

Mission Ready

Volume 3, Issue 7

July 1, 2001

Seminars/Keynotes

Albuquerque
Atlanta
Boise
Boston
Cancun
Charlotte
Chicago
Dallas
Denver
Fresno
Honolulu
Houston
Jacksonville
Las Vegas
Los Angeles
Louisville
Memphis
Miami
Minneapolis
Montreal
Nashville
New Orleans
New York
Oklahoma City
Orlando
Ottawa
Philadelphia
Phoenix
Portland
Rochester
Sacramento
Salt Lake City
San Antonio
San Diego
San Francisco
Santa Barbara
Seattle
Tampa
Vancouver
Washington DC
Winnipeg

In-house Seminars, Keynote Speeches and Consulting Services available.

Whose Beret is it Anyway?

While the authors of this newsletter served as proud Marines, we are nonetheless, also admirers of the United States Army, and believe the business community has much to learn from the military in general. But recently the Army instituted a policy shift that no business should ever emulate.

For decades, the Army's elite Ranger division has attracted young soldiers for whom "boot camp" was not enough. Those who voluntarily enter Ranger School know full well that the dropout rate is horrendous. Out of the hundreds of already experienced, trained sergeants that enter the three-month ordeal that is Ranger School, perhaps only twenty will graduate. When they do, they are entitled to wear the coveted black beret, signifying their Ranger status. Regular soldiers, who might salute their officers without enthusiasm, voluntarily *stand* when Rangers enter the room. The respect given—when none is officially required (a Ranger sergeant, for example, does not outrank a Mess Hall sergeant)—is a testimonial to how the rank-and-file feel about this small, elite brotherhood of warriors. And, they can spot a Ranger a mile away—if not by his walk, or by his fearless "attitude," then by his black beret.

In response to complaints from a few soldiers, who felt somehow inferior because others were allowed to wear black berets while they were not, the Army has made an incomprehensible decision. Rather than ignoring the complaints as trivial (or en-

couraging the plaintiffs to get their own black berets in Ranger School), the Army will now issue black berets to *all* its soldiers. By placating and bolstering the esteem of the undeserving, the Army has diminished the esteem of those statistically rare men who had the courage and incredible fortitude to *earn* the coveted black beret.

As business managers we must, of course, do whatever we can to treat our people fairly; but we should never fake reality. A sales manager who has one or two sales reps who make "President's Club," is entitled to acknowledge their achievement. And, whatever the perk may be—a parking place, or a seven-day cruise—it cannot be extended to all. Similarly, the Employee of the Month is just that: *the* employee of the month, as distinguished from all the other employees, who had an equal chance to vie for the honor. Every organization will have its top performers—those who voluntarily push themselves beyond the company performance norm. These top performers are entitled to the business equivalent of a black beret—whether it be a raise, a bonus, an office with a door, or a seat next to the Chairman at the Awards Dinner. And, if there are those who feel somehow discriminated against, it must be pointed out that the opportunity to excel was - and is - open to all.