

## LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM APOLLO

*7 Strategies to Launch Your EMS  
Agency to a Trajectory of Success!*

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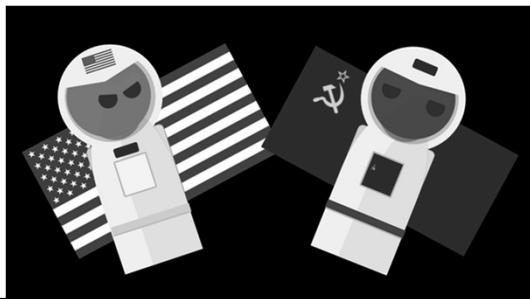
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1



2

## The Context



3

## September 12, 1962



4

## The Leadership Lessons

- 1) Establish a simple, concrete vision that everyone understands
- 2) Think big and trust your people to get it done
- 3) Challenge traditional thinking and listen to the outliers

5

## The Leadership Lessons

- 4) Be flexible and adapt to changing circumstances
- 5) Be creative and improvise
- 6) Develop good support systems – equipment and people

6

### **The Leadership Lessons**

- 7) Give credit to the “back room”
- 8) Make the public feel a part of it
- 9) Learn from your setbacks – and move ahead
- 10) Display pride and celebrate success

7

### **Added Bonus Lesson...**

Be humble and give others the credit

8

### **Number 1**

Establish a Simple, Concrete Vision  
That Everyone Understands

9

**What? The MOON**

**When? End of decade**

**How? On a rocket not  
yet invented**

10

### **Is Your Vision Statement...**

- Simple and clear – everyone understands what it means
- Concrete – it’s objective
- Meaningful – relates to a “higher purpose”
- Easy for everyone to adopt as their own
- Motivational...

11

### **The Mission**

#### **Mission**

*EmergencyCare's mission is to save lives and positively impact health, well-being and safety in the communities we serve.*

12

**Sunstar  
PARAMEDICS**

**Mission Statement**  
"To provide compassionate quality care and service built around the needs of the patients and communities we serve through effective partnerships."

**Vision Statement**  
"To be the preferred EMS provider in the eyes of our patients, partners, and communities."

13

**CARE PLUS Values**  
**Customer accountable:** Our commitment to honor our pledges and do the very best for patients, customers, and communities.  
**Attentive to human needs:** Our commitment to treat our patients, patients' family members, customers, and colleagues as valued individuals.  
**Respectful:** Our commitment to behavior toward our patients, colleagues, customers, and the public that demonstrates the respect we want to receive ourselves.  
**Ethical:** Our commitment to perform duties in a just and honest way and encourage an organizational culture which balances accountability with fairness.  
**Partnership:** Our commitment to create long-term relationships and partnerships focused on the needs of our patients and the communities we serve.  
**Lead by example:** Our commitment to personally model our values and promote an environment that supports our mission and vision.  
**Understanding:** Our commitment to understand and value diversity in our workforce and our community by treating all individuals equally and without judgment.  
**Safe:** Our commitment to create and promote the safety of our workforce, patients and community.

14

**Key Points**

- Do your people know **what** the mission is and **how** their role relates to it?
- Do your people espouse the vision and shared values of what your EMS agency stands for?
- What is the leadership doing to reinforce these points?

15

**NASA's "Dirty Little Secret"**  


16

**"We're Putting Men on the Moon!"**  


17

**"It went back to the *motivation* of the people who built them, tested them, and flew them. It showed what can happen when people believe that the thing they are working on is the most important thing they will do in their lives, and they don't want to be responsible for screwing it up!"**

**-- Andrew Chaikin, "A Man on the Moon"**

18

**Everyone at all  
levels, understood  
the mission and the  
importance of each  
person's contribution!**



19

**Do We Truly Believe What We Do in  
EMS Is The Most Important Thing We  
Will Ever Do in  
Our Lives?**



20

**More Importantly  
Do Your People Truly  
Believe What They Do in  
EMS Is The Most  
Important Thing They  
Will Ever Do in  
Their Lives?**

21

**In EMS, Everyone's Job is  
Equally Important!**

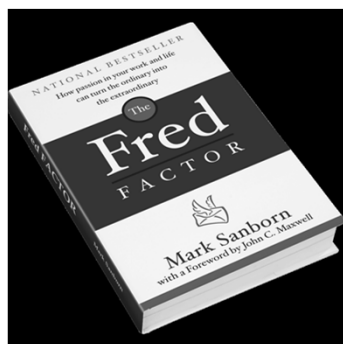
"Whatever you are, be a  
good one!"

