



**National
Transportation
Safety Board**

**Lessons from the ashes:
The critical role of leadership
in promoting safety**

Robert L. Sumwalt, III

“Leadership is about influence.
Nothing more. Nothing less.”

- John Maxwell



NTSB

Thomson, GA

February 2013



Accident aircraft prior to N-number change to N777VG.



1993

Imagery Date: 1/29/2015 33°31'35.58" N 82°30'06.95" W elev 490 ft eye alt 8059 ft



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1993

Google earth

Imagery Date: 1/29/2015 33°31'41.29" N 82°30'08.01" W ele



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Left wing at edge of tree line



Failed Leadership



NTSB

Failed Leadership

“the flight crewmembers’ failure to perform the flight control check before takeoff, their attempt to take off with the gust lock system engaged

...the flight crew’s habitual noncompliance with checklists...”

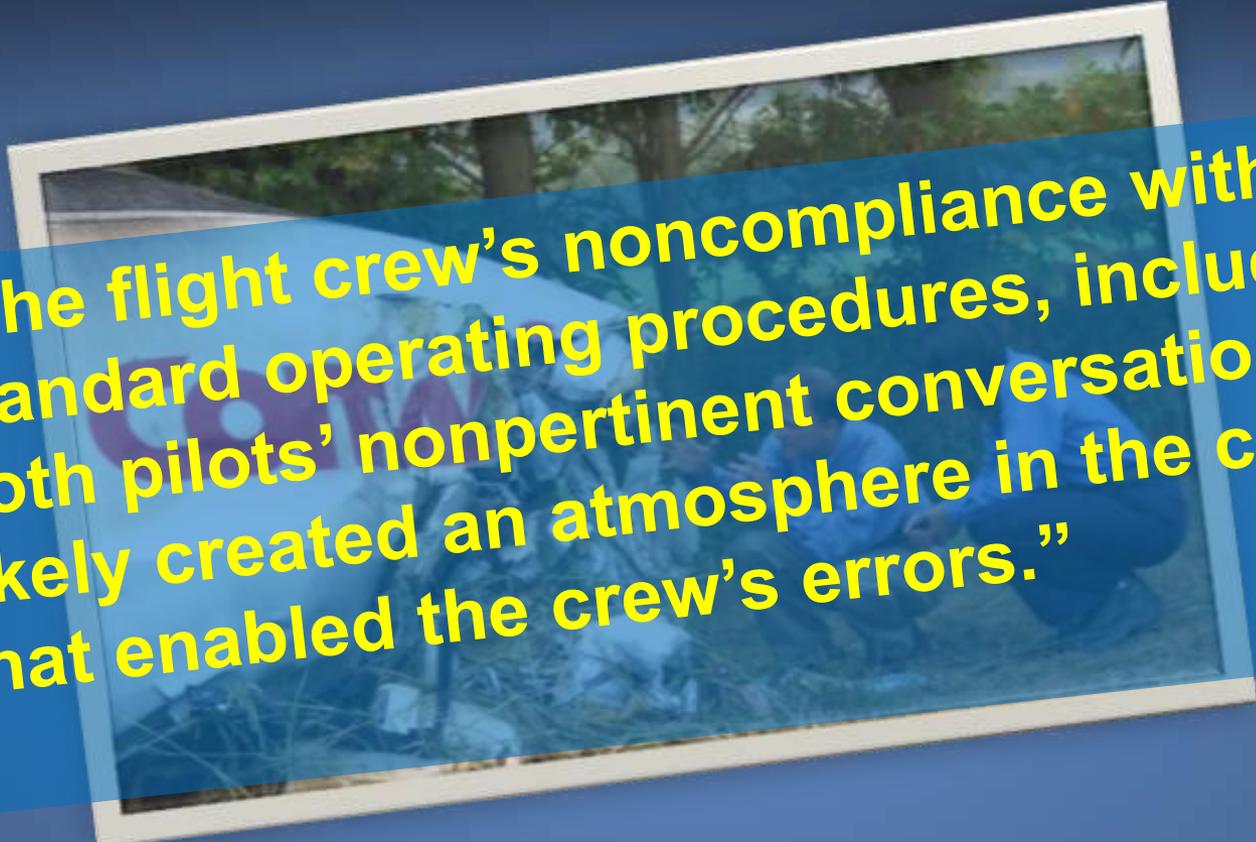


Failed Leadership



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Failed Leadership

A photograph of a crash site, showing a white aircraft fuselage and debris on a grassy field. The image is tilted and has a blue semi-transparent overlay with yellow text. The text reads: "The flight crew's noncompliance with standard operating procedures, including ... both pilots' nonpertinent conversation, most likely created an atmosphere in the cockpit that enabled the crew's errors."

“The flight crew’s noncompliance with standard operating procedures, including ... both pilots’ nonpertinent conversation, most likely created an atmosphere in the cockpit that enabled the crew’s errors.”



