

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

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## THESIS

**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL  
MARINE CORPS RECRUITING STATIONS:  
LEADERSHIP AND INFORMATION SHARING**

by

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September, 1996

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**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL MARINE CORPS RECRUITING  
STATIONS: LEADERSHIP AND INFORMATION SHARING**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
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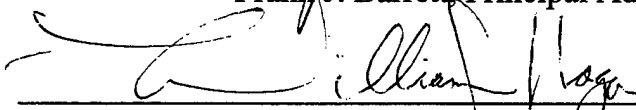


F. Michael Asmus

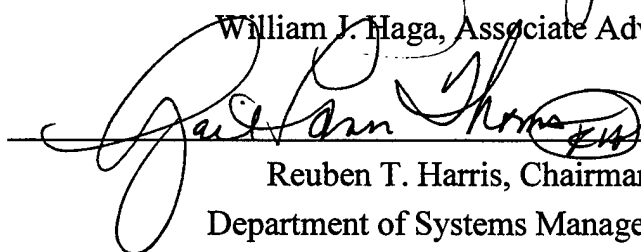
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## ABSTRACT

Marine Corps recruiting duty is the toughest peacetime assignment for any Marine. It involves complex internal and external factors dealing with global, national, and local issues completely out of the control of recruiting personnel making it a truly dynamic duty. Furthermore, recruiting is an assignment where performance is based largely on quantitative measures. Marines, at all levels, are under immense pressure to make assigned recruiting goals or be relieved from duty. The objective of this thesis is to describe the characteristics of the successful recruiting stations and define how they could reengineer through information technology. Using appreciative inquiry at the most successful recruiting stations, recruiters, noncommissioned officers in charge, and command group members are interviewed to discover and understand the factors that give life to their stations. The culture of these stations is then characterized to illustrate how they confront pressures to meet assigned goals. The outcome is that successful recruiting stations are designed for high performance and represent prime candidates to implement reengineering. Redesign through information technology offers to reduce the organizational complexity within recruiting stations thereby limiting pathologies and increasing efficiency. Recommendations are offered for further research.



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

As long as there is a Marine Corps, there will be a need to recruit Marines. Who better to recruit Marines than Marines themselves? Marines are able to demonstrate their abilities by speaking for and about their Corps. They enjoy a rich and illustrious history filled with examples of courage, honor, customs and courtesies unparalleled by any other modern day fighting force. For over 220 years, the Marines have been the first on scene to defend American interests and to project their power by maintaining a force of "readiness." Marines are ready not only to fight the battles of today but those of tomorrow. To maintain that readiness, they keep their ranks replenished with mentally and physically fit young men and women. Recruiting these men and women is vitally important for the Marine Corps to sustain their readiness.

Recruiting is a monumental challenge. Societal changes, waning interest in joining, a smaller population of recruitable youth, military downsizing and reduced budgets oppose the Marine Corps' ability to replenish its ranks. General Carl Mundy, the Marine Corps' 30<sup>th</sup> Commandant, labeled recruiting as the toughest peacetime assignment for any Marine. Determination of success is based largely on quantitative performance measures -- the ability to make monthly contracting and shipping mission. There is an enormous amount of pressure placed on personnel at all levels in the recruiting force to meet quotas or be fired.

For many Marines, recruiting duty is their first independent duty assignment. Separated from other Marines, sometimes hundreds of miles away, recruiters must

prospect, enlist, and prepare new applicants for recruit training with little or no daily supervision. Unfortunately, even if they do everything they are taught, they are not assured success; there are too many human factors involved. Recruiters must learn to face daily rejection and battle myriad external factors opposing their efforts to make Marines out of qualified high school seniors and recent graduates.

Quitting is ordinarily not in the Marine vocabulary. Yet, to illustrate how tough recruiting can be, during 1993-94 when the Marine Corps offered early retirement for field grade officers, the officer assignment monitors averaged one recruiting station commander per month accepting the early out package. One monitor said it did not surprise him, "since on recruiting duty more than any other assignment for a Marine major is there the possibility of relief related to performance."

Responding to the demands, most Marines in typical fashion get the job done. Yet, a few stations have set themselves apart as superior. They have created an environment where Marines enjoy their duties, excel at their tasks, and set even higher goals to attain.

## **B. OBJECTIVE**

The success of any organization or individual is largely dependent upon their ability to understand themselves. Once understood, it should become an objective to learn from and emulate behavior or processes which lead to success. This study aimed to learn the characteristics of the highly successful Marine Corps recruiting stations.

The objective of the thesis is to assist in the dissemination of the learned characteristics of consistently successful stations. Common themes were identified, then specific examples provided to illustrate the successful characteristics of recruiters, noncommissioned-officers-in-charge (NCOICs), and command group members. By sharing these characteristics of success, leaders can put them to use in individual and group efforts to continually reengineer Marine Corps recruiting.

### **C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To meet the objective, the following primary research question was answered: What are the characteristics found at the highly successful stations? Answering this question provided greater detail as to how successful stations focus on what has gone well for them in the past and the present, challenge conventional practices by experimenting in the margins, integrate their systems so that everyone can see and realize the consequences of their actions, and create forums and opportunities for ongoing dialogue. Finally, how successful stations would employ and integrate future developments in information technology (IT) was answered. Their proposed IT employment provides a model template for all recruiting stations.

## **D. SCOPE, LIMITATIONS, AND ASSUMPTIONS**

### **1. Scope.**

The scope of this thesis is on the influences at the recruiting station level. A recruiting overview is provided in Chapter Two for those not familiar with the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) structure and culture. External factors attacked at the national level such as societal changes, waning interest in joining, a smaller population of recruitable youth, military downsizing and reduced budgets although relevant are not addressed in this thesis. The scope of this thesis are the factors that Marines on recruiting duty at the recruiting station level can and do affect.

### **2. Limitations.**

Limitations of this thesis included the inability to visit all recruiting stations and the amount of time spent at the stations visited. Time and budget constraints limited visits to four-day trips at three different recruiting stations.

### **3. Assumptions.**

The interviewing and observation methods used to collect data generated accurate data. Additionally, the methods used would not manipulate any of the variables being studied.

## **E. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used to conduct this research consisted of four aspects: exploration, research design, data collection, and analysis and interpretation.

### **1. Exploration.**

Initial exploration into Marine recruiting came from personal experience on recruiting duty. Before arriving on the duty, horror stories were heard of how difficult recruiting was from former recruiting warriors. Within a short period of time, both the highs and lows of recruiting were experienced first hand.

The glories of winning and the disgraces of losing on recruiting duty are greatly exaggerated. The winning stations try to do everything in their power to stay on top. Time off is a great motivator for those on the duty who typically spend 10-14 hours per day on the job. Exceptional performance is also rewarded through superior achievement awards and meritorious promotions. Things can quickly turn sour if a station is failing. Everyone starts pointing fingers and Marines touted as "outstanding" in their Fleet Marine Force (FMF) duties quickly lose their careers to poor performance evaluations and even worse, relief from duty. No one is protected from relief. Recruiters, staff officers, civilian government employees, and even recruiting station commanding officers have been relieved of their duties. The rules are quite simple: produce or be fired.

Further exploration consisted of reading about success in Marine recruiting. Unfortunately, there is no widely available published data on success in Marine recruiting. The recruiting services in general do a great job at documenting failures but



little to document the successes. So, reading began with success in outside organizations with Peters and Waterman (1982). From there, books and articles were read on successful personal and business practices, change management, business process reengineering and enabling information technology in business. A complete bibliography is included in the list of references. Finally, a primary research question was determined and a proposal for the study was presented to MCRC for approval.

## **2. Research Design.**

The research design provided the road map for completing the objectives of the thesis. The planned study used an exploratory research process focusing more on description, describing the who, what, when, where, and how rather than causation. Since the characteristics of success were not known in advance and the main objective of the study was to uncover and learn from them, this study sought hypotheses. Accordingly, formal studies can then be developed for future research by deriving hypotheses from this study.

Given time and budget constraints, it was determined that three successful recruiting stations could be visited. The method of data collection planned was a hybrid of survey and observation. The emphasis was on the survey mode through the use of personal interviews with Marines at these stations. Additionally, since the study intended to collect past data with no experiments the design was ex post facto.

The next goal was to define “successful” recruiting stations. Together, with MCRC, successful stations were defined as those stations able to consistently make

contracting and shipping mission while relieving few, if any, recruiters. The premise was that these stations were the best at accomplishing the mission with the talent given and not at the expense of destroying the careers of the Marines assigned to the station. Three stations were identified representing the northeast, central, and west regions of the United States. In addition to being identified as successful, zero recruiters had been relieved from these stations and they also individually earned recent honors as a district RS of the year, a region RS of the year, and the RS with the highest recruit depot graduation rate.

The time dimension of the study was cross-sectional since only one four-day long visit interviewing Marines a single time was achieved at each station. However, the data collected was qualitative and longitudinal, describing events occurring over months and, in cases, years of time. The nature of the data, being qualitative, makes support or rejection of any hypothesis difficult.

### **3. Data Collection.**

Once the "successful" stations were identified, temporary additional duty (TAD) trips were planned to spend four days in each station. Coordination with command group members included briefings with the commanding officers for the trip purpose and with the executive officer for logistical support. On two of the trips, coordination was also made with the Recruiter Instructor to attain suggested initial interviewing start points.

