

**Becoming a Master Manager:**  
**Gen. Frank Savage and the Competing Values Framework**

**Cathy Becker**

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**Craig Boardman**

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The 1949 film “Twelve O’Clock High” tells the story of the 918<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group which was one of the first World War II air groups expected to implement daylight precision bombing, or bombing of Nazi targets from low altitudes during the daytime when they could be easily seen and shot down by the German Luftwaffe. The 918 under the command of Col. Ralph Davenport had come to be known as the “hard luck group” due to its heavy losses and low morale. However, Maj. Gen. Patrick Pritchard, general of the VIII Bomber Command to which the 918 reported, put the responsibility for the group’s hard luck squarely on the shoulders of Davenport, saying he had become too close to his men. When Davenport refused to demote a navigator whose mistakes caused his group to be late in reaching the enemy target, Pritchard relieved him of command and turned the 918 over to Savage. It was Savage’s job to instill discipline, raise morale, and improve the performance of the 918, with the goal of carrying out daylight precision bombing accurately and with as few losses as possible.

In this paper, I will evaluate Gen. Savage as a leader using the Competing Values Framework (CVF) discussed by Quinn et al in *Becoming a Master Manager: A Competing Values Approach* (Wiley, 2011). The CVF is unique among theories of leadership in that it brings together four opposing or “competing” perspectives, each with its own core competencies, and places them into one framework that situates each leadership model in relation to the rest. The CVF places these four models – Human Relations, Internal Process, Rational Goal, and Open Systems -- along two axes of internal vs. external and flexibility vs. control (see Fig 1). The result is four quadrants of leadership that stress different action imperatives for leaders: Collaborate, Control, Compete, and Create. According to Quinn et al, each of the action imperatives is associated with five core competencies. Most of the rest of this paper will be spent in evaluating the leadership of Gen. Frank Savage on a scale of 1 to 5 for these 20 core competencies. I will conclude with some general remarks about how Savage dealt with the inter-quadrant paradoxes of the CVF, and how his leadership style changed through the film.

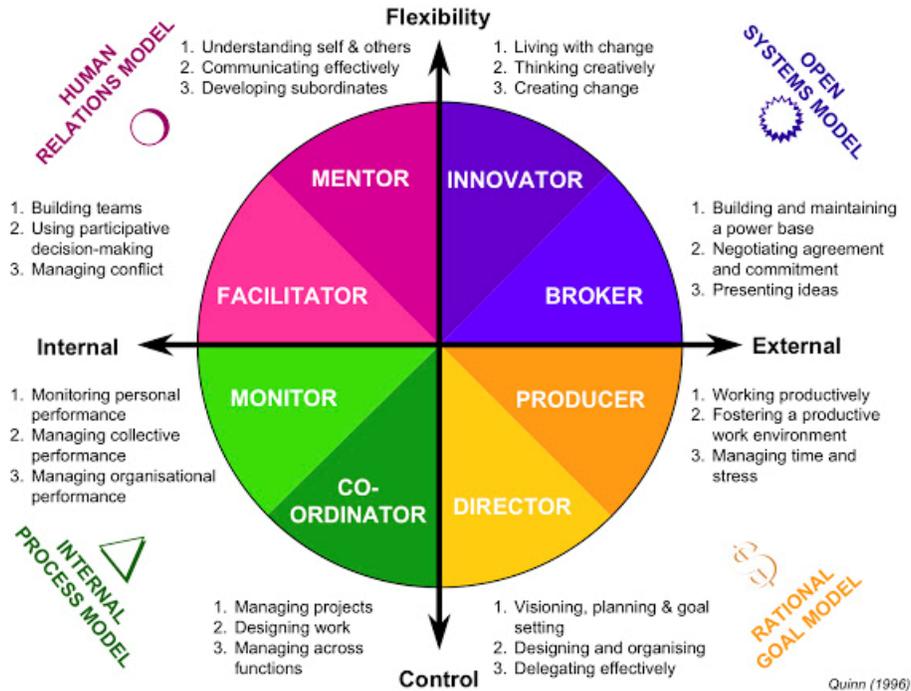


Figure 1: From Quinn et al., *Becoming a Master Manager*, p. 13.

