



MORE THAN A CAPABLE MARINER: MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF COMMAND AT SEA (Views from the Bridge)

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October 2012

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Purpose
- Research Questions
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Results
- Findings and Recommendations
- Conclusions
- Bibliography



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- Command is the goal for Naval officers.
- Failures in command raise questions about the process, the people, and the pressures.
- Lot's of people have "opinions" – I wanted to discover what successful COs say about their tours.



CHAPTER 1: Research Question

- How do former U. S. Navy cruiser-destroyer force commanding officers of the 21st Century describe how they met the challenges of command at sea?
 - Anticipated vs. Actual→ Surprises?
 - Preparations?
 - Measures of success
 - Advice for those who would follow



Helmsman with an attitude



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

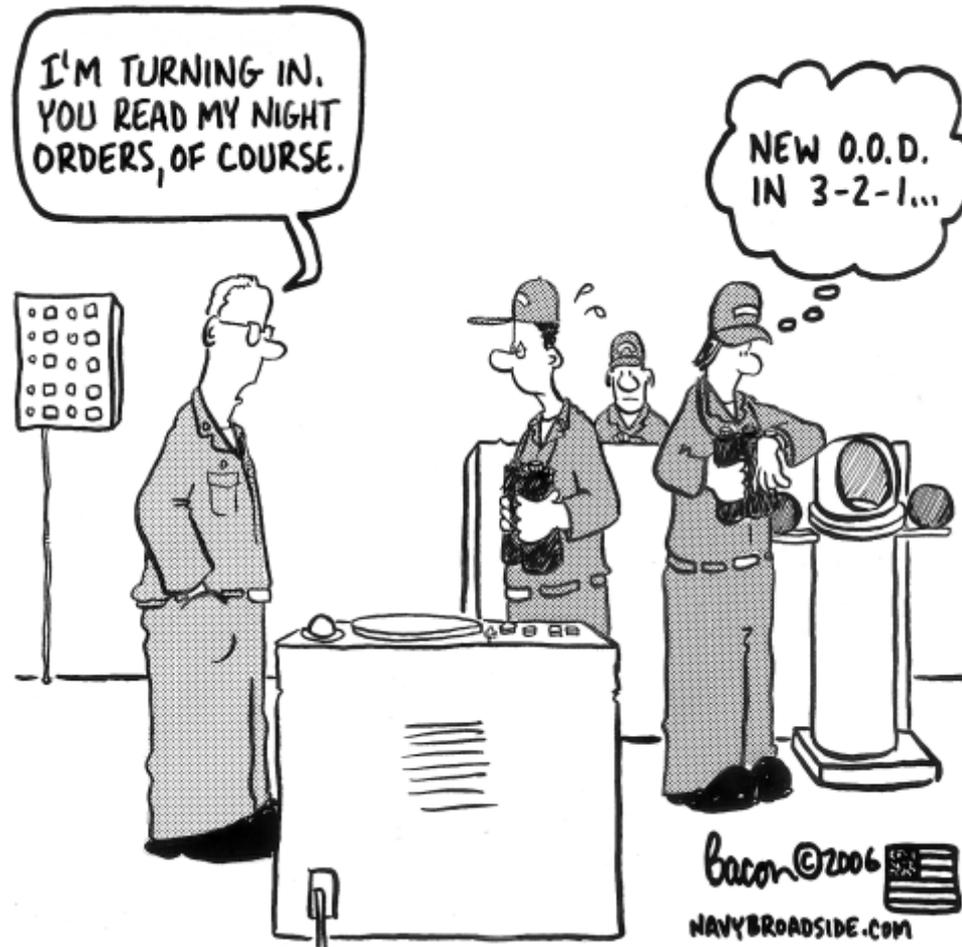
- The Concept and Nature of Command
- Rising Challenges to Command in the 21st Century
- The Path to Command
- Assessing Command Success
- Commanding Officers and Leadership Models in Action
- Research Methods



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW: Conclusion

Qualitative inquiry to discover today's challenges to COs

- The setting and the nature of command can be reviewed as theater, and command at sea as one such stage.
- Discussed challenges of command.
- Reviewed the key factors for command excellence.
- Reviewed successful COs' stories.





CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

- Methodology: Qualitative Case study
- Population: Former CO's of Navy ships since 2000
- Sampling: Convenience, volunteers
- Data Collection: Video records of COs' response to questions and added drawings and artifacts
- Adherence to ethical guidance for research.
- Note:
 - As former CO, Researcher had a distinct advantage/ or potentially fatal flaw.
 - *FHB* was in place throughout most interviews.



