



By: Liz Schloemann

There are times as leaders when you expend a lot of effort on a project, a plan, or in some cases, a person. You spend weeks to months building up to the perfect pivotal moment of success, when your effort comes to fruition. You just know that it's going to work because every detail has been captured and every variable accounted for. And then, just before the inevitable success, *it* happens. Your train gets derailed. Someone tells you the plan has changed. The boss is canning your project. The person you were trying to help hits rock bottom.

You are stunned. How can all that effort and time be completely wasted? And yet, as a leader, you must adapt to change. You tell yourself you can make a course correction, that your work can still be salvaged. You pull yourself up by the bootstraps and prepare to dig in, ready to expend even more energy on something that cannot be recovered.

As Newton's first law of motion states, an object in motion will stay in motion unless

impeded by an external force. Similarly, you feel like you must keep going. After weeks or months of working toward your goal, you find yourself on auto-pilot. You have deep-rooted values that prevent you from capitulating.

The best leaders, however, will recognize when it's time to "Chuck it in the f\*ck it bucket", even when you have sunk so much energy into something with no results. Sometimes the best thing you can do is walk away, and instead of trying to salvage the unsalvageable, save yourself. Save your time and energy for something that *will* produce results. Failure bites, but sometimes it's unavoidable. Accept it, learn from it, and move on to face your next challenge.

Take a break. Breathe. Then refocus your energy on your next project or plan. Understand the possibility that this too could be derailed. Army leaders must be flexible problem solvers able to react to new challenges.

You may one day find yourself on the battlefield with a perfect plan, perfectly executed that somehow still result in complete failure. Why? Because the enemy is an unknown variable and he's never going to behave the way you think he should. When that happens, you have to be able to throw your "perfect" plan out and react to contact. You won't have time for regret in the midst of battle, but by focusing on the next step, you can still succeed.

### **Common Chuck-able Situations:**

**Didn't get the award or evaluation you thought you deserved?** Unfortunately, there's not much you can do to affect this. It can be a huge disappointment to work really hard for several years only to walk away with nothing to show for it. As painful as it is, it happens quite often. Take the experience and use it as an example of what not to do when you are put in leadership positions. Don't let it stop you from trying your best. Your hard work likely doesn't go unrecognized.

**Tried to rehabilitate a Soldier and they keep getting in trouble?** Believe it or not, not everyone wants to be helped. If you have given a Soldier multiple chances at rehabilitation and they continue to fail, it is time to let go. Putting more effort into someone who is not motivated to improve will not only continue to frustrate you, but it will also damage the morale of your organization. Consider how your other Soldiers may view your actions, especially if your problem Soldier receives perceived preferential treatment. Would it be fair to administer UCMJ to the other troubled Soldiers who have been granted fewer chances? Not everyone belongs in the Army, no matter how much potential they may have.

**Planned a major event for months and your boss cancelled it?** These things happen. Trust your boss. Understand that there was a reason for the cancellation, even knowing how much work you put into planning it. A good boss will still recognize your planning effort, regardless if it was executed or not. Think of it as a practical exercise for the next major planning event you conduct. You likely gained some good experience from it, and can use it in your future endeavors. Sometimes things happen at higher levels that we don't see, and developing a bad attitude could ultimately damage the trust your boss has in you.

**Trained really hard to score a 300 on your APFT only to get injured?** Injuries are, sadly, part of being in the military. We train really hard to be physically and mentally tough, but sometimes the physical stress is more than your body can handle. Not only will you miss a perfect score APFT, you probably won't take one for a while. Time to switch gears and focus on rehabilitation. Setbacks are hard, but usually temporary. Depending on the level of your injury, you may have to temper your ambitions. Setting a date for when you think you will be able to take your next APFT and work towards that. Accept that after recovering from an injury, a 300 may be out of reach for the time being, but could be a future goal.

## **Conclusion**

These are just a few situations demonstrating the importance of moving on. Think of a

situation in wholly dedicated yourself to only to come out disappointed on the other end. Could you have reacted differently and cut your losses?

When you learn the right time to chuck an effort, you will become more resilient. The hard truth about resiliency is that you must acknowledge a terrible situation for what it is and accept it exactly as it is in order to move forward. It's like forgiving someone who is not sorry. You are never going to change the situation or the person. The only thing you can change is *you*.

Like forgiveness, resiliency is about how you change yourself to move on from something that could consume you. The more you practice it, the easier it gets to identify these situations. The key is that that once you chuck something, you should move forward with the same level of passion you had before. Resiliency is about you, so never lose sight of yourself when things aren't going your way.

*CPT Schloemann is an Army Military Intelligence officer, most recently serving as a brigade S2 at Fort Bliss, TX. Working at an Mobilization Force Generating Installation gave her a unique perspective on adaptive planning and training during critical missions*

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