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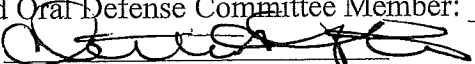
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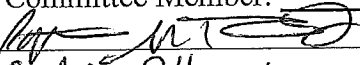
*Retention and Talent Management:
The Urgent Need to Modernize Force Retention*

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: Retention and Talent Management: The Urgent Need to Modernize Force Retention

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Thesis: The modernization of the military force, increased competition between the military and civilian sectors, and the military's inability to conform to rapidly changing social norms represent the three most significant challenges to military retention. For the Marine Corps and the DoD to retain the highest caliber force they will need to develop new contemporary retention strategies that align with trending societal norms and reflect the needs and desires of the modern labor force.

Discussion: The fundamental question behind this body of work is not whether or not the DoD can retain and fill the ranks throughout the service branches, but rather, are current retention practices preserving the highest talent grade within our nation's military? Current defense personnel retention initiatives are rooted in an outdated industrial era manpower model. These traditional retention practices have proven useful since the establishment of the all-volunteer force in 1973, but since the turn of the 21st century, they are beginning to lose their edge. The rate at which social norms and societal trends are evolving is rapidly outpacing the nation's bureaucratic defense institution. As the younger generations begin to dominate the talent pool, the DoD needs to fully understand and strive to fulfill the evolving generational values of today's force.

Conclusion: Modern studies on the nation's workforce indicate that the emerging talent pool values a positive work-life balance above all else, and are willing to sacrifice professionally to achieve the desired equilibrium. If the DoD fails to incorporate contemporary manpower management practices to improve work-life balance, it will become progressively more challenging to retain the military's most promising service members, detracting from the credibility and potential of the nation's military force.

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Preface

My entire life I have been the son of a Marine, a brother of a Marine, and have served as a Marine. The experiences and observations I have had as those three individuals have inspired my pursuit to discuss military manpower management and the need for institutional reform. The sacrifices that are made by service members and their families around the country are extraordinary, and the resilience and devotion demonstrated by our people are remarkable. The majority of sacrifices are inherent to the military occupation and are truly unavoidable, some are a result of personal/family choice but are a direct byproduct of the unique military lifestyle. The unfortunate aspect is that many of them are entirely unnecessary. As a result, some of the finest men and women that I have met have chosen to end their promising military careers prematurely. By modernizing and reforming military personnel management policies, the DoD can improve talent retention within the future generations of our nation's warfighters. The majority of my observations, thoughts, and recommendations regarding this topic are most applicable to military leadership, primarily officers and senior enlisted personnel of Staff Noncommissioned Officer ranks.

This paper is for my family, the men and women that I have served with, those who have gone before me, those who have yet to come, and the families beside them. Thank you, Dr. Christopher Stowe, and LtCol Petrizia Dineheart-Stabile for your mentorship and advisement throughout this process. I have eternal appreciation and love for my parents, Tom and Joan, and most importantly, I could never express the gratitude and love that I have for my wife Lauren and my wonderful son Liam. Your love, support, and sacrifices are my enduring motivation. Thank you.

Introduction

Regardless of industry, retention of quality personnel is vital to any organization and key to their success. High employee turnover drains institutional resources and decreases an organization's productivity. Grooming human capital takes a lot of time and money for training, cultural assimilation, and building social rapport with colleagues, superiors, and the customer base. Excessive turnover equates to lost experience, knowledge, continuity, and potentially lost clients, all of which diminishes company morale, resources, and productivity. Companies invest heavily in human resource and workforce management to effectively recruit and optimize their retention practices to build and sustain their employee talent base. Retention strategies can vary widely. Emphasis can be placed in competitive pay, compensation, and benefits, developing an enjoyable, safe, and superior work environment, cultivating a good and healthy work-life balance, or creating a robust employee recognition program. The bottom line when it comes to retention is how to best optimize employee satisfaction concerning their company, job, and workplace.

The military is not immune to service member turnover and the occupation presents unique challenges and obstacles to recruiting and retention. The profession of arms has high demands of its service members and requires unparalleled sacrifices from the people who wear the uniform. For centuries the United States and other nations relied on mandatory conscription to fill the ranks of their respective militaries. For the United States of America, the Vietnam War would alter the nature of U.S. military service. The public's opinion of the conflict spiraled into ill-favored turmoil sparking a substantial anti-war movement. Consequently, the demonized military draft was propelled into political contention. In 1969 President Richard Nixon vowed to end the draft and developed the Commission of an All-Volunteer Force known as the Gates

Commission. On July 1, 1973, Congress refused to extend the draft law, effectively ending mandatory conscription in the United States.¹

Well into the era of an all-volunteer military force, the Department of Defense (DoD) has developed and continuously refines a robust manpower management infrastructure aimed at recruiting and retaining the force. The government recognizes that “our voluntary service members are the strength of our military and it is our continuous duty and obligation to ensure that the Services are properly resourced.”² For the government to effectively support the DoD in resourcing their Service Branches with adequate manpower, significant funding and resources are required to compensate military professionals for their service appropriately. “Ensuring service members and their families are cared for is a sacred responsibility of a grateful nation.”³ Title 37 of the United States code mandates that the President of the United States is to conduct a “review of the compensation system for the uniformed service members of the Department of Defense.”⁴

The DoD has prioritized military modernization to maintain overmatch as the dominant military force on the planet. The associated requirement to force modernization is to develop and retain service members with requisite skill sets to operate in a modernized military. These demands have caused increased competition between the civilian and military sectors over a finite labor force with the converging skillsets. The modernization of the military force, increased competition between the military and civilian sectors, and the military’s inability to conform to rapidly changing social norms represent the three most significant challenges to military retention. For the Marine Corps and the DoD to retain the highest caliber force they will need to develop new contemporary retention strategies that align with trending societal norms and reflect the needs and desires of the modern labor force.

