

Critical Decision Making Under Pressure
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Decisions in rapidly changing dangerous circumstances are made at times without thought. I have heard and even uttered the words myself, "I didn't think about it." I just acted." We just did what had to be done."

Can that be true? Can those of us involved in extreme situations where life and death are at stake actually make decisions without thinking, without analyzing options, intuitively?

The answer is clearly yes.

Dr. Gary Klein in his research of cognitive development talks about making decisions under pressure in what he describes as "Recognition-Primed Decision Making". What Klein found working with the United States Marine Corps, Emergency workers and Businesses across the country, was, "It was not that the commanders were refusing to compare options. I had been so fixated on what they were not doing that I had missed the real finding: that the commanders could come up with a good course of action from the start. That is what the stories were telling us. Even when faced with a complex situation, the commanders could see it as familiar and know how to react."¹

Klein says "the commander's secret was that their experience let them see a situation, even a non-routine one, as an example of a prototype, so they knew the typical course of action right away. Their experience let them identify a reasonable reaction as the first one they considered, so they did not bother thinking of others. They were not being perverse. They were being skillful. We now call this strategy *recognition-primed decision making*."²

The Recognition-Primed Decision Making model fuses two processes Klein says; the way decisions makers size up the situation to recognize which course of action makes sense, and the way they evaluate the course of action by imagining it.³ Now it is important to keep in mind that decisions evolve with circumstances some decisions are made simply with more time to decide and others require quick if-then thinking to achieve results. The focus here is how to prepare ourselves to do those rapid decisions that needs to be made under pressure.

Law enforcement and security personnel at times make decisions with very little information available and even less, time. This time criticality is because either rapidly changing circumstances that unfold unexpectedly and spontaneously allowing little time to decide or

¹ Dr. Klein, Gary Intuition at Work Why Developing Gut Instincts Will Make you Better at What You Do, Doubleday 2003

² Dr. Klein, Gary Intuition at Work Why Developing Gut Instincts Will Make you Better at What You Do, Doubleday 2003

³ Dr. Klein, Gary Intuition at Work Why Developing Gut Instincts Will Make you Better at What You Do, Doubleday 2003

an individual officer is locked into a complacent mindset his Boyd Cycle is turned off, misses critical information unfolding progressively and is caught unprepared. Decision making in both cases is made more difficult due to little information being picked up on and processed. Law enforcement and security officers find themselves in these types of situations all too often. If not prepared through training, education, experience and backed up by strong character leadership time critical decisions do not get made and the advantage goes to the adversary.

To gather and process the incoming information in rapidly changing circumstances requires judgment and decision making without all the facts. (*Actually due to intuition built through experience we gain situational awareness, meaning there is a lot of information an experienced decision maker uses, it was just not available to us in earlier stages*⁴). To pick up on this information the signs and signals, we must have our individual Boyd Cycle "Turned On!" The Boyd Cycle (OODA-LOOP) is a subconscious and conscious act, of observation, orientation, decision and action cycles we use in our daily routines to make decisions.

Col Boyd explained a person in a conflict; any conflict must **observe** the environment, to include himself, his adversary, the moral, mental and physical situation, potential allies and opponents. He must **orient** to what it all means, "what's going on" which is part of the ongoing process throughout the situation. Orientation involves the information observed, ones genetic heritage, social environment and prior experiences (birth-present) that forms our picture of the situation. The results one forms during the orientation phase must be **decided** upon and an attempt made to carry out the decision, he must **act**.⁵

An example of this: is driving a car which combines mental and physical skills. While driving we make hundreds of subconscious and conscious decisions as to what other drivers will and will not do based on the signs and signals they display and take action accordingly in most cases. If we *observe* a turn signal or brake light come on in front of us we *orient* to it and make a conscious *decision* to slow ourselves or turn safely and *act* to do so in an effort to avoid accidents and keeps traffic flowing. If something happens unexpectedly and we observe and absorb the information, we make intuitive subconscious decisions and take decisive action as in swerving to a safe part of the road or stopping quickly to avoid the hazard. If we are not paying attention, having a spirited conversation, dialing a cell phone or distracted in some other way, problems arise, near misses, accelerated stopping and accidents occur. Why? There is a break in a properly running Boyd Cycle and we miss critical information.

The driving example is a very good one to utilize. It combines cognitive and physical abilities which are necessary to be successful and overall, at driving, we are very successful. Yes there are accidents, deaths and seriously injured, but when you consider the number of cars on the road and the daily activity taking place in cars we are damn good at combining these cognitive and physical skills. Why because we do it all the time, every day and this translate into experience at picking up the obvious and subtle signs giving us situational awareness while driving that translates into very good conscious and subconscious decision making.

⁴ Vandergriff, Donald, personal email communication, July 10th 2008

⁵ Col Boyd, John, Patterns of Conflict

This driving analogy is important to look at because it shows the correlation between doing and developing experience, utilizing both our cognitive and physical abilities in carrying out our daily tasks. This directly relates to what we in law enforcement and security do in carrying out our duties day to day. It also shows the importance of continuous training (driving everyday) and its affect on developing this ability in those who deal with crime, crime problems and dangerous encounters. Where both implicit, and explicit information is utilized in, solving these types of problems.

Our goal should be to harness the ability to develop the cognitive decision making process with the physical skills required in both progressive and spontaneous circumstances and refine the necessary methods through experience and apply it accordingly based on the environment and current circumstances. The first step is a shift of mind that intuition is not magic, not some strange force that comes from some unknown mystical location. That indeed intuition comes from a fine tuned senses, leading to a rapid decision making cycle developed through tough and continuous development through decision making exercises.

Intuition is defined as: "the way we translate our experience into action." Our experience lets us recognize what is going on (making judgments) and how to react (making decisions). Our experience enables us to recognize what to do and we can make decisions rapidly and without conscious awareness or effort.' We do not have to think through situations in order to make a good decision.⁶

Recognition-Primed Decision Making can be enhanced through training and in understanding that conflict is time competitive **o**bservation, **o**rientation **d**ecision and **a**ction cycles. Recognition-primed decision making is guided and controlled through tactical judgments based on your individual perceptions as circumstances unfold. What COL John Boyd called; "Implicit guidance and control."

The late Colonel John Boyd in his work stated that conflict is time competitive **o**bservation, **o**rientation, and **d**ecision and **a**ction cycles. Boyd's decision making cycle has been proven in its ability to give the upper hand, the clear advantage to the one with the fastest O-O-D-A cycle. The OODA loop had to be implicit in order to be made rapidly enough to outpace our adversary and win. Again these decisions are made based on the individual involved experience, background as well as training and the new information presenting itself via the unfolding circumstances.

