**AFTER ACTION REPORT TO STOCKDALE CENTER FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

**Introduction:**

Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership is grateful to support your recent attendance at a leadership conference/activity. We look forward to knowing more about your recent participation as it applies to your role as a key influencer of midshipmen.

Stockdale Center seeks to be a strong advocate for future leadership initiatives, seminars and leadership-strengthening opportunities. Therefore, we continue to collaborate with stakeholders, including donors, to establish high-level objectives that communicate the potential value of your particular conference/activity for other USNA key influencers.

We seek your participation in this process. Your responses are highly valued and we will review your feedback as you help us continuously improve our ability to strengthen leadership among faculty, coaches, and staff.

**Please submit your responses within five days.**

1. Your name and title: Nick Neforas, LT USN 6th Company Officer

2. Title of conference/activity: Creating High Velocity Organizations

3. Location of conference/activity: MIT Cambridge, MA

4. Conference/activity dates: 13-14 June

5. Specific role at conference/activity: Participant

6. How did your attendance accelerate USNA’s mission to graduate leaders, enhance the importance and value of ethical leadership for USNA key influencers, and strengthen your personal ability to model ethical leadership at USNA?

My attendance enhanced USNA’s mission because I was afforded the opportunity to interact with and learn from people outside the military. One thing of particular interest was the professor began the course by asking the class what promises do you make at work, and to whom. Most participants spoke in terms of creating a product, getting it to consumers, and providing timely and accurate support to their customers. Recognizing how my background differed, the facilitator asked me to share my response with the group. I discussed the promise mostly in terms of to the midshipmen, that is to mentor, coach, and lead them, as well as hold them accountable and ensure they are prepared to do the right thing above all else. This elicited some conversation about producing a product not as a physical good but rather the development of our people. That question in addition to the phrase “when the urgent pushes out the essential” by the other lecturer resonated with me. Together, this phrase and the idea of making a promise to provide for others served as a reminder to me of why we are here at USNA. In fulfilling the Company Officer role, many times our administrative responsibilities, which I’ll call management function take significant time away from our mentorship and development of midshipmen or the leadership part of the job. It was beneficial to be reminded about the most important aspects of this billet.

7. How did this experience fit into your long-term goals and objectives?

My long term goals are continued education in my own development with respect to leadership and passing what I learn to others. This experience was unique in that as the only active duty member in attendance I had the opportunity to learn from others and share my experiences with a group that was unfamiliar with the DoD. Being able to communicate with and learn in various work or educational circles and continued cultivation of those skills will serve me well wherever I go.

8. What personal learning objectives did you achieve as a result of your attendance and participation?

Drawing parallels between the military and civilian world and learning from both was achieved during the course. To create a “high velocity organization” a group must move quickly, however velocity implies you are also headed in the right direction. We examined pitfalls that inhibit our ability as individuals and groups to achieve this. At the organizational level, one topic discussed was the tendency to add but never subtract projects, even as we maintain the same resources, to include human capital. There was a collective groan of agreement in the room as we talked about this as it seems to plague most workplaces. Complimenting the idea of add but never subtract are many of the biases we fall victim to. One being sunken cost, where we’ve invested so much time and/or money into a project we refuse to let it go or change direction even when an unfavorable outcome is obvious. As much as we complain about these things, it is not the military or business as a whole at fault, but rather our willingness to allow it to happen and not speak up. This struck a chord with me, because there is a predisposition, be it for a FITREP or to please our boss to not give pushback when something is seemingly unimportant or contributes to the urgent pushing out the essential.

One other takeaway worth mentioning was the concept of risk and its role in our behavior. I’ve always viewed risked in terms of recognizing risk and mitigating it. From a psychological standpoint the lecturer spoke about our predisposition to be averse to risk when we have something to gain, but more willing to accept risk if we face a loss. Being mindful of this I will examine areas in my current and future jobs where I think it is important to take risks, not to catch up, but instead to get the group ahead.

9. Briefly describe how you intend to implement what you gained from this conference/activity?

There are three ways I plan to implement what I learned from the conference. First, being mindful of my purpose as a company officer, to lead, mentor, and coach midshipmen. I have a renewed sense of maintaining that as a priority and not letting collateral and administrative duties interfere with that to the same degree as last semester. Second, I will draw on some of the examples listed above as I interact with and teach midshipmen and pass that on to them. Lastly, I have already begun sharing the experience with my peers, discussing ways to ensure we convey our thoughts and ideas to leadership within Bancroft Hall, and continually evaluating the process by which we develop midshipmen.

10. How will you evaluate these outcomes?

The evaluation of these outcomes begins with time management. Effectively carving out time each day to meet with individual midshipmen and seek out those in need of mentorship can be evaluated through the interactions I have each day. The goal here being quality over quantity of interactions. Another specific way to gauge these outcomes is my current project of revising the OCONUS travel procedures. Evaluating the process has shown it needs to be revised, with the next step being to meet with all stakeholders and actually improve the process. Judging whether or not this change improves the process will take place in the fall as midshipmen submit travel paperwork.

11. Please provide a statement on the value of this experience for current and potential donors/stakeholders of:

a.) the value of Stockdale Center’s influence-the-influencer initiative

b.) the value of this specific conference/activity.

The value of the influence-the-influencer initiative cannot be overstated. One critical piece worth highlighting is that these programs supplement the education provided by the Stockdale center. The Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership is made unique through the ethical component interjected into the courses it provides. The subject matter of this specific course proved beneficial because it addressed many of the challenges faced at the Naval Academy with respect to resource allocation and time management.

12. Why (or why not) would you recommend this experience for other USNA key influencers?

I would recommend this experience for USNA faculty and staff. An overarching theme of the course was to constantly seek opportunities to learn. As influencers it is important to continually evaluate our knowledge and experiences and be willing to reflect on and question what we know. This experience served as a reminder to continue my on improvement as I work to do the same for others.