



CLEARED HOT!

Vernice  
“FlyGirl”  
Armour

You *have* permission to Engage! Notice, the emphasis is on the word “have.” That’s because you already possess your own permission to engage. I’m not giving it to you. In fact, I can’t. You’ve always had it; you just have to release it. It’s up to you to make the decision to engage. Once you have given yourself permission, you are *Cleared Hot* to create realities from possibilities *beyond* your expectations.

What does Cleared Hot mean? Well, in military terms, it means you have permission to fire your weapons on your target. During training that means you’re shooting at wooden tanks or old worn out tires. In real combat, you’re firing on the enemy. An enemy that in my case was trying to shoot my attack helicopter out of the sky.

In civilian life, Cleared Hot is the process of acting on a Breakthrough Mentality (BTM). What does this mean exactly? Harnessing the power of a Breakthrough Mentality is the first step. The definition of a Breakthrough Mentality is “refusing to settle, even in the smallest moments, and demanding a breakthrough life.” The small breakthroughs make the big breakthroughs possible. When you have a Breakthrough Mentality, you are truly open to discovery in the most innovative way. This sets the stage for giving yourself permission to engage... to take action.

In this manifesto, I explore engagement from an accountability perspective—how to be accountable for creating the foundation for engagement, both as an individual and organizationally.

## Giving Yourself Permission

I attended a business gathering where I had the opportunity to meet and spend one-on-one time with Bob Proctor. If you're not familiar with Bob, he starred in the movie *The Secret*, and is a living legend in the world of professional and personal development, business consulting and speaking. We were together for thirty amazing minutes and I didn't want to pass up the opportunity to learn as much as I could in the short time we had together.

I asked what sage advice he could give me, someone who was just starting the journey as a business consultant and speaker. He mentioned a book that was a must read, *The Art of Acting*, a collection of transcripts of lectures given by the revered acting teacher Stella Adler. "Hold on a minute," he said as he rummaged around in his bag and dug out his personal copy of the book. He wrote his information in the back and handed it to me! As soon as I returned home, I sent Bob a thank you card with our picture on the front and a note inside letting him know how much I appreciated the time we spent together.

I didn't want to just exchange information, but stay connected, so I needed to reach out and check-in, as well as make sure he received the card (it was the first time I'd mailed anything to Canada—who knew where it might have ended up). In the back of the book he had written out his name, mailing address, phone number and email address. Every piece of contact information I could possible need. I thought about calling the number, but didn't know what I would say to his assistant if he or she answered the phone. "Hey, did Bob get my card?" If I sent an email, would he even be the one to read it?

A month or so went by and I had been thinking about my meeting with Bob quite frequently, but I was still hesitant to reach out. Then one evening I was talking to a friend and she mentioned Bob's name. The next day, I was reading a book and there it was, the name "Bob Proctor" staring me in the face. When something or someone keeps coming up, I can't ignore it.

I was traveling again, on my way to speak at another conference. It got me thinking about my meeting with Bob several weeks earlier. Then and there, in the middle of the hotel lobby where I was staying, I decided it was time to reach out no matter who might be on the other end of the phone. I called the number in the back of the book. What were the odds that it would be a direct line to Bob? Yeah, I didn't think they were that high either. An electronic voice told me no one was available and to leave a message. Then a crazy idea hit me. Send a text! Surly this wasn't his cell number, but hey...who knows? I sent a text asking, "Bob, this is FlyGirl, do you even get these messages?" A text came back within seconds that simply stated, "Yes, even at 35,000 feet." I couldn't believe it! I started laughing unbelievably as I stood in the hotel lobby.

The lesson for me in that moment was engagement. I'd had Bob's information the entire time. I had the access and the exposure. It was up to *me* to give myself permission to engage. How many times had I looked at his information and just shrugged off reaching out to Bob because I didn't know who would get my call or email? Or, because I didn't know what I would say? How many times have you not engaged because of the unknown?

