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THESIS

**ANALYSIS OF THE SCREENING AND SELECTION
PROCESS FOR U.S. MARINE CORPS RECRUITING
STATION COMMANDING OFFICERS**

by

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March 2005

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MARINE CORPS RECRUITING STATION COMMANDING OFFICERS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

Recruiting is the most challenging peacetime assignment for any United States Marine. It involves many internal and external factors that are generally beyond the control of recruiting personnel. In particular, Recruiting Station (RS) Commanding Officers are subject to intense pressure to make their assigned recruiting goals or be relieved from duty. It is thus critical for the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) to select only the best-qualified officers to serve as recruiting commanders.

This thesis has three main objectives: (1) analyze the current screening and selection process used by MCRC since fiscal 1996; (2) evaluate whether this process is more effective than the previous method; and (3) determine if the process can be improved. To accomplish these goals, the study reviews MCRC's responsibilities, policies, procedures, and rationale in determining the required characteristics of a successful RS Commanding Officer. The methodology relies on a literature review, personal interviews with individuals from all recruiting command levels, and descriptive data on RS Commanding Officers from fiscal 1990 through fiscal 2003.

The results suggest that the current screening and selection process is effective and an improvement over the previous system. Recruiting commanders are more experienced, more diverse, and more suited to the task, based on several indicators. Recommendations are offered to change common perceptions of the current process as a "selection board."

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Semper Fidelis.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

In August 1995, General Charles C. Krulak, 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, stated in his Planning Guidance that the two most important things the Marine Corps does for the nation are to make Marines and win battles. General Krulak emphasized his commitment to the Marine Corps Recruiting Service because of its critical role in sustaining the force and shaping the future of the Marine Corps. He noted the many sacrifices made by the recruiting force and the unique nature of this assignment. Furthermore, he pledged that all Marines on recruiting duty would have the required resources to ensure continued mission accomplishment. Such use of resources emphasized the assignment of officers to serve as Recruiting Station (RS) Commanding Officers.

To meet the challenges of recruiting duty and assign the most qualified officers for service as RS Commanding Officers, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) mandated a more formal system of selection. The goal of this selection process is to guarantee that the Recruiting Service has the highest caliber Commanding Officers necessary for success.

Recruiting duty continues to be one of the most demanding missions of the Marine Corps today. General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., the Marine Corps' 30th Commandant, once called recruiting duty the toughest peacetime assignment for any Marine. He asserted: "The only regiment in the Corps that is in constant contact with its objective 30 days a month, without let up, is the recruiting service. It's the toughest job, at any grade, in the Marine Corps." [Ref. 1]

Before Marine drill instructors can begin transforming today's youth into the Marines of tomorrow, recruiters have to find and recruit quality people. As shown in Table 1, recruiting duty is a business that can be extremely difficult and demanding. Marine recruiters on the street have no breaks or downtime. What a recruiter did "last" month is of little interest to anyone "this" month.

Effectiveness is measured by a simple performance standard: making contracting and shipping missions each month for three years. Indeed, the term, “thirty-six one-month tours” accurately describes the recruiting environment. [Ref. 2]

Table 1. Marine Corps Recruiting: The “Numbers Game”

Selected Variable	Number
Number of Recruiters Currently Assigned to MCRC*	2,841
Number of Career Recruiters Assigned to MCRC	438
Number of Recruiters as of October 2003	3,279
Number of Recruiting Sub-Stations	577
Number of Recruiting Stations	48
Average Number of Phone Calls a Recruiter Makes per Month	3,000
Average Number of Phone Calls to Contact One Person	10
Average Number of Contacted Persons to Get One Appointment	7
Average Number of Appointments to Get One Interview	4
Average Number of Interviews to Get One Enlistment Contract	4

* Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

Source: Marine Corps Recruiting Command, October 2004.

Despite the challenges, the Marine Corps continues to enjoy unprecedented success in meeting its recruiting goals. This successful record is a testament to the high quality of leadership among commanders on recruiting duty. In other words, the key to recruiting success is in the RS Commanding Officer.

Recruiters are chosen from among the best Marine Staff Noncommissioned Officers and Noncommissioned Officers within the Marine Corps. The opportunity to lead these outstanding Marines is offered to only the most highly qualified Marine Corps Majors. Selection to serve as an RS Commanding Officer is considered a unique distinction and a great opportunity to shape the future of the Marine Corps.

During the winter of 1995-1996, General Krulak presented a special mission to the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) and the Personnel Management Division (MM). They would develop a profile to identify potential candidates for RS Commanding Officer who possessed the traits required to succeed on recruiting duty. At first, it was informally agreed between Brigadier General Pete Osman (Director of MM) and Major General Jack Klimp (Commanding General of MCRC) that combat arms officers with significant command and leadership experience would be the foundation of this successful profile. [Ref. 3]

Shortly thereafter, General Klimp took the matter to its next level, the process that selects RS Commanding Officers. He believed that, to have the best possible recruiting commanders, only Marine Majors graduating from the Command and Staff Colleges would be considered. RS Commanding Officers would then be selected through a command selection process similar to the existing Command Screening Program (CSP) that evaluates officers for battalion, squadron, regimental, group, and Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) commands. (This important process is explained below.) The CSP is instrumental in selecting Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels who will command Marines for periods of 18 to 24 months (36 months for some specifically-designated billets).

The purpose of having a formal RS Commanding Officer panel is to ensure that Marines have the best possible leadership. General Klimp favored this proposed process over the existing policy where selection of RS commanders was left in the hands of the occupational field monitors. He believed implementing a screening process would provide Marine recruiters with the leadership they deserved. Additionally, a formal selection process would also help improve the image of the RS command (one of the few commands remaining for Marine Majors). [Ref. 3]

General Osman pointed out that restricting the pool of eligible officers to only graduates of the Command and Staff Colleges would result in the recruiting service taking nearly half of these Majors each year. Further, this drain on graduates might cause serious problems for Force Commanders throughout the Marine Corps. General Osman proposed expanding the pool of potential RS Commanding Officers to Majors who were serving in combat arms. [Ref. 4]

In March 1996, a message to all Marines explained the selection process and formally announced the officers who were selected, 17 primaries and 3 alternates, as the first RS Commanding Officers. [Ref. 5] It was hoped that this message would bring prestige to a command assignment that was generally seen as an undesirable career option. Additionally, it was felt that, by identifying the process as “command selected,” more high-quality officers might show interest in this demanding duty that had come to be viewed as a “career ender.” [Ref. 6]

B. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this thesis is to determine whether the RS Commanding Officer screening process is more effective than the method used prior to 1996.

Initial research into the screening and selection of RS Commanding Officers derived from the need of MCRC to validate the success rate of the

current selection process. This study also compares the effectiveness of the current process with prior selection methods, and finds ways to continue its recruiting success.

Another reason for exploring this important process of recruiting comes from the author's personal experiences while serving on recruiting duty. Recruiting duty is a quota- and quality-based business, with easily definable standards of performance. The pressures are substantial for RS Commanding Officers and their recruiting force to achieve contracting and shipping missions.

This research describes the different components involved in the current RS Commanding Officer screening and selection process and it determines if this process improves recruiting performance when compared with the previous selection method.

The study is exploratory, focusing on the success rate of each Marine Corps recruiting district in reaching its respective contracting and shipping goals. [Ref. 7] The data set provided by MCRC covered an eleven-year period (fiscal 1993 through fiscal 2003).

This research also assesses qualitative data received from current and former RS Commanding Officers. The opinions from these officers evaluate recruiting procedures and the training of their recruiters before and after they arrive to their respective recruiting stations. Current and former RS commanders also mention the importance of effective communication skills.

The information gathered from this study may be critical for MCRC to evaluate its recruiter training programs. The research results may recommend actions to improve the efficiency and long-term results of current recruiting activities.

During 1995, the selection procedure involved recommendations made from the occupational specialty monitors to the Branch Head of Officer Assignments (MMOA) at Headquarters Marine Corps. Consequently, RS Commanding Officer assignments came exclusively from this department. [Ref. 8] The recommendations made by the monitors followed no established criteria for selection. "Gentleman's agreements" were usually made between the

monitors and the somewhat reluctant Majors who had reached “time-on-station” limits at their present duty station and were due for permanent change-of-station orders.

This lack of established standards for selecting RS Commanding Officers resulted in difficult times for Marine Corps recruiting. During fiscal 1994 and fiscal 1995, the Marine Corps failed to reach its enlistment contracting goals. At least one contributing cause was obvious: the caliber of Marine officers leading the recruiting force was inadequate. [Ref. 9]

In 1996, under Marine Commandant Krulak’s Planning Guidance, the Marine Corps Recruiting Command and Personnel Management Division would find a way to formalize its selection process of RS commanders and reestablish the recruiting success with which the Marine Corps has become so accustomed.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To meet the study objective, the following primary research questions were posed: (1) What are the characteristics of a successful Recruiting Station Commanding Officer?; and (2) Is the current selection process working to identify these characteristics? The effectiveness of the screening and selection process was measured by the profile used to select each RS Commanding Officer, the pool from which the Majors were selected, and, most importantly, by the success rate in reaching contracting and shipping goals while on recruiting duty.

Additional information collected included race, gender, primary military occupational specialty, average time in service, average time in grade, and education level of each RS Commanding Officer at the time of appointment. This study also examines the percentage of officers who retired after completing their recruiting tours, and the number of officers relieved of command as RS commanders before and after the formal screening process was implemented.

D. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

1. Scope

The scope of this thesis includes the following: (1) an overview of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) structure; (2) a review of changes in the screening and selection process for RS Commanding Officers since the 1980s; (3) an evaluation of the passage levels in the leadership pipeline and how they relate to Marine Corps recruiting in terms of effective leadership communication among RS commanders; (4) an assessment of comments from RS Commanding Officers regarding enlisted recruiter training; (5) an analysis of longitudinal data for 205 recruiting commanders; and (6) conclusions and recommendations.

This is the first study of its kind. The results of this thesis may have future applications within Marine Corps recruiting and the Department of Defense.

2. Limitations

The following limitations should be noted: (1) the study does not include information on officer recruiting (data obtained from MCRC only cover contracting and shipping goals for enlisted Marines); (2) since the number of Majors selected for recruiting duty is approximately 19 per year, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) data set used for this study could only provide files on 205 Majors between 1990 through 2003; (3) since 51 of the 205 Majors are still on recruiting duty or are too junior to be considered for retirement, more time is needed to evaluate the effects of recruiting duty on these officers, and (4) only a limited number of RS Commanding Officers could be interviewed for the study.

E. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Due to the uniqueness of this research, no previous studies on screening and selection of RS Commanding Officers could be found for the literature review. Instead, an in-depth analysis is made between the functions of an effective RS Commanding Officer and how they are related to the concepts of the leadership pipeline.

This thesis is further developed as follows:

- Chapter II provides an overview of the following: the MCRC structure; an organizational analysis of an RS; and a history of the RS Commanding Officer screening and selection process.
- Chapter III describes the methodology used in the study.
- Chapter IV analyzes both previous and current selection processes.
- Chapter V presents the qualities of a successful RS commander.
- Chapter VI provides a summary and conclusions from the study, and offers recommendations for further research.

II. MARINE CORPS RECRUITING COMMAND STRUCTURE AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with an overview of the MCRC structure. It offers a detailed description of each command level and how these commands interact to accomplish the recruiting mission. An organizational analysis is also conducted of Marine Corps Recruiting Station (RS) Orlando, as a case study of the challenges a recruiting commander must overcome to have a successful recruiting tour. A historical account of the screening and selection process is then presented to point out its transformation over time and to identify the characteristics of a successful Recruiting Station Commanding Officer.

In 1993, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps, decided that the time had arrived to unify recruiting operations under one command. MCRC was created to improve the Corps' organizational approach to recruiting. Previously, two regional commanders, formerly Major Generals, reported directly to the Commandant. For years, the director of personnel procurement, normally a Brigadier General, worked as a staff officer with the Manpower Department at HQMC.

An awkward situation existed because three or four General officers reported to the Commandant on the same subject. The structural change improved command and control of one of the Corps' most important functions, recruiting. Now, the Marine Corps has a single commander with overall responsibility and authority for recruiting. [Ref. 10]

B. MISSION

The mission of MCRC is to procure highly qualified individuals in sufficient numbers to meet the established personnel strength levels of the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve. While the mission explicitly emphasizes quality in supplying enlisted recruits and officer candidates, another task is implied:

commanders at each level must continue to develop a unified, integrated, and cooperative working relationship among recruiters and trainers (drill instructors and Sergeant instructors). This goal is achieved largely through effective communication. [Ref. 10]

C. STRUCTURE

Recruiters do not accomplish the recruiting mission on their own. The strong supporting arms of the recruiting command at the national, regional, and district level help make the mission a success. Major General Christopher Cortez, the former Commanding General of MCRC, describes the importance of perseverance and teamwork within the recruiting force. [Ref. 11]

The hard work and dedication of recruiters sustain the manpower required by the Corps and provide opportunities for young men and women to serve the nation. Like combat support elements in the field, recruiting support elements keep Marine recruiters in the fight. Marines from administrative, financial, supply, marketing, and communications billets provide the behind-the-scenes muscle that powers the recruiting machine.

Hallmarks of the MCRC support structure are its flexibility and adaptability in an ever-changing recruiting environment. The command always looks for ways to improve its support by reviewing all aspects of how it conducts business and how it supports the Marine recruiter.

Examples of these characteristics are the processing of medical waivers, which once took eight to ten weeks. Now, through improved technology, waivers only take three to five days to process. Additionally, the use of Web-based programs and improved computer hardware enhance recruiting station operations and efficiency by allowing recruiters to allocate more time to recruiting and less time to paperwork.

The Web-based program is called the Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System. This user-friendly system allows Marines to track information about applicants, recruiters, and recruiting organizations. [Ref. 11]

Figure 1 displays the MCRC structure and command relationships. The Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) is the overall authority for Marine Corps recruiting activities. Subordinate commands consist of recruiting regions, recruiting districts, and recruiting stations.