Understanding the Problem

It is clear to the government and the DoD that to sustain a competent, all-volunteer military force, that pay and compensation must be highly competitive with the civilian market. As it stands today, service members receive very competitive salaries which are augmented by additional compensation and incentive pays. Those who succeed in making a career out of the military profession will benefit from a generous retirement package. Housing is provided for the members and their families, or service members are allotted additional monetary allowance to attain their residence. Service members and their families receive full or partial medical benefits at little to no cost. Military professionals receive exceptional educational benefits with readily accessible educational institutions who have extended their services to the DoD. Every installation has a plethora of wellness, morale, and recreational services that are very affordable and easily accessible to military families. Gyms, pools, golf courses, recreational sports complexes, movie theaters, commissaries, exchanges, discounted vacation lodging, space available military transportation, this incomplete laundry list of incentives and benefits demonstrates the extensive resources that are readily available and appreciated by service members around the world. Despite the robust compensation and incentive programs utilized by the DoD, managing and retaining the highest caliber talent is a continuous battle, and in some military occupational communities, the DoD is losing.

What are the present-day roadblocks that are complicating the military's retention strategies? The DoD is approaching its second full decade of continuous conflict in multiple theaters, and global tensions only seem to be escalating. Since 2001 operational tempo has maintained a feverish pace for all service branches and there are few indications that the pace will slow. Over the same period of time, the DoD has become more technologically oriented.

Unmanned systems have flourished within the military, and their utility seems to have no end. Their emergence in the civilian sector has caused an increase in competitive demand for trained operators and skilled technicians. Information technology and cyber strategy have grown dramatically within the DoD. Cyber commands have rapidly developed throughout each of the services branches resulting in increased demand for technologically savvy and trained personnel. Military interest in the space domain has been reinvigorated which may ultimately lead to the emergence of a new service branch. Lastly, the advantageous gap of U.S. military overmatch over potential adversaries has been shrinking due to aspiring peer competitors revolutionizing their military forces.

Domestically, the U.S. economy has dramatically improved since the 2009 recession with the stock exchange achieving record highs. Similarly, the U.S. job market has steadily grown, directly competing with the military for employing educated, trained, and experienced personnel with unique skills and leadership talent. Society has been consumed by and has been increasingly dependent upon technology both professionally and recreationally. Technology, social media, and information sharing has increased globalization and has changed conventional business practices within the civilian market. Multiple civilian owned, free market corporations have developed and employed space technologies. Socially, societal norms have evolved and continue to change at an exceptional rate, accelerating generational differences and exponentially expanding generational gaps.

All of these aspects have varying levels of impact on military recruitment and retention efforts. Both the military and the civilian market are experiencing extensive changes that are creating converging and congruent demands, increasing competition between the two sectors. The need for trained, educated, and highly skilled experienced workforce is continuing to surge.

Historically the military has served as a bridge for the emerging professional to develop a reputable education, skill set, and experience base to competitively enter the civilian workforce. As the military force continues to modernize, there will be an increased need to develop service members with specialized skills through training and education and the civilian market will seek to capitalize on their talent. “Few institutions teach discipline, management, logistics, and efficiency like the U.S. Armed Forces.”⁵ The growing talent base within the DoD’s ranks will result in an increased effort to recruit trained and experienced service members to transfer to the private sector. Socially, the military is unable to maintain pace with societal change. Social norms concerning individual life preferences, gender roles and responsibilities, and contemporary family models will continue to complicate the quality of life for active duty service members.

To provide informed recommendations and well-informed conclusions regarding modernizing military retention practices and talent management, research and analysis of the current market, workforce, and military policies must be completed. There is a direct correlation between talent retention and the individual’s overall level of job satisfaction. Research organizations and organizational theorists such as the Boston Consulting Group and Edwin Locke have conducted studies and developed theories that aid in the assessment of the sources and impacts on job satisfaction. By understanding the overarching preferences of the modern workforce and applying organizational theory principles, job satisfaction estimates can be conducted to measure the effectiveness of the military’s current personnel retention practices. The subsequent analysis will utilize a study conducted by the Boston Consulting Group and Edwin Locke’s organizational Range of Affect theory to develop an informed observation and hypothesis regarding modern military retention. To inform and strengthen the analysis,

recommendations, and conclusion of this work, relevant professional examples of existing and past policies will be scrutinized and scholarly and professional resources will provide insight, substantiating supporting evidence, and relevance.

Organizational Theory: Job Satisfaction

Organization retention is commonly associated with and or equated to, employee satisfaction within the workplace. One of the most prevalent and widely accepted job satisfaction theories is Edwin A. Locke's Range of Affect Theory (1976).⁶ The hypothesis behind his argument is that job satisfaction is determined by the congruence of what an individual wants in a job and what one has in an occupation. For each individual, job satisfaction is based on the fulfillment of particular facets of work that the individual values. These facets are discretely dependent, and the value placed on each is weighted differently from one individual to the next. An example of a common facet would be feeling appreciated for your work. The following example demonstrates how job satisfaction will differentiate between two individuals who value a particular aspect differently. Individual (A) values the feeling of being appreciated for their work more than individual (B). If individuals (A) and (B) are equal performers and hold the same position in the same organization, according to Locke's theory, individual (A) would be more satisfied with the organization than individual (B) if the organization shows appreciation for work. Individual (A)'s higher level of satisfaction is attributed to their higher value placed in the facet of feeling appreciated. Overall job satisfaction would be the aggregate value of all the facets that the individual finds valuable in their occupation.