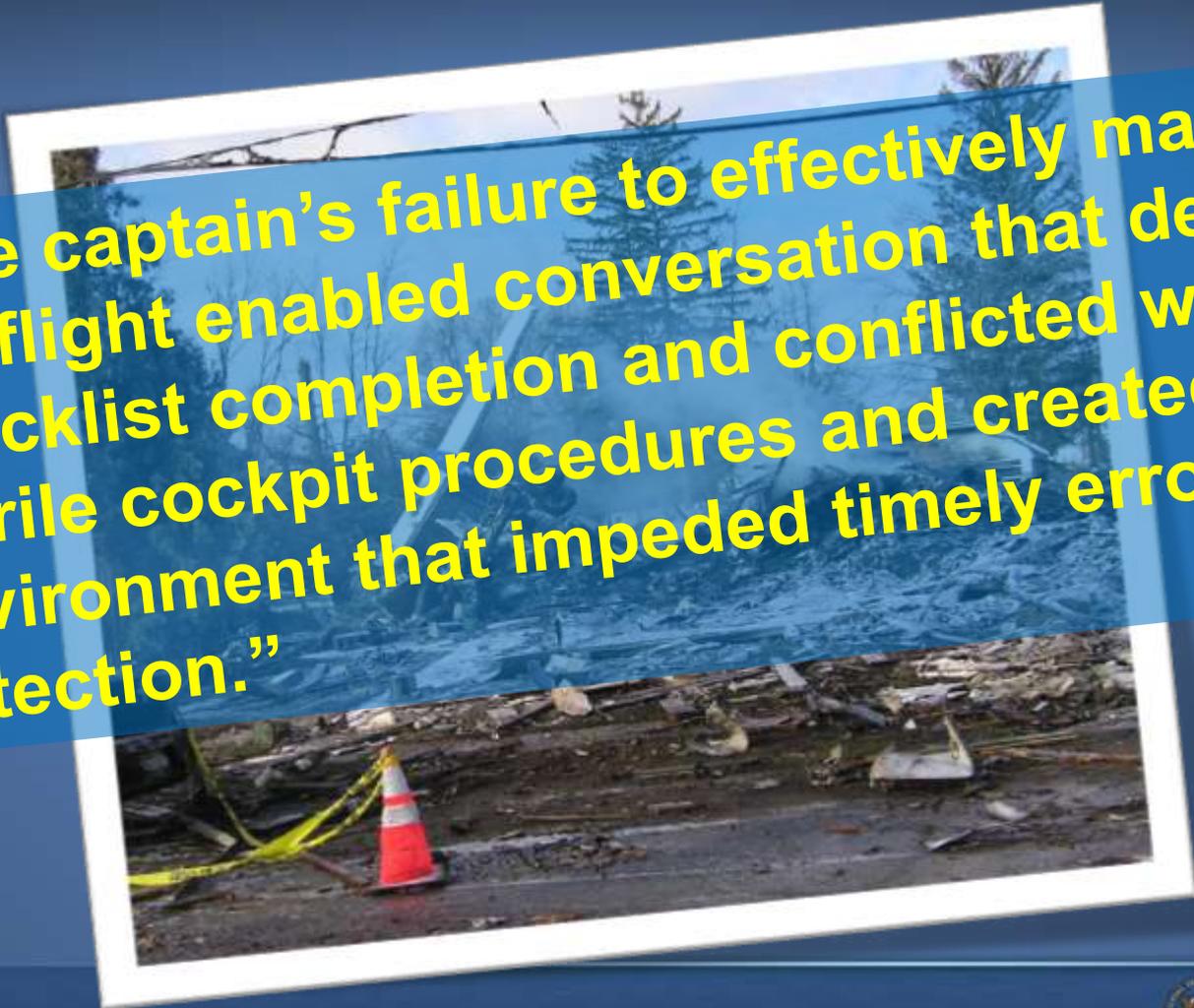
Failed Leadership



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Failed Leadership

“The captain’s failure to effectively manage the flight enabled conversation that delayed checklist completion and conflicted with sterile cockpit procedures and created an environment that impeded timely error detection.”



