

2025 SIUE PM Symposium

Leading High Performing Teams

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Overview

- 🇰🇷 Putting Things in Context
- 🇰🇷 Four Leadership Vignettes
 - 🇰🇷 Motor Replacement on the Airport Surveillance Radar
 - 🇰🇷 Climbing a Communication Tower
 - 🇰🇷 Building Defense Team Morale and Performance
 - 🇰🇷 Know Where to Stand
- 🇰🇷 Final Takeaways

PM = Project Management

PM = People Management

Setting the Stage

Osan Air Base is ~48 miles south of Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

My job:

- 🇰🇷 Ensure uninterrupted US communications across the South Korean peninsula
- 🇰🇷 Maintain navigational aids and communication services for Osan Air Base (F16, A10 and U2)
- 🇰🇷 Care for 170 Airmen under my command







North Korea





...on a personal note

- 🇰🇷 I left my wife and 4 kids in the basement of her parents house
 - 🇰🇷 8-year-old sort of understood what was happening
 - 🇰🇷 6-year-old was oblivious to everything
 - 🇰🇷 One-yr-old had undiagnosed medical issues and required multiple therapies and doctor visits each week
 - 🇰🇷 Youngest daughter was 17 days old when I got on the plane to Korea
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- 🇰🇷 My wife and I had no idea what we were getting into

Vignette #1

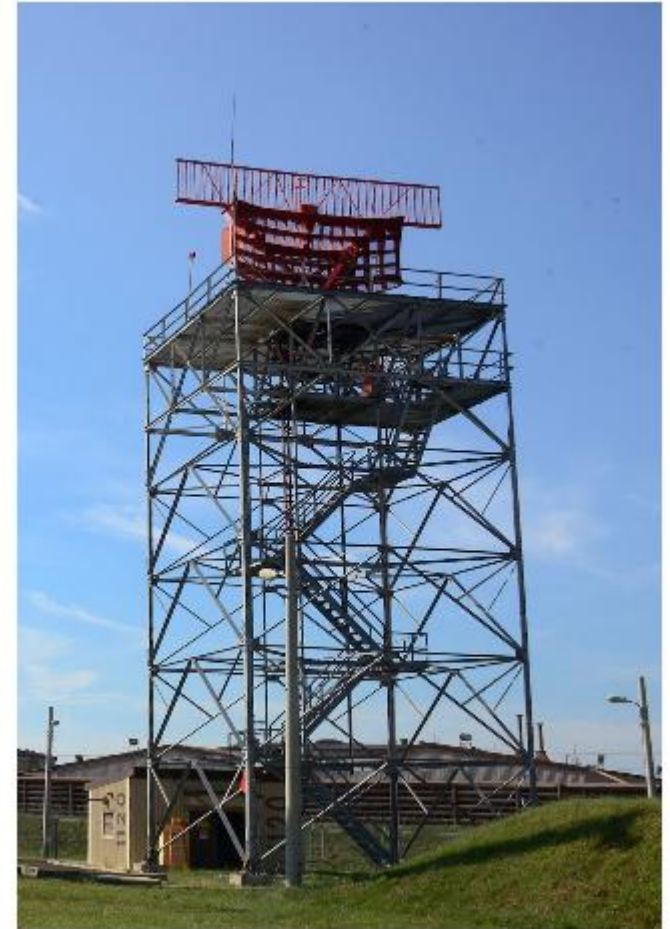
Consider a time when you had a project go bad just before go-live. How did you respond?

Motor Replacement on the Airport Surveillance Radar

ASR builds a picture of all aircraft in the sky within ~60 miles. It identifies all aircraft based on transponder codes

3 months into my 1 year tour, motor needed replaced

Third time's a charm...

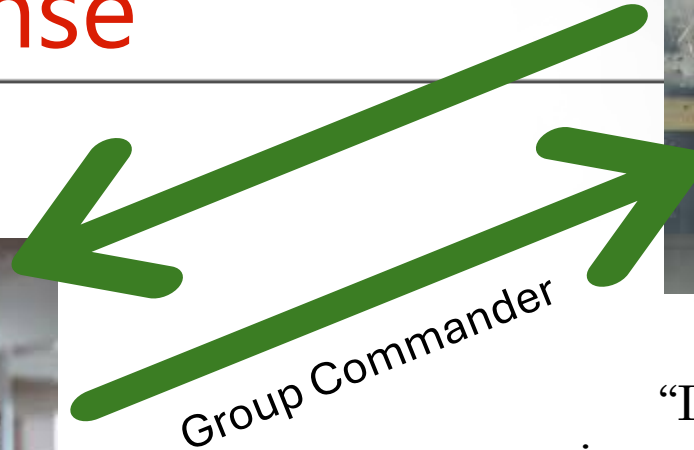


The Response



Squadron Commander
(my immediate boss)

“[censored]...I want the name of
the Airman who did this!”



