



The current status of the recruiting service and the results its pressured, overworked recruiters have achieved in the past five years is one of the untold success stories of present times.



Enlisted Recruiting Update

by BGen C.E. Mundy, Jr.

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One of the untold success stories of present times in our Corps lies in the answer to an oft-asked question: "How's it going in recruiting?" Depending upon who is inquiring and how familiar he or she is with the technical detail and the recent history of personnel procurement, the answer could be brief or could require considerable elaboration. What follows is an expanded answer, one that covers past, present, and future.

The Past

The draft officially expired with the last draftee in the pipeline reporting to duty on 30 June 1973. With his induction, the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) was fully in effect. The succeeding decade is the past we wish to put in perspective.

As is well known and will be elaborated on later,

recruiting success is defined in part by the percentage of high school graduates enlisted and the aggregate percentiles of their test scores on entrance examinations. In this respect, what was our record in the early seventies, the whaleboat days of AVF recruiting?

In 1975, the year our accurate statistics begin, 50 percent of the young men recruited for service in the Marine Corps were high school graduates, and 30 percent came from the lowest of the 4 mental groups from which the Armed Services are authorized to recruit. Any in our Corps in the early seventies would probably agree that 1975 might even have been an upturn from the year immediately preceding. In 1974, for example, only 37 percent of those manning the infantry battalions of the 3d Marine Division were high school graduates. The very best of the early AVF volunteers are today superb gunnery sergeants and staff sergeants in our staff noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps, but the sad truth is that a sizable percentage of the early volunteers would not, today, pass a recruiter's initial screening for mental, moral, and physical qualifications. Indeed, the extreme difficulties leading, motivating, and training disproportionately large numbers of essentially unqualified enlistees of that period is indelibly etched in the memory of all who had anything to do with the quality of personnel in our Corps.

Declaring in 1978 that "The Issue is No Longer in Doubt" (*MCG*, Jan78) then-BGen Bernard Trainor described the effects of this low point in the Corps' history together with the carefully charted course that had been initiated earlier to bring Marine Corps personnel quality back to acceptable standards. Since those traumatic days, we've come a long way. But a brief look at how this condition came to be is worth a short digression because it bears on today's successes and decisions for the future.

In 1972, the last year of the draft, none of the Services were prepared to recruit for the AVF. Though the Marine Corps prided itself on having been an all-volunteer outfit since Tun Tavern, we really did not understand the marketing implications of competing for quality manpower in an unconstrained, draft-free market. We did not know the size or understand the segments in the market. Thus, though initially well-funded, our advertising was off target. The training objectives for the recruiting force were similarly off center. A nationwide doctrine or established procedure for recruiting operations did not exist; each Marine Corps district had its own system; comprehensive training did not exist. Enlistment options and programs were also out of phase with what the market

would yield. Residual bitterness related to our involvement in Vietnam—in the minds of many, one of the two key variables in the equation—negatively affected the attitudes of a sizable segment of the population. Finally, with respect to staffing—the other key variable—the recruiting service had a number of outstanding Marines in the field, but no special emphasis had been placed on across-the-board assignment of superior officers and NCOs.

In hindsight we were more than a little naive. By late 1973, faced with low high school graduate percentages, we had tried to convince ourselves that we could take any reasonably intelligent kid off the street—no matter if he had not finished high school—and, forging him on the anvil of boot camp, could produce a bright-eyed, enthusiastic, dedicated, trustworthy Marine. We were wrong. We learned to our dismay that even 11 weeks of boot camp and the ramrod efforts of a drill instructor cannot supplant a supportive, disciplined home environment and the "stick-to-it-ivity" required to earn a high school diploma. It was at this point that a recruit depot commander, exasperated by the low quality of the early post-Vietnam era recruits, is reported to have said, "All we want from the recruiters are young men who are dependable, trainable, and honest." That reported comment has become an operational concept for the recruiting service. Based upon a number of studies related to loss of personnel from the Marine Corps before their scheduled expiration of active service (referred to as non-EAS attrition) the measures used to size up a potential applicant have come to be identified, generally, as:

Criteria	Measures
• Dependable	Education level, high-school graduates strongly preferred over non-high-school graduates.
• Trainable	Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) category; the higher, the better.
• Honest	Morally up-standing, possessed of integrity and adhering to the standards of society. The recruiter attempts to uncover the use of drugs, juvenile delinquency, and adult police records through interviews and police records checks. Unfortunately, many jurisdictions do not provide police records checks.

