

# The Leadership News

A quarterly newsletter on leadership and diversity in the Coast Guard

Issue 19 Summer 2002

## Two Coasties Recognized for Their Inspirational Leadership

by Lynne Donahue, Coast Guard Headquarters (G-WTL)

Two Coast Guard people were honored for their inspirational leadership performance by the commandant at the time, Adm. James Loy, at an awards ceremony at Coast Guard headquarters March 21. Cmdr. Lynn Henderson, the executive officer at Marine Safety Office Chicago, received the eighth annual Capt. John G. Wither- spoon Inspirational Leadership Award. EMC Jerome Rider, command chief of the CGC Decisive, received the first annual Master Chief Angela M. McShan Inspirational Leadership Award. Both were honored guests at the commandant's State of the Coast Guard address and luncheon on the same day.

### Secrets of Successful Leadership

Both award recipients shared their views on what makes up good leadership.

Henderson's practices and beliefs involved four points:

- Develop junior members through informal mentoring.
- Capitalize on people's strengths, build synergy and manage with a team concept.
- Good performers deserve preferential treatment.
- Be there for your people when they need you.

### Mentoring is a Must

“Everyone with 10 or more years in the Coast Guard can *and should* serve as an informal mentor to help develop our junior members,” said Henderson. “We all can make a difference mentoring and nurturing our people. I do not prescribe to the sink or swim philosophy, and if we need to grow the Coast Guard over the next few years to meet homeland security needs and fill mid-grade billets, we need to give people the tools, direction and support to succeed.”

When she was assigned as supervisor of Marine Safety Detachment Houma, Henderson found some of her new chief warrant officers, in particular those new to the marine safety program, were struggling with earning their inspector qualifications. She established a program where senior inspectors chose inexperienced inspectors to help them achieve their qualifications. Initially, some of the warrant officers were not too keen on the program, but when they saw many of the new inspectors earning qualifications in half the time, they saw the value in the program.

Henderson takes the most pride in helping chief warrant officers be promoted to lieutenants and petty officers and chiefs to chief warrant

officers. “It's a conscious process,” said Henderson, “looking for opportunities for these folks and teaching them how to write a good officer evaluation report.” Henderson's most recent informal mentor and boss, Capt. Raymond Seebald, told the troops at one of their first all-hands meetings, “It is *my* responsibility to get the XO promoted.” “At that point, I knew I had a good boss,” said Henderson.

### Build Strong Teams

Henderson's second point was to manage with a team concept, capitalize on people's strengths and build synergy. “If you haven't read Donald Phillip's book, ‘The Founding Fathers on Leadership,’” said Henderson, “I

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strongly encourage that you do. It's amazing that our country was not founded with a king or chief executive officer but by teamwork.

George Washington and Alexander Hamilton knew when to step up to the plate and when to step back when others were better suited for the job. Know

your folks' strengths and weaknesses, give them assignments setting them up for success and discreetly look for opportunities to help them overcome their weaknesses."



### Reward Good Performers

One thing Henderson took away from the Coast Guard Diversity Summit in 1999 was that good performers deserve preferential treatment. "I don't measure success with hours but by results," she said. "I believe in being generous, giving people time off to take care of family issues, allowing flex schedules so people can take classes and telecommuting for good performers. They all know the deal, that when we have an event and we need them, they will be there. The return on investment has been amazing. When I first arrived at MSO Chicago, it was like pulling teeth to get volunteers for our 80 plus outreach events such as parades and funeral honors. They didn't see the value; they felt overworked and under appreciated. Now when I

make a request, I always get more volunteers than I need."

### Take Care of Your People

Henderson believes that "you must truly care about people, ask about their families, take time to say hello and be there

for them when they need you." Henderson shared an example to illustrate her point. "A petty officer at



*Adm. Loy with Cmdr. Henderson (top) and EMC Rider (bottom)*

my unit is a top performer as a boatswain's mate, having served a majority of his career in the marine safety program. Two years ago, he asked to lateral to become a marine science technician because he had met the requirements and he wanted to advance. He routinely earned sevens on his marks and had other fine achievements. His dedication to the Coast Guard is unmatched by any member I have served with. The command forwarded his package to

headquarters with a strong endorsement. It was denied because he had 18 years in the Coast Guard and within two years, he could retire. Our position was the member had earned it. We had to put up a fight but eventually won. It was the right thing to do."

