



## The Marine Corps Way...

The Fourteenth in the series: ***An Executive Summary for Busy Managers.***

I guess the 14<sup>th</sup> time is the charm. This is the first “five sun” book I have come across...

Mayap ayabak (that is how they say good morning in the Philippines)! Believe it or not, the Philippines have eighteen (18) Starbucks stores. Eight of them alone are located in the city of Manila. These Starbucks people are making Wal-Mart look like a local chain...

*So you think you have employee loyalty. You think that your company is a formidable competitor in your market space. Most importantly, you think that you are poised to overtake the competition in your next competitive proposal. Would you still be as confident if your life was at risk? What would you change about your company if you were in the business of keeping your Country safe and staking your life on your capabilities?*

This is a classic case of finding a diamond in the rough. Business Leadership the Marine Corps Way was tucked back in the Barnes and Noble section of “B&N published” books. I had searched the local library and Amazon.com for books on leadership only to be frustrated by their proposed availability and delivery dates. So, I finally perused the local B&N hoping to find something worthwhile. After looking in all of the normal spots I moved off the beaten path and discovered a rack of

books in the corner that had a nice layer of dust. My search coincided with Veterans Day so when I saw a book on Marine Corps leadership I thought that it might make an okay read... at least it would be relevant to the topic and the timeframe. Little did I know how much wisdom that this book was hiding between its’ covers.

The co-authors, Dan Carrison and Rod Walsh are both veterans of the Marine Corps. This allowed them to give an interesting perspective to some of the anecdotes, especially when discussing boot camp. Admittedly, the authors are much better at highlighting ideas with potential than offering implementation plans. Clearly the training and simulation budgets of industry are nowhere near the levels of the Marines, but the authors offer a few novel ideas on how to overcome this challenge.

***Marines are made, not born, to be the most capable fighting force on the planet.***

A point well taken from this book is that all Marines, both Enlisted Personnel and Officers, are trained from the very beginning to be leaders; no matter what their background or previous experience. The Marine Corps knows that in battle the ranking leader can become a casualty. Should this occur, someone has to be able to take over the command. While casualties are rare in industry, retiring employees and defecting managers are a reality. Two weeks is certainly not long enough for a company to fill the gap left by a supervisor... unless one of the responsibilities of the supervisor all along was to make sure that their direct



reports were trained for succession. This type of training does not have to cost the company anything whatsoever. As a matter of fact, as the authors point out, the employee being trained will appreciate the opportunity and the supervisor doing the training will know that they are “promote-able” (assuming that management has made the supervisors aware that this is a requirement for promotion). Productivity from these employees can be expected to increase due to the enhancement of their morale.

***Does your company make use of this tactic?***

Recruiting is another focal point of the book. The Marine Corps is made up of 175,000 individuals. Each year they recruit 40,000 new people. That equates that more than 20% of their force are new recruits. This means that companies with 100 employees should expect to recruit 22 new employees each year. And, that excludes any planned growth! Imagine a 100 person company having to develop a strategic plan that included the recruiting and training of 22 new “replacement” personnel. The CFO would have a coronary.

My personal favorite piece of information from this book is that the Commandant has a suggested reading list for each of the levels within the Marine Corps. The authors state that it might be a great idea for business leaders to do the same. Imagine the benefits to the organization if the boss posted a list of suggested reading and left those books for borrowing in the company break rooms. The books

would give the boss a confidence level that his leaders had a common base of knowledge from which everyone could operate. How many companies have a suggested reading list that is encouraged by the most senior of managers?

Business Leadership the Marine Corps Way has many other thought provoking ideas and scenarios within the pages.

**Every leader in a business organization, both young and old, should be encouraged to read this book. Perhaps this should even be standard issue with the “rejected” stamp and the timecard approval writing instrument for new supervisors ☺**

The book in a nutshell:

- Being the best takes developing loyal leaders at every level of the organization

*Just like the Marine Corps, there is nothing easy about this book. The font is small and the pages are numerous. At times you wonder where the lesson is going only to be blind-sided by the obvious. The time investment will be well worth your while as you compare your own company activities to those which are used to maintain America's first responders.*

Just my opinion and we all know what “they” say about opinions...

Thanks

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