CHAPTER 4: Results

When did you first know that you wanted to or could Command/ fight a warship (event, person, experience, dream, etc.)?

- First ship experiences/ observations.
 - Chiefs, Sailors, Programs, Quals
- Power of a Good Commander.
 - Early initiative/ Desire - Motivated by examples of early COs.
 - “Amazing the impact of one CO on a wardroom of JOs.”
- “Sustained superior performance.”
 - Continuous learning and involvement.
- Self-aware; Confident and capable; Decisive.
 - “Love” of ship and people who served.
- Luck and timing of selection.



CHAPTER 4: Results

Discuss your path to command: key people, key events, and motivation).

- SWO plan worked.
 - Schools, ships, jobs, various experiences build adaptability and understanding of whole Navy.
- Ready but not “Comfortable” from Day 1.
 - As prepared as one could be, “Surprises.”
 - You don’t realize what you don’t know.
- Only sure way to learn to command is in command.



CHAPTER 4: Results

What barriers did you face and what did you do to overcome/minimize them in your path to Command?

- COs in general faced no barriers.
- Some experienced slow screening for command and observed remnants of the slow change in Navy culture.
 - “Only a ... AFS, ... LPD, ... FFG, ... DD....”
 - COs 3, 9, and 12 overcame their lack of early screening by adhering to time proven paths of accepting and performing well in extra tours at sea or other challenging assignments.
 - CO12 noted, “I got to command by doing a lot of Sea Duty, and I had Service Force, AMPHB, CRUDES, and afloat staff experience. I was as prepared as one can be.”
 - CO3 and CO9 served as Individual Augmentees (IAs).
- All CO’s demonstrated a self-awareness; were confident and capable; and effused a decisive “Love” of ship and the people who served.



CHAPTER 4: Results

Did you think you were well prepared for Command and what specifically could have been done to better prepare you for your tour?

- Officers thought the competitive process for command assignment was fair and transparent.
- They all noted they were as prepared for command as they could be; but “You don’t know what you don’t know” (CO12 and CO13).
- CO15 adamantly exclaimed:
 - You can’t know what it’s like to command until you command. And even when you get there and think you’ve got it, you haven’t arrived yet.
 - SWOS does the best job it can preparing you, but you are still on your own.

AS GOES THE FIRST 'BAD NEWS' REPORT OF THE MORNING, SO GOES THE REST OF THE DAY.





CHAPTER 4: Results

Compare your command experience with what you expected based on your observations of previous COs or other factors that influenced your conclusions.

- Much harder than those faced by their first ships' COs. (Especially later in decade)
- COs knew that these challenges resulted from previous Flag level decisions to save dollars by reducing manning, training, maintenance, and developing programs designed to prevent personnel issues ranging from abusive behavior to willful misconduct.
- Some of those reductions caused some ships to develop victim mentalities and negative attitudes.
 - These cultures seemed to spread as more demands were placed on fewer people and fewer support, though promised, never materialized.
 - They worked to do the minimum that would keep them out of trouble.
 - Few leaders would stand up and demand continued performance.
- CO1 noted:
 - In the ten years since I had the PC, upper level leadership lost their confidence in their juniors. I also thought that from our level of leadership, we did not trust our commanders...My challenge was then: hold standards, meet goals, and deliver capability to the Navy.



CHAPTER 4: Results

Since Cole/ 9-11/War on Terrorism implementation, what Navy-wide or Surface Navy specific policies and/or procedures have been implemented that have influenced your ability to command effectively, either negatively or positively?

- CO9 defined an approach taken by many:
 - I thought my early COs had been allowed to command more than we were. There was no email. You could only get outside information from snail mail, message traffic, or the radio.
 - Now, even when the ISIC is off the ship, there is a lot more tasking from many directions- ISIC, TYCOM, CLASSRON, etc.
 - The bosses are micromanaging everything: checking your programs, training, Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor, and constantly harping. No day went by without several emails from the staff tasking us for data that had to be reported immediately.
 - I finally told my wardroom that no email from outside the ship could be answered without a four-hour delay to try to slow the pace.



CHAPTER 4: Results

What ways have the changes in the operational and environmental expectations shifted the nature of challenges faced in Command?
How could we measure them?