Henderson wrapped up her remarks by saying, "I honestly believe I have just been doing my job. My people at MSO Chicago apparently feel like I have done more. The very thought of them generating a nomination for the Witherspoon Award has been a reward in itself."

### From Class Clown to Inspirational Leader

Rider began his remarks by explaining how he decided to join the Coast Guard: "I grew up on the west side of Detroit. I was a good football player, boxer and tennis player, but having low grades and being the class clown did not help me get that college scholarship. The teachers gave me great counsel – I could have attended any local community

college, but I did not listen to them. However, I did listen to my coaches while playing high school sports – that a player does not make a team, but the team makes the player. I knew that I needed to be part of a winning team. I listened to my pop's advice to join the military, and the Coast Guard was the perfect choice. Now, more than 19 years later, I am truly humbled to receive this award, for I am just one small member of Team Coast Guard."

## The Responsibility of “the Chief”

Rider continued, “The best day in my career was when I made chief petty officer. But suddenly overnight, I found that I had to shoulder a much greater responsibility. I realized the importance being ‘the chief’ carries. I had to stand for something and carry that message to others. To me, being a chief petty officer is standing tall and standing firm on my personal watchwords of integrity, standards, development and teamwork.

“Aboard Decisive, the chief’s mess maintains our personal and unit integrity, working hard to find solutions from the abundance of possibilities. We hold fast to our service and unit standards, never wavering. We develop each other, develop our juniors and, yes, develop our seniors, professionally and personally – especially this challenging, younger generation. The Chief Petty Officer Academy gave me a broader insight and built my self-confidence as a chief. But serving at sea with 75 shipmates, all demand-

ing ‘the chief,’ has been the best academy.”

Rider finished by saying, “I am most deeply honored to be the first-ever recipient of the Master Chief Angela McShan Inspirational Leadership Award. I am proud to represent what MCPO Angela McShan stood for, and I hope I can continue to make her proud.” ✎

**Nominations for the Witherspoon and McShan awards are solicited each year in December via an ALCOAST message.**

## Models of Leadership

Here are excerpts from the award nominations for EMC Jerome Rider and Cmdr. Lynn Henderson.

### Chief Petty Officer Rider:

- Guides all new crewmembers through an orientation process covering such things as salutes, respect for senior personnel, nautical traditions, ship policies, uniform, grooming, housing, etc.
- Has held frequent enlisted-only quarters, requesting that no officers attend, to give the Chiefs’ Mess the opportunity to “set the troops straight.”
- Consistently puts crew first by dropping everything when crewmembers need assistance or counseling.
- Created a widely popular “Career Day” for non-rated personnel, which featured speakers of all Coast Guard ratings describing their worlds of work.
- Organized several field trips for non-rated personnel to visit local Coast Guard units to get the flavor of life and work at different types of units.
- Is a key member of the ship’s Human Relations Committee, keeps multicultural, mixed gender crew smoothly running as command chief. His strong leadership has led to no human relations or civil rights incidents whatsoever on the ship.

### Cmdr. Lynn Henderson:

- Mentors all new people with a two-hour personal interview to discover their goals and aspirations and set up a plan to achieve them.
- Provides monthly leadership training (e.g., a study of “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”).
- Has no equal in the lengths she will go to assist personnel in resolving personal and professional problems.
- Inspires active duty, reservists and auxiliarists to volunteer for outreach events, such as parades, boating safety demonstrations, boat shows, beach cleanups, speeches, high school recruiting efforts and funeral details. In two years, the unit participated in 130 such events.
- Revitalized a Chicago maritime tradition of donating Christmas trees to disadvantaged families. Coordinated the effort with 14 other maritime organizations. Resulted in 1,500 families receiving a tree and the story being covered on prime time ABC national news, painting the Coast Guard in a positive, humanitarian light.

## Beware the Rambo in Pinstripes

by John Stevens

Lee Iacocca and Jack Welch are names that even the most casual observer of the American business landscape will recognize. These men epitomize the charismatic leadership style of the closing decades of the 20th Century. However, these and other esteemed titans of industry have one thing in common: they never viewed the world from the fifth level.

