The Value of the Military Skill Set – Part III

Description

Part III – Operations 24/7/365

Index to the Series:
Part I: Initiative, marketing, sales, project planning and program management skills
Part II: Auditing Skills
Part III: Operations 24/7/365
Part IV: “Point Papers”
Part V: Collateral Duties
Part VI: The “Git ‘er done!”• Factor
Part VII: “Total Care”•
Part VIII: Communications in the Workplace
Part IX: “Give a smart person with potential a chance”
Part X: Process Engineering, Continuous Improvement, Total Quality Management, Total Quality Leadership, or what ever you call it. The bottom line title: Making “it”• better
Part XI: The Military’s Supply System
Part XII : “Red Blood or Red Ink”•
Part XIII: Constructive Plagiarism

In this part, which is actually a continuation of the story in Part II, since it relates to how I found out this is a desirable skill in the outside world.

Not only did Cantor-Fitzgerald like what they saw in the pilot they hired, after he had a few weeks on the job he noticed something was lacking in the understanding of the shift workers. The computer center needed to run 24/7/365 to support the world-wide operations. It seemed the day shift was pretty well staffed up, but the “after hours”• shifts really didn’t handle casualties well. If the systems burped, they pretty much got out the paper and put their feet up, waiting for the day shift to show up and get things back into operation again. This guy saw that as pretty inefficient for a major corporation, with satellite offices around the planet.

He called me and asked for me to find him some chiefs (Chief Petty Officers (E-7 to E-9)) to be hired as after hours shift supervisors. He’s the key: he didn’t need them to understand computers, as much as he needed someone who knew how to keep things rolling, to be able to work through casualties, so that the “system”• was available to the users. Certainly computer knowledge was desirable, but not essential, to the requirement.

Who better than a bunch of experienced ship engineering senior enlisted people to manage the tasking? This isn’t to say that others don’t acquire the skills, but the entire careers of “snipes”• (that’s the polite term for the people who spent days on end below decks ensuring the rest of us had water, air conditioning, converted power, sewage services, compressed air, heat, ventilation, firefighting capabilities, and a variety of other things that seem so inconsequential, right up until the time they go dead, to paraphrase a like from “Top Gun”•) is spent making things operate around the clock, and fixing

breakdowns fast.

While I spent most of my career “above decks”• (polite way of saying the non-snipes), I had a tour 21 months as an Engineer Officer. It corrected my prejudicial views of the engineers and I found out just how hard they work. I had been in operations and in charge of communications and tactical information management prior to that assignment. I thought those areas were 24/7, but that was mostly only while at sea. The engineers never take a day off, even in port, therefore, the people with a ship engineering background get my vote for the most experienced in making it happen day in and day out, night, day, snow, sleet, hail, in hurricanes and glass like seas, in port, out to sea or even in a dry docked condition.

As a result of this working environment, there is a certain set of thought processes that develop around these conditions. In addition to the mental process, the Navy has refined methods to train to handle the proper normal operation of large and expensive equipment, as well as how to quickly respond to casualties, to keep the equipment damage to a minimum, and to ensure personnel safety. That entire system, the “Engineering Operating Sequencing Systemâ” (EOSS) has its roots in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, and is still in use today. The ships had been poorly maintained due to lack of funds and operations were basically run off hand written notes and word of mouth stories. We lost many people and spent a lot of taxpayer money on the repairs as a result of the poor “process control.”•

The EOSS success spawned a corollary in the “upper deck”• world, named “Combat Systems Operational Sequencing System”• (CSOSS) in the late 80’s, which became widely deployed on ships by the mid-90s. As the upper deck equipment became far more sophisticated and equipped with compressors, power converters, heat exchanging units up in topside spaces, the resulting costs of casualties was excessive. I saw one report from a ship’s captain that said the expected “wear and tear”• breakdowns seemed to almost disappear. He couldn’t quantify the cost savings, he just knew his equipment was operational most all the time, and he could only attribute that to the only significant change in how business was done, and that was the implementation of CSOSS.

Do you someone who needs a operations supervisor for a 24/7 shop? Go find a retired â€œsnipeâ€• and just see how much better things go. If the applicant is an AEGIS trained fire controlman or electronics technician, don’t hold it against them, but they are a good choice as well.

Category

1. Leadership
2. Military

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