Group Commander

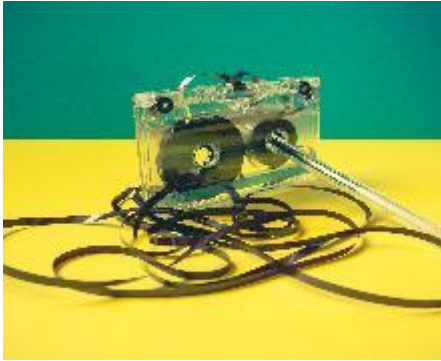


Wing Commander

“Do you understand how
important this radar is? I really
need you to get it back up and
operational now.”



What Now???

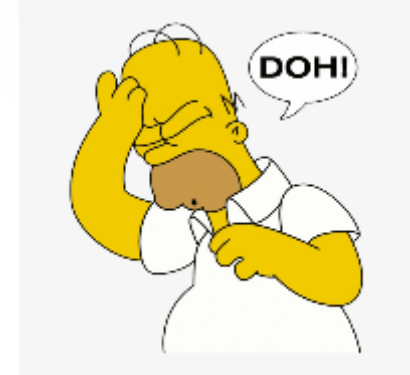


**No spare parts--oldest radar in the
FAA inventory**



Our solution:

Replace entire radar with new Digital ASR
(move project up several years)
Stand up mobile ASR



Wing Commander's solution:

Have the metal shop fabricate new parts

Lessons Learned

- 🇰🇷 Take your time when doing a job...pay attention to the details
- 🇰🇷 How you respond to problems is important
 - 🇰🇷 Yelling doesn't help solve problems
 - 🇰🇷 Think outside the box
 - 🇰🇷 When things break is the wrong time to be worried about laying blame
- 🇰🇷 Own up to your mistakes
- 🇰🇷 Bad news does not get better with age
- 🇰🇷 Result → radar up and running—planes up and flying

Vignette #1

Consider a time when you had a project go bad just before go-live. How did you respond?

Vignette #2

Consider a time when you had a team that did something you didn't like doing. How did you respond?

Climbing a Communication Tower

- Best leaders know what their people do
- One of my teams maintained communication towers...so I went out and got tower certified
- I confirmed that I'm afraid of heights
- Surprising what people tell you when you're on their turf
- Build relationships on a personal level and the professional relationship will be likewise strengthened

Lesson Learned: Leadership is a Close Contact Sport!



Vignette #2

Consider a time when you had a team that did something you didn't like doing. How did you respond?

Vignette #3

Consider a time when you took over a team that was low performing. How did you respond?

Building Defense Team Morale & Performance

Not enough security forces to defend every building (they were focused on the perimeter of the base)

Each unit had to defend their own buildings

I was in charge of the team defending our buildings...and it was the worst performing in the entire unit (500 people)

First Things First

Assess the current situation

Get out with the people. Walk where they walk. Work where they work.

Observations:

No weapons...people were using pieces of wood to “simulate” an M16

Defensive Fighting Positions were falling apart and had poor line of sight to anything

Little to no training on how to defend a building

What I did...

Rebuilt Defensive Fighting Positions

Replaced old concertina wire with new wire

Cleaned out vegetation and shrubs to provide clear line of sight

Coordinated with neighboring facilities to build synergy (string field telephones between units)

Acquired weapons and gear

Created an aggressor team to test ourselves

Get your hands dirty!





Lessons Learned

- Know the environment your people work in
- Get your people the gear they need to do their job
- Change what you can change and don't worry about the rest
- Make it fun
- Be seen...be willing to do what you ask your people to do
- Result → Highest possible rating from headquarters inspection team

Vignette #3

Consider a time when you took over a team that was low performing. How did you respond?

Vignette #4

Consider a time when someone else disciplined your team. How did you respond?

Know Where to Stand

1996: feeding my people to the wolves

1997: Senior NCO did the work and gave me the credit

2007: paybacks

Lesson Learned:

Stand in front of your people when things go wrong.
Stand behind your people when things go right.

Vignette #4

Consider a time when someone else disciplined your team. How did you respond?

Final Takeaways

- 🇰🇷 People have personal lives that may impact their job performance
- 🇰🇷 Take your time when doing a job...pay attention to the details
- 🇰🇷 How you respond to problems is important
 - 🇰🇷 Yelling doesn't help solve problems
 - 🇰🇷 Think outside the box
 - 🇰🇷 When things break is the wrong time to be worried about laying blame
- 🇰🇷 Own up to your mistakes
- 🇰🇷 Bad news does not get better with age
- 🇰🇷 Leadership is a Close Contact Sport
- 🇰🇷 Know Where to Stand
- 🇰🇷 Be Seen...get your hands dirty
- 🇰🇷 Work should be fun, not just drudgery



Know where to stand

How you respond to problems is important

Own up to your mistakes

Pay attention to the Details

Leadership is a close contact sport

Have fun

Bad news does not get better with age

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