## I. Core Competencies

### A. Collaborate: Creating and Sustaining Commitment and Cohesion

#### 1. Understanding Self and Others -- Rating: 4

This competency has two parts: understanding yourself, or self awareness, and understanding others, or social intelligence or awareness. Self awareness means recognizing your own emotions and how they affect you, knowing your strengths and limits and being open to feedback, and having a strong sense of self-worth and self-confidence. Social intelligence means having empathy for others, organizational awareness, and service orientation. I am giving Frank Savage a 4 in this competency because he demonstrates most but not all of it. Savage certainly demonstrates social intelligence. Although he starts off by dealing harshly with the men, demoting those who don't perform well or make mistakes, he does this to raise their performance level and instill pride in the group. These tactics work; for example, by putting the underperforming Gately in charge of the Leper Colony, Savage challenges Gately to perform,

which Gately subsequently does by getting his crew to perform and by himself flying missions even after he is hurt. Savage's first and foremost loyalty is to the group as a whole, and he insists that the men have the same loyalty. However, Savage falls short on self-awareness. Although he is the epitome of self-confidence, and he was sent in to replace a commander who had become too close to the men, Savage overestimates his own strength and underestimates how invested he would become in the men, particularly group leaders like Gately, Bishop, and Cobb. When Bishop and Cobb are both killed, Pritchard tries to get Savage to return to the VIII Bomber Command, but Savage refuses, claiming the 918 can't operate without him. Ultimately Savage pushes himself past the breaking point and ends up in a catatonic stupor.

## **2. Communicating Honestly and Effectively – Rating: 5**

According to Quinn et al., interpersonal communication has two parts: being able to express clearly what you are thinking and what you need, and being a good listener truly able to hear the thoughts and ideas that others express. I give Savage a 5 in this competency. Savage is certainly able to express his thoughts and wishes effectively, even when he is telling other people things they don't necessarily want to hear. It is Savage who tells Pritchard at the beginning of the film that Davenport is the problem with the 918 because he thinks of his men and not his mission. Savage also tells Gately directly why he had him arrested and demoted to the Leper Colony: because as air exec Gately was in command after Davenport left, yet he left the station to get drunk. When Gately protests that the arrest and demotion is personal abuse, Savage gets Pritchard on the phone so Gately can lodge the complaint, but Gately backs down when he realizes he would also have to tell the general he was off base without authorization. Yet Savage is also a good listener. This was demonstrated when Davenport told Savage that he was driving the men too hard, they weren't just a set of numbers, and he had to win something for them or they would walk out. Although Savage didn't react well to Davenport's advice at the time, he apparently took it to heart because shortly thereafter, he risked his own career by ignoring a

recall order and instead leading his men to bomb the target when no other group got through. As the men eavesdrop while Pritchard bawls out Savage, Savage tells the general that his radio malfunctioned and it might malfunction again if he had another chance to instill the pride in the 918 that it so desperately deserved. Then Savage persuaded Pritchard to recommend the 918 for a Distinguished Unit Citation for bombing under adverse conditions. The result was that every pilot who had put in for a transfer cancelled his request.

### **3. Mentoring and Developing Others – Rating: 4.5**

Quinn et al discuss three main elements to this competency: effectively evaluating and providing feedback on employee performance, coaching employees on work-related behaviors, and helping employees take on new tasks and responsibilities through delegation. Savage provides constant evaluation and feedback to his men, particularly during practice missions in which he hammers home the fundamentals of flying in a tight formation and hitting the target. If the men don't perform, Savage busts them to the Leper Colony. He also develops the men by delegating certain tasks, for example by promoting Cobb to air exec after he sent Gately to the Leper Colony. Even putting Gately in charge of the Leper Colony was a form of delegation, as Gately has to take every underachiever in the group and get him to perform. This challenge also prods Gately himself to start performing, flying several missions while hurt. In the end Gately takes over Savage's own spot leading the 918 on the most important mission of all, bombing a German ball bearings factory while under heavy attack in broad daylight. The only reason I am not giving Savage a full 5 on this competency is that letting Gately lead the group was not his idea but was forced when Savage was unable to fly himself. Savage told Pritchard that the 918 could not be without him, but in the end he had trained his men so well that they did fine.

