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Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

**ENHANCEMENT OF MARINE CORPS' RECRUITING AND RETENTION
PROGRAMS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Preface

I initially wanted to do my MMS on the benefits of having one standardized accounting, budgeting, reporting, and collections system for all branches of the military because one military financial management system would substantially improve the efficiency of my military occupation in a deployed environment. I soon changed my mind because my preliminary research showed that the topic had been written on previously by several military officers attending various military schools. I then decided to do my paper on Marine Corps' Recruiting and Retention Program Enhancement because it has a human resources (HR) flavor to it and both my under-graduate and graduate degrees are in HR. Also, I had explored the subject of the Corps' recruiting and retention programs back in 2004 and was curious to see how the Corps had executed their mission in those two programs through 2007.

I would like to thank Commander Joseph Arleth for encouraging me to stay in the MMS program and for his guidance on communicating with Headquarters Marine Corps regarding source data I wanted to use. I would also like to thank my MMS mentor, Professor Erin Simpson, for her patience and unyielding support as I juggled multiple requirements simultaneously. Her flexibility and understanding were vital to me completing this project. To the staff of the Gray Research Center, thank you for assisting me with gathering sources from the various online databases and assisting me with using the paper writing tools such as Bibme.

Executive Summary

Title: Enhancement of Marine Corps' Recruiting and Retention Programs

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Thesis: The Marine Corps' recruiting and retention programs can be enhanced by increasing the number of career retention specialists in every unit and strengthening educational opportunities for deployed Marines.

Discussion: Though the Marine Corps has historically met its recruitment and retention goals, recruiting has become more challenging and cultural indicators show that recruiting will become even more difficult in the future. Retention paints a slightly more favorable picture as the Corps now offers more reenlistment incentives than it has in the past. The Marine Corps, however, still has a retention goal challenge. The Corps has to retain more Marines per year than it has in the past in order to grow the Corps from 186,490 to 202,000 by fiscal year 2011. This paper will examine recruiting and retention in the Marine Corps, and will include a discussion of the Corps' mission and values, and an analysis of the Corps' environment and marketing strategy. The analysis of the Corps' environment and marketing strategy will reveal strengths and weaknesses that can be exploited or mitigated in order to enhance recruiting and retention.

Conclusion: The Corps' execution of its mission and values has earned the Corps its distinctive mark, image, and reputation. External environmental scanning shows the Marine Corps' recruiting and retention are impacted by America's opinion of the military, the economy, deployments, and competition with its sister services and universities. Environmental scanning also shows that the Corps holds a competitive position regarding its advertising, caliber of personnel, image, and community reputation. Internally, the Corps has numerous strengths and a few weaknesses. The Corps' major strengths are its numerous tangible benefits and its name, image, and reputation. The Corps under-staffing of Career Retention Specialist and possible lack of educational opportunities for its deployed Marines are two major weaknesses. The Corps has good marketing techniques due to enhancements in its marketing strategy since 2004. The Corps could strengthen its recruiting and retention programs by increasing the number of career retention specialists in every unit, and strengthening educational opportunities for deployed Marines.

Marine Corps' Recruiting and Retention Program Enhancement

"For the strength of the Corps is the Marine and the strength of the Marine is the Corps."¹

Introduction

The Marine Corps' end strength is affected by a three-legged stool of which the legs are attrition, retention, and recruiting. The Corps' goal and challenge is to manage the stool's three legs in order to reach and maintain a particular end strength number. In 2004, the Marine Corps' end strength was approximately 175,000.² Today, the Marine Corps has grown to approximately 186,490 active service members.³ The Marine Corps' goal is to reach the end strength of 202,000 by fiscal year 2011.⁴

Marines attrit for a myriad of reasons ranging from medical issues to disciplinary problems. Attrition is more difficult to control or manage than recruiting and retention due to the vast number of reasons Marines attrit. Therefore, the focus is on managing recruiting and retention in order to reach and maintain the Corps' end strength goals. This paper will examine recruiting and retention in the Marine Corps, and will include a discussion of the Corps' mission and values, and an analysis of the Corps' environment and marketing strategy. The analysis of the Corps' environment and marketing strategy will reveal strengths and weaknesses that can be exploited or mitigated in order to enhance recruiting and retention.

