

47. Risks From Fraternization (3:26)

So Russ, thanks very much for joining us today. I'm reflecting back on an essay that you wrote - a situation you encountered.

The situation happened literally when I was a three-month boot ensign. I reported to my unit which was in the shipyard in dry dock. One of my responsibilities was Damage Control officer for the aft damage control party. What happened it's a situation where my leadership qualities were in question I'm sure. I probably lost a lot of respect from the men.

We were having almost daily general quarters drills. One afternoon the general alarm sounded but there was no "This is a drill!" after they sounded the alarm. Some shipyard workers who were underneath the ship welding on the hull had accidentally ignited sludge in the in the bilge of the ship and started a fire. We went to our damage control stations.

We got the aft damage control party set and when it was time to open up the hatch, the situation turned because my lead hose nozzle man looked at me and said when the smoke and the heat was coming up he said, "Russ, you're not going to send me down there are you?"

You can imagine how that set me back. I don't know if I want to repeat the words on this recording as to what I said next but he came around and he followed out the orders and it was a good outcome from there.

That's the situation I was in and I realized that because the fire was out I had a lot of work to do and nothing to do with the fire.

How long did it take you to realize that you had to pivot on his hesitation? Ten seconds. Yeah five seconds. I realized right away when he said "Russ." My intent, when I started working with those guys, was to spend as much time as I could with them to learn the ship's systems, to learn the equipment capabilities and to learn their capabilities. I realized when he said "Russ" that I had gone way too far in spending too much time in a very casual setting.

My approach was to continue to do what my original intent was but to change my method. Instead of having these informal sessions with these guys, I started having formal training sessions and that turned things right around.

Related Primary Leadership Principles

Authority of Position	Team-Building	Courage
Decision-Making	Ability to Embrace Change	Political Savvy
Responsibility	Military Core Values	Field Presence
Discipline	Continual Learning	Expectations
Followership		