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ABSTRACT (MAXIMUM 200 WORDS) All leaders can learn from historical cases and leadership change models when preparing to assume command of an organization that has suffered from toxic leadership. Once, the leader identifies the need for change, he or she can begin to enable a unit to recover from toxic leadership with the help of history and change theory models. Historical references provide ideas, methods, and examples of how the formidable task of course correcting an organization over a short time frame is obtainable. A list of common themes that leaders should consider emerges, and should be considered by all leaders wanting to better their units. This list is a list of what to do, not how to do it. After studying change theory and the practical application of change within an organization, it is apparent that there are common practices. These reoccurring themes are: build a coalition of influential people from within the organization and assess a vision for the future, develop a plan to achieve your vision and share that plan with everyone, empower subordinate and enable them to make changes, build trust across the organization, create visible and tangible successes in order to keep the change momentum going.					
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Toxic Leadership Recovery

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

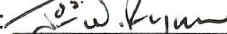
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

By

Major Michael J. Huber, US Army

AY 14-15

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: DR. Joseph W. Ryan

Approved: 

Date: 14 Apr 2015

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Anne Louise Antonoff

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Executive Summary

Title: Toxic Leadership Recovery

Author: Major Michael J. Huber, United States Army

Thesis: All leaders can learn from historical cases and leadership change models when preparing to assume command of an organization that has suffered from toxic leadership.

Discussion: Modern American commanders have very little time to adjust or change an organization while in command. If these commanders identify a need for change, they often feel successful if they are able to improve one or two minor things in the time that they are in command. Unfortunately, not all units are operating at the point in which minor “tweaking” is acceptable. Faced with the perils of assuming command following the relief of a toxic leader, new unit commanders may find themselves in a situation in which time is a commodity that they do not have. Challenges that a unit may have resulting from a toxic leader include a poor climate, culture, resistance to trust, resistance to participation, and an overall resistance to the day-to-day operations of an organization. Historical references provide ideas, methods, and examples of how the formidable task of course correcting an organization over a short time frame is obtainable. A list of common themes that leaders should consider emerges, and should be considered by all leaders wanting to better their units. This list is a list of what to do, not how to do it. After studying change theory and the practical application of change within an organization, it is apparent that there are common practices. These reoccurring themes are: build a coalition of influential people from within the organization and assess a vision for the future, develop a plan to achieve your vision and share that plan with everyone, empower subordinate and enable them to make changes, build trust across the organization, create visible and tangible successes in order to keep the change momentum going. The research and list of five common themes that are shared within provides a quick reference for how to accelerate and sustain change in an organization. However, only the leader and his team can know how to specifically unite, build, and develop their specific organization. These themes are not necessarily exclusive when attempting to change an organization that has suffered from toxic leadership; however, they are predicated on the fact that someone in the organization has identified that change is needed.

Conclusion: Once, the leader identifies the need for change, he or she can begin to enable a unit to recover from toxic leadership with the help of history and change theory models.

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Imagine having a supervisor who is destructive in nature. Your leader is mean, micromanages, only looks out for their own interests, is cruel, takes credit for others ideas, and makes poor decisions. You cannot quit or leave your job because you must serve through the remainder of your contract. Unfortunately, this type of leader is all too common, and they are referred to as “toxic leaders.” Toxic leaders can have a lasting impact on not only individuals, but also an entire organization. There are many challenges in a military leader’s career. One particularly difficult challenge over the past decade has been toxic leadership in military units. Army leaders, from the Secretary of the Army to majors attending the Army’s Command and General Staff College (CGSC), have made great effort in identifying, defining, and researching the effects that a toxic leader can have on both the individual and the collective military unit.

There is; however, very little study on how a new leader can restore performance and morale to the individual and unit after the toxic leader is removed. Despite the lack of thorough data on this topic, all leaders can learn from historical cases and leadership change models when preparing to assume command of an organization that has suffered from toxic leadership.

Modern American commanders have very little time to adjust or change an organization while in command. If these commanders identify a need for change, they often feel successful if they are able to improve one or two minor things in the time that they are in command. Unfortunately, not all units are operating at the point in which minor “tweaking” is acceptable. Faced with the perils of assuming command following the relief of a toxic leader, new unit commanders may find themselves in a situation in which time is a commodity that they do not have.

Challenges that a unit may have resulting from a toxic leader include a poor climate, culture, resistance to trust, resistance to participation, and an overall resistance to the day-to-day

operations of an organization. Adding to the complexity of the situation, and given the operational tempo of the modern military, addressing these challenges may be required while the unit is training and preparing for a deployment. In the worst-case scenario, these changes may be required when a unit is already deployed and conducting combat operations. If the organization requires change during a deployment, then there is additional risk involved. This risk can be partially contributed to the lack of family support structures present. Additional risk can also form from when changing the operational procedures of an organization that is engaged in combat (lives are on the line).