## Rewriting the Rules of Engagement

There are two sides to this conversation—how we deliver results in business and back home in our personal lives. Changing the dynamics of engagement begins with changing the rules. What are the preconceived notions you have created and lived with for years? How can you leverage your life experiences to create the full life you desire to live? What have your experiences taught you or prepared you to do? Is a mentality shift needed to move forward? What is your definition of joy and success and does that definition need to be reframed?

## Reframing Success

Defining success is not enough. Reframing success is essential, especially because what you think will bring you happiness and success often doesn't. Let me give you an example. Let's say you want to lose 25 pounds. You are determined to lose 25 pounds because you envision when you have dropped all the excess weight, you'll feel and look better. But when you've actually reached your goal, it turns out you've lost valuable calorie-burning muscle and strength. Your clothes hug non-existent curves and you're still out of breath when you get to the top of the stairs. You lost the weight. You achieved your goal. But your definition of success didn't match or wasn't in alignment with what you truly wanted. Let's explore what the desire was behind losing the 25 pounds. You wanted to have more energy in everyday tasks, have attractive curves for your clothes to embrace and feel good about the image looking back at you in the mirror.

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Let's look at a business example. Many organizations have rules and standard operating procedures for everything, especially safety. Company X created an incident reporting procedure. Part of the procedure was making sure management was notified. If an employee or customer was injured, they were to take immediate action to ensure no further injury occurred and get the injured party medical attention. Of course, a report also needed to be filed for documentation and to make management aware of what had transpired.

After a few incidents, management saw a trend: they were not notified as soon as an incident occurred and they felt this left them blind and unprotected. This situation was definitely not bringing them any joy. Soon thereafter new procedures were put in place. The incident binder was to be immediately taken out to ensure the employee followed the checklist, alerted management and filed a complete incident report immediately. All the staff was briefed on this change to the procedures and all manuals were updated.

When the next incident occurred, the clerk on duty knew exactly what to do. After he saw a customer collapse while standing in line, he immediately ran to the back office, took out the incident binder and started following the checklist. The first instruction was to notify management and start filling out the incident report. The clerk was new and wanted to make sure he was following the procedure to the letter. A customer poked their head in the door and said the gentleman was still lying in the floor and asked if they should call an ambulance. The clerk looked back to the procedure to see where in the checklist calling emergency responders came in.

Now, this example might seem a little extreme. But, let's face it. Everyone thinks in different ways. Management assumed that the employee would take the first steps to ensure the safety of the individual and emergency personnel would be alerted. The definition of success that was given and that employees were held accountable for was alerting management and filling out a complete incident report. The company was trying to prevent a lawsuit when the procedure they implemented actually put them more at risk than what they were doing before! Management neglected to consider the consequences, intended and unintended, of the new approach.

What are all the results that could possibly take place to include benefits and liabilities? Are they the results you are looking for? Will the specific result you desire give you the intended benefit? Reframing the definition of success is essential. What are the benefits you want and is your plan going to deliver on them? Once you thoroughly understand that, then you can put specifics in play.

## Turning Possibilities into Realities

What can get us closer to achieving our goals once we have redefined them? Again, it's the Breakthrough Mentality. The individual BTM is a product of personal accountability—are you accountable for reframing success and fully engaging in the activities that will produce it? When we talk about a team's BTM, however, that's where culture starts to come into play. What we want to cultivate in the team is an "Elite Team Mentality". For this process to be the most productive, each member must set aside their agenda, ego and politics, and bring out their gifts, passion and vision to accomplish the mission. Thinking beyond the box (or the cockpit) so you can see what's on the horizon helps to create the breakthrough results we are looking for.

We must make a cultural shift to engagement and accountability in the C-suite, middle management, and the front lines. There has to be accountability on all sides for creating engagement. In changing the culture to one of engaging with our people, we set up our organization to reap the rewards of sustainable innovation. We must answer the question of, "do we have buy-in?" When everyone involved understands their impact, is committed to the mission and vision of the team, and creates and nurtures a climate of accountability and engagement, i.e. Elite Team Mentality", the process for being Cleared Hot as an organization is set!

Changing the dynamics of engagement  
begins with changing the rules.

