Three Little Lessons

When to Say No
When to Let Go
When to Rock The Status Quo

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When to Say No

- I was given a job by MSFC to finish instrumenting the Hubble Space Telescope as it was shipped from CA to KSC by boat
- My budget was $85k
  - I found out that the original budget was $250K
  - The system had serious drawbacks
- I was getting a bad feeling about this job

When to Say No - continued

- I had been told "you can't turn down a job"
  - We (the Directorate) accept all jobs
  - If you refuse to do a job, you will jeopardize your career

When to Say No - Lessons Learned

- You can say "NO"
- Keeping your integrity and doing the right thing can enhance your career and your mythos
  - Any job I do will be successful
  - Won't accept otherwise
  - All jobs will be first class or not at all
- Don't compromise your standards
- Do your home work

When to Let Go

- After 51L all flight and ground systems were reviewed

- Three systems that I reviewed were selected for major upgrades that had to be in place prior to Return-To-Flight

- One, the Oxygen Deficiency Monitoring System, a $1.5 M job, I finished on time, but suddenly my costs surged to over $3M

When to Let Go - continued

- I thought my reputation was at stake
  - What do I do?
    - I asked for an IG audit
    - I asked for a contract audit
    - No one would take action
- After a while I figured out no one cared
  - My line had been used to park costs
  - Only the schedule mattered

When to Let Go - Lessons Learned

- A job is successful if the customer is happy
- Different projects have different main drivers
  - Ask the customer where the most flexibility exists
  - Flexibility and drivers can change as the project progresses
    - HUMS with FRF for summer of leaks
    - HGDS with system failures

When to Rock The Status Quo

- After delivering the 3 systems from my previous story, I volunteered to go help NASA/SPC Operations get the systems ready for launch
  - Large sequence of checkout and testing
  - Little did I know that our systems were the "long tent pole" in the schedule (KICS)
  - Highly scrutinized

When to Rock The Status Quo - continued

- I finally figured out - scrutiny meant power
  - I was invincible
    - As long as I worked longer and harder and ...
    - Was getting the job done
- Called company V.P.'s, Directorate heads, ..
  - No fear
  - What does it take, who do I have to talk to
  - My team became fearless
- Had the systems ready 2 weeks early

When to Rock The Status Quo - Lessons Learned

- When the fire is hottest and the scrutiny the highest, your influence rises
    - Your management has a stake in it too
- You are not always the highest priority
    - Know when you are and when you aren't and behave accordingly
- If you can't be stopped, you won't be stopped
- Your team will adopt your attitude