

# How Does a System Change Its Trajectory?

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# Consider:

1. An organization with a clear and traditional mission.
2. An organization with many, diverse stakeholders, each with differing needs, interests, and goals.
3. An organization in which responsibility for accomplishing the mission is separated from financial and other control obligations.
4. An organization that has had years of preparation.
5. An organization that is faced with sudden, unanticipated technological and other external change.
6. An organization predicated upon long-standing tradition, faced with the need for immediate change, all done in the glare of public scrutiny.

What is this  
organization?

*What is this organization?*

## The United States Navy

Captain Lyman K. Swenson  
BYU High School, Class of 1911  
Killed in Action, 13 November 1942  
Commander, U.S.S. Juneau



*What is this organization?*

The United States Navy  
off the coast of Guadalcanal

Navy Corpsman George E. Wahlen  
Weber High Class of 1942  
Medal of Honor recipient, Iwo Jima, 1945



# *What is this organization?*

The United States Navy  
off the coast of Guadalcanal  
in the summer of 1942.

Captain Mervyn S. Bennion  
LDS High, Class of 1906  
Killed in Action, 7 December 1941  
Commander, U.S.S. West Virginia





8-9 August 1942:

First Surface Combatant Naval Battle, Pacific Theater, U.S. Navy and Imperial Japanese Navy

Allied Losses:

4 cruisers sunk, 1 badly damaged;  
1077 men killed.

Japanese Losses:

2 cruisers slightly damaged.

The Battle of Savo Island

[www.pacificghosts.com](http://www.pacificghosts.com)

# *Vincennes*

Photo # NH 50845 USS Vincennes passing through the Panama Canal en route to the Pacific, 6 January 1938





# *Quincy*



# *Astoria*



# *HMAS Canberra*

Photo # 80-G-13454-A HMAS Canberra leaving Wellington, N.Z., for Guadalcanal, 22 July 1942