In a January 2001 “Harvard Business Review” article entitled, “Level 5 Leadership – The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve,” Jim Collins discovers a group of business leaders whose leadership style is recognized as the engine behind their company’s phenomenal success.

After exhaustive research, Collins’ research team discovered that “out of 1,345 companies that appeared in the Fortune 500 from 1965 to 1995, only a select 11 companies emerged as ‘good companies that became great companies.’” Each of these companies embarked upon a transition period resulting in staggering growth and sustained long term health. (“The 11 companies averaged cumulative stock returns 6.9 times the general stock market for the 15 years following point of transition.”) This metamorphosis was made possible by one key element coined by Collins as “Level 5 Leadership.”

At the helm of each of these 11 companies stood individuals who Collins describes as “counterintuitive [or] counter cultural,” a direct

contrast to the marquee names mentioned above. Surprisingly, the CEOs of these remarkable companies were *not* aggressive, *not* self promoting and *not* self congratulatory.

This relatively unique class of leader possesses the ability, says Collins, to “build enduring greatness through a paradoxical combination of personal humility plus professional will.”

Collins identifies Darwin E. Smith, chief executive of Kimberly-Clark for 20 years, as the paragon of Level 5 leaders. Smith, a self-proclaimed “eccentric,” transformed “a stodgy old paper company,” outpacing the general market by four to one.

“Smith is a classic example of a Level 5 leader – an individual who blends extreme personal humility with intense professional will,” explains Collins. Smith’s personality traits are worlds apart from those individuals who have historically set business

journals ablaze, such as Welch and Iacocca. Unlike these legendary names, Smith was “shy, unpretentious, even awkward.” However, like all Level 5 leaders, Smith was a paradox. Collins describes Smith’s virtues as a leader by stating, “[Smith’s] lack of pretense was coupled with a fierce, even stoic, resolve toward life.” Collins constantly emphasizes “humility” as a key factor in creating Level 5 leaders: “In retirement, Smith reflected on his exceptional performance, saying simply, ‘I never stopped trying to become qualified for the job.’”

### The Level 5 Hierarchy

**Level 5 - Level 5 Executive:** Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical combination of personal humility plus professional will.

**Level 4 - Effective Leader:** Catalyzes commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision; stimulates the group to high performance standards.

**Level 3 - Competent Manager:** Organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives.

**Level 2 - Contributing Team Member:** Contributes to the achievement of group objectives; works effectively with others in a group setting.

**Level 1 - Highly Capable Individual:** Makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills and good work habits.

**Source:** “Level 5 Leadership: The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve,” by Jim Collins, “Harvard Business Review,” January 2001

While Collins emphasizes that other ingredients must be present to migrate a company from “good” to “great,” he is emphatic that without Level 5 leadership, no company will be able to attain this feat.

Although Collins admits that no precise recipe exists for a leader aspiring to become a “Level 5 executive,” he is able to identify the characteristics of such leaders, distilling it down to one simple equation: “Humility + Will = Level 5.”

Collins’ research raises an interesting question. Although Level 1 through Level 5 are clearly defined, is it possible for a leader to migrate to the fifth level? Collins believes that the least a potential leader can do is consciously aspire to the necessary traits. “Whether or not we make it to Level 5, it is worth trying ... when we catch a glimpse of that truth, we know that our own lives, and all that we touch, will be the better for making the effort to get there.”

Like an anthropologist, Collins has revealed a small community of previously unrecognized great leaders that dispel the fact that legendary CEOs have to be outwardly aggressive and boastful and aspire to personal gain, such as Al Dunlap, CEO of Scott Paper who dubbed himself, a “Rambo in pinstripes.” As Collins states, “It’s hard to imagine a Level 5 leader thinking, ‘Hey, that Rambo character reminds me of me.’” ❖

**John Stevens is a business consultant, researcher and writer in Arlington, Va.**

### Praise for Leadership Essay

**T**hank you for publishing the essay, “What’s Wrong With Letting Small Things Slide?” by BMC Dennis Endicott (Fall 2001 issue). We require all hands to read professional leadership essays in order to make them better leaders and Coasties. All ranks and rates can benefit from essays like this. More units should take the time to promote your newsletter due to its practical value.