### **4. Managing Groups and Leading Teams – Rating: 5**

Much of what Quinn et al discuss related to this competency is not applicable to a military situation where, for example, decisions are made at the top and handed down rather than

being made by the team. However Savage does demonstrate parts of the competency that are applicable: he clarifies the roles of team members, runs effective meetings, and develops an effective team. Regarding team members, Savage clarifies the duties of each position in a plane – pilot, navigator, gunner, and bombardier – expecting them to meet a high performance bar and holding them responsible if they don't. Savage also sets expectations for ground personnel to do their job and holds them responsible when he finds many of them had been stowing away on combat flights. Regarding meetings, Savage runs a tight ship on morning briefings, starting them on time, following a clear agenda, and staying on point. Regarding team building, Savage makes it clear that the first loyalty of all the men is to the group, not to each other. When one pilot, Pettigrew, broke formation to stay back because his roommate's plane was in trouble, Savage orders a reshuffling of every room assignment in the group. Every plane, he tells the men, must stay in position to provide maximum cover for the others, and if you pull one gun out, it is like losing ten. Reshuffling roommate assignments not only helps prevents loyalty to particular individuals from overshadowing loyalty to the group, but also helps team members learn about other positions and parts of the team they might otherwise hear about.

#### **5. Managing and Encouraging Constructive Conflict – Rating 4**

Conflict in organizations is inevitable, and has many causes such as miscommunication, differences in values, or competition over resources. Regardless of the cause, managers spend much of their time resolving conflict. Quinn et al outline five approaches to managing conflict – avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating -- and discuss when each is most appropriate. In the case of Twelve O'Clock High, the conflict isn't so much between members or sectors of the 918, but between the men and Savage himself. Savage starts out dealing with this conflict through competing, or using authority structures and formal rules to win the battle. He has Gately arrested for being off base, demotes McIlhenny for not being fully dressed when he comes in, and even chews out the gate guard for not checking IDs or saluting.

This way of handling conflict is appropriate at first because the 918 was in a situation where quick decisive action was vital, unpopular action was needed, and the group's welfare was at stake. However, as Quinn et al note, this way of dealing with conflict led to a dysfunctional outcome of clear winners and losers, resulting in all the pilots putting in requests to transfer and triggering an investigation from the Inspector General. In response, Savage changes his way of dealing with conflict by moving toward accommodation. Although he never admits he was wrong, he seeks out the perspective of the pilots by asking Bishop privately why he wanted to transfer. When he learns Bishop has lost confidence in the reasons for going to war and feels the men of the 918 are being used as guinea pigs, Savage shares his vision of filling the German skies with American bombers to hit the Third Reich where it lives, and warns that while it's easy to transfer out of a group, it's much harder to transfer out of one's obligation. This pep talk is enough to rekindle Bishop's faith in why they are fighting the war, and when the Inspector General visits the base, Bishop leads the rest of the pilots in withdrawing their transfer requests.

## **B. Control: Establishing and Maintaining Stability and Continuity**

### **1. Organizing Information Flows -- Rating: 5**

This competency has two parts: managing information inflow and information outflow. Regarding inflow, Quinn et al discuss the serious problem of information overload and solutions for managing it such as Winston's TRAF system of Toss, Refer, Act, and File, and Covey's prioritizing action items to work more on problems that are important but not urgent so as to avoid crises that are important and urgent. Information overload was not nearly as serious a problem in 1942 as it is today; however, in Twelve O'Clock High, Frank Savage showed that he knew how to handle it. First, he followed Covey's recommendation of stressing the important but not urgent by holding repeated practice runs in between missions. Doing this improved the skills of the air crews so they suffered fewer losses during actual missions that were important and urgent. Savage also knew how to make the flow of information work to his advantage when

he partnered with Stovall to delay the pilot transfer requests in red tape long enough to earn the confidence of the men, who eventually all withdrew their requests. Regarding outflow of information, Quinn et al discuss the OABC method for composing clear, concise, and complete messages to others. Although we don't see Savage using this exact method, his messages to the troops during briefings and in private meetings are always clear and concise. In briefings he explains the goal of the mission – for example, hitting their first target on German soil – and how it will be done, including who will lead each squadron, where it will fly, and what time they will depart. For these reasons, even though the amount of information and the structures it flowed in were different for the World War II military than organizations today, I give Savage a 5.

## **2. Working and Managing Across Functions -- Rating: 5**

This is another competency that doesn't translate directly from 21<sup>st</sup> century business practices to the military during World War II, but there are some parallels. Quinn et al discuss hierarchy and differentiation as the traditional structure for organizations, and it is certainly the structure of the military. However, one could consider the crew of each airplane to be a cross-functional team integrated together to achieve a common goal. Each member of the crew – the pilot, navigator, gunner and bombardier – specializes in different skills, but they must work together at peak performance to achieve the goal of bombing the target. This was especially true for the crews that Savage managed, which were charged with carrying out daylight precision bombing. Savage practices many of the guidelines for managing these teams effectively: he clarifies goals of arriving on time and hitting the target, holds team members accountable for their performance by demoting laggards to the Leper Colony, provides up-to-date and relevant information in briefings and practice runs, and clarifies expectations within and between teams of not breaking formation. Savage also picks the right people; for example, after he demotes Gately, he promotes Cobb as air exec even though Stovall describes Cobb as “too frank.” This shows that Savage is not afraid of criticism, and in fact can use it to improve his own leadership.