- Previous Flag Decisions to live with.
 - Manning
 - Maintenance
 - Training
 - Programs to prevent...
- Numbers of ships. Pace of the Schedule. OPTEMPO.
- Ship's Cultures:
 - Squared away
 - Mentality of “neglect” so we can do it what ever way we want (that seems to keep us out of trouble).
 - Mentality of feeling sorry for our situation.
- Information Explosion.



CHAPTER 4: Results

COs were unanimous in pointing out the lack of emphasis on Warfighting and Professionalism.

- Warfighting: ASW, ASMD, FAC-FIAC, Offensive anything.
- Professionalism => Accountability
 - Personal
 - Peer
 - Senior
- Professionalism => Discipline to
 - Finish
 - Speak truth to power



CHAPTER 4: Results

What parameters did you note to assess your performance in command? How did you drive your confidence in Command?

- Getting around. “Faces, places, and paces.”
- Recognizing, Tracking, Rewarding progress.
- Meeting small goals enroute to larger ones.
- Growing (or declining) sense of self-efficacy.
 - F (performance, recognition, hope...)
- Hanging in there.





CHAPTER 4: Results

“Personal Mastery” (Senge, 1990)

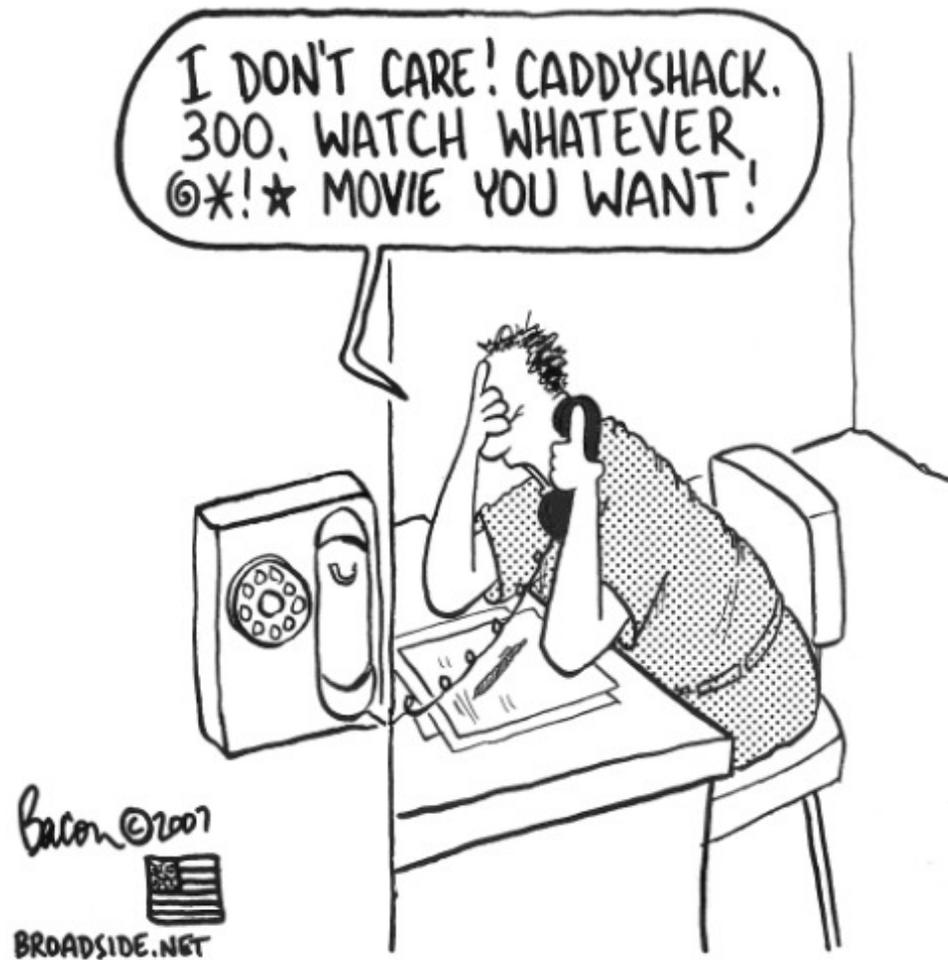
- All COs who participated admitted to having some bad days and even missteps in command, ... but did not become trapped by them.
- One CO made a point of noting that he tried not to stay mad for more than a minute, and always sought out the people he chewed out to ensure they knew it was the act, not the person, that caused it.
- Another CO cautioned, “A major danger sign for COs occurs when you get tired and cranky. You make mistakes and people will avoid telling you important things.”
- All respected the Navy, their ships and sailors, and themselves too much to let the crew down.



