

Kitchen Table Discussion (Special Operations Approach to an after-action review)

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Agenda - The military After Action Review (AAR)

- Background and rationale
- Example (Conventional)
- Special Operations AAR Approach
- Comparison (SOF vs. Conventional)
- Application to Fire Fighting

After Action
Review
(The Army's
mechanism to
internal
improvements)

- What did we set out to do?
- What did we do?
- 3 things that went well/3 things that we can improve on
- Typically conducted in a large group setting
- Everyone provides input from their lens
- Leaders write down key points -> Integrate lessons learned to future events

After Action Review Example

FACTS

- Explosively formed penetrators (EFP) Improvised Explosive Devices arrive in Iraq circa 2005.
- After multiple AAR's following countless deaths due to successful IED strikes, DOD begins mounting "rhino mounts on vehicles" incurring millions of dollars in cost.
- Successfully defeats EFP IED's for approximately 6 months before enemy delayed initiation a few seconds and continued killing US Service Members

OUTCOME

- AAR is a reactionary process after an event or something bad occurs
- Does not enable critical thinking to immediately enable decision making to save lives
- Extremely expensive





Special Operations Approach to Decision Making

- Picture – What is it and why do you think it's important to our conversation
- Relevance – What was the response to the incident from the team on the ground?
- Decision Making – Why is contingency planning so vital and where does that fall into the after-action review?

OUTCOME

- Ground mission continued without any change.
- Explosives were pre-staged to destroy the helicopter in the event of a crash.
- Wargaming contingencies enabled rapid decision making.

Blackhawk Down vs. Zero Dark Thirty

What is the difference?

AAR/Kitchen Table

- Reactionary in nature to discuss outcomes following actions
- Forces leaders to rely on SOP's delaying decisions in response to contingencies
- Slow to implement changes once an issue is identified

Contingency Focused Review

- Proactive in nature, discussing possible contingencies to have plans in place
- Mitigates leaders from pausing to review changes and make new decisions
- Enables preservation of time and resources

Applying the SOF AAR approach to the Kitchen Table

- Applicable principles
 - Formalize and canonize outputs
 - Leader responsibilities
 - Element responsibilities
 - FF responsibilities
- Connection to leadership exercise:
 - Which leader do you need on the battle ground?
 - Which leader do you need at the Kitchen Table?
 - Can they be the same leader?
 - Who is responsible for capture and integration of the AAR outputs?
 - Other thoughts?

Why does it matter?

How does it apply?

- Time saved in knowing decision points equals lives saved
- After Action Reviews/Kitchen Table discussions change from **reactive to proactive**, focusing on decision point management
- Leaders can remain operationally focused (up and out); manpower and resource allocation
- Operators know the algorithm of decision making and focus on execution (down and in); drill and action



Insert SOF Graphic

Insert FD Graphic

Remember, you can always talk about what happened around the kitchen table afterwards, but it's always too late to plan once a call for action occurs.