## One Mission, One Goal, One Team

Radical Honesty, Elite Loyalty and Warrior Courage. These are foundational values that can set the stage for people to engage.

**Radical honesty** is tough. It's agreeing to be open and honest as a means to forwarding the mission, even when that seems risky or unusual. It's radical because it just doesn't happen in normal everyday functioning. We're taught to be polite or defer to authority or be safe rather than sorry, which is great as long as it doesn't keep people from addressing problems that must be solved for the mission to be accomplished. Again, how do we lay down our egos and hidden agendas so we can be open and honest, but with a feeling of respect for ourselves and those we work with? How can we agree on the results we desire and come together as a team to reach them?

**Elite Loyalty** is much more than what someone might think of as being loyal. Elite Loyalty is that "never leave a Marine behind" kind of loyalty. If you are in a tough place, you have a support that isn't going away. Just think of the implications of an employee feeling the elite loyalty of his or her manager—knowing that he or she could take a risk when asked to be innovative, and still be supported if things didn't work out as planned. Elite loyalty can be as simple as saying a presentation will be delivered before an 8am deadline, and the team member staying after hours (on their own dime) to make sure it is ready as promised so the team and manager look good in the division meeting. Elite Loyalty is the deepest trust that you are all dedicated to the mission together with the highest integrity.

**Warrior Courage.** Imagine a warrior, strong and fast, racing across the open field, spear raised, his war cry echoing for miles to every ear in range. You're giving everything you have, 100% intensity, into achieving your goals. When a team comes together and everyone feels the energy of warrior courage, everyone is carrying their weight to accomplish the mission. The strengths of the team cover the gaps of the individual weaknesses.

The combination of these values directly impact how the team deals with challenges and obstacles. As a team, blind spots and dark corners can be observed and managed well before they negatively impact the mission. Ideas and creative responses can be generated and implemented long before an individual could even notice they're needed. It allows an organization to be decisive in the midst of combat—an essential element. The bottom line is that a Breakthrough Mentality, translated into an Elite Team Mentality, fundamentally transforms our ability to respond to problems instead of just react to them. When you put these best practices together, you are operating with One Mission, One Goal, One Team, and you can deliver on the promise of Cleared Hot.

When you put these best practices together,  
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## Delivering on Cleared Hot

### **To deliver on Cleared Hot, an individual must:**

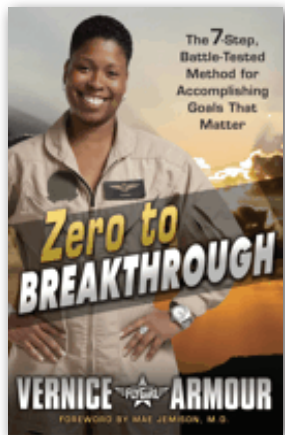
- Harness the power of a Breakthrough Mentality.
- Make a commitment to think outside the box and create possibilities beyond your expectations.
- Give yourself access and exposure to opportunity, and be open to discovery to make your break.
- Be accountable for giving yourself permission to engage.

### **To deliver on Cleared Hot, an organization must:**

- Create a culture of “Permission to Engage.”
- Cultivate an Elite Team Mentality.
- Implement Radical Honesty, Elite Loyalty, and Warrior Courage.
- Build leadership skills in engagement and exercise personal accountability.

Engagement has to be addressed from both the top down and the bottom up. The responsibility lies with both sides. An employee has to take the step to go Cleared Hot and engage, even when the path doesn't seem clear or easy. Leadership must foster a climate and create a culture where engagement is not only accepted, but acknowledged and rewarded. Cleared Hot is permission to engage in productivity and delivery of the mission... in business and in life.

**You... are Cleared Hot! 🚀**



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A former captain in the United States Marine Corps, Vernice “Flygirl” Armour flew the SuperCobra attack helicopter in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, serving two tours in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Now an inspirational leadership speaker widely featured in the media, she lives right outside Washington, D.C.

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This document was created on June 8, 2011 and is based on the best information available at that time.

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