Mission

The mission of the Marine Corps as set forth in the National Security Act of 1947 as amended (1952) is "Marines are trained, organized, and equipped for offensive amphibious employment and as a 'force in readiness'."⁵ As stated in Marine Corps

Strategy 21, "the Corps has three major goals to realize its mission."⁶ The first goal "is to make America's Marines who comprise the premier expeditionary 'Total Force in Readiness';" the second goal "is to optimize the Corps' operating forces, support and sustainment base, and unique capabilities to respond to the complex spectrum of crises and conflicts;" and the third goal "is to capitalize on innovation, experimentation, and technology to prepare Marine Forces to succeed in the 21st century."⁷ The first goal consists of the following aims: (a) recruiting, developing, organizing, and sustaining "a quality Total Force with the proper mix of educated and trained active and reserve Marines and civilian personnel," and strengthening trust, rewarding performance, accepting and learning from mistakes, enhancing retention, and developing the full potential of the Marines and civilians.⁸

Values

The foundation of the Marine character consists of three core values: honor, courage, and commitment. These values, which have been practiced throughout generations, have made U.S. Marines the Warrior Elite.⁹ The Corps' values can have a positive impact on recruiting and retention. The Corps effectively markets its core values as if the values were a slogan, tying honor, courage, and commitment directly to the Corps' image. As will be discussed later in this paper, the Corps' image is one of its intangible strengths that is used to recruit and retain Marines.

Honor requires each U.S. Marine to exemplify the ultimate standard in ethical and moral conduct. Marines are coached to never lie, cheat, or steal. Each Marine clings to an uncompromising code of personal integrity, accountable for his/her actions and

holding others accountable for theirs. Above all, honor mandates that a Marine never discredit the reputation of the Corps.¹⁰

Courage is honor in action. It is moral strength, the will to heed the inner voice of conscience, the will to do what is right regardless of the conduct of others. It is mental discipline, and adherence to a higher standard. Courage means willingness to take a stand for what is right in spite of adverse consequences.¹¹

Commitment is a combination of selfless determination and a relentless dedication to excellence. Marines never give up, give in, or willingly accept second best.¹² The Marine Corps' execution of its mission and the upholding of its values have earned the Corps its distinctive mark, image, and reputation.

Recruiting

"The mission of a Marine Corps recruiter is to represent the Marine Corps in his or her communities and search for qualified and motivated individuals to provide them with the chance to join the ranks of the world's finest fighting force."¹³ Marine Corps recruiters go through extensive screening for acceptance into the Basic Recruiter's Course, and upon acceptance the recruiters undergo seven-and-a-half weeks of stressful training.¹⁴ This intense training is meant to prepare the recruiter for the stress, exhaustion, and tempo of the minimum three-year tour at one of the country's 48 recruiting stations.¹⁵ The demand and stress on a recruiter is magnified during a time of war, and even further as the Corps is ramping up its end strength from 186,460 to 202,000. Dane Schiller, of the McClatchy – Tribune Business News, writes "recruiters are under continued pressure to find people willing to join the military in a time of war."¹⁶ The demand on recruiting

can either advance or hinder a Marine's career depending on if the Marine successfully or unsuccessfully makes mission.

In fiscal year 2004, Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) said cultural indicators showed that recruiting would become more difficult. Fierce competition for the fully qualified population, especially from colleges, and strong economic and employment trends were possible factors for future recruiting challenges.¹⁷ The National Academy of Sciences, Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment echoed MCRC's forecast when the committee stated "college attendance rates for men and women continued to climb and many recruitment-age youth would continue to view active-duty as a costly detour to or derailment of their futures."¹⁸

On August 26, 2004, I interviewed Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Linzey Southwell who had been awarded outstanding recruiter on three occasions during a three-year recruiting tour in 1st Marine Corps District, New Jersey, a geographical location where the selection of qualified personnel were scarce. SSgt Southwell stated "recruiting is the Marine Corps hardest B-billet [secondary job outside the Marine's primary military occupational specialty (MOS)] because the Marine's longevity is based entirely on his production with no consideration for his effort."¹⁹ That same month and year Major David Anderson of the United States Naval Institute wrote an article regarding retention in the Marine Corps.²⁰ Major Anderson said it was a small wonder that the Corps had somehow been able to meet its recruiting goal with the constantly looming career threat over the Corps' recruiters.²¹ According to SSgt Marc Ayalin of MCRC, "from July 1995 through November 2003, Marine recruiters had successfully met their assigned recruiting goals for 100 consecutive months," and they had done so in light of an all-volunteer force.²²

Achieving recruiting goals without the assistance of a draft was a significant achievement during that 100-month fight and this achievement still stands as a testimony to recruiters' dedication and determination.

