

87. Keep It Simple (2:51)

You were always probably a practitioner of 'Explain the Mission.'

Absolutely. In very simple words - loud and clear. Duplicate if necessary - probably more necessary than you would like but repeating things never hurt anything. You used to say - tell them what you're going to do, tell them what you're doing and then tell them what you just did.

I always felt the troops have a right to know exactly what you want done and in the simplest way you can explain it is the best way. They can usually understand it.

Do you have an opinion on people who don't do that? Well, yes I do. Did you have any leaders like that? I had the guy that was right ahead of me at Yorktown. His name was Art Hancock. He talked at such a high level that lots of times the people didn't know what he was talking about. He just used big words - long sentences. He was just a wonderful officer. I loved Art Hancock. He was a great leader from a standpoint of he was a good pilot, he took responsibility. But he just talked at too high a level.

I think he felt that it was showing his intellect and maybe it did but that wasn't what you need when you're trying to get people to do stuff. You need them to understand what you want them to do. So you tell them in a language that they understand.

Well there was one difference between Art and I - he talked intellectually above his troops sometimes and that was too bad. In fact I used to be his boss at headquarters and sometimes he would have a new idea and he'd call me up and he'd explain it to me and I'd say, "Art I don't understand what you're talking about. I mean I just don't see what you want." And then he would back off and restate some of his statements. And then, "Okay - now I'm beginning to see what you want." Lots of times I would agree to let him have what he wanted but I didn't understand it until he put it in the terms that I could understand.

And then that's what ...I may be a simple soul but it worked for me to keep the message simple.

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