There are, and always will be, exceptions to these general criteria: the young person who had to quit school to support the family because of the loss or incapacitation of a bread-winner; the aspiring applicant who, in spite of demonstrated superlative qualities in all other areas, fails to cut the

minimum test score; or the youth who makes an honest, human mistake in conduct. It is the express guidance of the Commandant that there shall always be a place in our Corps for such young Americans. Excepting such "superstar" cases, however, on the whole, the fact is that young persons possessing the quality measures above make better Marines than those who do not.

The Present

In terms of enlistment quality, 1983 and 1984 are high-water marks for the Corps on the long road back from the seventies. Goals are being achieved which were heretofore thought unapproachable, and their effect on the readiness, effectiveness, stability, and happiness of our Corps are obvious to anyone observing or commanding the young Marines entering our ranks today.

To those not familiar with recruiting, success is most easily related in terms of "making quota." Reports and official statements are usually expressed in terms of a quota percentage. In earlier recruiting times, this was probably as accurate an assessment as needed, but today, making quota is not simply a function of enlisting and shipping to recruit training the numbers needed to meet a prescribed quantity. Recruiting is one of the most sophisticated operations currently ongoing within the Defense Establishment.

Putting aside supporting operations, such as market analysis and advertising, recruiting consists of shipping and contracting. Shipping is the more obvious of the two. It involves the processing and administration immediately associated with getting a recruit underway to recruit training. Shipping also represents something of a graduation exercise for a recruiter who has sought out, sold, enlisted, and nurtured an applicant for somewhere between 2 and 12 months prior to the date on which he or she is shipped. The commonly held perception that a young person walks into a recruiting station, is administered a test, given a physical, and then put on the morning train to Parris Island or San Diego is a carryover from another time in history. Recruiting today is akin to a placement service in which an applicant applies for a position in the firm (occupation field and/or shipping date) up to a year prior to being formally hired; that is, shipped to a recruit depot. An examination of a recent month's shipping results, left column of Figure 1, reveals that of 2,749 recruits shipped, only 296 were enlisted during that month. Thirty-one had been enlisted 12 months earlier, and more than 1,600 of those shipped had been awaiting shipment for between 3 and 11 months. This process, called the Delayed Enlistment Program, provides a pool of recruits from which the stations

SHIPPING & CONTRACTING

ACTIVITY IN DECEMBER, 1983

	Shipped: 2,749	Contracted: 3,149
Dec 1982	31	Dec 1983 296
Jan 1983	81	Jan 1984 433
Feb 1983	117	Feb 1984 297
Mar 1983	158	Mar 1984 248
Apr 1983	224	Apr 1984 138
May 1983	263	May 1984 131
Jun 1983	329	Jun 1984 106
Jul 1983	199	Jul 1984 146
Aug 1983	266	Aug 1984 295
Sep 1983	222	Sep 1984 533
Oct 1983	223	Oct 1984 320
Nov 1983	340	Nov 1984 174
Dec 1983	296	Dec 1984 32
Total:	2,749	Total: 3,149

Figure 1

draw to achieve their monthly shipping quota. Thus, a report of the percentage of quota made for a given month actually reflects very little new business done during that month, but rather, the success of operations over the past 12 months, and it offers little evidence of how things may be going at the moment. This often misunderstood fact can result in a worried look on a recruiter's face at the very time public statements are proclaiming great success in making quota.

