

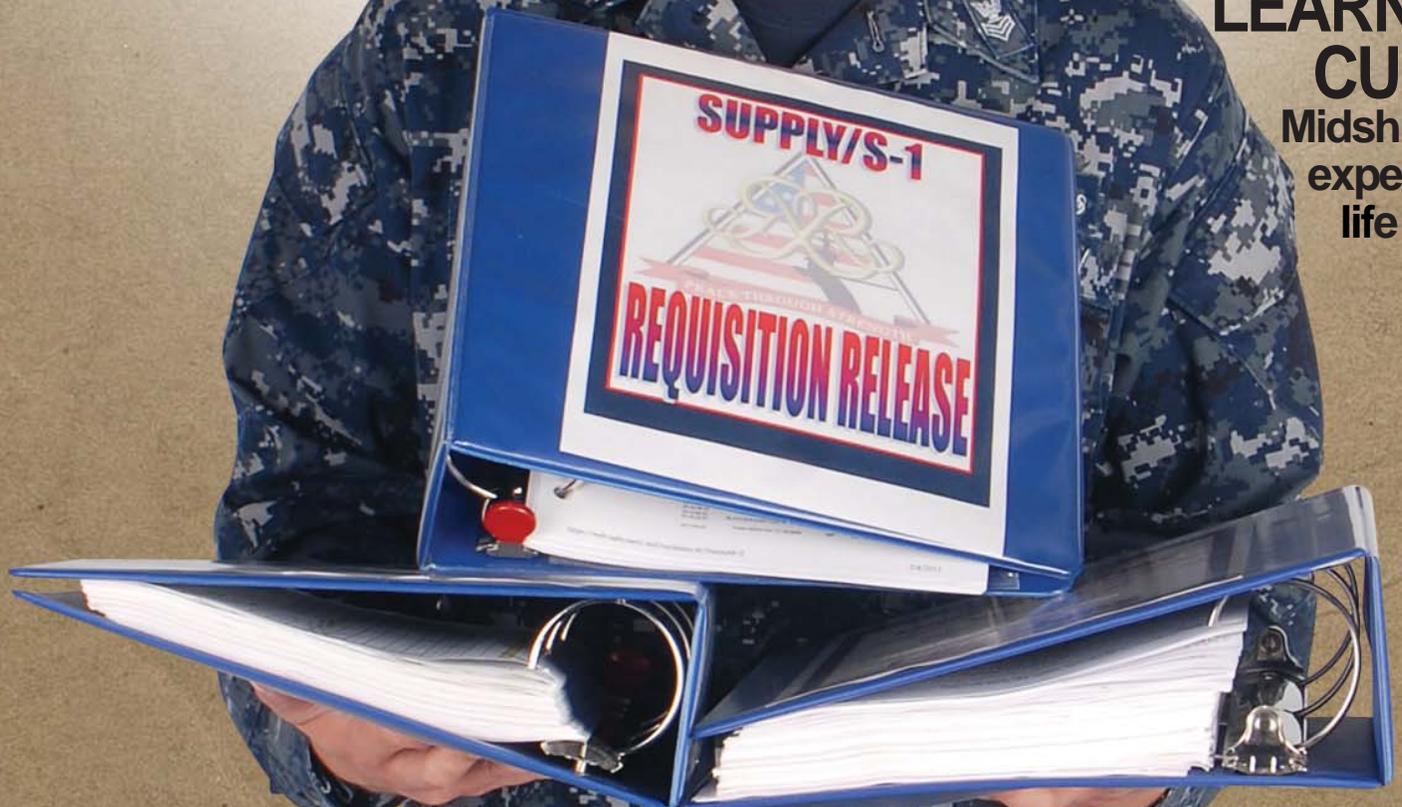
NAVAL MEDIA AWARD WINNER

The Box

July 15, 2013

MM2 GRAY
RAISING THE BAR
& SETTING NEW
STANDARDS

LEARNING
CURVE
Midshipmen
experience
life at sea



LS1 BLAYLOCK
THINKING
OUTSIDE
the BOX



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Story by MC3 Timothy Schumaker