- Abraham Lincoln



22

**Mandatory  
Reading!**



23

### **EMS Leader Discussion Points**

- How do your people feel about the work – is it meaningful to them?
- Do they truly enjoy what they are doing?
- Do they go above and beyond to help patients in need?
- Does the leadership team recognize those who do?

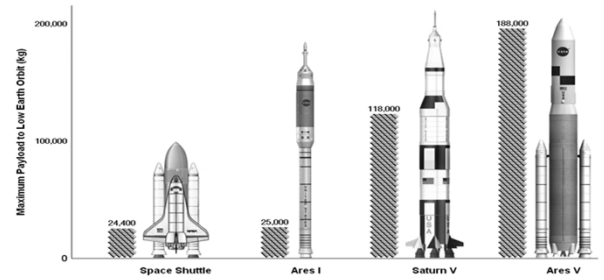
24

## Number 2

Think Big and Trust Your People to  
Get it Done

25

## Can't Get Much BIGGER Than a Saturn 5!



26

## EMS Leader Points

- What have we done to THINK BIG and see alternatives to the status quo
- What have we done to set the direction, communicate it, and let our people get it done?
- What has the leadership team done to demonstrate *trust* in those accomplishing the mission?

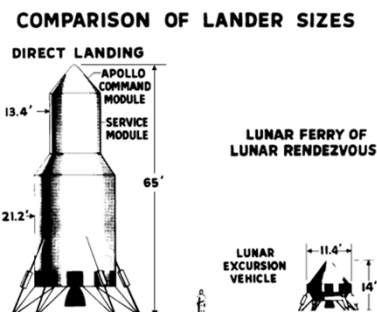
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## Number 3

Challenge Traditional Thinking and  
Listen to the Outliers

28

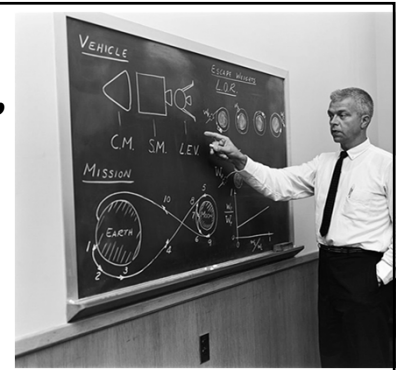
## Direct Landing or Rendezvous?



29

## "The Outlier"

John Houbolt



30

### LBJ Leadership Style?

If LBJ was predisposed to liking your idea, he would go for it easily – but if he wasn't, it would take multiple people to convince him otherwise – he was “hardened to his biases”



31

### EMS Leader Discussion Points

- Are we hardened in our biases and do we dig our heels in?
- Can we look at a new idea objectively and not dismiss it before it gets a fair hearing?
- Do we encourage “outlier thinking”?
- Do we reward new ideas and approaches that are adopted and do we give the person credit?

32

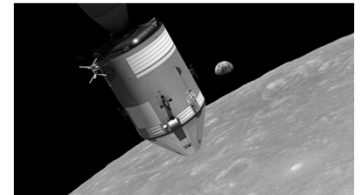
### Number 4

Be Flexible and Adapt to Changing Circumstances

33

### Apollo 8 and Apollo 9

- Apollo 8 was to test the LM in Earth orbit
- Soviets planned to launch mission to orbit the moon



34

### Apollo 8 and Apollo 9

- LM not quite ready - Apollo 8 went to the moon instead
- Apollo 9 tested the LM in Earth orbit in early 1969

35



36

### EMS Leader Discussion Points

- Have we moved our agency into something that was not planned for in advance?
- Were we able to anticipate the changing situation?
- Were we **nimble and agile** in making a decision to change or were we mired in red tape?

37

### Number 5

Be Creative and Improvise

38

### Apollo 13



39

### Lunar Module Lifeboat

"I don't care what anything was DESIGNED to do. I care about what it **CAN** do! So let's get to work. Let's lay it out."

- Gene Krantz



40

### Skylab



41

### EMS Leader Discussion Points

- Have we been creative and improvised to deal with a difficult situation?
- Do we create a culture where creativity is nurtured and rewarded?
- Do we have a team approach to solving problems and dealing with crisis?

