

The Leadership News

A quarterly newsletter on leadership and diversity in the Coast Guard

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Leadership Forum Explores Techniques to Use Talents, Measure Managers' Effectiveness

by CAPT T. D. Yearout, Fourteenth Coast Guard District, Honolulu

Two hundred Coast Guard people attended the Leadership Forum held at the Coast Guard Academy Oct. 16-17. The Forum combined presentations, focus groups and a panel discussion. The purpose of the conference was to:

- Disseminate information on strengths-based concepts to thought leaders and change agents throughout the Coast Guard
- Gather input from forum participants regarding if and how these concepts might be applied to the Coast Guard workplace and accession points
- Outline an action plan with milestones and responsibilities

On the first day, members of the Gallup Organization gave presentations outlining their concepts of a strengths-based system of management and the use of their 12-question survey to improve individual managers. These are explained in the book, "First, Break All the Rules," by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. Coffman explained

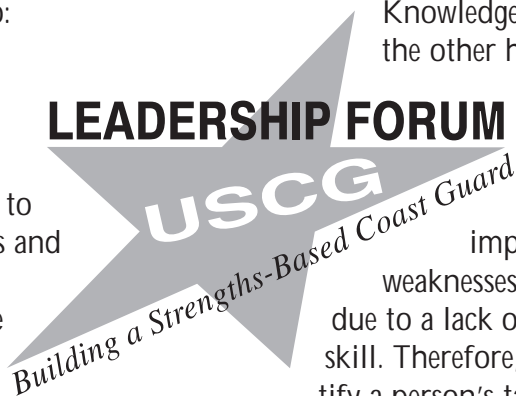
how the best managers select an employee for talent rather than for skills and experience. Talents are innate and are formed by the age of 17. After this point, very little can be done to change these talents.

Knowledge and skills, on the other hand, can be taught. Gallup believes that it's a waste of time to try to improve a person's weaknesses unless they are due to a lack of knowledge or skill. Therefore, we should identify a person's talents and place them in positions that allow them to succeed naturally. Where talents are lacking, Gallup proposes managing around them. This includes developing support systems and partnering with individuals who have the required talents. Where these don't work, Gallup proposes moving the person to another position where they have the talents to succeed or out of the organization if no fit can be made. Gallup has developed a survey tool, called the StrengthsFinder, that identifies a person's strongest innate talents and can be used by managers to properly cast workers in the correct roles. Examples of some of the strengths that the survey can identi-

fy are achiever, competition, discipline, empathy, responsibility, developer, analytical, adaptability, and communication.

Gallup asserts that *traditional* managers select workers based on experience, intelligence and determination; set expectations by defining the right steps; motivate workers by helping to identify and overcome weaknesses; and develop them by helping them learn and get promoted. They believe this approach is wrong because people don't change that much. Gallup says managers should not "try to put in what is left out" but instead should "try to draw out what was left in." The *best* managers "break

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all the rules" of conventional wisdom by selecting for talent (rather than experience), defining the right outcomes (rather than the right steps), focusing on strengths (rather than on trying to overcome weaknesses), and finding the right fit for their workers (rather than helping them move up to the next rung).

12 Questions Are Telling

The authors of "First, Break All the Rules" have produced a 12-question survey, Q12, that differentiates great managers from those who are merely adequate. The questions are broken into four groups or camps and should be addressed in the following order:

Base camp: What do I get?

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?

Camp 1: What do I give?

3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my superior, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?

Camp 2: Do I belong here?

7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?

8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?

Camp 3: How can we all grow?

11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to grow and learn? *

The survey is given to the direct reports of the manager being evaluated, and the results provide the manager with feedback on whether he or she is meeting the needs of his or her subordinates. The feedback is not included in the manager's performance evaluation. It is designed solely as a tool to help the manager improve. The gross information from the surveys can be rolled up through the organization to give an overall evaluation of how well managers are doing.

Doable for the Coast Guard?

On the second day of the Forum, we received briefings on the Future Force 21 strategy for human resources and the current retention problem. We then broke into groups to develop feedback on whether or not the strengths-based system and Q12 would work within the Coast Guard and, if so, how they should be implemented. A panel representing all the groups held an honest and open dialogue with Rear Adm.

Fred Ames, the assistant commandant for human resources, and the audience about the benefits, barriers and concerns if the Coast Guard were to adopt the Gallup Organization's model.

