



## U.S. NAVY SHIP



## Unleashing the Talent of a Military Crew

By Hoke Rose

### The Job To Be Done

Naval leaders must always consider two sides of “Mission Accomplishment,” namely, sustaining operational readiness *and* taking care of their Sailors, Marines and families. While most leaders “speak” to this promise, many do not invest their time and other capital into the development of their Sailors.

One ship captain in the U.S. Navy inherited a culture of mistrust when he took the helm of his ship in the summer of 2007. He had a substantive and deeply rooted problem: broken trust between khaki leadership and the deck-plate Sailors. “Khaki walls” kept communication stifled, and a win-lose culture was evident. Alcohol-related incidents and other Sailor misconduct were rampant. Attrition was the worst among this particular class of ship and retention was near the bottom compared to similar vessels.

The captain bet on both a short-term and long-term strategy. Initially, he and his khaki leaders did due diligence on the immediate problems: tightening up the liberty policy, engaging the Chief’s Mess, and sending the consistently poor performers out of the Navy. Then he decided to make his gains “stick” and operationalize the Navy’s Core Values throughout the ranks. As he saw it, he needed a deliberate process to cascade his top goals down to every Sailor.

Furthermore, he needed to increase accountability so that the ship could maintain its operational edge *and* ensure that the Sailors consistently developed new skills by making weekly progress on their personal and professional goals.

### The Solution: A Deliberate Process to Move the Command Forward

Where did the captain start? First, he defined the execution gap between the Commander’s Intent (his goal line) and actual deck-plate behavior. The Commanding Officer’s (CO’s) Intent had three pillars:

- Take Care of the Ship
- Take Care of Ourselves and Our Shipmates
- Know Your Job

To eliminate the gap between intent and reality, the ship’s leaders launched the improvement program with FranklinCovey’s anonymous, on-line questionnaire, the Execution Quotient (xQ), a leader’s tool that measures a command’s capability to focus and execute its top priorities. Three hundred sixty three Sailors from Deck and Weapons Departments participated in the xQ census. See Figure 1 for the unimpressive results as of October 2007.

**Fig. 1**  
**The Ship's Execution Gaps, October 2007**

	<b>xQ Score</b> (0-100 scale)	<b>Top 10% of</b> <b>U.S. Military</b>
<b>Clarity:</b> Do we know the goals?	36	73
<b>Commitment:</b> Do we buy into the goals?	31	76
<b>Translation into Action:</b> Do we know what to do to achieve the goals?	30	72
<b>Enabling:</b> Do we take down barriers?	31	65
<b>Trust/Synergy:</b> Do we work together to arrive at better ways to achieve our goals?	24	69
<b>Accountability:</b> Do we account to each other for our commitments?	23	71

**Phase I.** After understanding where the strengths and weaknesses of the ship were based on the xQ scores, the captain then launched an effort to build trust through ship-wide leadership development and by defining a specific Code of Conduct (based on the Navy's Core Values) that would lead to personal and interpersonal effectiveness. Thirty-two top-performing khaki leaders underwent training to become certified facilitators for "Leadership 101," based on a Navy-customized version of the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. By the end of the ship's 2008 deployment, 2,543 Sailors (95 percent of the crew) had invested three days in exploring their personal decision-making process and setting personal and professional goals. Response to this process was overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, this process revitalized the mentoring program with several facilitators becoming trusted advisers to hundreds of Sailors.

**Phase II.** Next, the captain announced the performance gaps identified via the xQ and started an accountability process to close those gaps. As the crew began to renew itself in building greater trust around a specific, shared Code of Conduct, the CO began to work on the other execution gaps by deploying the *4 Disciplines of Execution* process. The process included:

1. Dramatically narrowing the focus of Commander's Intent by involving others in defining the most important performance gaps (up to three) that had to be immediately addressed in the form of goals to be accomplished and then aligning these goals with every department and division through a series of collaborative work sessions.
2. Identifying what the top performers were already doing to impact these goals, that is, creating a benchmark of behaviors and activities that predictably drive the best results on the ship.
3. Building a compelling scoreboard (goal progress information system) for the local teams to know if focusing on the best behaviors and activities that are already working, and if they are winning or losing. This knowledge connects each Sailor personally to the goals. It removes the mystery behind goal progress and helps inconsistent performers become more reliable.
4. Maintaining a weekly cadence of accountability from the CO to the newest reported deck-plate Sailor. Each week, every team of 8-10 Sailors was to meet with their leader for 20-30 minutes to account for their individual commitments and to support their shipmates in keeping their goal promises. This constant cadence of building habits of personal effectiveness became the heart of living by the ship's Code of Conduct.