Failed Leadership

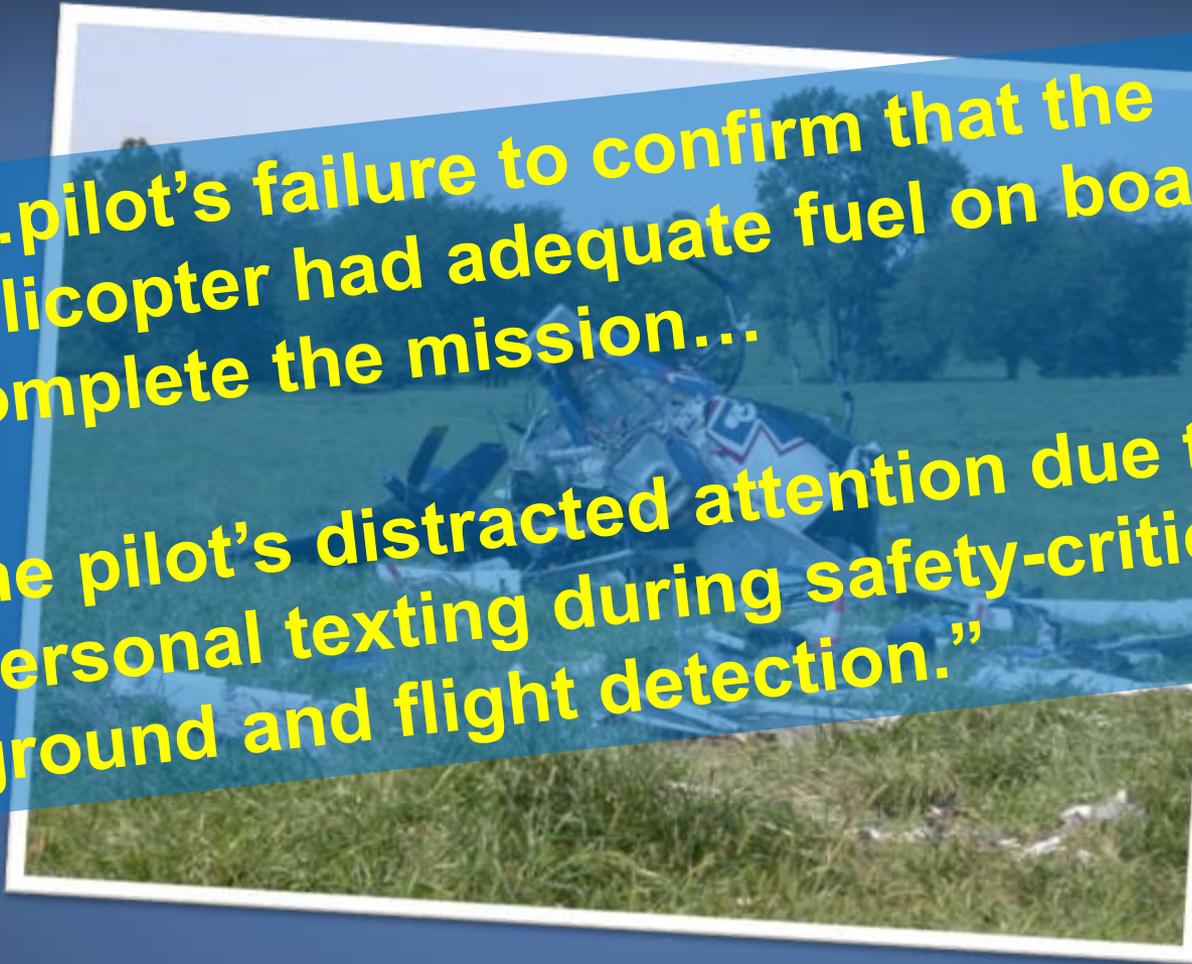


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Failed Leadership

“...pilot’s failure to confirm that the helicopter had adequate fuel on board to complete the mission...”

the pilot’s distracted attention due to personal texting during safety-critical ground and flight detection.”



Failed Leadership



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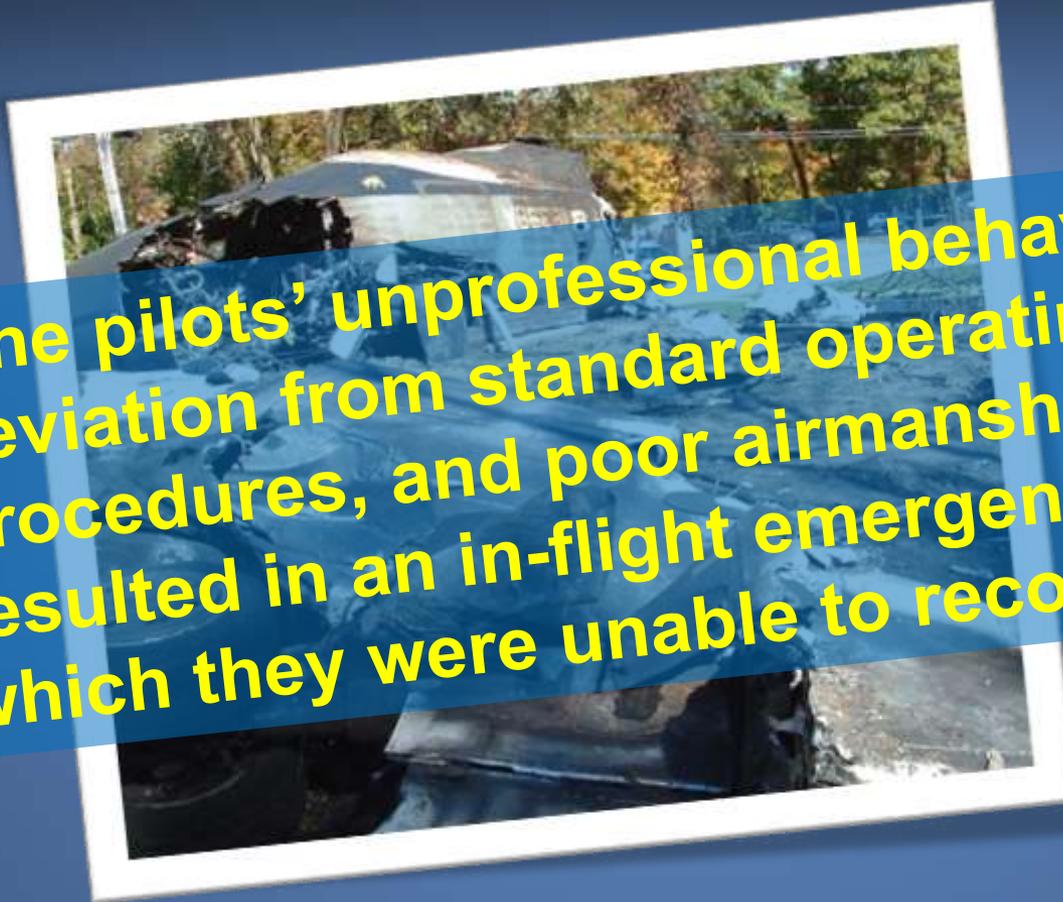
Failed Leadership

“The flight crewmembers’ unprofessional behavior, including their nonadherence to sterile cockpit procedures ... which distracted them from their primary flight-related duties and led to their failure to correctly set and verify the flaps; ... the flight crewmembers’ lack of checklist discipline.”

Failed Leadership



Failed Leadership



“the pilots’ unprofessional behavior, deviation from standard operating procedures, and poor airmanship, which resulted in an in-flight emergency from which they were unable to recover.”

