks for about five years, I mean these things, there are direct parallels to what I had here to what really organizations really need to consider today.

The second item on the policy was don't be afraid of taking initiative because you might make a mistake. I mean, too often there are organizations out there where people are afraid to take initiative because they think they're going to get hammered if it doesn't work out exactly the way they expect. Folks, particularly folks out in the field, folks in the office, they need to understand that as senior leaders, you want them to take initiative and you'll have their back if their heart was in the right place. Now, it's not to say they're going to goof up, because it still can goof up, but you want people to try and fail rather than just having people never try at all. So, they have to feel like the leadership team will have their backs when they're trying to make good things happen if it doesn't happen to work out. So that's number two.

Number three is constantly assess areas under your cognizance and take action to make improvements, keeping the chain of command informed. So again, I mean there's a theme here of continuous improvement. I want everybody to feel responsible for their areas, their people, their processes, their technology, their equipment that they're responsible for, and to always be looking for ways to make improvements.

The fourth thing. On a submarine, you have to qualify on a watch station, which means you need to demonstrate a minimum level of knowledge and sort of capability to be able to operate the equipment in that watch station, in the engine room, or the control room, or wherever on the submarine. So, I say qualify as quickly as possible with a safe level of knowledge, stand the watch and become an expert. So, how this translates is when you have folks with new superintendents, new PMs, new laborers, whoever they are, try to get them up to speed as quickly as possible to the point where they are going to be safe. They're not going to be doing any damage on their workstations. But the way we really learn as adults is to actually do things. And it's really a force multiplier if you can get people up to speed quicker because you'll expand your capability. You're going to mitigate the labor shortage situation we have now. Get those folks up to a minimum level of capability to be able to do their jobs for you and let them work and really learn.

The fifth thing. In any shipboard situation, if you are unsure of your actions, stop and get help. Same thing holds true for out in the field or in the office. If you're really not sure, too many people feel like, oh geez, if I stop and I ask for help, it's going to show that I don't know anything or that I'm weak or whatever. But no, you have to have a culture where people can say, hey, I need some help. And you have to make sure that they are not denigrated for it. They have to feel like I can

ask for help and it'll be forthcoming, and it'll be in the right spirit. And it'll help us make sure that we're doing things the right way.

The sixth thing is perform at least one task daily that upgrades the operational proficiency of the ship. And the same thing for construction companies. Just imagine if everybody did one thing, one thing a day to try to improve a process or improve the way things worked, how people interact, or did something in the organization. My God, you would get to peak performance in a couple of months probably. But you have to set that mindset, that continuous improvement. Again, and this is a recurring theme through a lot of these, continuous improvement is what is required to get to peak performance.

And then the seventh thing is provide me with recommendations for the ship or crew improvements via chain of command. Every recommendation will receive a response. And the important thing there is really the second sentence. We've kind of talked about the continuous improvement culture that you want to establish. And part of that is making sure that you do give folks a response. Because if you don't respond to their suggestions or recommendations, you're not going to get any more from them. So always give them a response, even if it's not something you want to do, say, hey, great, really appreciate the input. It was really well considered, and it might be something we do down the line, but right now we think we're good to go with what we have because we're getting these kinds of results, or whatever the appropriate justification is.

The eighth thing was, again, sort of submarine, but it's work hardest while underway, i.e., at sea, in order to reduce in-port workload and maximize liberty. So, I didn't even know it, but I was talking about work-life balance back before work-life balance was a thing. Right? Yeah. The idea is work hard when you're at work. Don't come in, don't ease into the day. Jump headlong onto the day. You know me. I'm for Baltimore. I'm a Ravens fan, and every year they kind of have a little slogan that they use and the coach, John Harbaugh, he's a big slogan guy. He thinks it's a good motivator.

So, the slogan this year is "Come to work ready to go to work." I think that's a great, great slogan and we can all do that. We can all do it, it doesn't matter what. If you're an athlete or a businessman or military person or whatever, if we all have that attitude, oh my goodness, we can jump head long into the day and achieve great things.

The ninth thing was always make assignments to the most junior man capable of accomplishing the task. And this frankly is one of the most important items on the list. This is how you establish and expand your capability. You want to spread that workload out. If a junior person is capable of doing something, maybe they're not trained to do it, maybe they haven't done it before, but if they're capable of doing it, you need to train them up, get them doing it, spread that workload out for everyone. And again, it's going to help mitigate your labor shortage situation.

And then the 10th thing I think is sort of the wrap up. It is always remember that you're living the right life, like with a mission. Now, obviously that mission was a military mission, protect the country, et cetera, but the construction mission is just as important. I mean, my goodness, without the construction industry, we'd still be running around on dirt roads and living in mud huts. And goodness, the hospitals that the construction industry builds, I mean, it's a great mission.

It's a great mission to do the kinds of things that you all do and the kinds of products that you put out. I mean, it's pretty phenomenal. So, you need to remind people that, hey, we're not just building a building here. We're building a hospital that's going to help save lives and really make the general condition of our folks better. So, make sure you really emphasize that mission, why they're coming and getting out of bed every day.

So, I think that's about it. Hopefully you can get a little bit out of at least a couple of these. And any questions, you give me a call. This is Mike Flentje, FBI. *We Build Better Contractors*. Thanks.