

Abstract Title: HRO-Spiritual Leadership that Runs Toward the Fire

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Object:

Picture a spring day in the Pacific approximately 400 miles southeast of Tokyo Japan. It is late in the afternoon and you are an F/A-18 pilot aboard the carrier *USS Kitty Hawk*. You are in your thirties, commanding one of the squadrons embarked on the ship.. You've just landed or "trapped" in Navy jargon after a training mission. The sea state is rough with the carrier flight deck pitching and rolling, lifting up and down in excess of 20 feet. The ship moves in and out of rain squalls that reduce visibility to less than a mile, constantly seeking the wind the aircraft need to land into.

Once parked and chained, you descend the ladder from your aircraft and talk to your Plane Captain. He is 20 years old, from Detroit and until he joined your squadron had never held a steady job or seen an airplane up close. Since you are the "Old Man" you have seen his service record and know that he had several legal violations prior to his enlistment, nothing of any major consequence but he is working hard and performing well.

From your position on the bow of the carrier you see the gathering dusk, the rain splattering on the deck and the reduced visibility, down to a half-mile. Out of the mist an F-14 emerges. Lined up to the side and chasing the carrier deck as it rapidly descends due to a wave, the Tomcat is out of synch. The pilot is trying to work the aircraft back to the proper lineup while at the same time adding as much power as possible. All too little and

too late, the F-14 impacts the point the flight deck of the carrier drops off into the water essentially snapping in half. The crew ejects at this point and you witness the stick figure-like bodies propelled back up into the mist overhead.

The front half of the Tomcat has ignited into a fireball and slid down the deck tangled up in the arresting wires. Debris passes in front of you sliding into the ocean while a wave of heat knocks you back into your airplane. You look for your Plane Captain to be sure he is OK but he is already running towards the fire, as is every other person on the flight deck. You realize you too are running towards the fire though what you know about firefighting couldn't extinguish a grease fire in your kitchen at home. Someday, you'll have to figure out why people are running towards the fire?

Methods:

What are the elements that cause this story to be repeated again and again? Perhaps it isn't an aircraft carrier; perhaps it was the Twin Towers, a nuclear reactor or in an emergency room. But this story occurs often enough to beg the question, what is it about certain organizations that inspire this type of commitment while many other organizations find it difficult create employee accountability about routine matters? In the case above a 20 year old that had limited exposure to aircraft is heading into the problem while current headlines offer examples of seasoned executives distancing themselves from far less hazardous situations. The premise of the presentation will be to explore this question weaving practical observation and research theory.

Results:

The results explore Servant Leadership as a model by Robert Greenleaf and Spirituality in the work place as developed by Dr. Conger and seen in action on flight

deck. Definitions and structure as to what spirituality is, how a leader serves authentically and other academic support will be used to understand what traits, skills and behaviors are found in servant and spiritual leaders. This will yield a leadership philosophy that creates and sustains the high reliability organization. This philosophy can then be used by organizations trying to create greatness and accountability in work life.

Conclusion:

Leadership examples from high reliability organizations exemplify servant and spiritual leaders. Examples support the hypothesis that spiritual and servant leadership can create a culture of accountability, as is found in high reliability organizations. This philosophy can be used in any organization that is attempting to create operational excellence.