The other, and key, part of the recruiting equation is contracting—the sales business actually being done by the recruiting force. Contracting consists of prospecting, locating, qualifying, selling, and enlisting into the pool a high quality applicant who can qualify and desires to enlist for a given program or shipping date. Once enlisted, the "poolee" becomes a ward of the recruiter, and the recruiter turns into a squad leader—or often times, platoon commander—responsible for preparing the poolee for eventual shipment by maintaining his or her motivation and ensuring that qualifications are maintained, grades are kept up (if still in school), brushes with the law are avoided, and an acceptable level of physical fitness is achieved and maintained. Referring again to Figure 1, during a month in which an individual recruiter ships one or more poolees to recruit training, he is concurrently contracting other poolees for shipment up to 12 months hence and leading those who were contracted previously and are waiting in his pool. There are few jobs that challenge an NCO more than treading the fine line between planning and managing sales and, in ef-

fect, leading troops—the challenge of recruiting today.

But, as Gen Trainor forecast six years ago, the issue is no longer in doubt. In 1983, 92 percent of those enlisted in our Corps were high school graduates; in 1984 to date, that percentage has climbed to almost 96 percent. In 1983, only 6 percent of those enlisted scored in the lowest of the four enlistable AFQT categories; by the end of

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1984, less than 3 percent will be in that category. The percentages of those enlisting with aptitudes in the upper two AFQT categories has also risen.

In considering the significance of the foregoing statistics, it must be remembered that not until FY-80 did the Marine Corps achieve a benchmark set 5 years earlier of 75 percent high school graduate enlistments. In that same year, 29 percent of those enlisted were in AFQT category IV—although this figure was, in part, the result of a mis-normed Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Test, and only 65 percent of those who entered did so on 4- or 6-year enlistments. By comparison, in 1983, 81 percent of those who contracted enlisted for at least 4 years (6-year enlistments are growing in number but at present account for approximately 3 percent of regular accessions). In 1984, this figure has risen to 94 percent. The significance of the longer term enlistment is considerable. Put simply, only higher quality applicants can enlist for longer service. Being eligible for such enlistment, the applicant also qualifies for the harder skill occupation fields. And looking to the future, a six-year contract today is a three-year contract that does not have to be written three years hence. In more measurable terms, to maintain an enlisted end strength of 177,000 in 1975, recruiters were tasked to enlist 56,000 new Marines. In 1984, end strength is relatively the same, 176,000, but largely because of longer terms of enlistment, only 38,000 new enlistments will be required—18,000 fewer than in 1975. This phenomenon is a direct function of higher quality recruits who can be enlisted for longer terms, attrite at lower rates prior to their normal expiration of active service, and are more reenlistable.

In short, we are recruiting at a quality level never before achieved, and the benefits to the Corps are eons beyond simply being able to report attainment of a numerical quota.

At this point, with 18,000 fewer contracts to write and with high school graduate and upper aptitude categories at all-time highs, readers will have concluded correctly that things are going “well.” Recruiters receive accolades every day for the excellence of their accomplishments, and well-intentioned commenters express the opinion that since things are going well, recruiters are most deserving of the “easier” time they’re having. The latter is an understandable, but totally erroneous conclusion. Recruiting today—as it has been throughout the AVF era—is a 72-hour-a-week, feet-to-the-fire job characterized by a starkly measurable outcome: success or failure.

Contrary to uneducated perceptions, prospective *quality* recruits do not walk in, jobless, to recruiting stations in significant numbers. They come from the gyms and the classrooms of high schools and increasingly of junior colleges. They are sold at the kitchen or dining room table in their home with their parents looking on. They come from the grassroots of our society, not from the poolhalls and pick-up-work street corners that provided so many of those who enlisted a decade ago. Put simply, Marine recruiters spend significant time and money to sort through tremendous numbers of prospects to find, qualify, and sell the wholesome, steady, intelligent young recruits entering our depots today. Their job is a tough one, a 3-year tour that has been equated to a carefully planned, precisely executed tactical operation with intermediate and final objectives to be achieved at all costs, every 30 days, 36 times in a row. Suffice it to say, “well” and “easy” are far from one and the same in present day recruiting.

