

Good news- Easy to read, very timely and very inspirational.

Bad news- Even though they are described in an exciting, dangerous, national security related, life threatening setting, you have probably heard most of the principles before.

Good news- A couple ideas stand out and are absolutely worth considering. And as usual, I hope you can apply them right away.

Summary:

Written by an anonymous, active member of the Navy Seals, not a seasoned author, this book jumped into the top ten best-sellers list minutes after Osama Bin Laden was taken out last month. I found it on my wife's new Kindle while I was scrolling through the non-fiction must read list and ordered it. With so many people buying it in the last month, the book is currently out of print on Amazon.com.

The armed forces have given us many enduring managerial and leadership models and concepts, and in the elite Navy SEALs commando unit, one key principle is teamwork. The SEALs take teamwork very seriously. Members are taught that their very lives, as well as national security, depend on the team. They pledge to each other that "dead or alive, bloody or broken, team members (all of them) are coming home!" (No man left behind) The book describes ritual teamwork ordeals where trainees sit huddled together for hours in icy, raging surf, their instructors taunting them as they help each other stave off drowning and hypothermia. There are many other gut wrenching training related and real life action stories in the book that make it worth reading. Each chapter lists key lessons and the leadership principles will be very helpful and on target for some (and can mean life or death for these SEAL's and their leaders), but many of us have seen these principles in different contexts before. They include:

- Improve the quality of your team by truly screening prospective teammates
- Trust, respect, accountability, consistency, flexibility, stamina, perspective, empowerment and reliability are paramount and necessary
- Stay involved with your team. Don't be aloof and distant. Absence begets suspicion.
- Identify and utilize the talents of those on your team
- Identify potential problems before they become critical
- Challenge your team with high standards
- Watch out for burn out, allow for and learn from mistakes and avoid knee-jerk reactions
- Have no ambiguity in your mission statement
- Don't think too highly of yourself. You came from the trenches too.
- Have confidence: be strong, real and trusted
- Say what needs to be said. Keep people informed. And listen too.
- Lead from the field, not the sidelines
- Be mindful of morale
- Be a student of human interaction
- Don't give false or petty rewards
- Don't micromanage. Assign jobs only if you trust the assignees to do them.
- Encourage physical and mental fitness
- Assess risks well and do preventive maintenance
- What you get from your team is directly related to what you give to it

And, as I said, these are all excellent reminders, but best ideas I gleaned are really not in the principles, but rather are from the concept of SEALs teams, themselves. They involve solving the really tough business situations we face and are included in the Applications section below.

Applications:

1. When you have a really, really tough, intricate or difficult problem to solve that really, really needs high priority action, don't be afraid to take your very, very best people out of their current role for a period of time and have them take care of the problem. They are your best (your version of the SEALs) and they will solve it. And if they are your best, they will also be able to figure out how to keep their regular work going. And don't forget to really, really reward them!!

2. If you liked application #1, then have your SEAL's team(s) ready to go with appropriate training, facilities, plans, leaders, etc.

3. And, if your business model fits, consider having a SEALs Team or SWAT Team as a permanent fixture. I know many organizations that do.

And Finally:

I work with many clients on Consulting, Training and Coaching and have already put aspects of this approach to use with some of them. If you want more thoughts about this book, or want to add your own, check out my blog. You can visit it at <http://richsteel.blogspot.com/> This opinion and others are posted on my newly revised web site: www.rsbvc.com To talk more about this and other topics, e-mail me (Rich Steel) at rsbvc@aol.com or call me at my office on 610 388 3680 or on my cell at 610 324 8466.