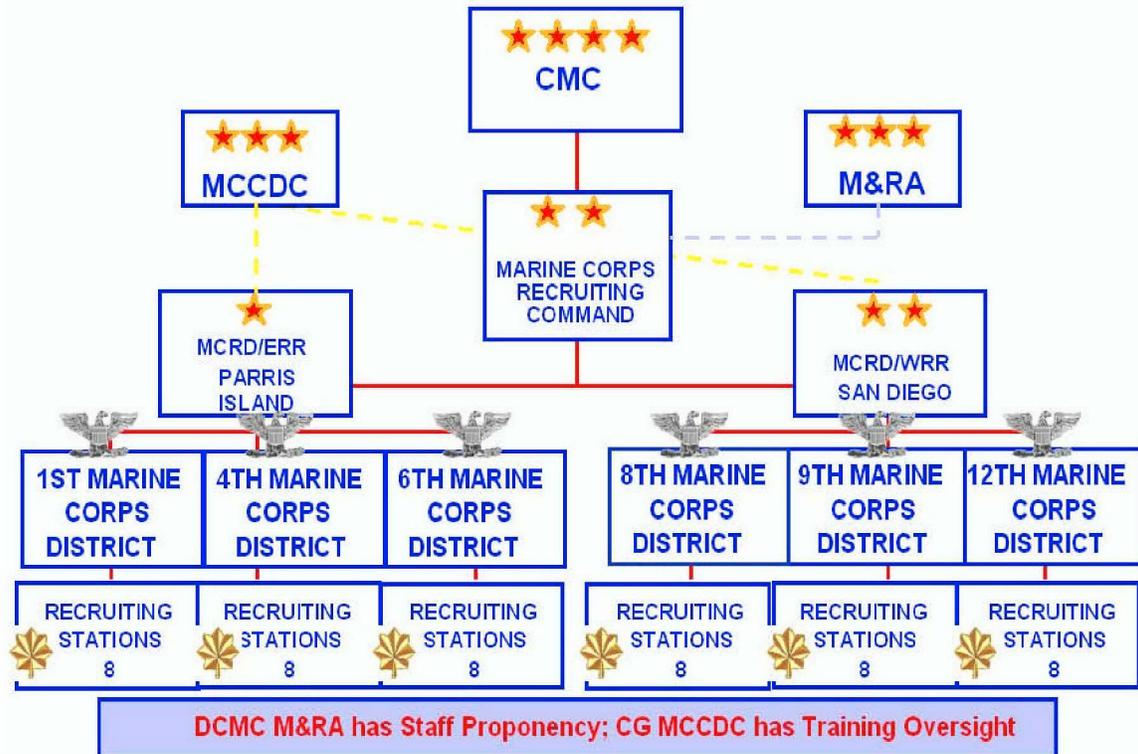
The Commanding General (CG), MCRC, a Major General, reports directly to CMC on all matters of recruiting. However, the deputy chief of staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) maintains staff cognizance for policy, budget, and coordination of recruiting matters for CMC.

As the central authority over all Marine Corps training, the CG, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), continues to exercise training and funding oversight of both recruit depots.

Two recruiting regions report to MCRC: an Eastern Recruiting Region (ERR) commanded by a Brigadier General and a Western Recruiting Region (WRR) commanded by a Major General. These region commanders also serve as CGs of the Marine Corps Recruit Depots (MCRDs), where recruit training is implemented. ERR headquarters is located at MCRD Parris Island, South Carolina. WRR headquarters is located at MCRD San Diego, California.

Each recruiting region has three Marine Corps Districts (MCDs). Six districts are each commanded by a Colonel who assigns missions, allocates personnel (structure) to the recruiting stations (RSs), and reports to the respective regions. The district Commanding Officer is assisted by an executive officer and an operations officer who are usually Lieutenant Colonels.

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING COMMAND



CMC: Commandant of the Marine Corps
 DCMC: Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps
 CG: Commanding General
 MCCDC: Marine Corps Combat Development Command
 M&RA: Manpower and Reserve Affairs
 MCRD: Marine Corps Recruit Depot
 ERR: Eastern Recruiting Region
 WRR: Western Recruiting Region

Source: Marine Corps Recruiting Command, April 2003.

Figure 1. Recruiting Command Structure

Figure 2 displays MCRC's "area of operations." Each RS is commanded by a Major. There are 48 Marine RS Commanding Officers in the United States. Each RS commands recruiting substations (RSSs). The RSS level is where actual canvassing of recruiting functions takes place: prospecting, enlisting, and preparing applicants for recruit training. Currently, 554 RSSs are distributed nationwide. The number of RSSs per RS depends on the size of the

geographical area assigned, the population, and quality of applicants available, as well as budgetary limitations. [Ref. 12]

Certain RSSs have Permanent Contact Stations (PCSs). These offices are established in areas with heavy traffic, such as shopping malls. PCSs may be collocated with other service offices, and they are manned full-time under the control of the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of an RSS.

Transient Recruiting Facilities (TRFs) are offices that are periodically used by individual recruiters to work in outlying regions of an RSS's area of responsibility. They are manned on a part-time basis.

Marine Corps Recruiting Command "Area of Operations"

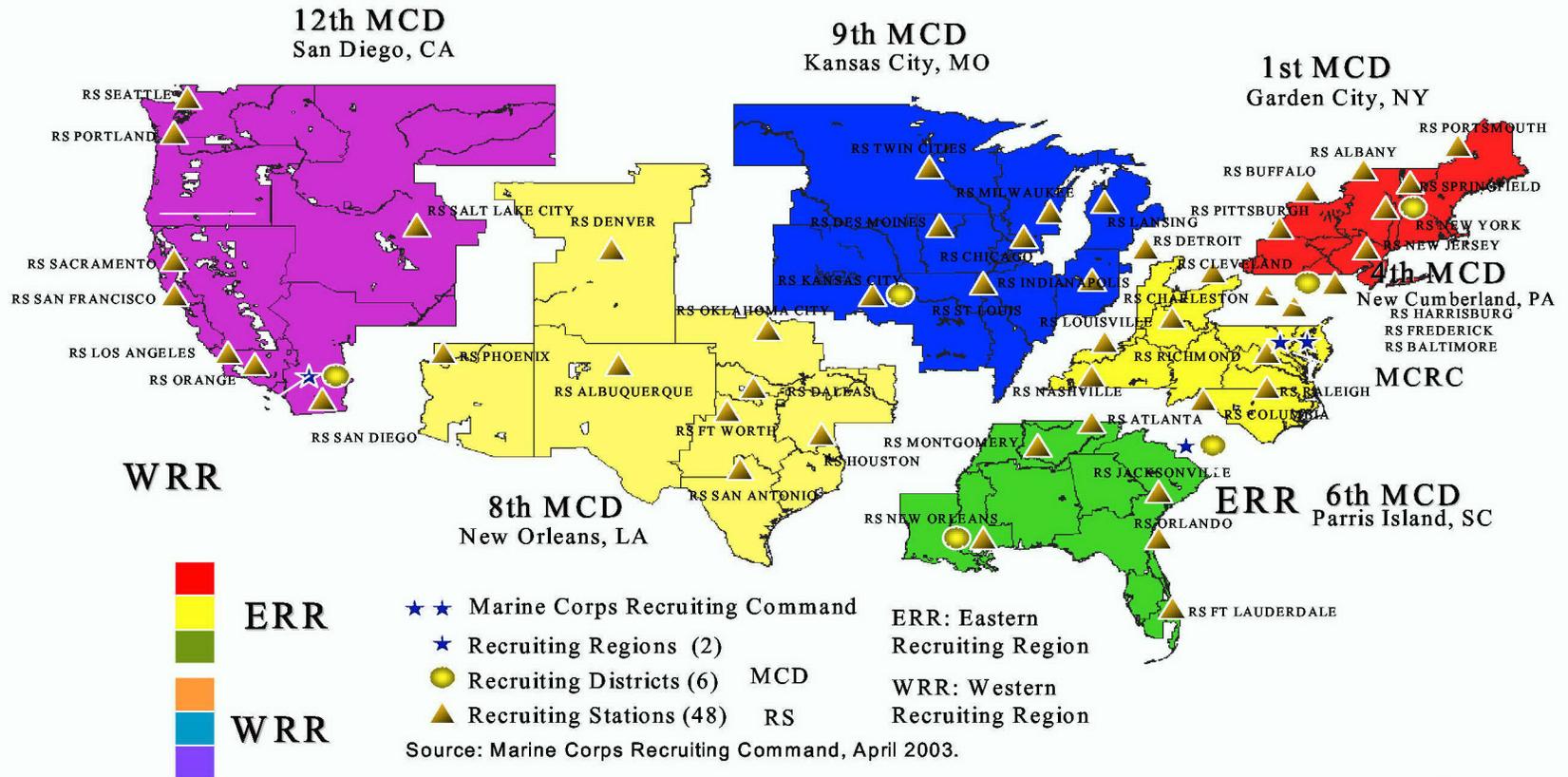


Figure 2 . Marine Corps Recruiting Command

Each RS Commanding Officer, as displayed in Figure 3, has a command group, which is the commander's greatest means of establishing guidance and course of action throughout the command.

The Executive Officer (XO) is in charge of mostly administrative functions: budget monitoring, awards, relief packages, probation letters, and investigations.

The Operations Officer (OPSO) is responsible for the quality-control effort of the entire RS. An effective OPSO must maintain open lines of communication with all the NCOICs.

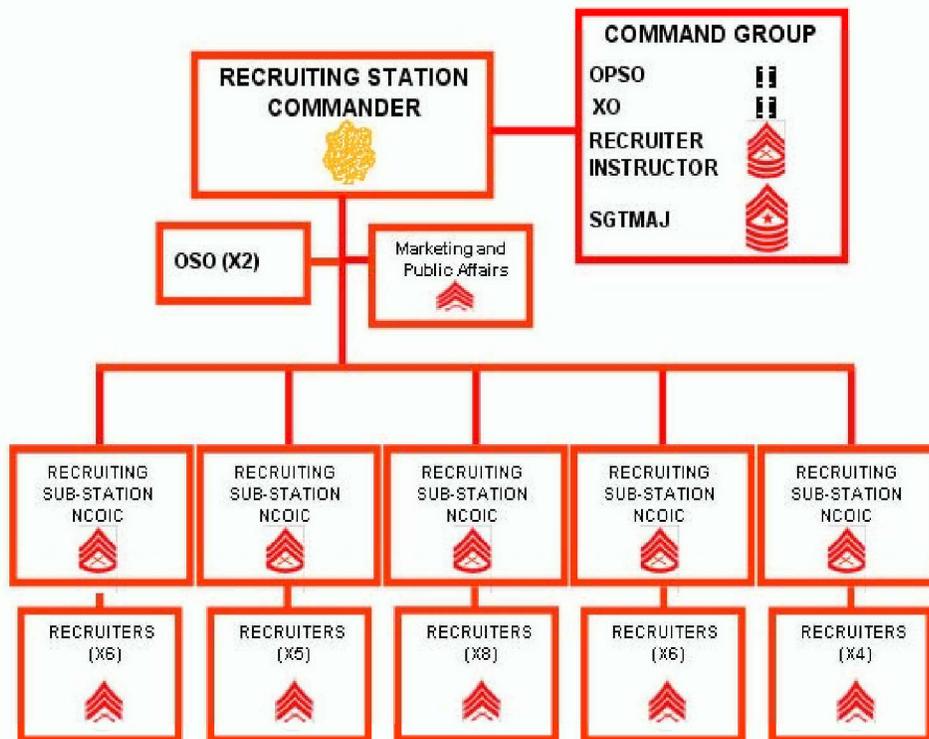
The Sergeant Major is responsible for maintaining troop welfare for enlisted Marines and supporting the RS's Delayed Entry Program (DEP), which allows recruits to postpone entry into active duty for up to a year.

The Recruiter Instructor (RI) is a career recruiter who is responsible to the Commanding Officer for all training within the RS. The RI must be an expert at systematic recruiting and professional selling skills.

The Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) is responsible for one to seven recruiters, depending on the size of the geographic area. This is where the "rubber meets the road" in recruiting. The NCOIC trains his or her recruiters and keeps them productive in reaching their recruiting goals. Training objectives include maximizing recruiting activities, improving recruiter sales techniques and performance, and monitoring the interactions with the applicants from initial contact through shipping to recruit training.

The NCOIC must be the resident "sales expert" and the overall "wise man" of systematic recruiting within the RSS. Although Recruiters School gives Marines the fundamental tools to survive on recruiting duty, it is the NCOIC who sharpens these skills and demonstrates the proper way to get things done.

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING STATION



OPSO: Operations Officer
 XO: Executive Officer
 SGTMAJ: Sergeant Major
 OSO: Officer Selection Officer
 NCOIC: Noncommissioned Officer In Charge

Source: Marine Corps Recruiting Command, April 2003.

Figure 3. Recruiting Station Headquarters and Structure

D. RECRUITING STATION ORLANDO: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

RS Orlando was chosen as an example of a recruiting station to show its organizational strengths and challenges in recruiting. RS Orlando was also selected as a case study because the author is familiar with the recruiting station, having been assigned there from 1995 to 1998. Using the business model to explain corporate organizational behavior [Ref. 13], RS Orlando's organizational

structure and design are analyzed by describing its departmental composition, coordinating mechanisms, and elements of the organizational construction. Over the years, RS Orlando has struggled to meet its recruiting goals; this is another reason why it was selected as a case in explaining the operations of a recruiting station. The possible causes for RS Orlando's struggles are examined below in a more detailed analysis of the organization's structure and design.