As production of numbers has become more attainable in recent years, a dramatic shift toward quality vice numbers has been directed within the recruiting force. This “quality-screw tightening” has reduced the size of the youth market available to Marine recruiters. For example, referring again to FY-80 as a reference year, the re-norming of the earlier-noted, mis-normed ASVAB Test resulted in 20 percent of those who were enlisted in the Marine Corps that year being ineligible for enlistment the following year. In addition, in March 1983, authority to enlist all but exceptional AFQT category IVs was suspended. This action, which has been moderated recently to authorize enlistment of applicants with AFQTs between 27 and 30, reduced the market available to Marine recruiters by another 10 percent (other Services still authorize general enlistment of category IVs). Thus, on the basis of these criteria changes alone, Marine recruiters must select those to be enlisted in the Marine Corps from a pool of applicants only 70 percent the size of that available in 1980. In a

similar action in March, the criteria for reenlistment were also tightened. Only former Marines possessing the same mental, educational, and physical qualities required of recruits were allowed to reenlist, and then, only in occupational fields in which MOSs were short or balanced. This reduced the number of prior-service Marines eligible for the recruiter to draw from his prior-service quota by 60 percent.

Three other management actions, while not enlistment criteria changes, have had a distinctly restraining and complicating effect on the

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recruiters' ability to maneuver within the available market. They are length of enlistments, Reserve mission by specific unit and MOS, and level input to the depots:

► Two years ago, the requirement was for only 70 percent 4- and 6-year enlistment contracts; in 1984, the requirement is 90 percent—a significant increase in these harder-to-fill categories. Thus, in 20 percent of the cases, recruiters have a more difficult task in selling the applicant who is comfortable with a 3-year enlistment but apprehensive of 4 or 6.

► Two years ago, in fulfilling their non-prior-service Reserve enlisted quotas, recruiters were able, generally speaking, to enlist a young man or woman who desired to serve in the Marine Corps Reserve without strict regard to the specific numerical and MOS needs of a local Reserve unit. In effect, a recruiting station with more than one Reserve unit could overrecruit for a unit with highly marketable MOS requirements—communications/electronics maintenance, for instance—and underrecruit for a rifle company and still be credited with making quota. Equally illogical, overstrength units could be critically short of required MOSs—cooks, for example—and continue to receive persons trained in their over MOSs. In 1983, only 65 percent of the non-prior-service Reserve MOS requirements by unit were filled, even though 107 percent of the total numbers of recruits required by the Reserve were met. For 1984, a precise Reserve Manpower Recruiting Plan was developed under which recruiters must place a recruit qualified for and desirous of a specific MOS in a specific unit. The remedy is working. To date, recruiters are meeting this "eye of the needle" placement operation with 100 percent success. However, this precise requirement, com-

pared to the "open season" quota making of previous years has increased substantially the demands of the recruiting force. Finding a young man for the Reserve tank company in Boise, Idaho is easy; convincing him to be a cook in the tank company is not.

► One of the most significant undertakings currently underway in Marine Corps manpower management is an effort, for the first time ever, to level the input of recruits into our ranks so that a steady, vice seasonal, flow of young Marines will pass through recruit training, the formal schools, and into the Fleet Marine Force (FMF). The benefits are steady levels of readiness, greater unit and personnel stability, and improved use of available school seats.

Level input is challenging because of the historic seasonal recruiting cycle. The majority of students graduate in the spring and enter the Services during the summer and fall. With the exception of a handful of mid-year graduates, very few choose to enter during the months of February through May. Figure 2 compares the 1982 shipping cycle

**IMPACT OF LEVEL LOAD
ON REGULAR MALE NON-PRIOR-SERVICE QUOTA**

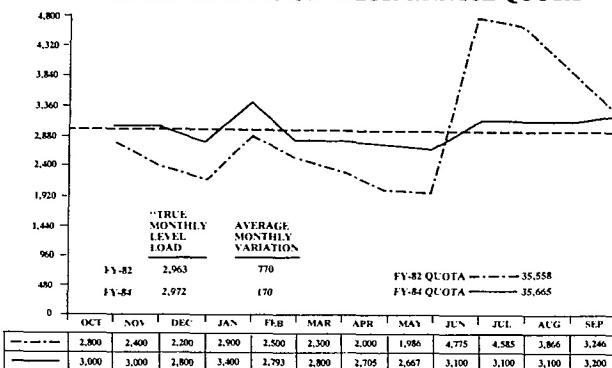


Figure 2

with the revised cycle for 1984. The two years provide an excellent comparison. The shipping quota in 1984 is larger by only 107 Marines. Significant is that heretofore the flow of recruits during the peak summer months has been well over double the input of the lowest valley months. The impact of feast or famine input into our training and personnel management system has been, as the cycle shows, something of a seasonal roller-coaster ride.