A recent example of how a toxic leader can effect an organization was published in *Stars and Stripes* on 24 February 2011. The Commander of the 172nd Infantry Brigade was relieved of command for having a “negative leadership style.”¹ During the investigation, his subordinates described their work environment as “six disparate units that were part of the same organization in name only,”² and an environment where everyone avoided contact with the brigade commander. One person went as far as to say, “Command relationships are abysmal and fractured beyond repair.”³ In military organizations, it is essential that units work together as a team to accomplish a mission, because often the missions are either too large for one unit to accomplish by itself, or the skills that one unit has requires additional skills from another unit.

As seen in the previous example of the 172nd Infantry Brigade, a toxic leader creates an environment that can have long lasting negative effects. At the individual level, Soldiers can become biased and anchor themselves towards a feeling of mistrust and complete lack of confidence in leadership at all levels. When soldiers lose trust and confidence in their leadership,

¹ Seth Robson, “Command climate under Zachar “toxic,” report says,” *Stars and Stripes*, February 24, 2011. <http://www.stripes.com/news/command-climate-under-zachar-toxic-report-says-1.135797/>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

they begin to lose their sense of urgency towards mission accomplishment. Soldiers begin to not only question the importance of a mission, but the validity of the orders they receive. In the military, the mission is the number one priority. If there is no sense of urgency to complete a mission, there is no reason to exist as a military unit. The loss in sense of urgency can often be traced back to a lack of trust in leaders. The effect a loss in urgency has on the individual soldier can have lasting negative impacts on not only that soldier, but also potentially, the future units, which that soldier is assigned. If the effects of a toxic leader on an individual are not corrected, they can potentially spread like a cancer to other units and leave an infection of mistrust across the Army. Under the previously mentioned case of the 172nd Infantry Brigade, the commander's leadership style caused teamwork within his brigade to erode. The loss of unit camaraderie resulted in the subordinate battalions operating not together, but as six independent organizations. This commander was in charge for a little over ten months, and in that time he had eroded the trust, cohesion, and teamwork of the entire brigade.

Ultimately, a toxic leader can be infectious, and the effects of one toxic leader can spread to other units at other installations. Overtime, without correction, the effect of one toxic leader can snowball across the entire Army. However, the spread of discontent and mistrust can be avoided if new leadership is able to regain the trust of the affected soldiers by restoring the soldier's sense of belonging. If the soldier's leadership does not regain this trust, the Soldier could decide to terminate his service to the country (upon completion of his commitment) or even worse, he could become a discipline problem. This behavior could be with the intention of subjecting himself to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) for no other reason than a release from their term of service due to disciplinary actions. The premature loss of any soldier

would be unfortunate because the Army would not be able to capitalize on the time and resources invested in training the soldier and that would be unfortunate and costly.

At the unit level, toxic leaders can also have a profound impact on morale and mission accomplishment. Random acts of indiscipline could begin to appear along with a reduction in unit morale. Low morale can become dangerous because it can lead to complacency, lack of motivation, a decrease in attention to detail, and a loss in a sense of purpose and belonging to a greater organization. The results of low morale could potentially cause harm or injury to individuals and effect mission accomplishment.

Despite the challenges associated with course correcting a military unit following the relief of a toxic leader, there are models that can help new leadership focus their efforts. These models are based on civilian organizational constructs; however, parallels in the hierarchical structure of the organizations can be found with military units, and the principles discussed in the models can be paralleled in the military. These models are designed to assist leaders to address, mitigate, and hopefully overcome the effects of toxic leadership on the individual and the unit. Leaders can use change theory models to expedite and implement the desired change, or they could look at leadership models and techniques to facilitate the change.

In addition to leveraging leadership models and change theory models to overcome time constraint, military leaders can also cultivate the lessons learned from historical reference to overcome time constraints. These lessons come in the form of techniques, practices, mindsets, principles, and leadership styles. Additionally, by learning how others have acted in similar situations, and learning the outcome of other's decisions, a new leader can make more informed and timely decisions. By incorporating leadership models, change theory models, and military historical reference, new leaders can help a unit recover from toxic leadership.

In the book, *The First 90 Days*, Michael Watkins, an Associate Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School addresses the importance of acting quickly in what he calls “windows of opportunity.”⁴ These windows of opportunity present themselves in the first ninety days of a new leader coming into an organization. Watkins presents the case that there are no universal rules or roadmaps for successfully transitioning an organization, and argues that it is critical that leaders properly diagnose the situation that the organization is in, and develop a proper plan of action in which the strategy for change matches the situation at hand.

Most important to his research is time. New leaders must accelerate their learning curve and rapidly reach “the point at which new leaders have contributed as much value to their organization as they have consumed from it,”⁵ known as the breakeven point. Only after a leader reaches the breakeven point are they a net contributor to the organization, and the organization is able to grow and take new form. Watkins surveyed 210 company CEOs and presidents, as to when they thought the breakeven point was. The average response was 6.2 months.⁶ Mr. Watkins research aims to reduce the amount of time that it takes new leaders to reach their breakeven point.