Despite RS Orlando's struggles during 1995-1998, it is important to point out that this RS has overcome its challenges and improved dramatically in recent years. By the end of fiscal 2001, RS Orlando was recognized by the Commandant of the Marine Corps for its outstanding performance in meeting or exceeding quantitative and qualitative objectives for enlisted and officer recruiting. [Ref. 14]

1. Departmental Structures

RS Orlando is best described by its three departmental configurations: a functional structure, a geographic divisionalized structure, and a mechanistic structure.

As a **functional structure**, RS Orlando is a very specialized group focused around one specific area: recruiting. When communicating with prospective "customers," the screening processes were very standardized. Before discussing any challenges or benefits about joining the Marine Corps, each Marine recruiter was required to ask specific questions related to the applicant's education level, violations of law or arrests, and any prior illegal drug use. This process saved valuable time for the recruiter in determining an applicant's basic qualifications for enlistment.

Furthermore, direct supervision of the recruiters by their respective NCOICs was easier and more effective because the NCOICs had great experience in recruiting and they could assist with any common problems faced by their recruiters.

As a **geographic divisionalized structure**, RS Orlando was responsible for RSSs in geographic areas over a hundred miles away. These RSSs allowed RS Orlando greater flexibility in expanding its recruiting market and achieving its required recruiting quota.

As a **mechanistic structure**, communication between the different leadership levels at RS Orlando tended to be more vertical than horizontal, especially when a recruiter was struggling to meet a recruiting quota. During remedial training, recruiters endured long, grueling training sessions and they were even instructed on how many phone calls they had to make each day. This training procedure was practiced fervently, and it was based on guidelines in a recruiting publication called "Volume I: Guidebook For Recruiters." [Ref. 15]

2. Coordinating Mechanisms

Nadler and Tushman [Ref. 16], and Mintzberg [Ref. 17] state that, as soon as people divide work among themselves, coordinating mechanisms are necessary to make certain that everyone works in concert.

RS Orlando employed all three forms of coordinating mechanisms: informal communication, formal hierarchy, and standardization. [Ref. 13]

Informal communication occurred on a daily basis among recruiters and during training sessions with their NCOICs. Shared information included recommendations for better recruiting techniques while contacting prospects on the telephone, giving presentations at local high schools, and supporting the local community.

The **formal hierarchy** assigned legitimate power to each NCOIC in managing an RSS any way the recruiter wished, as long as the RSS reached its contracting and shipping mission by the end of each month. NCOICs were responsible for directly supervising their recruiters.

Standardization was observed mostly in RS Orlando by the methodical preparation of each enlistment package that included: personal information, entrance exam results, police checks, medical documentation, security clearance questionnaires, and job specialty paperwork. Only one correct way could be

used to fill out these endless forms. Any “creative” filing of paperwork often resulted in a delay to the enlistment process and infuriated the administrative staff at the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS).¹

3. Elements of the Organizational Structure

Every organization is configured in terms of basic elements of organizational structure. [Ref. 13] These elements assist in defining the culture of the organization. This section summarizes seven elements and illustrates how they relate to the operations of Recruiting Station Orlando. These elements originate from McShane-VonGlinow’s book, “Organizational Behavior,” and they represent the important internal and external factors that decision makers must consider to become successful in their organizations. These elements are as follows:

Span of Control: RS Orlando had a relatively narrow span of control, about four recruiters per NCOIC. This did not mean the NCOICs were not capable of monitoring or controlling more than four recruiters at a time. Typically, not enough recruiters graduated from Recruiters School to sufficiently staff each RS.

Centralization: The formal decision authority was held by only one person, the RS Commanding Officer. If the CO desired the opinions of his command staff, he would normally listen to his XO, OPSO, Sergeant Major, and the recruiter instructor.

Formalization: As stated previously, the methodical process of preparing the enlistment package for each prospective applicant was rigid and tightly controlled. RS Orlando’s functional procedures worked effectively, but it was inefficient in preparing enlistment packages. Based on personal experience, recruiters used electric typewriters to record applicant information on enlistment

¹ The MEPS is a Department of Defense joint-service organization staffed by military and civilian employees. Their job is to determine an applicant’s physical qualification, aptitude, and moral standards as determined by each branch of service, the Department of Defense, and federal law. There are 65 MEPS facilities located throughout the United States.

forms. This painful routine caused many typing errors and took valuable recruiting time away from each recruiter.

If an applicant were sent to MEPS without a complete enlistment package, the RSS NCOIC would be contacted immediately for an explanation. This administrative oversight by the NCOIC was usually reported as professional incompetence. The NCOIC would subsequently receive an embarrassing phone call from the RS commander.

Area of operations: The area of operations for RS Orlando was appropriate because the RSSs adequately represented the Marine Corps in the surrounding community. However, more recruiters were needed to cope with the huge geographical area assigned to each RSS. Although this command did the best job possible with its coordinating mechanisms (an administrative hierarchy mandated constant communication between the OPSO and the mostly reluctant NCOICs), the organization itself appeared too small at times to meet the recruiting demands of the region.

Technology: Most administrative tasks performed by recruiters were monotonous and cumbersome. As previously noted, dependence on outdated equipment wasted a significant amount of recruiter time that could be used more effectively for other tasks. A potential solution would be to digitize the enlistment forms on computer and process applications electronically.

External Environment: The local community was not completely supportive of military recruiting. Military recruiters were viewed by some as “liars,” whose only interest was to reach a monthly recruiting quota. Furthermore, most high school officials encouraged their students to attend college rather than serve in the armed forces.

Organizational Strategy: RS Orlando went to great lengths to support the surrounding community. Besides recruiting, RS Orlando was actively involved with local charitable organizations (such as Toys for Tots), and the RS Commanding Officer would often speak before veterans’ organizations.

The purpose of this discussion was to identify the organizational elements needed for an RS to operate effectively and efficiently. Once departmental

structures, coordinating mechanisms, and elements of the organizational structure are identified, a successful RS commander must possess the leadership skills to ensure these elements are properly designed, implemented, coordinated, and supervised to assist in reaching the recruiting goals.

The effective use of these organizational elements is also directly related to the Marine Corps Recruiting Command structure. Combined with effective leadership, the application of these elements is one of the reasons for MCRC's consistent success in recruiting.

E. RECRUITING STATION COMMANDING OFFICER SCREENING AND SELECTION PROCESS

1. Introduction

With a few challenges along the way, America's All-Volunteer Force (AVF) has managed to be quite successful. Contrary to the popular line, some military officials argue that the AVF did not replace the unpopular draft with a simpler, more favorable way of filling the armed forces' ranks. These officials claim the AVF is actually not an "all-volunteer" force, but an all-recruited force, where recruiters aggressively seek applicants and officer selection officers (OSOs) do more recruiting than selecting. [Ref. 18] Indeed, instead of making military recruiting an easier process, the AVF caused even more fierce competition for recruits among the four armed forces.

To successfully compete in this environment, Marine Commandant Louis H. Wilson took immediate steps in 1975 to improve the quality and quantity of recruits and recruiters. He chose Brigadier General Alexander P. McMillan, a former RS Commanding Officer in San Francisco during the 1960s, to improve the recruiting force. [Ref. 10]

General McMillan brought a sense of urgency to the recruiting service. Because of his significant accomplishments, he is considered the "father of modern Marine Corps recruiting." [Ref. 10] In 1977, General McMillan developed the concepts of "systematic recruiting," which used sales training and statistical

analysis. He also established a Recruiting Management Course and an Executive Management Course to instill systematic recruiting at each command level.

Today, all Marines assigned to recruiting duty are trained in the systematic recruiting methodology. This proven teaching method reinforces General McMillan's commitment to assigning top-notch officers and enlisted Marines to recruiting duty. [Ref. 1]

2. Previous Experience

This section examines the recent history of the selection process from the 1980s through the mid 1990s and it also discusses the RS Commanding Officer screening and selection processes currently employed by Headquarters Marine Corps since 1995.

During the 1980s, the Personnel Management Division (MM) and MCRC worked together to develop a screening and selection process with an expanded pool of combat arms officers from which to select the RS Commanding Officers. [Ref. 8] This process was similar to the Marine Corps Command Screening Program (CSP), used to select the most qualified Lieutenant Colonels to command. The process was as follows: [Ref. 3]

- Only students in the Command and Staff colleges were considered. This ensured that RS Commanding Officers were selected from the best and most experienced pool of officers.
- All Officer Qualification Records (OQRs) of Command and Staff students were provided to the Director of Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA).
- M&RA formed three teams consisting of three officers each. The senior leaders in recruiting led each team. (Today, these team leaders would be the Commanding General, MCRC; the Chief of Staff, MCRC; and the Assistant Chief of Staff, Enlisted Procurement.)

- The OQRs were divided equally between the three groups. All groups internally screened and briefed each case, determining the best candidates for RS Commanding Officer billets. This procedure was similar to that used by the Command Screening Board.
- The OQRs were then passed from team to team until each team had screened all available candidates.
- Upon completion of this process, the three-team leaders compared lists to gauge consensus. Officers who were unanimously considered best qualified to command Marines on recruiting duty were selected as RS Commanding Officers.
- The list of selected officers was provided to the occupational monitors, and the appropriate assignments were made. Once these officers were identified and assigned, only the Commandant could change that assignment.

According to MM and MCRC [Ref. 3], this system was designed to ensure that:

- Only officers who had significant leadership experience were selected for the 15 or 16 RS Commanding Officer billets that became available each year;
- Officers who were selected had the requisite skills to be successful in a sales environment;
- Reliefs from command were kept to a minimum to avoid turbulence and loss of stability within the RS;
- Marines were led, not intimidated; and
- Continued success would be assured during uncertain years.

Although the process described above proved effective in selecting capable Majors for recruiting duty, the pool of eligible combat arms officers could not be limited to only Command and Staff graduates without compromising

combat readiness for the deployed forces. Subsequently, the pool of eligible candidates was expanded to Marine officers from other occupational specialties. This manpower increase provided at least 2 qualified officers for each recruiting station vacancy. [Ref. 4]

During the mid-1990s, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, in his Planning Guidance, stated “the most important thing we do in the Marine Corps is make Marines.” [Ref. 19] The Commanding General of MCRC and the Director of MM attempted to ensure that the recruiting service was provided with the level of leadership necessary to perpetuate success.

The selection system for RS Commanding Officers began to show a positive response to the unique requirements of MCRC. The first RS Commanding Officer selection panel occurred in the winter of 1995 to select commanders to report for duty in the summer of 1996.

As part of an ongoing review, a number of modifications were made to the selection process. [Ref. 19] The selection panel, which consisted of officers from MCRC, met in December instead of February of each year. Earlier identification of RS Commanding Officers benefited all concerned, especially the individual officer.

The number of officers to be considered for each RS vacancy increased from two to three. This gave greater flexibility to the selection panel and increased the number of alternates selected. Further, the Manpower Management Officer Assignment Branch (MMA) became more involved in the selection process. This participation consisted of:

- Preparing briefing packages;
- Presenting briefs to the selection panel on the officers being considered;
- Being represented before the selection panel prior to the beginning of deliberations;
- Slating of officers to specific recruiting stations in coordination with MCRC;

- Drafting the official administrative message announcing the selections; and
- Providing a representative from MMOA to participate on the selection panel.

During 1996, the identification and assignment of recruiting station commanders revolved around three general factors: profile, pool, and the selection process. [Ref. 20] These factors are described below.

a. Profile

Command experience sought from candidates included the following: any time served as a Company or Battery commander; independent command of platoons; and any experience working with Staff Non Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) and Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs).

Personal characteristics focused on demonstrated leadership; strong people skills; flexibility; a forward-looking and forward-thinking demeanor; mission accomplishment; technical proficiency; tenacity; and a “hands-on” officer who is not afraid of getting one’s hands “dirty,” when required.

b. Pool

MCRC recommended the candidates. If they were qualified and available, their names were added to MMOA’s list of candidates. MMOA provided a sufficient number of candidates that fit the profile (twice the required number, i.e., 15 billets/30 candidates). MMOA then provided Master Brief Sheets (performance reports) to the Commanding General of MCRC.

c. Selection Process

As previously noted, the screening panel consisted of three teams. The team leaders, from MCRC, were the Commanding General, the chief of staff, and the operations officer. An MMOA representative also served on the panel as a non-voting member. Each team reviewed all candidates, and the team leaders briefed each case. The top candidates were selected by vote. The final decision on duty location was made by MM. Careful assignment of selectees to specific RSs was accomplished by matching individual capabilities and demographics. MMOA also issued orders to provide a reasonable turnover for RS commanders. An example of the selection timeline is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Typical Timeline for Selecting RS Commanders During Mid-1990s

Date	Action
2 January	MCRC submits names of candidates to MMOA
31 January	MMOA provides briefing packages to MCRC
15 February	MCRC returns with a list of RS selectees
2 March	MMOA issues orders to recruiting duty
2 June	Selectees report to their recruiting stations

Source: Marine Corps Recruiting Command, September 1996.

During the mid-1990s, General Osman, the Commanding General of MM, cautioned against calling the screening process a “board.” He insisted on naming it a “screening panel” because, in his view, the Marine Corps already had too many boards. In addition, if this process were to become a board, Majors who were not selected for recruiting duty could be viewed in a negative light for promotion. [Ref. 8]

The officers selected for RS command positions during 1995-1996 marked a turning point for the Marine Corps in reclaiming the level of recruiting success Marines expected. This screening process also validated the fact that

officers with strong leadership characteristics had a higher probability of being successful on recruiting duty. [Ref. 21]

Nevertheless, the selection process needed further refinement. Since the team leaders of the panel were all from MCRC, the selection of RS commanders tended to favor Majors who had prior recruiting service. MMOA addressed this issue by taking charge of the selection panel process. MMOA reestablished the appropriate pool of Majors based on the quality of their service to the Marine Corps, and not whether they previously served on recruiting duty. Eligibility requirements are discussed below.