The word implicit is used throughout Boyd's work. I understand it as tactical judgment and intuitive decision making. This type of decision making is necessary in an effort to deal with and resolve crime and violence we in law enforcement and security are facing. There is no time in dangerous rapidly unfolding circumstances, for contemplation and analytical decision making. By the time you stop and contemplate, ponder an idea and come up with a solution, it may be too late. The real world of crime and violence is not a class room or boardroom model, where there is time to strategize and take hours, days and weeks to come up with a plan. It is clear we must recognize forming patterns and respond guided by implicit information if we are to be successful. This is not to say we do not use explicit information gathered when the time and information is available. There is a balance between explicit and implicit information. We do our homework and gather information in

⁶ Dr. Klein, Gary Intuition at Work Why Developing Gut Instincts Will Make you Better at What You Do, Doubleday 2003

accordance with what is unfolding at the time. This is both an art and science developed by education, training and experience... It alludes to the critical importance of understanding conflict and the strategy and tactics essential in resolving it...

What's not clear is understanding, how we explain intuitive decisions. Why is being able to explain decisions important? The obvious answer is so those who sit in review of our decisions understand how and why a critical decision was made. So that the citizenry, who participate in review boards and sit on juries have a better understanding how we use tactical judgment to decide. So those in leadership positions within our professions and those who conduct investigations into events surrounding decisions, frontline law enforcement and security professionals make. In the heat of the moment, our decisions are thoroughly investigated, fairly. Not just with the available physical evidence, provided at the scene of an incident, but taking into account how conflict unfolds and how individuals process information and perceive circumstances as they unfold.

This knowledge as to how we process information and make decisions is so critical to understand and consider if justice, is to prevail. The most important reason is so that the individuals in law enforcement and security can deal with the aftermath of an incident through understanding that decisions made on the fly, in rapidly changing circumstances do not match the analytical models. Analytical models are done when there is plenty of time. This allows for an analysis and synthesis to take place in the static environment of a classroom or in a living room watching a media report of the circumstances. The man in the arena has only time to read and pick up on important subtle signs showing danger and act. It is clearly a different process that physiology shifts us from a frontal lobe conscious thinking, analytical being; to a mid-brain subconscious instinctive reaction responding through operant conditioning to meet the challenge or threat.

In the world today explicit and clear answers are expected after a response, even if it is a use of force situation, an officer handling a suspicious person or a response to a natural disaster to save lives. How do we explain what we did not "think about" so others understand?

Intuition, implicit judgment appears simple to understand but is not an easily acquired skill. The words intuition and implicit almost imply "there is something missing." This term implies an unscientific or haphazard approach. "In conflict one plus one does not equal two" but we live in a world where there is an explicit answer to every situation. Yet in the real world of conflict that is not the case. You put two people together who disagree and you cannot predict what's going to happen, let alone the conflicting individuals get so angry they decide to get physical or worse deadly.

In conflict there are chaos, uncertainty, disorder, and friction that confuse and slow the decision making cycle down. You cannot predict exactly what's going to happen next, because there are things going on that you cannot see or hear for example; the numerous thoughts going through your adversaries mind: *"I will do what I am asked," "I will not do what I am asked," "I will escape," "I will fight," "I will assault," "I will kill," "I will play dumb until..." "I will stab," "I will shoot," "he looks prepared I will comply," "he looks complacent I will not comply," etc.* Remember your adversary has his own objectives and plans as you do and they combat one another, thereby creating conflict! In conflict $1 + 1 = ?$ Pause to try and figure out (analysis) what's happening or gather more explicit (precise) information and it could be over with unfavorable results. Therefore the needed tactical judgment or implicit, guidance and control.

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The problem arises when our judgments in the heat of the moment amongst all the chaos, uncertainty, disorder and friction were perceived as unreasonable or wrong by others. We respond with what we perceived as happening based on the unfolding circumstances was not, after all is said and done, accurate. Our judgment was wrong! What you thought was a gun... was a wallet, or cell phone. Who you thought was the suspect was an innocent bystander. This is worst case scenario. However in this worst case scenario we could still be justified in our actions based on the circumstances.

What about the body language that you observed that showed signs the citizen was becoming anxious and you were fearful of assault. You take initiative to control the situation and the citizen responds by becoming physically assaultive. You take control with reasonable physical force, a complaint is filed and you are now under investigation for excessive force. What about the citizen who verbally abuses you while in your professional capacity and you strategically decide to raise your voice and use verbal manipulation to gain control, which you do. Again you're facing a complaint investigation.

How are these examples explained appropriately? How does the lack of understanding by ourselves and those who sit in judgment of us, as to how we make decisions, affect our in the moment, under pressure decision making? Why is it important to understand and be able to explain it? How and who do we train so there is a clearer understanding of the decisions we make, for all involved? How will all this enhance our ability to perform under pressure and become better intuitive decision makers?

Critical Decision Making: Under Pressure

Part 2

Explicit versus Implicit Information: It's Role in the Process

In part one of this series we discussed the Recognition-Primed Decision Making, the Boyd Cycle and the importance of training in the development of the decision making process. In this second part I want to answer some questions. What is implicit and explicit information? How we make decisions based on one or the other, or a combination of both types of information we receive? I also want to answer the question how does our lack of understanding of conflict and decision making affect our decisions in the real world while under pressure? How do we explain these decisions after they are made to all affected by the decisions we make (leadership, citizenry, organization, juries)? How and who do we train and educate so there is a clear understanding of the decisions we make? Finally how will this educational process enhance our ability to perform under pressure and become better decision makers?

In the law enforcement and security professions most of the little training conducted surrounds physical skills training. Training focuses on firearm proficiency, how to swing and block with a impact weapon, use oleoresin capsicum (Pepper Spray), defensive tactics and handcuffing techniques. A small portion of time is spent talking about use of force decisions and filing appropriate reports as to the action taken by officers. Although there have been great strides in bringing new training techniques such as Redman suits, simmunitions and range 3000 simulators to combine the physical and mental realms of conflict. While this training is excellent, it is just a small part of the overall conditioning that must take place in the preparation of our profession. This type of response training is called conditioned response. It is a specific training for a specific reaction, and while it is important, does not fully prepare people for complex situations.

Decisions are made in two ways as we exposed in part 1. They can be done through analytical thought when time is plenty and the circumstances allow for a detail analysis and synthesis of gathered explicit information. Or, they are also made intuitively under pressure when time is critical and only implicit information can be gathered to resolve critical incidents. To understand how we make decisions it is important to understand the nature of how we gather explicit and implicit information as well as how we combine them in making decisions.

