CHAPTER ONE: PROFESSIONALISM

In case you haven't noticed, STARFLEET is a pretty big place. Over 4,000 STAR TREK fans in the United States, Canada, Europe, and even New Zealand. All speaking different languages, worshipping different gods, growing up in different cultures and backgrounds. All united by one common, but tenuous thread — the love of STAR TREK.

This diversity is a wonderful thing. It means fresh ideas, the chance to meet new people and opportunities for experiences that would not have been possible without STARFLEET's international presence.

It also means challenges. A fresh idea from a liberal in New York is certain to upset a conservative in Missouri. A passing joke concerning a Muslim and a Jew inspires a retaliatory joke about Christians, resulting in controversy. A proposal floated by a well-intentioned but adventurous member ends up sparking a backlash among members who are opposed to the change.

The SFMC is simply a microcosm of STARFLEET at large. We have friendly people and not-so-friendly people; religious and agnostics; personalities both outgoing and withdrawn. Some believe the SFMC is too much the USMC, while others will angrily retort that the SFMC hasn't gone far enough to recognize its debt to the US Marines. In spite of all this, membership packets must be built, Academy courses sent and graded, problems resolved with a minimum of wasteful conflict.

How does this happen? How can a misanthrope from Michigan work with a party animal from Peoria, and still make sure that a simple Trek fan in Texas gets what he wants from the SFMC?

In a word, professionalism.

Consider this definition of the term professional: "One who, by appearance, bearing and conduct represents himself and his profession in a manner worthy of respect and emulation." It isn't Webster's, but it describes perfectly the kind of attitude you need to express as a STARFLEET Marine.

Professionalism is the act of being a professional. By looking and acting in a manner "worthy of respect and emulation," individuals with different back grounds, perspectives and world-views can not only coexist, but work together in a way that benefits everyone.

Express a professional attitude, display a professional appearance while conducting yourself in a professional manner and you will inspire confidence not only in yourself, but those who are associated with you. On the other hand, if your attitude is poor, your dress is sloppy and you have never met a person you liked, then that too will reflect not only on you, but on everyone who is associated with you.

PROFESSIONALISM HELPS YOU IN MORE PLACES THAN STARFLEET

That's right — by learning to display professionalism, you will not only enhance your experience in STARFLEET, but in other areas as well. Today's market place is more competitive than ever, with many highly educated and qualified individuals unable to find satisfying jobs. The difference between Applicant A and Applicant B is often found not in a resume or work experience, but by image, conduct and attitude. An employer presented with two equally qualified applicants is going to pick the one who displays the most professional bearing and outlook, because he knows that his customers, given the choice, will respond better to that individual.

How can you be a STARFLEET Marine professional? Let's take a look at the definition of professional, one step at a time.

APPEARANCE

It is a fact of life that people often get their first impression from you image. Your hygiene, clothing and posture all individually contribute to a composite image that can be compelling if done right, and boring or even revolting if not enough attention is paid to it.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

The Puritans often said "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." They believed that a clean body was a sign of strong character and pure spirit. Considering this was two centuries before the invention of deodorant, one can see why it might have been important to them!

A clean and neatly groomed body is very important to a professional appearance. While you don't need a "high and tight" (the standard military cut, which is simply a term for 'I'm bald and I know it, but won't admit it!'), you should keep your hair, no matter what length you choose to wear it neatly trimmed and styled. If hotel security keeps telling your date that pets aren't allowed in the lobby, then you may have a grooming problem! If you're male, watch that mustache and beard — nothing looks worse than a Mountain Man in BDUs.

Odor is a delicate subject, but one that should be addressed. In some STARFLEET chapters, there may be an individual who only bathes on alternate Tuesdays in months beginning with "R". That individual is usually not invited to parties, and when that individual sits down at the meeting, there is normally a resounding lack of company around him. The moral of the story: Don't be that person.

If you are going to be speaking in public, or will be on close contact with others, pay special attention to your face and hands. Your audience will be paying special attention to both parts, so make sure they are clean and present-able. Avoid gaudy or flashy accessories (for ladies, this includes distracting nail polish), since each of these items will distract the audience from your message.

CLOTHING

In or our of uniform, you are representing the STARFLEET Marines. Make sure your clothing is clean, neat, and in good taste. If you are so callous as to wear a T-shirt with "Nuke the Gay Unborn Whales" emblazoned on it, your associates will not forget it when you put on your SFMC uniform.

If you wish to wear a STARFLEET Marine uniform, wear it right or don't wear it at all. The Marine Force Manual contains several different uniforms, designed to fit any price range, body type and Trek era, so you should be able to find one that you like and can afford.

Make every effort to put the right insignia in the right place. If the Marine Force Manual isn't specific enough ask your OIC or other member of the chain of command for guidance. If all else fails, pose the question to TRACOM (which produced the manual) and they will locate the answer for you.

Here is a quick checklist for squaring away your uniform:

1. Launder it, and remove any obvious stains — ketchup, grease, paintball residue, etc. Class C uniforms (BDUs) can usually be machine-washed and tumble-dried, but you may need to dry-clean the Class A and B uniform sets, especially if they are made of wool or other fine fabrics.

2. Press your uniform. You are not in the field, so the "tactical" look (i.e., grungy and dirty) is a no-go. BDUs, especially the commercial knock-offs found in US Cavalry and other "outfitter" magazines, are normally made of cotton-synthetic blends, which need a bit of care to look crisp. Spray-starch is also recommended, though you should use it sparingly to avoid shiny spots. Special places to look are the pocket flaps (on BDUs), which tend to curl up; shirt-tails; and pants. The clothing doesn't have to stand on its own, but it shouldn't look as if you have been wearing it since last week, either.

POSTURE AND MOVEMENT

Your posture and stance while communicating, particular with those who are not members of the SFMC, says a lot about the way you think about them. Avoid crossing your arms while listening; it may communicate a negative or defensive attitude. Maintain eye contact during a conversation, while talking and listening, and don't interrupt unless absolutely necessary. Speak clearly and calmly, even when you are angry; it will add weight to your words, and lets the other party know that you are serious about resolving the situation. It is also important to speak slowly and maintain awareness of both the tone and volume of your voice. Does your voice get higher when you are excited? Louder when you are angry? Work to moderate these habits; recent research has shown that disagreements are often brought on not by the content of conversation, but by its presentation.

Smile every chance you get, especially if you are attempting to communicate an awkward or potentially controversial issue. The gesture will calm your audience and signal that you are not being threatening. If the issue is grave enough that a smile is inappropriate, do not go to the other extreme and scowl. This will immediately set most individuals on the defensive, making cooperation difficult.

When walking, always move with purpose. Keep your back as straight as possible and hold your head high. A person who shuffles aimlessly about the place may give the impression that he lacks direction, an impression that could carry over into other interactions. This does not mean marching or hurrying. It does mean that, whatever speed you choose to walk, you always look as if you have a goal and are determined to reach it.

ATTITUDE

There are three common characteristics that are found in varying degrees in every STARFLEET Marine. These are self-confidence, initiative and assertiveness.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Self-confidence is belief in yourself, your abilities and your value as an individual. It is presented in many ways — the pride you take in your hygiene and dress, for instance, and your tolerance of the differing views of others. Without self-confidence, you cannot lead — or follow — effectively.

INITIATIVE

Initiative is the ability to make decisions and take actions independently, without the necessity of direction from others. Initiative is closely related to self-confidence; each feeds into the other. Also called self-motivation, this personality trait is especially important in the volunteer environment of the Corps, where individuals are often asked to take on responsibilities with little or no active supervision, due to circumstances of geography, personality or job description. The self-motivated Marine is able to look at the environment around him, determine the best course of action to take, and then take it — without stopping every five minutes to ask for further instructions.

ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness is a word describing a combination of traits that, when put together, give you the determination to succeed despite all obstacles. As an assertive Marine, you respect and value the opinions of others, but are not afraid to have, believe in and express your own.

When necessary, you are willing to be forceful, but will not force your opinions or views on those who cannot accept them.

LETS GET DANGEROUS...

Each of the above traits are vital to be a good leader or member. However, too much or too little of any one of these can lead to disaster. Following are a few examples of personality types with an excess or shortage of these characteristics.

SELF-CONFIDENCE: SLOBS AND SNOBS

The "slob" shows his lack of confidence by presenting a lack of personal care. He's the guy who shows up for meetings in ragged, dirty jeans and embarrasses everyone by simply claiming to be a part of the group. His uniform, if you can call it that, looks as if he used it for a tablecloth and then slept in it to boot. He is unkempt, often uncouth and unfriendly, and apathetic about how his fellow members react to him. If you ask him what people might think about him, he says "I don't really care, man, I'm just here for the cheese dip."

The "snob," on the other hand, shows his insecurity by tripping to the opposite side of the scale. He takes every chance to remind you and everyone else in the same grid square of how many ribbons, awards and titles he has. He places more value on his fictional rank than on any other aspect of his being. He has a desperate need for recognition, and to get that recognition, he criticizes others. When there is a clique to be had, you will often find him hanging around it, always prepared to give advice on how not to do things, but completely unable to put his advice into action. This guy is the one who demands a special place in the meeting room, and demands that everyone, new members and old, treat him with a respect bordering on worship.