Rapidly reaching the breakeven point is critical for leaders in all military organizations, but especially critical for leaders who are arriving at an organization that has suffered from a toxic leader. Watkins provides a ten-step acceleration plan for leaders to optimize the time they have and fully capitalize on the ninety-day window of opportunity. His ten-step plan includes: promoting oneself, accelerating one’s learning, matching strategy to situation, securing early wins, negotiating success, achieving alignment, building one’s team, creating coalitions, keeping

⁴ Michael Watkins, *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2003), 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Watkins, 2.

one's balance, and expediting everyone. The ten steps that Watkins presents could be integrated into new leadership's plans and potentially help with developing a course of action for rapidly making changes to the troubled organization.

While Watkins focuses on the mechanical aspects of accelerating change in an organization, COL Wesley L. Fox considers the human aspects of effecting change and building trust. With over forty-three years in the U.S. Marine Corps, Colonel Fox is a well-respected leader in the military community. As a veteran of the Korean War and Medal of Honor recipient during his tour in Vietnam, Fox has much experience and wisdom in leadership. He sums up leadership by saying "If leadership isn't positive, it isn't leadership"⁷ In his book *Six Essential Elements of Leadership: Marine Corps Wisdom of a Medal of Honor Recipient*, he challenges leaders to have a positive impact on units through six essential elements: care, personality, knowledge, motivation, commitment, and communication.⁸ He eloquently captures in his book the essence of positive leadership and what is required to positively affect an organization. Fox believes without all six of these elements, it is impossible to positively lead an organization. During toxic leadership recovery, Fox's six elements should be used to reestablish leader-subordinate relationships. His six elements are critical to building and maintaining trust (a trust that had previously been eroded by a toxic leader) in an organization.

In addition to those of Watkins and Fox are many theories on leadership and change techniques. These theories can provide ideas and possibly lessons learned from other leaders. Three prominent models are James O'Toole's "Values Based Leadership,"⁹ John Kotter's "Eight

⁷ Wesley L Fox, *Six Essential Elements of Leadership: Marine Corps Wisdom of a Medal of Honor Recipient* (Naval Institute Press, 2011), ix.

⁸ Fox, vii.

⁹ James O'Toole, *Leading Change: The Argument for Values-Based Leadership* (New York: Ballantine books 1996)

Step Process of Creating Major Change,”¹⁰ and James Kouzes and Barry Posner’s “Five Fundamental Practices.”¹¹ These models all provide unique and interesting insights into the methods and techniques that could be used to overcome adverse and difficult leadership situations. Additionally, these methods address not only the traits that a leader needs to develop to tackle the challenges that he or she faces, but these models also address what actions a leader should take to rectify potential underlying issues to the problem at hand.

James O’Toole is a Rhodes Scholar, and was the Executive Vice President of the Aspin Institute, a non-partisan organization whose mission is to “foster leadership based on enduring values and provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues.”¹² In his book, *Leading Change: The Argument for Values Based Leadership*, O’Toole’s premise is that leaders fail to effect change not because they do not know what they are doing, but because of how they are trying to implement change. To him, the countless methods and models for how to lead are all viable and rational. The failure of leadership originates in the leaders values and how his/her values influence change. O’Toole makes the argument that, regardless of the method used or the change that is being made, people will inherently follow a leader who uses values that appeal to the group he or she is leading. Thus for an organization to change, a leader must change or incorporate new values appealing to the group as a whole. As an example, he cites the values of integrity, trust, listening, and respect of followers as the values that Americans expect out of their presidents.¹³ During toxic leadership recovery, O’Toole’s theories can help leaders to center their values and expectations around those in which the organization needs, and by doing so will be able to positively effect change in the organization.

¹⁰ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 22.

¹¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*. 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

¹² Aspin Institute, Home Page, last modified 2015, <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/>.

¹³ O’Toole, 19-33.

Another leader in the study and philosophy of change theory is John Kotter. Not only is Kotter a full professor at the Harvard School of Business, but he is also internationally known as the authority for leadership and change theory,¹⁴ and he is the foremost subject matter expert in organizational transformation. In his book *Leading Change*, Kotter provides an eight-stage process for creating major change within an organization. He believes that rapid change is possible in an organization if the leader and the organization have committed to these stages. He also believes that if the change attempted in an organization was difficult, painful, and not very successful, that these efforts often end up angering and disillusioning members.¹⁵ The members in the organization begin to lose faith in their leadership and begin to question whether or not the organization needs to change and if that change is even possible.¹⁶

Kotter believes that internal cultures are the principle reason behind why change does not occur in an organization. He asserts that institutional culture is a chief barrier to change, including “bureaucracy within the organization, politics, low level of trust, lack of team work, arrogant attitudes, a lack of leadership in middle management, and the general human fear of the unknown.”¹⁷ To overcome these internal challenges, Kotter developed his eight-stage process for change. The steps are: 1) Establishing a sense of urgency, 2) creating the guiding coalition, 3) developing a vision and strategy, 4) communicating the change vision, 5) empowering broad based action, 6) generating short-term wins, 7) consolidating gains and producing more change, and 8) anchoring new approaches in the culture.¹⁸ Change at all levels requires the organization

¹⁴ Kotter, 195.

¹⁵ Kotter, 19.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kotter, 22.