CHAPTER 4: Results

Would you be willing to share any artifacts (Command Philosophies, Letters from Command, etc.) to enable me to do cross-comparisons with others' like products, including my own?

- Several shared Command Philosophies
- Some had old handouts from previous COs
- Several had examples of letters/ BZs from Command



**The Captain began to rethink Standing Order #3:
"When in doubt about anything at all, call the Captain."**



CHAPTER 4: Results

- What is the one thing about your experience as a Commanding Officer you would tell:
 - A room of Department Heads about Command at sea?
 - Prospective Executive Officers
 - Prospective Commanding Officers?



Things always got a little tense around Sea Detail time.



CHAPTER 4: Discussion of the Results

COs' advice

- To DHs
 - Learn the whole job: equipment, people, and ship.
 - Begin to see a larger role in Navy.
 - Help CPOs teach JOs.
- To XOs
 - Be XO, not “PCO.”
 - Take care of CO- Back the CO and make you both heroes.
 - Take care of Crew (XO messing and Berthing).
 - Take care of ship (3M, DC, Safety, Training, Qualification & Advancement).
 - Prepare for Command.
- To COs:
 - Work it. Enjoy it. Relish it. Stay in there. Respect the position and the people.
 - Anticipate surprises. Shift to “Fundamental” leadership.



CHAPTER 4: Discussion of the Results

Leader models

- Situational (Hersey and Blanchard)
- Transactional (Kuhnert & Lewis)
- Transformational (Avolio; Bass; Bennis & Nanus; Kouzes & Posner)
- Servant (Greenleaf)
- Covenant (Clark)
- Stewardship
- Positive (PAL) (Luthans, et al.)

A CO will need them all: Make sure its
“AUTHENTIC”



CHAPTER 4: Discussion of the Results

“Information Explosion”

- Connectivity and communications systems have not lifted the Fog.
- Every problem a leadership problem?
- Micromanaging and fracturing of “TRUST.”
- Two-way street.



Why C.O.s don't get much sleep



CHAPTER 4: Discussion of the Results

“Seniors”

- TRUST is Glue for effective command.
- What is it with seniors?
- All COs confessed to not always understanding their bosses and vice versa.
- Only one had kind words for a Commodore.
- DESRON training ?



The "fleet up" dilemma



Implications of the Results

- Power of a Good Commander.
 - A Life of service. Mission focus.
- The SWO Path works.
- *Naval Leadership and Command at Sea* timeless and updated.
 - Importance of CPOs.
- Decision making models.
- Anticipate surprises. Stay focused.
- Speak Truth to Power- Listen when you get there.
- Taming information explosion.
- Commodore preparations?



Limitations

- Holistic study.
- Limited numbers due to funding, time, and travel.
- Mostly just COs of CRUDES ships-
 - No apparent differences between Mineforce and AMPHIB and CRUDES.
- Self-reported performance. Researcher made poor application of NVivo program.



Ideas for Further Study

- XO to CO Fleet-ups: Shifting from Enforcers (XOs) to Visionaries (COs).
- Expand Command assignments and include Commodores.
- Compare East Coast vs. West Coast/ Ships/Subs/Air Squadrons; etc.
- Discover most important attributes: sea time, lived experiences, and factor in ability to learn vicariously through them.
- A study that follows the effect of adding PAL to Navy leadership training.
- A study that explores junior officers' attitudes and proclivities to Command.
- A study that investigates the seniors' appetite for more and detailed information.
- A study that explores Command failures to identify missed opportunities for interventions.



Conclusions

- SWO path to Command works. Command is tough; today, it is tougher.
- COs make a difference.
- Surface Force Turmoil caused by budget pressured decisions ignoring system consequences and mission requirements.
 - JOs tried to warn/ rescue the bosses. Most were slammed.
 - Set up crisis in Credibility/ Confidence/ TRUST.
 - Micromanaging (or appearance) further eroding it.
- Think about WARFIGHTING
- Hope remains- Factors in place to reverse funding, training, and manning trends.
- Anticipate surprises. Recover. Rebound. Focus.
- Effects of previous funding, training, maintenance reductions can be overcome, one ship, one crew, one event, one CO at a time.



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