In 1984, we will come closer than ever before to the level input with a variance between the peak and valley months of only 733, vice 2,789 in 1982. Trimming off the summer peaks and spreading the fill across the eight other months, particularly the lean months of December, March, April, and May has been a tall order for our recruiters. As of

this writing, albeit at considerable expense in terms of real pressure on them, they are achieving the goal.

The Future

In two words, Marines can be *guardedly optimistic* that our recruiters will continue to enlist the necessary numbers to achieve end strength and, more importantly, to maintain the requisite man-

“ They enlist for that same mystical reason that a majority of those reading this article did. . . . ”

power quality that we have regained. This assessment rests on assumptions concerning variables we control or can predict, but it can be dramatically affected by factors we cannot control. The assessment of these variables is to a recruiting situation as METT and KOCOA are to a tactical situation. Follow along and see if you agree.

Starting Variables and the Major “Constant.” First, enlisted end strength is projected to rise only slightly in the next 5 years—from 179,000 in FY-85 to approximately 184,000 in FY-89—an increase of less than 3 percent. Coupled with the lengthened terms of service described earlier, enlistment quotas should, therefore, remain relatively constant. One constant—and a distinct advantage to us—is that within each class of graduating seniors there appears to be a steady percentage of adventuresome, stout-hearted, my-country-right-or-wrong youths who are the sinew of the Marine Corps. They do not enlist for bonuses, technical training, or educational benefits. They enlist for that same mystical reason that a majority of those reading this article did: the privilege and pride of being a Marine. But even among this group, the percentage that seeks out a recruiter is thought to be relatively small. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the recruiter continues to make the initial contact happen by telephone, on a visit to a high school, or through a poolee waiting to ship to a depot.

Variables Controlled by the Marine Corps. In a broad sense, the Marine Corps controls 10 major areas which directly affect recruiting. Two have been discussed: enlistment criteria (i.e., quality goals) and manpower management objectives (enlistment length, Reserve mission, level load). All areas are continuously monitored within the Headquarters and by the commanding generals of the Eastern and Western Recruiting Regions (a second hat for the commanding generals of the recruit depots). Without elaboration, the remain-

ing eight are:

- Quality of command—i.e., leadership and management—in the field.
- Technical proficiency of recruiters, NCOICs, and command groups.
- “Systematic recruiting,” that is the doctrine for organizing and planning recruiting; the individual techniques used by recruiters; and the information system used for data collection, feedback, and management.
- Size of the recruiter force.
- Caliber of Marines assigned to the duty.
- Market research/analysis and operational plans.
- Mix of enlistment options and bonuses.
- Program funding requests to support execution of recruiting advertising and support appropriations.

Necessary adjustments to plans—altering one or more variables in one direction or the other—are made as perceptions of opportunities change. The objective of the changes is to *continue* to obtain the absolute best quality enlisted force the market will bear or, to use an aviation analogy, the purpose of the adjustments to plans is similar to keeping a high performance aircraft operating continuously at the outer edge of its envelope. As the pilot is pulling “G’s,” so too is the recruiting service kept in a condition of unrelenting maximum effort. Neither has an “easy” task, but when both are at maximum performance, the results are usually “good.”

“ Success in recruiting rests on a fragile balance that once lost is difficult to regain. ”

With respect to the future, the Marine Corps controlled variables are, for the most part, the uncomplicated part of the analysis. It will remain uncomplicated as long as we continue to recognize the direct correlation between recruiting success and putting some of our very finest and, often, most technically proficient Marines on recruiting duty and providing them—even at the expense of more tangibly appealing programs—with the support essential for them to do their jobs. Success in recruiting rests on a fragile balance that, once lost, is difficult to regain.