Example of aggregate job satisfaction (*variable f = facet*):

Job Satisfaction = ($f(1)$ satisfaction X $f(1)$ value) + ($f(2)$ satisfaction X $f(2)$ value) + ($f(3)$)....

To assess possible solutions for military retention one must achieve a better understanding of what today's workforce values in their organizations and occupations. Utilizing Locke's model these valued attributes would serve as the facets to job satisfaction desired by the modern workforce. In 2014 the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) surveyed employees on employment preferences which received over 200,000 responses.⁷ Amongst the data collected was a list of twenty-six factors that contribute to on the job happiness (job satisfaction). In order of precedence, the top ten elements according to the survey is an appreciation for one's work, good relationships with colleagues, good work-life balance, good relationships with superiors, a company's financial stability, learning and career development, job security, attractive fixed salary, interesting job content, and company values.

Of the top ten factors within the results, one is categorized as employee compensation, an attractive fixed salary represents the 8th most important factor. The other variables in the top ten are related to the workplace environment, job content and opportunities, and company reputation and image.⁸ Specifically to American respondents, the top five factors contributing to job satisfaction are the company's financial stability, good relationship with superiors, good work-life balance, company values, and appreciation for work.⁹ These findings show a departure from traditional retention practices of monetary compensation and tangible benefits such as work vehicles and phones. The modern workforce is favoring intangible, quality of life factors that influence the workplace environment and support the employee's personal life. To effectively

increase employee job satisfaction, companies need to achieve a greater understanding of what the modern workforce is looking for in their occupation.

As an all-volunteer force that represents a sampling of American society, the factors to job satisfaction discovered by the BCG survey can serve as a benchmark to determine what today's military professionals value in their careers. Understanding what occupational attributes correlate to job satisfaction in the modern workforce enables a critical review of current military incentive and compensation practices. The concepts outlined in Locke's Range of Effect Theory will guide in the discovery of where the military is achieving success, and highlight the shortfalls of current retention initiatives. Comparing the voices of the current generational workforce to the reality of military service will provide critical insight into how the military should steer retention efforts in the future. The following section will outline the findings of the BCG survey and serve as criteria to evaluate existing military practices that apply to each factor.

Workplace Appreciation

Workplace appreciation can come in a variety of forms but knowing your people is exceptionally important to be effective. In the book "5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace," workplace appreciation is broken down into five specific categories which correlate to different personality types. Words of affirmation, gift giving, quality time, acts of service, and physical touch are the means to provide and cultivate workplace appreciation.¹⁰ Each language of appreciation can also improve other job satisfaction factors such as a good relationship with superiors and colleagues and company values. Generally, the military recognizes this need and does well with formalized processes for workplace appreciation. There are many formal award programs and systems in place which ultimately aim to fulfill the appreciation factor. Where the

military tends to struggle is the consistency in the application of existing formal practices. The following is an outline of military applications that fulfill each appreciation language.

Words of affirmation can be verbal or written recognition for an individual's performance.¹¹ In its basic form, verbal affirmation can be achieved through a meaningful and positive exchange between a supervisor and an employee aimed to recognize their hard work and accomplishment. Formalized awards and recognition policies when applied correctly are an effective means to cultivate appreciation and serve to enhance career progression. In practice, military recognition programs promote the public display of gratitude of an individual's performance typically in a formation or unit gathering. Award citations and letters of commendation embody the spirit of words of affirmation and serve to fulfill the individuals need for appreciation.

Quality time with leadership will also fulfill employee needs for workplace appreciation. In its purest form, a leader who is available and receptive can meet their peoples need for quality time.¹² An engaged, visible leader who participates in candid, honest and meaningful conversations and interactions with their people effectively create an environment conducive to accumulating quality time. Simple acts such as providing undivided attention while having face to face interaction will enhance the value of professional and social communication. Group events such as team building exercises and positive unit events are other examples of quality time activities that will foster employee appreciation. Occasionally sharing meals or taking the time to learn the daily tasks and jobs of subordinates promote valuable interaction and foster quality time. A leader who "makes their rounds" to engage their people constructively builds quality time and in turn, fulfill employee's need for appreciation.

Participation in acts of service will also foster workplace appreciation. Acts of service are demonstrated by leaders who follow through with commitments and express through action their appreciation for their people.¹³ The term, “servant leader,” epitomizes the appreciation language of acts of servitude. A critical aspect to acts of service is the need for leaders to be receptive to, recognize, and understand the needs of their people. In doing so, leaders can focus time and energy to satisfy their employees’ needs. An employee who observes their leaders actively trying to tend to or improve their quality of life will experience a sense of appreciation. An example would be a leader who recognizes substandard living conditions in their unit’s barracks facility and seeks resolution through base facilities. A leader who takes the time to help resolve individual hardships is also engaging in an act of service to their subordinate. Leaders who can empathize with their subordinates and constructively act to support them are successfully showing appreciation for their people.

Gifts can be physical things or intangibles given to an individual as a reward or a symbol of appreciation and accomplishment.¹⁴ Giving individuals formalized awards in the cases of exceptional performance is a classic military application of tangible gift giving. Military awards are a long-standing tradition in the profession of arms serving as a source of morale and personal recognition. Less formalized practices can also fulfill an individual’s desire for gifts of appreciation. Motivational prizes such as parking spots, trophies, extra time off, or a senior officer providing a command coin are all examples of gift giving found in the military. Opportunities for career enhancement or unique career experiences serve as great motivational tools and methods of showing appreciation to employees.

Physical touch is another form of providing appreciation in the workplace. In a professional environment fulfilling an individual’s need for physical touch can be challenging.

