

Job Satisfaction and Motivation

by BGen R. H. Barrow

† In 1971 the commanding general of FMFPac, LtGen William K. Jones, asked his subordinate commanders for their views on how to strengthen the "band of brothers" concept among Marines. This article is the reply written by BGen Robert H. Barrow, then commanding general, Marine Corps Base, Camp Butler. Printed initially in the December 1971 edition of an FMFPac publication called *Marine Leader*, the advice contained in Gen Barrow's article is as valid today as it was a decade ago.

Some of our junior officers and NCOs experience a lack of challenge in their assignments in comparison with expectations. This may be a result of inflated expectations, but often it is a result of overdirection and supervision by a senior who feels compelled to cover himself and ensure a task is completed to his precise satisfaction, or by failure of the senior to realize the full capabilities and potential of his junior. As an example, in my view there are few things more demoralizing to a young staff officer (indeed any staff officer) than the nitpicking senior who feels obliged to massage and recast every piece of staff work that crosses his desk. As I look back through the years, some of my least favorite Marines have been the eager but cautious staff officers who worked out their anxieties on the papers produced by their juniors.

We must do more to develop the teacher and scholar relationship spoken of in the *Marine Corps Manual*. Our younger officers and men realize that they are very much in a learning role and that a peacetime training atmosphere is one in which mistakes can be made and cor-

rected without the consequences often imposed by war. Accordingly, seniors should be especially mindful of the need to be patient, to make allowances for error, to evaluate and explain, and to be reasonable and tactful in making corrections. As stated in the May 1971 *Marine Leader*, "Inertia and lack of aggressiveness are more reprehensible than mistakes or errors in judgment."

While it is essential that we require our young officers and men to adhere to high standards of performance and conduct, this requirement should not lead to a state of absolute conformity. Within the precept of our standards, we should encourage individualism, imagination, and bold initiative.

A senior's attitude toward leave has a direct bearing on job satisfaction and motivation. It is of no satisfaction to an individual that he is doing this job so well that he cannot be spared to take leave. Leave which is given begrudgingly is offensive to the individual taking leave and the Marine who acts for him while he is absent. Commanders and seniors should encourage, even insist, that their Marines take leave.



Among other things, it is a challenge and vote of confidence for the Marine who has to fill in for the Marine on leave.

We need to take a hard look at our billet rank requirements, particularly for various headquarters. Headquarters have a way of consuming young officers, assigning them minimum responsibilities or squandering their skill and talent. For example, it seems to me that most general and special staff sections could have administrative chiefs instead of administrative officers, and the administrative chiefs need not be senior staff NCOs. At all levels certain assistants could be bright, young

NCOs instead of bright, young officers. The resultant greater challenge and opportunity for recognition as far as young NCOs are concerned would enhance the various commissioning programs. Put another way, we need to look more at competence and potential and less at rank. For example, well over a year ago we switched the command duty officer responsibility in this command from field grade to company grade.

As we talk and act on the matter of job satisfaction and motivation, our focus seems to be on junior officers and young Marines. The inference can be drawn that field grade officers

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and staff NCOs are "hooked" and that they don't require the same degree of attention. Not only is this situation inherently wrong, but it also raises doubts among the junior officers and young Marines as to the prestige and responsibilities which await them as they look forward to advancement.

For much too long we have fed on some old saws that don't hold up under close examination. In many respects, the old saw that "Marines take care of their own" stands out as more talk than action. Within a command, face to face, I believe that we do a reasonably good job or taking care of our own. However, in the larger scheme of things, especially in personnel management policies, procedures and practices, we fall short. To prove it we have only to look at some of the assignments to duty in WestPac; for example, the excesses in sergeants major, data processors, etc. There has been too much attention to overseas control dates and not enough to the individual and the needs of the Marine Corps. Job satisfaction starts with a set of orders, and a Marine should receive them with the feeling that he is needed in the command to which he is being assigned, as opposed to the feeling, in some cases, that he is seemingly paying retribution for too much home life.

We need to stress the importance and challenge of duty in supporting establishments. While we all know that the FMF is not the only critical part of the Marine Corps, orders to a supporting establishment are sometimes regarded as exile. Assignments in the supporting establishment are not only challenging, but also contribute greatly to the readiness of the FMF units. We also need to stress the importance and challenge of certain specific assignments within the supporting establishment and FMF. For example, we have all heard the clever comments about so-and-so maybe ending up as special services officer or clubs officer. Personally, I regard those two billets at Marine Corps Base, Camp Butler as two of the most important in all of WestPac, and while they can be filled with unrestricted/nonspecialist officers, there are eager officers clamoring for FMF duty who probably couldn't handle either one. (The special services officer here directs a

consolidated, all-commands-on-Okinawa activity that involves the largest recreation fund budget in the Marine Corps and an enormous effort in recreation, athletics, facilities managements, hobby shop resale activity, etc. The clubs officer sits on top of a system that is over twice as large as any other in the Marine Corps, involving 27 clubs, annual gross sales of over \$7 million and employing 849 Marines and civilians. Both of these officers contribute immeasurably to the well being of almost 20,000 Marines and, as a result, indirectly to the readiness of the FMF units on Okinawa.)

I receive a considerable amount of mail from Marines who have completed an assignment here in which they speak of their tour in most favorable terms. Quotes from two letters this week: From a lieutenant who rotated early, "I really enjoyed my tour at Camp Butler, and it was a tough decision for me to leave." From a major, "In all sincerity, I feel that upon leaving I took with me a wealth of experience gained. Undeniably, it was great getting back to my own family, but it was not without regret that I had to relinquish that sense of 'belonging' to a command such as the Camp Butler Family."

Turning specifically to the band of brothers concept, I believe we are making real progress within certain commands in terms of the various interpersonal relationships, e.g., among Marines, officer and enlisted, commanders and their men. I believe much progress remains to be made between commands, starting with command and senior officer attitudes; as an example, if two commands have been tasked by their common superior to accomplish a certain task and one works at it and the other against it, the band of brothers concept is less likely to thrive between members of the two "opposing" commands.

In working to improve job satisfaction and motivation, we need also to look beyond the local scene. We need to stress a higher purpose than the individual's specific assignment. We need to inspire him by relating his work to the purpose of the Marine Corps, service to Country, service with the best. Along with this, we need to develop greater camaraderie and let it flourish on the job, at the club, on the playing field, and in our homes.

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