Flow-Based Leadership

What the Best Firefighters Can Teach You About Leadership and Making Hard Decisions

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Introduction

- Background
- Flow defined
- High reliability organizations
- Flow-based leadership model
- Implementing a flow-based organization

About Dr. Judy
How I Arrived in the Fire Service

What is Flow?

- Clear goals
- Opportunities for decisive action
- Merging of awareness and action
- Concentration on the task at hand
- Sense of control and confidence
- Loss of sense of self
- Temporal distortion
- Autotelic experience

How Flow Works
How Group Flow Works

- VUCA = Emergent
- Fluid leadership = Dynamic subordination
- Consciousness = Ability to "flip the switch"
- Shutting off the self to merge with the team
- Every action, no matter how tiny, has an impact on the dynamics of the system
- The collective is enfolded within the individual and the individual within the collective

Flow and Decision Making

- High cognitive ability
- Low inhibition
- High emotional intelligence

High Reliability Organizations

- Training and preparation
- Performing at maximum capacity in emergent situations and environments
- Anticipating "unexpected" problems
  - Preoccupation with failure
  - Reluctance to simplify
  - Sensitivity to operations
- Containing "unexpected" problems
- Commitment to resilience
- Deference to expertise
- Remaining mindful
Operationalizing an HRO Culture

- Leadership begins with individual choice
- Individual mindfulness champions mindful behavior
- Culture is knowing and sense-making
- Culture change is often born out of tragedy

Georgia Smoke Diver

What is Flow-based Leadership?
Lead by Example

Leaders of Equals

Communicate
- Vision
- Mission
- Creed
- Core Values
- Processes and procedures
- Real-time communication
  - Instructions
  - Internal notifications
  - Changes in plans
  - Praise or correction
  - External communication
The Georgia Smoke Diver Mission

To prevent death and injury by training firefighters to be adaptable and to develop critical decision making skills in high stress environments.

The Georgia Smoke Diver Creed

Nuts and Bolts (Core Values)

- Competence
- Honor
- Integrity
- Excellence
- Mental Toughness
- Passion
- Commitment
Commitment to a Stable Infrastructure

Bind the Group with Ritual, Storytelling, Knowledge Sharing, and Collaboration

Honor Individual Creativity
Flow-based Leadership
STC Leadership Conference

Use Positive Motivation Techniques

Building Cathedrals: Facilitate Team Flow

How this Relates to Leadership in STC

- Meeting downstream communication challenges
- Meeting challenges from rapidly emerging scenarios
- Facilitating proactive approach to changing environment
Meeting Downstream Communication Challenges

- Communicate clear goals
- Monitor execution
- Expect accountability at all levels
- Ensure organizational alignment
- Be ready to shift focus and communicate that shift, while remaining true to the plan, as the world changes

Meeting Challenges from Rapid Growth and Emergent Situations

- Be aware of the formation of communication silos
- Nurture open communication to avoid the evolution of a "political culture"
- Allow input from your people to keep your processes efficient
- Keep your technology current

Being Proactive

- Have a strategic plan in place (for yourself and your organization)
- Plan for unexpected technology malfunctions and resource issues
- Make sure your people have the training they need to be effective
- Document and communicate your processes and procedures
- Cultivate self-awareness and the ability to remain calm in rapidly emerging situations
- Grow the next generation of leaders, while honoring the knowledge and wisdom of those who came before
Csikszentmihalyi's Transformation into Flow

- Unselfconscious self-assurance
- Focusing attention on the world
- The discovery of new solutions while focusing attention on obstacles to reaching goals

Strategies for Maximizing Flow States

- To minimize anxiety and resulting stress, employ ARSENAL™
- ARSENAL strategies enable the ability to concentrate on the task at hand
- Feeling good and rested enhance the feeling of confidence
- The right training and experience enable decisions to come easily
- Awareness is the first strategy

Choose to be Happy
Work Hard / Have Fun

Be Prepared / Practice Your Craft

Hang on to Your “Swim Buddy”
Rest When You Get Tired

Take Time to Meditate

Teach and Mentor Others
Foster Community

Anticipation and containment principles
Conscious FLOW-based leadership
Consistent communication: The key to awareness and mindfulness
Using history and ritual to bind the group
Facilitating individual and team success

Celebrate Success!

Georgia Smoke Divers

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References


Conclusion

Preparing Leadership for the Unexpected Challenges in Today's Volatile Business Environment

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