The measure of appropriateness of contact has three distinct factors to the equation. The comfort level of the leader, the comfort level of the subordinate, and the comfort level of the observer. Balancing these three factors is critical in a professional setting and key to maintaining an acceptable level of suitability. Good solid handshakes, fist bumps, high fives, and meaningful pats on the back can all fulfill the language of physical touch.¹⁵ For leaders, it is essential to understand that the need for physical touch does exist and may be crucial to an employee's need for appreciation. The challenging aspect of this language of appreciation is gauging the appropriateness of contact and maintaining a suitable level of professionalism.

Good relationships with colleagues

The bond created between military members who serve together is a hallmark of the military profession. Acts of heroism rooted in selfless actions motivated by the love and friendship of fellow service members have been idolized by society. Mainstream culture profits from the phenomenon through books, television shows, and movies which romanticize the bonds of military servitude. A prime example of this is the HBO hit series "Band of Brothers" based on Steven Ambrose's book which shares the same title. The story line has been developed to follow true experiences throughout World War Two of Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 501st Parachute Regiment, of the 101st airborne division.¹⁶ A 2018 RAND Corporation survey asked junior service members why they joined the military. Listed in the key findings from the study were that service members joined the military for family and the value of the relationships established with fellow service members.¹⁷

Defined as "the common spirit in the members of a group and inspiring enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group," the term *esprit de corps* embodies a

foundational principle to military service.¹⁸ The very nature of the military is the unification of a group of people for a common cause, the defense of a beloved nation. Any mode of entrance into military service involves an indoctrination process which educates member on the institution's core values, creates a mutual sense of identity, and culminates in a formal acceptance into a service branch through an oath. Integral to this process is the cultivation of a common bond among all of those who have completed the trials of the indoctrination process. Regardless of service branch, unit cohesion is vital to mission success which persists through all levels of command. Various military traditions and practices such as mess nights, birthday balls, and formal ceremonies reinforce the culture, core values, and identity of service members which in turns strengthens the bonds among them. The military profession does an excellent job at cultivating tightly formed friendships amongst colleagues and service members. Interpersonal relationships amongst service members is undoubtedly a strength to military retention.

Good work-life balance

The military profession demands a lot from their service members and requires numerous sacrifices that the civilian population is typically immune to. RAND Corporation published a study that examined recent military deployment experience across all branches. One of the key findings is that between September 11, 2001 and September of 2015, 2.77 million service members served on more than 5.4 million deployments, which equates to 1.95 deployments per member.¹⁹ The study also notes that deployment metrics vary from service to service, the Army's typical deployment length during this time was one year whereas the other branches averaged between 5-7 months. Another important note is that the majority of service members were married at the time of their deployments and nearly half had children.²⁰ What the study did

not capture are the training evolutions and exercises that are also required before executing a deployment. The requirements mentioned previously equate to additional family separation and added time away from home. Though service members typically understand the magnitude of the sacrifices that they will endure before entering the military, the burdens of military service are a significant hindrance to a positive work-life balance.

Consistent geographic relocation presents a significant obstacle to maintaining home life stability and cultivating work-life balance. The typical duration of military orders is 2-3 years. The average orders duration represents the interval that service members can expect to be reassigned to a new billet and potentially relocate to a new duty station. For dual professional families and members with children, the ability to “grow roots” is nearly impossible unless families choose to accept additional sacrifices. Often service members relocate themselves and leave their family in a location to promote home stability, again, equating to familial separation. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as “geo-baching” or becoming a geographical bachelor separated from one’s family. The professional choice to become a geo-bachelor is amplified in dual military families in which two service members are spouses. Balancing geographic collocation and deployment cycles of these members have proven exceptionally difficult, and often service needs trump the service members preferences. Dual military couples frequently choose one member’s career over the other to improve work-life balance.

On paper, the military’s leave policy is very competitive. Active duty service members can accrue 2.5 days per month which equates to 30 days of paid leave per year. Members can maintain a balance of 60 days of leave which is baselined each turn of the fiscal year.²¹ Seemingly attractive, the operational tempo and workplace pressures often lead to lost leave days every year. A phenomenon which is not unique to military service. On average American

workers forfeited nearly 50% of paid vacation in 2017 while 10% of surveyed employees took no leave at all. The fear of falling behind work obligations or remaining competitive against peers are the leading causal factors to leave forfeiture.²² Future military retention practices need to focus on improving and cultivating a positive work-life balance.

Good relationships with superiors

The value of leadership in an organization cannot be understated. Familiar clichés in the business world such as “People quit their managers, not their companies” or “People leave bosses, not jobs” highlight the innate desire for people to have good relationships with their superiors. Gallup conducted a study in 2015 which found that 50% of Americans have previously left jobs due to poor management.²³ The military goes through great lengths to train and cultivate superb leadership throughout the entire rank structure. Service members begin leadership training the day they arrive at boot camp or officer training. Their leadership training and development will continue throughout their career only to end the day they leave military service. Like any organization, one of the military’s biggest challenges is retaining their highest caliber service members which equate to stronger leadership potential. The civilian market actively recruits military leadership due to their training and experience. Companies such as Cameron Brooks base their mission around “helping Corporate America find its future leaders from the Military’s top Junior Officers.”²⁴ The fact that companies like them exist is a testament to the overall quality of leadership talent that the military produces. Compared to the leaders in the civilian market, military leadership is superbly trained and typically of high quality. Refining and improving retention practices will only serve to benefit military personnel and their relationship with their superiors.