3. Current Selection Process and Plans for the Future

The process that selects and slates RS Commanding Officers has evolved over the past 20 years. It grew from a strict assignment system during the late-1980s to a less formal one controlled by a panel of MCRC representatives during the mid-1990s. Today, the selection process remains almost identical to that used during the mid-1990s. The only difference is in the composition of the panel. It is now a board comprised of six General officers.

Further changes to the selection process are likely. As noted above, if the panel is allowed to be called a board, Majors who are not selected for recruiting duty could be seen as not fit to command. This message would be misleading, and it could adversely affect morale among field-grade officers.

One way to avoid any possible misunderstanding would be to keep the screening and selection process a simple and informal experience. Nine proposals to accomplish this were being reviewed at MCRC in 2004. [Ref. 22] They include:

1. Reduce the screening timeline to a one-day validation process. A small group of General officers and Colonels would hear short briefs on officers nominated by MMOA, and they would subsequently identify

the primary and alternate candidates for duty as RS Commanding Officers.

2. Decrease the number of members on the selection panel. The selection panel would consist of six officers, including three General officers (CG of MCRC, CG of ERR, and CG of WRR) and three Colonels. The Colonels would be officers without recruiting experience to provide the desired balance to the panel.
3. Select an appropriate location for the screening process. The selection panel would be held in any available digital boardroom. This would allow access for all panel members to view the Official Military Personnel Files of the officers being considered.
4. Streamline the time allowed for briefing. Monitors would present cases to the panel members (1-2 minutes per case). This presentation would be a short summary that covers the candidate's career highlights and any significant contributions to the Marine Corps.
5. Assess recruiting station assignments based on diversity, gender, and geographic location.
6. Select candidates and rank alternate selectees for recruiting duty by a panel-member vote.
7. MMOA would slate the officers for command, and MCRC would validate the command slate.
8. MMOA would be the lead agency in the panel process. They would prepare sufficient cases to meet requirements for primary and alternate candidates based on several qualifying factors such as permanent change of station movers, date of rank that supports a three-year tour as a Major, key billet accomplishments that would keep the officer competitive in his or her Marine Corps career, and completion of Professional Military Education.
9. After the selection panel convenes, MMOA would route the results to MM for approval; MM and MCRC would informally notify CMC; and MMOA would release the all-Marine message with the panel results.

These proposed changes, once implemented, should improve the administrative procedures during the selection process by consolidating efforts between the respective departments and eliminating any procedural redundancies. Furthermore, lowering the number of General officers who participate on this panel from six to three will help to eliminate the perception that it is a statutory or formal selection board.

The next chapter describes the methodology used for this study. It includes a literature review, how the data was collected, and a data analysis and interpretation.

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III. METHODOLOGY

This study consisted of three major phases: literature review, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation.

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

Initial research focused on identifying and reviewing a variety of publications relevant to the study. This included literature on organizational structure and coordinating mechanisms, managerial strategy, and selected articles on various aspects of military recruiting. In addition, a number of official Marine Corps publications were examined to gain a better understanding of the organizational components of Marine Corps recruiting as well as the historical development of a strategy to select RS commanders. Further official documents were obtained through personnel from MCRC.

B. DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected for this study. Data collection began with an in-depth search of all-Marine administrative messages that announced the Marine Corps Majors selected as RS Commanding Officers for each fiscal year. The scope of these messages covered fiscal 1996 through fiscal 2003. [Ref. 23]

A special data file was created for this study. The data file covers the period fiscal 1990 through fiscal 2003. After identifying each Marine Major, individual names were sent to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) in Monterey, California, and a longitudinal data file was constructed by matching names with their respective social security numbers. This individual information is classified for official use only and protected for privacy.

The total number of individual observations in the file is 205. The data file includes demographic information such as age, primary military occupational

specialty (MOS), duty MOS, date of rank, education level, time in grade, time on active duty, date of commission, unit identification code, date of separation from active duty, and reason for separation. The timelines for the data file were carefully selected to reflect the career progression of the 205 officers who served as recruiting commanders before and after the formal screening and selection panel was introduced in 1996.

Additional quantitative data include shipping and contracting statistics, by recruiting region, from fiscal 1993 through fiscal 2003. This information was provided by MCRC. [Ref. 7]

Qualitative data were collected to provide a personal view of the challenges faced by former recruiting commanders. Qualitative sources of data collection include information obtained from a recruiting study, and through telephone and email interviews with five current and former RS Commanding Officers. The recruiting study is a 2003 joint report from Marine Corps Research University, located in Quantico, Virginia, and Penn State University. The main objective of this study was to evaluate the efficiency of the recruiting strategies and systems in the Marine Corps and to recommend promising directions for increased efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment process. [Ref. 24]

The interviews were conducted in person and by phone during July through September 2004. The interviewees are Navy and Marine Corps officers with extensive recruiting experience. The following survey questions were asked via email:

- What is your current occupation?
- What are your primary responsibilities?
- How many personnel report to you?
- As a Recruiting Station Commanding Officer, what skills and knowledge did you consider critical to do your job effectively?
- How important were communication skills in your job?
- Who did you communicate most while serving as a RS Commanding Officer?
- Describe a typical day while on recruiting duty.

- How did you communicate as an RS Commanding Officer?
- Describe a particular incident that represented a communications challenge while serving as an RS Commanding Officer.
- How do you think the communication skills required for recruiting duty differ from occupations you had after recruiting?
- How satisfied were you as an RS Commanding Officer?
- What impact did your successful tour on recruiting have on your career?

The information collected from these questions reflects the importance of effective leadership communication towards mission accomplishment. Interviews are transcribed to identify key themes. These themes are discussed and used for illustration and amplification.

C. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data obtained from DMDC were interpreted as follows: (1) if the recruiting commander was on recruiting duty less than two years, he or she was considered relieved of command; and (2) if the officer was not promoted to Lieutenant Colonel after sixteen years of commissioned service, he was considered “passed over” for promotion.

While interpreting the DMDC data file, if an officer possesses the MOSs 9910 (Unrestricted Officer) or 9911(Unrestricted Ground Officer), but fails to maintain either MOS for at least two years, that officer is considered relieved of command for the purposes of this study.

Additionally, if an officer is in the Marine Corps long enough to be selected for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (approximately 16 years of commissioned service), but does not get selected, it is assumed that the officer has been “passed over” twice for promotion and given a mandatory retirement date due to time-in-service limitations.

Quantitative data are analyzed using Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software. The SAS frequency tables showed the following:

- Percentage of recruiting commanders retired after serving 20 years;
- Average age of recruiting commanders;
- Average time in grade as a Major upon assignment to an RS; and
- Total number of RS commanders relieved for cause.

The analysis of qualitative data focuses on the reasons why it is considered important for RS Commanding Officers to possess effective communication skills. In Chapter 5, effective communication skills within the Marine Corps recruiting structure are examined with respect to leadership capabilities. This chapter draws heavily from the approach used by Charan and Drotter in The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership-Powered Company. [Ref. 25]

The next two chapters constitute the results of this research. They include an analysis of the selection process before fiscal 1996 and after the formal process were implemented. Additionally, a description of the characteristics of a successful RS commander is provided along with a personal account, from the author, on the pressures of recruiting.

IV. ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS AND CURRENT SELECTION PROCESSES

The statistical results for this study are examined by two separate time periods: (1) before the formal screening and selection process was introduced (fiscal 1990 through fiscal 1995); and (2) after the formal process was introduced (fiscal 1996 through fiscal 2003). Information from these two periods is compared and presented in a series of tables and figures. Each officer serving as an RS Commanding Officer is selected based on a specific profile. In addition to the screening characteristics listed in Chapter 2 of this study, the selection panel also focuses on factors such as: age of the officer, time in grade as a Major, and education level.

A. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS BEFORE AND AFTER THE PROCESS

Table 3 shows the number of Majors selected as Recruiting Station Commanding Officers from fiscal 1990 through fiscal 2003. The wide fluctuation among the quantities of officers selected each year demonstrates the flexible nature of recruiting. MCRC's staffing requirements can change frequently throughout any fiscal year. RS commanders who decide to extend their recruiting tours generally can cause these deviations. However, other causes may include the opening of a new Recruiting Station or the need to replace a recruiting commander who is relieved of duty.

Table 3. Number of Marine Corps Majors Selected for RS Command, Fiscal 1990-Fiscal 2003

Fiscal Year	Number of Majors Selected
1990	22
1991	9
1992	18
1993	10
1994	11
1995	16
Sub Total 1990-1995	86
1996	17
1997	17
1998	14
1999	20
2000	12
2001	6
2002	17
2003	16
Sub Total 1996 - 2003	119
Total	205

Source: Marine Corps Recruiting Command and Defense Manpower Data Center, October 2004.

Table 4 shows the percentage distribution of RS Commanding Officers by racial/ethnic group and gender. Compared with the Marines' Almanac of 2002 [Ref. 26], the proportion of minorities serving as RS commanders in fiscal 1996 through fiscal 2003 (10.9 percent) is slightly lower than the proportion of minorities (11.2 percent) serving as a Major in the Marine Corps as a whole. However, the percentage of female RS commanders (4.2 percent) exceeds the proportion of women serving as Majors in the entire Marine Corps (2.4 percent). The increase in minorities and women from the first period to the later period most likely reflects changes in the Marine Corps over time, as the percentage of Majors among minorities and women has also risen.

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of RS Commanders by Racial/Ethnic Group and Gender, Fiscal 1990-1995 and Fiscal 1996 – 2003

Racial/Ethnic Group	Fiscal 1990 - 1995	Fiscal 1996 - 2003
White	91.6	89.1
Black	3.6	2.5
Hispanic	2.4	1.7
Other/Unknown	2.4	6.7
Gender		
Male	98.8	95.8
Female	1.2	4.2

Source: Marine Corps Recruiting Command, October 2004.

Table 5 shows the proportion of RS Commanding Officers who held a Master's degree at the time they were selected for command between fiscal 1990 through fiscal 1995. The wide fluctuations of officers with a graduate degree (i.e., 8 percent in 1990 compared with 33 percent in 1992) are unexplained. Graduate education appears to play no clear role in the selection process. The important point to observe is that 14 of the 86 selectees (or 16.3 percent of officers) possessed a graduate degree from fiscal 1990 through fiscal 1995.

Table 5. Percentage of RS Commanding Officers with a Master's Degree, Fiscal 1990 - Fiscal 2003

Fiscal Year	Officers with a Master's Degree (percent)
1990	8.3
1991	11.1
1992	33.3
1993	20.0
1994	27.2
1995	10.0
Sub Total 1990 - 1995	16.3
1996	25.0
1997	21.0
1998	11.1
1999	7.1
2000	12.3
2001	83.3
2002	33.3
2003	9.5
Sub Total 1996 - 2003	22.7
Total	39.0

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, July 2004.

Table 5 also shows the proportion of RS Commanding Officers who held a Master's degree at the time they were selected for command between fiscal 1996 and fiscal 2003. The extreme percentage difference observed for fiscal 2001 (83.3 percent), compared with the other years may be due to the small number of selectees for that year. As previously mentioned, during fiscal 2001, only six Majors were selected for command. Five of those six officers possessed a Master's degree. The important point to observe is that 27 of the 119 selectees (or 22.7 percent of Majors) possessed a graduate degree from fiscal 1996 through fiscal 2003. When comparing the first period with the later period, the 6.4 percentage point increase in the number of selectees with a graduate degree may be due to a longer average time in grade of the selectees from fiscal 1996 through 2003. Majors with longer time in grade upon selection tend to have more time to pursue graduate education than Majors who have shorter time in grade.

Table 6 shows the percentage distribution of RS Commanding Officers by their primary MOS. A primary MOS identifies the primary skill and knowledge of an officer. A duty MOS, on the other hand, is temporary and it designates a particular skill or training in addition to an officer's primary MOS. An RS commander billet is considered a duty MOS. As seen here, most of the recruiting commanders are infantry officers and field artillery officers. The perception throughout the Marine Corps is that these officers go through more intensive training and they should thus possess a higher aptitude for handling stressful circumstances.

However, it is important to point out that good performance in a primary MOS is no guarantee of success on recruiting duty. Recruiting presents a very foreign experience than what a fleet Marine commander is accustomed to seeing. [Ref. 1]

As indicated below, a notable difference is found between the numbers of infantry and artillery officers. First, during fiscal 1990 through fiscal 1995, 61 percent of RS commanders were infantry officers and artillery officers. During fiscal 1996 through fiscal 2003, the percentage rose to almost 70 percent. Similar comparisons exist for adjutants, logistics officers, communication officers, and motor transport officers. The reason for these large variations can be explained by the availability of officers in the Marine Corps to fill RS commander billets at a point in time. For example, a shortage of adjutants throughout the Marine Corps would result in fewer adjutants being assigned to recruiting duty. Conversely, an increase of infantry officers would produce a greater number of infantry officers being selected as RS commanders. [Ref. 9]

Table 6. Percentage Distribution of RS Commanding Officers by Primary MOS, Fiscal 1990 - 1995 and Fiscal 1996 – 2003

Occupational Specialty	Fiscal 1990 - 1995	Fiscal 1996 - 2003
Adjutant (0180)*	5.8	0.9
Infantry Officer (0302)	40.7	55.5
Logistics Officer (0402)	8.1	1.7
Field Artillery Officer (0802)	20.9	14.3
Engineer Officer (1302)	1.2	0.9
Communication Officer (2502)	0.0	4.2
Electronic Warfare Officer (2602)	1.2	0
Supply Officer (3002)	4.7	5.0
Supply Operations Officer (3010)	1.2	0.0
Financial Management Officer (3404)	1.2	1.8
Motor Transport Officer (3502)	4.7	1.7
Data Systems Officer (4002)	0.0	0.8
Public Affairs Officer (4302)	0.0	0.8
Military Police Officer (5803)	0.0	0.8
Aircraft Maintenance Officer (6002)	0.0	0.8
Surface-to-Air Weapons Officer (7204)	1.2	0.8

Occupational Specialty	Fiscal 1990 - 1995	Fiscal 1996 - 2003
Air Support Officer (7208)	1.2	0.8
C-20 Pilot (7553)	0.0	0.8
Weapons and Tactics Instructor (7577)	0.0	0.8
Pilot VMAW (7592)**	2.3	1.8
Aviation Safety Officer (7596)	1.2	1.8
Pilot VMGR (7556)**	2.2	1.6
Pilot HMH (7558)**	2.2	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0

* A four-digit number identifies Marine Corps personnel and occupations.

