

Management 101



by **Bill Corden**

On a mountain biking vacation back many years ago we rode with a young feller maybe 30 years old. He was a lieutenant in the US Navy who had just returned from his first tour of duty on a nuclear submarine, he was so happy to be able to see daylight again.

And he told me this very cute tale.

Fresh out of Officer Training College he was given a crew of about twelve seamen to manage, he first reported to the Old Man who sent him off to meet his charges.

Well, it wasn't a very good meeting, as they had all just come off a very troublesome voyage, with in-fighting and crew politics making for a very unhappy group, very low morale and no team spirit whatsoever.

After a fractious couple of hours, he reported back to the old

man and the story went something like this.

“Sir, you’ve got a lot of problems down there, the entire crew is unhappy, there’s personality clashes, there’s crew members who aren’t properly trained, there’s some who’ve threatened to call in sick before we set sail, some don’t even want to be on the Sub, it’s a bad, bad situation.”

Old Man: ” Sit down son, sorry Lieutenant.... let me give you a brief, non-mechanical education on the matters of running a ship.

The U.S. Navy isn’t paying you \$70,000 a year to come to the captain and tell him he’s got problems. The U.S. Navy is paying you to take charge of a group of men, find out what drives them and what it takes to pull them together as a team. **You**, therefore, identify all of the impediments to success and come up with processes to alleviate them . You put all of these processes together and see how they work and fix the leaks.

Then when you’ve done all that you come back to me and say:

“Captain, Sir I have taken over charge of my unit and everything is under control.

“There were some major problems to begin with, but I have identified them and have resolved most of them, there’s still a few outstanding issues that I have to deal with, but I expect to have them sorted out before we leave port. If there are any major setbacks that I cannot handle myself, I will provide you with a report and my recommendations through the chain of command.”

Old Man: “Now I think you know what to do next?”

“Yes sir. Captain sir.”