INITIATIVE: LEMMINGS AND SUPERHEROES

The lemming suffers from a severs lack of personal initiative, and you will often find self-confidence missing, as well. He's the guy who agrees with everyone and goes along with the majority opinion, no matter what. If he has personal opinions, he keeps them to himself. In order to duck personal responsibility, he prefers that every decision be reviewed by a committee (of which he won't be a member, since that would mean accountability). He will not do anything unless someone agrees to do it first, or unless he can be part of a larger group. He loves the word "teamwork" but has no idea what it truly means.

The superhero typifies good initiative gone bad. Unlike his opposite, the lemming, this dude hates the word "teamwork" and doesn't want to know what it means. This "hero" has no need for help — others just get in the way, because they can't do it right in the first place. This guy is almost always a poor communicator — he has a great deal of difficulty explaining precisely what he needs, so instead of trying, he chooses to do it himself. Like all the "problem personalities" we have discussed previously, this Marine often suffers from a great lack of personal confidence. By asking for help, by delegating, he thinks he is showing how weak he is. He volunteers for everything, but rarely gets much done. This is because he is too busy defending his turf to plan his work and then work the plan. Superhero has "burnout" written all over his forehead, at which time his chief complaint will be that "he had to do it all himself".

ASSERTIVENESS: SPEEDBUMPS AND BULLDOZERS

The speed bump is unassertive, and as a result, is completely unable to initiate personal action. He is always reacting to situations that others put him into, a lifestyle that is personally frustrating and professionally inhibiting. The common thread that continues to run through the personality is a lack of self-confidence. Deep down, he believes that he deserves to be trodden on — that he is simply fated to be a rung on someone else's ladder of success. This feeling becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; as he continues to be pushed around , he gets to feeling weaker, which then results in being pushed around some more. To cover his weakness, he constantly calls loudly for action, but refuses to follow through and volunteer. Unlike the lemming, who just simply won't move at all, the speed bump will eventually contribute, but only if constantly supervised and pushed, usually by a bulldozer.

The bulldozer is just too assertive. He is the Marine who must always be in charge, no matter whose project he happens to be working on. The bulldozer is a controlling personality; he must shape his environment, because he is unable or unwilling to shape himself. Confidence plays a great part in this personality, as it does in all. Like his fellows, "BD" believes that others see him as weak and incompetent. Deep down, he believes it about himself, too, and in order to prove to everyone that he isn't the idiot he thinks everyone sees him to be, he wants to set himself up so he can't fail. This individual often believes that everyone is out to get him — when he sees two or more individuals working on something he isn't involved in, he immediately jumps to the conclusion that they must be plotting against him. The

bulldozer wants followers, and he usually gets them by bullying some speed bumps!

In later courses, we will discuss specific techniques for dealing with all these personalities. However, in order to prepare for leadership, you must be aware of the existence of these personalities. Perhaps you fit into one of these categories; if you recognize yourself here, don't despair — all is not lost. Self-awareness is the first step to resolving self-doubt.

CONDUCT AND COURTESY

Professionalism is also a matter of personal conduct. You can look great and be very confident, but if you are rude or thoughtless you will still not succeed in putting across a positive, professional image.

Courtesy is very important to the professional. It is the most effective tool you have to avoid the misunderstanding and miscommunication that often bedevil interpersonal relationships. If someone is talking to you, listen quietly; don't interrupt. If you need to speak to someone else, wait calmly until the prior conversation is finished before beginning your own.

Courtesy is especially important in situations where anger or other strong emotions are involved, or when cultural, language or religious differences form a barrier to understanding. Don't let frustration or anger guide your words and actions; channel the emotion into positive thought related to the topic at hand. A smile is a great way to dissolve a tense situation.

Even when not engaged in argument, courtesy is important and useful. Volunteer to assist other members of your group when you see their need. Hold the door for others. When new visitors and guests come in, be among the first to extend a heartfelt greeting, a warm smile, and a handshake.

Many times, laughter is the best medicine; however, like any prescription, it has side effects. Many a meeting is completely derailed by a well-meaning but thoughtless jokester who spends the entire evening or afternoon making one joke after another. Everyone may be happy, but nothing gets accomplished, and your peers will usually be a lot more annoyed than joyful. Engage in horseplay and shouting only when appropriate, and never in the middle of meeting or indoor gathering.

Most importantly, respect the rights of others. Respect their property, their person and their right to enjoy their fan experience as much as you enjoy yours, and you will earn respect in return.

"THE HAT TRICK"

There is a story that, a couple of years ago, an individual belonged to both the SFMC and another fan club in which Marines were present. The individual had responsibilities in both organizations at the "Regional" level, and took both very seriously.

The Marine also took "hats" very seriously, and wanted to make sure that time was given to both positions. Accordingly, he modified his BDU uniform so that he could use the same uniform to fit both roles. The organizational name tape, the shirt pocket and sleeve were all fitted with Velcro so that the Marine could conveniently switch uniforms and "identities."

Unfortunately, the story goes, the Marine switched more than his uniform. At a convention at which the Marine was present, he brought both sets of insignia with him. Naturally, many of his fellow Marines were "dual-affiliated," as is so commonly the case; equally naturally, they often had questions that covered both of the organizations. However, the Marine officer would only answer questions about the SFMC when he had SFMC insignia on; and would only answer questions about the other organization after he had switched "roles," literally by taking off the STARFLEET stuff and putting the other regalia on.

This caused a great deal of controversy; after all, convention attendees have better things to do than stand around while somebody puts on the right dress to answer a question. It eventually led to quite a row with both organizations.

You are probably wondering what this has to do with professionalism. The Marine wasn't hostile or unethical (though he was a bit strange, and remains so to this day), so he really wasn't "unprofessional" in that sense of the word. However, this incident illustrates a valid point that applies to professionalism: No matter what hat you think you are wearing, someone else may not get the message. The Marine in the story considered himself a member of STARFLEET when he wore SFMC regalia, and a member of the other organization when he wore its insignia; however, the members who relied on him for information considered him a member of whichever organization they needed information on at the moment, and acted accordingly. When they couldn't get it, because the Marine was wearing the wrong "hat," they got upset.

How does this apply to you? Many of our members have the bad habit of thinking that, because they eliminate their rank or some other "SFMC" identification from their correspondence, or because they tell you during a phone conversation that they "aren't speaking as a Marine", that they then have the right to act like children. They are then completely surprised when their peers apply that attitude to their standing in STARFLEET or the SFMC, and judge their friends and associates by that yardstick, as well.

The moral of this story: You wear whatever hat your audience says you are wearing. No matter how hard you try to distance yourself from your various "roles" or "personas," and no matter how you try to switch between them, the fact is that everyone sees you as only one person, and if you are acting like a child, they will think you are a child, whether you are playing a STARFLEET Marine, a general member, or just plain old Joe Snuffy You. Therefore, it behooves you to always act professionally. You may not take your rank or position as seriously as others do!

THE FINAL COMPONENT: SELF-CONTROL

The final component of behaving professionally is self-control. No matter how hard you try, no matter how patient you are, someone will eventually learn how to "yank your chain," and will give it a big pull. The difference between being a professional or a putz is that one will give in to his natural angry impulse and shoot back with both barrels, while the other will analyze the situation and respond calmly.

Anger is a powerful force; it can be used constructively, or it can be used to destroy. The professional channels the anger toward the goal he or she is attempting to achieve. The putz wasted every ounce of energy he has on avenging himself on everyone who he thinks has hurt him.

Self-control is simply that voice in your head that, like a control rod in a nuclear reactor, stops your reaction. When your impulse (driven by anger, etc.) says "Kill 'em, stomp 'em, eat 'em raw", your self-control says "Stay cool, act like a pro!" Like all the other skills covered in this chapter, it can be learned. It is also one that gets easier with practice.

If you have real problems with self-control, be honest enough to admit it, and then do something about it. Think about Captain Picard of the USS Enterprise. How many times do you see him telling Vice Admiral Nechayev what he really thinks of her? (Perhaps that she is a psycho witch who has no life, and who really needs to find some mode of employment that does not require putting the Enterprise in the line of fire once a week?) You can bet that he has often felt the urge to tell her something like that, but he knows that the situation won't improve much if he gives in to the impulse. Put yourself in his shoes when you are angry — how would he act? If you aren't a big fan of Picard, then pick someone else who you think acts like a professional, and emulate that person.

It may seem strange at first, but most mental health professionals recommend this technique, called "role assumption," very highly. Eventually, after imitating him enough, you learn to apply the technique on you own, and soon you'll be "acting the part" professionally.

EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER ONE

Please note: this is not the final exam. Do not turn these exercises in to the SFMCA.

I. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Explain each of the following terms in your own words.
1. Professionalism
2. Professional
3. Initiative
4. Assertiveness
5. Self Confidence

In your own words, describe how each of the following areas can affect your image as a professional.
6. Appearance
7. Attitude
8. Conduct/Courtesy
9. Self Control

II. SELF ANALYSIS

In "The Hat Trick" (page xx), the Marine in question causes a controversy by asking associates to only address him about one organization or the other when he has appropriate insignia on. Think of a time when you witnessed a leader or individual in fandom "take off his hat" and act unprofessionally.
1. How did you react?
2. When witnessing the behavior of incident, how difficult was it to separate the individual from his or her position?
3. Did you succeed in doing so?

Think of a time when you lost your temper at a fellow Fleet member or fan.
4. What was the conflict about?
5. What caused you to lose your temper?
6. Was the conflict resolved? How?
7. What could you have done differently that might have prevented the loss of temper, or diffused the situation somewhat?