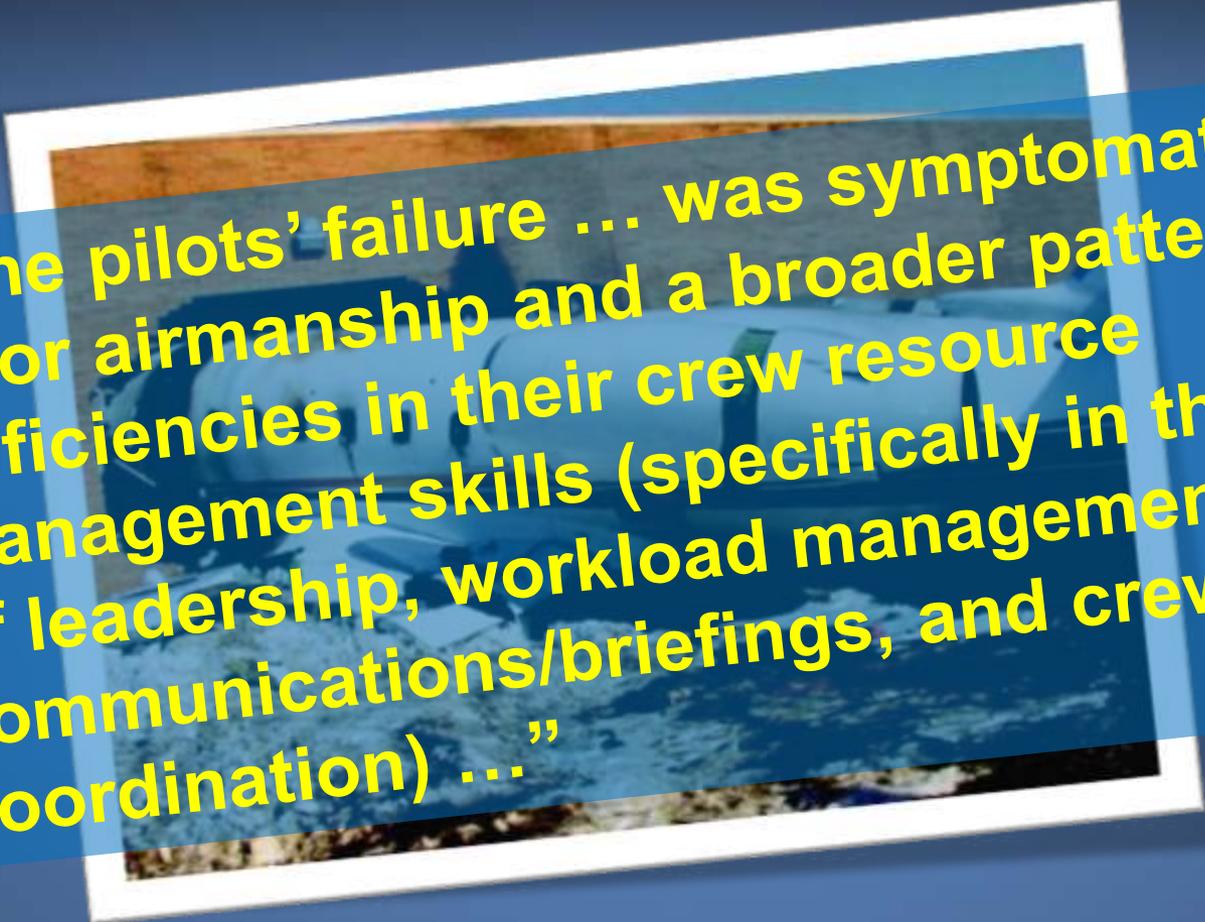


Failed Leadership



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Failed Leadership



“The pilots’ failure ... was symptomatic of poor airmanship and a broader pattern of deficiencies in their crew resource management skills (specifically in the areas of leadership, workload management, communications/briefings, and crew coordination) ...”