When Gen. Colin Powell was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff, he kept a list of leadership tenets under the glass on his desk. Item number nine on that list was “check small things.” This list seems to have served him well. A hearty thank you goes out to BMC Endicott. The more we hammer these little things home, the safer our people will be. The leaders that we develop will be prepared to take our place.

– *Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Culver, Station Port Isabel, Texas*

### A Leadership Parable

by Lt. Cmdr. Ben White, Gulf Regional Fisheries Training Center, New Orleans

**T**here were, once upon a time, three seamen who graduated from Cape May together having identical records. Eagerly they used their high standing to go to sea on high endurance cutters and were assigned to three different 378' cutters in Alameda, Calif.

One day it just so happened that all three seamen were directed to paint the hull of their respective cutters. And it just so happened that I was walking down the pier and thought I would engage the seamen in a little friendly chitchat.

So I asked the first seaman, “What are you doing?” He looked at me over his shoulder with a “what-a-moron” look on his face and said, “I’m painting this stupid hull.” (And for the sake of the junior personnel in the audience, I replaced what he

really said with the word, “stupid.”) “OK,” I said, feeling a little uncomfortable for having interrupted his work, and I went on down the pier.

I asked the second seaman, “What are you doing?” She turned around, rather startled that I had snuck up on her, and said, “Well, sir, I’m protecting the watertight integrity of this hull.” “OK,” I said, feeling much better about our junior members, “it looks good.” “Thank, you, sir,” she said.

I walked on down the pier to the third seaman and asked, “What are you doing?” The seaman looked up, stood up, popped a snappy salute with the greeting of the day (both of which I returned) and said, “I’m saving lives, sir.” “OK,” I said, suddenly knowing the power of leadership. ❖

## Diversity: Not Just a Passing Phase

by Cmdr. Catherine Haines and Lynne Donahue, Coast Guard Headquarters (G-WTL)

The Coast Guard held its second diversity summit April 8-11 at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Conn.

More than 300 people from every segment of the Coast Guard attended the summit, the theme of which was “Out of Many, One – Leveraging America’s Strength.”

The commandant, Adm. James Loy, made the opening speech and his successor, Vice Adm. Thomas Collins, made the closing speech, stressing the enduring importance that diversity holds to the most senior leaders in the Coast Guard. Several other admirals, senior executive service members, and commanding officers also attended the conference.

The goals of the summit were to:

- Increase awareness and knowledge about current diversity issues in the Coast Guard
- Foster a constructive dialogue in which people can speak openly and honestly about their differences
- Share best practices from field commands that can be used by others to increase team cohesion and performance
- Empower attendees to support similar dialogue at their own units

The first diversity summit, “A Dialogue on Diversity,” took place in April 1999. This conference served to gauge the Coast Guard’s diversity

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**“The summit was held in part because many people still misunderstand the true meaning of diversity; they believe it only relates to women and minorities.”**

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planning processes through frank, open discussion of issues. The second summit continued this exchange of ideas and expanded the format to include specialized diversity training.

Several world-class speakers captivated the attention of the audience with their expert delivery skills and insightful information about diversity.

The first was Dr. Bertice Berry, an award-winning entertainer, lecturer, comedienne and former talk show host, who had the audience laughing with her personal accounts of struggling to overcome stereotypes. Mauricio Valasquez, a nationally recognized author, consultant and trainer, gave examples of discriminatory practices still taking place in the workplace and housing markets, despite existing laws. Another speaker, Julie O’Mara, a diversity consultant and author, gave examples of effective practices in diversity management that have worked for other organizations. Finally, Dr. Peggy McIntosh, associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, summarized her 1988 groundbreaking paper on white privilege, in which

### The Coast Guard’s Diversity Journey

- 1990** Diversity staff created at Coast Guard headquarters
- 1993** “Diversity as a Process Study” completed
- 1995** Workforce Cultural Audit conducted
- 1998** Commandant’s Diversity Advisory Council established
- 1999** Diversity Summit I – “A Dialogue on Diversity”
- 2000** Coast Guard recognized by the Vice President’s National Partnership for Reinventing Government as a benchmarking partner for best practices in achieving workforce diversity
- 2001** Career Intentions Survey established
- 2001** Coast Guard receives the highest agency score in the report “Managing Diversity in the Federal Service: An Examination of Agency Programs”
- 2002** Diversity Summit II – “Out of Many, One: Leveraging America’s Strength”
- 2002** Organizational Assessment Survey conducted (follow-up to the 1995 Workforce Cultural Audit)

she identified some of the daily effects of white privilege in her own life.