Recruiters had to face many challenges during that time, such as the impact of September 11, 2001, changes in the recruiting environment, and pressures of a robust economy during a good portion of that period.²³ SSgt Ayalin reported that the recruiters had "learned to overcome and adapt and find innovative ways to reach young men and women."²⁴ Unfortunately, according to SSgt Southwell, those innovative ways normally meant sacrificing quality in order to meet recruitment goals.²⁵ SSgt Southwell went on to state that some recruiters performed unethical practices that were not aligned with the highest traditions and standards of the Marine Corps.²⁶

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that, from 2004 to 2005, complaints of recruiting irregularities among all service branches increased from about 4,400 to 6,600. The GAO suggested that the Iraq war may have tempted recruiters to lower their standards for signing new recruits and to resort to high-pressure tactics to make their quotas. The GAO report said attracting sufficient numbers of high-quality recruits to military service 'has proven to be one of the greatest personnel challenges faced by the Department of Defense' since the inception of the all-volunteer military 34 years ago.²⁷

Fast forward to 2007 and the plight of the recruiter has not changed. Harold Hyman, a Rice University professor and a Marine in World War II, says it is "a desperate race" for recruiters "to meet quotas because of the Iraq war."²⁸ Dogen Hannah of the Knight Ridder Tribune Business News writes that the "unexpectedly long and increasingly unpopular Iraq war, has made it tougher to persuade prospective recruits to enlist."²⁹ Overall, from 2004 to 2007, the Corps has met its annual recruiting goals. However, the Corps did fail "to reach its recruiting goals for the first four months of 2005, the first time this had happened in a decade."³⁰ Also, in August 2006, the Corps

had to "recall up to 2,500 Marines who'd completed their tour of duty to serve in positions that couldn't be filled by volunteers."³¹

Retention

The late 1990s represented difficult recruiting and retention years for many of the Armed Services. The Corps was the only military service to achieve both its accession and retention goals throughout those difficult years.³² By early 2000, however, it was becoming apparent to senior Marine Corps leadership that additional solutions needed to be enforced in order to alleviate pressures that were being forcibly bestowed onto recruiters, career retention specialist (CRS), and commanders in order to meet end strength requirements.³³ In 2000, the Commandant of the Marine Corps announced that the Marine Corps was facing its greatest retention challenge and directed an unprecedented Corps-wide 2-day retention stand down in order to: (a) "galvanize efforts in order to attain the difficult FY00 first term mission" and (b) "concentrate on career retention."³⁴ "In short, retention in the Marine Corps had come to a crisis."³⁵

The Marine Corps approaches enlisted retention by dividing the reenlistment population into two distinct groups: "first term Marines who reenlist for the first time and transition to our [Marine Corps] career force and, the subsequent term (or career force) Marines who reenlist for their second, third, fourth, or more time."³⁶ In fiscal year 2000, the reenlistment of Marines, who were approaching the duration of their initial enlistment contract, was steadily increasing, while career force Marines were steadily decreasing.³⁷ The career force Marines, particularly those serving in the 8 to 12-year-of-service range were departing the enlisted ranks to explore other opportunities.³⁸ By the end of fiscal year 2000, the career force had shrunk from 39.5% in FY88 to an all time low percentage

of 30.3%.³⁹ A thorough examination of the retention posture showed retention percentages had been overstated due to stop loss, which is a program that halts separations and retirements in critical specialties during war or crisis.⁴⁰ The 2003 stop loss measure was “the first wide scale implementation of the policy since the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and 1991.”⁴¹ According to Lieutenant General McCarthy, Commander of Marine Corps Forces Reserve in 2004, approximately 30,000 Marines were involuntarily activated to support the global war on terrorism, which also increased the retention percentage.⁴²

Retaining the Marine Corps’ combat experienced Marines and their leadership is one of the current Commandant of the Marine Corps’ highest priorities.⁴³ Although the Corps has been meeting its retention goals it has not done so without a monumental challenge. In *Experience Pays*, a September 2007 Marine Corps News article, it states “Congress’ goal to increase the size of the Marine Corps has sent it into growing pains.”⁴⁴ The article goes on to say while the recruiters are working extremely hard to bring in new recruits, CRSs are focusing “on another challenge just as vital to the strength of the Corps,” and that “the retention war never ends.”⁴⁵

Major Goodrum of Manpower, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) in 2003, wrote “recruiting is hard work, retention is equally so.”⁴⁶ The primary difference in stress levels between CRSs and recruiters is that the CRSs’ careers will not be jeopardized if they fail to meet HQMC’s established reenlistment targets. On 25 August, 2004, I interviewed SSgt Nishman Huffman who was the CRS for Combat Service Support Group 11. Staff Sergeant Huffman said there was one CRS to approximately every 1,490 Marines.⁴⁷ Therefore, a battalion with less than 1,500 Marines rated only