Some cautioned that a strengths-based philosophy could be perceived as profiling or stovepiping our people. Another concern had to do with Gallup's recommendation to use a compensation system consisting of overlapping bands of salaries. For the Coast Guard, this would mean congressional action would be required to change our compensation system.

Having said this, however, there were areas that could be implemented if the costs could be worked out with Gallup. These include the widespread use of the Q12 survey and some local and/or targeted use of the strengths-based concepts. For example, managers should, and often do, accommodate individual talents where they can. We could also use these concepts as a screening tool for specific types of billets, say recruiters. However, screening all applicants at accession points would be of little value since we recruit military personnel, both officer and enlisted, for a career, not just a single position.

While we left with many unanswered questions, we gained valuable insight into potential tools to manage the human resource challenges of the Coast Guard. ❖

*Q12 is copyright 2000 by the Gallup Organization

LEADERSHIP ESSAY

There is no Such Thing as a *Minor* Transgression When you are a Leader

by LCDR Darryl Verfaillie, Training Center Yorktown, Va.

As chief of the Coast Guard's International Maritime Officers School, located at Training Center Yorktown, Va., I have the unique opportunity to observe officers from many different nations and services – from military police forces to coast guards to navies. From my personal interactions, I have noted a common thread that binds them, overcoming both cultural and religious boundaries – and that is the belief that good leadership is good leadership, regardless of the politics involved.

Leadership is an essential part of our culture and, whether good or bad, affects the productivity and readiness of our service. It is my belief that leadership starts long before you are placed in a position to lead. It starts with personal ethics, common sense and a willingness to hold yourself and others accountable. It involves a commit-

ment to consistency and the willingness to ensure adherence to the Coast Guard's core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty. It involves placing your personal opinions aside and focusing

“Each time we allow something to pass that should be addressed, whether it be failing to salute at colors or making inappropriate remarks with coworkers, we set the tone for others to follow.”

on those issues that affect the majority, rather than the minority.

Exemplifying good leadership is far from easy and requires a conscious effort. The old mindset of “do as I say and not as I do” doesn't work in today's Coast Guard. Each time we allow something to pass that should be addressed, whether it be failing to salute at colors or making inappropriate remarks with coworkers, we set the tone for others to follow.

Leadership is also about accepting responsibility and passing along praise. When things go well, they go well because of the contributions of many. No one individual can attain sustained success without receiving the support of those they work with and for. Recently, an officer from the Royal Thai Navy was selected to be the class honor graduate. When approached, he stated that though it was an honor to be selected, he would have to decline. He further explained that the award would best benefit one of the junior officers in the class. In this instance, he demonstrated a key concept of leadership ... to nurture the development and success of others through our own actions.

No one ever said it was easy to lead, and as one would suspect, it is much easier to ignore those minor incidents that occur. In reality, each time we choose (and it is a choice) to ignore the *minor* or the apparently *insignificant*, we diminish our service and ourselves. ☒

For information on the Leadership Essay Program, visit www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm (click on “Leadership Essays”).

Leadership Boot Camp ... Civilian-Style

by Vicki Brannan, Coast Guard Headquarters (G-WKW)

The Coast Guard recently created a leadership course, entitled Leadership Principles and Skills, for civilian employees. The Leadership Development Center at the Coast Guard Academy created the forty-hour course and held the first session in September. I was fortunate to be one of the 24 individuals (out of 96 that applied for it) selected to participate in the training.

Student expectations for the course were to learn how to:

- Manage people
- Create a team among staff members
- Plan careers
- Work with different generations successfully
- Handle personality conflicts
- Enhance leadership skills
- Provide performance counseling

The course surpassed our expectations. Each day involved myriad activities and a variety of instructors and teaching styles. During the day, LT Charles Coiro and CWO James Freeman did an outstanding job teaching us how to be good Coast Guard leaders and how to

effectively work with military personnel. The lessons involved lecture as well as activities to reinforce the learning process.

The course covered how to:

- Create an Individual Development Plan
- Be self aware (using the Johari Window model)
- Utilize the Coast Guard Leadership Competencies
- Influence and direct others
- Be a follower and a leader
- Utilize motivational theories
- Build a team
- Be a mentor and/or find a mentor
- Work with different generations and personality types
- Do the "ethically correct thing"

Evenings were filled with optional educational opportunities as well. One evening we toured the Coast Guard museum. Another evening, SCPO Gordy Yowell explained the differences between the generations to us. The first few days of class I realized I thought a little differently than most of the class members, but could not figure out why. After SCPO Yowell's presentation, it was

crystal clear. I was a generation X person surrounded by baby boomers! As the light slowly entered my eyes, I could relate to the way that baby boomers approached matters ... and, yes, it is very different from generation X people! The third evening everyone learned what Myers-Briggs personality type they were. By Thursday morning we were all experts on personality types (not!). CDR Chuck Pratt taught us how to work with different personality types in the work environment.

