War And Media Operations: The US Military And The Press From Vietnam To Iraq

It’s Your Ship: Management Techniques For The Best Damn Ship In The Navy

The Case Against Israel’s Enemies: Exposing Jimmy Carter And Others Who Stand In The Way Of Peace

by Naveen Sharma


Reminded of Tony Hayward’s infamous media gaffs, I was quite tickled when I came across War and Media Operations. I was looking forward to having a good read about the relationship, or the lack thereof, between the media and the military. How fitting that as I checked out the book, I came across an article in an Egyptian newspaper with a photo digitally altered to make appear that Egyptian president Hossni Mubarak was the individual leading the Middle East peace talks.

The most immediate impression when reading the book is that it does not focus entirely on the media and military. The book dedicates a couple of chapters to understanding the military and military policy on strategic innovation. It substantiates its examples with cleverly created tables and mind maps which really help the reader understand the author’s points. The only problem is that, given the depth of content within the first few chapters, the book is not a light read. However, as you get into the core of the subject matter, the author provides you with excellent time lines and descriptions of events leading up to each conflict the USA has been involved in and the place the media had in them.

The author neatly shows us the evolution of the military mindset towards the media over the generations and from conflict to conflict. He also provides easy-to-remember tag-lines to group the various operations the United States took part in and the media’s involvement in them. This helps the reader remember the lessons learned.
book review

It’s Your Ship is a Business Week, Wall Street Journal and New York Times Best Seller authored by Captain Michael Abrashoff, commanding officer of the USS Benfold, a ship with poor retention rates, dismal performance and a crew performing below potential. Captain Abrashoff describes in this book how, as the commanding officer, he turned the USS Benfold into “the best damn ship in the Navy”. He conveys this through stories of his experiences on board, describing different scenarios and events. If you are expecting an in-depth analysis of his management tactics, you will be disappointed.

The book is an easy read and the lessons learned from reading his stories are very similar to those a young boy would learn from listening to his grandfather. The book provides an entertaining platform to learn from someone else’s experiences.

The book is divided into chapters based on a particular value Michael Abrashoff uses in his management technique. He discusses what many of us already ‘know’ as good leadership skills such as “Lead by Example”, “Listen Aggressively” and “Take Calculated Risks”. In that respect, the book does not reveal any novel leadership trait that a successful manager should have. Rather, he shows how using these traits in the appropriate manner at the appropriate time makes a good leader.

For example, Michael Abrashoff once made a Third Class Petty Officer the person in charge of the quarterdeck. Usually meant