### **3. Planning and Coordinating Projects - 5**

This competency is about project management, specifically planning and monitoring project execution. Quinn et al discuss a number of tools designed to help managers carry out these functions, including a statement of work, work breakdown structure, PERT/CPM (Program Evaluation and Review Technique and Critical Path Method), resource leveling, Gantt charts, human resource matrices, and cost/schedule integration graphs. In the film we don't see Savage using any of these tools, most of which postdate World War II. However, his entire purpose in taking over the 918 is to help an underperforming bomb group carry out the project of daylight precision bombing. Savage does this by going back to fundamentals. He holds practice runs in between each actual mission, flying with his men to provide guidance and instruction. Then after each real mission, Savage holds a critique in the Interrogation room where he identifies what went wrong and what went right, and makes adjustments accordingly. For example, after one mission, Savage told the men that while losses were down because they were flying in tight formation, bombing was off, and he ordered new practice runs specifically on hitting bomb targets accurately. This stressing of the fundamentals improved the skills and confidence of the men so much that by the end of the film they were able to carry out daylight bombing of the German ball bearings factory with minimal losses even without Savage's leadership. In other words, he planned and monitored the project so well that it was executed successfully.

### **4. Measuring and Monitoring Performance and Quality - 5**

For this competency, Quinn et al argue that the most important element is picking the right processes and outcomes to monitor and identifying the key drivers of organizational effectiveness. Picking the right processes and measuring the key drivers is so important, they say, that the global financial meltdown of 2008 could be blamed on companies that didn't do this. It was critical for the leadership of the 918 as well. Quinn et al highlight the Baldrige Criteria as a way to measure organization effectiveness because it includes not just financial performance but also employee

indicators, operating indicators, and customer satisfaction. These criteria also highlight a key difference between the leadership of Davenport and Savage. Davenport was concentrating on only one piece of the Baldrige Criteria – employee indicators. He took the side of his men without taking into account the mission they were there to do. Savage by contrast highlighted operational indicators such as reliability, on-time delivery, and reducing errors. It was Savage's contention that by concentrating on the mission, he could in turn raise the performance of the men. Davenport had become too close to the men, he told Pritchard at the beginning of the film. What the men needed was not feeling sorry for themselves, he said, but pride in their mission and their group, and they could get that from raising their performance on key operational indicators such as arriving at the target on time, hitting it accurately, and reducing their losses. This is what Savage's leadership and coaching showed the men they could do, and it worked: As operational indicators for the 918 rose, so did employee satisfaction and attendance, while turnover was cut. Pilots who had previously put in for transfers withdrew their requests, and ground crew began to stowaway on mission flights because they wanted to be part of the action.

#### **5. Encouraging and Enabling Compliance - 4**

In this competency, Quinn et al discuss triggers for employee misbehavior and strategies for managers to encourage compliance. Many of both points are relevant to Twelve O'Clock High. In the film, the men don't comply with the rules of the organization for many reasons. The gate guard waves through Savage's car because it's a staff car -- he doesn't know he needs to check ID on everyone. Men regularly don't wear a uniform, forget to salute, and get drunk on base even though they know these things are against the rules because there is little penalty. Gately leaves the base after Davenport is fired out of a sense of unfairness and distrust. Even Davenport refuses to obey Pritchard's direct order to relieve the navigator Zimmerman who had cost lives by making them late to the target because he didn't think the order was right. To deal with these misbehaviors, Savage uses a number of Mitchell's compliance strategies. The most

prominent one is punitive, as when he demotes McIlhenny for not wearing his uniform, closes down the bar where Cobb was drinking, and has Gately placed under arrest. But he also uses preventive strategies by shuffling roommate assignments so pilots would be less likely to break formation over a friend; cognitive strategies by explaining that daylight precision bombing would shorten the war by wiping out German industry; and even normative strategies by telling Bishop it was his obligation to remain in the group to fight the Third Reich. One strategy that Savage does not use, however, is remunerative or increasing positive consequences when people do comply. For example, after all the pilots withdraw their requests for transfer, Cobb suggests handing out 3-day passes to London. Instead, Savage everyone back to work, with Cobb, Bishop, and “every man who can lead a mule to water” being given a chance to lead a practice run. Cobb gripes about this to Stovall, who is unsympathetic. But in general, I think Savage was overly punitive and would likely have gained more loyalty from the men sooner if he had used remuneration more often as a strategy a little more often. For that reason, I give him a 4.

