

Title:

Can Businesses Learn from the Military?

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625

Summary:

A different view regarding motivating your workforce

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Article Body:

A few years ago I left the forces after serving a full 22 years. I joined the Army straight after leaving school; it still seems like yesterday when I walked into the careers office in Barnsley as a spotty eek. After numerous test, medicals and a 2 day assessment I was told I was going to be a vehicle mechanic 'B' in the REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers), a right mouthful when I was full of beer and attempting to chat up a young filly. Funnily enough when I enrolled in the REME I was not told I would be spending the first year after basic training in a technical school, if I had known this prior I would defiantly have tried something else.

During my career I became knowledgeable in a host of subjects, some unmentionable, the ones that are printable include; vehicle engineering, health and safety, human resources, general management. During my career I worked in some fantastically well organised, well managed places and unfortunately some not so good places. This leads me to the question; can a business really learn from the military?

Since leaving the forces I have been involved in a few business ventures, generally poor unsuccessful ones. Looking back I honestly believe if the management of these businesses employed a more military type attitude they would have not failed so easily. So what do I mean by a military type attitude? I certainly do not mean acting like the cast of Bad Lads Army.

This is what I mean:

In normal business life the main motivator is money or the fear of the boot. This is probably why so many people nowadays change job so frequently. These should not be the only motivation tools a company employ. The Army uses the best

motivation tool there is 'Time Off'. Of course having your workforce at home most of the time is counter productive.

In the early 90's I managed a small vehicle workshop in Berlin. I had one military worker and one civilian. During the quiet periods I would call for the dice to be brought out, sometimes as early as 8am. The dice were thrown by all of us, the lowest combined score from 2 throws meant that person had to man the telephone all day, whilst the winners disappeared either home or to the local golf course. This management tactic as well as others ensured I had a happy workforce, production statistics don't lie they showed an overall output increase. Other methods in different places included production meetings in the local pub, rewarding my hardest worker by giving him 5 days off; this certainly spurred the rest of the lads on and a host of other methods.

Of course there were times when I worked with unmotivated, self opinionated, lazy soldiers, on these occasions I adopted a sterner approach.

I then look at the majority of workers in everyday business life; I see they are generally unmotivated, unless they are self employed. I wonder if this is because they are not well managed. My guess would be they are not managed at all. My cousin works in a very busy establishment as soon as his boss leaves the office, everyone logs on to EBay. How counter productive is that?

To conclude in my opinion many lessons can be learned from the British military in how to manage and run organisations. I should send my article to the BBC maybe they will run a programme on it, now that would be funny.

About the author - Peter Arkwright recently retired from the military, he is now the Managing Director of www.bizseller4u.com
A new portal that allows people to list their Business for Sale

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