42

## Number 6

Develop Good Support Systems –  
Equipment and People – And Work  
the Problem

43

## Mission Control



44

## Equipment and People

- Use the best technology
- Put multiple backup systems in place
- Use ingenuity and speed to develop contingency plans when backups fail
- Demand the best from your people
- Avoid decisions not based on the facts

45

**“There is no such  
thing as good  
enough. You, your  
team, and your  
equipment must be  
the best. That is  
how you will win  
victories.”**



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

46

**“Let’s work the  
problem people.  
Let’s not make  
things worse by  
guessing!”**

47

## EMS Leader Discussion Points

- Do we have the best and latest equipment?
- Do we have the best people – and do they feel they have the resources to get the job done?
- Do people in all departments – dispatch, billing, education – see their role to support those who serve the patient?

48



## Number 7

Give Credit to the  
“Back Room”

49

## Mission Control Front Line



50

## The Back Room



51

## EMS Leader Discussion Points

- Do we have a good “back room” (a/k/a support team) to call upon when needed?
- Do we rely on them to help solve problems?
- Do we give them the credit they deserve?

52

## Number 8

Make the Public  
Feel A Part of It

53

## Gaining Broad-Based Support

- Vision communicated from the top – Kennedy
- Transparency in the process
- Astronauts visible in the community
- Excellent news media relations
- Government printing office pushed it out
- Live television!

54

### Live Television!



55

### Are We Making the Headlines or Reacting to Them?



56

### Number 9

Learn from Your Setbacks – And  
Move Ahead

57

### EMS Leader Discussion Points

- How do we deal with the initial trauma of a major setback – vehicle crash, line of duty death?
- How do we pick up the pieces and move forward – and what have we learned?
- What are we doing to help improve resilience among our people?

58

### Number 10

Display Pride and  
Celebrate Success

59

### EMS Leader Discussion Points

- What are we doing to celebrate *individual* achievements?
- What are we doing to celebrate *group* achievements?
- Are we making it public?
- Are we sincere and enthusiastic about celebrating?

60

### Bonus Lesson...

Be Humble and Give Others  
the Credit

61

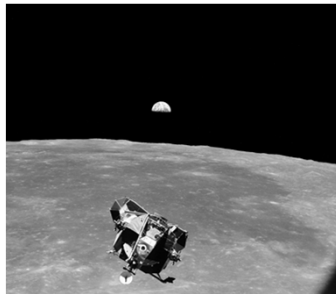
### Neil Armstrong on Humility

- "I guess we all like to be recognized not for one piece of fireworks, but for the ledger of our daily work."
- "Well, I think we tried very hard not to be overconfident, because when you get overconfident, that's when something snaps up and bites you."

62

*"It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small."*

- Mike Collins, Apollo 11



63

### 400,000 People Did This!

"When you have hundreds of thousands of people all doing their job a little better than they have to, you get an improvement in performance. And that's the only reason we could have pulled this whole thing off."

64

### Mike Collins on Humility

"Heroes abound, and should be revered as such, but don't count astronauts among them. We work very hard; we did our jobs to near perfection, but that was what we had hired on to do. In no way did we meet the criterion of the Congressional Medal of Honor: 'above and beyond the call of duty.'"

65

"Neil Armstrong was born in 1930, Buzz Aldrin 1930, and Mike Collins 1930. We came along at exactly the right time. We survived hazardous careers and we were successful in them. But in my own case at least, it was 10 percent shrewd planning and 90 percent blind luck. Put LUCKY on my tombstone."

- Mike Collins



66

### **Collins on Humility**

*"Celebrities? What nonsense, what an empty concept for a person to be, as my friend the great historian Daniel Boorstin put it, "known for his well-knownness." How many live-ins, how many trips to rehab, maybe—wow—you could even get arrested and then you would really be noticed. Don't get me started."*

67

### **EMS Leader Discussion Points**

- Do we appreciate the respect we earn from others by being humble about our own contributions?
- Do we practice "downsizing" what we do while "upsizing" what others do?

68

### **Summary**

- The Apollo program brought a nation together with a shared vision and leadership principles that can apply to every EMS agency
- The level of commitment from top to bottom was equally high and consistent – we can achieve that in our own organizations!

69