The skills I acquired during the training helped me improve my personal management style. I communicate more effectively with my staff members, easily delegate responsibility, found a mentor, created an individual development plan and better understand the personalities of the people in my work environment. All of these skills will help with my future career plans. I hope to one day be a Senior Executive Service employee and believe this course steered me in the right direction.

The LDC did an outstanding job coordinating the first-ever Coast Guard civilian leadership course. The course is scheduled to be held twice annually and is open to GS 12-14 and Wage Grade and NAF equivalent employees. For more information on the course, go to www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm and click on "Training," then "Leadership Principles and Skills." ❖

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

– George Patton

Focus on Similarities Instead of Differences

by CAPT John E. Williams, Maintenance & Logistics Command Atlantic

We are all different, yet we are truly very much the same. When two people are trying to get what they want from each other, they usually see more differences than similarities. But when you can focus on and bring up the similarities, you are definitely a step closer to *winning without intimidation*.

Donald T. Phillips in his book, "Lincoln on Leadership," points out that Abraham Lincoln had deep personal differences with both his secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, and his secretary of state, William Seward. As an example of what kind of man Lincoln was, he had hired each of them for their posts knowing the lack of appreciation and outright disrespect they both had

for him. Seward even blatantly tried to undermine the president and his decisions on a number of occasions. Neither of them believed that Lincoln was qualified and competent to lead the country through crisis. But in Lincoln's mind, each was the best-qualified man for the job, so he hired them. That's a leader!

Lincoln not only looked for the good in both of them, but the similarities he had with them as well. He found there were many, including love for, and a deep commitment to, their country. He began spending more time getting to know each man and having them get to know him. He was able to turn them into two of his closest and most loyal allies. That's a positive persuader!

One of the many quotes attributed to Lincoln that I've always enjoyed is, "I don't like that man very much ... I'm going to have to get to know him better." When entering into a discussion with someone whom you're trying to persuade to your point of view, stretch your mind and imagination in order to focus on similarities and – very importantly – make the other person aware of them as well. Not only will this help to establish rapport, it will also show you both where you actually have the same or similar goals and outcomes in mind. Once you can focus on those mutual goals, the individual challenges will begin to work themselves out naturally and automatically. Please practice this. You'll experience amazing results. ☒

Book Review

"The Perfect Storm," by Sebastian Junger

There are many different leadership angles to explore in this true account of a recent tragedy that could have been avoided. Reading the book or watching the film are both valuable. Coast Guard leadership competencies that are evident in the story include: accountability and responsibility, followership, personal conduct, looking out for others, group dynamics, and decision-making and problem solving. The author reconstructs an actual tragedy at sea based on interviews with those who knew and/or searched for the unfortunate lost at sea. The role of the Coast Guard and the Air National Guard shows the impact of one person's behavior on others and the importance of entrusting the chain of command in extremis.

The book shows followership and personal conduct on many different levels and in different parts of society. Look at the support provided by the family members to the fishermen and the fishermen themselves at sea. The actions of the crew of the USCGC Tamaroa show good judgement, followership and personal conduct. Group dynamics and decision-making lead the crew to their ill fate, as they suffer from a "groupthink" commitment to a handsome profit in exchange for increased risk. For Coast Guard use, "The Perfect Storm" is a good tool to discuss the chain of command, groupthink and the danger of replacing competence with overconfidence. ☒

– by LTJG John Ely, Leadership Development Center, New London, Conn.

Taking Initiative and Finding Mentors Pays Off A Welfare to Work Success Story

by Janelle Holtz, Group Honolulu

In June of 1997, I had been on welfare for one year living in low income housing with my two children, who were only three years old and one year old at the time. I had been searching for work, but at the same time hesitant because of childcare and transportation. In August, I was picked up for the Welfare to Work program. Finally ... hope! They sent us through training on job searching, resume writing and interviewing.

I was determined, especially since the program paid for childcare and transportation. The job development specialist saw my determination and when an opening in the Fourteenth Coast Guard District administration division became available in November, she sent in my application, and they chose me for the three-year position. From there I soaked up all the information and training I could.

