

# The Inner Wingman: Trusting Yourself

**Bottom line: If you don't trust yourself, neither will your co-workers. (And neither will your customer...or even your spouse!)**

by *Waldo Waldman*

**H**ave you ever wondered what it takes before a fighter pilot can strap on a \$30 million jet and fly a mission for his country?

Well, before fighter pilots ever get to fly, we have to demonstrate expertise in tactics, technology, threats, systems, etc. Extensive hours of study, simulation, and practice missions must be accomplished before we are designated "M/R"—MISSION READY. This intense qualification process is critical to establishing the foundation for being a "Top Gun," and if we don't qualify, we don't fly! We may even get our wings taken away...permanently.

Simply put, we're not trusted to fly with other wingmen until we can fully trust ourselves! The "M/R" program isn't about teamwork, building relationships, or stress management. It's about getting in the books, relentless training, and disciplining yourself to be the best.

In business and life, before you can be trusted to execute a mission and work with others, you, too, have to become Mission Ready. You have to trust yourself to win!

*You have to Prepare!*

*You have to Train!*

*You have to Sacrifice!*

It's about personal leadership, and you're the Pilot in Command.

As you can imagine, the process of becoming M/R isn't very fun. However, the fun starts *after* you have paid the price to turn into a winner. And, by the way, it's not about natural talent, either. Look at Michael Jordan: He was cut from his high school basketball team. He became great because he practiced long after his teammates left the court. Famous Olympic gymnast Peter Vidmar had a simple secret to winning the gold medal: He worked out when he

wanted to, and he worked out when he didn't want to. Finally, let's take a look at what the great Arnold Schwarzenegger once said: *Nobody ever got muscles watching me lift the weights!*

I have a question for you: *Have you lifted your OSHA weights today?*

## Fear vs. Confidence

At work, you have to be skilled with the latest safety standards, regulations, and procedures. From emergency preparedness and biological agents awareness to fire protection procedures, manufacturing process safety, Federal Agency Program (FAP) guidelines, health care, fitness programs, driving safety programs, and more, you have to constantly sharpen your sword. As a corporate manager, you need to stay on top of your team and be a trusted resource to them so they can come to you for help. You have to continually build and nurture relationships with colleagues and industry partners and sharpen your management skills by constant study, attending seminars, and one-on-one feedback with your staff.

You, and no one else, have to lift the weights and develop health and safety muscles. Responsibility lies with you and *not* with your supervisor or your peers. It takes dedication, discipline, and focus, and it's not easy. But this is how you develop what I call your *Inner Wingman*. Real leaders are in touch with their Inner Wingman.

Real leaders don't "demand" compliance to rules, regulations, and policies about health and safety in the workplace. They "command" it through their example and through the respect they garner by their actions. As General George Crook (a famous general from the 1800s) stated, "Example is the best general order."

When you trust your inner wingman, you become confident. Confidence breeds action, which leads to performance, which results in joy. People who lack confidence more often than not are fearful. They fear change, failure, and rejection. Fearful people have a survival mentality, but confident people have a winning mentality. Confident people are enthusiastic and passionate about winning. They have positive attitudes. As you can imagine, it's impossible to promote health and safety in an environment where people are fearful of making mistakes. What kind of environment do you want to foster in your workplace? Isn't it easier to work with others and do business with people who are positive and *trustworthy*?

Bottom line: If you don't trust yourself, neither will your co-workers. (And neither will your customer...or even your spouse!)

So before you start complaining that nobody complies with the health and safety standards in your organization, ask yourself whether you've done the heavy lifting necessary to build trust in yourself. In business and life, nobody is flying your jet but you. You must be in control. You must set the vector as a leader for your team.

Remember, the best safety and health wingmen are those who are Mission Ready and can execute their own missions successfully and thus contribute to the success of their organization's mission. Leadership begins (and ends) with you!

**Push it up!® ■**

**Waldo**

*Waldo Waldman builds team unity within organizations as a high-energy-leadership inspirational speaker. A former combat-decorated fighter pilot with corporate sales experience, Waldo brings an exciting and valuable message to organizations by using fighter pilot strategies as building blocks for peak performance, teamwork, leadership, and trust. He has worked with dozens of corporations such as Baptist Health, Honeywell, and NY Life and national associations such as Associated Builders and Contractors and the National Rural Electrical Cooperative. To learn more about Waldo's seminars or to register for his free newsletter, "The Wingman," visit [www.yourwingman.com](http://www.yourwingman.com) or call 866-WALDO-16 (925-3616).*