# *Chicago*

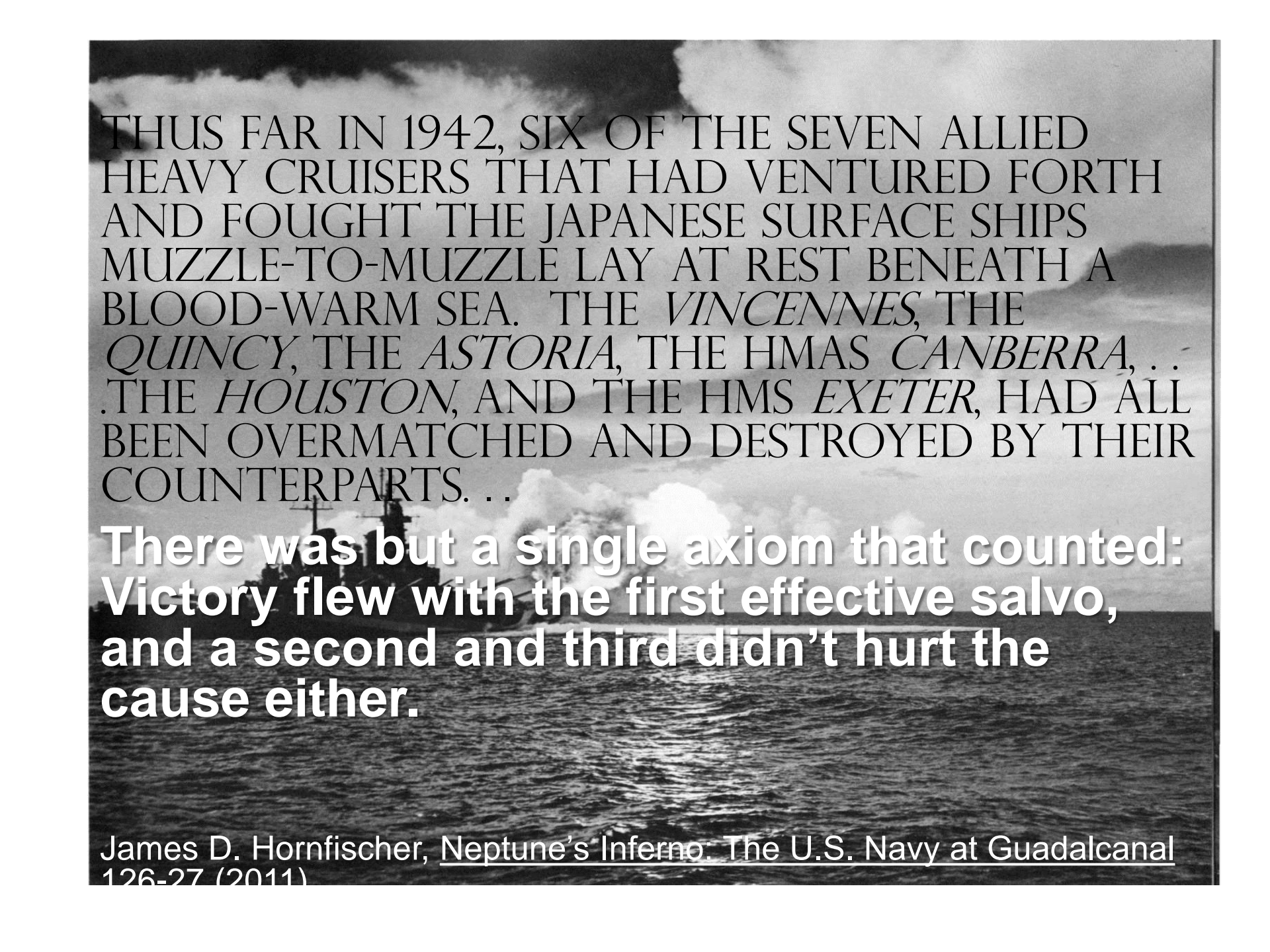


Admiral Ernest  
J. King, Chief of  
Naval  
Operations,  
USN

8 August 1942:

“the blackest  
day of the  
whole war.





THUS FAR IN 1942, SIX OF THE SEVEN ALLIED HEAVY CRUISERS THAT HAD VENTURED FORTH AND FOUGHT THE JAPANESE SURFACE SHIPS MUZZLE-TO-MUZZLE LAY AT REST BENEATH A BLOOD-WARM SEA. THE *VINCENNES*, THE *QUINCY*, THE *ASTORIA*, THE HMAS *CANBERRA*, ... THE *HOUSTON*, AND THE HMS *EXETER*, HAD ALL BEEN OVERMATCHED AND DESTROYED BY THEIR COUNTERPARTS. ...

**There was but a single axiom that counted: Victory flew with the first effective salvo, and a second and third didn't hurt the cause either.**

James D. Hornfischer, [Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal 126-27 \(2011\)](#)

Following the devastating defeat on 8-9 August 1942 (the Battle of Savo Island), Admiral King had just one question:

***Why?***

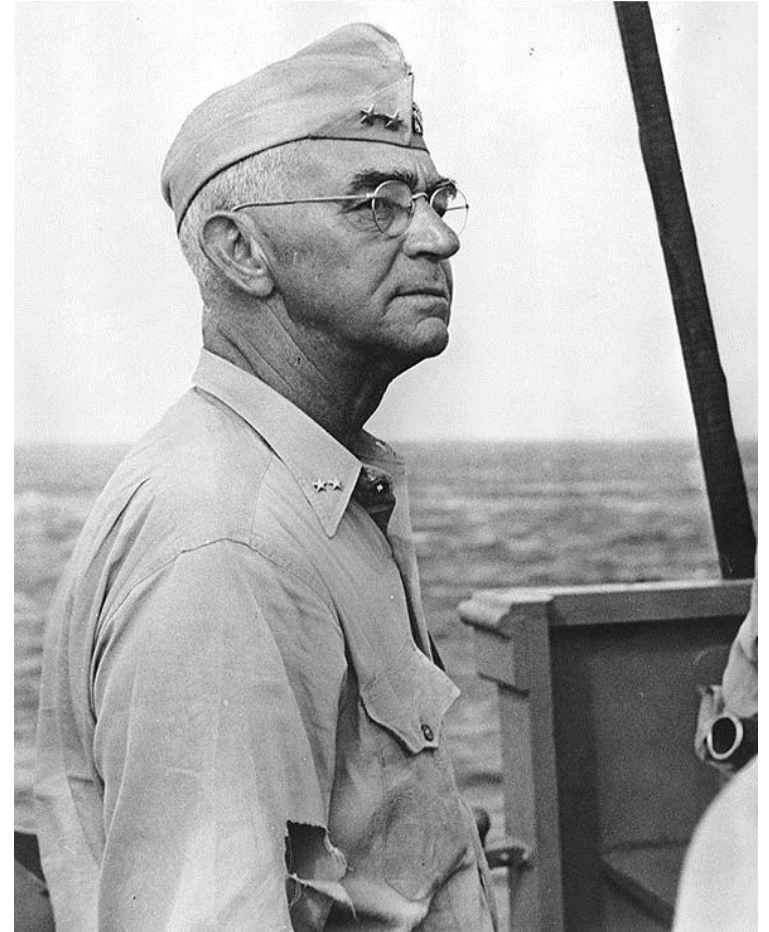


# Why?

“[A] fatal lethargy of mind which induced a confidence without readiness, and a routine acceptance of outworn peacetime standards of conduct. I believe that this psychological factor, as a cause of our defeat, was even more important than the element of surprise”.

Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner.

Photo # 80-G-216636 RAdm. Richmond K. Turner, Feb. 1944





# 1. New Leadership

“Paradoxically, the problem was their overconfidence. . . . Complacency and timidity were first cousins as contributors to defeat.”  
Hornfischer, 95-96.



# What occurred in the aftermath of the Battle of Savo Island?

1. New leadership. Leaders promoted during peacetime were not necessarily wartime leaders. Both high ranking and ship commanders were replaced by fighters.



Vice Admiral Robert Ghormley (l)  
Was replaced by  
Admiral William  
“Bull” Halsey (r).



# 1. New Leadership

Where did these new leaders come from?

They were always with us.

## 2. Analysis of performance.

The performance of both fleets was carefully analyzed. It was determined that the fleet with the first on-target shots generally prevailed.

Moreover, training and practice routines were reevaluated.



## 2. Analysis

- The loss of so many ships in so short a time at the Battle of Savo Island caused deep review at every level.
- American failure was reviewed, but so was Japanese success.
- The question was not how to copy success, but to understand the conditions that lead to success and learn from that.



**3. Practice.** Routine, realistic and intense practice regimes were implemented.



### 3. Practice

- Heavy gun practice hadn't happened on most cruisers since February 1942, six months earlier.
- Realistic, live-first, "off-set" firing drills hadn't happened in more than a year.
- Ship crews, captains, fighting units, task forces and fleets hadn't practiced together since before Pearl Harbor.

4. New expectations of performance were established.



# What changed?

1. Leadership.
2. Data was collected and analyzed.
3. Based on data, practice routines were implemented.
4. New expectations were established and communicated.

Admiral Norman Scott:  
A long way to go and a short time to get there.



- The new commander, Rear Admiral Norman Scott, “determined to make his own force a match for the Japanese, he had studied the recent night surface actions carefully and instituted [a rigorous new practice routine]. . . .For the next two weeks we held daily gunnery practice and high speed night tactical maneuvers, every night, all night. We were at general quarters every night and had mock battles with opposing ships, all moving at flank speed. . . . With training, helmsmen were able to maintain ship intervals with more expertise and direct more energy to finding the enemy ships, allowing you to get off those very important first salvos. Hornfischer 137.

Photo # 80-G-20823 Captain Norman Scott, USN



“The *Helena*’s turret crews learned as rapidly as any in Scott’s task force. They were ‘quick and slick as precision machinery, . . . Swinging their arms with the grace of ballet dancers to maintain the flow of ammunition from magazines to guns.’ They got good. They expected to hit, [the first time,] every time. The gunnery department acquired . . . ‘a bull’s-eye complex.” Hornfischer, 140.



# What does this suggest for us?

1. Leadership: What will your leadership look like? What does “leadership” mean for you? What are the qualities of great leadership and how can I manifest them? Are new qualities of leadership needed for new challenges?

# What does this suggest for us?

2. Data-driven analysis: What use will we make of data? What data do we need? What changes do we expect based on data? Is data important? Do I believe that I “know” without data? If I do not have the data I need, how can I get it? What is the goal of having data? Am I focused on data for its own sake or am I willing to measure my impact on children?

# What does this suggest for us?

- 3. Practice: Do I have a growth mindset? Can learning be improved? Can my students, by practice, improve and progress? Can I, by practice, improve and progress? Do I have the tools I need to implement true formative practice? Do my classroom, school, district, and state systems support formative practice? How can I improve? How can I influence for the good other levels of my system?

# What does this mean for us?

- 4. What will I do? What will I do now?



# Our Strategic Plan follows this same pattern and includes similar elements.

## 1. Leadership

If we expect different outcomes, we need different inputs.

## 2. Data Analysis

We are rich in data and poor in understanding.

## 3. Meaningful Data Utilization

Look to patterns and systemic evidence, not anecdotal or incidental.

## 4. New Expectations

Our system can fly.

# What does this suggest for us?

1. Leadership: What will your leadership look like?
2. Data-driven analysis: What use will we make of data? What data do we need? What changes do we expect based on data? How do we connect financial and performance data into a meaningful whole? How do we know our data is reliable?
3. Practice: How will formative assessment cycles be implemented and used to stimulate student improvement? How will summative assessments be used to backstop and validate formative systems?
4. How will we each take action in the context of a system to improve performance?

~~not~~

~~What can I do?~~

rather

**What will I do  
now?**