

Mission Ready

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The Importance of Employees Feeling Important

Would it surprise you to know that the Marine Corps - with its legendary reputation for excellence and commitment - is largely composed of "minimum wage" employees? It's true; fully seventy percent of the members of this elite, high performance organization earn about a thousand dollars a month.

Why, then, do these underpaid employees stand so tall?

The secret of their self-esteem is simple: the organization makes each and every Marine, regardless of rank, feel important. Not only do they feel personally important, Marines feel as if they belong to an important organization, doing the most important job in the world!

Do the people in your department feel similarly exalted? We hope so, but - as business managers ourselves - we know that many managers are reluctant to make their subordinates feel important. These managers fear they will lose leverage over their departments if their people walk around with pride in themselves and in their organization. These are the kinds of managers that dangle the paycheck over the heads of their employees, and even say things like "Remember: You're Replaceable!"

Isn't it ironic that Marine Corps officers and sergeants - who are stereotyped as the managers described above - tell their people that they are *irreplaceable*?

The Marine Corps knows that their Marines will not even consider reenlistment unless

they are exalted by the organization they serve. Why should they? The life is hard and underpaid. The Corps also knows that, while most Marines would never admit it, they are sensitive to public opinion. Sometimes in a foreign country, for example, the local populace may not particularly appreciate Marines. Even here at home, a young Marine, all dressed up in "blues," can be affected by the disparaging glance of a pretty girl; or feel a pang of inequality when an executive his age drives by in a Porsche. The Marine Corps has little control over how their people are treated off base, but "on-base" is a different story.

When Marines step back on base, they feel exalted by the organization they serve. Just as a Marine Corps base is a different world - in which "minimum wage employees" are treated with respect - your workplace, too, can be a different world.

Just because our society at large may not hold factory assemblers, for example, in high esteem, doesn't mean that these assemblers cannot enter a workplace that treats them as vitally important members of a high performance organization, and contributors to a great cause. Your workplace doesn't have to be like "the real world;" it can be better.

We hope you'll follow the example of one of the most successful organizations in this country - composed largely of underpaid employees. Making your people feel important really pays off - in performance, and in personal and institutional loyalty.