Consider the personality descriptions in "Let's Get Dangerous" (page xx), then think of someone who fits one or more of these personality types.
8. What behavior do they exhibit that make you believe the individual has one of these personalities? Be specific.
9. Imagine yourself as that individual. How do you think they look at their life and world? What kind of things do you think the individual could do to develop a more positive and confident outlook?
10. How do you react to this individual?

Every person is a unique individual, with a mix of traits. Each of us has confidence, initiative and assertiveness in different proportions, giving us our personality. Take a good look at yourself, and try to determine your own proportions.
11. Of the three traits presented (confidence, initiative, assertiveness), which do you believe you have the most of? Why do you think that?
12. Which trait do you believe you have the least of? Why do you think that?
13. Name one or more individuals that you would consider "professional."
14. What traits give you that impression? Be as specific as possible.
15. What traits do you see in this individual that you might be able to emulate? How might you go about doing it?
16. In "Professionalism Helps You In More Places Than STARFLEET" (page xx), the author says that "customers, given the choice, will respond better' to the individual with the most professional image. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

CHAPTER TWO:

COMMUNICATION

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Communication may be defined as "the transfer of ideas and information in a mutually comprehensible format between two or more persons or groups".

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

As in many other organizations today, more information is available from more sources within and without SFI than ever before. Due to advanced communication technology, it is easier than ever to access and share that information, leading to unimagined opportunities for collaboration and achievement of our common goals.

With new opportunities, however, come new challenges. One of the greatest is that, as communication becomes more rapid and frequent, the chance of misunderstanding increases as well.

SFI has several thousand members spread literally throughout the world. Each member is a unique individual, the product of culture and environment. Each looks at the world in a slightly different way and through sometimes radically different sets of experience.

In order to carry on business with as little misunderstanding as possible, while still enjoying the benefits of association with new people of different beliefs, clear and effective communication skills are a must.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Your communication may be considered effective is the other person understands the idea or information you are trying to impart, without confusion, error, or misinterpretation. If they don't understand what you mean, they only understand part of what you mean or they get the wrong idea completely, then your communication was ineffective. Obviously, when communicating you want to be as effective as possible. The best way to do this is to start by choosing the right media for your message.

MODERN MEDIA

Most forms of communication can be separated into two broad categories, verbal or non-verbal. The four most common forms of communication are listed below, along with a brief description of each. You will notice that each format has it's own advantages and disadvantages. This is an important point to consider when selecting the method you will use to communicate your ideas to someone, and will be discussed a little later on in this chapter.

NON-VERBAL FORMATS

TRADITIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

Since humankind first developed an alphabet, it has been using the written word to transfer information. Even with the lightning-fast communication technologies available today, the letter is still considered the most efficient and legally reliable form of communication.

Paper is durable, easy to use, readily available and cheap. It can be found in thousands of colors, weaves, weights and materials. It can be shipped easily and inexpensively literally anywhere in the world, regardless of the technology available to the sender or recipient.

Finally, the written letter remains the accepted standard for legal or formal correspondence with government and business entities. The many delivery options available insure privacy and accuracy of delivery.

There are disadvantages, however. Although traditional correspondence is relatively inexpensive (especially when compared to telephone usage), electronic messaging may be cheaper yet. The nearly infinite variety of papers come from a very finite number of trees, hundreds of thousands of which are destroyed each day. Whereas an electronic document can generally be duplicated with the click of a mouse, special (and expensive) photocopying technology is required to duplicate paper documents.

A final disadvantage is delivery. Many delivery options exist for paper documents; however, the speed and reliability with which these documents are delivered is directly related to the amount of money you are willing to spend on it. No matter how much money you lay out for delivery, through the Postal Service, Federal Express, etc., it will never get there as fast as if you had sent it electronically.

However, if you have a legal document that must be delivered, the intended recipient does not have access to electronic communication technology, or the format, subject matter or purpose of the letter does not lend itself to electronic communication, traditional correspondence is the way to go.

ELECTRONIC MAIL

Electronic messaging, or "e-mail," is a relatively new technology that has just become widely available over the past few years. Increases in reliability, coupled with decreased costs for equipment and access, are rapidly making e-mail the non-verbal format of choice for many.

For those with access to the technology, e-mail provides many advantages over traditional correspondence. The greatest advantage is speed. An e-mail message takes only a few seconds to get to its appointed destination, since it travels at the speed of light. Even if the message does not get through immediately, due to disruptions in the delivery system, it will usually make its way within a few hours.

Cost is also a factor. A letter, sent via First Class US Mail to another destination in the US, costs .32 cents for the first ounce (about the first six pages). With a local Internet connection a document ten times that size may be sent for less than a penny — in fact, hundreds of copies for that document can be sent at the same time, for the same price. The document may be sent anywhere in the world where a connection exists for the same price as sending it to the neighbor next door (compare this to International Priority Mail from the USPS, which charges a minimum of $8.95 for three-to-seven day service).

E-mail tends to be less formal than traditional mail; because of its speed e-mail messages tend to be shorter, resembling a hybrid cross between letters and conversation on a phone. While this can be an advantage for those individuals who don't have the patience or skills to write a traditional letter, or who just want to get one or two thoughts across, it can be a major impediment to in-depth discussion. The speed with which e-mail goes from sender to recipient means that both individuals often feel pressure to respond without the kind of reflection or thought that would result from a letter saying the same thing.

Another drawback is in formatting. With today's desktop technology, a standard letter can include typographical enhancements, typefaces and graphic art designed to enhance the impact and reinforce the message of the document. Although some e-mail software supports a limited amount of enhancement (for instance, different colors or bold, italics and underlining), the recipient must usually have access to the same software that was used to create the message in order to experience those enhancements. Spelling and grammar checking are two common features of standard corre-spondence that e-mail platforms are still generally unable to match (although this capability is being built into more programs).

E-mail is not universal; unlike traditional correspondence, which can be delivered literally anywhere in the world, e-mail may only be sent to individuals who have the capability to receive it (currently, about 1% of the world's house-holds, and a little more than 10% of US households). Acquiring this capability costs a great deal. On the upside, however, most STARFLEET members are either actively "on-line" or can be reached via someone else who has the capability.

The greatest disadvantage is the lack of privacy. Any correspondence which you send through the US Postal System is protected by criminal laws which prohibit tampering with mail pieces except under court order. It is relatively easy for an expert to tell when mail has been tampered with, and established procedures exist to investigate incidents of fraud. E-mail, on the other hand, becomes the property of every individual through whose system the mail passes (Internet e-mail is delivered from your computer to the recipient's machine by being routed through a variety of intermediate machines). Any of them have the legal right to look at the message.

As more business is conducted on the Internet, encryption technologies are being developed which will enable users to enjoy some privacy. Already, several encryption programs exist for both personal and business use.

Overall, e-mail is the best format to use for messages which are time-urgent, for which privacy is not a great concern, or for messages which do not require a legal or formal format.

VERBAL FORMATS

TELEPHONES

Of the verbal formats, the telephone is probably the easiest to use. For a set price each month, you can talk as long as you want to anyone in your local area. For a larger fee, you can talk to people across the planet. Telephones allow you to discuss information without any delay in response. Subtle information can be given through audible cues like your tone of voice, inflection, speech pattern and pauses in the flow of conversation. Verbal communication may reduce the amount of misunderstanding that may occur in a written letter. It is more personal and direct, although it can certainly be formal or informal, depending on who's talking to whom about what.

The two biggest disadvantages to the telephone are cost and the inability to show visual information like pictures. Telephone calls are expensive if you make them often, and although you can call a member in Germany to chat, you will pay a stiff price for it unless you arrange for an off-peak time to call.

Not being able to show someone a picture may not be a big problem most of the time, but it is difficult to describe some things accurately without a drawing, picture or diagram — something non-verbal formats are excellent for.

However, if you need to get complex or sensitive information across, the phone makes a convenient and relatively inexpensive method of doing it.

FACE TO FACE

Personal communication is the fastest method of transferring information, as it allows you to use body language, audible and visual cues to help the other person understand. It is best for subtle or complex ideas, and allows you to demonstrate a procedure or show an item or picture directly to the viewer as you explain. The disadvantage to personal interactions may not be so obvious, but they exist. Your body language may be sending one message while you are verbally sending another, leading to confusion or distrust. Some people are nervous or intimidated when dealing directly with others. Emotions, fatigue, and background activity can all distract or distort your message. Finally, and most obviously, you have to physically meet with someone to interact personally. That limits who and when you can meet, and could cost a great deal of money to arrange.

CHOOSING THE BEST MEDIA FOR YOUR MESSAGE

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?

When you are preparing to communicate something to someone, take a moment to consider what it is you are trying to accomplish. Make your goal as simple as possible. "I want to explain an easier way to recruit new members" or "I need to make sure they know how to get to the airport".

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO AVOID?

Consider how the other person is going to receive your message. Is there a reaction you want to avoid? Is there a possible point of confusion that you need to prevent? "I don't want them to think I'm saying their method is wrong, just that this method is easier" or "I've got to make sure they go to the Regional Airport, not the County Airport".

WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

Next, you need to think about yourself and how you can best send your message. It's a matter of style, and what you are most comfortable with. Do you do better talking to people than writing to them? Or are you much better at writing things down than talking to people? (My good friend, COL Randy Bisig, is someone like that. He is great at making lists and notes, then explaining things to you from his notes. I, on the other hand, talk as if I just drank eighteen cases of Jolt Cola TM and haven't slept in a week.)