¹⁸ Kotter, 23.

to go through all the stages; however, some stages may be continuous or ongoing during other stages.¹⁹

During the first stage, establishing a sense of urgency, the new leader must quickly identify problems and opportunities. If he fails to do so, reform will stall. In the case of a new leader working through toxic leadership recovery, it is important to identify the impact his predecessor had on the organization, openly discuss those problems with the organization, and determine how to turn the problem areas into opportunities. Leaders must be able to learn about their organization and identify what the organization needs to change; all while building a team that will put in the extra work required, and making the changes that are needed. According to Kotter, a sense of urgency is critical in building cooperation.²⁰ If there is no urgency then the problems that were identified will continue and remain the status quo, and the opportunities for change will stall out and never be completed.

In stage two, creating the guiding coalition, Kotter asserts that no individual leader is capable of effecting change in an organization. He thinks that leaders must build a team or a coalition to carry the vision of organizational change through to completion. Kotter believes that the team does not have to be large or unwieldy; however, it must contain the appropriate people. These people need to have trust in each other, and conversely, other members of the organization must trust in them. In units that are enabling change in the midst of toxic leadership recovery, it is critical to identify not only leaders (Junior Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) but also to identify soldiers who are influential among their peers and bring them into the team. These soldiers will accelerate change as they have the trust of their peers.

¹⁹ Kotter, 25-26.

²⁰ Kotter, 37.

Stage three and four are developing a vision and strategy, and communicating the vision for change. Developing a vision and strategy is critical to reaching the desired end-state. The vision must be clear, sensible, understandable, desirable, feasible, and flexible. Communicating the vision is critical to accomplishing the desired change in the organization. To effectively communicate the vision, the vision must be out front, visible, and represent a large portion of the communications from leadership. The vision must be tied to all aspects of the organization. It is critical for leaders to exercise every possible means to communicate the vision. Examples could include: news articles, speeches, meetings, memos and training events. The key to success is repetition. It is particularly important to enabling the guiding coalition to communicate the vision across the entire organization. Kotter defines vision as “a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future.”²¹ He believes that the vision serves three purposes.

First, the vision identifies the general direction of the change. Second, the vision provides motivation. It pushes people to take action in the direction that the vision is guiding the organization. Third, the vision serves as a means to coordinate people within the organization towards a common goal. The vision is critical because people within the organization may have varying opinions on how the organization needs to change, or if it needs to change at all.²² The vision will alleviate any confusion for member of the organization as to the direction the organization is taking, as well as provide the reasons for the change.²³

For a military unit working through toxic leadership recovery, it is critical not only to develop the vision quickly, but also to spread the vision quickly. The vision could include training objectives, performance standards, maintenance objectives, or overall morale based

²¹ Kotter, 71.

²² Kotter, 71.

²³ Ibid.

desires. The vision should be directly related to the problem areas that were identified in stage one.

Stage five of the process is empowering broad based action. Kotter emphasizes that any change, especially a drastic change in an organization, can rarely occur unless the majority of the people in the organization help with that change.²⁴ The problem is that unless people believe that they have the power to help the process, they will not try to help. It is essential to empower all members of the organization to help and enable the change that will lead to the shared vision. According to Kotter, there are four major obstacles to empowerment: structures, skills, systems, and supervisors.²⁵ These obstacles habitually appear in organizations regardless of its form or function.

Empowering broad based action is a critical step for leaders to consider when the leader is in a military unit that is working through toxic leadership recovery. It is critical to identify and remove the obstacles remaining in the unit, attack them and eliminate them. These obstacles may include system or procedural based concerns, as well as training concerns. For example, the former (toxic leader) could have placed an arbitrary requirement on the process for leave approval. These requirements could include unrealistic time lines; such as requiring all leave forms to be turned in six weeks prior to the initiation of leave. Another example includes tying awards to rank. Both of these examples could have a negative effect on morale. The obstacles could be supervisor related. Supervisors could require additional or corrective training on leadership and or management skills, because of learned negative habits and from the previous (toxic) leader. Regardless of the issue or concern, it is incumbent on new leadership to identify

²⁴ Kotter, 105.

²⁵ Kotter, 106.

and eliminate the obstacles so that everyone in the organization can feel empowered and begin to work together towards a new vision.

The sixth step in the process is to generate short-term wins. This step is critical to sustaining momentum in the change process.²⁶ For units that are working through toxic leadership recovery, these short term wins can be in the form of training exercises where the unit had previously shown poor results, or in the form of unit cohesion events. Events including sports competitions with other units, family days, or even marriage retreats with the unit ministry team, if planned and resourced appropriately could help to build visible short-term wins. Other short-term wins could come from an increase in positive responses from surveys, or showing improvement at a training event that the unit had previously performed poorly. To subordinates, perhaps the most visible of changes occur when it effects them directly or they have had input on the change.