Company's financial stability

The United States' budget for the fiscal year 2019 provides \$686 billion to the DoD.²⁵ Defense spending has consistently represented 15% of the country's total budget over the last ten years. When adjusted for inflation, the defense budget has fluctuated from \$375 to \$686 billion since 1980.²⁶ For the previous century, defense spending has represented a significant portion of the countries budget, and although sequestration made headlines in 2013, the defense departments financial backing can be considered consistent and stable. Sequestration is a "provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 which imposes across-the-board budget cuts if Congress and the White House cannot agree on targeted cuts aimed at reducing the budget deficit."²⁷ Financial cuts are felt in training, maintenance, supplies, and equipment which, when aggregated directly correlate to military readiness. Funding for salary and benefits are rarely affected and have only occurred during government shutdowns due to budget disagreements between Congress and the White House. The financial stability of the DoD can be characterized as stable. As such, the defense budget correlates to a reliable income which serves as an appealing incentive to military members, positively contributing to recruiting and retention.

Learning and career development

The military's ability to educate and develop an individual within a career field has been a staple to recruitment and retention since the end of compulsory service. The level of training and education a service member receives concerning leadership and their occupational specialties is exceptional. Additionally, the military provides arguably the most comprehensive and robust educational benefits program to its service members regardless of industry. Various

tuition assistance programs and the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill serve as the core of military educational benefits. Tuition assistance provides active duty service members up to \$4500 annually to support up to 16 credit hours. The Post 9/11 GI Bill provides up to four years of educational benefits which include added monetary stipends for books and housing. The Post 9/11 GI Bill can be transferred to a spouse or family member if the service member elects to do so which adds utility to the program.²⁸ Many service members utilize the military as the foundation to develop their skills for future careers. The fields of medicine, aviation, and engineering are prime examples of military occupations which require extensive education and training that directly correlate to the civilian market. The potential to learn, receive education, and enhance career development within the military has always been a strength for military retention and recruitment efforts.

Job security

On 14 June 1775, the Second Continental Congress convened in response to British hostilities. The congressional assembly agreed to establish the Continental Army in defense of their land and citizens and would place General George Washington in command.²⁹ On that day the United States Military was born, and it has persisted ever since. In terms of job security, the United States military and the DoD is a secure occupational field. Congressional mandate ensures the existence of the armed service branches and they can only disassemble through America's elected officials. Throughout history, personnel numbers within the service branches have ebbed and flowed with the countries needs and demands for military service. However, for those actively in uniform, job security is typically determined by individual performance and personal achievement. The military profession can be a competitive occupation and requires

diligence and dedication. Those who are qualified, perform superbly, and fulfill the requirements for continued service, are generally in control of their careers and are retained and promoted accordingly. More often than not, the military professional controls their job security through their overall performance and corresponding evaluations, but ultimately it is determined by the needs of the service. The military and DoD will remain a secure institution as long as the nation values security and requires the ability to defend itself providing a secure occupational vocation.

Attractive fixed salary

Military salary in the form of Basic Pay is a matter of public record and readily available on the internet. However, basic pay is not an accurate representation of military compensation, and when comparing to civilian wage, the totality of Regular Military Compensation (RMC) is recognized as the appropriate standard to relate the military to the private market. RMC combines basic pay, housing, and food allowance, and incorporates the adjustments to benefits that are exempt from federal taxation.³⁰ As a whole, RMC is the reflection of the total gross pay of service members based on rank. RMC does not consider additional incentive or special compensation due to unique occupational specialties such as flight pay or contractual bonuses or pay based on specific service time such as hazardous duty or imminent danger pay.

Considering compensation alone, RMC outpaced wages in the civilian market from 2000-2012. In 2009 the average RMC for enlisted personnel corresponded to the 90th percentile of the appropriate comparison group in the private sector with equivalent educational background. When comparing military officers pay to their civilian equivalents, officer compensation correlated with the 83rd percentile of the civilian market.³¹ These statistics can be partially

attributed to the economic recession during the evaluated period and may overinflate the competitive nature of military compensation. It is in the nation's interest to adequately compensate and sustain an all-volunteer force charged with defending the country and its interests. "To maintain its viability, members of the all-volunteer force must receive compensation that is competitive with civilian earnings."³²

Interesting job content

Military service provides exceptional opportunities that are unique to those who join the ranks. Many civilian occupations are paralleled within the military but come with additional training and job requirements specific to service branch or command. As an example, a service member who specializes in logistics is required to qualify on a weapon system, uphold a physical fitness standard, and may at any moment be called upon to assist in disaster relief efforts in a foreign country. Other occupational specialties provide job content that cannot be found or duplicated in any other industry and is unique to military service entirely. Military recruiting efforts emphasize and market the military's unique job content while highlighting the education, training, and leadership experience gained through military service. Opportunities to travel and live abroad are plentiful and interacting and working with partner nations is a regular occurrence. Transcending the military job content is the nobility of service to a more significant cause. Joining an all-volunteer force, serving the country, and swearing to support and defend the constitution of the United States next to brothers and sisters of arms. For those who value unique and exciting job content, the military provides substantial opportunities to fulfill their desires.

Company values

Company values are equally important to an organization as they are to the employee. Company values serve as a message to the outside world for what the organization stands for and enables potential employees and customers to align themselves with a business that they believe. For an organization, values are how you hire, how you cultivate institutional behavior and serve as the heart of your organization's culture.³³ All four service branches have traditional foundational core values from which they have built honorable legacies. The Navy and Marine Corps share their core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, the Army upholds seven core values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage, and The Air Force espouses the core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do. Each of the services' core values cultivates a culture of honorable servitude, selfless commitment, and noble character. Every Airman, Soldier, Sailor, and Marine are taught with their respective branches core values upon entry into service and are expected to embody and uphold them in and out of their uniform. With their principles steeped in rich and meaningful history, the services' values are a time-honored tradition which bonds each generation who have donned the military uniform, unifying the noble lineage of service, honorable heritages, and meaningful purpose.