Upon arriving at stations, recruiters and NCOICs were sought to interview first. Data collection where the "rubber met the road" was desired to ascertain why these stations were so successful. The decision was made to visit the field on "solo" trips to rid

appearances of any affiliation with the command group or "higher headquarters." Identification was provided as a student studying the characteristics of the successful stations. After interviewing recruiters and NCOICs for the first two or three days, available command group members were interviewed on the final day. The total number of Marines interviewed was 26. Of those, 16 were staff noncommissioned officers and the remaining ten were noncommissioned and commissioned officers.

At the first station, interviews were conducted in civilian clothes (coat and tie) in an attempt to avoid suppression of any open communication from the constant visual reminder of military rank structure. At the second and third stations, all interviews were conducted in military uniform and no suppression was noticed in the recruiters or NCOICs' ability to engage in open, frank communication.

The type of interviews conducted were appreciative inquiry, a method intended for discovering, understanding and fostering innovations in organizations. This type of inquiry affirms positive experiences by seeking out the best of "what is" to help ignite "what might be." The steps in appreciative inquiry include discovering factors that give life to an organization, envisioning what might be, engaging in dialogue, and finally constructing the future. The interviews were held in recruiter and NCOIC offices and lasted between one and two hours. Each interview was tape recorded then transcribed, generating over 500 pages of transcripts.

Initial selection of recruiters and NCOICs to interview was based primarily on who was available and proximity to recruiting station (generally staying within a 90 mile radius). Subsequent selection was based on recommendations from those already

interviewed and through conversations with the recruiter instructors and operations chiefs, since they deal with recruiters and NCOICs on the most frequent basis.

#### **4. Analysis and Interpretation.**

The final aspect of the methodology included analyzing and interpreting the data collected. Interviews were transcribed so that they could be reviewed to associate key themes. Once key themes were identified, specific examples were used for illustration and amplification.

#### **F. CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The rest of this thesis is broken down as follows:

- Chapter II provides an overview of the structure and culture of Marine recruiting and is intended for those with little or no background in the area.
- Chapter III is the heart of the thesis. Six common characteristics of success found in the stations visited are discussed with specific examples from recruiters, NCOICs, and command group members.
- Chapter IV discusses reengineering recruiting through information technology, the Joint Recruiting Information Support System, and how successful stations would implement and integrate future developments in information technology.
- Chapter V provides conclusions about the study and recommendations for further study in the area.



## **II. OVERVIEW OF MARINE RECRUITING**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview of Marine recruiting, the "toughest peacetime duty" for any Marine. It is intended primarily for readers with little or no recruiting experience. The mission and structure of Marine recruiting will be covered followed by the culture in recruiting stations. The chapter closes with a scenario of what recruiting could easily look like in any recruiting station.

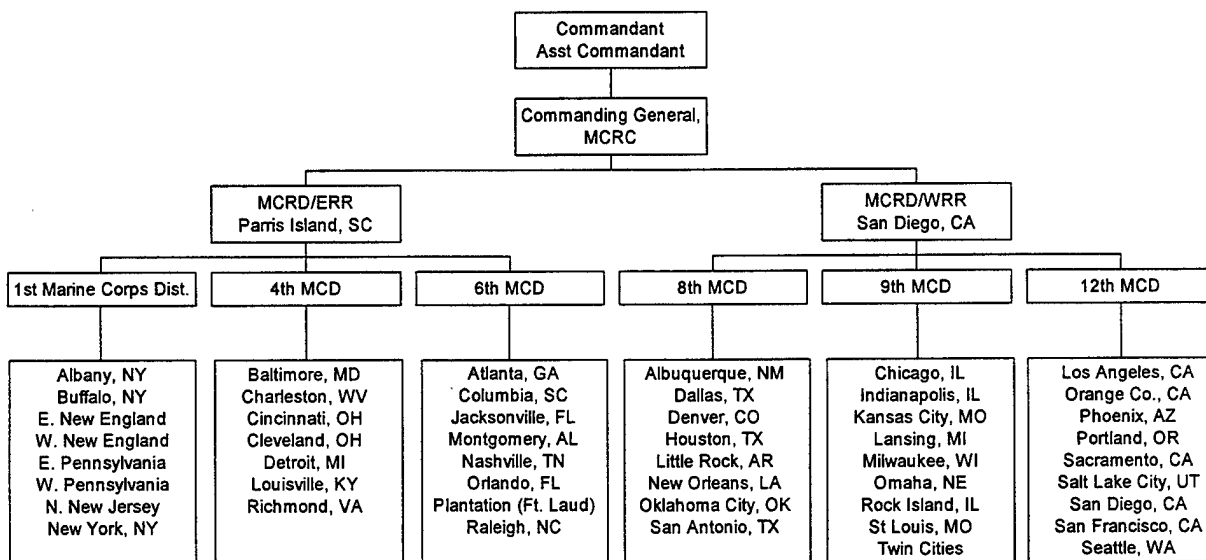
### **B. MISSION**

The mission of Marine recruiting is to recruit quality young men and women to service their country as United States Marines and Marine officers and to perform other tasks as directed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps (PRC, 1996).

### **C. STRUCTURE**

Figure 2-1 represents the command structure for recruiting. It begins with the Commanding General (CG), Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC), a major general, who reports directly to the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) on all recruiting matters. Two regions report to MCRC: Eastern Recruiting Region (ERR) and Western Recruiting Region (WRR). The regions are commanded by brigadier generals who are dual-hatted as commanding generals of the Marine Corps Recruit Depots (MCRD) where recruit training takes place. ERR headquarters is located at MCRD Parris Island, South Carolina and WRR at MCRD San Diego, California. Marine Corps

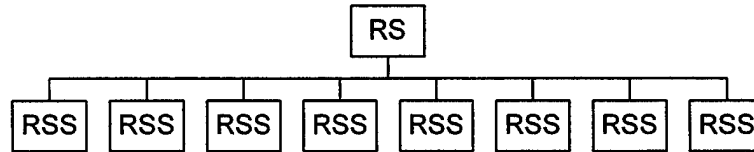
Districts (MCD) are commanded by colonels and report to the regions. There are three districts in each region. Districts are further broken down into recruiting stations (RS) which are commanded by majors and represent the last layer in the structure with a commissioned officer in charge. There are 49 recruiting stations in the nation.



**Figure 2-1. Recruiting Command Structure**

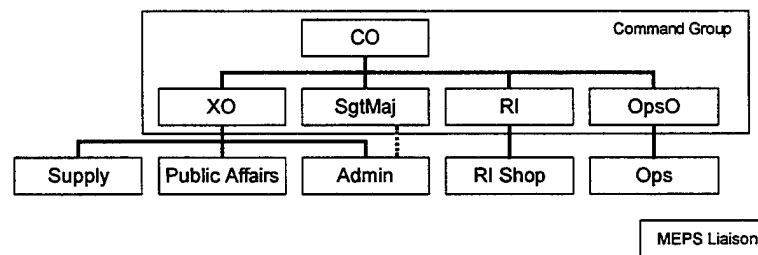
Recruiting stations consist of a headquarters and field units called recruiting substations (RSS). The substation is where actual recruiting takes place. It is led by a noncommissioned-officer-in-charge (NCOIC) who has several canvassing recruiters to carry out prospecting, enlisting, and preparing applicants for recruit training. Figure 2-2 represents the relationship between the recruiting station and substations. The number of substations in any one RS varies depending on factors to include, but not limited to,

geographical size of the RS, number of recruitable youth, personnel assigned and budgetary constraints.



**Figure 2-2. RS Structure**

The RS headquarters, Figure 2-3, consists of a command group and support staff. The command group typically consists of the commanding officer, executive officer, sergeant major, recruiter instructor, and operations officer. Although the commanding officer is ultimately responsible for all the station does or fails to do, the command group is the nucleus that provides the vision and direction for the station. In addition to oversight of the subordinate sections listed in Figure 2-3, members of the command group have individual programs they manage for the commanding officer.



**Figure 2-3. RS Headquarters**

The Executive Officer is responsible for the High School, Musician Enlistment Option (MEOP), and Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) Scholarship programs. Respectively, these programs assist in attaining enlistment of high school



seniors, musicians for the Marine Corps' bands, and applicants for college scholarships to earn commissions as Marine Corps officers.

In addition to the full time job of troop welfare for all enlisted Marines, the Sergeant Major is responsible for the Delayed Entry Pool Program. This program helps reduce pool and recruit training attrition by placing emphasis on preparing poolees for bootcamp. It also provides incentives for poolees to refer friends to enlist.

The Recruiter Instructor (RI) is responsible for the Command Recruiting Program. This program capitalizes on the efforts of "hometown" Marines recently graduated from bootcamp or brought back home on temporary duty from Fleet Marine Force (FMF) units and supporting establishments to assist recruiters in prospecting applicants. The RI is also responsible for the training program in the entire recruiting station primarily focusing on NCOIC management and recruiter sales training.

The Operations Officer is responsible for the Prospect Priority Card (PPC) and Reserve Referral Credit programs. The PPC Program provides leads to applicants initially requesting more information about the Marine Corps through national advertisements. The Reserve Referral Credit Program tracks applicant referrals from local reserve units. The Operations Officer is also responsible for the quality control effort of the entire station.