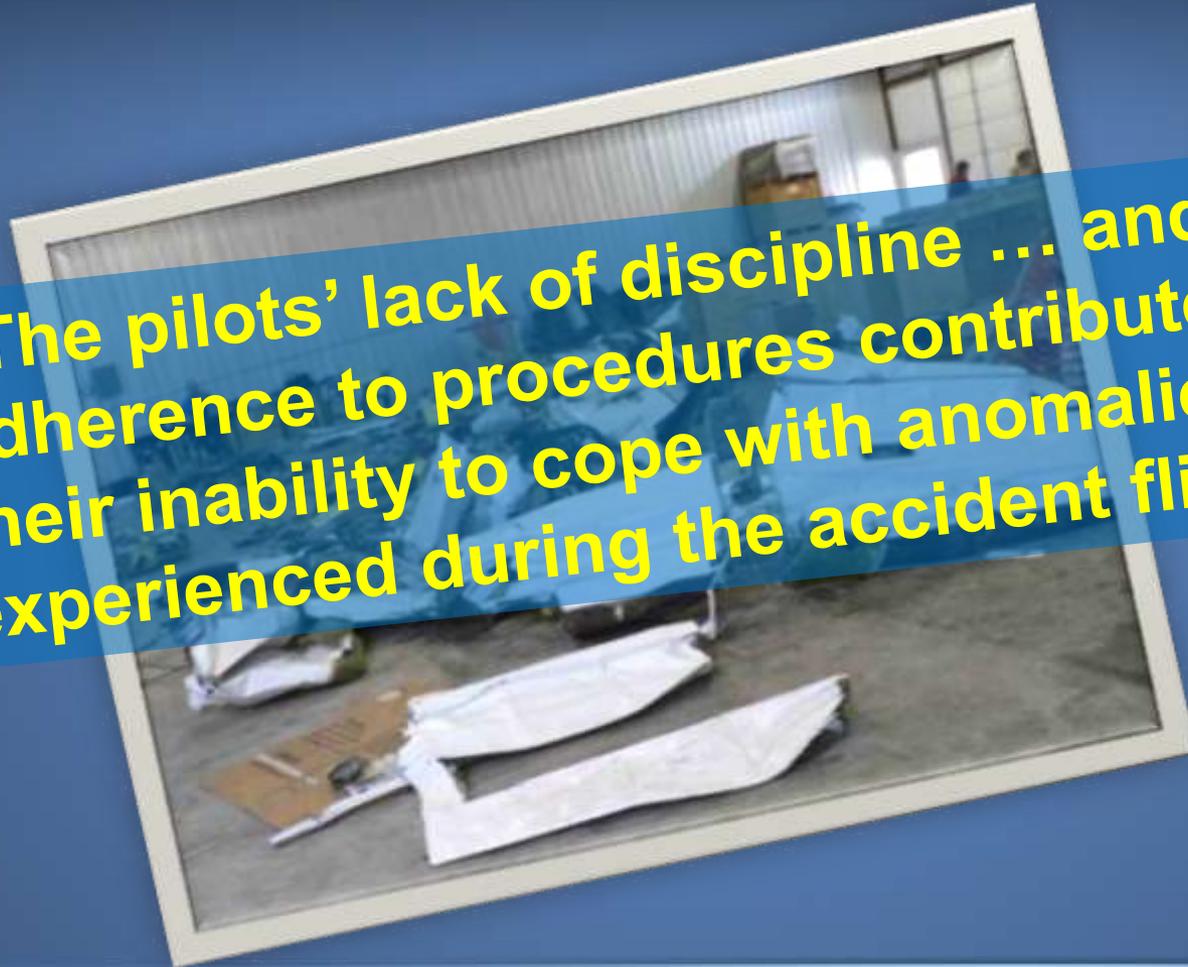


Failed Leadership



Failed Leadership

“The pilots’ lack of discipline ... and adherence to procedures contributed to their inability to cope with anomalies experienced during the accident flight.”



Failed Leadership

“Marlin Air’s selection of the accident captain (who routinely failed to comply with procedures and regulations) to the positions of company chief pilot and check airman, with responsibility for supervision and training of all company pilots, contributed to an inadequate company safety culture ...”

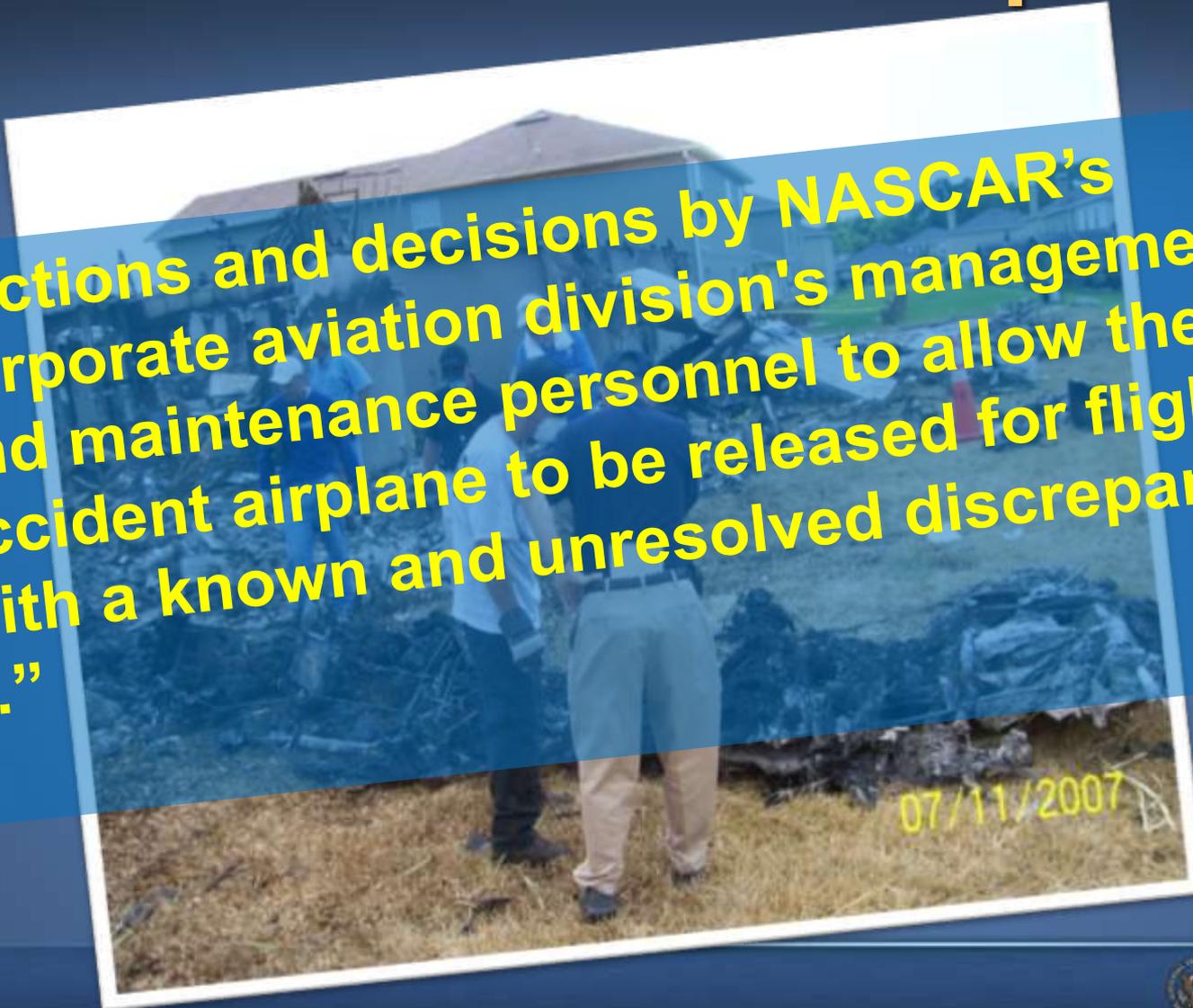


Failed Leadership



Failed Leadership

“Actions and decisions by NASCAR’s corporate aviation division’s management and maintenance personnel to allow the accident airplane to be released for flight with a known and unresolved discrepancy, ...”