Summary of Findings

Edwin Locke's Range of Affect Theory postulates that job satisfaction is rooted in the collective fulfillment and or dissatisfaction of many individually valued occupational factors. The Boston Consulting Group's study on organizational talent provides useful insight into the current trends of the modern workforce and assessed what factors retain the highest value amongst today's generations. As demonstrated, an informed hypothesis can be developed

through the comparison, research, and assessment of each of the BCG study's elements coupled with the current military occupational climate. The military's organizational characteristics, practices, culture, and personnel base satisfies the majority of the BCG's top job satisfaction factors. However, there is one occupational factor to military service that routinely suffers, work-life balance. Rated as BCG's third highest valued contributing factor to job satisfaction, a positive work-life balance has a larger impact when applied to Locke's job satisfaction theory.³⁴ Consequently, job dissatisfaction is exacerbated by not fulfilling the service member's need for a positive work-life balance. The higher the level of job dissatisfaction experienced by an individual, the lower the likelihood of retaining them beyond current service obligations.

Understanding Today's Work-Life Balance

The measure, meaning, and quantifying variables to work-life balance is unique to each individual in the work force. For the purposes of this analysis, work-life balance will be viewed through a generational lens to provide insight into today's talent base and the social norms attributable to each generation. The current work force is comprised of three generation, Baby Boomers, Gen-X, and the youngest, Millennial generation. By 2025 Millennials will constitute 75% of the global work force.³⁵ As the emerging generation in the work force, Millennials represent the target audience for the policy changes of today and those who will be drafting the vision for tomorrow. A recent study on work-life challenges across generations provided the following insight into the Millennials in the work force.

We learned that millennials are highly committed to their careers. Many of them are moving into management at the same time they are becoming parents. Their work hours have increased over the last five years, they are twice as likely to travel overnight for business as other generations and they are more likely to be part of a dual-career family than their baby boomer counterparts. They want to work flexibly without stigmas and are willing to make tough choices and sacrifices to better manage work and home.³⁶

There are three critical takeaways from the study concerning Millennials in the work force. The majority of married Millennials are dual professionals, they value legitimized work place flexibility, and they are willing to make career sacrifice to improve the balance between home and work. The all-volunteer military force of today reflects American society and mirrors the sample population assessed within the study. The military's focus on talent management and their efforts concerning force retention should be shaped to conform to the social trends of the modern workforce to sustain relevance. Failing to consider the generational values of service members will result in ineffective personnel management policies that are unable to compete with the private sector over the finite talent base who demonstrate the willingness to sacrifice professionally to improve their home life.

Compared to the civil workforce the service members within the DoD are relatively young. Over 50% of each service are 29 years of age or younger while the Marine Corps represents the youngest service with 66% of its force under the age of 25.³⁷ These figures demonstrate that the generational maturation process within the military is accelerated over the civilian workforce. The ratio of Millennials to non-Millennials is higher within the DoD over the private sector. The higher concentration of younger generations within the Military reinforces the notion that the service branches need to understand the social trends within younger generations and implement changes within manpower management programs and policies to increase their effectiveness on their youthful talent base.

An analysis of fulltime employees has shown that 78% of Millennials and 73% of Gen-X professionals have a partner who works full time. These figures are a dramatic leap above the older Baby Boomer generation, of whom 47% are dual professional.³⁸ As of 2017 over 50% of

the entire active force within the DoD is married, 56% of the Army and Airforce, 52% of the Navy, and 42% of the Marine Corps.³⁹ A recent 2018 military lifestyle study revealed the top concerns of active duty service members and their spouses. Two of the top concerns identified within the report are the lack of spousal employment opportunity and military family quality of life.⁴⁰ A correlating DoD study in 2017 revealed that the unemployment rate amongst military spouses is 24%, nearly six times higher than the national average of approximately 4.5% in 2017.⁴¹⁴² The most prevalent contributing factors to the high unemployment rate amongst military spouses are geographic instability, unreliable and expensive child care, and the inadequacy of the job market surrounding DoD installations.⁴³⁴⁴ The social dynamics of the young and emerging generations of today's workforce indicate that dual professional relationships are now the norm. As shown by the military spouse unemployment rates, the instability and unpredictability of the military lifestyle significantly detracts from spousal employment opportunity, effectively alienating over 50% of the DoD's talent pool.

Flexibility in the professional environment provides opportunity for employees to manage their professional and private lives more effectively, improving the ability to attain a positive work life balance. Comparing generational differences within the workforce, Millennials value work place flexibility and paid parental leave over both Generation X and the Baby Boomers. A study found that 44% of Millennials are willing to take a pay cut for a job with greater flexibility.⁴⁵ In addition, Millennial parents are more likely to take paid parental leave over the older generations and for a longer duration. Overall 48% of Millennials, 35% of Gen X and 24% of Baby Boomers have taken or would take paid leave after having a child. Conversely, Millennials are the least likely generation to take a break from their career when becoming new parents while Baby Boomers were the most likely.⁴⁶

The DoD has recently made progress to improve workforce flexibility. March of 2018 the Under Secretary of Defense implemented changes to expand parental leave of military personnel recognizes as primary or secondary caregivers in the event of a birth or adoption.⁴⁷ In October of 2018, the DoD provided discretionary authority for the service branches to implement Career Intermission Programs (CIP). The program allows service members to temporarily depart active duty and transition to Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) for a period of up to three years. Utilization of CIP incurs a 2 to 1 pay back term for time spent off of active duty but enables service members to pursue an authorized sabbatical from military service.⁴⁸ While these programs and policies are available to service members, request authorization is handled on a case by case basis and is at the discretion of the service members chain of command. Despite the availability of these programs, participation has been limited. Regarding CIP, The Government Accountability Office (GAO) attributes the lack of participation to “statutory requirements, eligibility criteria, and military culture.”⁴⁹

A significant finding within a study focusing on generational differences in the workforce is the willingness of Millennials to sacrifice professionally to improve their home life. 77% of the American Millennial respondents stated they had either sacrificed a previous job or were willing to do so in the future to improve work-life balance. Additionally, 76% stated they would be willing to change their career field to achieve the same ends.⁵⁰ Across the board, males specifically have a higher probability of making career sacrifice to improve their home life. Males are more likely to change jobs, career fields, give up promotion, take a salary cut, or relocate to achieve a more positive work-life balance.⁵¹ These statistics are amplified within the DoD since the majority of American service members are male. The Air Force has the lowest percentage of men to women with 80.3% while the Marine Corps has the highest at 91.7%.⁵²

The demographic combination of lower average age and male majority within the armed services places the military at higher risk of turnover attributed to service members seeking to improve work-life balance over the civilian market.