Coast Guard panelists led discussions with the audience about these topics:

- Preserving our most valuable asset – our people
- Building Team Coast Guard
- Shattering the glass ceiling – military
- Coast Guard – employer of choice
- Harnessing the energy of the dot-com generation – diversity at the deck plates
- Weaving diversity into the fabric of our Coast Guard

The summit was held in part because many people still misunderstand the true meaning of diversity; they believe it only relates to women and minorities. The Coast Guard's definition of diversity is understanding, valuing and capitalizing on the unique strengths of each employee. Many factors contribute to a diverse

workforce, including race, age, gender, religion, civilian occupational series, enlisted ratings, officer career paths, disabilities and workforce component (e.g., active duty, reservists, civilians, auxiliarists, contractors). However, some people allow these differences to negatively affect teamwork, communication and productivity in the performance of the mission. Genuine diversity thrives only when all individuals work together to nurture it.

The commandant and Coast Guard senior leadership understand that smart diversity management is becoming increasingly more important in our nation's competitive recruiting market. Holding organization-wide diversity summits demonstrates the Coast Guard's commitment to building, valuing and retaining a diverse workforce. ☒

**For more information about diversity in the Coast Guard, visit [www.uscg.mil/diversity.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/diversity.htm) and click on "Diversity."**

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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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## **"The Founding Fathers on Leadership" Tops List of Recommended Reading** by Lynne Donahue, Coast Guard Headquarters (G-WTL)

In 2001, the commandant approved a recommendation by the Leadership Advisory Council to name one book a year the "Commandant's Choice" for professional reading. Adm. James Loy chose the book, "The Founding Fathers on Leadership: Classic Teamwork in Changing Times," by Donald Phillips, as the first book to be named the "Commandant's Choice." Phillips is the author of several popular leadership books, including "Lincoln on Leadership" and "Martin Luther King, Jr., on Leadership." In choosing the book, Loy said that it "offers lessons on teamwork, communication and risk taking ... lessons that are particularly relevant to the Coast Guard and our missions."

Copies of the book were sent to all Coast Guard units to add to their leadership libraries in April 2002. All units received at least two copies of the book; larger units received more copies.

Loy also approved the recommendation to rename the "Professional Reading List" the "Commandant's Reading List." The list was first published in Commandant Instruction 5351.1 on the Coast Guard Leadership Development Program in 1997. The list is now available on the Web at [www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm) (click on "Leadership," then "Commandant's Reading List"). ☒

## Coast Guard Measures Employee Satisfaction With 12 Key Questions

by Lynne Donahue, Coast Guard Headquarters (G-WTL)

“Not another survey!” was the reaction of many people when they heard their command had voluntarily agreed to take part in The Gallup Organization’s 12-question employee satisfaction survey, which Gallup dubs Q12™. However, this is not your usual military survey; it is only 12 questions long, taking only about five minutes to complete. Unlike other surveys, the results of this survey will be used at the lowest possible level as a leadership tool. The results will help supervisors and managers improve their workplace climate, increase employee satisfaction and improve retention.

The survey received widespread attention when it was published in the book, “First, Break All the Rules: What the World’s Greatest Managers do Differently,” by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, two Gallup researchers. The book presented findings from a massive research study in which they identi-

fied the factors that make up an exceptional workplace. They found that workplaces that scored high on the Q12™ were most likely to be able to attract, focus and retain the most talented employees. Factors that you may think would be critical, such as pay and benefits, were not determinants of the best workplaces.

In November 2001, Coast Guard commands were invited to sign up their unit for the program. Originally, the Coast Guard planned to survey 6,000 people, but 145 commands wanted to use the tool, and that equated to 11,000 people taking part in the project. Rear Adm. Fred Ames, assistant commandant for human resources, didn’t want to turn any commands down, so he increased the original budget for the project to accommodate all the commands that wanted to take part.

