

Wisdom and the corporate world

Wisdom - Intuition based navigation thru chaos

Background

Corporate management at all levels is a decision making rich environment. Many of the decision made in this environment, although smart may not be wise. We often find ourselves asking "what were they thinking when they did this" about a situation we are left with by our predecessors. History provides us with a wealth of case studies to show both good and bad examples. Wisdom can and should be practiced by all but mostly by those who's decision making quality impacts the lives of others, Leaders.

Who is a wise leader (if there such a thing)? What is a wise decision? What are the makings of a wise leadership? Where can it be found? What is the correlation between wisdom and success? How do we teach wisdom (is it an acquired skill)?

Goal

This paper attempts to describe leadership wisdom and ways of developing wise leaders by examining factors impacting patterns of decision making in order to understand how its created and how it can be reproduced using the military as a case study.

Assumptions:

1. Wisdom definitions are related to circumstances such as time, space, culture and the yardstick – method of measurement.
2. Wisdom is a personal acquired quality that allows some people to sometime have the intuitive ability to navigate thru chaos.

One definition of ***intuition*** is the ability to understand and make the right decisions without the need for extensive comparison of options. On definition of ***navigate*** is to identify and take the path to a desired outcome beyond the horizon. That desired outcome would be the ***vision***.

It would be required to navigate in to the future thru the chaos - One definition of chaos is that dynamical system such as life or war are impacted by a vast number of minute details that it is impossible for a human to compare all the options, predict the outcome and choose the correct one. Therefor it is the leadership wisdom that set the direction. It is borderline prophecy.

3. Defining Wisdom is a review of past actions and evaluation of their contribution to secure survivability by looking at the leader's:
 - a. Actions compatible with decisions that stem from the ability to see beyond the horizon,
 - b. Vision (how would this future look),
 - c. Innovation,
 - d. Experience, that is based on combining diverse knowledge,
 - e. Sticking to core values that take into consideration far reaching consequences.
4. Wisdom requires an action that its consequences will only be seen beyond the person's horizon can imply great ego, wisdom or both) it also requires a high degree of emotional control.
5. As all decisions are made based on limited information under current day restrictions and the constraints of time it is the x factor that make them wise or not. That x factor is the decision maker's *intuitive ability to navigate thru chaos – the leader's Wisdom.*

A wisdom yardstick – using the definitions of wisdom to evaluate events, the considerations for the decisions that led to them and rate their wisdom.

In most cases wisdom can only be measured by comparison to the road not taken, a speculation of what would happen had we taken a different path or comparison to others that have taken a different route. In both cases the comparison is speculative at best as the chaotic amount of circumstances options and details prevent us from getting a reliable answer.

A look at a path to wisdom – leadership creation the in the military as case study.

As stated, if wisdom is attributed to an act by reflecting on the past now comes the question of how we predict what are the qualities of wise decision makers. As most decision makers have achieved the state of wisdom thru a process (Intuition based navigation thru chaos) we would attribute it to the success of the process.

There is an inherent conflict in the process of reaching the wisdom state as wise decisions are made by experienced leaders. The process of gaining experience includes a learning curve - that includes trying, learning what works and what doesn't – *ailing*, and learning from it.

One winning formula to address this process is a combination of:

1. Starting off with a “large” bank of candidates, continues education,
2. On going screening & selection,
3. Mentoring,
4. Training,
5. Allowing trail & error and,
6. Instilling and validating that the loyalty and core values (tribe, state, military or company) are ingrained in the leader’s soul so he always strives to secure the survivability of the organization.

Great commitment, investment and continuity is required for the success of this program.

The military’s deliberate way of creating wise leaders has a key ingredient for success. The acknowledgment of the presence of failure. It could be argued that the military’s goal is leadership creation and not wisdom. I agree that at the lower levels it is true but as the successful leaders climb to the top it is more the wisdom than the leadership quality that are sought after tested and refined.

1. By continuously screening its future leaders for the making of a leader - Character, personality, charisma, core values and technical leadership skills. That is the threshold.
2. By the right combination of many levels of education at the right time, fieldwork, staff work and training.
3. By longevity in the system that allows:
 - a. Diversified exposure to events and situations,
 - b. Exposure and continues testing of their inner working to insure their core values are solid.
 - c. Strong identification with the organization and commitment to its future.
 - d. The ability to identify the ones who possess the relevant intuition and have perfected it. The ones who see beyond the tool of systematic processes and use it to leverage innovation.
 - e. Be judged in the long term based on track record not just based on one immediate success.
 - f. Be allowed to evolve.

Longevity is a risky investment with great benefits. Risky because:

1. Not all participants in the program graduate.
2. It is an expensive program.

3. Like any other great idea if not carefully controlled it can backfire with deadly effects.
4. Those who do not rise to the level of wise leaders but the organization fails to remove cling to the process (which is only a tool) and drive the organization to mediocrity and destruction.

One example of military deliberate leadership and wisdom creation is Gen. Mark A. Welsh III. Chief of the USAF. He is the first of his peers but likely a typical product of the system that build him and the likes of him. When the time comes there will be a cadre of Mark Welshes to choos from.