** VMAW: Virtual Military Aircraft Wing; VMGR: Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron; HMH: Helicopter, Marine Heavy Squadron.

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, October 2004.

Table 7 presents a summary of the descriptive results collected before and after the formal screening process was implemented. As seen here, the average time in grade as a Major has increased by seven months. This finding may support the assumption that more experienced Majors increase the probability of a successful recruiting tour. In contrast, the average time in service as a Major decreased by two years. This anomaly is generally due to force-structure issues.

Table 7. Summary of Descriptive Information on RS Commanding Officers at the Time of Appointment by Selected Variables, Fiscal 1990-1995 and Fiscal 1996-2003

Selected Variable	Fiscal 1990-1995	Fiscal 1996-2003
Number of RS Commanders Selected	86	119
Average Age	33 years	33 years
Average Time in Grade (Major)	14 months	21 months
Average Time in Service	14.8 years	12.7 years
Percentage with Master's Degree	16.3	22.7
Percentage Infantry MOS	40.7	55.5
Percentage Artillery MOS	20.9	14.3
Percentage Logistics MOS	8.1	1.7
Percentage of Males	98.8	85.8
Percentage of Minorities	8.4	10.9
Percentage who Retire with 20-30 Years of Service	81.3	55.6
Twice Passed Over for Promotion to O-5	4 (4.7 percent)	0
RS Commanders Relieved for Cause	6 (7.0 percent)	3 (2.5 percent)

Source: Marine Corps Recruiting Command and the Defense Manpower Data Center, October 2004.

Today, more officers are promoted sooner to the rank of Major, than in the past, to adjust for officer manpower attrition. Based on the results presented, MCRC apparently prefers to select Majors who are mature in their rank, but who are also relatively young in their careers.

The number of RS commanders with a Master's degree increased by 6.4 percent compared to the earlier period. This fluctuation may only reflect the small population size of the 86 RS commanders selected during fiscal 1990 through 1995 compared with the 119 RS commanders selected during fiscal 1996 through 2003. Although an officer with a graduate-level education may generally be considered a more effective critical thinker, it is no guarantee for success. Graduate education plays no clear role in the selection process. [Ref.9] There is no way to quantify an RS commander's ability to succeed until that officer has personally become exposed to the challenges of recruiting duty.

As previously mentioned, the later period also reflects a significant increase in infantry officers and communications officers; and a significant decrease in adjutants, logistics officers, field artillery officers; and motor transport officers. These fluctuations are again due to varying officer manpower retention rates experienced at Headquarters Marine Corps. MCRC does not choose one officer over another for recruiting duty based on the officer's MOS. The main criterion is the officer's ability to lead Marines. [Ref. 9]

The number of relieved RS commanders decreased from six (7 percent of the total), during the earlier period, to three (2.5 percent of the total) during the later period. Although this difference appears small, it is considered significant among recruiting officials and it is a clear indicator that the current screening process is selecting higher quality officers to serve on recruiting duty. [Ref. 9]

The percentage of RS commanders, from the earlier period, who retired after recruiting duty and after serving between twenty to thirty years of active duty, is 81.3 percent. The retired percentage of RS commanders from the later period is 55.6 percent. However, these results are incomplete since most of the officers of the later period are still not eligible for retirement.

The number of RS commanders who were twice passed over for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel decreased from four (4.7 percent of the total), during the earlier period, to zero during the later period. However, these results are inconclusive since most of the officers of the later period are still not eligible for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel.

B. THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS: THREE IMPORTANT SKILLS OF A SUCCESSFUL RECRUITING STATION COMMANDER

The first section of this chapter provides a descriptive profile of RS Commanding Officers before and after the formal screening and selection process was introduced. In the later period, the data show a higher percentage of Master's degrees held by RS commanders, an increase in the average time in grade, and a reduction in the number of commanders relieved for cause.

However, the descriptive statistics do not fully answer the first research question of this study: what are the characteristics of a successful RS Commanding Officer? What personal attributes do RS commanders need to be successful? One good way to identify some of these qualities is to ask the experts. The five interviewees for this study possess extensive experience in recruiting and they each emphasized the importance of using effective communication skills while they served as RS commanders. Their names and positions in 2005 are as follows:

- U. S. Marine Corps Colonel Thomas Spencer. He is the Chief of Staff for Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California and the Western Recruiting Region. Colonel Spencer served a successful tour as an RS Commanding Officer. He was also assigned as the Director of Recruiters School, San Diego, California.
- U. S. Navy Captain Carol J. Herron. She is the Dean of Students at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey, California. Captain Herron served three tours in recruiting: the first tour as executive officer of Navy Recruiting District San Francisco, the second tour as Commanding Officer of Navy Recruiting District Los Angeles, and the third tour as Commander of Navy Recruiting Region West.
- Mr. Stephen B. Wittle. He is the Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 at MCRC, Headquarters Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia. He served as a recruiting station Commanding Officer, a recruiting

district operations officer, a recruiting district executive officer, and the head of enlisted recruiting at MCRC. Mr. Wittle is a retired Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel.

- U. S. Marine Corps Major Robert P. Cote. He is the Commanding Officer of recruiting station, Seattle, Washington. He has been on recruiting duty since June 2002.
- U. S. Marine Corps Major Dan Wilson. He completed a successful tour as the Commanding Officer of Recruiting Station, San Diego, California.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face and followed up with an email survey. Each interviewee granted permission to use his or her name. Personal interviews required approximately 25 minutes to complete. Relevant themes are determined based on the similarities observed in the responses by interviewees.

These themes describe the qualities of a successful recruiting commander in reaching monthly contracting and shipping goals. These themes also emphasize the importance of a commander to establish and maintain effective lines of communication at all levels of the recruiting command.

Theme 1: Display a selfless attitude toward mentoring and serving each member of the recruiting command to make recruiters more productive.

Evidence:

Throughout the interviews, the subjects stressed a sincere desire to support every member of the recruiting command group and every recruiter under their charge. When providing guidance and encouragement, commanders lead by adjusting their communication skills, according to the different recruiting environment, to make their recruiters more effective in “selling” their respective branch of service.

Captain Herron’s communication skills changed dramatically since she completed her numerous recruiting tours. As Dean of Students for NPS,

communication with her students is a relatively simple process. There is an established protocol already in place. Additionally, since she works in the same location as her students, communication is usually face-to-face. However, as a recruiting station Commanding Officer, Captain Herron modified her communication skills to comply with this challenging environment. "While on recruiting duty, I had to become a master of communication via telephone, by sheer necessity, to keep control of the daily recruiting operations of my recruiters over a large geographic area."

Major Wilson's comments illustrate the level of genuine commitment he displays as a recruiting commander. He views his leadership position as a way of life rather than just collecting a paycheck.

I call recruiters and SNCOICs who are doing well to congratulate them, and I speak to struggling ones about their plan for future success. I usually visit a local substation or the MEPS to get out of the office and talk with my Marines. From time to time, a phone conversation does not go the way I would like. In that case, I always conduct a follow-up face-to-face meeting with the Marine to get back on track. On occasion, I even took the Marine out to lunch for a heart-to-heart in order to overcome misunderstandings from a phone call.

Mr. Wittle's comments focus on the importance of knowing the job well as a recruiting commander.

[The recruiting commander] needs to become technically and tactically proficient in recruiting. Part of leading the station was also to be a teacher and mentor to subordinates, not just a cheerleader.

In their current occupations, the interviewees feel very confident in their abilities to manage and communicate effectively. They enjoy their jobs and they strive for continuous self-improvement.

A common statement among the interviewees is how a tour on recruiting duty contributes significantly to their professional growth and prepares them for greater responsibility.

Theme 2: Focus efforts to effectively communicate the correct message throughout the recruiting command and dispel damaging rumors quickly.

Evidence:

The most common communication challenges faced by the interviewees in their experience on recruiting duty were clearly articulating the commander's intent and dealing with unfounded information.

Colonel Spencer emphasized that effective communication does not develop naturally in most recruiting commanders. High-quality communication skills require preparation and training.

Communication skills were exceptionally important. My particular RS consisted of 225,000 square miles. I only saw all my Marines once per year (Marine Corps Ball). I could not afford for my message to be misstated or misunderstood. In the operating forces, if the message is unclear, one simply calls a formation and gets the word corrected. You do not have that luxury on recruiting duty. You have to get it right the first time, every time.

Major Cote supported the idea that communication styles vary among recruiting commanders.

Communication is vital. With Marines stationed over a large area, you do not have the same amount of personal contact compared to other assignments. A commander's intent must be clear. The daily communication, especially with the command group, depends largely on the leadership style of the RS Commanding Officer. I had Marines spreading rumors about personnel transfers within my command. [In response,] I faxed a note to each RSS and I reminded everyone that only the CO makes personnel transfers. I advised my command group members not to discuss proposed moves.

Effective communication skills also help recruiting commanders seek and establish external relationships that are critical to recruiting success. External factors include creating meaningful relationships with school counselors, gym teachers, judges, former Marines, MEPS personnel, and community members.

An effective commander must capitalize on these recruiting assets.

Theme 3: Avoid becoming exceedingly involved with the daily operations of the recruiting station. Trust the capabilities of one's command staff and intervene only when required.

Evidence:

Recruiting stations must adapt to the growing complexities of the civilian environment. Societal changes, such as decreased interests in joining the armed services, military downsizing, and reduced budgets are just a few of the complex challenges the recruiting force must overcome. Effective commanders must find innovative ways to observe and supervise the performance of their staff without becoming "micromanagers."

As Major Wilson suggests:

I take a week of leave every trimester, to make sure I send a clear signal to the recruiting station that it is okay, even encouraged, to take leave. It also shows your command group that you trust them to run the show in your absence. Allow your Staff NCOICs to run their own show, provided they are successful. Afford them the flexibility to give their Marine recruiters time off when they are performing to expectations.

One of the five signs of an ineffective leader is poor performance management. This is characterized by "someone who provides poor or little feedback to his employees, isn't a good coach, doesn't offer clear direction, and whose people are unsure about their goals. In other words, this manager is unable to communicate productively." [Ref. 25]

Mr. Wittle concludes:

I will tell you I was not one to holler or scream to influence Marines to get the job done. Some individuals think intimidation is what is required to be successful. My personal belief is that this is a very weak leader. I think an effective leader needs to understand to use the domesticated traits to influence others; not wild, undomesticated conduct.

The primary purpose of these themes is to determine whether a credible relationship exists between a successful RS Commanding Officer and the implementation of effective leadership communication. The comments from the

interviewees appear to substantiate this claim. The themes suggest that an effective RS commander must master the art of coaching and motivating the recruiters. As Charan et al. write:

Coaching is the hands-on art of caring; it bonds people to each other and the organization. When you care, people know it, and this is a very important aspect of leadership at this and other levels. [Ref. 25]

A significant relationship can be seen between this statement and theme #1 of the interviews. The interviewees express a strong sense of pride when caring for their command staff and their recruiters.

One could sense a high level of satisfaction in the tone of Captain Herron's voice. During her interview, she stated: "You have to have it in your heart to work with each individual recruiter." This justifies her commitment of caring for the technical proficiency and personal welfare of her recruiters. Captain Herron's sense of duty is genuine and would be difficult for anyone to fabricate. Her extensive experience in recruiting gave her great credibility among the command staff and the recruiters. It also reinforced one of the main responsibilities of serving as an RS Commanding Officer: to grow and develop her recruiters into the future recruiter NCOICs. The benefits obtained from quality communication include "improved productivity, higher quality of services, and reduced costs." [Ref. 27]

Captain Herron continually stressed effective communication and how it applies toward her success as a military leader and to the development and mentoring of students at NPS. Her main goal is to serve the officers at NPS. In her view, her officers always come first.

Charan et al. define a competent leader as someone who is responsible for maintaining the quality and productivity of the managers. Failure to perform these roles effectively may have negative consequences for an organization. Furthermore, an effective manager needs to "develop a sensitivity toward power. What this means is they need to use their power in ways that motivate and instruct rather than demean and demoralize." [Ref. 25]

Similarities are also seen between these leadership statements and themes #2 and #3 of the interviews. During their years as RS Commanding Officers, the interviewees mentioned how they were required to continuously update and justify the importance of sound and fair recruiting practices to the civilian community. This is a monumental responsibility for commanders, since military recruiters tend to be viewed skeptically as nothing more than “sales people” who are only interested in making their recruiting quota.

If recruiting commanders are unable to convince the local civilian community of the legitimacy and integrity of a recruiting station, enlistments will eventually drop. The interviewees claimed that they would never criticize their failing recruiters in a public setting. Any concerns with recruiters who did not meet performance standards were handled in private. When correcting their recruiters, each interviewee stressed the importance of “focusing on the recruiter’s behavior rather than character or intelligence.”[Ref. 25]

Summary

The descriptive information collected for this study may indicate that the current selection process, compared with the earlier period, tends to favor RS commanders among officers with approximately 13 years of active-duty service, those with at least 21 months time-in-grade as a Major, and those with a Master’s degree. More women and minority officers are also being selected to command recruiting stations.

The descriptive information relates to the interview themes in two general ways: (1) An RS commander with more time-in-grade usually possesses greater experience in handling Marines as a Major. This experience is commonly manifested by a leadership style that mentors and coaches Marines to become more effective recruiters. (2) The RS commander with a graduate level of education is more likely to focus on leadership principles that promote a healthy, productive, and professional work environment for the recruiting station. An effective commander trusts the senior-enlisted leadership in accomplishing the

recruiting mission and avoids “micro-managing” or becoming too involved in the daily operations of the RS.