### **C. Compete: Improving Productivity and Increasing Stability**

#### **1. Developing and Communicating a Vision -- Rating: 3.5**

For this competency, Quinn et al discuss the key components of a vision, and how the leader can translate those components into a personal leadership story. A vision includes three components: heads, or a clear organizational philosophy centered on the vision; hands, or the practical steps to support the vision; and hearts, or the personal values that inspire people to follow the vision. Leaders need to be comfortable with the paradox of competing values in the CVF, and show how their personal story helps them authentically represent that vision. I give Savage a 3.5 for this competency. He does have a vision, which he shares with Bishop during their private talk just before the pilots withdrew their requests to transfer. In the conversation, Bishop makes it clear he doesn't know why the group is fighting and feels they are being used as guinea pigs. Savage shares his vision of a “solid overcast of American bombers” who can “hit

the Third Reich where it lives,” and tells Bishop they can’t get to that point without hitting their targets now. He then says that fighting the war is an obligation. This covers all three components of the vision – head, hands and heart – in that order. What Savage doesn’t do is share the vision with the entire bomb group, although Bishop as the group’s leader passes it on to the men because they all subsequently withdraw their transfer requests. Nor do we get much of a sense of Savage’s personal leadership story. What makes him a unique authentic representative of this vision? He never shares that with us or his men.

## **2. Setting Goals and Objectives -- 5**

For this competency, Quinn et al discuss how leaders can translate their vision into organizational goals, use organizational goals to establish individual goals, provide ongoing coaching and feedback, and evaluate performance. Of particular importance is that the goals follow Doran’s SMART framework – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. Savage does an outstanding job at all of this. The organizational goal is carrying out daylight precision bombing, which Savage translates into goals for individual bomb crews as well as the ground crew. He assigns each person to a specific spot, even if that spot is the Leper Colony where they are expected to improve their performance. Through coaching and feedback during practice runs as well as critiques of actual missions, Savage evaluates and improves performance. The feedback is tailored to each employee; for example, when the navigators and pilots get their part right but the bombing accuracy is off, Savage orders special practice runs for the bombardiers. Savage’s goals also follow all five parts of the SMART framework. The men know exactly what they are supposed to do, when, and where, and they do it. Perhaps the most relevant of the SMART goal criteria for the 918 is “attainable.” Under Davenport, the men didn’t think daylight precision bombing was attainable because Davenport didn’t think it was attainable. Savage showed them it was by breaking it down to fundamentals and improving performance. This competency is one of Savage’s most noteworthy achievements.

### 3. Motivating Self and Others – 4.5

For this competency, leaders need to understand what motivates employees and how to translate those stimuli into motivation. Quinn et al discuss extrinsic motivators such as a cash bonus vs intrinsic motivators such as a feeling of accomplishment, as well as theories of motivation such as equity theory, or ensuring individual inputs and outcomes are equal across the organization, and goal setting theory, or setting challenging goals and providing feedback. But they spend the most time on Vroom's expectancy theory, which posits that employees must believe if they exert effort, they will be able to perform the task, that if they perform the task, they will receive an outcome, and that the outcome is valuable to them. Regarding motivators, Savage excels at making intrinsic motivation come alive in his men. From the start, his goal is to instill a sense of pride in the men by improving their performance, which he believes will motivate them to perform even better. This is what ultimately takes place, but the question is how to get it started. For this, Savage relies on punitive measures such as demoting people for not wearing their uniform, closing down the bar, and arresting people off base without permission. Instead, he could have taken advantage of the clear extrinsic motivators of the men such as day passes to London, but he chose not to and came close to being "cooked," as Davenport said, by the Inspector General. But perhaps the key area where Savage excelled over Davenport was in expectancy theory. The 918's organizational goal was daylight precision bombing; however, under Davenport, the men didn't think their effort would result in a satisfactory performance, nor did they understand that a satisfactory performance would lead to a particular outcome, or why the outcome was important. Savage was able to convince them of all these things. First, he showed that if they put in the effort, they could actually achieve the goal. This was proven on the mission where Savage claimed a radio malfunction to ignore the recall order and instead led his men to be the only group that got through and hit the target. Savage then negotiated a Distinguished Unit Citation for their performance from Gen. Pritchard. Then,

when it became clear that the extrinsic motivator of recognition from the Bomber Command wasn't enough, Savage connected to the men's intrinsic motivation by explaining that not only could they achieve the goal of daylight precision bombing, but it was their duty.