ARE YOU ANGRY?

If so, consider writing your thoughts out on paper first. It is too easy to write something you will regret on your personal computer and then send it (via e-mail) to two hundred people in the blink of an eye. Once sent, you are pretty much committed to what you said, regardless of how much you change your mind later. This has ruined more than one good STARFLEET officer's reputation. By writing things out, you can release excess hostility, possibly becoming calm before you even finish your letter. Then, if you still want to send it electronically, you won't have to worry about eating crow later.

Anger isn't always a bad thing, however, especially if it is constructive. When you need a forum to express your feelings on a subject in a manner that will allow it to take a constructive form, the traditional letter is often the way to go. Thomas Payne's Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence are just two examples of anger made eloquent by application of pen and ink.

ARE YOU TRYING TO PERSUADE SOMEONE?

Persuasion is a delicate task, and so you should try to use the most personal method of communication you can arrange. This means face to face or telephones, in most cases. It is very difficult to persuade someone to do something with a written message (unless it is my wife leaving a sign on the fridge that says "touch my donuts and you die, fat boy" which is the exception to the rule).

Exposition is the term applied to written persuasion. If you have a good grasp of grammar and language and a couple of high school English courses, the written word can be an effective medium for persuasion, especially if you intend to use graphic aids or the result of extensive research to support your argument.

EFFECTIVE WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Here are some tips on improving you written communication skills. First we will cover things common to all forms of written communication, then discuss both traditional correspondence and e-mail in greater detail.

COURTESY

Always be courteous when you write, even when angry. There are several good reasons for this. First, you get better cooperation when you are courteous. Second, your letter may be shown to others at a later date. Without under-standing the reasons for your anger or other strong emotion, your lack of courtesy may be interpreted as something else. Thirdly, there may be some misunderstanding that you are not aware of, and your anger may be misdirected or unnecessary. I have fallen into this trap on occasion, mistaking someone's comments as a personal attack and replying in anger only to discover (too late) that it was all a misunderstanding. Self-control and courtesy go hand in hand. Even if you are absolutely sure that someone is deserving of your anger, be courteous anyway. Even the Bible says "Kind-ness to your enemies is like coals heaped upon their heads" (which means, for you Biblically-challenged types, that it drives them nuts when you're nice to them and they're expecting you to scream and shout instead.) When closing a

letter, especially one where you have asked the reader to help you take action on your behalf, thank them for their time and efforts. Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best — "Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy".

PRONOUN USAGE

This may seem like a minor point, but it is an important one. Just as your tone should be geared to the reader and subject matter, so should the pronouns you use. Whether from habit or oversensitivity, many writers make the mistake of using "he/she" or "him/her" when referring to an audience of unspecified or mixed gender. Using phrases like the "he/she" combination, rather than sticking with one set of pronouns, confuses the reader and chops up your sentences into unreadable fragments.

It is neither offensive or wrong to use a single gender's set of pronouns when addressing both genders. Traditionally, the literary and business standard has been to use the male pronouns (he, him, his). TRACOM documents are written using this style. However, it is also perfectly to use female pronouns (she, her, hers). The important thing is consistency, and to avoid using both just to be inoffensive. Naturally, when addressing a specifically male or female audience, or a specific gender subject, use the appropriate pronouns. Additionally, the term "Marine," often used in SFMC manuals to refer to the third person, is considered gender-neutral, and is acceptable in almost any case.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

An acronym or abbreviation is a collection of letters that represent a larger or more complex collection of words or phrases. Abbreviations are spelled out when you say them, like using "SFMC" for "STARFLEET Marine Corps". An acronym is pronounced like some kind of slang word, like using "SNAFU" for "Situation Normal, All Fouled Up".

It is common practice to list the long form of an abbreviation or acronym the first time it appears in your writing. for example, you may use an acronym like SFMC a lot. The first time you use it in your letter, you should show what it stands for by putting the short form in parenthesis after the long form, like this:

"Members of the STARFLEET Marine Corps (SFMC) are prohibited from wearing ribbons issued by the real world military, whether or not the SFMC member has actually earned the right to do so. It is SFMC policy to use only Civil Air Patrol (CAP) ribbons for our uniforms, as CAP ribbons are cheap, easy to locate, and authorized by the appropriate CAP authority."

Note that I did the same thing for CAP as well. The exception to this is if the term is so widely recognized it is practically universal (USA, for example) or the person you are writing to obviously knows what it means (it is a safe bet, for example, that the Commandant of the STARFLEET Marine Corps knows what SFMC means...) Be careful, however in assuming that a certain acronym has a single, universal meaning. As an example, although "USA" is most often used to represent "United States of America", in a different context it might represent "United States Army".

THE FORMAT OF A GOOD LETTER

There are certain things that should always be included in your written correspondence, particularly when writing formal or business related letters. These are:

Always date your correspondence, especially if it is time-sensitive. Not only is it courteous, but it allows you to reference the document easier in the future.

RETURN ADDRESS

You wan them to write back? Tell them where to send it. This is especially vital if they toss your envelope, and later want to write to you. If you use letterhead, however, place your return address information, including a phone number, fax number and e-mail address (if any are available) below the date. If you have office hours or specific times when it is necessary to call you, put that information in the body of your letter, just before you close.

INSIDE ADDRESS

The inside address is the block where you put information about the reader the letter is intended for. Many businesses open all mail that is received on a particular day, and just send what is inside to the recipient. Putting an inside address on the letter gives those individuals the information they need to route your correspondence to the proper person.

This is also useful if your intended recipient has a spouse or friend who picks up their mail. The Inside Address will be below the return address, unless letterhead is used. In that case, put the inside address under the date (see the example letters at the end of this chapter).

SALUTATION AND REFERENCE LINE

Always use a salutation in any correspondence. It may be as simple as "Fred:" or, if speaking to an undetermined audience, "Dear Sir:" The salutation assists in setting the tone of the letter, so match it with what you intend to write in your letter body. If you are writing something formal, such as a request for promotion, use a formal greeting, such as "Commodore:" or "Dear Vice Admiral Lermontov:" If, on the other hand, this is just a friendly note, "Yo, Mike!" or "Dear Sally," will do just fine. The salutation is placed below the inside address, unless you are using a Reference or Subject line, in which case it will go below that.

Also important is the subject/reference line. Although not often used in personal correspondence, both of these items are very important if you use written correspondence for business or even within STARFLEET.

A reference line is placed between the inside address and the salutation, and begins with "Re:" which means "In Reference To. You use it if you are replying or writing about a specific piece of correspondence. A name or description of the correspondence or document is included after the reference symbol, e.g. Re: Your Correspondence of June 7, 1996 or Re: The document "TRACOM and the 24th Century." Normally, a copy of the referenced material is included with the correspondence.

If you are not referring to a specific piece of documentation, but your letter does concern only one general topic, a subject line is used instead of a reference line. This line begins with "Subject:" or "Subj.:" and is followed by the topic, e.g., "Subject: Marine Courses Available in the Professional Development Program" or "Subj.: The duties of TRACOM S-2."

THE BODY

Naturally, the body is the most important part of your letter. Before finishing the first paragraph, your reader should know what your letter is about. Use the rest of the letter to support the arguments or expand on the information given in that first paragraph. This is also where you put contact information that is not contained in your letterhead or return address, such as the best time to call you or an alternate phone/fax number or e-mail address.

SIGNATURE BLOCKS

These are very important, as it lets the reader know who is sending them the letter. In fact, most people check the signature block first thing before they even start reading the letter. A good signature block should list your abbreviated rank (LTC for Lieutenant Colonel, for example), first and last name, and any modifiers like "Jr.", "Sr." or "III" (the third, etc.) on the first line. The next line should show your position or responsibility like "OIC, 12th Brigade" or " Commanding Officer, USS Arkham". The last line should show your affiliation, like STARFLEET, SFMC, OR SFMC(R) for STARFLEET Marine Corps Reserves. If you have different areas of responsibility, particularly true of SFMC reservists, only list the most pertinent position relating to your letter. As an example, Vice Admiral Victor Lermontov is a SFMC Reservist. He is also the Commanding Officer of the USS High Frontier, a STARFLEET chapter.

If he writes a letter to the Chief of Operations, with a concern about his ship, he might use the following signature block:

VADM Victor Lermontov

Commanding Officer,
USS High Frontier STARFLEET

He could of course show SFMC(R) instead of STARFLEET, if he wanted to, but it would probably be more appropriate to show STARFLEET since his letter concerns mostly STARFLEET related information. If he writes to me concerning SFMC matters, however, he would sign as:

LGN Victor Lermontov
OIC, 299th MSG SFMC(R)

Notice that even though he may have two or more "hats" he only wears one when he signs his signature block. His rank is listed as the SFMC equivalent to his STARFLEET rank, since he is a reservist. Also not that although it is common practice to put a slogan, motto, or quote after your signature block when sending e-mail, it is inappropriate for letters in traditional format.

It is also acceptable to place "STARFLEET," "SFMC" or "SFMC(R)" immediately after your name, and leave off the third line entirely, like this:

LGN Victor Lermontov, SFMC
OIC, 299th MSG

Use your best judgment and remember that the more unnecessary things you add to a signature block, the greater your chances of looking like an egomaniac or a "stuffed shirt". Keep it simple, relevant, and straightforward.

