After Goofing,

Article Technical-1

What Next?

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Everybody goofs - so what's new ? Admit it ! Start a new trend.

MOST of us in the maintenance field have goofed sometime or the other. Though it may be a natural phenomena and, as a proverb puts it: "He who makes no mistake, never makes anything"; yet we cannot afford to take it as lightly as said. This is because of the disastrous consequences of such mistakes and even more so with the present fleet of sophisticated aircraft and equipment that we are handling. Now, whether these mistakes go unnoticed for are brought to light depend upon you. The mistakes which are unearthed are generally of a serious nature and teach us a lesson. However, the mistakes which are of a lighter nature go unnoticed and are, in fact, more serious since these initiate a chain of events which can culminate in an accident.

There is, invariably, some reason for making a mistake. But there can never be reason for hiding it. The moment one realises that he has made a serious mistake, frantic questions run through his mind. These may be:

- Should I tell my immediate superior or try to cover it up?
- Will it effect me at the time of my annual assessment?
- If my subordinates find out, will I lose their confidence and respect?
- For Pete's sake, what should I do?

So it really isn't as simple as goofing. In fact, herein is the real problem.

Every mistake calls for its own particular antidote, of course, but here are a few general principles that can be applied to any mistake in orders to minimise the damage and maximise the benefits that can often be garnered from the mistakes.

Do not Panic !

Making a mistake is usually upsetting, but it is not the end of the world. Normally, a technician is not likely to fly apart when he makes one. True, he is not supposed to make mistakes in the first place, but a certain quota from technical donors is inevitable as per the laws of probability. And statistical figures will prove this point.

But, do not panic—you are only going to cause more damage by doing so.

Do not try to conceal a mistake

No one expects you to broadcast your mistakes, but you are certainly expected to tell the right person about it. To hide your mistake is a crime when it comes to aircraft operations. The pity is that in these cases it is invariably someone else who has to pay for it. So speak up and you will save that somebody's day.

Your mistake is likely to cause loss or damage to an aircraft and even, perhaps, a life. Tell your superior immediately. The sooner a mistake is known, the sooner the efforts can be made to rectify it—and even though your Section Commander won't be happy when you make a mistake, he would rather hear about it from you than be caught unawares after the damage is done.

Sometime back an Armourer forgot to remove the safety pins from one of the ejection seats of a Hunter trainer. The aircraft was programmed for an afternoon sortie. However, the Armourer only remembered his mistake after the aircraft had taken off. In his



initial panic, his first impulse was to keep quiet about his mistake, hoping that the need for ejection would not arise. But after a moments thought, he informed the O i/c DSS who in turn informed the control tower about the situation and the aircraft was made to land back immediately. When his OC came to know about this he praised the technician for his sense of responsibility. Now, had the technician kept quiet and the need to eject arrived, he would have been the guy who killed two squadron pilots and would have never be able to square his action with his own conscience. And yet, just a simple admission won him repute as an honest worker.

In another case, an Engine Fitter was installing an idling device on an engine when one bolt broke inside while he was tightening the bolt. In order to conceal this from others, he tried to drill out the broken bolt all by himself by holding the idling device in a bench vice. All he succeeded in achieving was to drill an eccentric hole thereby damaging the internal threads of the idling device. The item had to be sent to the repair agency.

Admit it was your error

It is quite natural to justify your mistake by finding someone or something else to blame. Some of us feel that an admission of mistakes reveals professional incompetence. No, we are human, we can make mistakes. You have got to fight the fear that you will lose face with your colleagues, your subordinates and your boss. In most cases such fears are unfounded—unless you have foolishly tried to build an image of infallibility. Admitting a mistake will often raise esteem rather than lowering it.

Learn from your mistakes

A mistake can be a useful danger signal that there is something basically wrong with the way you are handling a particular part of your job. Try to analyse each action of yours and find out where the loophole is and avoid it in future. Your supervisor will help you in this and it is his job to perfect the working condition so that the mistake is not repeated. Remember Murphy!

To quote an example, a WO i/c AOP Flight learnt through a mistake that he could not accommodate all his subordinates in their personal requests and manage the section at the same time. He agreed to a request for 3 days casual leave by a Radar technician (who wanted to visit the nearest hill station along with his colleagues) knowing that 3 out of the 5 Radar tradesmen were already away on course/leave/temporary duty. The next day the only available Radar technician in the Flight fell sick and was hospitalised. The Warrant Officer realised what had gone wrong. He analysed that this particular mistake was because of his generous altitude to grant all subordinates, requests indiscriminately. His subordinates had therefore taken advantage of this. But once he made it clear that personal requests had to be considered in terms of section needs, his subordinates kept such requests to a minimum.

Do not brood over your mistakes

Learn from your mistakes and you shall feel sorry for yourself. It only makes matters worse to let a mistake nag you. Do not stay awake the whole night re-living it. Do not allow it to sap your confidence and willingness to move decisively on the problems that confront you. This does not mean that you can blithely laugh off a mistake and ignore its lessons. But it does mean that you can't afford to let a mistake throw you for a loss—because, if you do, you will probably end up making more mistakes as a result of worry and anxiety.

Your first aim should be to make as few mistakes as possible. But when you do pull a boner, know how to make best of it, not the worst!