Decision Making and Explicit information

Rapid decision making is essential to the law enforcement and security officer. An officer who is unable to make a timely decision puts himself and those around him in danger. Most of us are brought up to make decisions after careful consideration and contemplation. "Think before you act!" "What were you thinking?" "Didn't you think it through?" are words

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we have all heard from parents, teachers, co-workers, bosses, internal investigators and review boards throughout our lives, when our decisions come into question.

There has been extensive research on the topic of cognitive development. One of the models in decision making has been developed by research and transformation and implementation into a usable model is the Adaptive Leadership Methodology (ALM) developed by Donald Vandergriff and his cadre in teaching new leaders in the Army ROTC program. ALM has been accepted by the Army with the United States Military Academy at West Point rewriting the lesson plans in its Department of Military Instruction (DMI) following the ALM model. In his book *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War*, Vandergriff describes methods of decision making the first The Military decision Making Process, he describes as the classical or analytical approach; "the MDMP is a very good example of an analytical decision-making process; it is the first of two primary decision making models. Analytical methods such as the MDMP are formal problem solving techniques." (Vandergriff, 2006) The U.S. Army's MDMP is a modification of the French Army's misinterpretation of a German Army Decision-making training approach in the late 1800s. In the U.S. Army's model, the decision-maker uses an analytical decision making process to reach logical decisions based upon a thorough analysis of the mission and situation. The MDMP as well as other analytical decision-making models use the same basic problem solving methodology."⁷ An example of this is the problem oriented policing, problem solving process SARA; **scanning**-identifying the problem; **analysis**-learning the problem's causes, scope and effects; **response**-acting to alleviate the problem; and **assessment**-determining whether the response worked.

The SARA Problem-Solving Model is employed by most law enforcement agencies and provides techniques for identifying the elements of the problem; techniques to support the search for the underlying causes of the problem; and techniques for the development of the most effective strategy to address the problem. The final phase of the model highlights the requirement to assess the final results and to determine if the response was effective. The S.A.R.A. model is widely applicable to problems faced by many neighborhoods and has produced excellent results for hundreds of communities across the United States. It establishes a collaborative, systematic process to address issues of community, safety, and quality of life.

This approach is very good when the time for gathering, pondering and analyzing is plenty. Explicit (precise) information is gathered, reviewed, analyzed, and discussed by a collaborative group of police, business owners, and community members. Decisions are made as to what strategies and tactics to utilize then a plan is developed and put into action which is under constant assessment by all so adjustments can be made to make the plan effective. The key here is there is "TIME" to get explicit and detailed information and walk through the process to achieve desired results.

Explicit decisions are needed if you are trying things or experimenting to resolve these progressively evolving problems of the community. Intuitive decisions are not needed exclusively to resolve these types of issues because time is available. A big factor in this type of problem solving and the need for explicit information is it gives time to develop trust

⁷ Vandergriff, Donald (RET MAJ U.S. Army) *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing face of War* (2006)

amongst the group which is sometime lacking in communities and a problem for rapid decision making.

Rapid Decision-Making and Implicit Information

When the focus has turned to critical decisions that need to be made and time to make decisions is critical such as; use of force decision making. Most decisions must be made intuitively and rapid based on implicit (understood) information or tactical judgment based on the patterns we have learned from experience (birth-present) and the new information we are gathering, analyzing and synthesizing in the rapidly changing circumstances. This leads us to a second type of decision-making.

The second type of decision-making model is a naturalistic or heuristic model.

“Experience has much to do with this method of decision-making. There are three key steps inherent in heuristic decision-making: experience the situation in a changing context, recognize the pattern of the problem from personal knowledge and experience, and implement a solution. Although this is commonly used decision-making approach, heuristic and naturalistic models for decision-making have only recently come into prominence in decision-making literature.⁸”

Security and law enforcement officers use the rapid decision-making process by recognizing the signs and signals of crime and danger intuitively or through what we in the protection professions call our sixth sense. Our sixth sense is intuition based on, experience. “Intuition is how we translate our experiences into action.⁹”

Again I will use the car analogy as an example. It is a freezing cold, snowy night and the roads are covered with snow and ice. You are traveling at 40 mph on a narrow curvy road. Your mindset is on getting home after a long shift. As you come into a sharp corner your vehicle begins to slide out of control. As you feel your heart rate pick up and hands lock onto the steering wheel and foot goes to the brake automatically due to the fear of and avoidance of an accident. Your experience is you have lived in this wintery environment your whole life and have driven the icy, snow covered roads countless times before. Your intuition kicks in with “this is BAD!” You intuitively release or pump your foot on the brake, steer towards the direction of the slide and drive through the problem to safety. When you’re once again safe then your heart rate comes back down to normal and breathe a sigh of relief. The conscious mind comes back and gives you a scolding for being complacent and driving too fast for the conditions.

“Experience is a reliable guide when it is relevant to the contemporary and future operating environment and missions, and when it’s filtered, processed and stored in the brain using enduring principles and useful, reliable thought models. When key elements of the operating

⁸ Vandergriff, Donald (RET MAJ U.S. Army) Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing face of War (2006)

⁹ Dr. Klein, Gary Intuition at Work Why Developing Gut Instincts Will Make you Better at What You Do, Doubleday 2003

environment, opponents, technology and missions change rapidly, how experience is translated into intuition is even more important.¹⁰

Failure to use rapid intuitive decision-making in circumstances where it is required can be deadly. We must take slices of important information, called pattern recognition, make decisions and take the best option if, we are to survive dangerous and deadly encounters.

I have used this scenario below in training for 8 years. It is a tragic example of when decision-making is indecisive.

A young officer with about 1 year on the job observes a motor vehicle for speeding on the highway. The speed of the vehicle was approximately 98mph. The officer pursues the vehicle as it gets off the highway to secondary roads, the offender does not appear to be trying to escape, just traveling at such a speed he does not see the pursuing officer initially, the vehicle eventually pulls over, in a remote area. It is important to note this is a remote area of the country and back-up is a long way off at least 20 miles.

Once stopped, the officer and the traffic violator exit their vehicles. The violator, a male in his fifties walks towards the officer. The officer says "good morning sir" and they exchange pleasantries. The officer observes the subject has his hands in his pockets and tells him, "sir takes your hands out of your pockets" The subject asks, "why?" "Take your hands out of your pockets sir," the officer demands again. The subject in a display of complete frustration, anxiety, non-compliance and contempt, starts to do what I describe as an Irish gig in the middle of the road all the while telling the officer; "here I am, here I am, shoot my F#\$%ing ass!"

