



Why Real Life Isn't Like Hawaii Five-O

Dr. Robert K. Bitting

The other night, my wife woke me up in the middle of the night complaining that I was singing in my sleep. I was singing the Hawaii Five-O theme song - arguably one of the catchiest theme songs in television history, by the way. I've been watching old re-runs of the show lately (obsessively, according to my wife), and that particular night it was the last thing I watched on TV before falling asleep - which only partially explains why I woke up singing. But there's more to it than that, and I think it has something to do with power, leadership, and the way that things work in the real world, especially at work. So, with apologies to Jack Lord (the actor who portrays Steve McGarrett), here's why real life could never be like Hawaii Five-O:

- McGarrett is everywhere, all the time. He always arrives moments after the crime has been committed, and is always there at the end when the criminal is arrested. Although most bosses think that they possess the skill of omnipresence, they don't. Thank God, because this would be a nightmare for the employees who know what they're doing and don't need someone looking over their shoulders every minute.
- There is only one crime at a time in Hawaii, so it is easy for McGarrett to give it his total attention. No one commits a new crime until the old one is completely solved. How many of us get to deal with only one problem at a time?
- McGarrett's staff is unconditionally loyal, trustworthy, hard-working, and efficient. There is never any dissension in the ranks. If a subordinate screws up, he (there are no "she-type" people on staff) knows it, and immediately, respectfully, and gratefully receives admonishment from the boss. No one hold any grudges.
- McGarrett is the perfect delegator - when he delegates. Tasks are assigned to subordinates with lightning efficiency, and when Steve follows-up, the task has been successfully completed. Many times, though, he does the job himself instead of asking others to do it, which seems to waste some of his valuable time. Come to think of it, that's how a lot of bosses do it - oh well, nobody's perfect.
- McGarrett apparently only has one suit, and he wears it all the time. No one ever says anything to him about it. How would your co-workers react if you wore the same clothes to work day after day? Also, there's the matter of his hair...
- He does not exercise his right to preferential parking. Several minutes of each show are dedicated to Steve running out the door, down a long flight of stairs, across the street, through the parking lot, and finally to his car. Moments later (as if he forgot something), the whole process is reversed. This, at least, keeps him in good shape. Also, he always drives, even when a subordinate is with him. I don't think so.

- McGarrett's office is huge with a lot of couches and chairs, and he even has a large veranda to enjoy the view. This is okay, because he works 24 hours a day, seldom rests and doesn't seem to live anywhere. This makes him a hero to workaholics everywhere.
- The large office also comes in handy when it's time to deal with the bad guys, because they never seem to go to jail, they just end up in McGarrett's office - which seems to make them more upset than actually having to do hard time. I don't know about you, but I'm always a bit nervous when I get called in to see my boss.
- Although McGarrett reports to the governor, the governor really seems to report to McGarrett. He's the boss of everybody. Now, we know that this can't be true. However, if you could pick one place to be the boss of everybody, where would it be? Hawaii, of course. Sorry, no one really gets to work in paradise.
- Nobody seems to know what "Five-O" means. This would be a fatal marketing gaffe in most organizations.
- People's names are changed unnecessarily. Kam Fong as Chin Ho. Zulu as Kono. What's going on here? I think that if you have a good name you should stick with it. Too much change can be a bad thing.
- Finally, even McGarrett's staunchest of enemies, the infamous Wo Fat, is rather likeable, and you always hope he gets away. Don't worry, he does. I wished I liked everyone, even the people at work who make my life miserable, but I don't - and they don't just make periodic guest appearances, either.

Well, there you have it. Life isn't really like Hawaii Five-O, at least most of the time. When it comes right down to it, maybe I'm just jealous - or at least I wish I could spend more time in Hawaii. Book 'em, Dan-O. Da-da-da-da, DA-DA, da- da-da DA DA...

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