CARBON COPIES AND ENCLOSURES

A carbon copy (or CC:) is a copy sent to an individual who is not the intended recipient of the letter, but who should be aware of the contents. All individuals for whom carbon copies are being provided should be listed on the letter, below the signature block.

An enclosure (or ENC.:) statement is used if you are attaching items to the letter (for instance, an application or pamphlet). If more than one item is being enclosed in addition to the letter, you should list them, as well.

PROOFREADING YOUR WORK

It is very important to proofread your letter before sending it out, even in e-mail format. There really is no excuse for not checking your work, except for laziness or carelessness. A carefully written proposal may go down in flames because you made the simple mistake of misspelling the name of the person you are writing to — repeatedly. Poorly written or spelled material makes a very poor impression on the reader. No one expects perfection, especially in e-mail where lower standards of spelling and grammar are accepted, but your letter should not look like it was typed by E. E. Cumming's little friend Archie. (You don't know who Archie is? Send me an e-mail and I'll let him answer you. He lives under my fridge, munching on donut crumbs while proofreading my writing.)

SPELLING

Most, if not all, word processing programs have a spelling checker. Use it! If you are computer challenged, and are typing or writing your letter in the more traditional manner, at least take the time to check the spelling of names, places, and any word with "ie" or "ou" combinations in it. I know someone who spells "friend" as "freind" or "fiend" on a regular basis and has on more than one occasion rooted for the "Kansas City Chefs".

GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION

If you won't check your spelling, or can't spell worth a darn anyway, there isn't anything I can do for you as far as grammar goes. Just go through and read your letter out loud to yourself. If you have to take a breath in the middle of a sentence, it needs a comma, or it needs to be chopped into a couple of shorter sentences. As a general rule of thumb, if

you have a sentence with more than thirty-five words in it you're either running for office or you're running off at the mouth. In the days of the telegraph, it was an economic necessity to use as few words as possible to create a message, since you paid "per word" to send the telegram. It became the mark of educated and intelligent men to send great amounts of information in as few words as possible. My personal favorite (although probably not the best example of professionalism, I admit) was one sent to Lord Home, a British noble. It said "TO HELL WITH YOU. OFFENSIVE LETTER FOLLOWS." Perhaps a better example would be the reply an American officer gave to a German delegation, that had come to request the American surrender at the Battle of the Bulge. After a lengthy, but polite explanation of the bad tactical situation the American army was in, the Germans asked the American General to surrender. His reply was "Nuts to that!" The translator explained that it meant "No" to the puzzled Germans, and history was made. The point of these examples is to use as few words as possible when you are trying to get your message across.

There are a couple of common mistakes that people make concerning punctuation. Capitalize at the beginning of a sentence. One space after periods, not two (this was a typesetting convention that is no longer necessary with modern word processors). Either indent the first line of paragraphs or leave a blank line between them, but not both. Examine the body of this and other SFMC materials to see an example of this. If your sentence has more than two commas, you probably ought to rewrite it or bread it up into two or more shorter sentences.

CONTENT

Consider what you have written. Does it cover everything you intended it to? If you were following an outline or working from a list, did you cover every item? Does your letter follow a theme, or wander around and come back to the same topic a couple of times? Remember when you sat down and thought about what you were trying to achieve with your message? Did you achieve it? If not, scrap it and do it again. Almost everything needs to be rewritten once, this is especially true the longer the material is that you are writing.

TONE

Lastly, clear your mind and take a bread from your writing. Go get a drink, fix a sandwich, or find something to do for a while. Then come back and pick up your letter and read it — as if you were the recipient of the letter, not the author. You may be surprised to discover a tone to your letter that you didn't intend to create, or you may suddenly realize that you emphasized some point too much or not enough. Fix it, then mail it, knowing you did the best that you could do. Following these steps will improve your letters, helping you build the image of a professional.

USING E-MAIL AS A PROFESSIONAL

NETIQUETTE

Netiquette is a word that was coined to describe a set of common courtesies and conventions among users of the Internet and e-mail. If comes from the term "Etiquette".

WHAT IS NETIQUETTE?

Basically, it means acting politely and with common courtesy to others on the net, as you would want to be treated. If this sounds a lot like the "Golden Rule", you're right. There are a few unique aspects to Netiquette, mostly because of the unique medium of electronic communication. We'll cover these later.

WHY USE IT?

People who cannot communicate politely and with courtesy end up not communicating at all. Why waste time talking (or writing) to a person who is rude and insulting? Without a set of "guidelines" for behavior, anarchy and chaos eventually result, and the whole system breaks down.

WHAT IS "FLAMING"?

This is the term for posting insulting, inflammatory, and generally rude messages to a person or group of persons.

The intention is, of course, to cause as much unhappiness as possible. This usually deteriorates into what I call "flaming e-mail volleyball" where a series of vicious and insulting messages are traded back and forth. This is childish and cowardly. In reality, few people would have the guts to say to your face the things they say in an e-mail message of this kind. Flaming serves no useful purpose, and instantly destroys any credibility you have as a professional. In two minutes, you can destroy a reputation you spend two years building.

Take a moment to think about this, as it is critical to your success as a STARFLEET Marine and as a leader. How many people do you know of, personally or by reputation, that are considered unprofessional because of how they conduct themselves via e-mail? I know of several who would otherwise be considered excellent members of the fan community, but have developed a reputation for unprofessional conduct because of how they handle their e-mail. It is also a sad fact that many people are quite charming in person, but turn into completely different (and unpleasant) people when they sit down in front of a keyboard. This comes from the mistaken belief that courtesy is less important on the Internet than it is in person. It is more important, not less.

SO I CAN'T BE CRITICAL OR ANGRY IN MY E-MAIL?

Of course you can. Just make sure your anger is expressed politely, and that your criticism is constructive. If you disagree with someone on something, then explain why you disagree — don't make absolute or personal statements like "You are just a control freak, Bob" or "Everyone knows that people from Texas are jerks". If you choose to make a personal attack against someone, instead of the real issue at hand, you show everyone how unprofessional and childish you are. Have you ever stood and watched two small children shouting names at each other? Have you ever wanted to be just like them?

PRIVACY

A major difference between traditional correspondence and e-mail is the relative level of privacy that is offered by each. In traditional mail, your letter is in an envelope, secure from casual attempts to read it. If someone were to open your mail and read it, it would be obvious in nearly every case. Interfering with someone's mail is a criminal offense and it carries stiff legal penalties. E-mail, in the other hand, has no such legal or physical protection. It is pathetically easy to copy an entire volume of written text from someone's e-mail and then read it, without leaving any trace of having done so. Nor, at this time, are there criminal penalties for doing so. Although there are several excellent encryption programs available (PGP, MacPGP, and Enigma all come to mind) they aren't yet easy enough to use or widely enough distributed to make e-mail secure. The basic rule of thumb is that traditional mail offers a level of security and privacy, e-mail does not.

ARE YOU ENTITLED TO PRIVACY?

Yes, provided you make an effort to provide that same privacy to others. If you post your e-mail to a Regional or National bulletin board, then you have no reasonable entitlement to privacy, obviously. If you write your letter on the outside of your envelope, then you shouldn't be surprised when people read it, either...

SHOULD YOU EXPECT PRIVACY?

No. While we are trying to raise the level of professionalism within our organization, there are still many people (inside or out) who simply do not measure up. These individuals believe that the privilege of privacy only applies to themselves, not others. E-mail multiplies this attitude, because it is so easy to abuse the system. The best way to use e-mail is to assume that everything you send will be distributed to the general public. If you wouldn't be comfortable standing on a chair in a church, saying out loud whatever you are writing, then don't send it e-mail. The more contro-versial your message, the greater the odds are that it will be re-posted to a larger audience than you intended.

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE POSTING

One of the recurring problems that occurs with e-mail, especially in STARFLEET, is the practice of posting someone's private e-mail to you into a public forum, like a list server. If someone sends you public e-mail, you can answer it publicly or privately, as you desire. By posting to you publicly, the other person has waived their right to privacy concerning that posting. If, however, someone posts to you privately, you should answer them privately. By

sending their mail to you privately, they are invoking their right to privacy. You should not violate their desire for privacy by posting their mail to a public forum. There are a few exceptions to every rule, of course. If the person sends you private e-mail that requires you to consult someone else for an answer, it may be appropriate to forward that e-mail onward. However, it is your responsibility to pass on the sender's desire for privacy to the person you are forwarding to. This prevents the final recipient from accidentally violating someone's right to the final recipient from accidentally violating someone's right to privacy. Threatening e-mail or e-mail that concerns illegal activity (that's criminally illegal, folks, not in violation of the bylaws of the Knights of Columbus, etc.) obviously isn't entitled to privacy. Finally, if the person asks or implies that you distribute the message to a larger group (a letter of thanks, a request for help, etc.) then by all means, post it as necessary.

LIST SERVERS

If you spend any time at all on-line, sending or receiving e-mail, you will encounter list servers. STARFLEET has an international list server, one or more Regional list servers per region, and several special interest ones. The STARFLEET Marines Corps has a list server, as well.

WHAT IS A LIST SERVER?