This behavior continues for 30 seconds, and then the subject approaches the officer exclaiming; "I am a F@#\$ing Vietnam combat veteran" as a struggle ensues. The subject is struck by the officer's impact weapon, only to walk away towards his vehicle and open the door. All the while the officer is ordering him to "get back", "get back," "sir, get back" "sir get back here to me!" The subject is standing at the operator's driver's side door leaning inside while retrieving something. The officer is keeping his distance and giving orders to get back. The officer notices the subject has a long gun (M-1 carbine) in his hand and orders him "sir put the gun down." He radios for back up and continues to tell the subject, "sir put the gun down," "put it down now sir." The subject shouts back an emphatic "NO!"

The officer continues several more times to order the subject to put the gun down, and then they exchange shots. The subject fires suppressive fire to keep the officer at bay while moving to avoid the officer's shots and close the distance. The officer and subject continue to exchange gun fire until the subject's rounds finally strike. While the young officer is struck he continues to order the subject to put the gun down. The officer continues the fight and hits the subject center mass, but the subject is able to reload his firearm. After the subject has reloaded, he shoots while moving and kills the young officer on the roadside. He then walks towards his personal vehicle shouting "mother f@#\$er!"

¹⁰ Vandergriff, Donald (RET MAJ U.S. Army) How to Create Adaptive Leaders, How to teach-facilitate-mentor, Handbook For Instruction of Adaptive Leaders (2005)

In the end 60 rounds exchanged—33 by the subject and 27 by the officer—the Subject hit the officer a total of ten times and the officer struck the subject once. The young officer involved died at the scene. The subject escaped and was apprehended the next day.

This video I use for training has a powerful affect on me and the officers of law enforcement and security. This incident is a catalyst for my research on decision making. The lessons are plentiful, but I focus on the decision-making. Keep in mind the review of this incident is for learning lessons and in no way is meant to dishonor the memory of a fallen brother officer. Any given day it could be one of us due to lack of decisive decision-making.

In my view this incident was about decision making or lack thereof decision making, despite all the physical aspects of conflict that unfolded. At the core of this incident was not making decisions and seizing the initiative. This is an example of where rapid intuitive decision making could have, should have and would have ended in the favor of the officer. Why? What made him indecisive and therefore ineffective in this case?

Take a look at this fact; from the time the rifle was first seen to the first round being fired was 30 seconds. 30 seconds does not seem like a very long time, but in a hostile situation that is a lifetime. It is important when reviewing this incident and the decisions involved not getting lost in the gun fight. It should have never got that far. Lets break this down so we can see the importance of understanding the decision making process based on experience gathered in this line of work.

The subject was stopped for speeding, once stopped he exits his vehicle, which agree or disagree with is common practice known as a walk back in this part of the country. Once the conversation ensues and the request for the subject to remove his hands from his pockets ends in a diatribe of unusual behavior i.e. Irish gig in roadway, shouting "here I am", "here I am", "shoot my f@#\$ing ass!" turns to an assault on the officer from which the subject walks away. Intuitively the officer mind should have been screaming "BOLD action is required." Bold action translates into several options, (1) I cannot not handle this guy alone, he is too strong. I must disengage and regroup with back-up. (2) I can handle him physically and I must use reasonable and necessary force to control the subject. I must act now and choose one of the two options before the situation escalates out of control (i.e., gun appears).

Then the subject walks to his vehicle, retrieves, readies a rifle and after several orders to put the weapon down, refuses and assaults the officer with lethal force. Again bold action is required: (1) close distance with subject while he is in the process of readying the weapon and if he does not comply deadly force would be reasonable and necessary. (2) Seek cover and engage with deadly force. (3) Drive into, the non-compliant tactical advantage seeking and escalating to the imminent threat of deadly force subject. (4) Disengage from the suspect to a safe cover location remembering rifle verses pistol gives advantage to the subject. Continue to monitor with available resources, insuring public safety. Then a more detailed explicit plan can be implemented.

Why was he indecisive? We will never know for sure, what the young officer was thinking but, I have listened to various responses from veteran officers involved in trying circumstances. They list: poor training, liability concerns, no leadership backing, no community backing, never thought it would happen to him (complacency), reluctance in taking a human life, being disciplined for using force etc. These are few of the most common responses I have heard and discussed as factors surrounding indecisiveness. What

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Klein and Vandergriff have discovered through hundreds of observations of and the study of decision making in complex environments, is that people fail because they have not been prepared properly for this situation. What we consider as conventional training does not fit the bill.

The training aspect we will discuss below but the other responses listed as factors in indecisiveness are all part of what's known as friction - *"Everything is very simple in war, but the simplest thing is difficult."* (Graham, 1873) In the decision making aspect of conflict, any unthought-of, unresolved issues or concerns will slow the decision making cycle down, in an attempt to analyze these issues in the midst of a crisis situation, causing an overload of the senses and indecisiveness.

Under pressure and the survival stress response, kicks in. An automatic response takes place, shifting thought, from the frontal lobe (analytical thinking) to mid-brain (intuitive thinking). According to Vandergriff it is not automatic, just faster, and conditioned through doing many complex scenarios none of which were the same (each followed by constructive feedback sessions called After Action Reviews or AARs). A high stress situation causes chemical changes in the brain that cause you to think and act differently than when under normal conditions. Most of those involved in traumatic situations give little or no thought to their behavior; they instinctively do what their experience has programmed them to do, through education, training and preparation. In this scenario it appears as though the young officer is over thinking the issue and hence he is confused and indecisive. He is unable to adapt in time to take effective action.

The ability to adapt to changing conditions in rapidly changing conditions and seize the initiative requires the ability to think on your feet. "Adaptability is an effective change in response to an altered situation. Adaptability is not speed of reaction, but the slower, more deliberate processes associated with problem solving."¹¹ This is where the observation and the ongoing process, orientation phase of the Boyd Cycle come into play.

The young officer in this case should have been making the observations via all his senses including intuition, obviously he was seeing everything unfold, but he failed absorb the information effectively and orient to the magnitude of the threat unfolding in front of him. This caused a form of paralysis when the survival stress response instinctively kicked in. You might ask: "if it's instinctive, why did he not do something?" The answer is he did not and was not trained properly in rapid decision making (I use the word "and" because it is the responsibility of the individual and his or her organization to prepare them).

I do not attribute his indecisiveness to complacency in this case, because he initially appeared alert and aware ordering hands out of pockets etc in attempt to gain some semblance of control. Once the circumstances went outside the normal training of what he had received, he could not decide. This problem rests not with this young, conscientious and brave officer. Out of date training is prevalent in the law enforcement and security professions. Let me remind you, that there remains a place in our profession with what we call training. But, to just depend on it, puts us decades behind of what we now know about learning. We should do all we can to learn from this incident and others like it, in an effort

¹¹ Vandergriff, Donald (RET MAJ U.S. Army) How to Create Adaptive Leaders, How to teach-facilitate-mentor, Handbook For Instruction of Adaptive Leaders (2005)

to evolve and adapt our approach and response strategies and tactics. Training in decision making, specifically deciding under pressure should be a staple of training for all law enforcement and security officers.