The entire command group, except the RI, is assigned to recruiting duty for a three year tour. Billets overlap and no previous recruiting experience is required.

The RI is a career recruiter, military occupational specialty (MOS) 8412, and has years of experience in recruiting. Success as a recruiter and NCOIC are prerequisites for selection as an 8412. Success as an NCOIC and trainer are prerequisites for selection as

the RI and assistant RI. The RS table of organization calls for approximately 15 percent of the 8411 and 8412 population as career recruiters to ensure a consistent base of experience present in the station to combat personnel turnover.

The heart of the RS is in the operations section. The operations section gathers and reports all information concerning productivity. The operations chief, usually an 8412, assists the operations officer in tracking and scheduling applicants for testing, enlisting, and shipping to recruit training. Additionally, they process waivers for applicants needing exceptions to enlistment criteria. The operations section also maintains all statistics related to activity analysis and awards.

Other supporting staffs are responsible for training (Recruiter Instructor Shop), administration (Admin Section), supply and logistics (Supply Section), and public affairs and marketing (Public Affairs Noncommissioned Officer). The Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) Liaison is also shown in Figure 2-3. The MEPS Liaison coordinates the applicant enlistment and shipping through the MEPS and is the RS' last link in the quality control chain to ensure applicants are qualified for enlistment. The MEPS Liaison works directly for the RS commanding officer, but in some cases reports to the operations officer.

The RSS is led by an NCOIC who may be an 8412 career recruiter or canvassing recruiter (8411 MOS). Ideal 8411 NCOICs were successful recruiters possessing solid leadership skills and promoted to NCOIC status. NCOICs are usually responsible for one to seven recruiters depending upon the size of their area and target population (18-27 year old qualified military availables). Additionally, depending upon the number of recruiters assigned to an RSS, NCOICs are assigned as on or off production themselves. NCOICs

on production are expected to recruit as well as lead recruiters, a monumental challenge. In rare cases, an RSS will be assigned as a "one-man fighting hole," with just one Marine to recruit applicants and manage the substation. To assist the RSS, NCOICs request temporary assignment of Marines just completing recruit training for special programs to work as recruiter assistants and aides.

Marines selected for duty as canvassing recruiters are temporarily assigned to Recruiter School in San Diego for initial training and then permanently assigned to an RS for a three year tour. Many Marines volunteer for the duty because it offers a unique challenge and opportunities for promotion unavailable in their primary MOS'. Others do not volunteer and are reluctant about taking up the challenge; they just hope to survive their tour. When possible, recruiters may be assigned to an RS and RSS of their choice. In all cases, the needs of the Marine Corps and recruiting service are considered first for assignments.

#### **D. CULTURE**

There is a lot of pressure on personnel at all layers of the recruiting structure. The pressure comes from expectations to make accession goals to meet military end-strength requirements. Accession goals are determined by manpower personnel at Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) from Department of Defense (DoD) authorized Marine Corps end-strength, current force level, and the anticipated number of Marines separating. These accession goals are then given to MCRC for action. MCRC determines and tasks contracting and shipping goals to recruiting regions. Regions task the districts who then

task recruiting stations. Contracting refers to the enlistment of qualified applicants. These enlistees then wait to attend recruit training in a delayed entry pool and are often referred to as "poolees." Shipping refers to sending poolees to recruit training, also known as bootcamp. The recruiting stations assign contracting and shipping goals to substations by "fair" sharing the task across all recruiters. Individual recruiters in the substations then find the "faces to put to numbers." The numbers are passed along with the underlying threat of poor performance evaluations or being relieved from duty if they are not met. Recruiting personnel "on the bag" are those ultimately responsible for making the numbers; they carry this pressure around with them 24 hours a day until mission is met placing severe strain on their personal lives.

Marines, competitive by nature, are especially competitive on recruiting duty. Competition is present at all levels. Districts compete with each other for goal attainment and quality standards. Recruiting stations do the same by challenging each other and seeking recognition from district as top RS. But, most of the competition takes place between recruiters. To them, recruiting is a "battlefield" where recruiters hunt to make the "kill" on prospective applicants. Recruiting stations create awards programs to invigorate and sustain this killer attitude and competition. These awards come in addition to the extra \$275 per month that all 8411 and 8412s receive as special duty assignment pay regardless of their performance. For many, this is the first time they have been assigned to a duty where they are evaluated primarily on a quantitative measure (their ability to make monthly contracting and shipping mission consistently). Sometimes, the hunger to succeed and internal competition places barriers to communication and

impedes sharing of critical knowledge. That knowledge may mean the difference in making mission or not in an assignment that is much more than a routine, mundane task.

Recruiting requires flexibility and improvisation. It is a "people" business and requires the ability to interact and deal with persons from different backgrounds and positions. Recruiters must be able to adapt to fluid situations and improvise as necessary when dealing with applicants, parents, and educators. For instance, applicants that do not meet all of the physical, mental, moral, and education requirements for enlistment require waivers to the criteria. Recruiters must track down documentation and signatures from parents, educators, and law officials required for the kill. They use their interpersonal relationship and public relations skills to acquire the information they need. They must also be flexible to changing requirements from above. Frequently they are subjected to the demands of the RS as to what type of applicant to enlist whether it pertains to male or female, graduates or seniors, and they must stay abreast of the ever changing qualifications for enlistment programs. Successful recruiters put in long hours, six to seven days per week just to make mission.

The RS is responsible for improving the skills of recruiters through continual training. Recruiters are trained and evaluated by the RI and their NCOICs. The majority of training focuses around sales training and time management. Recruiters are trained individually and in groups. Occasionally, command groups use training to remedy poor performance from recruiters and NCOICs. They carry out training in such a way as to punish them. Recruiters and NCOICs not meeting goals are required to attend remedial training. This training takes place after hours since they cannot afford to lose prospecting time during the business day. Most of the training involves scrutinizing recruiter and

RSS performance by focusing in on negatives in an effort to make them uncomfortable and embarrassed over the inability to make goals. It also involves lectures and underlying threats from command group members if future results are not attained. In trying to push a team concept, some RS' require entire substations to attend remedial training if intermediate objectives, called phaselines, are not met. The desired result to increase teamwork is often not achieved because of the resentment and hostility between successful and unsuccessful recruiters in a substation or across the entire recruiting station. Training can quickly become a "whipping tool" for those not making mission.

The following scenario illustrates how recruiting pressure creates dysfunctionality.

Gunnery Sergeant Jones, NCOIC of RSS Monterey, was having another bad month. He just called the operations section at the RS for the status of a waiver they were processing for an applicant with a previous misdemeanor. While talking to the operations chief, Gunny learned that the commanding officer was on his way down to his substation for a surprise visit.

Ops Chief: Yeah Gunny, he just got off the phone with the colonel and he's out to chew some butt. District isn't happy that we're bringing up the rear again this month and I could hear the colonel yelling at the major over the phone all the way out here in Ops. Anyway, since you guys are close by and only two for ten midway through the month, he decided to make a surprise visit with Top.

GySgt Jones: Seagull visit.

Ops Chief: Seagull visit?

GySgt Jones: Yeah, you know. They come in and crap all over the place and then leave ... thanks for the scoop .

Ops Chief: Good luck.

Gunny thought the operations chief probably recommended they visit his substation. He thought aloud, "that double faced bastard." There was no trust between anyone throughout the recruiting station anymore. Gunny thought again about the poor decision somebody made to put an 8411 canvassing recruiter in the operations chief billet vice an experienced 8412 career recruiter. Then he realized that was not his problem anyway. Gunny looked out in the office and realized that all the recruiters had suddenly disappeared. The Gunny thought aloud again, "damn, I've got to turn this speakerphone off when I'm talking to the RS." The recruiters had heard the conversation and bolted out of the substation to avoid the C.O.'s visit. No one liked being around when "the man" was coming. The front door opened. Gunny was relieved to see it was only Sergeant Arnold. Sergeant Arnold was a young recruiter who recently started displaying an attitude when Gunny did not give him some requested time off. Gunny was determined not to treat Sergeant Arnold better than anyone else. The RSS had not made mission for the last three months and anyone wanting time off would have to earn it. Before Gunny could ask Sergeant Arnold where he had been the door swung open again and the C.O. charged in with their Recruiter Instructor, a Master Sergeant, called "Top."

GySgt Jones: Good afternoon, sir.

C.O.: Glad to see you made it in today, Gunny. You mind if Top takes a look at your NCOIC management book while I make myself at home?

GySgt Jones: No sir. Go right ahead.

Top and Gunny stepped into Gunny Jones office and Gunny closed the door.

GySgt Jones: Top, what the hell is going on? Every day somebody from the head shed is stepping into my office!

Top: Well maybe if you were here a little bit more and could make mission we wouldn't need to stop by.

GySgt Jones: That's a low blow, Top. I'm ahead for the year and if you're talking about yesterday when the XO popped in, I was at the hospital visiting my niece.

Top rolled his eyes. Gunny knew he should not have told the truth, nobody in the command wanted to hear about anyone's personal life, yet they sure wanted to keep tabs on everybody. Top picked up Gunny's management book and started analyzing the entries.