The seventh step in the process is consolidating gains and producing more change, and builds on the short-term wins that the organization achieved. This step is a refinement step. In this step, the guiding coalition takes advantage of the trust and credibility it has developed up to this point and uses it to address additional changes while continuing to refine the changes that have already been made.²⁷ It is also important in this step to reward outstanding performance, or bring new people into the organization if needed to promote additional change.²⁸ Reinvigorating the process with additional projects during this step is important to keep momentum towards the desired vision. For leaders who are working towards toxic leadership recovery of their unit, it is important to show the unit how far they have come and to reassess where the unit wants to go. It is critical to either create new projects to address areas of concern that were previously identified

²⁶ Kotter, 121-122.

²⁷ Kotter, 150.

²⁸ Kotter, 150.

and have not yet been addressed, or reassess and determine new projects that need to be initiated. These changes will build on the momentum already established and continue to push the unit towards the vision that was initially developed.

The last stage of Kotter's model is anchoring new approaches in the culture. This step completes the change to the organization. Capitalizing on the gains the organization has made, step eight asserts that the changes that were made have to be incorporated at the culture of the organization. These changes are now a learned behavior and need to be reinforced and trained to new members of the organization. Leaders and followers alike need to be indoctrinated into the new culture of the organization and be made aware of the link between the new status quo and the new success of the organization. In military units, this is accomplished through new standard operating procedures (SOPs), counseling's down to the lowest level, leader reinforcement, and rewards.

John Kotter's eight-stage process was designed for business management purposes; however, the process is relevant for military units. His research and methodologies can be very insightful for leaders that are working in organizations that are in the process of toxic leadership recovery. Kotter's method can help to accelerate the process and assist new unit leadership to provide results to both supervisors and subordinates alike.

Kotter's model for change would be a great tool for whomever replaces the 172nd Infantry Brigade Commander that was relieved. The new commander could leverage Kotter's model to implement change. He could utilize stages one through four of Kotter's model to reduce the negative effects that are still present in the organization after the removal of the previous commander. Stages five through seven would allow the new commander to introduce his/her new vision and begin to positively transform the unit. The final step, step eight, the new leader

would be able to finally integrate the changes into the culture of the organization. He/she will know when this has occurred when the elements from the new vision have become automatic and routine and the unit cannot imagine operating in any other manner.

After years of research, James Kouzes and Barry Posner present a different way to look at change theory in their book *The Leadership Challenge*. They use hard data from surveys conducted across 60,000+ leaders and followers to determine “how leaders can get extraordinary things done in an organization.”²⁹ Through their study of leadership, they developed the “Five Fundamental Practices of Exemplary Leadership.”³⁰ These practices are: challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart.³¹ They believe that when a leader exemplifies these practices, they will truly be able to get the most out of their organization. Where Kotter’s model is systems based and designed to accelerate change in an organization, Kouzes and Posner address the human aspect. Their practices are applicable to toxic leader recovery.

For the new commander of the 172nd Infantry Brigade, these steps could be invaluable in transforming the organization. The commander must be able to challenge the process or the status quo of what is going on in the brigade. It is imperative that the new commander change the daily business as usual practice of “avoiding the brigade commander,”³² and squash units not integrating and working together. He must look for opportunities to bring the subordinate organizations together and integrate them towards a common purpose.

²⁹ Kouzes, xvii.

³⁰ Kouzes, 8.

³¹ Kouzes, 9.

³² Robson.

Next, the commander needs to inspire a shared vision. To Kouzes and Posner, this vision is “a dream of what could be.”³³ For the new commander to inspire a shared vision, he must envision what he wants the future to look like and then backwards plan how to get there. In the case of the 172nd Infantry Brigade, the commander’s vision would be a cohesive brigade that is capable of seamlessly conducting integrated mission across the entire spectrum of operations. It is important for the commander to not only see the vision, but he must also communicate the vision using understandable language that is capable of igniting passion and desire to change in others.³⁴

When transforming an organization, it is critical to understand the leadership is not an individual sport, it is a team effort. It is critical for the new commander of the 172nd Infantry Brigade, as Kouzes and Posner phrase it “enable others to act.”³⁵ Similar to Kotter’s coalition, enabling others to act requires the inclusion of others in order to accomplish the change. It is vital to obtain the support of your subordinates and empower them to act and implement change. For the new commander, it is critical share the new vision with subordinates, receive feedback and discuss with the brigade that change is possible and obtainable if they all work together towards the shared vision.

Modeling the way is just that, leading by example. It is critical for the new commander to not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk. When discussing the vision for the future, and what is required, the commander must be present and visible at all times. He must be out front and build the trust and confidence of his subordinates. Like in Kotter’s model, during modeling

³³ Kouzes, 10.

³⁴ Kouzes, 11.

³⁵ Ibid.

the way, Kouzes and Posner suggest that the leaders need to concentrate effort on producing small wins so that members in the organization are confident that bigger changes are possible.³⁶

Much like Kotter, Kouzes and Posner realize that transforming an organization is a long process. To Kouzes and Posner, leaders must keep the process alive and not let the change process fizzle out. The Kouzes and Posner, leader encourage the hearts of their subordinates. Regardless of whether the encouragement is accomplished through simple gestures or dramatic deeds, it can go a long way towards keeping the organization headed for the vision. For the case of the new commander of the 172nd Infantry Brigade, the effects of the old commander could be long lasting and the road to the vision could even outlast the new commanders time in command. It is critical that the new commander provide enough the recognition and encouragement to subordinates to keep them going.