A list server (also called a listserve) is basically an automated bulletin board or public forum. You send a message to it, and it copies your message and then sends it to everyone who has subscribed to the list server, including yourself. If you read your MFM, there are instructions given on how to subscribe to the SFMC list server. List servers are an efficient way to get a lot of information out to a lot of people in a hurry, but they do have some disadvantages. First, if you don't subscribe, you don't get the messages from the listserve. Second, there may be several different topics being discussed at once, which can be confusing until you get the hang of it. Third, it is a public forum and it is usually automated, so there is no privacy and if someone wants to post messages not relative to the listserve's purpose (chocolate recipes on the SFMC listserve, for example) you'll have to wade through a bunch of garbage messages to find those important to you.

THREADS

A thread is a string of messages all relating to a specific topic, usually from a specific e-mail message that was posted to the listserve itself. Other threads may be created from this one, or simply be present as other topics are discussed by other people on the listserve. As an example, I post an e-mail concerning the upcoming SFMC "Run for Your Life, Corporal Brown" charity event. Someone from Pennsylvania asks for more info on it, while someone from Texas says he thought it was canceled because of a problem with the hotel. Someone else says his unit is going to be there, and wants to know if we'll be doing it as a single group or by Strike Groups. I post the info, someone from Louisiana says his unit will be there and offers to run with the group from Texas, someone else explains that the rumor is just a rumor, and so on. As more and more people add to the listserve, several different threads are created and followed (one about the info, another about rumors of hotel problems, another for who's announcing they'll be there, and so on). Learning to follow the thread of a topic is a skill that takes time, especially on the larger (international, etc.) list servers. One thing that makes it easy to follow a thread is the subject line in every e-mail message. If you are replying to a message, it will usually say "Re:" in front of the subject of whichever message you are replying to. When people look at the list of messages they get from a listserve, they can quickly sort out which messages follow which threads. You have to make sure what you post is relevant to the thread you are following. If it is off topic, for example you want to know if there are any other events going on that same weekend as the "Run for Your Life" event, you would change the subject line to read something else other than "Re: Run for Your Life". This lets others know that a new thread or topic is being covered.

OFF-TOPIC POSTING

Before you post to a list server, consider whether or not your message is relevant to the general theme of the listserve. Don't discuss political problems within STARFLEET on a list server dedicated to the SFMC. Likewise, don't discuss SFMC matters on any of the STARFLEET list servers. If people wanted to discuss these topics, they would subscribe to the appropriate listserve.

An all too common event that occurs is for someone to read something they find amusing, like a David Letterman

style "Top Ten list of reasons why Democrats should listen to Ross Perot" and then posting it to the SFMC listserve. Now obviously, such an item has nothing at all to do with the SFMC, or even Trek in general. What happens then is that one or two people post messages saying "Very funny, loved it" while a couple of others post messages saying "Stupid, don't waste my time with this trash". Another guy posts his favorite "Top Ten list" while someone else posts a joke about politicians. Someone complains about the next round of jokes, while someone complains about the complainer's lack of humor, and so on. A brief cycle of wasted time and energy occurs, and someone drops his subscription to the list server because he didn't subscribe to the "Political Humor Listserve", and he's tired of wading through all of the "off topic messages" on the SFMC listserv. Pretty soon you have a list server that no one subscribes to, except a couple of people trading jokes and complaining that the listserve is "boring" or "dead" because no one posts to it anymore. This has happened to more than one list server.

List servers exist to allow a forum of discussion concerning a general of specific topic. Don't post off topic messages to a list server—they do real damage to the list server's ability to function effectively. If you find something hysterically funny, but not relevant to the listserve, then send it privately to those folks who might be amused by it.

REPLYING TO E-MAIL

It is a good idea to acknowledge e-mail you receive, even if it doesn't require a reply. This is courtesy, and it also lets the sender know that their message didn't go whizzing off into the electronic ether someplace, instead of landing in your mailbox.

WATCH WHERE YOU SEND YOUR REPLY

Be careful when you reply to an e-mail message. Most e-mail programs have a "Reply" button and a "Reply to All" button. If you hit the wrong one, it will cause some confusion. As an example, someone posts a message asking for any suggestions on activities for strike groups and sends it to fifty people at one time. If you hit "reply", your suggestion goes back to the person who asked for the info, but if you hit "reply to all" it goes to all fifty people, including yourself. Instead of one person getting fifty responses, fifty people get fifty responses, tying up the server and wasting huge amounts of time and energy. If you watch carefully, some people send mail with a line that says "send replies to" and gives a different e-mail address than the one that originated the message. There could be a number of reasons for this, from a listserve requirement to the person sending the e-mail from one location (work, for example) and expecting to be in another location (home) by the time everyone replies.

QUOTING

When quoting someone's message, there are two things you should do.

First, only quote the part of the message that is necessary to clarify you reply . Few things are more irritating than to see someone quote an entire three page letter, and add the words "I agree" at the bottom. Of course, one thing that is more irritating than that is to see someone else do the same thing, including the "I agree", and then add their own "Me too" at the bottom of that. This continues until the listserve collapses into confusion.

Second, indicate that you are quoting someone else's text by either putting the quoted text in a separate color, or using one of the common Internet styles of quoting (either placing the quoted text in brackets, or prefacing each line with a ">" symbol). This separates your text from the original sender's words. If you are writing a message that you expect others to quote heavily (i.e., you are making a list of items and want their feedback on each item) then separate major topics into distance paragraphs, so it is easier to quote them in reply.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CC AND BCC?

These are the abbreviations for "Carbon Copy" and "Blind Carbon Copy". If you want to send your e-mail message to more than one person, you can either send it twenty or so times (changing the address every time you send one) or you can type your message once and CC it to everyone on your list. Obviously, this is a lot easier. When you send something "Carbon Copy", the entire list of names that you sent the message to appears in the header. By checking the header on an e-mail message, you can see if the message you received was sent to a friend of yours, for example.

Sending a message as a "Blind Carbon Copy" does the exact same thing as a "Carbon Copy" except the recipients will not see the list of names you sent the "Carbon Copies" to. That is to say that each person's message will show only that you sent the message to them, not that you actually sent it to fifteen people.

WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO BCC?

The only time it is appropriate to BCC someone is if you don't want the original recipient of your message to know that you are providing someone else a copy of it. Doesn't sound real polite, does it? It's not.

SIGNATURE BLOCKS

Signature blocks in e-mail are even more important than those found in traditional letters, because of the sheer volume of e-mail that people get. Without distinctive handwriting or a unique postmark, e-mail messages are much easier to confuse than traditional mail. The rules for good signature blocks given earlier in this material applies equally to e-mail messages, but some of the more important aspects are covered again below. You should always sign any e-mail you send, even if it is just a short "Mike" or Sgt. Lewis" type of signature.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD SIGNATURE BLOCK?

It has to identify you, indicate your position (which offers a clue as to why you might be sending the message), and give the date you wrote the message (to show how timely it is). As a rule, the shorter you can make your signature block and still cover these points, the better it is. Consider how stupid the example messages (given earlier in the chapter) would look if the person wrote "I agree" and then had an eight line signature block following. Examples of this can be seen daily on the STARFLEET listserve.

HEADGEAR AND NAMETAGS

Many people in the SFMC are reservists, and therefore have other positions of responsibility within STAR-FLEET. As mentioned earlier, you should only use whichever "hat" is appropriate to that specific message. Listing all of the positions you hold (have held in the past, came close to holding in the past or might have been considered for in the past) is pompous and shows "signature block envy". Don't drop names in your signature block, either. If you are insecure about your own importance, name dropping will only point out that insecurity to others. If you are a good friend of the Fleet Admiral, for example, then he'll probably be glad to tell people that when they mention you to him. Adding that fact to your signature block is egotistical, arrogant and sure to draw criticism. But hey, if you like the abuse, by all means ignore this paragraph.

QUOTATIONS: PROFOUND AND PROFANE

There is a trend among e-mail users to add one or more quotations to their signature block. These quotations range from traditional words of wisdom from historical figures to cheesy lines from B-grade sci-fi movies. What's the point of using a quotation as part of your signature block? Well, there could be several reasons. Maybe you admire someone's philosophy (COL Kelley is a big fan of Abraham Lincoln, for example) and you think their words are worth repeating. Maybe something in the situation you are writing about is relevant or analogous to the quotation you are using. Maybe your quote is the organizational slogan, or your own personal motto.

However, there are two times when it is inappropriate to add a quotation to your signature block. First, never add a quote to a traditional or business letter. If you feel the urge to quote someone, put it in the body of the letter, or as the last sentence before your signature block. Second, never use a quote to insult someone or attack their position on some issue. How can you do that? If you watch the various listserves, you'll see examples of it every day. A real life example of this occurred recently in STARFLEET over which a group of Star Trek fans was more original than the other, and it rapidly became a name calling contest as each changed their "quote" to become more and more insulting to the other. This also happened recently in the SFMC, and although the two incidents were not directly related to each other, they both exemplify unprofessional and childish conduct.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

POWER TOOLS 101: THE TELEPHONE

The telephone is the most useful tool available in verbal communication today, until they actually do invent a Star Trek style "Universal Translator". Like other 'power tools' it can do a lot of damage if used improperly.

COMMON MISTAKES

There are lots of dumb things you can do with a telephone (crank calling the local Green Beret veteran's group, for example). However, the three most common mistakes are shown below. They all have one common link; the caller is unprepared. Preparation is vital to success in anything, as I'm sure you will agree. Communication by telephone can be expensive, ineffective or annoying, depending on how unprepared you are when you start dialing.

FORGETTING THE DIFFERENCE IN TIME ZONES

"Hey, Colonel! Did I wake you up?"

