

# Mission Ready

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## The Secrets of Team Building

In the corporate environment, "teamwork" is the buzzword of management. It is used in practically every company newsletter, and in every pep talk to the rank and file. Motivational posters of individuals on whitewater rafts, strenuously paddling in unison - or a group of climbers helping each other up a dangerous slope - are hung on the walls of offices and production areas in virtually every business in the country. But, while management's heart may be in the right place, their methods often miss the mark. Here are a few secrets to team building.

### Team Spirit Must Flow from the Bottom Up

In many corporate environments, despite all the hype about working together, teams are only to be found "at the top." "Team selling," for example, is reserved for the most important customers, while smaller accounts are handled by the individual salesperson. "Team production" is a reality on some assembly lines, but there are many lone workers, doing the identical repetitive chore, who do not feel part of anything bigger than their individual workspace. This is a shame because it is imperative that those at the bottom begin the groundswell of team spirit for the entire organization.

Readers familiar with this newsletter know that we very often refer to the Marine Corps as a *business model*. Their concept of team building begins at the lowest level of the organization, not with the Generals and the officers. Team spirit in the Marine Corps begins with the three young Privates who form a "Fire Team;" their enthusiasm joins with the energy of the other Fire Teams, which then swells horizontally and vertically throughout the rank and file into an *esprit de corps* that should be the envy of any organization. The morale in the three man Fire Team - is just as high as it is in the Brigade, or Regiment; it's just not quite as loud.

Enthusiastic managers can create a similar *esprit de corps* if they start their team-building at the

bottom. Make each individual feel part of something bigger than him or herself. Team jackets, and recognition, and reward, go a long way to fostering a sense of belonging.

### The Team must never be a Haven

Being assigned to a team makes some individuals breathe a sigh of relief. They feel that the spotlight is no longer on them personally, but on the group. Their sense of *personal* responsibility is now diminished, "spread out," as it were, among his/her fellow team members.

In the Marine Corps, it is just the opposite. One's sense of obligation is *increased* by being part of a team, even to the point, on the battlefield, of self-sacrifice.

On whatever level of the your organization, the team must be never be a haven for its members. If a manager hears his team come up with collective excuses for not meeting its goals, then he might as well have a group of individuals working for him. By leading through personal example, the manager can create a group consciousness in which all are eager to do their personal best to serve the team.

### Keep Your Teams Together

And, finally, try to keep your teams members together. In most businesses, teams are constantly changing their composition, while managers wonder why there is no continuity of team spirit. The Marine Corps tries its best to keep the teams together for an entire tour of duty; the bonding grows stronger with each maneuver and with each Friday night on the town. If sent into combat, the twelve Marines in a Squad look out for each other as if they were brothers.

Remember: Marines Fight for Each Other. When your employees begin *succeeding for each other*, your organization will be formidable indeed.