#### **4. Designing and Organizing -- 5**

This competency involves allocating and coordinating resources to accomplish organizational goals along such lines as division of labor and specialization, hierarchy and lines of authority, standardization and formalization, and decision-making authority. How managers structure organizations involves trade-offs between advantages and disadvantages of each option. Also important is organizational culture: Even if managers get all the structural aspects right, they can fail if the organizational culture is not aligned with its goals. Quinn et al discuss four types of cultures in the CVF – clan, which mirrors the human relations model; hierarchy, which mirrors the internal process model; market, which mirrors the rational goal model; and adhocracy, which mirrors the open systems model. In *Twelve O'Clock High*, Savage is working within the military, so he has very little discretion over the structural aspects of the organization. Things like division of labor, hierarchy, and decision-making authority are already set. However, what Savage does have some control of is organizational culture, which under Davenport had been allowed to disintegrate. Cars were being waved on base without checking ID, men weren't saluting or wearing their uniforms, and people were off base regularly without permission. For Savage, part of raising the performance of the bomb group was addressing this lapse in culture and enforcing the formalization and standardization of the military. Regarding the four types of culture discussed in the CVF, clearly the 918 as a military unit emphasizes hierarchy. However, Quinn et al contend that organizations need a balance of cultures, and by the end of the movie, the 918 also shows aspects of the clan culture, by emphasizing loyalty and support of the group, and the market culture, by successfully achieving the predetermined end of daylight precision bombing. Savage even displays a little of the adhocracy culture when he uses

creative means to delay the transfer requests long enough to get the buy-in of the men and takes the risk of ignoring a recall command in order to prove to the men that they can hit the target.

### **5. Managing for Execution and Driving for Results – 4.5**

This competency is about getting things done. Quinn et al describe three ways to do this: the people process, or putting the right people in the right places; the strategy process of defining what to do and how to do it; and the operations process of outlining the path to follow to get results. They also list seven leader behaviors for aligning these three processes, most of which Savage practices. Savage knows his business in that he takes the group back to fundamentals, and he gets to know the men by studying their personnel files and interacting with them. He insists on a stark realism, telling the men at one point to consider themselves already dead so they can stop worrying about life back home and get on with their job on base. He sets clear goals and priorities for critical things such as reaching the target on time and hitting it. He follows through by training the men through practice runs to meet these goals. He rewards doers by, for example, visiting Gately in the hospital, but he also punishes non-doers; performance and outcome are clearly linked on an individual level. He expands capabilities by making sure anyone who wants leadership training can get it. Finally, he is honest with others even when delivering difficult messages, though he is not honest with himself about his own limits and as a consequence ends up in a mental breakdown by the end of the film.

### **D. Create: Promoting Change and Encouraging Adaptability**

#### **1. Using Power and Influence Ethically and Effectively -- 5**

Power is defined as “the capacity to mobilize people and resources to get things done.” For this competency, Quinn et al discuss the sources of power as well as strategies and tactics for increasing influence with supervisors, peers, and subordinates. In “Twelve O’Clock High,” Savage gets his power largely from his position, but also from his expertise in military training and his relationship with his commanding officers who put him in charge of the 918.

Accordingly, he uses influence strategies and tactics based mainly on position power, such as legitimate authority (giving directives with the expectation they will be followed), upward appeal (indicating directions are what higher management wants done), and pressure/coercion (threatening punitive action if a directive is not followed). He also uses rational persuasion, a tactic from expertise power, and inspirational appeal, a tactic based on relationship power. In seeking to influence his supervisor, Pritchard, Savage discusses the issues plaguing the 918, providing feedback that the problem lies with its commander, Davenport, and that to fix the problem, the men need not to be protected but to feel pride in their achievements. Savage's main peer in the film is Davenport, who remarkably remains friends even after Savage recommends to Pritchard that he be replaced. One explanation is that Savage doesn't bad-mouth Davenport, but instead accurately diagnoses that Davenport cared too much about his men and not enough about mission. To be an effective transformational leader, Quinn et al point out, one must be "high on task and high on people ... you must learn to do both." Savage does both in influencing his direct reports with methods such as making sure they know exactly what is expected of them, giving them recognition for good performance but also calling out bad, providing constant training and development, holding regular performance appraisals, and emphasizing the ways they all depend on each other. These are all ways that Savage uses power both ethically and effectively, and the men respond to it by giving him their best performance.