The combination of the descriptive information and the interview themes relate greatly to the main research objective of identifying some characteristics of a successful RS Commanding Officer. To be successful on recruiting, an RS commander must implement the managerial skills necessary to meet mission requirements. These skills center on inspiring confidence in the recruiters to succeed and taking an active interest in their lives.

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V. CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL RECRUITING STATION COMMANDING OFFICER AND THE RECRUITING CULTURE

In addition to the three important skills of a successful RS commander, as mentioned previously in Chapter IV, uniquely comprehensive traits are required from leaders to succeed in Marine Corps recruiting. This chapter illustrates various instinctive qualities that are important for an RS Commanding Officer. First, the discussion focuses on the significance of leadership communication and why this quality is important to an RS commander. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of the six passages of the leadership pipeline and their relationship with recruiting. Finally, a viewpoint on the recruiting culture and a personal account from recruiting duty are provided from the author's perspective. The connection between the different sections of this chapter can be explained as follows: Once an RS commander learns to effectively communicate the recruiting mission to the recruiting station, the commander must also be able to effectively communicate at all levels of MCRC. To accomplish this task, the RS commander needs to understand the functions at each level of recruiting.

A. QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL RECRUITING STATION COMMANDER

1. Leadership Communication

As in any military unit, the RS Commanding Officer is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of his or her command. The RS Commanding Officer is responsible to the district CO for reaching monthly and yearly mission requirements, as well as for maintaining quality standards. The most critical role the commander can perform is creating a climate that pursues, as well as achieves, success.

Communication is the very essence of sound leadership. [Ref. 1] A commander cannot be productive unless he or she can communicate effectively.

Good communication does not just happen. It must be developed and maintained. It usually takes years to acquire this important skill.

Consequently, current RS screening processes require that selectees possess adequate communication skills. For example, any noticeable speech impediments are automatic grounds for disqualification from recruiting duty.

[Ref. 9]

Effective commanders must study and practice to develop their communication abilities. Officers in positions of leadership are obligated to guide their recruiting organizations as they react to external and internal conditions within the recruiting environment. As Conger (1991) observes, the “critical role of effective leaders is to be skillful craftsmen of their organization’s mission.” The leader must be able to “detect opportunities in the environment... and be able to describe them in ways that maximize their significance.” [Ref. 28] Here lies the importance of exercising effective communication skills. Person-to-person communication is especially important in periods of extreme stress, such as during an enemy attack, while defending against a determined assault, or, more to the point, while struggling to achieve that elusive recruiting quota.

A successful tour on recruiting duty can enhance a Marine’s career. Conversely, the penalties for failure can be severe. Failure on recruiting duty does not simply mean a transfer back to the fleet; it can result in very serious consequences that will most likely end a Marine’s career. To foster the attitude necessary for success, the RS Commanding Officer must ensure that the command group is totally dedicated to accomplishing the mission.

Since the recruiting command group must speak and act with one voice, it should be the commander’s first priority to establish cohesion among the new team. Effective communication and leadership help a CO foster free-flowing communication and unity of purpose that can make the command group extremely strong and mutually supportive.

2. The Six Passages of the Leadership Pipeline

This section reviews the leadership pipeline, how it relates to the Marine Corps recruiting hierarchy, and what personal qualities are important for an RS commander to be successful on recruiting duty. An explanation is also provided on how communication varies at the different organizational levels, and the recommended managerial strategies a commander can implement to effectively communicate at all levels of the recruiting command.

Six different leadership “passages” are explained in *“The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership Powered Company.”* [Ref. 25] Authors Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter, and James Noel have substantial firsthand experience in leadership succession and development around the world. They have coached some of the world’s top corporate and military leaders and the have developed effective leadership succession and development programs for leading organizations of all sizes.

As Charan et al. observe, “Managing requires special efforts not only to establish common directions, but to eliminate misdirection.” [Ref. 25] A mutual understanding through effective communication can only be obtained by communicating through all leadership levels in the chain of command. As additional layers are added to the leadership ladder, attainment of common direction and mutual understanding become increasingly difficult.

Communication is a two-way process where the sender of information must attempt to identify the receiving audience. Every commander defines communication differently, based on needs and the environment. For some, communication is a telephone call, an email message, or even gossiping by the water cooler. Others may associate communication with some form of media, such as radio or television.

To be an effective communicator, the recruiting commander must possess the ability to clearly articulate an idea to a recruiter, to the command staff, or to higher headquarters. Each step up or down the leadership ladder is associated with increased communication challenges. A commander’s communication style

needs to adjust according to the audience if the intended message is to be understood. These skills are critical for dealing with the rapidly changing recruiting environment.

These leadership passages stimulate leader transition and development within an organization. The higher the passage level, the more complicated the requirements become. [Ref. 25] The six critical leadership passages are summarized below so that the reader can become familiar with a proven method for building an effective leadership pipeline, assessing competence and performance of an RS Commanding Officer, and planning management development in a way that addresses the unique challenges faced at each leadership level within the Marine Corps Recruiting Command and throughout the Marine Corps.

Passage One: “From Managing Self to Managing Others”

The first level is when the individual learns to “manage oneself.” This usually occurs during the first few years as a commissioned officer. It is characterized by individual contributions at a technical and professional level. During this period, the commander gets assigned jobs done on time, accepts company culture and adopts the standards of his profession. Once individual skills are refined and good results are produced, more responsibilities are designated. When these responsibilities are dominated, along with demonstrated ability to work with others, the individual officer often transcends to “first-line manager.” This is the equivalent of being assigned as a platoon commander in the Marine Corps.

The second level is “managing others,” and it is characterized by shifting from doing work to getting work done through others. At this level, the officer is responsible for assigning work, filling jobs, and motivating others. The officer relies heavily on the experience of Staff Noncommissioned Officers to accomplish the mission. The officer learns how to reallocate time to complete

work and help others to perform effectively. At this level of leadership, the officer must also learn to value managerial work, rather than just tolerate it.

Passage Two: “From Managing others to Managing Managers”

The third level is “managing managers.” At this level the officer becomes strictly a manager. An RS Commanding Officer operates at this level. The officer no longer focuses on accomplishing individual tasks. The main objectives involve selecting individuals who will transition from Passage One, assigning managerial and leadership work to lower managers, measuring their progress as managers, and coaching them. This level is crucial as the commander decides which canvassing recruiters possess the necessary leadership qualities to serve as future NCOICs. Time applications and work values are similar to those at level two. At this level, the RS commander tackles strategic issues that affect the overall productivity of a recruiting station.

Passage Three: “From Managing Managers to Functional Manager”

The fourth level is the “functional manager.” It is characterized by an increased managerial maturity and understanding that one will now manage and value areas outside the sphere of familiarity. A recruiting district commander operates at this leadership level. The district commander must be able to work with other recruiting district managers, compete for a “fair share” of the total recruiting mission, and properly manage recruiting resources, such as the number of recruiters, based on demographic and social conditions. District commanders have the authority to move their recruiters or officers to any another recruiting station, within their respective area of responsibility, if they feel doing so will enhance mission performance.

Passage Four: “From Functional Manager to Business Manager”

The fifth level is that of the “business manager.” Business managers are more strategic thinkers, sensitive to functional diversity and capable of viewing everything from two time periods: long-term and short-term. A recruiting regional commander operates at this level. The regional commander is responsible for integrating different functional areas instead of just working and understanding other functions. For example, the recruiting regions apportion new contract goals to the recruiting districts. Within these shipping and contracting objectives, other enlistment requirements are also established regarding a recruit’s education, gender, race, and ethnicity.

The recruiting regions are also responsible for determining the appropriate manpower inventory of critical skills and for controlling the flow of recruits to basic training. Every fiscal year, the quotas are established for musicians interested in joining the prestigious Marine bands and the appropriate number of recruits required to ship to recruit training.

The recruiting standard at this level depends on the abilities of the regional commanders to functionally determine if recruiting services can be provided professionally, technically, or physically. Also, they must determine if the recruiting service is “profitable” and whether the results can be sustained for an extended period of time.

Passage Five: “From Business Manager to Group Manager”

The sixth level is the “group manager.” This is equivalent to the Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruiting Command, responsible for the performance of both recruiting regions: Eastern Recruiting Region and Western Recruiting Region. The Commanding General evaluates the success of each region and provides corrective action as required. Two key skills to master at this level include:

- Learn to evaluate recruiting strategies for proper capital allocation (i.e., how many recruiters are needed to make contracting mission and where will they be assigned).
- Determine how to develop recruiting region commanders and to evaluate if MCRC has the right mix of leadership and core capabilities to succeed.

Passage Six: “From Group Manager to Enterprise Manager”

The seventh level is the “enterprise manager.” In the civilian sector, this person would be seen as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), but within the Marine Corps, it would be the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC). As the leader of the “enterprise,” CMC must be a long-term visionary. CMC develops sensitivity to the external influences that shape our society, guiding MCRC through these changes with initiative. CMC must effectively choose a “corporate team” of General officers to meet recruiting goals. This will allow CMC time to analyze and understand the entire environment surrounding the critical decisions that can affect the Marine Corps each year.

As mentioned previously, the RS Commanding Officer is tasked with “managing managers.” *The Leadership Pipeline* explains this level as characterized by understanding that one is now a “pure manager.” As a junior officer, individual contribution was still part of one’s job description. As seniority is achieved over time, a recruiting commander can remove individual tasks and focus on mentoring and coaching the members of a command group.

The commander, along with advisors, establishes recruiting station policy, defines standards of performance, frames annual and monthly mission objectives, trains and assists the recruiting force, and oversees the welfare of all Marines and their families within the command.

In short, the RS Commanding Officer is the strategist, communicator and mentor for the command. This is an enormous responsibility that greatly depends on the commander’s ability to communicate effectively. The command

group meeting is critical in planning for recruiting success for the upcoming month. Before the commander convenes the meeting, the following question should be asked: are we on track to make mission this month? If the answer is “no,” then what must be done differently to ensure success next month? If the answer is “yes,” then what must be done to secure a subsequent victory next month?

The Commanding Officer must maintain a sharp focus on improving the productivity and efficiency of the recruiting force. Nothing else matters. If a commander is preoccupied with what the other services are doing, what the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) is doing, or what every headquarters in the chain of command is doing, the commander is wasting valuable time.

An RS Commanding Officer needs to only be concerned with specific areas of control – mainly the recruiting station. [Ref. 1]

When a commander visits the recruiting substations, it is important to always be aware of the command group’s impact on productivity. The recruiter instructor is usually welcomed more casually and receptively than the commander, because the RI is generally there to help the substation with “sales-assistance” that can affect the ability to make contracting mission.

When devising a plan to visit an RSS, the commander needs to communicate specific guidance as to what is to be accomplished by the command visit. If there is no specific agenda for the visit, the commander or any command group member should not conduct the visit. An RS Commanding Officer should not allow the command group to distract substations with “surprise” or “informal” visits.

What relationship should a commander have with NCOICs and recruiters? The commander must lead by example. An effective commander inspires loyalty and confidence in subordinates. This requires effective communication skills, and a genuine interest to establish rapport with NCOICs and recruiters.

Commanders need to spend time caring for and learning about their Marines and their families. Honest leaders will refuse to merely claim they care

with general lip service and subsequently pay no attention to their Marines. Inviting family members of enlisted Marines to the commander's home for social functions is highly encouraged. In doing so, they create loyalty and dedication within the recruiting station. Fraternization incidents among officers and enlisted surely take a back seat on recruiting duty.

A commander who leads by enforcing the status quo (experienced in the Fleet Marine Force), and threatening to give poor performance evaluations for failing to make recruiting mission is destined to be relieved of command. Marine recruiters know they have a difficult job. A pompous and arrogant commander only makes recruiting duty more difficult. In the long run, it is the RS Commanding Officer who is ultimately held responsible for making or failing to achieve the recruiting mission.

A commander of a successful recruiting station recognizes potential barriers to communication and eliminates them. Traditional hierarchical structures are replaced by flatter organizational structures to make the commander more accessible for NCOICs and recruiters to communicate directly. This ensures important ideas and concerns are addressed quickly and effectively. The commander needs to enforce an open-door policy and encourage horizontal communication. Creating an environment that values personal accessibility results in ongoing dialogue among all members of the organization. For example, by making NCOICs explain their RSS's performance, commanders encourage NCOICs to critique their own actions. They often assert their successes or talk through solutions to their own problems. [Ref. 12]

Every commander will confront numerous shortfalls and negative trends during a recruiting tour. It is critical that the commander and the command group maintain clear lines of communication to uncover who is responsible for the trend and the reasons behind it. On issues concerning unethical recruiting behavior, such as fraudulent enlistments, the commander must make certain that only those NCOICs acting outside of current recruiting policy are singled out and addressed accordingly. This is known as the "corral theory," and a commander

must quickly learn to treat each NCOIC according to merit. Winners must always be treated as “winners.” [Ref. 1]

The most powerful qualities a successful recruiting commander can exhibit are focusing on current and past strengths, successes, and the potential abilities of NCOICs and recruiters at all times. This is called affirmative competence. [Ref. 29] For example, if the recruiters of an RSS are struggling to reach their contracting goal, the commander needs to realize that this is a leadership or a training issue. The commander must project a positive attitude and deploy the command group accordingly, concentrating on the root(s) of its ineffectiveness. Marines in return will show loyalty to their commanders. Punishing a failing RSS with extra working hours will only humiliate Marines and drive down their morale. Recruiting duty is no place to institute a “harassment package.”

The other important quality of a commander is the ability to express appreciation. The commander should publicly praise Marines and celebrate the recruiters’ and NCOICs’ achievements. The commander should not threaten the RS with punishments for failure. Instead, a commander should communicate a true belief in the RS’s ability to succeed. A positive attitude and effective communication skills greatly enhance a commander’s probabilities of success on recruiting duty.