one CRS who was solely responsible for the command's counseling and reenlistment needs. Some CRSs were assigned administrative assistants who scheduled the CRSs' interviews and managed administrative tasks.⁴⁸ My 21 February, 2008, interview with SSgts Wendy Shuman and Debra Cruz, CRSs for Marine Corps Base Quantico Headquarters and Service Battalion (MCB H&S BN) revealed that some Marine Corps commands are still short CRSs.⁴⁹ Staff Sergeants Shuman's and Cruz's CRS office services 2,700+ Marines for MCB Quantico H&S BN.⁵⁰ Per MCB Quantico H&S BN's table of organization and staffing goal, MCB Quantico H&S BN's CRS office rates three CRSs yet they only have two CRSs and an administrative assistant.⁵¹ Both SSgts have been CRSs since 2001. They say shortages in the MOS create burnout in the office.⁵² Staff Sergeant Shuman also believes there should be stabilization of CRSs in each command.⁵³ Specifically, SSgt Shuman believes the CRSs should remain in their commands for at least two to three years because that would allow time for the CRS to get to know the command population, gain their trust, and then service their individual needs and concerns.⁵⁴ Marine Corps Base Quantico H&S BN CRS office has had five CRSs in one year which is a higher than average turnover rate.⁵⁵

Environment

The USMC's recruiting and retention programs are critical to ensuring that the Marine Corps achieves its mission of being trained, organized, and equipped for offensive amphibious employment and as a force in readiness. In order to assess the strength of the recruitment and retention program, a thorough environmental analysis must be conducted.

An organization's external environment has three components: the remote, industry, and operating environments.⁵⁶ The analysis of an organization's "remote environment includes an analysis of current global and local economic, political, technical, social, and environmental aspects of its functioning and an analysis of their potential developments."⁵⁷ The analysis of the industry environment in which the organization operates "is represented by the analysis of the intensity of competition in the given industry which is determined by the following five factors: (a) rivalry between the existing competing companies, (b) the threat of competition from other industries trying to sell customers their substitute products and services, (c) threats presented by potential entrants trying to penetrate the given industry, (d) the bargaining power of the suppliers, and (e) the bargaining power of the buyers."⁵⁸ The analysis of an organization's "operating environment is the analysis of its customers and markets, of its competitive position and immediate competitors, its suppliers, and its creditors, its position in the community, and its labor force."⁵⁹ There are several external factors that affect the Marine Corps recruiting and retention efforts. Table 1 summarizes the elements of the remote, industry, and operating environments that have an effect on recruiting and retention in the Marine Corps.

TABLE 1. Influential Factors of Retention and Recruiting

Environment	Influential Factors
Remote	<i>Social:</i> The attitudes and beliefs of the American people regarding the military and conflicts in hostile countries. <i>Political:</i> DoD sets the Corps manning parameters by dictating the Corps end strength. Also, DoD passes laws like stop loss/stop move, which prevents service members from exiting the service and dictates the Corps operating budget
Industry	<i>Substitute Products:</i> U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy (i.e. sister services) and educational institutions in which the Corps' target population (17 to 24 year old, education qualified, males per Annex F to Marine Corps Recruiting Commands, MCRC, Operation Plan 1-04) may choose to go to school vs. joining the military. <i>Competitive Rivalry:</i> The Marine Corps' sister services comprise its industry boundaries.
Operating	<i>Competitive Position:</i> Currently the Marine Corps holds a competitive position regarding its advertising, caliber of personnel, image, and community reputation. <i>Customer Profiles:</i> Understanding the target population aids in the Corps ability to recruit.

In 2003, MCRC published a brief on recruiting the 21st century Marine. According to MCRC's brief, American youth wanted to (a) be challenged, (b) be measured against a standard and held accountable, (c) belong to something bigger than themselves but that they can be proud of, and (d) be led, but want the opportunity to lead as well.⁶⁰ Marine Corps Recruiting Command's brief also reflected cultural indicators which showed that recruiting would become more difficult due to more competition for the fully qualified population (especially from colleges) and strong economic and employment trends.⁶¹ These predictions corresponded with the results of studies conducted in 2003 and 2004 by the Peter D Hart Research Associates. Findings, which were based on teen and young adults' responses, showed that 94% of the population surveyed planned to continue their education sometime after high school.⁶² "The dramatic increase in college enrollment was arguably the single most significant factor affecting the environment in which military recruiting took place."⁶³

In fiscal year 2008, HQMC Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA), Manpower Plans, Programs, and Budget Integration and Analysis section (MPP-50) conducted a First Term End of Active Service (FTEAS) Survey from 16 March to 31 July 2007. The convenience sample revealed the top reasons for leaving active duty (for those first term Marines who stated they were leaving active service) are: "civilian job opportunities, job satisfaction, and the desire to attend college."⁶⁴ Also, roughly 10% of the Marines in the convenience sample stated that "they spent more time away from home than expected," and that the deployment tempo decreased their desire to reenlist.⁶⁵ A Marine Corps M&RA Question and Answer document on active duty enlisted retention states that continued deployments of Marine forces in support of Operation Iraqi

Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom and the U.S. economy “will challenge our increased retention goals and we will continue to monitor this very closely.”⁶⁶

In addition to changes in the industry environment, changes in the remote environment such as the American people’s attitudes and beliefs regarding the military and conflicts in hostile countries can have a substantial impact on recruiting and retention in the Corps. In 2004, Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard A. Cody and Lieutenant General Jan C. Huly, Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations stated, “the support of ordinary Americans is important for troops to feel like their work has meaning.”⁶⁷ Lieutenant General Huly went on to state Americans’ support “makes an awful lot of difference” to troops who are deployed.⁶⁸ Whenever LtGen Huly and other Marines leaders visited deployed Marines, the Marines frequently inquired, “Does everybody know what we’re doing, and are they still supportive of our efforts?”⁶⁹ In 2007, Daniel Weiss’ article in The Village Voice shows that America people’s attitudes and beliefs regarding the military still do affect recruiting.⁷⁰ Weiss writes that Sgt Juan Valderrama, “the top Marine recruiter in the New York City metropolitan area-labors against widespread lack of interest in the military.”⁷¹ Weiss goes on to write, SSgt Jeffrey Hess, Sgt Valderrama’s supervisor, says “you get someone who might be good to go and he gets out the door [recruiting office] and there are 8 million people saying, ‘Why in the heck are you doing this?’”⁷² Rod Powers, retired Air Force First Sergeant and military author, also agrees that society’s view of the military has a significant impact on recruitment and retention. Powers stated the following:

The state of our economy is only one reason for high recruiting and retention rates. Much more significant is the way the media has portrayed our troops for the past fourteen or so years (since the first Gulf War). Today our military members are portrayed as dedicated heroes, which have a noticeable effect on

how our Nation's youth view military service. All the recruiting commercials in the World and all the pay raises of the past ten years have had less of a positive effect on military recruiting, than has this shift in the way our troops have been perceived by the general public in recent years.⁷³ The FTEAS Survey conducted from 16 March to 31 July 2007 revealed the top reasons for Marines who intended to reenlist were: "pride, increase in responsibility, lateral move with a bonus, and choice of duty station."⁷⁴

Environment Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis (SWOT)

Table 2 reflects my assessment of the Marine Corps' internal capability (its strengths and weaknesses) and external situation (its opportunities and threats) which affect its recruitment and retention. As noted in Table 1, the Marine Corps competes with other branches of military service and universities for recruitment of 17 to 24-year-old, educated qualified males. Universities do not offer all the tangible benefits provided by the Corps; however, such benefits are offered by the Corps' sister services, but the Marine Corps' intangible benefits being its image, name, and reputation, are elements which distinguish it from its sister services. A 2003 poll, which surveyed men who were seriously considering military services, showed the propensity to enlist in the Marines centered on fidelity, readiness, and structure.⁷⁵

In the past, weaknesses such as constant deployments and noncompetitive pay for career force Marines took a toll on recruiting and retention in the military. Milton Copulos, a Bronze Star-winning Vietnam veteran who leads the National Defense Council think tank says, "Recruiting struggled before September 11th and that it was a trend that had been going on for a while, for many reasons. Military pay had not kept pace with inflation. Under the Clinton administration, troops were deployed far more often than at any time since World War II. Families were being disrupted."⁷⁶ Copulos goes on to say that unless the picture improves, it could be approaching a crisis stage, even more because of a lack of retention of trained military

personnel than because of recruitment problems.⁷⁷ Major Anderson of the United States Naval Institute echoes Copulos' sentiments. He says "the continuous high level of intensity required to perform successfully, coupled with ever-increasing standards and expectations of performance required of Marines by Marines, is causing many career force Marines to think more often about leaving. They are physically and emotionally drained-burned out."⁷⁸ Major Anderson goes on to say that some career force Marines are urged by their spouses to find another line of work – perhaps one that requires less time away from home, or includes better pay and benefits.⁷⁹

A 2007 draft information paper obtained from M&RA, MPP-50 states that the Marine Corps uses a variety of measures to recruit and retain quality people for the Corps.⁸⁰ In fact, the Corps is utilizing every asset to keep experience Marines in its ranks.⁸¹ Sergeant Esme Holiday, CRS for Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, says "the incentives are getting better."⁸² Sergeant Holiday says the Corps needs people and wants more Marines to remain in service so the Corps is "reaching out to meet their needs and draw them back."⁸³ Table 3 shows my assessment of the Corps' current strengths as amended in FY07 to assist with growing the force to 202,000. Table 3 also shows adjusted weaknesses. It is important to mention that although the Corps recognizes the need for tangible measures, such as increased reenlistment bonuses to compete effectively with civilian opportunities, the Corps emphasizes the intangibles of service in its retention efforts.⁸⁴