Top: Is there some reason you haven't been using your NCOIC management book, Gunny?

GySgt Jones: No Top. I've just been real busy this morning helping run some paperwork for a waiver we're trying to push through.

Top: Damn it, Gunny! Didn't you learn anything Saturday night at phaseline training? We're in the quality market. We don't need no stinking waivers!

Gunny vaguely remembered going to phaseline training Saturday night. He wondered why Top called it training since no training actually took place. All that happened was a "Spanish Inquisition" of why you were not at your quota. The NCOICs and recruiters called the Saturday night "training" the "beating meeting." What made the meeting even worse was that it took place late on Saturday night. Most of the NCOICs and recruiters were already working 12 to 14 hour days six days per week. At least Gunny only had an hour drive home after the meeting. Some NCOICs and recruiters had to drive a couple hours home and then explain to their families where they had been and why. It was



nasty. The RS' philosophy was to make it as painful as possible so that no one wanted to be there. They always said, "you know the consequences." To them everything was black and white.

Gunny decided not to waste his breath trying to explain to Top that the applicant he was running a waiver for has the highest ASVAB test scores in his senior class, has attended the substations' last three pool meetings with a friend, and only needs a waiver for an incident that happened a year ago when he confessed to stealing the cross-town high school's mascot as a prank. Meanwhile, the C.O. had picked up Sergeant Arnold's Scheduling and Results Book.

C.O.: Look at this Sergeant Henry! How do expect to make any freaking appointments if you're not meeting your objectives? You were supposed to make 70 telephone calls yesterday and you only managed to make half of that. What the hell have you been doing?

Sgt Arnold: Sir, my name is Sergeant Arnold.

C.O.: I'll tell you who you are ... you're a recruiter looking for a one-way ticket out of the Marine Corps if you don't start writing some damn contracts.

Top opened the NCOIC's door and stepped out with Gunny. The C.O. turned to Gunny and asked him what his excuse was today. Gunny looked down for some answers.

C.O.: I don't want to hear it. You are obviously not trying hard enough. The numbers don't lie! You've been up to the RS twice already this month and we've told you what you need to do. Somehow, some way, you'd better make it happen.

GySgt Jones: Yes, sir ... we'll be there.

The C.O. and Top stormed out and Gunny went back into his office and melted into his chair. He had lost all motivation to make mission. It was no longer his mission, but the

RS'. After all, they had all the answers. He glared out at Sergeant Arnold who was whispering on the phone just like he had been all week. Gunny yelled out, "Sergeant Arnold, don't freaking disappoint me this month!" Sergeant Arnold whispered into the phone, "Honey, I have to go" and hung up the receiver. He and his wife had been having problems with their son. The family's recent move and lack of family time together, due to the demands of recruiting, was bearing a negative effect on his son's performance in his third school in the past three years; he was having a real problem staying focused in class and was not meeting prescribed standards for his grade. The school threatened to hold his son back if he could not keep up with the other students and called for a parental meeting which Sergeant Arnold could not make. Sergeant Arnold had asked to take some leave for personal reasons but Gunny told him that now was not a good time for personal problems since the substation was not making mission. He told Sergeant Arnold to make mission first then talk to him about leave. Sergeant Arnold could not concentrate.

As the C.O. and the RI drove back to the RS, the C.O. asked why the RS was not making mission.

Top: Sir, it is just that time of the year. Recruiting works in cycles. We'll pick it up again soon.

Somehow, the C.O. had a hard time believing him. Prospecting numbers were down across the RS and no one had any answers on how to revitalize the RS. He lost confidence in his NCOICs ability to make mission on their own and was starting to lose faith in his command group's abilities as well. District wasn't making it any easier. Every administrative, operational, or supply report the RS sent up was reviewed for timeliness and accuracy like never before. Any discrepancy found was shoved back

down the C.O.s throat by the district C.O. directly. Things had sure changed from how they were treated when they were making mission. Patience was wearing thin for the major. He simply did not have time to listen to excuses anymore. The colonel made it clear to him: make mission or else. Or else what? That proverbial threat of a poor performance evaluation? That would surely hurt opportunities at intermediate level school and promotion selection. However, that threat no longer phased him. And he presumed his threats to recruiters no longer phased them. He was frustrated, for the first time in his career he was part of a team that was not successful.

Welcome to Marine Corps recruiting, the essence of a battlefield. A duty far more challenging than any other peacetime assignment. A duty where Marines must meet hard monthly numbers or else become casualties of war. Where pressure builds at the end of every month in the race against time to make the “numbers.”

The pressure to succeed can dangerously lead to a lapse in sound judgment and into adopting a “make it happen at any cost” attitude. Where leaders merely focused on numbers create cultures in which decisions are made behind closed doors and orders force fed to subordinates. Where interest in the personal lives of subordinates and families is lost or never established. Disloyalty and mistrust infiltrate the entire structure and blame runs rampant from Marines unaccustomed to anything but success.

Sound leadership and information sharing is required for success in such a demanding duty. The next chapter discusses the characteristics of those stations able to create cultures that facilitate success.

### **III. CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL RECRUITING STATIONS**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter addresses the characteristics of successful recruiting stations. These are stations that have established cultures where Marines can cope with changing demands, are willing to think outside accepted boundaries of problems, and experiment with possibilities. Unfortunately, these characteristics do not represent a comprehensive list and are not a cookbook recipe for success on recruiting duty. They are, however, common themes found at three of the most successful recruiting stations in the nation.

Expectedly, recruiting station commanding officers have the most impact on the characteristics of successful recruiting stations. These leaders create and manage the values of the station. Values that inspire and motivate Marines to think and act at their highest levels. What are they doing that the rest are not? Simply stated, here is what they do and how they do it.

#### **B. INSPIRE CONFIDENCE IN RECRUITERS AND NCOICS**

**Recruiting station commanding officers define their core task as inspiring confidence in their recruiters and NCOICs. This involves taking an active interest in recruiters' and NCOICs' personal lives.**

Recruiters and NCOICs at successful stations genuinely sense their leaders are committed to them, their careers, and their families because their leaders pay meticulous attention to their personal lives. Recruiters and NCOICs specifically expressed that they share great rapport with their commanding officer. A rapport formed and bonded by

commanding officers spending time caring for and learning about their Marines, going far beyond what is traditionally expected. These commanding officers expect and insist that people issues take up all their time. In doing so, they develop loyalty with and create confidence in their recruiters and NCOICs.

Although there may be slight variations across the most successful stations, the leaders at these stations use similar approaches in developing loyalty with and creating confidence in their Marines. They make an effort to personally visit with their Marines and take genuine interest in their personal lives. They travel to recruiting substations and get recruiters and NCOICs to talk freely and frankly about matters which are important to them. They feel it is far less important to learn the jobs of their Marines as it is to learn about them. Like the excellent companies (Peters and Waterman, 1982), they believe nothing more effectively involves people, sustains credibility or generates enthusiasm than face to face communication.

When these commanding officers travel to recruiting substations, they usually spend all their time visiting one or two recruiters or NCOICs. These are not perfunctory courtesy visits and time is not equally allocated between recruiters or NCOICs. Recruiters report that commanding officers have conversations that extend as long as is necessary. Commanding officers show tremendous enthusiasm in learning as much as they can about their Marines and their families. They seek first to understand their Marines by listening intently and asking questions about families, interests, and hobbies. They learn the names of Marines, spouses, and children. They learn birth dates and anniversary dates. They learn favorite foods, favorite television shows, and hobbies. By giving their exclusive attention they earn recognition from their peers and subordinates as

great listeners. One NCOIC says that whenever he talks to his commanding officer, it is as if they are completely alone. Oftentimes, recruiting is never discussed during these visits. Most recruiters said their conversations with the commanding officer concern family, religion, sports, politics, local and global news. Commanding officers develop a commitment to their Marines by showing respect for their thoughts by limiting themselves to personal in-depth, intense talks. One recruiter said, "he knows each and every one of us...some good, some bad ... and there is sincere concern coming from uptown and it helps." Another recruiter explained that they must deal with negatives all day and appreciate the fact that visits are made "not to come in and tear up your working file because we know they can do that." He further explained his willingness to give extra effort by saying, "we overproduce ... I think if I did not have that personal contact with the commanding officer, I don't think I would go to that extreme."

Leaders at successful stations also take an active interest in families. They actively participate in special occasions outside the workday to include attending weddings, sending birthday and anniversary cards, and personally delivering flowers and baby gifts to new moms. These leaders refuse to merely assert they care with general lip service and then pay no attention to their Marines, as is often the case with top management. Their display of care is best described by the examples uncovered during interviews with recruiters and NCOICs.

One NCOIC recalled the time he received a message notifying him that his wife had been rushed to a hospital located two hours from his recruiting substation for an emergency appendectomy. When he finally arrived, his wife was in recovery and his commanding officer was there visiting with her. The commanding officer did not send

someone to the hospital to pass on the recruiting stations' wishes for a speedy recovery. He did not have flowers delivered. The commanding officer personally delivered the flowers from the recruiting station with a large fruit basket from the Marine Corps League. The NCOIC remembered, "There was so much fruit in that basket that we had to give a lot of it away so it wouldn't go bad!"