The meaning of work-life balance is an ever changing concept that continuously adapts to social norms and societal trends. Multiple generations occupy the workforce at any given time and as each successive generation enters the talent pool they introduce a new interpretation and expectation of what work-life balance is and ought to be. As the younger generations rise to prominence and begin to dominate the market, employers need to acclimate their organizational practices to effectively manage their human resources. The youthful nature of the American military places the DoD at the forefront of generational change in the workforce. The Millennial generation is the emerging talent base of today and those who understand their values and characteristics will attain higher rates of success in retaining their talent. For the DoD to recruit and sustain the most credible and ready force to defend the nation, military talent management and force retention practices need to evolve alongside American society.

Recommendations

Historically, military personnel and families are stereotyped as leading nomadic lifestyles, moving every few years to fulfill the occupational requirements of the active duty service member. The saying “Home is where the (insert service) sends us!” is often utilized and captured on household décor and military memorabilia. Though as adventurous as it may seem, the instability of frequent moves coupled with routine deployments leads to homestead insecurity and can serve as a contributing factor to a host of other issues. Many thrive in the military lifestyle, embracing the regular change, while others struggle to cope with the uncertainty and

constant flux of military life. When analyzed, the traditional family model of a sole provider partnered with a familial caretaker is more resilient to the demands of the military lifestyle. However, societal trends continue to deviate from the traditional model with an increasing number of dual-professional couples and the prevalence of divorced/single parent families. Specific to the Marine Corps, 45% of Marines are either Married or single with dependents.⁵³ As alternative family models continue to proliferate, more service members are experiencing increased demands on the home front, stressing the equilibrium of work-life balance and negatively impacting job satisfaction.

Increasing the level of stability and predictability to the military occupation will help counterbalance the increased demands of alternative family models. It is unrealistic and naïve to believe that the elimination of personnel relocation and deployments from military service is possible. Training requirements, overseas assignments, installation locations, the number of suitable billets, and the needs of the service branches will always dominate the equation for service member career paths. However, what can be challenged and changed are common thoughts and practices of personnel management, career progression, and personnel assignments. Reviewing current practices and governing directives of Marine Corps Manpower Management will provide insights into likely areas of refinement to promote stability and predictability.

Strive for Geographic Stability

During career counseling with monitors, detailers, or mentors, most service members have heard the phrase “geographic diversity.” Geographic diversity implies the need for an individual to seek duty assignments at a variety of commands and or installations throughout their service. The conventional thought is that through geographic diversity service members

gain exposure to operations in different commands and installations providing experience in the various cultures throughout their service community. Historically geographic diversity has been a measure of competitiveness and has played a role in career advancement. The Goldwater Nichols act of 1986 initiated a paradigm shift in military culture. The act's demand for streamlining joint operations and for increasing interoperability between service branches has dramatically increased the level of standardization throughout the military. Standardization has also been amplified through technological advancements in information sharing, the establishment of lessons learned institutions and the DoD's operational experience over the last seventeen years of combat operations. In the age of standardization, the concept of geographic diversity is outdated and is an artifact of the 20th century.

Geographic diversity should no longer be a measure for career advancement, and the idea of "homesteading" should no longer be seen through a negative lens. The term "homesteading" is common jargon throughout each service branch for the act of seeking multiple assignments in one geographic location. Traditionally the idea of homesteading has had a negative connotation and considered a career faux-pas. Geographic stability enables a service member and their family to attain a higher level of home life consistency and connect within the greater community. Concerning education, geographic constancy permits military children to remain in a given school system and limit any possible adverse effects of repeated transfers. For dual professional couples, a working spouse would be able to establish themselves within a local market and effectively advance their career. Career oriented spouses could achieve longevity and upward mobility within a given company providing them the opportunity for tenured employment and future retirement benefits. In the event of a transfer, the longevity within a

given location facilitates consistent employment for a working spouse bolstering the competitiveness of their professional resume.

Cultivating geographic stability is not only beneficial to the service member and their family, but it is also advantageous for the fiscal constraints of the DoD. For each Permanent Change of Duty Station (PCS), the DoD incurs the cost for service member relocation. During a PCS the government pays for the transportation of the service members household goods, the transportation, and billeting of the service member and their family, reimbursement for damaged possessions associated with relocation, and additional compensation to the individual known as Dislocation Allowance (DLA). DLA is provided to the service member to offset any extra cost incurred throughout the relocation, and the amount corresponds to rank and the dependent status of each service member during the move.

Utilization of Follow on Orders

Many career scenarios present the opportunity for manpower to offer and provide follow on orders to an assignment. Orders to a career level school, overseas transfers, unaccompanied tours, and entry-level fleet orders all represent circumstances that provide the prospect to assign follow on orders to a specific billet or to solidify follow-on geographic location. The military hierarchical command structure is bottom heavy and shaped similarly to a pyramid. The preponderance of the force are junior enlisted and junior officers, consequently the number of billets associated with junior service members are also more prevalent making it easier to provide follow-on order to initial fleet tours or to solidify the geographic preference of the service member. Overseas assignments and unaccompanied tours also represent opportunities for follow on orders. Typically, such assignments are harder to source and as a means to

incentivize billet fulfillment, manpower can issue a favorable follow on billet or geolocation. Lastly, career level schools typically occur at transitional points in a service members career. These schools usually last a year or less which fall within the current planning horizon for typical manpower planning. Providing follow on orders to schools will enhance predictability and provide families the opportunity to make stability-based decisions.