"No, it's only three in the morning here, you jerk! Of course you woke me up, and my family too!"

"Bummer, man, it's only 11 PM here. Hey, listen, I wanted to talk to you about my next promotion, OK?"

"I'm going to kill you, Joe, unless my wife finds you first."

ABUSING THE PRIVILEGE OF A COLLECT CALL

"YOU HAVE A COLLECT CALL FROM —" "JOE!" — DO YOU ACCEPT THE CHARGES?"

"Yes"

"THANK YOU, CALLER GO AHEAD."

"Hey Colonel, just calling to say hi. What's going on in your neck of the woods?"

"You just called me, collect, from Botswana, to say hi?"

"Yeah, kinda bored around here since they threw me out of the local video game place, so I figured, hey why not call old Bob and see what's up, y'know?"

"You realize it's costing me twenty-three bucks a minute for this?"

"Bummer, man, you oughta switch to another long distance company."

"I can't believe I'm paying twenty-three bucks a minute for this!"

"Yeah, man, I know what you mean. Cool, I'll call you back tonight at 11 PM, when it's cheaper. -Click-"

The best rule for Collect Calling is to never call someone collect unless they first give you permission to do so. With the advent of the "disposable calling card," which allows you to buy long-distance time even at the local convenience store, there is really no need for this kind of behavior.

LOBOTOMIZED BY AN ANSWERING MACHINE

"THANKS FOR CALLING...THE COLONEL IS AWAY FROM THE PHONE RIGHT NOW...LEAVE A MESSAGE AND I'LL CALL YOU BACK, UNLESS IT'S JOE AGAIN, IN WHICH CASE EAT HOT FLAMING

DEATH AND HOW DID YOU GET THIS NUMBER ANYWAY?"

"BEEP"

"Bummer, man, like what a hostile answering machine, dude."

"Is this thing on? Um....if you're home, why don'tcha pick up the phone?...Guess not...you guys must be out shopping or something, huh? Well, I forget what it was I wanted to tell you now, anyway. I'll call you back tonight, around 11, OK?"

"Oh wait, yeah, I know now. Some guy called from...um 10th Brigade, I think...his name was Eric...or Larry...or maybe it was...no, that was the other phone call for you, never mind. Anyway, he wanted you to call him, before tomorrow or he's gonna take the whole strike group and...I forget now, exactly, but it was pretty severe, man...He gave me his number, but I can't remember what it is now. The area code was like 405 or 403 or something, though, so you can probably fig-"

"BEEP"

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

The whole purpose of calling people on the phone is to get information to or from the person you call. The best way to do this is to be prepared with a list of things you need to discuss before you call. Whether or not you get a live response or a machine, you will be prepared to get your message across.

ANSWERING MACHINES AND VOICE MAIL

Answering machines, pagers and voice mail are becoming more and more common these days. It is a fact of life that you will often have to settle for leaving a message for someone instead of talking to them. This is especially true for someone whom you have never spoken to via telephone before.

BE PREPARED TO SPEAK

Have your notes ready, and be ready to leave a message when the machine indicates it is recording (usually be either a beep or a series of tones). Remember that although many machines will record for as long as you speak, others give you only a set amount of time to call. Check the clock before you speak; if you are cut off before you finish speaking, you'll have an idea how long you have to speak when you call back to finish the message.

SPEAK CLEARLY

Many people have a regional accent, or speak very fast or quietly, as a habit. Make a conscious effort to speak clearly. Do not yell, but make sure your voice can be heard distinctly. Speak with a smooth cadence, neither rushing or hesitant. If you talk too fast, the person will misunderstand your message; speak too slow and the answering machine will disconnect you. Even if it doesn't cut you off, it is agonizing to some people to listen as someone spends five minutes saying what could be said in three.

LEAVE PHONE NUMBER AND TIME TO CALL

If you want the person to return your call or forward a message for you, leave a phone number (and area code) as well as the best time to call back. If you don't leave a number, they can't call you, now can they? Simple, but you wouldn't believe how many people forget to leave their phone number (or address, if they want you to mail them something!) Even 911 callers do this, which is why you see the 'automatic tracer' function in use by emergency services in so many cities.

TIME STAMP IT!

Some machines tell you when a call was received, some don't. If the machine doesn't audibly give the date/time when you leave a message, assume that it won't tell the owner that information either. Leave a time with your message, or a date and time if you think it may be a day to two before the message is received. This is an extremely important point that most people forget.

"Colonel, this is the Commandant. I need to talk to you about this idiot who keeps calling me."

"BEEP"

Now, in the example above, there is no return number, no time to call and no way to know when the Commandant called you. It is especially bad if you've been out of town for a day or so. Do you have his number? What idiot is calling the Commandant? (You can probably guess, though, since you just had your number changed, right?) When should you call him back? How long has this been going on?

"Colonel, this is the Commandant again. Some chowderhead named 'Joe' has been calling me for three days now, wanting your phone number. Call me before 9 PM tonight, it's 5 PM now. My number is 573-123-4567. If I don't hear from you by 10 PM I'm unplugging my phone, so my wife won't kill me."

"BEEP"

Aha! Much better call, this time. Now you know what is going on, and when to call back. Obviously, poor Joe hasn't had this course and is about to suffer a serious career problem. (For those of you who are wondering, Joe ends up writing the TRACOM 'Survival Above the Arctic Circle' series of manuals).

REAL PEOPLE

Talking to real people can be a troublesome as machines, especially if you are like some (ahem) and enjoy talking. It is very easy to wander off topic and waste a half hour joking around then forget what you called for in the first place. Here are some simple rules to increase your effectiveness and reduce the amount of time you spend on the phone (and therefore, how much money you spend!)

SET A TIME LIMIT

If you are on a budget for time or money (and who isn't, in a fan club, right?), you should set a reasonable time limit of the length of call. (My wife says to tell you that "Friday" is not a reasonable time limit.) Make sure you explain you have a time limit at the start of the conversation; this is important if the person you are calling likes to talk, too!

FOLLOWING AN OUTLINE

If you have several topics to discuss, make an outline and discuss each topic in detail, one after the other. When you jump from topic to topic and back again, you make mistakes, confuse each other and often forget things. One at a time, follow the outline.

SUMMARIZING THE CONVERSATION

If you are getting a lot of information, or giving it out, be sure to summarize the conversation to clarify any points. People often misunderstand what is said after a half hour or more of conversation. Summarizing the info is a good technique to prevent this. Simply say something like "OK, to review what I've said..." and then list the major points of your outline. (You did use an outline, didn't you?)

CLOSING THE CONVERSATION

Always close the conversation with courtesy. Thank the person for taking the time to talk to you, for providing you with the information you need, or for asking for information that you were glad to provide. If you intend to speak with them again in the near future, let them know when you'll call back.

EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER TWO

Please Note: This is not the final exam. Do not turn these exercises in to the SFMCA.

I. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Explain each of the following terms in your own words.

1. Communication
2. Effective Communication
3. E-Mail
4. Verbal Communication
5. Non-Verbal Communication
6. Date
7. Return Address
8. Inside Address
9. Salutation
10. Reference Line
11. Subject Line
12. Signature Block
13. CC (Carbon Copy)
14. BCC (Blind Carbon Copy)
15. Enclosure
16. Netiquette
17. Flaming
18. List Server (or listserve)
19. Thread
20. Off-Topic Posting
21. Reply

II. PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. It's Wednesday, and your chapter CO just informed you that Saturday's meeting has been moved across town due to a scheduling conflict. You are familiar with the new location, but you are sure many members of your unit aren't. The CO asks you to get word out to your Marines. Assuming that everyone in your unit has access to all forms of communication discussed so far, which would you choose? Why?

2. You are the Superintendent of the STARFLEET Marine Corps Academy. A recent recruit washed out of the Marine Basic Training, unable to pass the final exam. He sends you the following e-mail message:

To: sfmctracom@sfi.org
From: snuffyguy@any.net
Subject: What's All This About?
Hey, buster
Listen to me, you jerk. Im no dummy, you here? I got this here test and you did me wrong! Now you just go back and change those questions, OK? I no I ansered all them right.
Gimme a call, OK? I'm gone sometimes, so don't call then!
Joe

In your opinion, is this effective communication? Why or why not?

3. You know this recruit is obviously upset about something, but you are unsure of what specifically he is upset about. In fact, you are not even sure who it is, although you at least have a first name and an e-mail address.

Write a reply to "Joe" that asks for his identification and specific problems. Remember to be clear, concise and

courteous!

     4. It turns out that Joe feels that test questions 4, 7, 9 and 25 are ambiguous, and he thinks they should be rewritten. He also wants credit for those questions, because those four points will give him a passing grade.

     If you were Joe, how would you have written this e-mail message to get the point across more clearly?

     5. After looking over Joe's request, you don't feel you can give him the credit he thinks he deserves. You have researched the questions, asked the opinions of others and surveyed other students to see if they had similar problems, but came to the conclusion that the questions were properly worded, and the grade should stand.

     Analyze each of the four media described in PLDC, and describe the advantages and disadvantages of using each in this situation. Keep in mind that you have never met Joe, though you now have complete contact information; that he will probably be very upset; and your own strengths and weaknesses in communicating. Considering all of the above, which would you choose as your preferred medium for communicating with Joe on this issue?

III. SELF ANALYSIS

     Describe a time when you have been involved in a conflict, verbal or non verbal, in which you felt you had been insulted, degraded or threatened.