After one recruiter checked aboard, he learned that his household goods were being delayed for an indefinite period of time. When the commanding officer heard the news he and the sergeant major mobilized and arrived at the recruiter's house with a truckload of furniture, dishes, pots, pans, and linens for his family to use from their families.

Leaders at the successful stations care about all of their Marines and families. They have a knack for making individual Marines and their families feel special yet they do not preferentially treat anyone; everyone is treated as family. One of the operations officers interviewed explained that just before reporting in for recruiting duty his wife's grandfather suddenly passed away. Knowing that the previous operations officer had already transferred, he was worried the recruiting station would not approve his phone request to attend the funeral which was hundreds of miles away. He called the station and spoke with the commanding officer who insisted they attend the funeral and take as much time as needed with their family. The operations officer elaborated:

We could not believe it. The recruiting station even sent flowers to the funeral. We hadn't even checked in yet. This immediately won over the heart of my wife having heard so many bad things about recruiting duty.

During an interview with one commanding officer, he explained that he actually took time off to lend support to his sergeant major and his family when the sergeant major's father was dying from cancer. He said:

I had been adopted by the sergeant major's family, then his dad died of cancer ... I packed in recruiting. I said, just run it. Make it happen. I was where I felt I ought to have been. I was there, I mean up to the day his dad died.

By taking such an active interest in their Marines, commanding officers make their Marines feel valued and significant. Knowing that their presence makes a difference, recruiters and NCOICs are more confident in themselves and their abilities. They display their confidence in their demeanor and attitude toward others.

Commanding officers who make an extra effort to learn about NCOICs and their families, have NCOICs who also make an extra effort to learn about recruiters and their families. One NCOIC, describing his concern for his recruiters, said:

Concern means sitting down and talking to them about their family lives, it means sitting down and giving them good solid guidance on how to recruit, it means helping them set goals, making them make good solid career decisions and basically solid leadership in terms of how you involve yourself in your recruiters' lives. The more they believe that you're a part of their life and the more they believe that you truly care about them not as a recruiter but as a Marine and as a person, the more likely they are to give you good solid performance. I'm not as concerned about whether they like me as I am about whether they believe that I'm on their side.

Recruiters develop loyalty with poolees in the same manner as their leaders do with them. They go above and beyond what is prescribed for them to do in maintaining contact and preparing poolees for recruit training.



Recruiters at the successful stations associate themselves as a big brother or father to their poolees. All of the recruiters interviewed seem to treat their poolees like family members. In describing how he treats his poolees, one recruiter said:

I don't do anything special other than common sense. They are kids, they like to play. I make my poolees do things together ... something that is outside of general orders or rank structure. We'll go to movies, go bowling or go-cart.

Aside from getting poolees together, recruiters at the successful stations also take immense interest in the personal lives of their poolees. They develop loyalty with applicants early on by personally taking them to MEPS vice putting them on buses like recruiters from other services. One recruiter described the personal attention he devotes to his applicants before they take the medical exam: "I will pick them up, eat breakfast with them making sure they eat the right things so they don't put a lot of sugar in their body." They also find out a lot about their poolees by listening. Describing the importance of being close to poolees, another recruiter said, "We're close ... you have to be there for them ... and they will ask it of you." But that closeness does not get in the way of good order; at times, recruiters must play the role of disciplinarian. They straighten out kids having trouble in school by "being firm with them ... and they respect us." One recruiter said his poolees don't even consider skipping classes with their friends for fear of what the Marines will do to them. After poolees ship to recruit training, recruiters stay in contact by writing and having new poolees write to the poolees now in recruit training. One recruiter described the effort he puts into making sure his poolees maintain high morale at bootcamp by sending them many letters at once:

These kids would get 10, 12, 14 letters from mail call and they're like what the heck is going on. And I'm always putting something in the envelope that

I send, not just a letter. I put something inside of it like a quote for the day, a thought for the day. Every Sunday my wife and I cut out something funny in the comics for them.

Developing rapport and maintaining friendship is reward enough for some of these recruiters. Another recruiter describes his friendship with and the confidence in a recruit who refuses to give up:

I've got a young man in recruit training right now [who has been there for over six months, he is] truly a no quitter... he refuses to give up because of me. I call him and write him. I keep in contact with his family. When he graduates that will be my single most prized accomplishment.

Recruiters also find it important to develop rapport and gain confidence with their poolees' families. A recruiter turned NCOIC shared how he establishes rapport and gains confidence with parents:

Once you establish a rapport, and gain confidence with the kid, you've got to have confidence with his parents. Once you do that, that is a big motivation, because his buddy enlists. His parents are content because of that other guy; parents know each other one way or another. So really do that, establish a good rapport with the poolees and get involved with the parents. I go to their house [to] just shoot the breeze with them. When you get to know them they will invite you to barbecues, birthday parties, and weddings. And you show up. You don't have to be in uniform. Take the recruiter hat off. And just go and hang out. You don't force them to [let you] go ... once the rapport is established, they'll pull you up. 'Hey, my sister's birthday party is coming up, come on over, or graduation.' [That is] very important. When these kids graduate high school, you must be there. Parents really recognize that. That really tells them something. Something else ... when a kid is messing up in school, I always tell the parents [I need to know] ... whether I have to get a parental consent or not, I say... if he starts messing up I need to know about it. You're his parents [but] a lot of times he's not going to listen to you ... he will listen to me. And the parents know that. 'Oh, this is a Marine telling my kid he's going to kick his butt.' That's confidence. I have parents who call me, 'Johnny's messing up. And you need to do something.' Okay, no problem, I'll go over there and kick his butt in school. Parents know that and they really like that. I've got parents right now that I put in their kid two years ago [and we still talk] 'we just wanted to let you know that Victor's doing very well.' That is really a success for me. When the

parents call me up and out of the blue say, 'I just wanted to let you know that he's really doing well and things are good. Thank you very much.'

**C. CREATE ENVIRONMENTS THAT VALUE PERSONAL ACCESSIBILITY AND ELIMINATE TRADITIONAL BARRIERS**

**Recruiting station commanding officers create an environment that values personal accessibility and eliminates traditional barriers that might hinder interpersonal communication.**

With recruiters and NCOICs spread out over large areas, it would be easy for commanding officers to insulate themselves from ideas and concerns by insisting on strict adherence to the chain-of-command. Frequently ideas are stifled and problems enlarged as they slowly pass up through the chain until they reach a point where even the senior leaders can no longer apply the ideas or solve the problems. Commanding officers at successful stations recognize barriers to communication and tear them down. They replace traditional hierarchical structure with flatter organizational structure to make themselves more accessible for others to communicate directly with them. These commanding officers create environments where issues are up front and on the table from the beginning.

One way commanding officers create environments that value personal accessibility is by eliminating a formal chain-of-command for daily communication. They encourage NCOICs and recruiters to share ideas and discuss concerns directly with them. One commanding officer described his access policy:

When they have a real problem, damn it, I want to know about it. I absolutely insist on knowing. And I will not be waylaid or insulted ... by so and so who should have told me ... I absolutely, steadfastly refuse.

An interview with an NCOIC from the station validated this policy. The NCOIC described access to the commanding officer:

The door is always open. Never a problem calling him. If I have to page him or whatever ... he has created an environment where people give him good intelligence which allows him to operate from the premise that he understands all facets of the situation.

Commanding officers also eliminate barriers that might hinder interpersonal communication by fostering ongoing dialogue. This dialogue makes it possible for NCOICs and recruiters to express ideas and concerns. They also partake in open conversations which lead them to understand direction and objective.

Even the successful stations use different mechanisms to foster ongoing dialogue. In one station there was an overwhelming commitment to family values. This commitment led to strong language within the station referencing the family which opened up interpersonal communication. The commanding officer stated it all started at an NCOIC meeting when a particular NCOIC was afraid to tell the others at the meeting why he was having problems in his substation. Another NCOIC leaned across the table and said, "come on Top, we are all family here." They all had a good laugh and that set the tone for open, frank communication. Everyone simply talks and acts like they are members of the same family. Marines in this recruiting station are anxious to introduce themselves and talk about their success.

One NCOIC talked about how they conduct the best type of training anyone could receive or give because of ongoing dialogue. They have overnight All-Hands' meetings which all of the recruiters, NCOICs, and command group members attend. Throughout the day and night, they conduct leadership and sales training. They have role plays with

recruiters and NCOICs playing the parts of recruiters and applicants. This NCOIC said he likes to volunteer to be the applicant all the time. Then he uses the role play to present all of the difficulties his recruiters are experiencing. The dialogues presented give him fresh ideas on how to attack these problems.

At another station they conduct monthly NCOIC meetings which they refuse to refer to as "meetings." To them it is more than just a meeting, it is a time for them to focus on mission. Therefore, they call it "The Focus." The commanding officer requires the NCOICs to focus on what is going good or bad by having them explain the performance of their substations. One NCOIC explained:

He always has everybody explain what went good and what went bad during your month. And that goes around. That's how it always starts. And whether you made it or didn't make it, you have your opportunity to say this is what happened, and in doing so you know, you really start to kind of pick apart what went right and what went wrong in your own mind. And it, if you'd never thought about it before at least you think about it at that point for what really did go right and what really did go wrong. And you have to articulate it. And when you do that to the group or the committee, out of that comes suggestions ... and so out of that probably comes a lot of ideas for where we need to focus our attention and some training.