Failed Leadership



Failed Leadership



“Contributing to the accident was an organizational culture that prioritized mission execution over aviation safety...”



A common thread woven between these crashes is a failure of leadership at some level.

Sometimes the leadership failure is at the management level and sometimes the leadership failure is in the cockpit.



**“The best way to predict the
future is to create it.”**

- Peter Drucker



Creating a Future of Safety: Three Leadership Questions

1. How strong is our safety culture?
2. Are we really living our values?
3. Are we fooling ourselves?



Creating a Future of Safety

HOW STRONG IS OUR SAFETY CULTURE?



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Safety Culture is:

“Safety culture is the core values and behaviors resulting from a collective commitment by leaders and individuals to emphasize safety over competing goals to ensure protection of people and the environment.”

Source: U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission



Do you have a good safety culture?



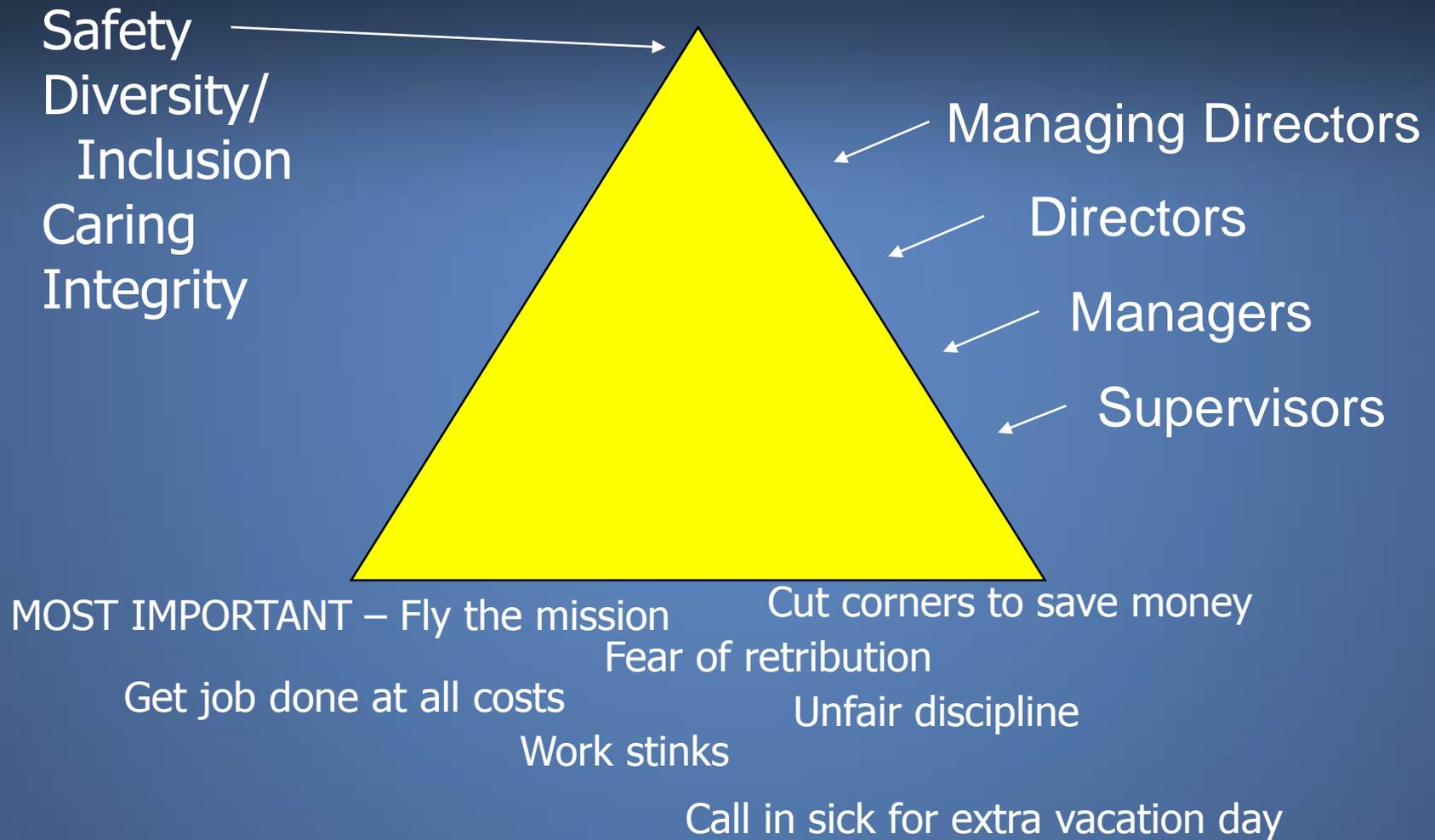
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Do you have a good safety culture?

