The Value of the Military Skill Set â€“ Part V

Description

Part V â€“ Collateral Duties

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: â€œPoint Papersâ€•
Part V: Collateral Duties
Part VI: The â€œGit â€˜er done!â€•Â• Factor
Part VII: â€œTotal Careâ€•Â•
Part VIII: Communications in the Workplace
Part IX: â€œGive a smart person with potential a chanceâ€•
Part X: Process Engineering, Continuous Improvement, Total Quality Management, Total Quality Leadership, or what ever you call it. The bottom line title: Making â€œitâ€•Â• better
Part XI: The Militaryâ€™s Supply System
Part XII : â€œRed Blood or Red Inkâ€•Â•
Part XIII: Constructive Plagiarism

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Military operations require many tasks, yet the luxury of bringing along the manpower Ã¢â‚¬Å“overheadÃ¢â‚¬Â• is not usually the case. To allow for that, the Navy gave the name of piling on assignments of â€œCollateral Dutiesâ€• (yes, pretty close to the term â€œcollateral damageâ€•Â•).

The particular purpose in bringing up this topic is general education for both potential employers, as well as ex-service members. Civilian employers donâ€™t usually understand this concept, and service members donâ€™t think to bring it up, since these collateral duties just become second nature, and they fail to highlight that they have, in many cases, significant experience in other professional areas, which would be excellent complimenting skills to their intended employment.

The range and scope of these extra assignments cover a broad swath of professional areas. Many are assigned to the service member because it needs to get done, and, in some cases, they have no experience in the area at all. They may be formal schools available, but not always accessible, the experience level of people who have held these duties, in addition to the main job they have had, is usually quite extensive in the â€œroll up your sleeves and go for itâ€•Â• arena. In almost every case, there is an instruction in a binder on the shelf that covers the requirements of the job, required reports, appropriate forms, and who to contact in the command structure for assistance.

A key feature of these collateral duties are that they serve the needs of the entire unit, not just the division or department the service member is assigned. A resulting management issue that arises is the unit commanders issue direction to an officer, or enlisted member several steps down the chain of command in many cases. As a junior officer (see duties listed below), I regularly interacted with the captain and executive officer, being tasked directly by them, and reporting back, around my department

head. I was blessed with a good command climate, where this worked pretty well, with few conflicts in my tasking, and those were easily worked out. I mention this, because it was my first experience operating in a matrix style management scheme, which gave me an appreciation of the requirements to keep my direct boss informed of the direction I had received, and also to report status of jobs regularly to him, so he could answer the CO and XO, as well.

On my first assignment as an Ensign (O-1), I had a long list of collateral things to do. Besides being assigned to manage the Operations Specialists and Electronics Technicians, I had my shipboard watch assignments for underway and import conditions. Those were the top level, expected portions of the â€œposition description.Ã¢â€• From here the list begins. Iâ€™ll list it just for illustrative purposes, as best I can recall:

Helicopter Control Officer
Landing Signal Officer
Legal Officer
Public Affairs Officer
Cruise Book Officer (published to document a 6 month overseas deployment, much like a yearbook from high school)
Alternate Communications Management Security Custodian
Collateral Duty Intelligence Officer (CDIO)
Intelligence Photography Officer
Intelligence Publication Custodian
Top Secret Material Custodian
Secret Material Custodian
Registered Mail Custodian
Navy Wide Exam Custodian

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I know there were a few more, but those ones did require a significant amount of time to complete.

In other assignments, I was a Safety Officer, Electrical Safety Officer, Heat Stress and Hearing Protection Officer, Command Managed Equal Opportunity Officer, Classified Material Security Officer, and Physical Security Officer. There are laundry lists of many other â€œjobsâ€•Â• I either escaped, or I never was in a position to have to hold them. The number of added areas of responsibility was much longer for junior officers when I left the service. I knew I had plenty to do, and their lists by the mid-90s were much longer.

As you can see from the list of additional requirements I worked, they cover a rather eclectic span of disciplines. An experienced officer or senior enlisted person who comes to apply for a job with you will have a similar list of duties they fulfilled, while having their primary duties. Take a few minutes to ask them what collateral assignments they had, you may well find skills and knowledge in their backgrounds they would never have been able to fit one their resumes.

Category

1. Leadership
2. Military

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