

## Leaders Must Model One Thing First

### ***What can my church learn from the mission-focused leadership of the United States Marines?***

A clear, executable mission is the key to success for every branch of the military. An outstanding attention to teamwork and training make the United States Armed Forces the most formidable fighting force on the planet. Leadership is just as important to each service branch as it is to your church.

In the U.S. Marines, the leaders model the mission.

### **THE QUICK SUMMARY - [Semper Fi](#), by Dan Carrison and Rod Walsh**

For more than 200 years, the U.S. Marine Corps has been a paragon of world-class leadership, excelling in the areas of motivation, training, and management. However, the Corps doesn't create an elite force simply by barking orders at underlings or demanding grueling rounds of laps. Rather, the Corps is the master of in-depth training, nonstop motivating, and world-class leadership.

*Semper Fi* shows readers how to adapt these proven practices for their own organizations. The book goes behind the scenes to pinpoint what works for the USMC, showing readers how to create a training and management culture that brings out the best in all their employees.

The book gives readers tough, practical tips for:

- Inspiring individual initiative
- Rewarding hard work
- Encouraging loyalty
- Working with limited resources
- Dealing with change
- "Leading the troops" at every level of the organization

### **A SIMPLE SOLUTION**

The reputation of a Marine Corps officer is widely known and greatly admired. As an officer, he commands the respect of his troops, having endured training more difficult than the troops he leads. Intellectually, he has been well schooled in strategies that will help his unit succeed in their mission. Physically, he is as tough – if not tougher – than his troops.

The Marine Corps officer is in command of his troops because he belongs there. Prepared and entitled to lead, both he and his troops know it.

Leaders on a church staff team have many of the same characteristics described above. While not usually facing life and death situations as a Marine Corps officer would, the staff member

nevertheless would do well to learn from, and apply, leadership strategies of the Marine Corps officer.

*A manager should walk just as tall as a Marine Corps officer in front of his column. Like the officer, he is totally exposed if the collective mission fails and must account alone to upper management. Like the officer, he takes the job home with him. Like the officer, he has ambition, requiring the virtues of courage, self-sacrifice, and the ability to delay gratification.*

#### Leadership Strategies Checklist

- See that every member feels entitled to lead
  
- Ensure that managers can never distance themselves from a subordinate's failure
  
- Understand that the wider his perspective, the more effective the leader
  
- Lead by personal example
  
- Put the concerns of your personnel before any task
  
- Keep your people fully informed
  
- Personally exemplify mental and physical readiness

- Encourage and empower your subordinates to find the solution
- Prepare your subordinates for two jobs – theirs and yours
- Encourage questions, even in urgent situations
- Be prepared to occasionally withhold guidance and praise
- Never promote beyond the next organizational step
- Avoid close personal relationships with anyone under your authority
- Be especially motivating to those who are unhappy in their positions
- Ask for a verbal or written confirmation of your instructions
- Create a team culture of self-sacrifice

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Make use of peer evaluations at all levels of management

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Be a teacher, not a boss

Dan Carrison and Rod Walsh, [\*Semper Fi: Business Leadership the Marine Corps Way\*](#)

## **A NEXT STEP**

Prior to your next leadership team meeting, duplicate the Leadership Strategies Checklist listed above. Ask your team to rank how well they are currently living out the strategies from 1 to 5, with 1 signifying the action is never done and 5 signifying the action is consistently done.

When your team gathers together, ask them for all the actions they scored a five on, writing the action on a chart tablet. If more than one team member duplicates an action, place a check mark by it. Discuss the results, asking the team to share personal examples to illustrate the action.

In the same manner, ask the team for all the actions they scored a four on, writing the action on a chart tablet. If more than one member duplicates an action, place a check mark by it. Discuss the results, asking the team for ideas on how to move each action from a “four” to a “five.”

Finally, in a general discussion, list actions that were NOT scored a four or five that surprised the team by their absence from the lists prepared above. After the discussion, select three actions that the team agrees would be most important in moving to a four or five in the next three months. List specifics as to how these actions can be achieved, and encourage the team to review the list often.

At the end of the three-month period, display those top three actions on a chart tablet, and ask the team to rate themselves again, using the same scale. If the team feels they have moved to a four or five, celebrate the success with stories that illustrate the action. If there is still room to improve, discuss how the team can do so.

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