The Key External Variable. Unquestionably, timely funding and policy support from the Congress are essential to recruiting success. Though some would disagree, pointing to recruiting budget reductions in the late seventies, Congress has made a good faith effort to provide measured,

adequate support throughout the AVF era. The funding process, however, is unrealistically complicated. The planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS), with its two-year cycle, is applied to a governmental activity heavily affected by private sector, free market conditions. Nowhere else in the great American free enterprise system, do businesses wait two years to finance shortfalls or opportunities.

Related to the uncertainties of business, the recruiting services have difficulty making a concrete case for their annual recruiting budget requests. In part, this is because the net effect of all market variables changes significantly from year to year. Accurate forecasting of the changes is not possible. Even if it were, knowledgeable persons frequently disagree on the probable effect. Thus, not knowing what the changes will be and lack of consensus regarding the effect complicates the effort to prepare an appropriate budget request. In layman's terms, a Service, DOD or congressional budget analyst who takes a "whack" at a line item in the Procurement Marine Corps budget can expect a reclama in terms of how many M16A2s, tanks, or AV-8Bs the whack will cost. The same whack at the recruitment advertising budget can hardly be reclamaed because we must wait until catastrophe is at hand to quantify what the effect of a loss of awareness in the recruitable market is. Because any reclama can only be conjectural, a whack is easy to impose.

“ . . . the combined appetites of our sister Services and the Nation's colleges will be among the . . . unfavorable multipliers. ”

Declining Number of Males Age 17-21. The second key variable is the size of our principal target market: 17 to 21-year-old male high school seniors/graduates. The parallel decline in well-qualified female graduates is less sensitive simply because 95 percent of our annual accession requirements must come from the male side of the population. Size of the high school graduate market is an uncontrollable variable that, fortunately, we are able to forecast. Such forecasts, however, are as numerous and varied as solutions to a "Platoon in the Attack" problem at The Basic School. The Naval Personnel Research Development Center's recent projections are the best available for our purposes. Figure 3 is an extract. The decrease from one year to the next averages 3-4 percent. The decline bottoms out temporarily in 1989 with the target population 15 percent smaller than at present.

DECLINE IN PRINCIPAL TARGET MARKET

	Estimated Population; 17-21-year-old, Male, HSG's AFQT, I-IIIB	Cumulative Decline
1984	3,584,497	100.0
1985	3,479,190	97.1
1986	3,339,453	93.2
1987	3,187,406	88.9
1988	3,085,006	86.1
1989	3,068,386	85.6
1990	3,089,840	86.2

Figure 3

Assuming planned enlisted end strength remains essentially level, other favorable multipliers, such as lengthened enlistments and reduced non-EAS attrition, will be necessary to maintain our present quality levels. In addition, we will have to consider the costs and benefits of multipliers currently critical to the quality objectives of the other Services. Among them are expanded educational bonuses and greater choice of occupational field or MOS. One is expensive, the other limits flexibility in classification and assignment. From budgeting and from manpower management viewpoints, neither is desirable. For the moment, at least, neither is necessary for the Corps.

Variables Controlled by other Agencies. Unfortunately, the combined appetites of our sister Services and the Nation's colleges will be among the increasingly unfavorable multipliers. The Army, Navy, and Air Force have legitimate needs and ambitious plans. Including Active, Reserve, and National Guard components, the three plan to increase their total enlisted end strength by 41,000 in the next two years. A sizable amount of the increase will be drawn from the target market and obviously will put increased pressures on all competitors in the market. At the same time, there can be off-setting factors. For example, the Air Force, comprised of relatively fewer enlisted combat occupations, has come under recent scrutiny from some members of Congress to increase dramatically its number of women enlistees. Such a move could expand the male population available to the other Services.

Another source of increasingly serious competition, but potential opportunity, are colleges. They, too, are confronted with a declining number of high school graduates from which to draw students. Few colleges are likely to close their doors without concerted efforts to broaden their own market. The obvious solution is to develop mutually beneficial solutions that take advantages of educational funds already provided by Congress. Various organizations are currently work-

ing toward such proposals; but in the near term, four-year colleges will continue to be in the competitive arena with our recruiters. Parenthetically, the Marine Corps' increasingly effective Community College Enlistment Program encourages and offers enlistment incentives for attainment of an associate degree; thus, two-year schools are becoming something of an extension of the high school market.