I attended the Career Enrichment Seminar, where I learned about the value of mentors, and I began to look for mentors in my workplace. I also went to computer training to learn the various programs I needed to do my job. Susan Matsudo taught me just about everything there is to know about awards. She taught me how to type and format letters as well as other administrative standard office procedures. She taught me

how to use the Standard Distribution List and the Standard Subject Identification Codes (SSIC) handbook. The admin secretary, Corinne Alconcel, taught me about Officer Evaluation Reports, time sheets, office protocol and PowerPoint. She helped me get well acquainted with the Correspondence Manual and Secretary Handbook.

In 1998, the Government Travel Account was turned over to my charge, and Fran Tanaka taught me everything and more that I had to know about the GTA. She taught me Excel and how to set up a database and an accounting filing system. I was given charge of the district publications library. That was an added bonus. Anything I wanted to know about the Coast Guard was in these publications. During my years in admin, I got involved with the Fourteenth District Morale Committee and was voted secretary. I was also involved in the Civilian Advisory Board and was voted chairperson.

My Coast Guard mentors had taught me so much, and I hated to leave an organization that I loved so dearly, but my term was coming to an end. But I was never a person who gave up. I sent out my resume to different government agencies and applied for every opening the Coast Guard had. Things started to

look up when the Civilian Advisory Board hosted its annual career fair. At the fair, I sought help and improved my resume. At the same time, an opening came up for group secretary, and the rest is history. I am truly blessed! I came into this organization as a GS-1 and am now a GS-5 (and will be a GS-7 in three years). I kept the faith and there is a saying that "faith initiates a miracle on your behalf." ✠

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Article Submissions

We need your articles on leadership and diversity issues and best practices. Article length should be 400 words or fewer.

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Career Development Advisors – Devoted to Helping You Out

by MCPO Bill Michael, former Career Development Advisor

What the heck is a career development advisor? Don't we send advisors into countries at war?

Well, the CDA program is sort of like that. We can come into a situation and advise on a variety of different issues. Some of the issues we can talk about are: Team Coast Guard career opportunities, incentive programs, goal-setting, mentor-

ing, voluntary education, "A" School selection, financial planning, enlisted to officer opportunities, benefits programs and diversity.

How is this accomplished? The CDA in your area comes to your unit and spends anywhere from three hours to a few days with you. During the visit, the CDA trains and meets with as many individuals as possible. All CDAs love to talk

about the Coast Guard and the many career programs available for employees. Our program goal is to ensure that each Coast Guard employee is informed about programs that may help him or her. Many of you have seen the T-shirt that says, "I'm a mushroom. I'm kept in the dark and fed manure." We don't want anyone in the Coast Guard to wear that shirt! We don't want people to leave the Coast Guard without all the facts.

Boosting Your Productivity Learn from the Best

To operate more efficiently, observe co-workers you admire. Watch how they work, noting everything from their attitude to the tools they use and habits they adopt. Here's how:

- Compare the steps they take to complete their assignments with how you tackle similar jobs. Look for shortcuts they've devised.
- Example:* Notice how they cluster related tasks or use certain technologies, such as personal digital assistants, to save time.
- Study quiet performers, not just the stars with the glowing reputations. Get recommendations from higher-ups on low-profile winners you can learn from.
 - Talk it out. If you're battling a personal-productivity issue, discuss it with a co-worker who has conquered a similar challenge. You may discover a new approach worth trying.
 - Seek out productive colleagues in other areas of your organization. Even if your jobs differ, you can learn by observing how they handle stress, solve problems and manage time.

Source: "Communication Briefings"


Adapted from "Not Just for CEOs," John H. Zenger, Irwin Professional Publishing, 212-337-4097.

Our target audience is Team Coast Guard. We try to remain well-versed in all Coast Guard programs. Doesn't matter to us if you are enlisted, officer, civilian, reserve, auxiliary or a dependent. If we know about a career development opportunity that might be of interest to you, we let you know about it. When you get an e-mail or other bit of information from us, we are doing our job. Your job is to determine whether you can use the info and also pass it on to others who can.

Where can you find CDAs? We are located at every ISC and at the Institute. To find your nearest one, go to the Web site www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm and click on "Career Development Advisors." You can also call the program manager at 202-267-2439.

We're here to serve you and your unit. Give us a call. ☒

\$\$ Money for College \$\$

*Tuition Assistance is now \$2,500 per year
(\$1,500 for Select Reservists). 
See ALCOAST 433/00.*

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