B. RECRUITING CULTURE

As mentioned previously, a successful Recruiting Station Commanding Officer requires several characteristics to lead and motivate recruiters to accomplish the mission. Conversely, what is liable to happen when an RS commander chooses to direct a recruiting station with arrogance and indifference, instead of applying the principles of effective leadership communication and the passages of the leadership pipeline?

This section presents an idea of the potential consequences that may develop when a leadership style goes awry on recruiting duty. The challenge lies

in RS commanders finding a balance between authoritative and persuasive forms of leading their Marines.

Relatively few Marines tend to ask for a tour of duty in recruiting. In fact, previous research shows that only 20 percent of Marines actually volunteer for recruiting, while the remaining 80 percent are assigned by other means. [Ref. 24] Few Marines volunteer because recruiting duty is considered to be one of the most difficult jobs in the Marine Corps. The pressures associated with achieving recruiting quotas can often be quite intense, depending on conditions that are beyond the control of recruiters.

Mr. Stephen B. Wittle, former head of enlisted operations for MCRC, gives a more personal perspective on the challenges faced by recruiters. [Ref. 11]

Unlike regions that are exposed to a large military presence such as Southern California or Virginia, there are many communities whose only exposure to the Marine Corps is the recruiter. It's like mining the communities of America for the raw materials necessary to forge Marines. They [recruiters] put a lot of work into representing the Marine Corps – in essence, they are testimonials to our success.

As mentioned previously, a Marine could be a stellar performer in his or her primary MOS, but that would not mean much on recruiting duty. As a recruiter, the bottom line for success is to make certain the required number of individuals sign a contract, are shipped to boot camp, and then graduate as a Marine. To accomplish this objective, the recruiter must be able to “sell” the Marine Corps. This concept is new to most Marines. No Marine joined the Marine Corps to become a salesperson. [Ref. 1]

Recruiting duty is not for the introverted. It is a “people” business that requires the ability to interact and deal with young men and women from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. Marines who succeed as recruiters find their careers greatly enhanced for having completed such a significant and commendable duty.

The following case is based on the author's own experiences upon reporting for recruiting duty in 1995. It should be emphasized that the views expressed here are solely those of the author.

1. The Pressures of Recruiting: A Personal Account

The date was January 10, 1995. I was a Staff Sergeant reporting for duty to the United States Marine Corps Recruiting Station in Orlando, Florida. My job would be to serve as a Marine Corps Recruiter for three long years. I was not particularly pleased with this assignment. I had heard many “horror stories” about recruiting duty from Marines at my previous command.

“Your career will be on the line everyday!”

“You will work very long hours!”

“You will drive hundreds of miles per week looking for applicants!”

“You will never see your wife!”

I tried to ignore these pessimistic predictions and keep a positive attitude. Throughout my career, I always applied the following principle: “If you work hard, you will succeed.”

I walked confidently into the Recruiting Station’s administrative office, turned in my Service Record Book to the records clerk, and took a seat. I immediately heard yelling from an office across the hallway. The noise came from the Commanding Officer’s office. It did not take long for me to figure out that some poor soul was being “chewed out.” The last thing I heard was: “[Expletive deleted]! Get the hell out of my office, Master Sergeant!”

A few seconds later, I saw a very flustered Master Sergeant storm out of the CO’s office. This Master Sergeant was the Recruiter Instructor of the Recruiting Station. He was the senior enlisted Marine of this command. I immediately got up from my chair and I introduced myself. “Welcome aboard, Staff Sergeant Munoz! The Commanding Officer will speak with you shortly,” the Master Sergeant snickered. Somehow, I sensed that this was not going to be the most pleasant experience for me.

After about twenty minutes, the Master Sergeant reappeared and said, “Staff Sergeant Munoz, report to the Commanding Officer.” I banged on the CO’s hatch, waited for his acknowledgment to enter, and reported to him. Our conversation was short and to the point:

CO: Good morning, Staff Sergeant Munoz.
Me: Good morning, sir.
CO: Did you volunteer for recruiting duty, Staff Sergeant?
Me: No, sir.
CO: Than I guess you are [expletive] out of luck, huh? Do you have a family?
Me: Just my wife, sir.
CO: Excellent. Make sure your wife stays busy and enjoys Orlando. You will be quite busy yourself.
Me: Aye, aye, sir.
CO: Staff Sergeant Munoz, my policy is a simple one: I will not tolerate failure. If you do not meet my standards of proficiency, I will hold you accountable on your fitness reports. You have received the appropriate training and I expect positive results from you while you are here. Is that understood?
Me: Yes, sir.
CO: Do you have any questions?
Me: No, sir.
CO: Make sure you see the Recruiter Instructor before leaving this building.”
Me: Aye, aye, sir.
CO: Welcome aboard. You are dismissed.
Me: Aye, aye, sir. Good morning, sir.”

As I left the CO's office, I thought the CO's indifference toward me was just a "mind game" to help me adjust to this new environment. If the CO's technique was supposed to motivate me, it was not working. I was at this new command for no more than one hour and I already wanted to leave. I vaguely remembered the "Quality of Life" class I received at Recruiters' School. The instructor stressed how the Recruiting Station Commanding Officer makes it a priority to balance every recruiter's working hours with "quality family time." I realized now that this piece of information was not entirely accurate.

When I stopped by the RI's office, he assigned me to my RSS. He informed me, if I wanted to "survive" this duty, I would need to recruit at least three qualified applicants per month. "Staff Sergeant Munoz, you better do whatever it takes to make your mission. Learn what you can from the more seasoned recruiters who are successful. Don't hang around the recruiters who are losers. If you value your career, do not fail. The choice is yours." Before I left his office, the RI handed me a flier that read as follows:

**Every morning in Africa
a gazelle awakens.
It knows it must run faster
than the lion
or it will be killed.**

**Every morning in Africa,
a lion awakens.
It knows it must run faster
than the gazelle
or it will starve.**

**It does not matter
whether you are a lion
or a gazelle:
when the sun comes up,
you'd better be running.**

I soon recognized my command's use of the political frame² in its operations. I knew right away how higher headquarters segregated its Marine recruiters into two coalitions: the predators and prey/winners and the losers/leaders and followers. The senior leadership may have considered this insight as realistic, but it caused a major detriment within the command.

Recruiters who struggled to make their contracting quotas felt demoralized and were labeled as "bad Marines." This cynical viewpoint was an insult to all Marine Recruiters and it also degraded good order and discipline throughout the command. This created a "ticking time bomb" that threatened mission accomplishment.

This command also operated on a structural frame³. This "machine mentality" had two main objectives: write the required number of recruiting contracts each month (contracting mission) and ship the required number of applicants to boot camp each month (shipping mission). It never mattered to the

² Organizational behavior theory that views organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles. Different interest groups compete for power and scarce resources. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are part of everyday life ("Managing with Power", Jeffery Pfeffer, 1992).

³ Organizational behavior that draws from sociology and management science. Emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships. Hierarchies are created to coordinate diverse activities. Problems arise when the structure does not fit the situation ("Reengineering the Organization", Hammer and Champy, 1993).

senior leadership how many dinner dates or social events I canceled with my wife because the command needed to contract or ship “just one more applicant” for the month. Every recruiter needed to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The human resource frame⁴ of this command always took the back seat. Making contracting and shipping missions was paramount. Although the Commanding Officer’s monthly newsletter stressed the importance of spending quality time with one’s family, as well as honest and dignified behavior while on recruiting duty, the Recruiter Instructor made certain the symbolic frame⁵ was clearly understood: “Just do whatever it takes to make these kids sign on the dotted line!”

By the end of my three-year tour as a Marine recruiter, the consequences of failing to reframe proved disastrous for our command. Within a three-year period, Recruiting Station, Orlando went through two Commanding Officers. Both of these senior officers were relieved of their duties as Commanding Officer for failing to meet contracting or shipping quotas.

This result came as no surprise to me. The recruiters, the operating core of this organization, were tired of being abused. Morale was at an all-time low. The repeated theater of public ridicule and threats of “destroying our careers” if we could not find at least three people to join the Marine Corps every month eventually lost its impact among the recruiters. The incentive to succeed did not exist. The general culture became clear: most recruiters stopped trying to make their contracting and shipping missions due to ineffective leadership.

Despite the desperate operational tempo, I considered myself lucky. I completed a very successful tour on recruiting duty. Through countless hours of hard work each week and unwavering support from my wife, I received the “Recruiter of the Year” Runner Up award for Recruiting Station, Orlando.

⁴ Based primarily on ideas from psychology. Views organizations as an extended family, inhabited by individuals who have feelings, needs, skills, and limitations. The main focus is to tailor organizations to people and find ways for individuals to get the job done while feeling good about what they are doing (“What America Does Right”, Robert Waterman, 1994).

⁵ It sees organizations as tribes, theaters, or carnivals propelled by rituals, ceremonies, heroes, and myths. Problems arise when actors play their parts badly and ceremonies and rituals lose their potency (“Leadership Jazz”, Max DePree, 1992).

I was also offered a position as the Noncommissioned-Officer-in-Charge of my own Recruiting Substation. I refused this offer as soon as the Recruiter Instructor presented it to me. I would never voluntarily become a senior partner of this bureaucracy, and no incentive could convince me otherwise.

The command experienced problems largely because of inconsistent mentoring and leadership. When a recruiter achieved or exceeded his or her monthly quota, that Marine was called a “superstar.” If recruiters missed a contracting mission, they were labeled as “bad Marines” and issued a letter of caution. What is wrong with this picture?

Furthermore, communication was severely lacking between the RS command group and its NCOICs. Somewhere in the organizational structure of the RS, an attitude of indifference had festered. This unhealthy corporate climate disregarded one of the most treasured values of a Marine: taking care of each other.

Recruiting duty is a far cry from the Fleet Marine Force (FMF). Commanders of successful recruiting stations are aware that the leadership skills required to lead Marines on recruiting duty are much more complicated than those needed to command Marines at other operational units.

For example, a battalion commander in the FMF can lead successfully without exhausting his efforts because unit missions are not as demanding or dynamic as recruiting duty. Orders given in the operational forces are usually concerned with traditional missions that Marines have always accomplished. Directives such as: “Let’s go to the field,” “Take that hill,” or “Drill the platoon” are obeyed with little doubt that the mission will be accomplished. These tasks may not be performed exactly to the commander’s specifications, but they will be completed nonetheless.

However, a recruiting station Commanding Officer cannot simply order “three enlistment contracts from every Marine each month” and expect the recruiters to faithfully comply. Additionally, a fleet commander does not need to respond to an evolving environment, nor is the commander exposed to the pressure and rejection experienced on recruiting duty.

In conclusion, this chapter illustrated a variety of qualities that are indicative of a successful RS Commanding Officer. There is no doubt that leadership through effective communication is critical to a commander's success on recruiting duty. Furthermore, a thorough understanding of the six passages of the leadership pipeline offers RS commanders a valuable insight on the duties and responsibilities at each command level of recruiting. It is important to note that neither of the leadership qualities mentioned above was sought in choosing RS commanders until after the formal selection process was introduced during fiscal year 1996. [Ref. 9] The next chapter provides a summary of this study along with conclusions and recommendations for further research.

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VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study set out with a number of objectives: to provide an overview of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) structure; analyze the current screening and selection process for RS Commanding Officers; determine whether this process, which was introduced in 1996, is more effective than the method used previously; review the history of the screening and selection process; and describe various characteristics of a successful RS Commanding Officer.

The reasons for establishing a formal selection process were also identified and analyzed. These reasons include the need to standardize the screening and selection criteria, offer Marine Corps Majors the unique opportunity to serve as a Recruiting Station Commanding Officer, and supply MCRC with high-quality officers to serve as recruiting commanders.

The Marine Corps has long been recognized as a distinctive and elite fighting force. It is widely believed that officers who complete a successful tour as an RS Commanding Officer possess substantial leadership qualities. One of the most important leadership qualities is effective communication. This research illustrates the passage levels of the leadership pipeline, how these levels relate to the challenging experiences faced by recruiting commanders, and how effective leadership communication affects the probability of completing a successful tour on recruiting duty.

Based on the information received through a literature review and personal interviews with present and former recruiting commanders, this study suggests that success on recruiting duty is strongly related to how effectively RS Commanding Officers inspire and motivate recruiters to do their best at all times. Each recruiting commander must be equally committed to high-quality standards. For a recruiting station to maintain success over time, applicants who enlist must ship to boot camp, and they must complete recruit training. If an excessive

number of recruits do not ship, the delayed entry program will suffer, and the contracting mission will become even more difficult to achieve.

At the same time, when a relatively large number of recruits do not graduate from recruit training, the recruit depot has a problem, and the Marine Corps will fall short of its manpower objectives. One approach to reduce the loss of recruits, either before entering active duty or during initial training, is to enlist high-quality applicants consistently.

The quantitative data used in this study were specially developed by combining information from the Marine Corps Recruiting Command with files at the Defense Manpower Data Center. This information is examined for its potential use in evaluating outcomes of the current screening process. The results of this analysis may have future applications within the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense.

This research effort accomplished all of its objectives. However, it is unable to quantify one of the most important elements of a successful recruiting tour: effective leadership. Major General Christopher Cortez, USMC, the former Commanding General of MCRC, emphasizes the critical role of sound leadership to his recruiting commanders. [Ref. 30]

Our strategic center of gravity continues to be the leadership of the Majors who command the recruiting stations and the tactical center of gravity continues to be the leadership of the officer selection officers and recruiting substations commanders. I will rely upon these Marines to maintain our contracting and shipping requirements. Our critical vulnerabilities continue to be complacency and acceptance of substandard leadership where an imbalance of motivation, desire, knowledge, skills and accountability are allowed to exist. We are vulnerable to these areas in both officer and enlisted recruiting. We must remain on the offensive. Accomplishing the mission is our first priority. Give this matter your attention.

