

## *Our New Year's Message: 2023*

### *CKO: Chief Knucklehead Officer*

Recently it was decided that henceforth following the Ph.D., my title would include the abbreviation CKO, which stands for Chief Knucklehead Officer. It is not as bad as it sounds.

The derivation of this Knucklehead designation is twofold. First, it relates to the movie *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* starring Russell Crowe as Captain Jack Aubrey. In it, the rank-and-file sailors salute their officers by putting their knuckles to their heads. Meaning, they are of a station lower than their leaders. They demonstrate humility.

Second, the term Knucklehead pertains to people who try things and fail. But instead of giving up, Knuckleheads pick themselves up, dust themselves off and try again. Knuckleheads are change agents who do not know what they cannot do. They take action. They are always tinkering with ideas and strategies to make tomorrow better than yesterday. Knuckleheads actively make mistakes. They effectively break things on purpose to make greater things happen.

So, how can you to be the CKO of your career? It begins with the knowledge that you own your career. This ownership frees up a great deal of energy that would otherwise be employed to show well to others and not be viewed as making mistakes. It is an action focused mindset.

Crucial to being a CKO is making mistakes. Because their ego is not on the line, a CKO pushes boundaries, tries new things and makes adjustments, even as they fail. They know that many of their decisions will be wrong and require correction as further information becomes available. A CKO does not deny or explain away their mistakes because action always needs to be taken. They know that how things work is more important than how they appear.

Like Captain Aubrey, a CKO bases their decisions on their higher-level goals to achieve success for not only themselves, but for their associates and organization as a whole. They view this leadership ability as “not a matter of pride,” but rather “a matter of duty.”

*My wish for you is to be a CKO: Chief Knucklehead Officer. You have nothing to lose but your hesitancy. You will gain productivity, greater knowledge of your potential and the ability to own your career at increasingly sophisticated levels.*

*George E. Gercken*