Senge (1990) states that in dialogue people become observers of their own thinking. By making NCOICs explain their substations' performance, commanding officers force NCOICs to critique their own actions. They often affirm their successes or talk through solutions to their own problems.

Commanding officers also encourage horizontal communication to increase overall communication. One commanding officer stated, "I try to pressure NCOICs to get on the net horizontally." Commanding officers also allow NCOICs to cover for one another. NCOICs talk to each other because they have authority to give and receive help

from fellow NCOICs with contracting and shipping missions. At one station the recruiter instructor summarized how NCOICs use horizontal communications by saying, "NCOICs here call each other and they do that on their own because everybody is looking out for each other."

#### **D. FOCUS ON SUCCESS AND EXPRESS APPRECIATION**

**Recruiting station commanding officers deliberately focus on recruiter and NCOIC success and make an effort to express appreciation.**

Leaders publicly and privately express their gratitude. They shake hands and recognize superior performance at All-Hands events. They also congratulate and acknowledge NCOICs and recruiters privately in their offices and hallways. While observing one commanding officer addressing his recruiters and NCOICs about making mission, he said, "It is you who are doing it and I thank you from the bottom of my heart that you do this."

Commanding officers also appreciate positive outcomes by focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and potentials of recruiters and NCOICs. They exhibit affirmative competence (Barrett, 1995). For example, an NCOIC reported his substation had missed mission one month and he was personally devastated. He was even more embarrassed to attend the end of the month NCOIC meeting. It was his first time missing mission and he did not know how the commanding officer would receive him. The commanding officer greeted him with the same warm handshake he gave everyone else. Instead of focusing on why the NCOIC's substation did not make mission, he thanked

him for the extra poolee their recruiting substation shipped to recruit training that month and for the color guard detail they performed at a civic ceremony. These were events the NCOIC had completely forgotten about. Leaders at successful recruiting stations deliberately find successes to affirm competence in recruiters and NCOICs.

Another example of nurturing affirmative competence and the gratitude commanding officers express involves celebrating recruiters' and NCOICs' achievements. Most commanding officers elect to publicly praise their Marines, one of the Marine Corps' leadership tenets. However, one NCOIC shared a story of how he was motivated by a former commanding officer who privately expressed his gratitude to recruiters:

You save the plaques and you've got all kinds of things but what I keep in my drawer are the little notes that my former C.O. used to write me every month. A little personal note that just came to me as an individual recruiter at the end of the month that just said 'Thanks.' It came to my house. It did not come to work. I didn't have to stand up in front of anybody and get it, it was just a little something between him and me ... and it made me feel special ... and it probably made me do a lot more for him as an individual because I felt like he was doing as much for me, to take some time out of his schedule at the end of the month and just say, 'hey, thanks.' Sometimes he would make a joke out of it or he would remember one or two things that happened during the month that nobody else remembered. Something positive. Always something positive and he would make a comment about it. I think probably one of the reasons that I do like recruiting and that I have been successful is because of people like that. He has a major impact on people. There is no question that the man is incredible in terms of motivating other people to do things that they normally would not do ... and we live that every day out here.

In keeping with focusing on successes, commanding officers never paint recruiters and NCOICs into a corner. One commanding officer, reiterating the importance of allowing Marines to save face, said:

These are grown men, you don't humiliate the heads of families and Marines who are leading other Marines. You need them to turn around. They need to be able to walk out and go do the job not having lost their face. They impose a great deal of scrutiny and are most severe with themselves.

NCOICs in return show great appreciation to their recruiters. At one successful recruiting substation, the NCOIC implemented a "Recruiters Breakfast" every month. If the substation makes mission, the NCOIC buys breakfast for all the recruiters. If they miss mission the recruiters buy breakfast for him. Either way, they go to breakfast and have fun. So far, the NCOIC has bought breakfast 19 times whereas the recruiters have only bought him breakfast once. The NCOIC, describing the breakfast ritual, said:

At breakfast we will sit around and talk about the price of tea in China, or whatever, it doesn't really matter. Then I'll congratulate them again. After that we will take a look at what we are running into this month and decide what to do.

#### **E. VALUE PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING**

##### **Highly successful recruiting stations value participative decision making.**

NCOICs at successful stations are expected to make decisions about mission assignments and personnel matters by getting involved. The NCOICs at one station meet every Friday to discuss the overall status of the entire station. One NCOIC described how the meeting is conducted:

Topics are discussed among all the NCOICs in the station. Then we will come to a decision of what the best thing is to do and propose it to the commanding officer. The NCOICs are an extension of the command group ... we have a voice, an opinion of what goes on.

They use their Friday meeting as a platform for participative decision making. NCOICs meet in a round table format with command group members to discuss recruiting



performance and debate strategy. Everyone is expected to participate by suggesting new ideas and making proposals to the group. One NCOIC described the meeting as an exchange of ideas where no suggestions are shut down. The commanding officer's only rules are for Marines to come to the meeting with an open mind and be prepared to discuss and defend proposals. He says, "I made them start articulating why so they could hear each other."

NCOICs at successful stations are also brought into the mission planning to help decide how substations should be tasked. Commanding officers share the recruiting station monthly mission goals with NCOICs and then allow them to meet together to formulate a plan on how those numbers should be divided. NCOICs start with fair shared missions then discuss recruiters going on leave, Marines back from bootcamp on recruiter's assistant duty, and even wives that are pregnant. They discuss anything relevant to the station's ability to making mission. Some months they try to convince the group they need a decrease for their substation. Other months they assume heavier missions to cover for other substations. Together, NCOICs decide missions and then make a joint proposal to the commanding officer. Upon approval of assigned missions, they are still left with the flexibility to take mission increases or decreases for each other. Traditionally, missions are assigned and substations are on their own to make it. Some substations over contract, enlisting more applicants than required, receiving awards for overachieving. Other substations miss mission and walk away as losers. In successful RS', substations that over contract take mission increases to cover for other substations. Although they no longer get credit for over contracting, the end result is that both substations make mission and get recognized as winners. One commanding officer not

only allows them to participate in deciding on monthly missions but has gone as far as allowing NCOICs to participate in deciding structure. An empowered NCOIC said:

We can shift around missions or shift boundaries and we have started to sense we have got something to say in this whole thing. This is really us making this work.

Commanding officers strongly believe NCOICs must be developed and trusted. In the successful stations, it is a privilege to be an NCOIC. One NCOIC stated, "the job [is] worth aspiring to for all recruiters in the station." NCOICs are the commanding officers' "company commanders in the field" and as such are given the authority or legal power to make decisions. They lead their recruiting substations without unnecessary interference from the recruiting station.

One commanding officer, describing his trust in his NCOICs, said:

They are the backbone of the Marine Corps right here, these guys, they bust their ass. And they get stuff done. And you give them the authority to do what they have to do, they will respond.

At another station, the commanding officer has abolished mandatory reporting and training requirements in an effort to reaffirm his confidence in the decision making abilities of his NCOICs. This commanding officer reported:

We do not do mission restatement letters or phase line training. We do not do anything that would be demeaning. We trust they will do the right thing.

NCOICs recognize their empowerment in these stations. Here, one NCOIC appreciates the autonomist mentality of his commanding officer:

He relies on the NCOICs to do their job. We have the authority to do our job, or the responsibility to do it, and are able to yield the sword the way we see necessary. All he really wants is kind of my theme for where I'm going and what I'm doing, he really doesn't want to be investigative, he just kind of

wants to feel comfortable ... that I at least have a plan. Convince him that you've got a plan and that you are putting one foot in front of the other.

NCOICs are expected to lead the recruiting station by making decisions. They encourage participation by getting together to play volleyball, basketball, softball, or just run together. In one recruiting station, NCOICs plan sector physical training events and invite command group members to show up to play with them. In another station, the NCOICs choose the weekly physical training event and participate with the command group before the Friday meetings. Commanding officers solicit their "sound, timely advice" and express reliance upon the NCOICs. In doing so, they mold relationships of mutual respect and confidence in NCOICs. One NCOIC summarized their mutual respect as: "he trusts us and we trust him."

By allowing recruiters and NCOICs to participate in decision making, they are also more willing to speak up and propose ideas deemed traditionally unacceptable. The Marines at one recruiting station have been pushing for a Mobile Recruiting Office (MRO) to supplement inner city recruiters. The MRO would be used by recruiters to canvass the inner city and to set up quickly for various school and community events. Another idea generated at a successful station is to have advertising affect local areas and current trends. They have proposed billboards on the side of the freeway and on the way to the beach to read: "Like the beach? 1-800-MARINES."

#### **F. EMPLOY INTEGRATING DEVICES**

**Highly successful recruiting stations employ integrating devices so Marines can see the overall picture of the entire stations progress and share information.**

Successful stations employ integrating devices that allow recruiters and NCOICs to see the consequences of their actions, to recognize their contributions, and experience the entire recruiting station's progress. They use formal integrating devices such as daily reports and conference calls to facilitate achievement of objectives. They also use informal integrating devices such as physical training and conversations to create opportunities for NCOICs and recruiters to share information.