Uncontrollable, Unforecastable Variables. Finally, the effect of the economy, and the ebb

and flow of public perceptions of the Armed Forces are factors essential to our assessment. Two bellweather variables are youth unemployment and the perception of lost opportunities in hometown industries. While there is no shortage of available economic statistics, such as youth unemployment rates, "help wanted" indexes, the Dow Jones industrial average, etc., Solomon would be taxed to make a reliable forecast using the best sets available. Reduced to making our own estimates, eight related perceptions support some optimism with respect to recruiting, even in the face of declining numbers of graduates and improving economy:

- Relatively high youth unemployment.
- Closing of older plants.
- Automation and robotics in new plants.
- Hiring focused on skilled, older workers.
- Declining effectiveness of unions.
- Necessity for many new employees to already possess skills.
- Service industries, such as the food, deliveries and maintenance fields, that are the major employers of youths are low skill and low pay.
- Growing appreciation that Armed Services are a low cost means of gaining skill training and experience.

Closely related to the economic outlook is the resurgence of affection and regard with which the majority of our countrymen hold the Armed Forces. The rebound from the low point of the seventies has been in progress for several years. More recently, one very positive outcome from our participation in Lebanon and Grenada has been a heartening and measurable increase among Americans in esteem and pride in their Marines. Tragic as the loss of 241 Marines in the 23 October bombing, few incidents in our country's history have more dramatically portrayed to the citizens

the character of young Marines or the character, pride, and strength of the Marine Corps family. Never have the words *pride* and *Marine* been more synonymous in the mind of the American public. The public's continuing concern for economic opportunity on one hand and its pride in the Armed Services and particularly the Marine Corps on the other are expected to offset to a degree the decline in high school graduates.

Outcome Variables. Almost all of the foregoing, while impossible to measure, drive four quantifiable outcome variables. Changes in these final 4 variables tell us when adjustments must be made in 1 or more of the 10 areas that we control directly. Two have been discussed—new contracts and shipping. Monthly goals for each are planned based on all the foregoing; thus, consecutive shortfalls gets immediate attention and careful analysis. This year to date, the Marine Corps is well on track in quality shipping and quality new contracts.

Pool strength, the number of new contracts waiting to ship as a percentage of the quota for the next 12 months, is as important as shipping and contracting. The size of the pool is the principal determinant of how tight the quality screws can be dogged down. Growth in pool strength over time is reflected in Figure 4. Presently, the Marine

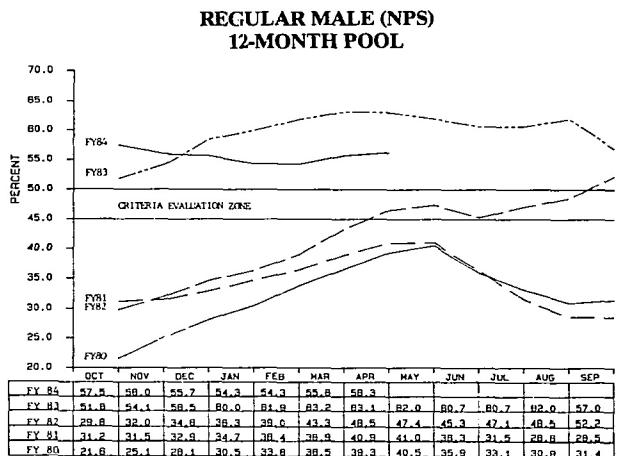


Figure 4

Corps is at 55 percent of the projected monthly quotas for the 12 months ahead. This is well above the minimum 45 percent we believe we must maintain before backing off a turn or two on the quality screws. The total pool is only as strong as the sum of its parts. The principal parts are the recruiting station and substation pools. A recruiting station or substation increases pool strength only one way: contracting more persons than it ships. The

reverse is deficit recruiting. A string of deficit months sends up red rockets. The maintenance of a strong pool is essential to the ability of the recruiting service to maneuver. Without it recruiters must operate in a direct-ship market, and the issues of quality and quantity are constantly in doubt.