The Winning Combination Gathering Explicit and Implicit Information

In the heat of a rapidly changing set of circumstances where risk is high it is imperative we process information implicitly via the Boyd Cycle if we are to gain the edge and seize the initiative. We also discuss situations where risk is low and time is prevalent for gathering detailed information and thoughtful analysis over time in an effort to implement whatever plan we wish to fit the circumstances or problem we are facing.

We talked a lot about the use of implicit information and rapid decision making and how there is no time for analytical processing of information. That is true in the spontaneous and unexpected circumstances our duties sometimes put us in. But what about when you're planning a dangerous mission, a high risk warrant services if in law enforcement or a response to an individual who may be potentially violent in the workplace if you're a security officer? Neither case has the individual involved forced anything dangerous and TIME is on your side.

In this type of situation you can take time and do a thorough background and intelligence investigation to learn all you can about the individual in question. After gathering and analyzing the information collected, you can notify in the case of security proper authorities such as law enforcement, employers in an effort to prepare a plan and intervene based on current practices. If law enforcement you can take precautions as well in calling out a highly trained response teams who are better equipped and prepared to handle the type of service required. You can put a detailed plan deciding when and where you want to put the plan into action. You can put all the right personnel in the right places before implementing any action. You can prepare by doing your homework and gathering all the explicit details, you can.

Once in place and the plan goes into action, and contact is made, the implicit side of the equation is back at the forefront because good plans should actually resemble biology instead of engineering. That is they should evolve. The preparation and planning cannot take into account the silent evidence, the thoughts and motivations going on in the mind of an adaptive individual with his own ideas and plans. Although the right personal development to include training in the Boyd Cycle, which leads to situational awareness and adaptation as long as the plan is allowed to evolve. So you must be prepared to adapt to the changing circumstances, only in this case you have all the tools and personnel on scene and ready to take whatever action is necessary based on the subject's response. This is the combination of explicit and implicit information gathering and both decision making models in an effort to give you every advantage in setting up the environment and individual for your success.

You can do this on the fly as well in a variety of circumstances by slowing down and utilizing if then thinking while in route to calls such as domestic violence call or an alarm. Use the time in route to the call for "if/then thinking" as it relates to your approach strategies such as; park down the street a few hundred yards and approach on foot to the alarm or domestic. You will be amazed at what more explicit information you can observe to improve your orientation of what's going on. We take too many "tactically troubled" short cuts in this profession and pay with the loss of life. Give yourself the advantages and set yourself up to

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respond. Let's stop mistaking good luck for good tactics and harness every possible way to adapt, learn and evolve in our abilities to make better decisions and hence more tactically savvy techniques that give us the edge we need.

Critical Decisions Making: Under Pressure

Part 3

Creating and Nurturing the Decision Making Environment

Complexity of Decisions

We discussed the Recognized Primed Decision Making and the importance of understanding and utilizing the Boyd Cycle to process implicit and explicit information in parts one and two of this article on critical decision making. In parts 1 and 2, we used several examples of where and how this applies to the everyday work we do. We also discussed two ways we process information analytically, when time is plenty and risk is lower, as well as intuitively made decisions when time is scarce and risk is high. This leads to an understanding that critical decisions can be complex especially in environments where there is conflict and competitive minds collide.

We often after a decision is made, struggle to explain our responses appropriately. Decision makers have problems articulating their decisions and actions. And those who review the decision, struggle to understand the action. This leads to unnecessary suspicion from investigators and frustration on the part of the decision maker. This fact creates problems in the individual decision maker, making future decisions, as well as effects the whole organizations decision making capabilities, why? There is confusion, uncertainty and mistrust over what is a good or bad decision. Officers are often told they made a bad decision, are disciplined over it and told to *"get out there and handle it right the next time."* No explanation as to why the decision was bad or how he/she may do it better, just get out there and do what's right! This is unacceptable, this creates friction, the slowing down of the decision making cycle, which is both dangerous and leads to an ineffective organization. Not acceptable in professions where life and death are part of the mix. We must seek more knowledge and understanding of how conflict unfolds and how we make decisions, if we are to be more effective at making and reviewing them.

We use *Complexity theory* in an effort to understand the dynamic nature of conflict and decision making. "Briefly put, complexity theory postulates how complex systems are capable of generating simple patterns, and conversely, how simple systems are capable of displaying complex behaviors." (Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War, 2006*)¹² We must have some understanding of complexity theory and how it relates to the complex nature of humans and human behavior in competitive environments, if we are to explain or gain understanding and comprehension of the environment, behaviors and events around us. "What's happening now?"

This definition of complexity fits perfectly in the world of law enforcement and security where rapid decisions making is necessary to fulfill our obligations to protect and serve the community or organization. To perform a decision in a competitive environment or, to understand what happened, if you are reviewing or investigating the circumstances surrounding a decision, you must take into consideration that conflict is a complex phenomenon full of uncertainties, and a vast array of other problematic factors that cause friction and slow decision making down. That small change in the individuals, the environment and in the situation itself can produce significantly larger outcomes, like winning or losing, life or death.

I want to focus on how we can effectively create an environment of good decision makers. An organization must develop sound decision makers in an environment that includes ongoing development through innovative training and the nurturing of strong character. Strength of character is the bedrock of rapid decision making.

Training

One of the best resources I have read on the training and leadership aspects of developing rapid decision making is Don Vandergriff's book; *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability in the Changing Face of War*. Vandergriff has spent years researching and fine tuning his methods of learning and education in the United States Army. His leadership model called Adaptive Leader Methodology (ALM) for developing rapid decision makers is now being accepted by the U.S. Army, specifically at the United States Military Academy at West Point New York in the Department of Military Instruction. After all is said and done what we do in rapidly changing circumstance is to think on our feet, "Adapt"!

Adaptability is defined as "an effective change in response to an altered situation. Adaptability is not speed of reaction, but the slower, more deliberate processes associated with problem solving." (Vandergriff, 2006)¹³ To be effective on the street you must be able to process information under pressure quickly but deliberately. Through continual development with varied scenarios and constant feedback from mentors, peers and instructors, people learn to pick up on signs and signals that signify change is taking place, and then be able to respond accordingly. The type of development Vandergriff speaks of enables an individual to synthesize multiple courses of action faster in a given situation, and then pick an appropriate one, then act on it. This is the orientation part of Boyd's OODA

¹² Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War, 2006*

¹³ Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War, 2006*

loop, and it is the most important part. Once an individual orients on the key aspect of what they have observed, then, decide and act parts become easier.