- “... it is worth pointing out that if you are convinced that your organization has a good safety culture, you are almost certainly mistaken.”
- “... a safety culture is something that is striven for but rarely attained...”
- “... the process is more important than the product.”
 - James Reason, “Managing the Risks of Organizational Accidents.”



Sometimes the Message gets Distorted



WORD OF THE DAY

Wednesday, June 8, 2016

align-ment *noun* \ə-'līn-mənt\
Where the leaders and front line employees, and everyone in between, share and practice the same values.



Alignment



How leaders influence safety

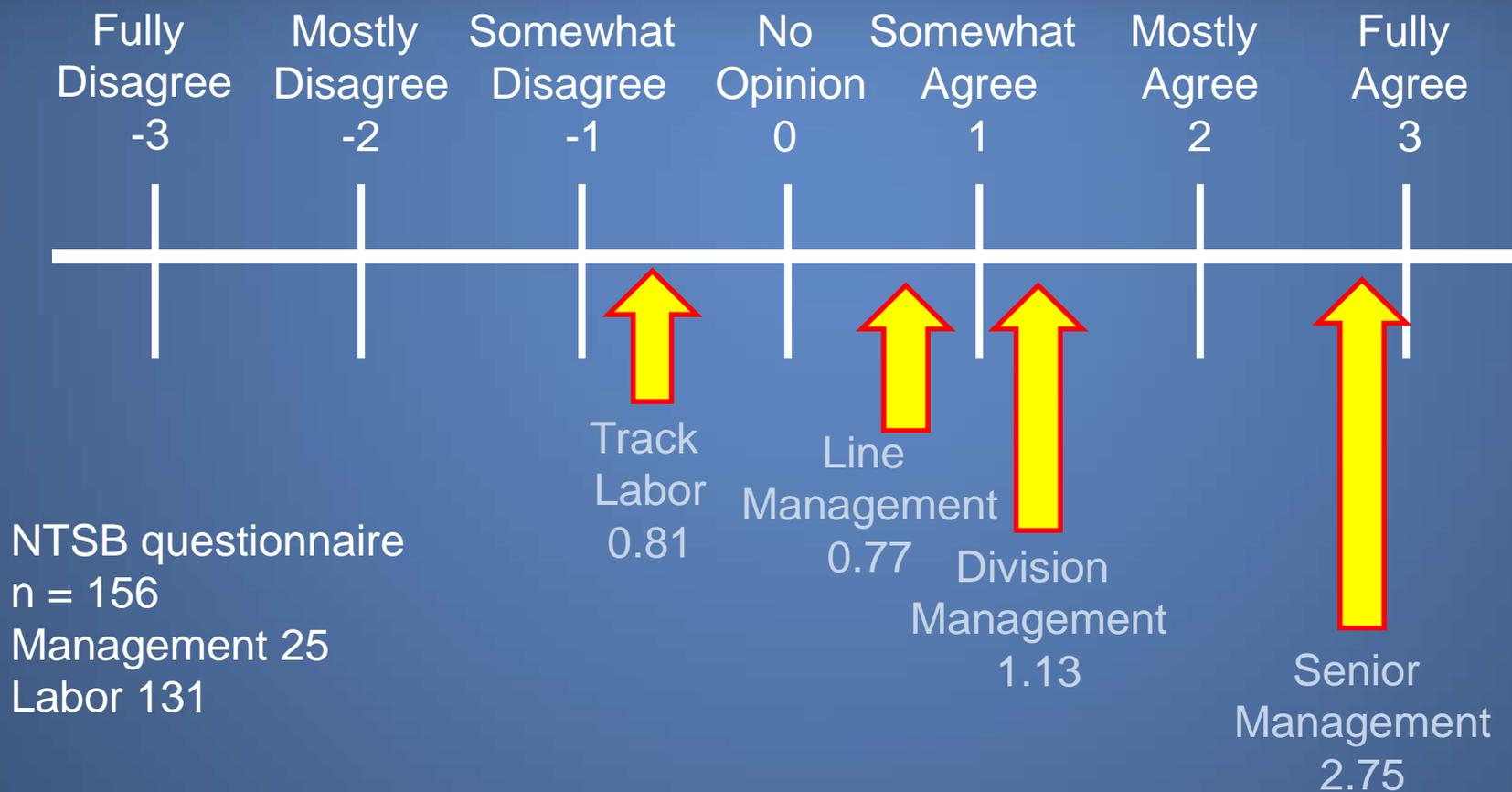
“The safety behaviors and attitudes of individuals are influenced by their perceptions and expectations about safety in their work environment, and they pattern their safety behaviors to meet demonstrated priorities of organizational leaders, regardless of stated policies.”

- Dov Zohar, as cited in NTSB accident report

Metro-North Railroad



Metro North management is committed to workplace safety and participates regularly in safety events.



Management does not pressure staff to maintain service or operations, potentially at cost of safety.



Employee Comments

- “Sometimes I feel safety is priority one as long as it's convenient.”
- “Metro-North pays lip service to safety. On time performance & budgets take precedence over safety.”
- “The railroad only cares about the on-time performance.”
- “It's all about on-time performance and safety rules are thrown out the window to keep on time performance. Management has no clue.”



Creating a Future of Safety

**ARE WE REALLY LIVING OUR
VALUES?**



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Values

- Is safety the top priority of your organization?
- Don't make it a priority – make it a core value.



Living the Values

- In a successful organization, everything you do is run through the filter of your core values to make sure you are being true to them.
- And, most importantly, you must live those values.



*SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING:
Smoking Causes Lung Cancer,
Heart Disease, Emphysema, And
May Complicate Pregnancy.*





CVS Stops Tobacco Sales



This move will cost CVS an estimated \$2 BILLION in revenue

“The sale of tobacco products is inconsistent with our purpose – helping people on their path to better health.”

- Larry J. Merlo, CEO, CVS Health



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“This move is clearly in-line with their stated purpose and values, a move we don't see often enough today in corporate America. Relying on a strong foundation of values is often what sets market leaders apart from the pack.”

- Michael Woody, Ph.D. for Fox Business



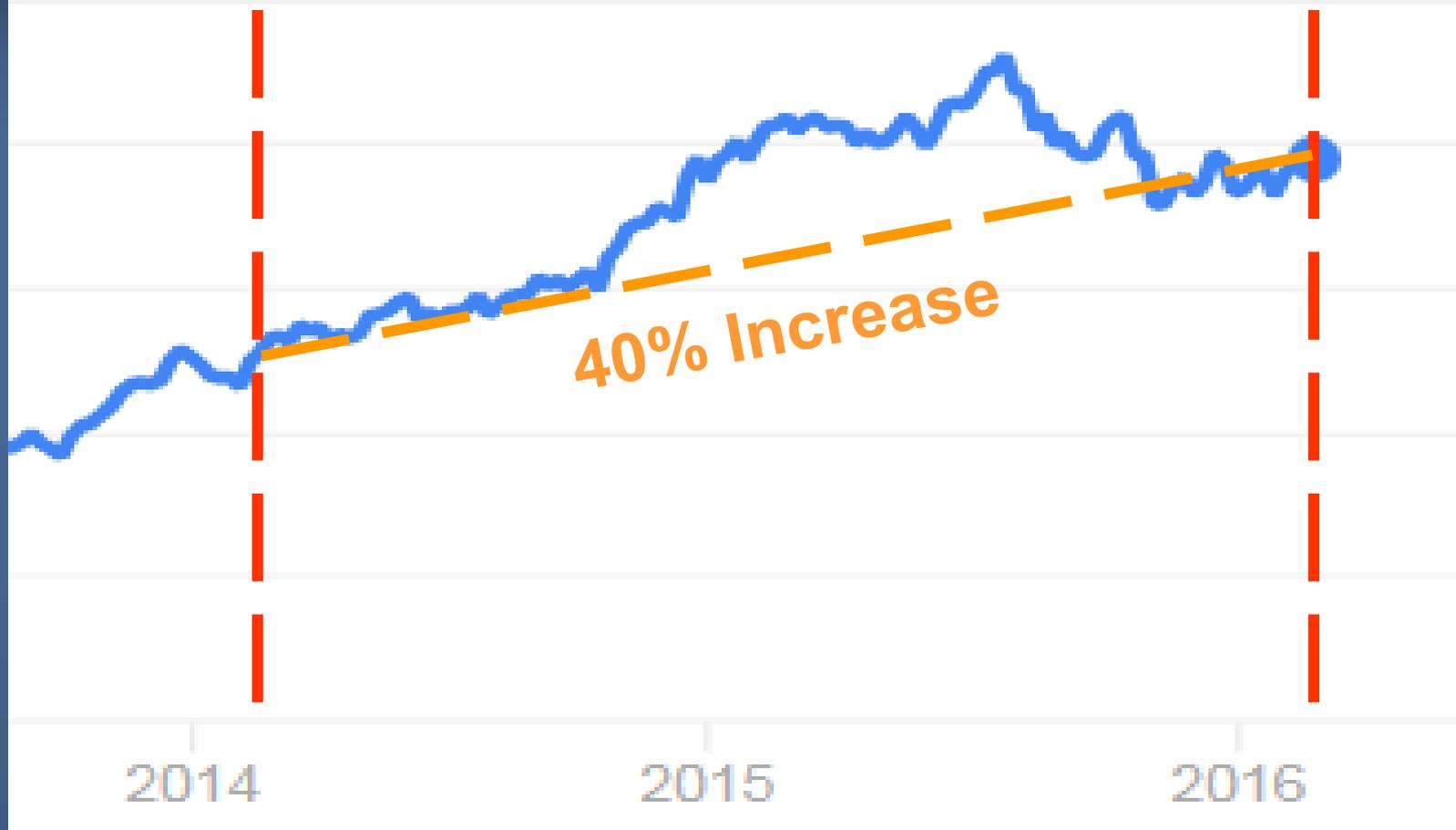
“Think of values as the core guiding principles that act as the foundation of your organization. These principles should guide every decision and serve as your fallback in times of uncertainty.”

- Michael Woody, Ph.D. for Fox Business

CVS Health Corp

Feb 7, 2014
\$66.44

Feb 5, 2016
\$93.10



Creating a Future of Safety

ARE WE FOOLING OURSELVES?



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An Impressive Operation



An Impressive Operation

- Full time crew
- Impeccable maintenance
- High training standards
- Going above minimum standards
- Positive audit comments



**“You can fool the auditors,
but never fool yourself.”**

- John Fenton



And, fool the auditors, they did...



Gulfstream G-IV Crash
Bedford, MA
May 31, 2014
7 Fatalities

And, perhaps they even fooled themselves.



“Good can be Bad”

- With good safety performance, people/organizations can easily become complacent.
- Don't ever believe that a lack of accidents means you are “safe.”
- To counter this complacency, there must be a leadership obsession with continuous improvement.

- Courtesy of Jim Schultz

Are you on the right track?

“Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.”

- Will Rogers





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Creating a Future of Safety: Three Leadership Questions

1. How strong is our safety culture?
2. Are we really living our values?
3. Are we fooling ourselves?





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