In April 2002, about 10,000 people received e-mail invitations from Gallup to take the survey on the

Web. Another 1,000 people received paper copies of the survey because they did not have e-mail or Internet access during the survey open period. The survey was open for three weeks, and the response rate was 75 percent.

“This is how all our surveys should be,” said Lt. Cmdr. Roger Laferriere of Marine Safety Office Toledo, Ohio, “short, sweet and to the point!”

In June, Gallup trained 330 Coast Guard people to become trainers, who will provide training sessions for all supervisors and managers who took part in the project. The training is a crucial part of the program, as it will inform supervisors and managers how to interpret their results and, more importantly, how to use the results to improve communication in key areas and build a better workplace.

Once the entire project is complete, the Coast Guard will evaluate the program to see if it would be worthwhile to offer again in the future. ☒

**For more information about this topic, see the following Web sites: Coast Guard headquarters Q12™ project:** [www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/leadership.htm) (click on Q12 Survey)

**Rear Adm. Ames’ series of Flag Voices on the Q12™ concepts:** [www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/flagvoice/firstbreakall.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/flagvoice/firstbreakall.htm)

### The 12 survey items are:

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission/purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates (fellow employees) are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

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## Reserve Leadership 101

by Lt. Paul Fawcett, USCGR, Group Grand Haven, Mich.

When you assume command as commanding officer or officer in charge of that group, station, marine safety office or air station, you inherit issues you're probably familiar with and probably one you're not: reservists. In many ways, Reserve personnel resemble your active duty force: they perform the same duties, complete the same qualifications and are subject to the same regulations and instructions. However, these part-time Coasties have some significant differences from their active duty counterparts:

- Reserve members may reside a great distance from their parent commands, making ready access to unit services and events, such as morale events and changes of command, difficult.
- Changes to computer operating systems such as the upgrade to the Command and Control Personal Computer, Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement and the Coast Guard Message System may take

longer for reservists to master as they are at the command only intermittently and can use new systems only occasionally.

- Reservists may not be aware of new command policies, personnel changes or administrative procedures, as they may not be present when directives are issued or informed via their chain of command.

Commands should be cognizant of these and other differences and strive to overcome these problems in order to maximize Reserve effectiveness. Here are some steps commands can use to assist reservists:

- Appoint a Reserve ombudsman, possibly the spouse of a senior Reserve officer or enlisted member, to check on each reservist's family during the member's absence for deployment or training. Reserve families experiencing pay or benefit problems or needing family support may not know whom to turn to; the ombudsman can bridge this gap.

- Create a quarterly electronic newsletter for all hands, including a command message, news from department heads, drill and training schedules, new administration procedures and upcoming morale events. To ease production burden on the command, this newsletter could be coordinated and produced by Reserve personnel under command direction.
- Hold a yearly all hands meeting for active duty *and* Reserve personnel. This allows both active and Reserve personnel to put names and faces together and get to know each other. It also permits reservists to access services from the command such as ID cards and DEERS updates.

Reserve personnel can provide a major benefit to their commands, easing the burden for duty sections and watch standers as well as providing invaluable surge capabilities. However, their needs are different from active duty personnel and need some understanding and consideration. The benefits will far outweigh the effort expended. ☒

## Effective Decision Making

by Lt. Cmdr. Greg Stump, Coast Guard Headquarters (G-WTL)

One of the critical, but often overlooked, requirements for effective leadership is sound decision making. This is especially true as we soar ever higher into the ranks of middle and upper management. Typically, as this progression occurs, leaders become more focused on strategic decisions relating to plans, policies, programs and personnel, and less consumed with day-to-day tactical concerns. Good decision making, especially in middle and upper management, will therefore likely increase overall organizational health and effectiveness. Understanding the meaning and art of deciding, therefore, is paramount.

Decide is derived from the Latin word, “decidere.” “Decidere” means, literally, “to cut off or to kill.” Similar words with the root “cide” include homicide, germicide, genocide, pesticide, etc. The act of deciding is to actually kill all but one of many alternatives, with the hope that the chosen alternative is “best” or “right.” Of course, seldom is there ever an undisputed best, or right, decision for any contentious issue – every alternative has strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes, in the process of decision making, we eliminate alternatives that may actually be better than the one we ultimately choose. This is one reason why leadership is so difficult – effective decision making requires a considerable amount of data analysis, listening and reflection.

