

THE COMPELLING JOURNEY™

A PLAYBOOK™ FOR SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE GROWTH

- ▲ Strategic Planning is easy:
Executing is the real challenge
- ▲ Most plans naturally default to
examining organizational barriers
- ▲ Overcoming leaders' personal
barriers requires some
Compelling Knowledge



*“Irrational barriers and ancient prejudices fall quickly **when the question of survival itself is at stake.**”*

– John F. Kennedy

Overcoming The Barriers to Action – “The Compelling Knowledge”

What would cause someone to act a certain way despite a powerful personal reluctance to do so? **Sergeant York did.**

Alvin York lived in the backwoods of Tennessee. As a young man, he was a hell-raiser and a tippler. According to the movie about his life, he experienced an event that inspired a strong faith journey.

Foremost among his newly adopted religious tenets was a staunch belief that killing other humans was wrong. A problem arose for him when, like many young men at the time, he was drafted into the Army to serve in France in World War I. The strength of his beliefs drove him to attempt to register as a Conscientious Objector, but his request was denied.



Reluctantly, he joined others in basic training. He surprised his drill instructor because of his proficiency in firearms. He was a crack shot, having hunted from a very early age. Because of his prowess with a rifle, he was promoted to corporal in his company to help train others. **Nevertheless, he clung to his religious belief that he should not kill anyone and shipped off to France without his superiors knowing if he could be counted on in action.**

When he was sent to the front, he became involved in an action that took him behind enemy lines with his patrol. Under heavy fire, he flanked the enemy, killing two dozen and capturing several hundred, which he and the eight or so members remaining in his patrol successfully guided back to Allied lines.

For this daring exploit, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor and is celebrated as a hero to this day.

Alvin York believed in the Call to Action: Preserving Freedom. He had to confront his own Personal Barrier to Action – his belief that taking human lives was wrong. When the time came, he used his own Compelling Knowledge to overcome that barrier and respond to the call. When questioned by officers in an after-action review of the incident, he was asked what caused him to engage and kill the enemy, he responded that he had acted to save lives.

In our last post, we discussed that personal barriers to responding to the Call-to-Action can derail change initiatives. When leaders balk at executing a plan that has been worked through and approved by all, it gives everyone in the enterprise an excuse to avoid doing something that might be outside their habitual approaches to their work.

By getting the leaders to declare what might cause them to hesitate to follow through with some part of a plan, they create an environment of accountability and promote an atmosphere of trust. The act of acknowledging that there could be a circumstance that they might be reluctant to act on displays vulnerability, one of the foundations for trust. The next step is to discern what knowledge for each team member is so compelling that they will rely on it to overcome their previously discussed hesitancy to respond to the call. In this fashion, team members can support one another in preparing for the reluctance they have already identified. Accountability is enhanced because not only have the members agreed on the Call to Action, but each has also identified that they choose to respond and have discussed openly why it is compelling for them to do so.

As your organization defines its Call-to-Action, spend time identifying the barriers and the Compelling Knowledge that will sustain your leaders in its pursuit. Once this is firmly settled, discussing Organizational Barriers is next.