

Reward Your Huns

By CSM Christine Seitzinger

Attila the Hun knew how important rewarding his soldiers was to keeping his army together. An inspired leader of a nomadic conglomeration of 700,000 barbarians in the 5th century A.D., Attila found that his tribesmen would leave behind their families and travel great distances for a chance to pillage and loot; they would even fight each other.

While the Huns' reward came in the form of booty looted from conquered cities or tribes, today's soldiers are a little more civilized. The basic reason for using such incentives, however, remains the same. Rewarding exceptional work keeps soldiers motivated.

Integration and use of creative rewards is one of the cornerstones of effective leadership. A good way to come up with ideas is to ask your soldiers for feedback and suggestions.

Rewards not only single out exceptional workers, but also create a positive story that the soldier will be able to tell others time and time again. Of course their spouses, significant others and co-workers will hear about the achievement and what the company or organization did to celebrate it. As a result, the soldier relives the recognition over and over.

In *Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun*, author Wess Roberts devotes a chapter to the barbarian leader's philosophy on rewarding his soldiers. "Heaps of booty, promotion through the ranks and recognition as being a mighty warrior are reserved for those who go beyond the normal call of duty," reads one passage. Through his innovative leadership style, Attila transformed tribes of undisciplined savages into one of the greatest armies of all time.

You can reward people in many ways for the positive things they do. However, in order to motivate our workers to do their best, we need to be creative in the ways we reward outstanding perfor-



mance. Sometimes we get caught up in our daily routine and forget to give those pats on the back. GEN Bruce C. Clark was quoted as saying, "Ten pats on the back for each kick in the shins is a very good ratio for the commander."

Consider a soldier's performance. How about a counseling statement? Most of the time when you mention those two words, everybody thinks, "negative, negative." We need to change that. All soldiers receive counseling from their leaders, or should. So, another way we can reward them is through a positive counseling statement. The NCOER is another way to evaluate performance.

A paycheck alone doesn't always motivate people to do their best on the job. Again, rewards are another means of motivation. I recently asked soldiers at a quarterly briefing for their ideas about rewarding soldiers and got some great suggestions.

When a soldier exceeds the norm,

whether it be personal or for the organization, you need to immediately recognize the achievement in a memorable and unique way. The more creative and unique you are in rewarding your soldier, the more enjoyable that even will be, not only for the soldier and yourself but others.

Think globally. Arrange for a senior leader—company commander, first sergeant or post sergeant major—to have lunch or dinner with some of your soldiers. Talk to the people at the dining facility and arrange it. In Attila's words, "Sincere concern for and purposeful mingling with your Huns will raise their spirits and encourage greater valor."

Dedicate a parking space as a reward. Or, you may want to consider the more traditional impact award. There are also certificates of appreciation and achievement and three- and four-day passes. Sometimes, just a hand-written "thank you" on a card can mean a lot. Along the same lines, many units and installations develop coins that are given to soldiers to recognize outstanding performance and dedication to duty.

A variety of command information channels can publicize a soldier's accomplishments. For instance, e-mail can be used to announce winners of NCO and soldier of the month, quarter and year boards. Base newspapers normally run soldier features and highlight the accomplishments of service school graduates, winners of NCO and soldier boards, including the names of top NCO course graduates. Unit bulletin boards are the perfect place for "walls of fame" to showcase important unit events through photos of promotions, reenlistments and awards ceremonies.

Leaders can provide frequent personal rewards by being creative, proactive and positive. The key to an effective rewards program is finding what motivates or challenges soldiers and civilian employees to do their personal best. ■

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