TABLE 2. SWOT Prior to FY07

Components	Description
Strengths	<i>Tangible:</i> - Career opportunities and technical training - Basic allowance for subsistence and basic allowance for housing - Tuition assistance for college of \$3,500 per year, \$32,400 for the Montgomery G.I. Bill for college, and other full college programs - Annual 30 days paid vacation - Annual uniform clothing allowance - Full medical and dental benefits - Many allowances are tax-exempted along with on-base establishments (e.g., post exchange and commissary) where the service members also receive substantial discounts or name-brand items - All travel and expenses for required moves are paid by the Corps Generous retirement plan with continuing commissary and post-exchange privileges and medical benefits extending throughout the Marine's lifetime and that of his/her spouse <i>Intangible:</i> - The Corps' image, name, and reputation, character, strength, intellect, and compassion - Leadership and personal character - Constant exposure to new experiences
Weaknesses	- Stifled promotions in certain military occupational specialties - Poor morale in lower ranks - Constant deployments - Inability to lateral move into other fields - Noncompetitive pay for career force Marines - Internal politics - Excessive stress levels on recruiters - Under staff of CRS which results in burn out - Educational opportunities are not afforded to most infantry Marines or Marines on constant deployments - Insufficient recruiting budget
Opportunities	- Possible weak economy - Possible increased patriotism of the American people - Possible increase in exporting jobs to other countries - Educational desire from those who lack money to go to school - Teachers, counselors, families
Threats	- Sister services - Other non-military employment - Possible robust economy - Possible decrease in patriotism - Families can also be a potential threat - Colleges and universities

TABLE 3. SWOT After FY07

Components	Description
Strengths	<i>Tangible:</i> - Career opportunities and technical training - Basic allowance for subsistence and basic allowance for housing 100% Tuition assistance for college, \$53,424 for the Montgomery G.I. Bill for college, and other full college programs - Flat rate SRB based on Marine's SRB Zone, grade on date of reenlistment, and MOS Marine is reenlisting in not to exceed \$80K - Duty station preferences - Lateral MOS move if the Marine qualifies for the job - School seat incentives (i.e. Jump and SERE schools) - Combat incentive pay - Special duty assignments (i.e. Drill instructor or Security Guard duties) - Promotion points for reenlisting - Annual 30 days paid vacation - Annual uniform clothing allowance - Full medical and dental benefits - Many allowances are tax-exempted along with on-base establishments (e.g., post exchange and commissary) where the service members also receive substantial discounts or name-brand items - All travel and expenses for required moves are paid by the Corps Generous retirement plan with continuing commissary and post-exchange privileges and medical benefits extending throughout the Marine's lifetime and that of his/her spouse - Local Company level incentives: - Authorized Basic Allowance for Housing to live off-base - Dress blue uniform allowance - Permissive Temporary Assigned Duty - Priority for base housing <i>Intangible:</i> - The Corps' image, name, and reputation, character, strength, intellect, and compassion - Leadership and personal character - Constant exposure to new experiences
Weaknesses	- Poor morale in lower ranks - Constant deployments - Internal politics - Excessive stress levels on recruiters - Under staff of CRS which results in burn out - Educational opportunities are not afforded to most infantry Marines or Marines on constant deployments

Analysis

The Corps most competitive advantage is its ability to differentiate itself from its competitors. The Corps' tangible strengths such as 100% tuition assistance for college and full medical and dental benefits reduce the threat of non-military employment and college/universities' appeal. The Corps' intangible strengths make the target population feel as though they gain something uniquely valuable to them that they cannot obtain by joining any other branch of military service or acquire by going directly to college from high school. For those in the target population with a strong propensity to go to college, the Corps' tangible benefits (e.g. college programs) coupled with its intangible strengths will make the Corps a competitive career choice. Therefore, the Marine Corps should continue seeking a competitive advantage via differentiation in its marketing (for recruiting) and level of service (for retention). The Corps will be able to sustain differentiation through its continuation of perceived high value to the public and a lack of imitation by its sister services. The perceived value of the Marine Corps and its inability to be duplicated will be achieved by maintaining exemplary standards in physical fitness, leadership, appearance, teamwork, etc.