**Fig. 2**  
**Ship's Execution Gap Closure Rate, September 2008**

	<b>xQ2 Sep 2008</b>	<b>% Improvement</b>
<b>Overall</b>	41	+ 41%
<b>Clarity:</b> Do we know the goals?	51	+ 42%
<b>Commitment:</b> Do we buy into the goals?	42	+ 35%
<b>Translation into Action:</b> Do we know what to do to achieve the goals?	41	+ 37%
<b>Enabling:</b> Do we take down barriers?	45	+ 45%
<b>Trust/Synergy:</b> Do we work together to arrive at better ways to achieve our goals?	35	+ 46%
<b>Accountability:</b> Do we account to each other for our commitments?	38	+ 65%

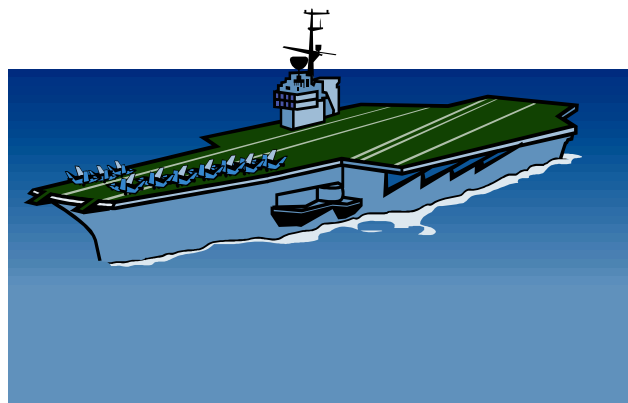
**Results After FranklinCovey Implementation**

After one year, the crew took a second xQ to see what improvement, if any, had been made. See Figure 2 for the positive result. Even by the end of the ship's 6-month deployment, the ship had achieved the following:

- 32.8 percent reduction in Non-Judicial Punishments (NJPs) over the previous year;
- 60.6 percent reduction in Alcohol-Related Incidents ;
- Four-fold increase in advanced education enrollment (from 184 to 749 Sailors) with a 98 percent completion rate;
- Two straight quarters of beating the Navy retention goal of 48 percent [67 percent in 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr and 52 percent in 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr] thus allowing the ship to fly the retention flag for the first time in 5 years. This compared to a meager 34.5 percent result for Calendar Year 2007. Year-over-year savings\* of retaining this additional top talent exceeded \$11 Million (or an additional 110 Sailors retained);
- Cross-Section Attrition Rate was reduced for three successive quarters from 9.3 percent to 6.0 percent to 2.0 percent. While the value is less attrition is difficult to measure, a 1 percent reduc-

tion indicates 17 more Sailors made it to EAOS (End of Active Obligated Service) than in the previous period. Other benefits included improved morale, less misconduct, and improved manpower readiness.

- Increased Physical Fitness Assessment scores and Examination Scores. 2008 scores showed the ship's Fitness scores had risen one category, and failures had been reduced by 40 percent. A substantive push had been made for study time, mock tests and mentoring which helped produce the improvements;
- Improved Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) scores.



## Future Capability/Sustainment (Leader Development and Execution Culture)

The ship now has 49 certified Leadership facilitators who will deliver continued leadership workshops to incoming personnel as part of their training program. Additionally, the ship has 18 certified Execution consultants who will continue to sharpen department and division performance goals (aligned to the CO's) and coach them on the weekly cadence of accountability process. The ship possesses a talented cadre of facilitators to sustain the process either in port or at sea.

**"When leaders, (and everyone is a leader on this ship), understand the goals and are able to articulate them, anything is possible." —Ship Captain**

In short, the chosen leadership responses initiated by the leaders have been successful in uplifting both morale and the command climate. As a result, levels of readiness and retention are rising while misconduct is sharply falling. The needs of the Sailors and the ship are being addressed, rendering results that every Commanding Officer desires.

The next challenge the ship faced was carrying the momentum the ship had built during deployment and sustaining it through the surge period. Then, the true test of the cultural changes came during the shipyard period (May-Oct 2009). Would the crew stay on schedule and ready to return to the fleet? By all accounts, the crew was ready to return, and the new culture remained in tact.

In summary, by the end of the study period encompassed in this case study, the crew was winning; the ship was ready; and the Navy was retaining top talent, thus proving that a command can win with all of its major stakeholders.

## Change of Command

In January 2010, the ship underwent a change of command. During the ceremonies, the Commanding Officer made the following summary of the post-shipyard period results of the FranklinCovey process:

### Results as Extracted from CO's Speech, January 2010

50 percent reduction in DUIs including one month of zero DUIs.

60 percent reduction in most cases (non-judicial hearings before a commanding officer) compared to the first three months of the command when there were over 60 cases a month.

20 percent reduction in Non-Judicial Punishments when compared to the previous Maintenance Availability.

Golden Anchor Award for 2008 for retention excellence—the first time the ship had received the award in 6 years.

185 percent increase in advanced education with over 700 Sailors enrolled in 2009.

Completed very successful 7-month deployment, meeting all mission requirements despite extremely challenging environmental conditions—and with no serious injuries or deaths.

Awarded the Admiral Flatley Memorial Award for Operational Safety, the Captain Edward F. Ney Award for food service excellence and the Franklin Covey Leadership Greatness award.

Finished maintenance availability on time, with a crew that is energized, has high morale and ready to finish training for a deployment in the near future.

"What did we learn? Stretch goals are achievable." ■

\*Savings based on 1% increased retention year-over-year = 4.25 Sailors X average \$100K investment per Sailor (\$30K out of Boot Camp and average \$70K for Schools).