To meet and deal with the types of crime, crime problems, conventional and unconventional threats we face, we must develop and nurture mutual trust and strength of character with in our organization and community to make effective decisions, especially decisions under pressure. "Raising the Bar" describes key characteristics of adaptive individuals. Which I agree is critical to possess if we are to be successful and change the internal and external culture which affects how we respond and deal with the serious issues we all face.

Vandergriff's approach develops adaptability in leaders focusing on five areas:

Intuitive-this enables rapid decision-making without conscious awareness or effort;

Critical thinker- the ability to achieve understanding, evaluates viewpoints, and solves problems;

Creative Thinker-equally important, called *fingerspitzenfuhl* or the feeling in the tip of one's fingers (Napoleon called it a "gut" feeling);

Self-Aware-an understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses;

Social Skills-the ability, to assess people's strengths and weaknesses, the use of communication skills, and the art of listening

These characteristics are critical to being a good decision maker and adaptive individual. The characteristics listed above, have been talked about in the law enforcement and security professions for years. Let's develop and etch them at the forefront of our minds by conducting valuable training and setting high standards that focus on these characteristics. As mentioned above there have been efforts made in the area of cognitive/physical training which use force on force role plays, simunitions and simulators all great tools to enhance this effort. At the heart of all this training, or as Vandergriff says development, is the ability for instructors to facilitate the after action review after each event.

The problem we face in law enforcement and security is that the vast majority of officers do not receive the training due to budget constraints, short staffs and the nature of what we do (little time available), creating a shortfall on this great training reaching everyone who works the street. But the biggest obstacle to this type of development is cultural. Once again a *mindset shift* is needed in how and when we train to develop these characteristics and skills necessary. But, surprisingly, as advanced as Vandergriff's model appears to be, it requires little resources, just very good instructors who understand its principles and how to teach within the framework of Boyd's OODA loop.

Mindset Shift...Take Advantage of Time!

COL John Boyd described conflict as "time competitive" observation, orientation, decision and action cycles (Boyd, December 1986)¹⁴...discussed above in part 1. These time

¹⁴ Col Boyd, John, Patterns of Conflict

competitive cycles should also be considered in preparation for future encounters, taking advantage of available time on shift to train and develop decision makers.

Most agencies do not spend the time or money on training frontline personnel. Those agencies that do, send their personnel to training send them to a one day, two day, or week long training classes that use out of date methods of learning, i.e., competency theory focused on short term memorization presented using power point lectures etc. These types of training classes are good for short term accomplishment, and do not promote long term continued learning. Problem here is, two-fold (1) training is conducted with outdated learning models and (2) in most cases you cannot afford to send enough personnel to get an organizational benefit from the training. If your agency can afford it, and send everyone, you can only send, once, with no follow-up. Problem with this is, the skills learned; perish quickly due to lack of conditioning through repetitive training. The benefits of cognitive and physical training are perishable, so if we are to be successful in creating and nurturing these skills it takes repetition and constant work if there is to be any real long term benefits.

The *"shift of mindset"* comes into play when changing a culture. There are numerous examples of how this shift in culture can occur, such as take advantage of downtime during a working shift, such as roll call, to train. Extend roll calls or guard mount time by 15-20 minutes, use uncommitted time on the shift to conduct a mini-training scenario with Tactical Decision Games (TDGs). Another aspect is doing it during physical training. Vandergriff has written an entire annex in a handbook on how to develop adaptability while developing the physical aspect of our profession. Yes, some of this development is up to "individual initiative!"

Creating Decision Makers with Tactical Decision Games (TDGs)

Highly effective method of training that develops rapid decision making is a tool called the tactical decision game (TDG) or decision making exercise (DME). This is a critical piece of Vandergriff's training methodology with the military. He has achieved great results in using these games to develop decision makers who will demonstrate adaptability in combat. He has received great feedback from those serving overseas to the benefits of the TDG's in creating decision makers performing for high stakes and under high pressure.

Tactical decision games are situational exercises on paper representing a snap shot in time. A scenario is handed out that describes a problem related to your profession (law enforcement, security, military, business, etc). The facilitator sets a short time limit for you to come up with a solution to the problem presented. The TDGs can be conducted individually or in a group setting. As soon as time is up, with the facilitator using "time hacks", an individual or group is told to present their course of action. What you did and why? It is important that individuals or groups working together are candid and honest in their responses. You're only fooling yourself to do otherwise. The lesson learned from the TDGs can make you more effective and safe in the performance of your job. The time to develop the strength of character and the courage to make decisions comes here, in the training environment. Mistakes can be made here that do not cost a life and valuable lessons are learned.

The key here is the facilitator/instructor whose job it is to insure responses are brought out and lessons are learned from the scenario. This can be done while working. I know because

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we have used them on my department and I have used them training security companies. It takes some effort, but can indeed be done.

The TDGs are effective at developing decision making in the field. In the few years we used TDGs in the Walpole police department, officers went from the initial thought of what are we doing this for? To getting involved and discussing strategy and tactics necessary to resolving the problem faced in the TDG setting. This evolved to applying what was learned, to the street under pressure. Tactical response and approaches to calls, communications, utilization of tactical basics such as; contact/cover principle and cover and concealment, approach strategies, perimeter containment and overall officer safety improved greatly utilizing these short scenarios. Knowledge of laws and policy and procedure improved by utilizing decision making exercises to fit legal and policy questions.

This simple tool works and works well. I use the term simple tool but, make no mistake, its work implementing and conducting these exercises. Developing scenarios and insuring appropriate lessons are learned takes thought and innovation to insure proper training is taking place. The instructor/facilitator needs to understand his job, is to draw out answers, not give them out. I must emphasize this point because; I have made that mistake in conducting the exercises. The goal is to make "decision makers" and "innovators", not give answers, directions and create followers; we have enough of that in our professions already.

The TDGs are about developing individual, initiative driven frontline leaders who can make decisions that meet the mission of the agency. "TDGs are used to teach leaders how to think and to train and reinforce established ways of doing something, such as task training. The techniques can be traced back at least to the Chinese general and military theorist Sun Tzu, who was advocating their use more than 2,500 years ago." (Vandergriff, From Swift To Swiss Tactical Decision Games and Their Place in Military Education and Performance Improvement, 2006)

The decision making critique (DMC) or after action review (AAR) is another critical component to developing decision makers. The AAR is conducted after the decisions are made and discussed after student responses. This is where the instructor/facilitator again draws out lessons learned from the group critique. The facilitator keys on two aspects of the TDG, was the decision made in a timely manner? What was the rationale of the student or group in making their decision? As Vandergriff continues to drill into students that attend his workshop, "it is not about the tactics but the decisions" when facilitating the discussion of a TDG.