## **2. Championing and selling new ideas -- 4**

For this competency, leaders must be able to champion and sell new ideas through substance, or what is communicated, as well as style, or how it is communicated. Quinn et al discuss four types of messages in the CVF for managerial communication, arguing that leaders need to be able to use all of them depending on what is being communicated and why. Savage does use all of them at different points in the film. For example, he uses relational communication, which is open, candid and honest, when he tells the men that fear is normal in

war and some of them will die, but they can stop worrying about it by considering themselves already dead. He uses informational messaging every time he provides basic facts to the men such as where their target is – for example, the first target on German soil – and why it is being targeted – for example, it is a ball bearing factory that undergirds all German industry. Savage uses promotional messaging when he tries to persuade the men to improve their performance. For example, in one briefing he outlines how the Germans have pulled planes off the Russian front and from civilian use to divert to the European front, concluding “They must have heard about the 918!” This is encouragement to the men for performing well so far and challenging them to perform even better. Savage is weakest in transformational messaging, but even there he gets the job done. Like promotional messaging, transformational messaging seeks action, but it also seeks genuine change. The change Savage is seeking from the 918 is the belief that they can carry out daylight precision bombing and the commitment to performance goals that will get them there. However, he communicates this vision not to the entire group, but to one group leader, Bishop, during a private conversation. Fortunately Bishop relays this to the rest of the men, but if he hadn’t, they would have transferred out of the unit and Savage would have failed.

### **3. Fueling and fostering innovation – 4**

An innovation is a products, service or improvement that delivers value to customers and clients. In “Twelve O’Clock High,” the chief innovation is daytime precision bombing. Previously bombing had been done under the cover of night, but in the film, the 918 must learn to do it during the day, at low altitude, without suffering too many losses, because military commanders wanted to get the job done in one trip rather than fighting their way to the target several times, and it was the only way to get the concentration and accuracy needed. Savage signed the order requiring the 918 to undertake daylight precision bombing from 9,000 feet rather than the usual 19,000, but he got this order from his superiors and passed it down to his subordinates. Therefore, he was not creating the innovation so much as he was training and

coaching the men to enact it. Because the military is a hierarchical organization with decision-making authority centered at the top, a key part of this competency – creating innovations through techniques such as brainstorming – doesn't totally apply. However, Savage did have to get the men to buy into the innovation of daylight precision bombing, which he did by creating a space in which they could change their thinking from “hard luck” to “hard work” and figure out how to improve their performance to meet organizational goals.

#### **4. Negotiating Agreement and Commitment -- 5**

This competency deals with how leaders use dialogue, or a thoughtful sharing of viewpoints, to come to agreement. Quinn et al discuss negotiating skills that build trust. Although in a hierarchical organization like the military, the men were not in an equal position to negotiate with Savage, he did have to gain their commitment to the mission, and he did this by following all of the principles of “getting to yes.” He separated the people from the problem by realizing that these men were not simply lazy but needed training and development. He focused on interests not positions by emphasizing fundamental skills and reasons for building them. He “made the pie bigger” by making sure anyone who wanted it got leadership opportunity and coaching. And he used objective criteria such as getting closer to the target and reducing losses. All of this built trust among the men and laid the groundwork for them to successfully execute their mission.

#### **5. Implementing and Sustaining Change - 5**

In this competency, leaders must understand when an organization needs to change and why there is resistance to change. Then they need to use one of the four strategies from the CVF – telling, forcing, participative, or transformational – to implement change. Organizations do not need to change for change's sake, but to align their internal strategies with the external environment. This is why Pritchard put Savage in charge of the 918 – to align its performance and culture with the task of daylight precision bombing which needed to be done to defeat the Third Reich. Naturally, the men of the 918 were at first resistant to this change. The reason they