General Welsh was born in San Antonio, Texas. He entered the Air Force in June 1976 as a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy. He has been assigned to numerous operational, command and staff positions. Prior to his current position, he was Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

The Gen. Welsh Path

EDUCATION

1976 Bachelor of Science degree, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.

1984 Squadron Officer School,

1986 Air Command and Staff College,

1987 Master of Science degree in computer resource management, Webster University

1988 Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

1990 Air War College,

1993 National War College, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.

1995 Fellow, Seminar XXI, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge

1998 Fellow, National Security Studies Program, John Hopkins University,

1999 Fellow, Ukrainian Security Studies, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

2002 The General Manager Program, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

2009 Fellow, Pinnacle Course, National Defense University, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.

2009 Leadership at the Peak, Center for Creative Leadership,, Colo.

*USAF Chief of Staff web site

ASSIGNMENTS

August 1976 - July 1977, Student, undergraduate pilot training,
July 1977 - January 1981, T-37 Instructor Pilot and class commander,
January 1981 - May 1981, Student, fighter lead-in training, Holloman AFB, N.M.

May 1981 - August 1981, Student, A-10 training, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

August 1981 - May 1984, Instructor pilot, Flight Commander

May 1984 - June 1987, Commander, Cadet Squadron

June 1987 - June 1988, Student, Army Command and General Staff College,

June 1988 - October 1988, Student, F-16 conversion training, Luke AFB, Ariz.

October 1988 - July 1992, Operations Officer, 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron, later, Commander, 4th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Hill AFB, Utah

10. July 1992 - June 1993, Student, National War College,

June 1993 - June 1995, Chief, Defense and Space Operations Division,

June 1995 - April 1997, Commander, 347th Operations Group, Moody AFB,

April 1997 - June 1998, Commander, 8th Fighter Wing, Kunsan Air Base,

June 1998 - June 1999, Commander, College of Aerospace Doctrine

June 1999 - September 2001, Commandant of Cadets and Commander, 34th Training Wing, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.

September 2001 - April 2003, Director of Plans and Programs,

April 2003 - June 2005, Director of Global Power Programs,

June 2005 - June 2007, Deputy Commander, Joint Functional Component Command

July 2007 - August 2008, Vice Commander, Air Education and Training Command,

August 2008 - December 2010, Associate Director of the Central Intelligence Agency

December 2010 - July 2012, Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe;

Commander,

August 2012 - present, Chief of Staff, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

D.C.

SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS

1. June 1993 - June 1995, Chief, Defense and Space Operations Division, Operations Directorate (J3), Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., as a lieutenant colonel and a colonel
2. June 2005 - June 2007, Deputy Commander, Joint Functional Component Command for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, U.S. Strategic Command, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C., as a major general
3. August 2008 - December 2010, Associate Director for Military Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C., as a major general and a lieutenant general
4. December 2010 - July 2012, Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe; Commander, Air Component Command, Ramstein Air Base; and Director, Joint Air Power Competency Center, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, as a general

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When the time comes there will be a cadre of “*Mark Welshes*” to choose from.

4. It took many levels of leadership to create the atomic bomb option in 1944. Was this the wise option to use in order to bring the Japanese empire to its knees? The generals told the president that its one million soldiers dead or an atomic bomb. Well, when you put it like that the answer is easy.
5. The Israelites basically just wanted Pharaoh off their back and argued Moses's "wisdom" ("why did you bring us to the desert to die"?) walking thru the desert. I personally, thank him and the Almighty for doing so. He knew why!
6. The founding fathers of New York city procured (200 years ago) vast watershed areas in the Catskills to secure the water supply to the city. Talk about applied vision = wisdom.
7. In the presentation I sent you there is a slide that includes the principles of war. A set of values to plan by. After you are done planning you test it's compatibility to the values. I think it is best to apply that method by using a set of key words and definitions to fill the toolbox of wisdom.
8. Since wisdom is a lofty dimension it might be necessary to test past wisdom, understand how it came to be, how deliberate the process was.
9. The ability to look into a dimension beyond the long term. So far into the future that it is a combination of vision and prophecy and explain it.
10. Sensitivity to feel, interpret, and act on near chaotic minute signs.
- 11.
12. Strict loyalty to the core values.
- 13.
14. Exceptional situational awareness.
- 15.
16. The ability (history of) to apply the tools of the trade to the right extent. How far to push? when to stop? What to push?
- 17.
18. A perfect sense of timing.
- 19.
20. The courage to identify mistakes admit and investigate.

21.

22. A history of failures and a track record of learning and improving.

23.

24. Resilience.

25.

26. One way the military deals with prepping leaders is multi layer stepped grooming.

Get evaluated, get certified, get an entry level job, get a secondary level job, go to the next level education and so on. As you move up you start mentoring as well (an experience in itself). This process is aimed to produce a flow of people in different levels and stages possessing a strong SOB(Sense Of Belonging (if you don't mind the acronym),