Reform Personnel Assignment Policy

The governing directive for Marine Manpower Management concerning personnel assignment is Marine Corps Order 1300.8S (MCO P1300.8S) which provides “policy for the permanent assignment of Marines.”⁵⁴ As written, the policy covers every scenario regarding Marine manpower assignments for officers and enlisted. The policy covers transfers Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) and within the Continental United States (CONUS). One glaring shortfall within the policy is the lack of guidance regarding the timeline when manpower issue orders to the service member. The only consideration mentioned within the order addresses the conduct of overseas assignment and the requirement to complete screening checklists for the service member and their family which may take 50-60 days. It is the responsibility of the service members parent commander to ensure the completion before orders execution.⁵⁵ To promote a higher level of predictability Manpower Management should be held to a standard timeline for orders issuance. For example, the Dutch Ministry of Defense maintains a standard of 6 months for domestic assignments and 12 months for overseas assignments.⁵⁶ To promote predictability and adequate planning, the Marine Corps should strive to issue CONUS orders, at a minimum, 6 months in advance and 12 months in advance for

OCONUS. Providing the additional time facilitates planning and coordination to execute family relocation.

Reinforce Manpower Management Office and Extend Planning Horizon

The current Manpower Management planning cycle is based on a fiscal year (FY) planning horizon which focuses on a primary group of “FY movers” or those who are due for orders within the current FY. Those outside of that group are typically of periphery concern of the respective community monitors and detailers and usually receive general career counseling from their representatives through community update briefs or informal counseling. Primary contributing factors to the narrow manpower focus are the limited resources and personnel of Marine Corps Manpower Management Branch, the FY selection board processes, the capacity of educational institutions, and promotions, retirements, and separations. To achieve the recommended orders issuance timeline, manpower management should be manned and resourced to maintain a three-year slate process. Each Marine should be briefed and counseled annually on a three-year career outlook by their respective career management entity. Increased communication between Manpower Management and the individual Marine coupled with an extended planning timeline will foster career predictability and aid in home life stabilization.

Legitimize Existing Programs

Over the last ten years, the DoD and the subordinate services have implemented new programs and manipulated existing programs and policies to improve quality of life and promote a positive work-life balance for their service members. Extended parental leave for both women and men, Career Intermision Program (CIP), Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP),

and the repeal of the DoDs Don't Ask Don't Tell policy are primary examples of the DoD seeking to modernize policies and adapting to societal norms in an effort to fulfill service members personal needs and bolster quality of life. These programs are offered in good faith by the governing institutions to their service members to be utilized without retribution or negative career repercussions. The reality is that many of the programs, particularly those involving personal time, result in the service members decision to compromise professional development by improving quality of life. These available programs open the aperture of opportunity to the members, but they come at the cost of blunting the competitive edge in their career development.

Most occupational specialties have specific career milestones in the form of qualifications, designations, and billets that follow precise training programs and specific career timelines. More often than not, peers are lumped into groups within which the individuals are evaluated against each other and are competing for the time and resources to achieve each progressive milestone. If a member experiences a key life event during a critical period in their career, they are faced with a decision to tend to their personal lives or pursue competitive advantage in their profession. If the member elects to utilize a program to enhance their quality of life they possibly jeopardize career progression by relinquishing their opportunity to their peers. For the programs that aim to improve quality of life to achieve maximum effectiveness, military services need to legitimize their utility by ensuring participants maintain equal professional opportunity that enables them to remain competitive within their respective communities.

Conclusion

The most valuable asset to any organization is human capital, and without it, nothing can be accomplished. The same holds true in DoD and the service branches found within. As an all-volunteer military force, it is critical for the service branches to groom and retain the highest caliber individuals to fill the ranks. Developing military professionals takes a tremendous amount of time, training, and resources before they can even enter the fleet forces and begin to accumulate experience and working knowledge of their craft. Historically uniquely skilled service members such as pilots, aircrew, ship drivers, and medical specialists represented the communities who suffered the most from the woes of retention. However, over the last two decades, the rate and complexity of technological advancements have dominated society and industry. To sustain competitive advantage the military fields and incorporates cutting edge new technologies while simultaneously evolving to adapt to the interconnected, globalized environment of today. As a result, the demand for technically skilled and proficient service members continues to increase and expand throughout all military occupational fields.

The trending demands for military modernization and correlating requirements for technically savvy service members is driving increased competition between the civilian and military sectors over a finite labor force with the requisite skill sets. The key to preserving the highest caliber talent within the military ranks in a progressively competitive labor market is to modernize retention and manpower management practices. Maximizing the effectiveness of these reforms will require a firm understanding of societal trends and a thorough understanding of the needs and desires of the domestic talent base. Current studies reveal that today's labor force places a great deal of value in a positive work-life balance and that dual-professional couples are the majority in today's society. As it currently stands, the military profession is a

time capsule of old industrial retention practices and obsolete manpower management models. Current incentives are rooted in monetary compensation through competitive salaries, robust benefits packages, and an antiquated bonus programs. Manpower management is designed to cater to the traditional family model of a sole provider coupled with a family caretaker. Though these models have proven effective since the emergence of the all-volunteer force, it is imperative that the DoD strives to modernize force retention and manpower management practices to sustain a credible, ready force, to serve and protect this great nation.

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