I have been asked how often you conduct the exercises. Keep in mind that the benefit of developing rapid decision makers comes from conditioning. Like anything else conditioning comes from repetition, but unlike task training (rote memorization), repetition means constantly changing the conditions while focusing on the five aspects of adaptability mentioned earlier. Realistically in an environment that has no specific training unit, and the person in charge of training has multiple tasks such as running daily operations, in charge of investigations, scheduling and frontline supervisory responsibilities it is challenging, but worth the effort to conduct these exercises. Here are some examples as to how a multi-tasking, understaffed agency can reap the benefits of conducting TDGs and developing adaptive personnel.

In our environment with shifts it's tough to do TDGs daily, although it can be done. If it gets demanding and busy on the shift you "ADAPT" and handle the necessary call for service,

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then when things slow down get back at the TDG (we now always have one ready "opportunity training"). The method used in my department was 1 game per month, 12 training evolutions that were not taught elsewhere with numerous lessons learned, from each TDG. The training objectives and lessons learned, did improve decision making and the tactical mindset of officers with just 12 TDGs conducted. There was a significant difference in responses to calls and how they were handled.

How to conduct TDGs

Here is an example of a TDG.

It is 1AM. You receive a dispatch reporting prisoner escaped in a marked police unit, with a fellow officer's gun. The suspect is a female emotionally disturbed prisoner who was returning after an evaluation from, the hospital transported by a fellow officer.

Ten (10) minutes later it's reported she has shown up at her sister's house that has custody of "her" child. She kidnaps her own child and shoots and kills sister's family dog. She leaves the scene and comes into contact with a fellow officer responding to the location.

She drives at a high rate of speed towards this officer, hits the driver's side door, officer jumped from and shoots at her but, misses. She continues to flee, crashes the car and then flees on foot with her child.

A search is commenced for 5 hours when she suddenly reappears in town, on the street, pointing the gun at police and her child who she is holding in her arms. She begins to laugh and taunt and makes statements "I will shoot you" and points the gun at those around, including her child and the news media that is on scene. From a car length away, you begin to negotiate. She then states I have ruined my life. You are fixing to work a murder suicide.

You then give instructions, how do you handle this situation? You have 30 second begin...

When the 30 seconds are up you pick individuals to give their responses. Get them up in front of the room (add a little pressure) and have them explain what they did and why. Do this individually with each participant. When all have completed get them as group to talk and critique each response. You will be amazed at what learning takes place.

You can also when time, is really tight do these TDGs in a group setting. Just give the group the scenario and begin a discussion as to how it's handled. This is again Adaptability, changes do to "time" constraints, and we get the lessons in. Our jobs are about change and adapting to those changes. Take advantage of the time you have to better prepare for the dynamic encounters we are faced with.

Our goal should be to do more of this type of training. To take advantage of any down time available to get a TDG in, when staffed with appropriate numbers of properly trained instructors (minimum 1 per shift) you could easily do a game a week (52 per year) which would be, much more beneficial to all, individuals and agency. Take advantage of actual calls and the lessons learned from them by utilizing After Action Reviews, which in my mind is TDG in reverse. You actually made decisions and resolved the problem (real world lessons). There is no more valuable training evolution than to take actual experienced situation and break down the lessons learned and adapt the lessons to a future response...

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The TDGs work and work well at developing decision makers and enhancing knowledge from past training.

To bring the training program to an even higher level of learning programs of instruction should utilize the method, explained above, to build experiences, which turn into pattern recognition.

The full program s of instruction Vandergriff describes, consists of four primary pillars and includes the use of: (1) a case study learning method; (2) tactical decision games; (3) free play force on force exercises; and (4) feedback through the leader evaluation system.

This complete comprehensive program of instruction, unify the approaches above in accomplishing learning objectives, which include; Improving one's ability to make decisions quickly and effectively; Making sense of new situations, seeing patterns, and spotting opportunities and options that was not visible before; Becoming more comfortable in a variety of situations; Developing more advanced and ambitious tactics; and Becoming more familiar with weapons capabilities, employment techniques, and other technical details. (Vandergriff, Raising the Bar Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War, 2006) Start with the case studies and TDGs and build upon the program to develop the best decision makers we can. From TDGs, you move into a force on force training environment, but all are followed by a facilitated AAR. The cost of not doing so is too high!

Mutual Understanding Community/Protectors: Training Those We Serve

An important piece of decision making is the necessary element of being able to explain our decisions. Explain them to folks in the community or organization who may not have a good understanding as to how we decide under pressure. In this article we discussed intuitive decisions based on implicit information gathered in high risk, little time available scenarios. We understand it, we know what we did and why, but still we have a difficult time explaining it to the world sitting in review from behind the desk in a safe environment, with plenty of time, analyzing the circumstances with an analytical mind. And explicit answers to our decisions are sought.

Why do we have this problem and how do we make those who do not do, what we do, understand? Perceptions and orientation of what we do is based as Boyd has stated on, past experience, genetic heritage, cultural traditions, and unfolding circumstances. (Boyd, December 1986) People see things, as they, view the world. Based on what Boyd has stated here in regards to how we orient (perceive) the world. Can we expect the citizens, to understand and make an appropriate judgment of our actions if most of their perceptions, of what we do come from, the abstract world of media, news, movies, television and print? If decisions of our actions are based on something they heard that has never been disproved or they have never experienced, how do they begin to understand it, in a way that the silent evidence (thought process, decision making, survival stress, etc.) is considered in the process? Again the process should be training, training and being more open and honest as to, what we do and why we do it.

As a community and a law enforcement organization we say we want to see and get to know our officers, yet if they stop, get out of their cars and have a conversation with someone they are seen as goofing off and not working. If they are seen in their cars parked on the roadside or in a parking lot conducting surveillance or traffic duties again the

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inference is, they are goofing off. These examples seem and are simplistic, yet they result in complaints, complaint investigations and at times, reprimands of individual officers. Officers in turn begin to see the community, whether a city or town or the occupants of a facility, they protect, as fickle minded. The community sees officers as out of touch. Leadership, community or organizational, get wrapped up in the politics of this and in short a great divide is formed which leads to distrust on both sides, a sad reality for those on both sides of the coin which in the end leads to poor results.