David Garvin and Michael Roberto wrote the article, “What You Don’t Know About Decision Making,”

which was published in the Harvard Business Review in September 2001. They state, “Decision making is arguably the most important job of the senior executive and one of the easiest to get wrong.” The authors contend that many managers and supervisors are poor at decision making. Their belief is that many people treat decision making as an event, a discrete choice that takes place in a single moment, whether they’re sitting at a desk, participating in a meeting or staring at a spreadsheet. After considerable research, the authors developed a decision making model comprising many elements. One of the elements in their model is the *approach* to decision making.

Two approaches exist for decision making: inquiry and advocacy. Inquiry is more time-consuming and difficult, yet is an effective method for decision making. Advocacy, on the other hand, is more of a contest (covert or overt) in which stakeholders have a special interest and are unable or unwilling to see the value of other alternatives. The following table identifies how each approach may look to the keen observer.

On a final note, the authors report that research has found that participants who consider that the decision making process was open and fair, as in the inquiry method, are more willing to commit to the final decision, even if their views do not prevail. ☒

This table identifies how each decision making approach may look to the keen observer.

	Inquiry Approach	Advocacy Approach
<b>Concept of decision making</b>	Collaborative problem solving	A contest
<b>Purpose of discussion</b>	Testing and evaluation	Persuasion and lobbying
<b>Participants’ role</b>	Critical thinkers	Spokespeople
<b>Patterns of behavior</b>	Present balanced arguments Remain open to alternatives Accept constructive criticism	Strive to persuade others Defend your position Downplay weaknesses
<b>Minority views</b>	Cultivated and valued	Discouraged or dismissed
<b>Outcome</b>	Collective ownership	Winners and losers

## LEADERSHIP ESSAY

**Should Youthful Indiscretions Mean the end for our Newest Members?**

by BMCS Rob Wyco, Station Manasquan Inlet, N.J.

Last fall, the commandant sent a personal letter addressing retention and leadership issues to all unit commanders, commanding officers and officers in charge. The commandant, in effect, called for a cultural change of our service. First term attrition rate is at 36 percent, and he wanted it reduced to 18 percent. The word on Capitol Hill is that we are discharging too many people for “youthful indiscretions” and that these are more of a leadership challenge than a military justice matter. I wholeheartedly agree.

Recently one of my former enlisted members came back to visit our station. In basic training, this member’s recruiter had called Cape May to pull him out because he had lied about an arrest record. Cape May refused at the time because of the non-rate shortage. After reporting aboard my unit, the member was disciplined for sleeping late and falsifying logs and counseled on indebtedness. I mean this guy gave me writer’s cramp filling out administrative remarks. He was on and off performance probation so much you’d think he was a professional bull rider. I de-

cidated to ask an outlying station to take him on temporary active duty for 60 days to ensure our chain of command wasn’t the problem. He did really well at first then accumu-

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lated some major debt and bounced some checks. I pulled him back, gave him one of those old guard counseling sessions and put him back on probation. Why didn’t I discharge him? Because I thought he had potential. Well he finally got to a point where I believed he possessed the maturity to become a petty officer, and off he went to “A” school. You may have heard about his “A” school class; they had a little problem with designer drugs while in Yorktown, Va. Not him, he was busy becoming a third-class and getting his associate’s degree; now he’s a second-class and has applied for officer candidate school.

Another incident that comes to mind involved one of my second-class petty officers. Shortly after a captain’s mast at the group, he spoke to me with tears in his eyes and said, “Senior, I’m going to turn this around.” I expressed my belief in him and reestablished that mutual trust. This guy ended up getting the leadership council’s “Sharp Coastie” award, positive administrative remarks and outstanding marks. He has gone on to make me very proud.

I have recommended two discharges in three years: one for exceeding weight standards and one for unsuitability, none so far for youthful indiscretions.

For a cultural change to take place, we all have to get onboard and especially reach the new members coming in. I know as a non-rate, I could have been discharged several times, but my supervisors saw my potential and didn’t place me in a hole I couldn’t dig myself out of. These experiences influenced my own leadership style.

For a true cultural change to take place, there should be no subcultures. Maybe that phrase, “Officers eat their young,” will also be leaving the service. Everyone deserves a second chance. ❖

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