Fire leadership in a VUCA World

Newport Beach, CA
13 December, 2017
Have you ever been a part of something where you felt “This is where I belong; this is why I exist?”

A *Purpose* greater than self, an *Ethos* that challenged you to pursue what is right, over what is fast, easy or convenient?

Do you remember the *moment* that you realized you were part of something special?
First, what is a VUCA World?

- VUCA in the Fire Service

Studying Success, The Science of Elite Cultures

Five Keys to Leadership & Cultural Success in a VUCA World

- I. Something bigger than me
- II. How do you see it?
- III. Hero or farmer?
- IV. The flow of things
- V. Be deliberate

The Culture Crucible
VOLATILE: Subject to frequent, rapid and significant change.

- Exponentially accelerated change
- Unexpected and unstable
- Unknown duration of things

REQUIRES: Accelerated, distributed decision making based on vision, purpose and beliefs
UNCERTAIN: Where events and outcomes are unpredictable.

- The inability to know everything
- Lack of predictability
- High probability of low probability “surprise” events

REQUIRES: Greater understanding through curiosity, empathy and a growth mindset.
What is a VUCA World?
VUCA In the Fire Service

**COMPLEX:** Infinite number of issues and factors, some of which may be intricately interconnected.
- Hard to know where to start
- Never enough time to adequately analyze or evaluate

**REQUIRES:** A deliberate focus on simplification, intuition, and looking at things as part of a dynamic, interactive, interdependent system.
What is a VUCA World?

VUCA In the Fire Service

**AMBIGUOUS:** Lacking clarity and understanding of the situation.

- Hazy reality, leading to a potential for misreading situations
- Mixed meanings of conditions

**REQUIRES:** Agility – the ability to quickly adapt, make confident decisions, learn from falls, and move authority to where the information resides.
What is a VUCA World?

Things degrading focus and attention

- Divisive Politics
- Information Overload
- Global Terrorism
- Multi-Generational Workforce
- Artificial Intelligence
- Social Media
- Climate Change
What is a VUCA World?  
VUCA in the Fire Service

Stated Challenges:
- Lack of trust
- Lack of commitment
- Selfishness, focus on instant gratification
- Lack of engagement
- Sense of entitlement
- Lack of flexibility, no willingness to compromise
- Lack of emotional intelligence, especially empathy
- Information overload due to increasingly complex environment
- Lack of accountability (ownership)
- Too many policies and regulations
- Resistance to change
- Generational issues (communication, expectations, skills, values, etc.)
- Silver badge / Gold badge
- Black shirt / Blue shirt
- Fire house vs. Department chiefs
- “Do as I say, not as I do”
- “F*%in’ admins”

Do any of these exist within your department?
Studying Success
The Science of Elite Cultures
Studying Success
The Science of Elite Cultures

- Former Deputy Commandant of U.S. Military Academy at West Point
- Former Commandant of the Citadel
- Former Director, Leadership & Professional Development, U.S. Naval Academy
- Former Executive Director, Character & Leadership Development, U.S. Air Force Academy
- Former Deputy Director, Character & Leadership Development, U.S. Air Force Academy
- Former Commander all SEAL Teams on the East Coast
- Former Commander, Naval Special Warfare Center
- Adjunct Researcher for Rand Corporation
- Multiple Combat Commanders
- Multiple Recipients of the Legion of Merit
- Multiple Recipients of the Bronze Star for Valor
- Multiple Professors of Leadership
- Multiple Division I Collegiate Athletes
Decisions are driven by our limbic brain.

It has no capacity for language, and is primarily influenced by emotions.

Decisions like:
- Commitment
- Discretionary effort
- Trust
Studying Success
The Science of Elite Cultures

5 X Per Second:

Can I Risk Making Something I Value Vulnerable to Your Actions?
Principles consistently apply to:

- Special Operations & Elite Military Units
- Military Academies
- The Best Sports Teams
- The Best Gaming Designers
- The Best Musicians
- Top Musical Groups
- Elite Athletes
- Chess Masters
- Elite Scientists
- The Best Companies
- The Best Governments

...The Best Leaders
Five Keys to Leadership & Cultural Success in a VUCA World
Five Keys to Leadership & Cultural Success in a VUCA World

1. Something Bigger Than Me

**WHY we Exist**

**Purpose**

Inspire, empower and challenge leaders to develop and sustain elite cultures.

**Ethos**

Character
Empathy
Trust
Ownership
Learning
II. How do you see it?

- **FIXED MINDSET**
- **GROWTH MINDSET**

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5 Keys to Leadership & Cultural Success in a VUCA World

III. Hero or Farmer?
Four Keys to Leadership & Cultural Success in a VUCA World

IV. The Flow of Things

- Anxiety (Mistakes ... Disengagement)
- Boredom (Mistakes ... Disengagement)

Flow Zone

Degree of Challenge

Degree of Competence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliberate Practice: Elite Performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purposeful Practice: Good Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Naïve Practice: Low Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fixed Mindset: Minimal Performance</td>
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### Five Keys to Leadership & Cultural Success in a VUCA World

#### V. Be Deliberate

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<tr>
<th>Performance Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Well defined, aggressive goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Frequently in <em>flow</em></td>
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<td>- Full attention and conscious actions</td>
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<td>- Focused supervision of experts</td>
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<td>- Continuous improvement</td>
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<th>First Time</th>
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<td>- Effort until minimally adequate level of competence reached.</td>
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<td>- Try something once or twice, then quit.</td>
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<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Focus on goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Uses feedback to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Sometimes in <em>flow</em></td>
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<th>Years or Decades</th>
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The Tribe

The Culture Crucible
Where we are (Too often)

- Focused Connection
- Assumed Accountability
- Effective Communication
- Agile Execution

- Am I Safe?
- Do I Belong?
- Am I willing to risk making something I value vulnerable to your actions?
The Culture Crucible
Where we want to be (More Often)

STRENGTHENED THROUGH

The Decision Point

WHAT THE TRIBE GETS IN THE END

The Tribe

- Purpose & Ethos
- Growth Mindset
- Leader - Leader
- Flow
- Deliberate Practice

Forging Elite Cultures

- Am I Safe?
- Do I Belong?
- Am I willing to risk making something I value, vulnerable to your actions?

- Focused Connection
- Assumed Accountability
- Effective Communication
- Agile Execution

VUCA

- Character
- Empathy
- Trust
- Ownership
- Learning

The Culture Crucible©
The Strength of the Tribe

The tribe exists around a common sense of purpose, values and beliefs. Comprised of family, friends or teammates, tribe members will do anything for one other; each member owning a little more than their share of every task, mission or relationship. They are loyal, loving and honest, enjoying the feeling of being and working together.

They watch each others’ back and they will kick each other in the butt. They care about and are willing to challenge each other in pursuit of purpose and excellence.

The strength of the tribe is the individual, the strength of the individual is the tribe.

The tribe consists of people that you want to work, play and grow old with. And by sharing experiences of great challenge, deep caring, and amazing accomplishment, the tribes’ bond stays strong.

The tribe is where we all belong.
Your Journey Continues...