

Mission Ready

Volume 2, Issue 9

September 1, 2000

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Laying Down the Challenge

Football season is with us again. For those of you who are not fans, we urge you to wait a moment before you turn the channel. Chances are, you will see an Armed Forces commercial, aimed at the target audience tuned into the game. These recruitment outreaches to America's young men and women can be very instructive to every business leader. Because, when you think about it, your challenge is very similar to the one faced by today's military: and that is, *How do you bring in new people who will be a credit to your organization?*

If you watch a few of the Armed Forces ads, you notice immediately that the Army, Navy and Air Force focus on the *benefits* of joining their organization. Benefits like: a four-week paid vacation, and the learning of skills which will serve you well, once you return to civilian life. But the flagship benefit of those three branches of the military - and the one discussed most in their ads - is their \$ 50,000 college education package, available to virtually all who enlist.

Then you see a Marine Corps recruitment ad. There is no mention of benefits, although the Marine Corps, if the truth were to be known, *offers the identical package as their brother services*. All you see is the image of a young man or woman in a Marine Corps uniform staring confidently ahead. And you hear a voice, asking: "Do you have what it takes to be one of us - the Few, the Proud, the Marines?"

End of ad.

Now, which approach do you think works best for today's savvy, Nike-clad, cell

phone-packing youth?

The Marine Corps' outreach wins hands down. While the Army, Navy and Air Force have struggled to meet quota - and have repeatedly failed - year after year, the Marine Corps has *met or exceeded* quota, for the last 63 months!

What can we, as business leaders, learn from the Marine Corps?

Rather than getting in a bidding war for today's whiz kids fresh off the college campuses - trying to "out-perk" our competition - we should not be afraid to lay down the challenge to the candidate sitting across the desk from us. We should not be afraid to, in effect, ask him or her: "Do you have what it takes to belong to the best organization in the industry?"

But, in order to ask that question, your recruiters must truly believe they represent the best company in its industry. If they feel that way, their passion will be contagious. The young candidate will want to be like them. Suddenly, the thrill of being accepted will mean more than the money and the associated perks. If that sounds naive to you, please remember that the Marine Corps doesn't attempt to out-bid the Army, Navy and Air Force. Because it is, in fact, offering something more: the chance to be a Marine.

You can offer a similar benefit: the chance for today's graduates to be a part of your organization. But you've really got to believe you work for the best company in the field.