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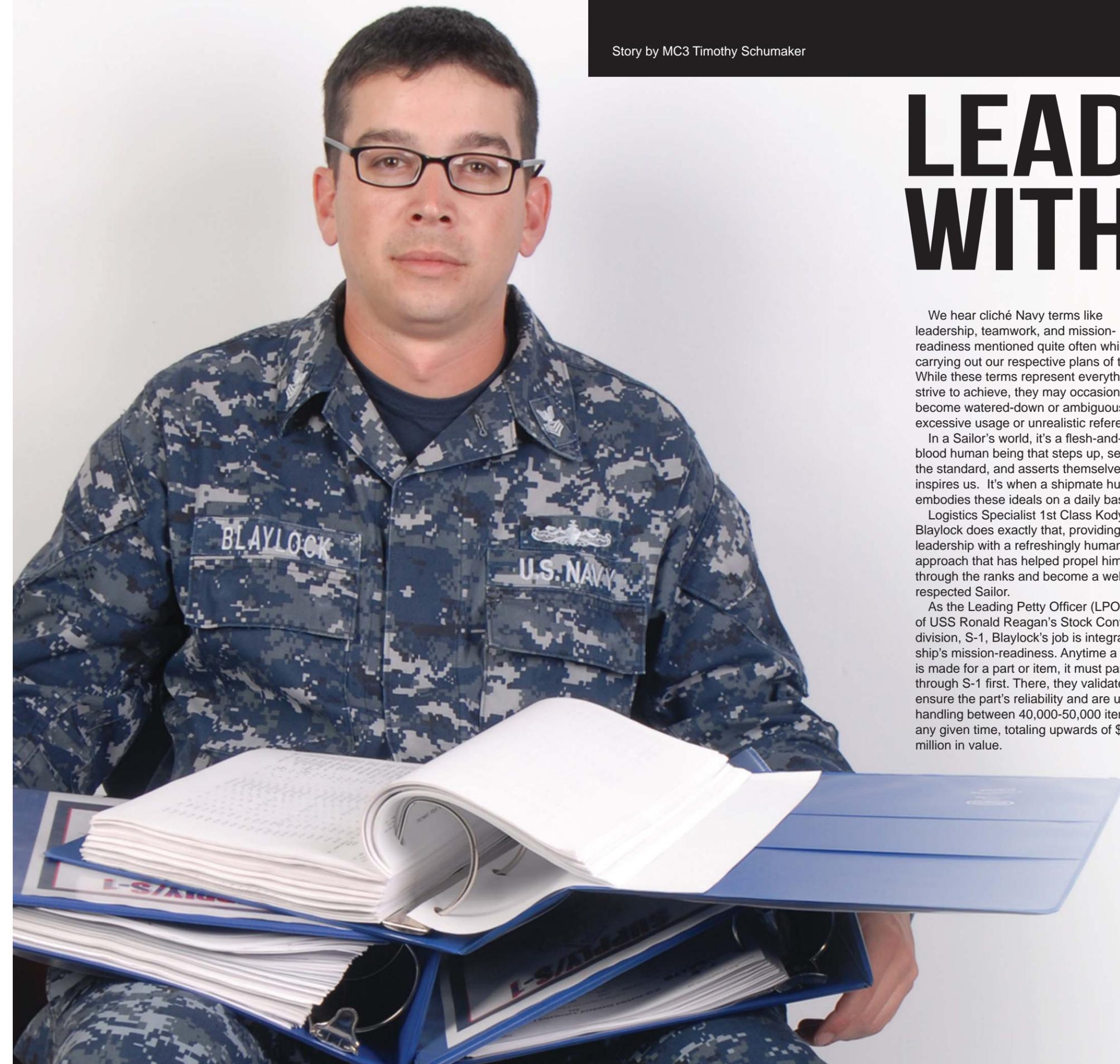
LEADING SAILORS WITH “THE HUMAN APPROACH”

We hear cliché Navy terms like leadership, teamwork, and mission-readiness mentioned quite often while carrying out our respective plans of the day. While these terms represent everything we strive to achieve, they may occasionally become watered-down or ambiguous with excessive usage or unrealistic references.

In a Sailor's world, it's a flesh-and-blood human being that steps up, sets the standard, and asserts themselves that inspires us. It's when a shipmate humbly embodies these ideals on a daily basis.

Logistics Specialist 1st Class Kody Blaylock does exactly that, providing daily leadership with a refreshingly humanistic approach that has helped propel him through the ranks and become a well-respected Sailor.

As the Leading Petty Officer (LPO) of USS Ronald Reagan's Stock Control division, S-1, Blaylock's job is integral to the ship's mission-readiness. Anytime a request is made for a part or item, it must pass through S-1 first. There, they validate and ensure the part's reliability and are usually handling between 40,000-50,000 items at any given time, totaling upwards of \$300 million in value.





"S-1 is the heart of the ship, and the pinnacle of customer service, in my opinion," said Blaylock. "The quantity and scope of responsibility for an LS on this ship can be intimidating, especially for junior Sailors."

Blaylock is one of four First Class Petty Officers in S-1 that form a team of concise and effective leaders who work together with their junior Sailors to keep the department functioning at a high caliber, and with minimal lapse in time or judgment.

Given the scale of importance of their work, he puts it into perspective by simply making his job all about the people he's in charge of helping, by preaching a mantra that revolves around the simple concept of maintaining a 'human being' approach. It's humbly profound, given that life in the Navy can occasionally feel somewhat robotic and repetitive.

"I always tell my Sailors that I'm a big 'human being' person," says Blaylock. "Especially in customer service and how we speak to people, which is the most important thing we do.

"We're a customer service one-stop-shop, and we never turn anyone away because it's our job to help people," he says. "I always tell my Sailors that it's their moral obligation to help someone if it's possible, and in the long run it will pay off because the people we help will support us. It's a win-win situation when we're helping someone."