Because substations are dispersed over large areas, recruiting stations fax daily reports to substations to inform them of the entire recruiting station's progress. Successful stations construct meaningful "dailies" that allow NCOICs to experience the progress of their substation and provide timely feedback for recruiters.

The daily reports in the successful stations primarily contain information concerning contracting and shipping goals and percent attained. They break down goals by substation and recruiter. Simple graphs are used to compare substations with other substations and recruiters to recruiters. The daily is also used to affirm behavior by recognizing the past recruiter of the month, recruiter of the year, substation of the month, and substation of the year on every daily. Additionally, the daily provides useful information such as an updated list of enlistment programs available for applicants. Finally, handwritten comments are put on the daily by the commanding officer. The comments usually congratulate a substation or recruiter for getting off to a good start or making mission early.

NCOICs and recruiters depend on receiving the daily at the end of the processing day. They expect it around a certain time and are quick to call the recruiting station if it

is not on time. They want to see their efforts applauded and they want to know who else is doing a good job.

Another formal integrating device used by successful stations is conference calls. These calls are made once or twice per month between the commanding officer, the command group, and NCOICs. The calls are used in place of meetings to discuss the recruiting station's progress. First, NCOICs review their substation's performance and provide applicant projections for enlistment. Next, command group members highlight areas of concern in the programs they manage. Finally, the call ends with the commanding officer breaking things down simply with a positive tone. One NCOIC described the calls:

The commanding officer has a conference call twice a month ... and it is never a bad thing. Sometimes it comes at a bad time and I have been braced for a bashing. But it never is. He always focuses on the positive things. 'This is what we need to do. This is what we need to accomplish.' And he breaks things down simply ... that attitude helps. Attitude is what makes the difference, and it's always positive.

Recruiting stations also use informal integrating devices to share information. One such informal integrating device is getting together for physical training that is fun. Successful stations play basketball, volleyball, football, and even bowl together. By getting together, they are provided an opportunity to share valuable experiences with one another through conversation.

The following example illustrates the power of conversation as an integrating device. Recently (November-December 1995), the entire government shut down because the legislative and executive branches could not come to terms on approving the federal budget. As government employees were sent home until a temporary resolution was

passed, the MEPS closed down eliminating any possibility to process applicants. Having already scheduled applicants for enlistment and thinking of ways to keep others interested, one NCOIC created a "letter of intent to join" for applicants to sign. Through conversation, the NCOIC passed along the idea to other substations. It worked so well that it became standard operating procedure during the shutdown. The NCOIC described the letter:

It is an actual contract between you and him that he signs. It says 'I intend to join the United States Marine Corps.' We've used that during the government shut down because we were out of business for about a week or ten days. During that period of time we needed to hang on to the guys we had already sold. So, we created the letter of intent. And it is simply him expressing his desire to be a United States Marine and there had to be some exclusions on it too. Such as: if I become medically, mentally, and morally qualified on it. And we tried it, and shared the idea with other NCOICs ... and it didn't probably did not have a major influence, but I think just the idea. It's the strategy sometimes, the mind set it creates in the recruiter.

The NCOIC further reported that the Marine Corps was the only branch of service in the area to make mission during that month. By employing the letter, through an informal integrative system, recruiters were able to maintain hope that they could hold on to their applicants.

#### **G. SEEK AND ESTABLISH EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS**

**Marines at highly successful recruiting stations seek and establish external relationships that augment their efforts to be successful.**

A recruiting station and recruiters primary goal of achieving monthly contracting and shipping goals is a complex task with many different facets. At times, Marines on recruiting duty need assistance. Fortunately, there are local people outside of the

command who are willing and ready to help. The successful stations find these people and enlist their support. They establish meaningful relationships with counselors, gym teachers, judges, former Marines, military entrance processing station (MEPS) personnel, and community members.

One of the recruiters interviewed claims the key to his success is that he just talks to people all the time, "everybody that has anything to do with putting a kid in the Marine Corps." In describing how he has attained success, he said:

In order for you to be successful, you have to shake hands, kiss babies and pass out cards like you were running for election. The only way to really get successful out here is to go out in the community and make yourself known.

This recruiter talks to people at church, on the street, and in his barber shop. He even socializes at a local night club. Recently, he was called by a judge who befriended him at that night club. The recruiter had a poolee who committed a misdemeanor while in the delayed entry program. Before handing the young man his fine, the judge called the recruiter to make sure his fine or sentence would not disqualify the poolee from attending recruit training. This recruiter's ability to establish relationships was the determining factor for his poolee getting an opportunity to become a Marine.

One commanding officer is good friends with the medical doctor at MEPS. The medical doctor has the final say on medical qualification of applicants applying for the service. Occasionally, doctors are required to conduct consultations on applicants meeting physical standards but who divulge past medical problems or surgery in their medical history paperwork. Consultations must be scheduled and can interfere with a recruiting station's sense of urgency to enlist applicants. However, this commanding

officer developed a relationship with the doctor that alleviates such problems. He described his close relationship with the doctor:

Doc does consults in his car while his daughter is taking violin lessons. We can call him at anytime, he's accessible. He came to the Ball and my parents sat with him at his table. He's got a Marine Corps sticker on the back of his car ... he's really been instrumental in making things happen for us.

That same commanding officer has "engendered and cultivated" worthy relationships with his peers from the other recruiting services. He can pick up the phone at any time and request their support. One example involved an applicant that joined the Air Force but before departing for recruit training decided to switch to the Marine Corps. His brother had just returned from bootcamp and was the deciding factor. The applicant requested discharge from the Air Force and was notified that discharge procedures would take three days. The Marines did not want to wait. The commanding officer knew the Air Force commanding officer well and made a phone call to request expedient action so the Marines could enlist the applicant. That same day the discharge paperwork was completed and the applicant enlisted in the Marine Corps the next day. Recruiting station commanders that establish such relationships are able to support their recruiters' efforts more effectively.

The successful recruiting stations also capitalize on the people and assets unique to their area. At a recruiting station with active duty Marine Corps bases in its recruiting area of operation, they developed relationships allowing them use of facilities and military instructors. They call on these relationships when conducting events to introduce poolees to the Marine Corps' way of life. They bring poolees to the bases to visit barracks and eat in chow halls. They also run obstacle courses and go to static displays of



military vehicles, aircraft, and equipment. Recruiters also call upon instructors to help train poolees on first aid, familiarity with weapons, and basic warfighting skills. These training events, made possible by the close relationships developed by recruiters and NCOICs, instill confidence in poolees to succeed at bootcamp.

One of the stations without access to Marine bases was able to develop a relationship with their Marine Corps League that is an example for all other recruiting stations to follow. The Marine Corps League is a private association of primarily former Marines dedicated to assisting the community and promoting the Marine Corps. Every Marine in the recruiting station is also a member of the League. If they were not already a member, they join shortly after arriving. However, there is no pressure put on them to join. They are informally briefed about the League by NCOICs and fellow recruiters and decide to join themselves. The recruiting station commanding officer reported that the League has grown from under 90 members to over 180 in the last couple of years and in that time has given away more than a quarter of a million dollars in charity. One recruiter said any recruiter would be foolish not to join because the Marine Corps League is instrumental in their success.

The recruiting station uses the League to promote awareness of Marines in the community. NCOICs and recruiters use Marine Corps League sponsored charity events as an avenue to get their faces on television and names in the newspaper. The League also arranges for them to access YMCA facilities and Boy Scouting events with their poolees. Recruiters will request established League members to make appearances with them in high schools. Established League members have long lasting relationships with school superintendents, administrators, teachers, and distinguished community members.

One NCOIC, referring to the League, stated, "sometimes it's not what you know, it's who you know." The commanding officer described his relationship with the League:

The two gentlemen that really run the Marine Corps League are my two best friends. They have been phenomenal ... and needless to say they had some very positive effects on the Marine Corps' presence out here.

This commanding officer attends every Marine Corps League meeting. Command group members, NCOICs, and recruiters also participate at meetings and jump when League members need help. The recruiting station provides the League with coffee mugs, pens, and posters; recruiters and NCOICs execute requested color guards for parades and ceremonies. They have developed a relationship of mutual support which assists them not only in accomplishing their missions but opening up doors to otherwise closed opportunities.

In summary, the characteristics of successful stations involve commanding officers inspiring confidence in recruiters and NCOICs by taking active interest in their personal lives, creating environments that value personal accessibility and eliminate traditional barriers to communication, and focusing on the successes of Marines and expressing appreciation for their efforts. They also value participative decision making, employ integrating devices so everyone can see the consequences of their actions, and seek and establish external relationships. These recruiting stations are able to adapt, cope, respond, and most importantly, innovate to meet rising demands. They are prime candidates for leading recruiting into the information age through reengineering, the focus of the next chapter.



#### **IV. REENGINEERING RECRUITING THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

##### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The recruiting service is constantly searching for ways to improve the quality of life for its personnel. One such way to improve quality of life is to make the job easier through the redesign of business processes. Current recruiting processes, called "systematic recruiting," were developed by Brigadier General Alexander McMillan in the late 1970s and have been in use for nearly 20 years (Reich and Kozlusk, 1994). Through the years, the guidebooks for recruiting authored by General McMillan have been slightly revised but never revamped. Reengineering recruiting does not propose to tear down the successful pillars of systematic recruiting. Efforts to reengineer propose to capitalize on existing recruiting experience by applying state of the art technology to the business processes of recruiting. The ultimate goal is to redesign systematic recruiting practices to achieve dramatic improvements.