Enhancements

Recruiting targets will be achieved by focusing on the Marine Corps strengths, particularly its intangible strengths that gives the Corps a comparative advantage over its competitors. The Corps will hone in on its differentiation in its aggressive marketing campaign and achieve its retention targets by addressing its weaknesses. The Corps' CRSs, Commanding Officers, and Sergeant Majors will play vital roles in transforming

the Corps' weaknesses into strengths. Opportunities will be exploited and threats will be minimized as much as possible.

Marketing and Recruiting Enhancements

Strengthening recruiting support is crucial to accomplishing recruiting targets. Marketing the Corps is the primary tool that will be utilized to strengthen recruiting support. According to Major Michael W. Zeliff, Assistant Chief of Staff Marketing and Public Affairs, "the decision to join the Marine Corps relies on how much a person wants to be a Marine."⁸⁵ He goes on to say "advertising plays a crucial role in raising awareness of today's youth and driving prospects to the recruiters."⁸⁶ The Marine Corps should capitalize on its reputation as a warrior by staying true to its successful "Smart, Tough, Elite Warrior" brand.⁸⁷ The Marine Corps' marketing plan includes:

1. Continuing the release of commercials
2. Advertising in theaters from mid-September through the end of October and again in April
3. Maintaining an interactive website
4. Redesigning recruiter sales tools (information packets and posters)
5. Partnering with a NASCAR race team for a show car
6. Implementation of a "rolling billboard" campaign where the Marine Corps' imagery appears on the sides of hundreds of tractor trailers nationwide⁸⁸

The marketing plan should also focus on exploiting an opportunity by gaining the support of teachers, counselors, and relatives. The Corps may wish to focus on educating them about the benefits of the Corps and the overall military experience. Having allies in the public, private, and social sectors may help strengthen recruiting support. Teachers

and parents may wish to be informed of facts, such as “88% of military jobs have direct civilian counterparts; 81% of all jobs in the military are non-combat occupations;” all the educational benefits that the military offers; and the intangible benefits that the Corps offers.⁸⁹ The Corps’ interactive website does offer information to parents but the parents need to be targeted by marketing in order to encourage them to visit the website.

Another way to strengthen recruiting support is to encourage recruiter’s assistance. Recruiter’s assistance is a program where junior enlisted Marines volunteer to go back to their hometowns to assist recruiters in recruiting the Marines’ peers. Junior enlisted Marines can earn points towards promotion for all new joins that they bring into the Corps. Currently, the Corps publishes announcements for needed recruiter’s assistances several times throughout the year on each Marine’s Leave and Earnings Statement (LES).⁹⁰ Also, base newspapers continually run advertisements looking for Marines to take part in the recruiter’s assistance program, and CRSs continue to encourage Marines to take advantage of the opportunities in recruiting.⁹¹ The shortcoming with these two approaches is that it is incumbent on the Marine to go online to retrieve his/her LES and/or go get a Base newspaper. In both cases, the recruiter’s assistance pitch is found either at the very bottom of the document as an endnote or buried among other items. Therefore, in addition to announcements on LESs and advertisements in Base newspapers, the Corps should utilize Base wide emails and Commanding Officers’ unit formations in order to disseminate the word and request personnel for recruiter’s assistance. It is important to get more command support in order to ensure that volunteering Marines will be released from their units so that the Marines can assist in the recruiting efforts.

Lastly, the Marine Corps has focused on the advancements in computer technology to improve efficiency and streamline recruiting operations.⁹² The use of web-based programs and improved computer hardware has improved recruiting station operations and efficiency and enabled recruiters to spend more time recruiting and less time doing paperwork.⁹³

Retention Enhancement

As previously stated, the Marine Corps has retention challenges for its enlisted Marines. Table 3, SWOT analysis, shows that there are several weaknesses and threats that exacerbate this problem. In FY04, the major reasons why career force Marines were leaving the Corps were as follows: (a) better paying jobs with less time away from home in the private sector, and (b) the lack of opportunity to go to school while in the Corps.⁹⁴ Major Anderson's declaration supported this assessment. Anderson wrote "good job prospects and the lure of a better quality of life in the private sector, especially as military pay and benefits erode and workloads increase, weigh heavily on the mid-level career Marine's decision to remain on active duty."⁹⁵ In FY07, the major reasons why enlisted Marines are leaving the service are: "civilian job opportunities, job satisfaction, and the desire to attend college."⁹⁶ It is apparent that civilian job and school opportunities are recurring threats to the Marine Corps' recruiting and retention efforts.

