

# Mission Ready

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## Happy Birthday, Marines

All across the United States and around the world, Marines young and old are celebrating the Corps' 225 birthday on November 10. Glasses will be raised to honor the oldest and the youngest at each Marine Corps Ball, worldwide. Those who made the ultimate sacrifice, that America might survive, will also be honored and remembered. Legions of Marine recruiters and public affairs officers will step back this day to see if all their hard work has paid off with newspaper articles and television news accounts of this day. In spite of the US presidential election, if history is any guide, the press will run with the story of America's favorite and most cherished military service.

The Marine Corps' annual birthday celebration is a lesson for all businesses to study. Particularly those with limited advertising budgets. We constantly hear the plea from small business owners that they can't compete against the advertising budgets of the "big guys." Well, that may be true when it comes to paid media such as television, radio, magazines and newspapers. However, those same, expensive advertising outlets are always looking for something different. Something they can highlight, at no cost to the "advertiser."

And, this is where the company birthday comes into play. Every business has a birthday. Yet, do your employees know when it is? Do your customers, your suppliers, your competitors? Chances are, even company management may not know. But a public birthday is a wonderful, and inexpensive, way to reach a wide audience.

Your employees become more connected with a living organization that doesn't just produce a product or offer a service. Rather it becomes an organization with a history and a future. And, your customers are reminded that you didn't just arrive on the scene. You've been delivering quality for years and will continue to do so well into the future. As important, your stature is elevated. Your customers begin to believe that your company must be even more than they thought it was – they just saw coverage, free coverage we hasten to add, in a newspaper or on the local news station. Of course, your suppliers will be delighted to know they are selling to such a well-connected company. And, then there are your competitors. Just as the enemies of democracy must tremble at the display of muscle the Marine Corps makes on its birthday; imagine the sinking feeling in the stomachs of your competitors when they see your company spotlighted in the newspaper they read while they try to enjoy that morning cup of coffee.

Now, some may worry about keeping their competitors from copying them and thereby minimizing their own advantage. Well, traditions aren't easily copied. We're certain the Navy, the Army and the Air Force all have birthdays. But, you rarely see any coverage. The Marine Corps got into the birthday business early and, as with so many other things, they dominate. You can too. Get in early, have fun and overcome all obstacles to this marvelous source of free publicity.