The previously listed models are all uniquely different, yet similar. They all challenge leaders to become the moral beacon in their organizations build trust and confidence between the leader and their followers, empower subordinates, and create acceptance of the shared vision. While these principles seem in theory to be common and easily executed, in practice they are difficult to do. Throughout history, many leaders have attempted to course correct organizations that have suffered from toxic leadership, and failed. However, leaders such as General Joseph Hooker, General Creighton Abrams, and General Matthew Ridgeway were able to successfully lead their organizations in a new direction. These leaders masterfully displayed the techniques that the previously mentioned models described.

General Joseph Hooker took command of the Army of the Potomac when it was at its lowest point for moral within the organization. His predecessor, General Ambrose Burnside, was only in command for two and a half months; however, under General Burnside the Army of

³⁶ Kouzes, 13.

the Potomac became corrupt and ineffective. He allowed his subordinate leaders to become uncontrollable and operate haphazardly. Unit morale was low and living conditions were unbearable. Low morale caused a decrease in motivation and a feeling of hopelessness spread across the Army of the Potomac.

The biggest challenge that General Hooker had to face was that of poor living conditions, poor leadership, and lack of pay. Hooker took a carrot and stick approach to solving the problem.³⁷ He developed many initiatives to bring soldiers back to their units, as well as to keep soldiers who were thinking about deserting from leaving. Working in conjunction with the president, Hooker worked with President Lincoln initiated a proclamation granting amnesty to all that had deserted. This amnesty would allow for no punishment other than loss of pay.³⁸ An additional carrot or privilege, which was provided by General Hooker, was the furlough policy. This allowed Soldiers to return home for a period to visit their families. Two men per company had their names drawn in a lottery and were allowed to go on furlough. The next two names were not drawn until the previous two men returned.³⁹ These two “carrots” resulted in desertion rates dropping from thirty percent down to four percent.⁴⁰

Another innovation that General Hooker used to overcome low morale and to build unit cohesion was the establishment of unit patches. These patches served the tactical purpose of enabling command and control at the division level. Additionally, the patches were designed to foster identity and *esprit de corps* in the units. Another visual symbol that was adopted simultaneously was the addition of campaign streamers to the unit flags. Regimental flags were

³⁷ Stephen W. Sears, *Chancellorsville* (New York: Mariner Books, 1996), 70.

³⁸ Sears, 70.

³⁹ Sears, 71.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

authorized to inscribe the names of the battles the regiment had fought.⁴¹ These symbols added a sense of pride and accomplishment to the regiment.

The most significant step that General Hooker took to rebuild his organization was to investigate and correct any allegations of injustice. General Hooker empowered his inspector generals to search out, find, and stop corruption.⁴² Through these investigations, Hooker discovered a great deal of corruption surrounding the manner in which his Army was cared for by his subordinates. He discovered and fixed discrepancies in hospital cleanliness, clothing and food issue, and overall camp sanitation. General Hooker addressed all of these issues, and by doing so, he exponentially increased unit moral. When unit morale was increased, so was the unit's allegiance to their leaders and to their mission. The increase in morale and allegiance to leadership increased the units overall ability to fight and win.

Facing both manning and leadership challenges, General Hooker quickly reorganized his units. He reorganizes from four Grand Divisions consisting of two Corps Headquarters each to eight separate Corps Headquarters that all report directly to Hooker. This reorganization is a direct result of the General's Revolt that resulted in the relief of General Burnside, his predecessor. During the General's Revolt, several of General Burnside's subordinate generals had lost faith in his ability to lead the Army of the Potomac, and pleaded to President Lincoln for his dismissal. General Hooker was aware of whom these Generals were and identified that he had leaders of "evil genius"⁴³ in charge of his units due to their involvement in the General's Revolt. He was faced with needing to replace three of his four Grand Division commanders.⁴⁴ Filling these positions and maintaining the structure of the Grand Divisions would be a daunting

⁴¹ Sears, 72.

⁴² Sears, 73.

⁴³ Sears, 61.

⁴⁴ Sears, 63.

task; however, Hooker addressed the issue from a different mindset than his predecessor.

Hooker abolishes the Grand Division Headquarters, reducing the requirement for an additional level of leadership, allowing him, as the Army Commander, to communicate directly with the Corps Commanders. Out of necessity, he was forced to restructure his subordinate leadership to build a new team.

General Hooker was able to turn his organization around in a short amount of time. He was able to enable subordinates by eliminating the grand divisions and empowering lower level leaders. He was able to reduce desertions and increase moral by building a shared vision and building trust between leaders and led. Through analysis of Hooker's changes, it is easy to parallel his action to Kotters change process. He quickly established a sense of urgency because he was in combat. He created a guiding coalition of division commanders to support his vision. He developed and communicated his vision of victory over the South to his men. He empowered his subordinate leaders by eliminating redundant bureaucratic layers of command. He generated short-term wins through the improvement of living conditions, the furlough system, and beginning to pay his soldiers. General Hooker creatively executed major changes in an organization while it was under the extreme stress of war, and he was able to begin to turn the war towards the favor of the North. If placed in a similar situation during the modern era, a new leader could follow in General Hookers footsteps to achieve similar results after replacing a toxic leader.

