

# MANAGEMENT MINUTE

## Five Ways to Motivate Using the Marines' MVP System

*By Chief John Buckman, III, IAFC President 2001-2002*

The U.S. Marine Corps follows a motivation path they call “MVP,” or mission, values and pride. MVP is based on five practices that you can adapt to motivate your firefighters:

1. “Overinvest in/instill your organization’s core values.” Start with the first time a job candidate contacts you and carry the message through their initiation and training after you hire them.

Benefit: The practice builds a sense of belonging to a worthwhile organization.

2. “Prepare every person to lead.” If you’re like most top managers, you separate followers from leaders. But that labels followers as disposable from the start. Sending the message that each person can be a leader builds a collective pride and trust. Each person knows he or she can rely on the next person to help.

3. “Distinguish between teams and single-leader groups.” Teams are run by a group, and the entire group is accountable for results of their decisions. A single-leader group identifies one person, usually a senior member, to lead and decide. Both groups have a purpose, but don’t confuse the two. Putting individual leaders in a room and labeling them a “team” forces those who think of themselves as leaders to give up control. And that will cause frustration and resentment, but not results.

4. “Attend to the bottom half.” In business, poor performance often leads to dismissal. That’s because entry-level firefighters are generally seen as replaceable. Devoting time to your entry-level staffers will not only build a stronger team, but also a positive motivation model to other leaders in the organization.

5. “Use discipline to build pride.” While such top-down control may seem counterintuitive to motivation, the Marines view discipline as a tool to build pride. Here’s how: Holding recruits accountable for their actions helps them refine work habits, which improves their selfimage. The result is greater motivation to discipline themselves so they can outperform expectations.