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Military Quotes - Planning

PART 1: PLANS ARE WORTHLESS

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"Plans are worthless, but planning is everything."

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

I love this quote because I do believe that plans are worthless when they are always changing. They change because they need to meet the ever-shifting landscape of not only our projects, but the world around us. Planning, as I learned in the military, is critical for bringing multiple people and/or organizations together to accomplish a common goal.

The military understands this, probably with more clarity than any other organization in the world, and their planning techniques are built on the fact that this is a necessity. There are two concepts that I think are crucial for this realization and can be used by all.

First, the concept of commander's intent. Commander's intent, "succinctly describes what constitutes success for the operation. It includes the operation's purpose, key tasks, and the conditions that define the end state." The key here, is that everyone has a clear understanding of what 'success' truly means. This allows the commander and their

subordinates to make logical decisions that support their intent. It is this level of expectation and trust that allows employees and employers alike to succeed and enjoy the role(s) that they fill.

Second, is the idea that no task is ever given without a purpose behind it. In army terms, we called this 'Task and Purpose' (pretty clever, eh?). For example, let's say you receive the following order: "Suppress the enemy at the hill so that another unit can safely navigate around them without casualties and clear the objective." Both the tasks and their purposes are aligned with the intent of clearing the objective. This allows subordinate commanders to determine the best way to accomplish their purpose while ensuring they understand how it fits into the larger picture.

Now, think of your own operations. If you direct every single step and action of your subordinates, you are likely to be providing them with a worthless plan. However, if they are involved in the preparation, you provide them with a definition of success, and you make known the purposes behind your directives, you will likely provide them with the "everything" that planning is supposed to be.

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