In fiscal year 2001 (FY01) nearly all the \$45 million budgeted for FY01 selective reenlistment bonus (SRB) payments was used to retain first-term Marines, but after much discussion and analysis a decision was made to allocate the general support SRB monies 60/40 between the first-term and career force retention efforts in FY02.⁹⁷ Also, in FY02, the Corps increased the SRB cap to career force Marines from \$20,000 to \$35,000.⁹⁸ The

Corps continues to see the value in striving to keep experience career force Marines in its ranks. The Marine Corps Bulletin 7220, FY08 Selective Reenlistment/Bonus Program and FY08 Broken Service SRB Program, states "retaining the Corps combat experienced Marines and their leadership is one of the Commandant's highest priorities."⁹⁹ The goal of this bulletin is to provide more flexibility to build the Corps' end strength and to support the Commandant's intent to achieve a 1 to 2 deployment to dwell ratio.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the Corps is offering a flat rate SRB (based on the Marine's grade on the date of reenlistment) to all enlisted Marines even up to 20 years of active service.¹⁰¹ In FY07, "the Marine Corps spent approximately \$460M in SRB and Assignment Incentive Pay to help achieve its end strength increase."¹⁰² "With a reenlistment mission of 17,631 in FY08 – compared to an historical average of 12,000 – the Marine Corps expects to spend \$536M in reenlistment incentives."¹⁰³

Screening Marines for retention in the Corps should not stop after the Marines' first term, but should continue throughout the career of each Marine. To properly screen/counsel each Marine in a unit, the Corps will have to increase each unit's table of organization to add at least one more CRS. I recommend a two-year screening that would be geared towards thoroughly preparing the Marine for reenlistment, lateral move opportunities, and promotion opportunities. According to SSgt Huffman, many career force Marines cannot lateral move into other MOSs because they do not meet the qualifications for those MOSs.¹⁰⁴ The two-year screening would indicate whether Marines are qualified or not for promotion and suggest what actions are needed for them to become qualified for promotion or make a lateral move. Two years out will allow the Marine to make the necessary adjustment in order to meet the qualifications (i.e. retake

the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery test to improve test scores used to qualify for MOSs). Follow-up counseling and screening sessions may ensure that Marines are meeting their objectives or to determine if their plans have changed.

Thoroughly screening a Marine for qualifications to all open MOSs, schools, officer programs, and promotion can be extremely time consuming even with three CRSs. Therefore, it may be prudent for the Corps to create or purchase computer software that automatically generates the list of programs that meet the Marine's qualifications. Staff Sergeant Huffman noted that reenlistment levels for all Marines were higher in units where the Commanding Officers took an active role in the reenlistment process and interviewed all the Marines. The Commanding Officers were able to convince 85% of the "unsure" Marines to stay in the Corps, and convince about 50% of the "will not reenlist" Marines to actually reenlist in the Corps.¹⁰⁵ Recognizing the Commanding Officer's ability to persuade a Marine to stay in service, HQMC has made it mandatory that Commanding Officers speak with the preponderance (~51%) of first term Marines.¹⁰⁶

Lastly, Marines want the opportunity to go to college. Some MOSs do not afford the Marines the opportunity to go to school due to constant deployments and high operational tempo.¹⁰⁷ This is disheartening particularly for the Marines who joined the Corps because of the promised educational opportunities. It is incumbent on the Corps to strengthen the educational opportunities for all Marines in order to better the individual Marine Corps and the individual Marine.

Therefore, the following is recommended in order to increase the Corps' retention numbers:

1. Continue offering SRBs to all enlisted Marines up to 20 years of active service

2. Place two or three CRSs in every unit for three-year-tour minimum
3. Screen and counsel Marines, who are two years, one year, and six months from their end of service contract and eligible for promotion
4. Create or purchase computer software that generates a list of programs that matches each Marine's qualifications
5. Strengthen educational opportunities
 - a. Establish remote computer labs for deployed Marines
 - b. Coordinate with universities regarding correspondence programs
 - c. Rotate Marines out of MOSs for two year periods in order to allow time to complete school
 - d. Allow officers to become certified teachers and provide incentives in doing so

Conclusion

The Corps' executing of its mission and values has earned the Corps its distinctive mark, image, and reputation. Environmental scanning shows the Marine Corps' recruiting and retention are impacted by America's opinion of the military, the economy, deployments, and competition with its sister services and universities. Environmental scanning also shows that the Corps holds a competitive position regarding its advertising, caliber of personnel, image, and community reputation. Internally, the Corps has numerous strengths and a few weaknesses. The Corps' major strengths are its numerous tangible benefits and its name, image, and reputation. The Corps under staff of CRS and possible lack of educational opportunities for its deployed Marines are two major weaknesses. The Corps has good marketing techniques due to enhancements in its marketing strategy since 2004. The Corps could strengthen its recruiting and retention programs by increasing the number of career retention specialists in every unit and strengthening educational opportunities for deployed Marines.

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