Recruiting leaders cannot afford to overlook the importance of reengineering. Increased demands and outdated processes have made recruiting personnel less flexible and less responsive. Information technologies can be combined and configured to attack these demands and processes. Successful implementation of information technology can create structures to deal with the dynamics of recruiting.

## B. ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLEXITY

Keen (1991) provides a model of organizational complexity and how information technology can be used to combat that complexity. Figure 4-1 is an illustration of his model suggesting environmental complexity gives rise to organizational complexity which gives rise to organizational pathologies. Information technology (IT) can be used to attack organizational complexity thereby limiting pathologies. This section applies Keen's model as a template to how reengineering recruiting can be used to attack complexity.

In sharp contrast to most FMF and supporting Marine units, recruiting stations must adapt to the growing complexity of the civilian environment. Societal changes, waning interest in joining, military downsizing and reduced budgets are a few of the complex issues Marine Corps recruiting must face. Other challenges include understanding the changing geographic distribution of the population and the increase in postsecondary institution enrollment. Recruiting remains a constant challenge.

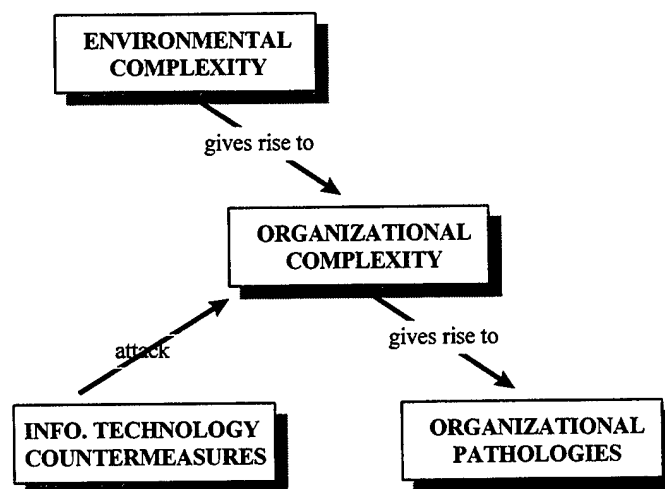


Figure 4-1. Organizational Complexity

Recruiting stations, like most organizations, respond to environmental complexity by increasing organizational complexity. They adhere to requisite variety which means the organization needs to be as complex as the environment. Recruiting stations add management layers, procedures, and controls to cope with complexity. In doing so, they create a multitude of organizational pathologies, such as:

- Tension between recruiting station headquarters and substations - recruiters and NCOICs become frustrated with complex and excessive reporting requirements of daily, weekly, monthly, and annual activity reports and redundant applicant information.
- Understanding is fragmented - more programs are created for NCOICs to manage. How these programs fit together is often complex and puzzling, making understanding of the entire picture fragmented for even command group members.
- Growing subservience to documents - in efforts to organize and reorganize, command group members and NCOICs create extra documents to deal with complexity only adding to the barrage of paperwork.
- Project work and teamwork become inefficient - NCOICs and command group members do not have access to the same information.
- Create more structure - additional layers of management are created to spread responsibility. Stations increase their number of substations and create more management billets, such as "pool monitors" to manage the entire recruiting station pool. The end result is less recruiters and more NCOICs on production leading to more tension.
- Leadership is depersonalized - leaders engulfed in fighting complexity rely on facsimiles or written correspondence too often to pass the word or for congratulatory remarks.

IT can be used as a countermeasure by attacking the root causes of organizational complexity thereby limiting pathologies. Tension can be reduced by simplifying complex and excessive reporting requirements through single data point of entry using recruiters to collect and retrieve data with notebook computers. Administrative and

operational reports and other documents can be simplified and reduced through automated applications that restore understanding of whole processes. Furthermore, groupware and electronic mail can facilitate project work and teamwork by giving command group members and NCOICs communication alternatives and equal access to shared files. Finally, leaders can repersonalize management and training by using videoconferencing for simultaneous face-to-face communication among substations.

### **C. JOINT RECRUITING INFORMATION SUPPORT SYSTEM**

The Joint Recruiting Information Support System (JRISS) is the Department of Defense's solution for reengineering recruiting through information technology. JRISS is an all encompassing information system that will automate almost every recruiting task at every level from prospecting applicants to long-range planning.

JRISS will consist of a client/server based relational database management system (RDBMS) common to all the armed services with service specific graphical user interface (GUI) front ends. It will include online transaction processing (OLTP), expert systems, and eventually decision support systems (DSS).

Building JRISS will require all the lifecycle activities: business process reengineering, requirements definition, analysis, design, development, implementation, and maintenance. The Army has been assigned as the project sponsor and set up their Program Management Office (PMO) at Fort Knox Kentucky. They have tasked each service to provide JRISS system requirements to serve as the base document for its development.

The Marine Corps plans to have database servers at each district headquarters with a reflective database at MCRC. Recruiters will use notebook computers to assist them in prospecting applicants and connect to the district servers remotely for updates. RS and region users will connect to the district servers via a wide area network (WAN).

Successful recruiting stations are the prime candidates to prototype and implement JRISS first. Recruiters and NCOICs in successful stations already participate in making decisions and will be empowered to make suggestions and changes to the system. The flat hierarchy and high cooperation in these stations also encourage experimentation. Finally, leaders in these stations will use the increase in data for affirmative competence vice using it to punish recruiters and NCOICs. Their successful implementation can provide a model template for other stations to implement JRISS.

In summary, reengineering recruiting through information technology will create structures to deal with the dynamics of recruiting. It will allow Marines on recruiting duty to be more flexible and responsive to growing environmental and organizational complexity.





## **V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. CONCLUSIONS**

The intent of this thesis was to study the characteristics of successful recruiting stations and present them for review. Initially some Marines cautioned that success would be too hard of a subject to write about. Others noted that successful recruiting stations merely amounted to "sound leadership." Captain Hoke Rose (Rose, 1995) explained, "Unfortunately, the term leadership in today's Marine Corps has come to represent so many principles, ideas, and values that the very term seems to have lost meaning." The characteristics covered in chapter three articulate the meaning of sound leadership in successful recruiting stations.

Leaders of successful recruiting stations understand that the set of skills required to lead Marines on recruiting duty is far more complex than the skills necessary to command other peacetime Marine units. Commanding officers of battalions and supporting units may lead successful units without devoting all of their efforts because their unit missions are not as demanding or dynamic as recruiting. Their Marines are typically assigned to duties in which they are specialists (infantry, administration, supply, etc.) and can execute their duties with little guidance or inspiration from their leaders. They do not need to respond to frequently changing requirements and are not exposed to the pressure and rejection of a duty such as recruiting.

Recruiting requires a new set of skills for leaders. It requires leaders to inspire Marines to spend countless hours selling the Marine Corps. The successful leaders elect to focus on their Marines by taking an active interest in their Marines, creating climates

that value personal accessibility, focusing on successes, employing integrating devices so that others may see the consequences of their actions, and expressing genuine appreciation for their efforts. They spend a vast amount of time with their Marines. They also encourage participative decision making which is in sharp contrast to traditional, top down military decision making. Finally, they see and understand entire systems as evidenced by their persistence to seek and establish external relationships.

Because of their high performance design, the successful recruiting stations are best equipped to implement new information technologies. Their open lines of communication and flexible structure encourage discovering the benefits and new possibilities from technology.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

MCRC should to continue to promote and seek ways to learn from themselves. The need for understanding how one learns and accelerating that learning is, undoubtedly, greater today than ever before (Senge, 1990). Experienced recruiters, NCOICs, and command group members are future recruiting personnel's greatest asset for learning. One recommendation is for MCRC to study itself as a learning organization.

Specifically, leaders require education in the task of developing culture. More attention could be placed in the Recruiting Management Course (RMC) on the roles, skills, and tools for leadership in learning organizations (Senge, 1990). Additionally, time would be well spent learning how to create appreciative learning cultures (Barrett, 1995). One such class could incorporate recruiting examples of competencies in:

- Affirmative Competence - drawing on the human capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by selectively focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and potentials.
- Expansive Competence - challenging habits and conventional practices, provoking members to experiment in the margins, making expansive promises that challenge them to stretch in new directions, and evoking a set of higher values and ideals that inspire them to passionate engagement.
- Generative Competence - constructing integrating systems that allow members to see the consequences of their actions, recognizing that they are making a meaningful contribution to the station's success.
- Collaborative Competence - creating forums in which members engage in ongoing dialogue and exchange diverse perspectives.

The MCRC should also investigate the possibilities of implementing intranets in the recruiting command. Intranets allow distribution of information within organizations using world wide web (WWW) based systems. Immediate benefits realized would be increased access to information across all levels of structure.

Finally, MCRC should further direct research at JRISS implementation strategies. Measures of effectiveness should be designed to contrast recruiting with and without JRISS. The results could then be used to formulate a strategy to attack resistance to change by educating recruiting personnel on the proven benefits of JRISS. To further reduce apprehension, recruiting personnel should be educated on implementation issues concerning training, integration, and available support.



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