To do the job at hand protecting and serving, it is pretty much understood that the community as a whole, after all the police and security are part of the community, they work in, and we must work together. To do this there must be a better understanding of what each role is and that role is actual mutual. The community wants to be safe and law enforcement and security roles, are to make it that way. We are on the same page. So how do we get to the same paragraph on the page?

Training, education and learning is the key to closing this divide. This is nothing new; it's been written and talked about in the law enforcement realm for more than 30 years. Although the foundation of experiential learning goes back centuries as Vandergriff explains in his research expounded upon in his article From Swift to Swiss Tactical Decision Games and Their Place in Military Education and Performance Improvement; *"in the late 1700s, Pestalozzi developed his theory that students would learn faster on their own if allowed to "experience the thing before they tried to give it a name." TDGs were used to sharpen students' decision-making skills and to provide a basis for evaluating them on their character."* I find it both fascinating and alarming us (law enforcement and security professions), are just recently beginning to conduct this type of training that's been around with documentation that it works and works well. A question of character and lack of knowledge seems to be the answer as to why we are not???

In fairness there has been a multitude of training classes on community oriented policing and problem oriented policing across the nation on the topic of building community trust. But not much of this training focuses on decision making under pressure in for example; use of force situations. Where training the population in use of force decision making has been conducted as in the LAPD program, there has been great results in bridging the divide between protection professionals and the community. It is a process of communicating and sharing information on both sides of the spectrum to help each understand what's expected and how we go about doing our jobs effectively.

We must continue to bridge this gap between protector and the citizenry by agencies offering more of this training, such as citizen's police academies, working with community groups, schools and things like Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC). In these groups all educate in their area of expertise, not to make experts, but to gain an understanding of what their goals and objectives are and then what methods are utilized in making decisions to help in understanding.

In the law enforcement and security fields we would put citizens and community leaders in circumstances we handle and have them role play them out. Or use TDGs to give them a feel for the types of decisions we make... Simple methods of education and learning, to bridge this gap which is critical if we want those to understand what it is we do and how we make decisions under pressure. This result in the community as a whole interested and involved and helps all understand the job we perform as well as the risks and consequences.

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Adapting to the changing conditions is what makes a true professional. Doing things the way we have always done them is fool hearted and unprofessional. On the other hand change for the sake of change is as well just as fool hearted, but effective change to meet the challenges that lay ahead and prepare all for both conventional and unconventional problems and threats, will take strength of character and leadership, leadership from; frontline personnel, mid-level supervisors and administrators, as well as community and local government leaders to reach these goals.

Leadership Roles in the Decision Making Process

The main component in the development of good decision makers falls on the individual and individual efforts. Yes, but the climate for this development comes from the top, in leadership. To achieve the results sought after, if we truly want to call ourselves professionals and prepare for the challenges we face in the future, leaders must LEAD. It is the Leader's role, to create and nurture the appropriate environment that emboldens decision makers. Leader development is two way, it falls on the individual, but the organization's leaders must set the conditions to encourage it. *"The aim of leadership is not merely to find and record failures in men, but to remove the cause of failure."* (W. Edwards Deming)

"Leadership can be described as a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective, and directs his or her organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent." (Vandergriff, Raising the Bar Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War, 2006)¹⁵ This is the definition we should subscribe to. However, all too often I have had both frontline personnel and managers tell me that this cannot be done. "This type of training and developing initiative driven personnel will cause more problems for departments and agencies in dealing with liability issues and complaints because control is lost." I wholeheartedly disagree with his sentiment.

The opposite is indeed the effect you get. This is not a free reign type of leadership. Matter of fact if done appropriately it will take more effort and time on your part as a leader, because you will be involved. Your training program will be enhanced and the learning that takes place unifies your agencies and all the individuals in it. How? Through the system described above which develops "mutual trust" throughout the organization because the focus is now on results. The "how to" is left to the individuals and the instructors. But a culture must exist to encourage what the Army calls outcome based training (Vandergriff Manning the Legions of the United States and Finding tomorrow's Centurians).

Mutual trust (unity) in turn allows individuals to think and innovate when solving problems, because they know it is what's expected. It's known by all, they will be held accountable for their actions good and bad. And those leaders will be there standing with them in the aftermath of a good or bad decision and that everything will be done to learn from and adapt the lessons too future operations.

If we expect frontline personnel to go out and deal with dangerous circumstances and resolve them, they must be insured leadership will be doing all they can do to develop, nurture and stand behind decisions made. Also be willing to except responsibility when things go wrong. The world we work in, is complex and chaotic yet in the vast majority of

¹⁵ Vandergriff, Raising the Bar Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War, 2006

situations we handle without drastic or tragic results. This is done with “very little training” in decision making. However in the less than one percent of the time for example a law enforcement officer uses force, leadership fails in backing an officer’s decision. Why? We could write another article on, politics, lack of knowledge in conflict, an unwillingness to take a stand on behalf of the decision maker, unwillingness to correct a obvious problem they observe, etc. etc. etc.

If you take on a leadership role, Then you must LEAD and have the strength of character to do what needs to be done in creating the appropriate environment. The single most reason for failure to make a decision I hear from those I train and speak with is “We will not get backed by our bosses!” These words are uttered not from the 10%, but from those who do care about what they do, yet feel for whatever reason they will not be backed after they have done what they have sworn or are duty bound to do in their efforts to resolve conflicts.

A leader’s role is to inspire others to complete the mission, whatever the mission is. It’s to develop unity and focus. It’s to hold themselves and others accountable for actions taken, rewarding good decisions and learning from and if warranted disciplining for bad decisions. This must be done fairly with integrity leading the way or we will not be prepared for the problems and threats that we will face. A leader’s role is to reduce friction in decision making of frontline personnel. Try it, I guarantee you will relish the benefits and results.

I would like to thank Don Vandergriff for all his insight and assistance into my writing this article. The numerous emails and phone calls interrupting his busy schedule, would be trying for most, yet Don always took the time to answer questions and give advice. Don you’re a true innovator and mentor. Many thanks.

Bio: Fred Leland is an active Lieutenant with the Walpole PD and a former United States Marine. He is an accomplished and accredited trainer with more than 28 years experience teaching law enforcement, military and security professionals. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy Class 216, where he specialized in terrorism related topics, leadership and management. He is currently an instructor for the Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee where he teaches decision making, use of force, terrorism, leadership and incident command to veteran law enforcement officers. His specialties are handling dynamic encounters, threat assessment, use of force, and decision making. Fred is a student of the late modern day Strategist COL John Boyd and the Ancient Strategist Sun Tzu. He founded Law Enforcement and Security Consulting, Inc (LESC) in 2006 with the focus of bringing these principles to law enforcement and security.

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