An additional example of both transformational and ethical leadership occurred between WWII and The Korean War when General Creighton Abrams took command of the 63rd Tank Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, located in Germany. In 1949, then LTC Abrams assumed

command of his second tank battalion.⁴⁵ Having already commanded a tank battalion during World War II, Abrams was an ideal selection for the command. The 63rd was a newly created unit, receiving the majority of its personnel as transfers from other units.⁴⁶ In typical fashion, the soldiers sent to the 63rd were other unit's problem soldiers. The 63rd was the only tank battalion in Germany at the time, and it was an embarrassment to leadership. The Division Commander assigned Abrams to the command because he wanted Abrams to "whip it into shape."⁴⁷

Abrams was an ethical leader who took time to assess the unit before making changes. He took a few weeks in the beginning of his command assessing and noting deficiencies.⁴⁸ When the time was right, and he was fully immersed and educated on what was going on in the unit, Abrams took all of his company commanders and their executive officers out for a walk around the battalion area. During the walk, he identified things that he did not like, simply by pointing at the problem area with a stick.⁴⁹ In his instructions prior to the walk, he notified his team that "if I see it again, I'm going to relieve the company commander."⁵⁰ During this walk, he set new standards for the unit. He identified minor infractions to discipline and attention to detail. He pointed out things like vehicle maintenance, cleanliness, as well adherence to standards. A few days later, Abrams went on the same walk again. Everything had been fixed but a flat tire that was on a trailer, and instantly, that commander was relieved.⁵¹ Given the severity of the situation, it is understandable that an example had to be made.

⁴⁵ John E. Leatherman, *General Creighton Abrams: Ethical Leadership at the Strategic Level*. Research project, (Carlisle Barracks PA: Army War College, 01 APR 1998), 3.

⁴⁶ Leatherman, 4.

⁴⁷ Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 108.

⁴⁸ Sorley, 109.

⁴⁹ Sorley, 109.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Albeit draconian in nature, during this walk not only did Abrams set the standard, but also he showed his subordinate leaders that he would enforce that standard, and that they are going to be held accountable. One of the commanders that was there that day later said in an interview “it became evident to those of us that were privileged enough to be there, that he meant goddam business. There was no more fooling around. I mean, it just stopped.”⁵² On this walk, Abrams quickly established the new standard. However, he did not stop at the establishment of standards. After General Abrams had demonstrated he was fully capable of enforcing the standard by relieving the commander that did not follow his instructions, from then on, he ensured that he took the time to properly coached and mentored his subordinates on how to meet his standard.⁵³

There are countless examples from Abrams’s time as Commander of 63rd Tank Battalion when he exercised ethical leadership in transforming his command. After the initial relief of the company commander, the reoccurring theme is that he allowed subordinates to learn from their mistakes. Even though he held them accountable, he also allowed them the time to learn from them. Additionally, he found inventive ways to treat the root of the problem and not just the symptoms of the problem. Abrams would challenge authority and the status quo in order to take care of his soldiers. During his command at the 63rd Tank Battalion, he transformed the unit from an embarrassment to one of the best battalion in the division.⁵⁴ As a result of his two years commanding the 63rd Tank Battalion, General Abrams was placed in command of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and promoted to full colonel in 1951.⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Leatherman, 4.

⁵⁴ Leatherman, 5.

⁵⁵ Sorley, 118.

General Abrams is representative of Michael Watkins' change theory. He identified a window of opportunity to effect change in the organization. He took the time to educate himself before making decisions, and he was able to incorporate the unit and the Army institutional values into his change vision. His ability to integrate not only change theories, but leadership principles as well into his change process allowed him to have a positive and lasting influence on the organization.

After fourteen years of sustained global conflict, the United States Army has placed significant effort on assessing lessons learned from the past to better the current Army. Surprising to many, a common theme of these "lessons learned" was poor leadership. The *2013 Chief of Staff of the Army Leader Development Task Force Final Report* went as far as to identify and define a "toxic leaders." The Task Force used the Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22 to define toxic leadership: "a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance."⁵⁶ An update the Multi-Source Assessment & Feedback (MSAF) tool was recommended by the Task Force to help eliminate toxic leadership.⁵⁷

The current MSAF is an 80-question survey, in which the rated individual is assessed across the entire leadership spectrum. While the rated individual is able to pick whom he or she would like to assess them, the data and the opinions from the raters are anonymous and designed to help the rated person grow. The data is only available to the rated individual and not to their supervisors. While there are challenges to the system, for example it is a lengthy survey, the data is valuable. As in any system, updating the current MSAF could prove to be valuable; however, using the model that the study suggests, could provide limited quality of the results.

⁵⁶ Department of the Army, *ADP 6-22: Army Leadership* (Washington DC: U.S. Army, 2012), 3.