resisted was simple: They didn't want to die. Davenport had protected them and tried to keep them from having to undertake daylight precision bombing, which had a much greater risk of losses if not carried out at peak performance. Because the men thought they were not capable of daylight precision bombing, they resisted being sent to what they thought would be slaughter – they didn't want, as Bishop said, to be treated as guinea pigs. Savage's task in the 918 was to implement this change despite the resistance. At first he tried implementing change mainly through forcing – by wielding his own authority and punishing anyone who disobeyed. But when that resulted in all the pilots requesting transfers and an impending investigation from the Inspector General, Savage tried a different approach. He worked with Stovall to delay the transfer requests, talked to Bishop to find out what the men needed to buy into the change themselves, and then proceeded to implement that even if it meant faking a radio malfunction with his own commander so he could show his men they were in fact capable of hitting the target. In short, Savage took on a transforming approach to implementing change. One key thing Savage did during this time was to fly missions with his men, providing them with constant direction and feedback, but also showing them he could walk the walk. This inspired respect from the men as an inspirational example to follow. This is when they began to turn around their own performance because they became personally invested in the mission. Engagement rose to the extent that ground crew started to stowaway in missions because they didn't want to miss the action. Savage meanwhile became more personally invested in the men, meaning when losses did occur, they hit him harder whether he admitted it or not. Although Savage seems to blow off the final loss of his air exec Cobb, he breaks down shortly afterwards. However, with the leadership of Gately, which Savage developed in the toughest way possible through the Leper Colony, the 918 goes on to hit its target in German industry. In this way, Savage's leadership transforms the 918 to implement lasting change with daylight precision bombing.

**II. *How did Gen. Savage balance the competing goals of improving commitment and morale versus accomplishing unit mission as he tried to improve the effectiveness of the unit?***

When Savage took over the 918, morale was low and performance was terrible. The unit had no hope of accomplishing the mission of daylight precision bombing. By the end of the film, the men were not only fully engaged in the mission, but were performing at peak capacity to successfully hit a ball bearings factory deep in German territory. How did Savage's leadership allow this transformation to take place? First, Savage never tried to choose between morale and mission. It was his contention that accomplishing unit mission would in itself instill morale and commitment. In other words, he balanced these two opposite parts of the Competing Values Framework by seeing them as two sides of the same coin. From the Compete quadrant, Savage:

- **Communicated a vision** when he explained that constant practice and hitting their targets now would help Americans defeat the Third Reich where it lived in the future.
- **Set goals and objectives** when he set individual goals for each man in the air crew, ensured the goals were challenging yet attainable, and provided continuous coaching and feedback during practice runs, as well as through critiques after missions were over.
- **Motivated the men** by showing them if they expended the right effort in practice runs, they could achieve the outcome of hitting their target in missions – which they did during the “radio malfunction” when they were the only team to hit their target -- and showing that the mission was important because it would lead to the defeat of the Third Reich.
- **Realigned organizational culture** by insisting protocol be followed in saluting, wearing the uniform, checking IDs at the gate, and not going off base without permission, as well as emphasizing loyalty and support for the group by insisting all pilots stay in formation.
- **Managed execution and drove for results** by emphasizing fundamentals, setting clear goals, rewarding doers and punishing non-doers, providing training and development, and being honest even with difficult feedback such as when he demoted Gately.

Savage thought that by emphasizing the competencies in the Compete quadrant, he would at the same time raise the morale and commitment of the men. In this respect he took a very different approach from Davenport, who concentrated on morale and commitment to the exclusion of mission. Davenport's approach got the commitment of the men to him personally – but lost their morale and performance. Savage's approach did not try to exclude morale, but saw it as a by-product of performance. However, he too came close to failing at first because he tried to instill performance through punishment and force rather than collaboration and buy-in. He dealt with the men so harshly that all the pilots requested a transfer, leading to an IG investigation. That investigation was dropped only after the men withdrew the transfer requests, which happened when Savage took on an approach rooted in the Collaborate quadrant. He:

- **Sought to understand others** by asking Bishop why he wanted to transfer out – because he didn't understand why they were fighting the war in the first place.
- **Communicated honestly and effectively** by explaining the reason non-performers were demoted – because if they were not, everyone else would wonder if they can be trusted.
- **Mentored and developed others** such as when he promoted Cobb and Bishop to leadership positions or flew with the Leper Colony to give coaching and feedback.
- **Managed groups and led teams**, such as when he clarified the role of each member of the air crew and holds practice runs to improve the performance of each, or when he shuffled roommate assignments to ensure that each man's loyalty is to the group.
- **Encouraged constructive conflict**, even if at first it was addressed to his own unpopular actions because he knew quick action was needed and the entire war effort was at stake.

Ironically, by moving into collaborative leadership, Savage also became a transformational change agent. By flying on missions with the men, Savage inspired their respect and got their buy-in to the organizational goal of daylight precision bombing, something they never thought they could do under Davenport. The result was a successful operation and lasting change.