The results of this study suggest that effective leadership communication, supported with a comprehensive application of the six passages of the leadership pipeline, are significant characteristics of a successful Recruiting Station Commanding Officer. Furthermore, the current criteria used to select RS

commanders confirm that the screening process is actively working to identify these unique characteristics among the officer applicants.

The results of this research also suggest that the current screening and selection process is more effective than the previous method. Generally, the outcomes support this conclusion: (1) MCRC has consistently achieved contracting and recruiting goals since the formal screening process was implemented; and (2) The number of RS Commanding Officers relieved of command, although small, has declined, even as the number of RS Commanding Officers has increased.

Another reason why the current selection process is considered more effective than in the past is that more information is obtained during the screening process on applicants. This additional information focuses on leadership experience, "people skills," the ability to think critically, and the individual's overall demeanor as an officer. The more information panel members have on applicants, the greater the probability of selecting the best-quality officers to serve as Recruiting Station Commanding Officers.

Since fiscal 1996, when the current screening and selection process was implemented, over 8,000 Marines served as recruiters, and they achieved their missions each month by successfully contracting 320,000 applicants and shipping nearly 327,000 quality men and women to the two recruiting depots. The recruiters' perseverance and consistent achievements stand as a testament to the efforts and determination of the recruiters and the outstanding leadership of their commanders. This professional attitude maintains the recruiting force as a premier team. [Ref. 31]

Since the new screening and selection system for RS commanders was implemented, the quality of applicants to join the Marine Corps has remained high. The Marine Corps consistently exceeds the Department of Defense standard that 90 percent of all enlistees be a high school diploma graduate. Indeed, nearly 97 percent of Marine Corps applicants recruited from fiscal 1996 through fiscal 2003 are high school graduates. [Ref. 32]

The responsibilities, challenges, and difficulties faced by an RS Commanding Officer cannot be underestimated. The commander is constantly concerned with personnel issues and mission accomplishment. Outside of a combat situation, recruiting duty is the “trial by fire” of a Marine officer’s ability to lead and motivate the RS. The leadership traits and principles of a commander will be tested as they have never been tested before.

The recruiting force is in a consistent struggle with civilian employers. Though some of the recruiting success may be linked to new job programs, new processes, and new advertising campaigns, recruiters continue to be the key to success. They are the ones “fighting on the frontlines” during times of peace and crisis, providing the lifeblood for the Marine Corps’ future. Major General Cortez emphasizes the importance of recruiting.

The future of the Marine Corps and its success begins here in the recruiting trenches. For the last 100 months, we have witnessed how Marines have shown their dedication to duty and their willingness to succeed by consistently finding the right men and women needed to sustain our ranks.

Recruiting requires unique skills from its commanders. They must inspire Marines to spend endless hours selling the Marine Corps. Successful commanders take an active interest in their Marines’ welfare while at the same time focusing on success and quality.

Further, the RS commander must be a moral compass. When making decisions, the commander must keep in mind the best interests of the institution of the Marine Corps, and avoid creeping into any “gray area” that may compromise integrity and values. Commanders must take the moral high ground and defend it tenaciously.

As Commanding Officers, Executive Officers, Operations Officers, and Sergeants Major, these leaders owe it to their recruiters and the future strength of our armed forces to learn as much as possible about recruiting. Recruiting duty is difficult everywhere, although it may be more difficult in some places than in others. Despite demographic issues, effective leadership can help achieve the recruiting mission.

Success on recruiting duty is 90 percent attitude. A positive force must emanate from the Recruiting Station Commanding Officer. Outside of a combat situation, recruiting duty is the test of a Marine officer's ability to lead and motivate. The recruiting commander who can enhance morale while maintaining accountability will succeed on recruiting duty.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

MCRC should continue to explore new ways to improve the current RS Commanding Officer screening and selection process. The RS Commanding Officer panel was originally designed to add vigor, validation, and MCRC participation into the selection process. As discussed previously, a good beginning would be to streamline the current composition of the selection panel.

The current panel is a six-member board of General Officers that reviews full briefs prepared and presented by the MMOA monitors. [Ref. 22] This relatively elaborate, high-level screening process clearly signals the importance of the task-at-hand, but a similar outcome could likely be achieved in a more simple manner.

Six General Officers are not needed to decide the future recruiting station Commanding Officers. Although the Commanding General of MCRC and the regional Commanding Generals clearly have a vested interest in the outcome of the screening process, the current selection panel only perpetuates the perception of being called a "command board" or "regulatory board."

It appears that over time a straightforward, uncomplicated selection process has become bloated and labeled out of context. [Ref. 8] A process that should take only one day to complete may extend for as many as three or four days. The selection process was intended to be simple, and MCRC has the means of keeping it that way.

The best course of action is to return to the method that was originally adopted in 1996: MMOA identifies and recommends Majors for selection as RS Commanding Officers; MCRC assembles a panel with MMOA as the lead

element to select the best officers as primary and alternate selectees; the selection list is forwarded to CMC for review; and, soon thereafter, an ALMAR announces the RS Commanding Officer slate. This is a short and direct selection process that can be completed in one day. That is how it was intended since its inception. [Ref. 8]

MCRC also needs to implement a tracking system for recruiting commanders who are relieved of command. Currently, MCRC does not maintain records of commanders relieved for cause. [Ref. 33] Although this is probably an unpopular topic of discussion, MCRC can benefit from the information.

By identifying the personal characteristics that are related to substandard performance, MCRC can establish profiles of commanders who may not be suited to withstand the rigors of recruiting duty. Knowing this information during the RS Commanding Officer screening and selection process would not only enhance future recruiting success, but it would also protect officers who may not be suited for recruiting but are otherwise excellent performers.

One of the key elements to recruiting success in Marine officer and enlisted procurement is based on the effective training of the command group members. The command group must be capable of supporting all NCOICs and recruiters equally.

It is not productive for command group members to play favorites, or ride RSSs harder than usual for no apparent reason. Whatever the situation, NCOICs must be treated as the commanders in the field, and the command group must lead, train, and support the field in an unbiased manner.

The command group should always operate with a unified voice, regardless of the issue or personnel involved. A future thesis could focus on analyzing the training MCRC provides Commanding Officers, Executive Officers, Operations Officers, and Sergeants Major before they are assigned to a Marine Corps recruiting station.

Other potential topics for future study include:

1. How can the effectiveness of the screening and selection process, as an indicator of recruiting success, be determined?
2. If a tour on recruiting offers Marine Majors the rare opportunity to command, why do so few officers volunteer for this duty?
3. Given current information, can one predict which officers will succeed or fail on recruiting duty?
4. Should MCRC always trust the selections made by the selection panel? What alternative methods of selection are available?
5. If the number of Majors relieved of command were to increase again, would a stricter screening and selection process be needed?
6. Does being an infantry officer (0302) or a field artillery officer (0802) increase the probability of a successful recruiting tour?
7. What incentives can be implemented by MCRC to increase participation of minority officers to serve as an RS Commanding Officer?

Marines about to embark upon a recruiting tour as a Recruiting Station Commanding Officer should be aware that the recruiting experience can be even more rewarding than it is challenging. Despite the various hardships RS commanders will likely endure, they can take pride in knowing that their service is crucial to the future of the Marine Corps and the nation's defense.

Semper Fidelis.

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APPENDIX: RECRUITING STATION COMMANDERS' COMMENTS REGARDING RECRUITER TRAINING

One of the most powerful characteristics of a successful Recruiting Station Commanding Officer is the ability to display affirmative competence at all times. RS commanders need critical thinking to effectively maximize recruiter strengths, and provide additional training as required. This appendix focuses on a 2003 study that described what several RS commanders thought about the quality of training their recruiters received before they reported to the recruiting station, and after they completed their recruiting tours. The results of this study are important because they provide feedback to evaluate the effectiveness that training recruiters receive at Recruiter School, and RS commanders are given the opportunity to make recommendations for improvements in recruiter training.

Coincidentally, the Marine Corps has continued to meet its recruiting mission in a challenging and competitive recruiting environment. Accomplishing this mission requires the integration of effective leadership, innovative training techniques, comprehensive human resource allocations, and a strong focus on recruiter efforts. It is expected that these combined elements will ultimately achieve both the quantitative and qualitative goals of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

Study by Marine Corps Research University and Penn State (2003)

In April 2003, the Marine Corps Research University and Penn State University completed an in-depth report that describes the development of a comprehensive model for evaluating recruiting efficiency. [Ref. 24] Efficiency is measured in terms of three recruiter-oriented dimensions and three system-oriented dimensions.

Recruiter-oriented dimensions include: (1) selection and training recruiters; (2) appropriated allocation of recruiter time and effort; and (3) allocation of recruiter attentions to applicants who differ in quality. System-

oriented dimensions include: (1) efficiency in resource allocation to the main categories of recruiting (e.g., advertising versus recruiters); (2) efficiency in the personnel allocation to recruiting regions, recruiting districts, recruiting stations; and (3) appropriate reward structures for acknowledging recruiter excellence.

This report was based on a combination of Marine Corps doctrinal publications, research literature, trade publications, and interviews with individuals from several leadership levels at MCRC. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the efficiency of the Marine Corps recruiting strategy and to recommend improvements, if necessary. [Ref. 24]

Data were collected from a variety of sources to evaluate the recruiter-oriented dimensions of recruiting efficiency. In particular, surveys were conducted with RS Commanding Officers, NCOICs, recruiters, and over 250,000 individuals who entered the Delayed Entry Program from 1996 through 2001 to measure perceptions of the quality of training received by individual recruiters. These surveys provided both a background for understanding the recruiting systems and for evaluating specific components of these systems.

The recruiting station commanders commented on the strengths and weaknesses of recruiter training before and after the recruiters reach the recruiting station. The results of these surveys are summarized below: [Ref. 24]

Comments of RS Commanders:

Strengths of Training Before Reaching the Recruiting Station

- High quality training.

Recruiter school provides the basic skills sets for success on recruiting. The basic recruiter course provides a solid foundation from which to build.

- Enthusiastic dedication to the Marine Corps.

There is a fervent belief and love for the Marine Corps and a generalized dedication to mission accomplishment. Strong Marine ethos is instilled.

- High sales and marketing skills.

Sales skills are generally strong among the recruiters.

Comments of RS Commanders:

Weaknesses of Training Before Reaching the Recruiting Station

- Inefficient evaluation and selection of recruiters.

Too many unqualified Marines are being allowed to graduate from recruiter school. Not every Marine is cut out for recruiting. The screening process needs to be more selective in sending Marines to recruiter school.

- Poor knowledge of recruiting process/system.

Recruiters are not reporting with an understanding of systematic recruiting and professional selling skills (PSS). A solid foundation of the systematic recruiting process is lacking.

- Problems with physical fitness.

The Recruiter School must emphasize more physical fitness, so its importance is linked to success during a recruiter's tour. Marines should not be allowed on recruiting duty unless they pass all recruiting standards and meet height and weight requirements.

- Lacking practical application.

More focus needs to be placed on daily duties and responsibilities. More role-playing with PSS would benefit recruiter performance. Dealing with educators and handling daily pressure to succeed are lacking.

- Weak at handling rejection.

Marines should continuously find ways to stay motivated in the face of adversity.

Comments of RS Commanders:

Strengths of Training After Reaching the Recruiting Station

- Consistent quality of training.

RS-level training is in accordance with established recruiting requirements, i.e., hours per month, topics, etc. This training, by experienced, competent instructors is critical to the individual recruiter's success and to accomplishing the team's mission. Training must be done continuously, not subject to mission attainment. Training should also be exciting and energizing.

- Effective on-the-job training with focus on practical application and transfer of knowledge.

Real-life training is paramount to succeed on independent duty. New recruiters receive more down-to-earth training from the seasoned recruiter when he or she accurately describes the recruiting market.

- Individualized and small group training.

Every three months, experienced recruiters implement one-on-one instruction. These Marines also provide more specific information relative to their area of operations. The recruiter instructor shop provides great training to all recruiters and individual instruction to recruiters who have identified deficiencies.

- Knowledge acquisition of the basics and understanding of the recruiting process.

Through hard work and persistence, the recruiter learns how the recruiting system works, and “why” certain things are done on recruiting duty in relation to mission accomplishment. Interviews are more fluid and product knowledge is greatly increased. Systematic training is used to review lessons learned from Recruiter School and to teach techniques that are successful in the recruiting market.

- Effective selling skills.

Self-confidence, proper training, and experience on recruiting generally result in strong selling skills

Comments of RS Commanders:

Weaknesses of Training After Reaching the Recruiting Station

- Lack of uniformity in quality.

The biggest weakness lies in the fact that a recruiter’s training is only as good as the NCOIC. Recruiter training becomes “hit or miss” throughout the RSS, depending on the ability and experience of the NCOIC. Further, reinforcement training is only as good as the NCOICs in the field. Not all Marines are good trainers, both in the operational forces, and in recruiting. Improvements are needed in institutionalizing proper techniques and procedures for training. Uniformity in training is lacking between RSs because each RS training program is different.

- Challenges with time management.

Time and distance are obstacles. Often a recruiter must choose to train at the expense of prospecting for applicants.

- Lagging communication skills.

Communication skills are a weakness in training. It is not sufficient for a Marine to just have a basic knowledge of recruiting. Successful recruiting practices require effective communication skills.

- Lack of individualized training.

More one-on-one identification and refinement of individual weaknesses are required. The RS leadership must ensure that it provides enough time to address each recruiter's strengths and shortcomings.

- Insufficient training time.

Training time needs to be increased. The RS Commanding Officer cannot afford to ignore the training schedule in exchange for increased prospecting time of recruits. Continuous training is critical for recruiting success.

Overall, the recruiting commanders had mixed opinions in assessing the level of training their recruiters possessed before and after arriving at the recruiting station. All commanders agreed on the importance of providing recruiters with continuous on-the-job training to properly develop the recruiting techniques and time management skills required for success. [Ref. 24]

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