When dealing with logistics, there's inherently going to be a lot of middlemen. Blaylock refers to them as the 'hands in the pot' that require constant inter-departmental communication and a solid foundation of common knowledge and sense of purpose. It serves as a prototypical example of how communication in the Navy is essential in creating a team to achieve mission success.

"The other 1st Class Petty Officers in S-1 and I constantly remind each other that we need to set the pace and the standards for these younger Sailors," added Blaylock. "It's all about everyone catching a

battle rhythm. If they see us setting the pace and the standard, they follow us. They become accustomed to doing things the right way every time."

LS3 Adrian Harrison works under Blaylock in Stock Control, and knows that he can approach his LPO when needing to know the right way to do things.

"He's the kind of leader that if you need to know how to do something, he'll teach you until you understand it," said Harrison. "He's a subject matter expert in pretty much everything in S-1, so if you make a mistake, he'll explain what you did wrong and help you fix it. Even if he doesn't have time at a given moment, he'll make time later for you."

Blaylock says that while it's imperative to establish a battle rhythm and comfort zone, it's also about stretching out of your comfort zone by taking up collateral duties and adapting.

"There are so many avenues to help you become a leader, especially on an aircraft carrier, and there are a tremendous number of people to learn from," Blaylock said. "In my department alone, I probably have 50 years of experience just from some of the senior First Classes and Chiefs."

The pace of Blalock's progression into a leadership role has been accelerating ever since he enlisted, but his pre-Navy story is relatively typical. After high school, he didn't want to go to college, and was getting into some trouble. Eventually, his aunt, a probation officer for juveniles, gave him an ultimatum while he was living with his grandparents to either join the military or move out. So, after looking into the other service branches, he joined the Navy out of Poteau, Oklahoma, as a 20-year-old.

Blaylock came in as an E-2 working in supply as a Store Keeper before the rates of Store Keeper and Postal Clerk merged to form Logistics Specialist in 2009.

His first ship was the USS Mobile Bay (CG 53), where he deployed twice. One was a Rim of the Pacific deployment, where he hit ports such as Hawaii, Thailand and Singapore. The other was an 8-month deployment to the Arabian Gulf in 2008, where he advanced to E-5. During that tour, he earned Bluejacket of the Year for 2008.

He then transferred to shore duty in Atsugi, Japan, where he advanced to First Class Petty Officer at only 25 years old, and directly supported Operation Tomadachi after the Japanese Earthquake hit. He was in charge of screening ship and aircraft parts for radiation, well outside of his normal supply duties. He also spent substantial time volunteering at phone centers and helping with casualty control to aid the affected people of Japan.

He then transferred to the Ronald Reagan, where he's already been named Senior Sailor of the Quarter for the 4th quarter of fiscal year 2012.

Throughout his career and the myriad of both experiences and success, Blaylock has had numerous leaders deeply influence him.

"I've had some great leaders along the way. One in particular, my Senior Chief on my first ship, took me under his wing," he said. "He was a quiet guy and didn't have to say a lot, but we knew that when he had something to say it was important. I learned a lot about the value of listening from him and to only contribute to a conversation if it added value in some way."

Good leadership also caused him to become meticulous and be adaptable with his work while he came up through the ranks. A real-life example is a situation he encountered on his first ship with that very supervisor.

After submitting a few days worth of work to his Senior Chief, it was abruptly denied and considered unacceptable. After acting out emotionally with a negative attitude, it eventually served as a wakeup call to Blaylock. Once he calmed down, he came to the conclusion that his work would have to rise to the standard that had been set and keep pace with the expectations placed on him.

"I learned that I was going to have to change things, and adjust. I now know that junior Sailors coming up through the ranks will constantly be expected to learn how to adjust and adapt to their surroundings, because they're not going to be working for the same people," he said. "Their surroundings will require them to speed up, or even slow down sometimes, to help others who aren't keeping pace."

And it's the habits like making your work meet the highest of standards that has helped mold his human approach.

"It all comes back to being a human being. The Navy can sometimes bring out the morals and characteristics in a person that people didn't know they had, like being assertive, being a leader, stepping up," said Blaylock. "I think everybody has these things inside them, they're sometimes just dormant."

As Blaylock knows well, nobody is perfect. For him, it's more about how an obstacle is overcome, rather than dwelling on past failures.

"Sailors are human and definitely make mistakes; I know I have several times. But I always tell my Sailors that there are more forgiven Sailors than straight-arrows," he said. "In the end, it all goes back to pushing forward and setting the standards. If you're doing that, everyone will take notice and follow suit. Maybe you won't get the award or recognition every time, but eventually it's going to pay off, and I'm a prime example of that."



WARRIOR ETHOS

PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH
CVN 76

“An organization, no matter how well designed, is only as good as the people who live and work in it.”

DEE HOCK
FOUNDER AND FORMER CEO OF VISA



USS RONALD REAGAN

SAILORS HELPING SAILORS. ONE TEAM. ONE FIGHT.