The final outcome variable is the number of applicants taking the ASVAB for the recruiters. Historical ratios exist between the number of persons taking the test and the number of applicants who go on to enlist. A drop in testing rate can portend a future drop in new contracts. The trend lines and statistics in Figure 5 confirm the number of testers

MARINE CORPS PRODUCTION ASVAB TESTERS AFQT CATEGORIES I-V

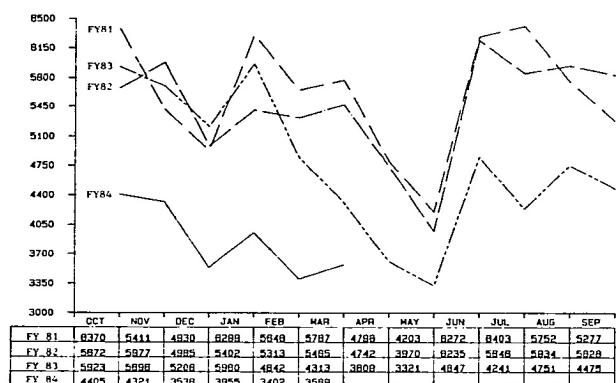


Figure 5

is down from a year ago. The number of new contracts is up, however, and we are, as just described, maintaining 12-month pool strength at more than 50 percent. The paradox of lower testers—higher contracts is explained, in part, as an outgrowth of the Marine Corps' increasingly effective procedures for screening applicants with a personal history of substance abuse. To ensure the effectiveness of this early screening effort, the decision was made in late 1982 to move the initial urinalysis testing at the recruit depots from the 30th day in the recruit training syllabus to the 3d day after arrival at the depot. As our recruiters are held accountable for recruit depot discharges stemming from preservice substance abuse, they are driven to keep such attrition to a minimum. Thus to save precious hours in processing a morally unqualified applicant who—once shipped to a depot—would admit to drug use or to another disqualifying offense, the recruiters have had to become increasingly skilled in their initial interviewing. The result—over the past year—is that our recruiters have uncovered more of the serious

substance abusers in the early processing and have simply recognized the obvious inefficiency of scheduling them to test at a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS, formerly referred to as an AFEES). Result: the testing rate is down. Down not necessarily due to external market factors, although it could be, but down due to internal management decisions. Three points: (1) the testing rate is a key outcome variable, (2) the testing rate is also a significant indicator of new applicant prospecting activity throughout the recruiting service, but unfortunately, (3) until the tightened procedures have been in effect for a year, month-to-month comparisons of numbers of testers will be as much a reflection of internal management initiatives as they are of changing external market conditions. Our estimates of the situation must be externally focused.

On-balance, however, and summing the above, all outcome variables currently are either favorable, or no worse than neutral.

Conclusion

How's recruiting these days? We are certain that it is not "easy." Ask any of the 3,300 Marine officers and NCOs who, as the recruiting service, comprise the only Marine Corps force of regimental size in daily contact with its target objective. Marines currently in the neighborhood and small town recruiting offices, and those who preceded them over the past decade have been the "thin red line"; they have truly "served on Samar." Only those who have lived it can appreciate the cumulative effects of quota pressure, lack of Navy medical care for the family, increased expenses due to not having a commissary or exchange nearby, working alone or with only one or two other Marines, and no club or other gathering place to enjoy the company of one's peers. Any one of these Marines will confirm recruiting is not "easy" going.

But, it is going "well." Ask any of us Manpower Department rear echelon planners who tally the score rung up by the Marines in the trenches. Will it continue to go "well"? We are guardedly optimistic that it will, but to remain on an upward, or at least level trend in quality, will require continued, unyielding effort and support from three groups of people. We can count, unquestionably on one, the recruiting service; it has the mission, and it is made of the "right stuff." The other two are (1) those of us who participate in decisions that support and fund recruiting programs, and (2) persons external to the Marine Corps in both the legislative and executive branches who influence the annual appropriation process. So long as the last two stay in step with the first, then the issue will continue not to be in doubt.