⁵⁷ David H. Huntoon and Frederick M. Franks Jr., *2013 Chief of Staff of the Army, Leader Development Task Force Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army, 2013), 38.

The new MSAF that the study recommended would assess three leadership areas: “1) moral and ethical behavior, 2) the development of teams and subordinates, and 3) the approachability of the leader.”⁵⁸ The next generation MSAF is designed to assess is a “leader is either toxic or unethical— characteristics of leaders often not observed by superiors.”⁵⁹

Making the results available to supervisors is a great utilization of the resources. It would allow the rated individuals peers and subordinates to have input into the evaluation reports of the people that they work for and with. This would most likely add to the seriousness of the MSAF, as well as increase the quality of responses. However, reducing the number of questions from eighty to ten while maintaining the goal of assesses whether or not someone is toxic is a challenge. It will be difficult for supervisors to assess whether or not one of their subordinates is toxic or unethical based on the responses of ten questions.

Additional concern arises from the studies statement that “toxic or unethical characteristics of leaders often not observed by superiors.”⁶⁰ This statement suggests that leaders at all levels are not taking the time to teach, coach, mentor, and observe their subordinate, and there is a probability that quarterly counseling’s are not being conducted. If the new MSAF is designed with the goal of helping supervisors to identify if someone is toxic or unethical, there are already tools for that, and if it is advertised that way, many leaders may use the tool a an excuse not to get to know their subordinates, because the MSAF will tell them everything they need to know. However, using the assessment to all subordinates to have input on their supervisors would be a great addition to the evaluation system. This would provide a checks and balance to the system, affording subordinates to have input, while being a continuous reminder to all that everything they do is being watched and can influence their carrier. Based on the Task Forces recommendation for a new MSAF, the Army

⁵⁸ Huntoon, 39.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

would also need to implement an improved Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (OER and NCOER) that would better hold leaders accountable for their actions.

In their report, the Task Force references the Center for Army Leadership's 2010 Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) released in 2011⁶¹. The report is a result from the comparison of data from 2009 and 2010 surveys of soldiers from all ranks regarding their leaders. The study indicated that, "one-in-five subordinates reported that they had experienced toxic leadership, and four-out-of-five reported observing toxic leadership."⁶² The Task Force recommended that Division Commanders spend more time with their subordinate commanders conducting leadership training and assessing if their subordinates are toxic. The Task Force further recommended that the Division Commanders "increasing emphasis on Leader Development, pairing challenging assignments with developmental counseling, increasing day-to-day coaching, and creating a unit leader development handbook."⁶³ Overall emphasis was placed on the identification of leadership traits in subordinate leaders, and addressing any shortfalls identified, and for Division Commanders to hold their subordinates accountable for their actions.

This study helps commanders to define what toxic leadership is. It also provides statistics showing that toxic leadership is prevalent in the Army by identifying that one in five soldiers perceive that they have experienced toxic leadership within his/her unit. Additionally, the study recommends ways to reduce the amount of toxic leaders in unit. However, it did not address any methods to correct the effects that a toxic leader has on soldiers or how to begin the toxic leadership recovery process in an organization.

⁶¹ Huntoon, 58.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Huntoon, 59.

After studying change theory and the practical application of change within an organization, it is apparent that there are common practices that can be learned. There are also common threads that can be found in the theories and actions taken by leaders throughout history. These reoccurring themes are: build a coalition of influential people from within the organization and assess the vision for the future, develop a plan to get there and share that plan with everyone, empower subordinate and enable them to make changes, build trust across the organization, create visible and tangible successes in order to keep the change momentum going. These steps are not sequential and in most cases conducted simultaneously.

The research presented thus far helps to create a primer, using historical reference, that leaders at all levels can use to prepare themselves for commanding a military organization that has suffered from poor or toxic leadership. Using historical references provides ideas, methods, and examples of how the formidable task of course correcting an organization over a short time frame is obtainable. Throughout the course of research for this study, much effort was placed in creating a checklist of tasks that should be done when attempting to turn an organization around after a toxic leader has affected the organization. However, the desirable list of common actions by some of the greatest military leaders throughout history because not all leadership challenges are alike. Two organizations may share common issues, and may be similar in structure, but the issues and the impacts of these issues, as well as the organizational culture, will not be the same. Thus, the actions that need to be taken to effect change in the organization will always be different. As the old saying goes, what is good for me might not be good for you. This adage can also be applied to units; what is good for one unit may not be good for another unit.

A list of common themes that leaders should consider did emerge, and should be considered by all leaders wanting to better their units. This list is a list of what to do, not how to

do it. The research and list of five common themes that are shared within provides a quick reference for how to accelerate and sustain change in an organization. However, only the leader and his team can know how to specifically unite, build, and develop their specific organization. These themes are not necessarily exclusive when attempting to change an organization that has suffered from toxic leadership; however, they are predicated on the fact that someone in the organization has identified that change is needed. Once the need for change is identified, a leader can begin to enable a unit to recover from toxic leadership with the help of history and change theory models.

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