



AUGUST 2015 NEWSLETTER

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What Others Say:

"Our CFO, Director of Marketing, Director of Accounting, VP of Sales, VP of Human Resources, and several Senior Brand Managers have all had their career paths accelerated and their futures improved by completing your development program."

- President, Fortune 500 Company

Great Mentors and Their Methods

If you want to be the best, and you can choose a mentor, who do you choose?

Think about this for a moment. Do you choose an acquaintance? A friend? A parent? A lot of folks have been mentored by a parent and turned out rather well. How about your boss? Or someone you know of who's been successful in their own right?

Norman Brinker (the founder of such successful restaurants as Steak & Ale and Chili's) once told me that he always intentionally selected people who could help him get where he wanted to be. Norman was always working to improve himself. That was his nature. So for you, to become your absolute best, who do you choose to mentor you?

Well, if you were an aspiring fighter pilot in 1917, you might select Manfred Albrecht von Richthofen. You may recognize him by his nickname: The Red Baron. Can you imagine what it would've been like to be mentored by the Red Baron? So, to become the best fighter pilot, would you select The Red Baron, the best fighter pilot there was at that time to train and mentor you? Or would you select the pilot *who trained and mentored* The Red Baron?

If you choose the latter, then you want Oswald Boelcke to be your mentor. Boelcke is today regarded as one of the most influential pilots ever. He's known as the "Father of Air Fighting Tactics." Boelcke created a system and process for aerial combat that is relied upon to this day by military pilots around the world.

What amazes me with aviation is how everything is on a checklist; every procedure, every process, everything. When it comes to carrying out your role as a pilot ***nothing is left to memory or chance.*** Everything is on a checklist.

All of these checklists create a *system and process* for a pilot to follow. If the human mind can follow a system or process, that system eventually becomes habit and *greatly reduces the prospect of human error*; and human error can be fatal for a pilot.

So, like most every other skill, aerial combat is about the basics, *the fundamentals*. Boelcke wrote a book about his own system and process of aerial combat tactics. Here are seven of his rules (or tools) along with my adaptation to each. As you read some of his "tools," can you see their application to your own job and/or business?

1. *"Always continue the attack you have begun."* In other words, finish what you started. Don't let "unfinished business" characterize who you're known to be.
2. *"Attack in Groups of 4 to 6."* In other words, when possible, employ and rely on your team, not just your own skill, brain power or muscle. Be a team-player, not an individualist. History and data are against the individualist. So, play it smart.
3. *"Coordinate attacks from above."* In other words, don't go into a situation in a reactionary mode. Plan your approach out ahead of time and get on top of the situation from the beginning.
4. *"Keep an eye on your opponent."* ALWAYS know who and where your competition is. But just keep *one eye* on them, not two. Remain focused on what you have control of; your job and your business, versus what someone else controls.
5. *"Rely on your skill, experience, and occasionally, treachery, such as setting an opponent up to rely on his missiles while you defeat him with your superior maneuvers."* Planning, strategy and skill often trump technology.

(Cont. on back)

6. *“Sometimes your best shot is the one no one expects you to make.”* In other words, always be prepared for any given situation and constantly train so that you can be prepared to deliver a solution that others never think of. This will be the value you add above and beyond what others can deliver. This one tool can make you a fast ball pitcher in a sea of knuckle ball pitchers; extremely valuable.
7. *“Believe that you can go out and do a good job and not look like an idiot.”* Build your skill, your knowledge base up to the extent that you’ve been tried by fire and come out on top. When this happens you ooze confidence and confidence causes you to believe in yourself. As you believe in yourself, as Jack Lowe Jr. (Board Chair at TDIndustries) once told me, you then *“live to fight the fight another day.”* And yes, that’s often what life at work is like. And that is okay, as long as you are able to walk away from a completed task knowing you’ve just done a great job; in your eyes *and* your customer’s.

So, if you wish to be the best there is at what you do:

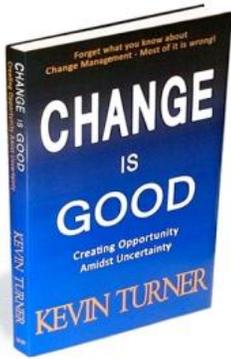
- a. First, find the best there is and ask them to mentor you.
- b. Second, create or find the best system or process (the method) and follow it, master it.

And remember, yes Boelcke wrote the book on pilot fighter tactics. But no matter how good you get, we are all susceptible to our own humanity. Interestingly, Boelcke died while violating one of his own rules, *“Two aircraft should not attack the same opponent.”* So, once you’ve found your system (or your mentor), ***don’t think you’re above your system or process.*** Be smart. Rely on it until you retire.

If the human mind can follow a system or process, that system eventually becomes habit and greatly reduces the prospect of human error.

Tip of the Day

“Leadership isn’t getting people to follow you. Leadership is getting people to believe in the same principle as you and to have other people lead along with you.” – Joe Theismann



Kevin Lane
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