     1. How did you react?
     2. Did you respond in kind? Why or why not?
     3. How did the conflict begin?

     Consider the "professional" you selected in Chapter 1.

     4. How might he or she have reacted?
     5. After reading this chapter, would you have behaved differently? Why or why not?

CHAPTER THREE: LEADERSHIP

     This chapter is designed to introduce you to the fundamentals of leadership and management. These two important skills are two sides of the same coin. To be a professional STARFLEET Marine you will have to master both of these skills, especially as your responsibilities and duties increase. Leadership and management will both be covered in much greater detail in later courses of the Professional Development Program. What is important at this stage is to understand the basics of both leadership and management, and how they are important to you.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE IN CHARGE TO BE A LEADER

     Many STARFLEET members operate under the assumption that "since I am not the CO, I don't need to be a leader." Consider the following examples to discover how wrong that assumption is:

     1. Your unit is assisting your fellow chapter members in working a local convention. Your OIC is asked to run Security, but someone is also needed to take care of overseeing the registration table, and you get volunteered. Outstanding leadership and management skills will be necessary for you to arrange for volunteers to fill empty shifts, ensure the security of funds entrusted to personnel at your table, and assuring that all visitors receive prompt, friendly service at your station.

     2. Your Strike Group plans an inter-unit picnic for this weekend. Representatives from several units in your area will be attending. The OIC, who lives out of town, has an accident on the way to the picnic area. Someone has to step in to make sure the event goes off as planned — someone with leadership and management skills.

     3. Your Marine unit participates in the local "adopt-a-highway" beautification program. Unfortunately, as

everyone gathers together at the starting site, several members are more interested in congregating on the tailgate of a member's pickup and talking than they are in doing anything constructive. As a result, a crowd begins to gather there and trash isn't getting picked up. You aren't the OIC or chapter CO; you are, however, interested in getting the show on the road. As a leader, you open a trash bag and start picking up, setting the example. Eventually, others see your actions and within a short time, everyone is participating.

Each of the above paragraphs show examples of leadership in action. In each case, your leadership skills were called on, even though you aren't one of the chapter "brass."

Volunteer organizations live and die by the willingness of their members to lead, and STARFLEET is no exception. Unless you are willing and able to lead effectively, your unit, chapter and ultimately STARFLEET will suffer.

Being a good leader doesn't always mean being in charge. In example three, you weren't the "Boss," but by using strong leadership techniques, you produced positive action.

Of course, you shouldn't forget that one day, you could be the OIC or CO, or occupy a position even higher in the "food chain." If you take the time and make the effort to develop your leadership and management skills now, you will find that you will enjoy yourself a lot more, feel a lot less frustration and be a more effective STARFLEET Marine Officer or NCO. If, on the other hand, you don't learn the lessons now, before you're put on the spot, you will be completely unprepared for it when the mantle of responsibility is thrust upon you. Believe me, leadership and management are not skills you want to learn "on the job".

WORKING DEFINITIONS

There are as many definitions for leadership and management as there are leaders and managers, but here are the two that we will use as our basis for discussion.

LEADERSHIP

"The art of influencing others in such a manner as to command their respect, confidence and whole hearted cooperation in the accomplishment of a desired goal."

MANAGEMENT

"The skill of planning and organizing for the efficient use of resources to reach a predetermined objective."

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD LEADERS

In the definition above, take note of the phrase "respect, confidence and whole hearted cooperation". Anyone with sufficient force can impose his will on someone else; leadership is not the art of bullying people, however. You may also notice that we use the term "art" to describe leadership, not "science". People are far more complex than machines, and any attempt to break leadership down into an exact science is doomed to failure. If there were an exact formula available for good leaders, there wouldn't be any other kind around. As a general rule, there are several characteristics that all good leaders show. Work on developing these characteristics and you will not go wrong.

HIGH PERSONAL STANDARDS

The desire to set a good example, to do the job right the first time, and to set a standard for others to match is a common characteristic of a leader. Sloppy work is the mark of someone with little or no self pride, and does not inspire men to follow your lead.

MORAL COURAGE

You must stand up for what you feel is right, even in the face of popular disagreement. You must have the

courage to admit when you are wrong, but you must also stand behind your decisions when you know that you are right. Moral courage also means that you do not stand quietly by while your fellow Marines do something that is morally wrong. Cadets at the famous United States Military Academy learn the motto "I will not lie, cheat, or steal; nor will I tolerate those who do." These are strong words for a strong reason.

INITIATIVE

The ability to see a job that needs doing, then doing it, is a good definition of initiative. If you must always wait for others to tell you what to do, you are lacking initiative. Leaders are proactive, not reactive.

ACCOUNTABILITY

This is one of the most important qualities of good leadership. You must be willing to accept responsibility for your actions. You are also responsible for the actions of your subordinates, if you are in a position of leadership. Do not make excuses, to yourself or to others. If a plan falls through because you failed to plan or perform effectively, accept the responsibility for your mistake and take positive action to prevent it from happening again.

LOYALTY

A good leader is loyal to those above him, beside him, and below him in the chain of command. Loyalty to those above him means supporting his superior officers and making a determined effort to carry out their orders. Loyalty to those beside him means developing mutual respect and trust with other leaders of the same level within the organization. As an example, inter-unit competition can get carried away and create a real rivalry that does more harm than good to the organization. Loyalty to those below him means giving to each man the opportunities for advancement that he has earned and the awards of commendation for superior achievement. He must make honest efforts to address their complaints and assist them with their problems. If the men have confidence in his professional skill and leadership, they will demonstrate loyalty to him.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD MANAGERS

Good managers are able to use the resources available to them to accomplish any mission. Anyone can take an abundance of manpower, money, material and time and then accomplish a mission; good managers can improvise and achieve their goals with less than optimum resources. All good managers have skill in Planning, Organizing, Coordinating, Directing and Controlling. These terms are explained below.

PLANNING

Planning is thinking about how a project should be accomplished from the beginning to the end before any of the operations actually start. Planning determines the best way to do a job in order to reach an objective. The success or failure of any project depends upon how well the planning function has been performed.

ORGANIZING

Organizing is determining which groups will be responsible for which jobs and with resources. There are three basic steps in organizing a project. You must identify and describe the individual skills needed to complete the project; you must develop a workable plan for each of the operations necessary for the project; lastly, you must identify the resources needed to accomplish the project.

COORDINATING

Coordinating is communicating with others in the organization to make sure that all people involved in the operation are cooperating with each other. Do not confuse coordinating with directing, which we will discuss next. Directing is based upon the formal authority given to the person who is responsible for getting a task done; coordinating however, is based on friendly persuasion and mutual cooperation of people who are not under the manager's direct supervision.

DIRECTING

Directing is the process of issuing instructions to get a job done. There are three basic styles of doing this, each with it's own advantages and disadvantages. These are "Direct Order", "Request" and "Suggestion". Directions can be given in either written or oral format. The choice is largely based on the situation and the individual concerned. Sometimes, the direction is a combination of both oral and written instructions. Remember, however, that too many orders tends to weaken your authority and cause confusion. The more initiative and responsibility your workers show, the less you will have to use the Direct Order style of direction. As teamwork and esprit de corps grows, the more you will be able to accomplish with the less direct forms of direction.

CONTROLLING

In controlling, you determine if the plan you have developed and directed is being followed. If not, you must take the necessary actions to change the plan in order to accomplish your goals. One of the dangers of an inexperienced manager is to go to extremes in controlling. By this we mean over-inspecting the work in progress (known as micromanagement) or the other extreme of not inspecting at all. The right amount of controlling will insure high quality work. It is the ability to strike a balance between the two extremes that distinguishes a good manager from a poor one.

EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER THREE

Please Note: This is not the final exam. Do not turn these exercises in to the SFMCA.

I. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Explain Each Term In Your Own Words.
1. Leadership
2. Management
3. High Personal Standards
4. Moral Courage
5. Initiative
6. Accountability
7. Loyalty
8. Planning
9. Organizing
10. Coordination
11. Directing
12. Controlling

II. SELF ANALYSIS

In Chapter 1, you were asked to think of someone who you considered to be a "professional." Think of that person now.
1. How many of the above traits does this individual show? List them, along with examples of times when you think each was displayed.

In "You Don't Have to be in Charge to be a Leader," three situations were given in which a "general member" is asked to accept the responsibility of leadership. Describe a time when you have been asked to lead without being the person in charge.
2. Did you use some of the characteristics outlined in the chapter? If so, which ones? If not, what characteristics do you think you exhibited? Describe each.
3. What do you think are your strongest leadership or management traits? Why?
4. What do you think are your weakest leadership or management traits? Why?

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SFMC

THE DUAL NATURE OF THE STARFLEET MARINE CORPS

The STARFLEET Marine Corps has a split personality; it is a group within STARFLEET and yet it acts in some respects as if it were a separate and distinct organization. The STARFLEET Marine Corps was originally conceived as a Fleet Division Chief program (FDC), similar in substance to the STARFLEET Corps of Engineers and other FDC programs. Since that time, however, it has grown into something far more complex and independent than the original FDC programs. The Commandant of the SFMC, for example, now reports directly to the Commander, STARFLEET — unlike FDC Chiefs. The differences extend beyond that, even. The SFMC has not one, but two distinct chains of command and support, a separate awards program, distinct uniforms and insignia that differ from STARFLEET in general, and it even has a separate Marine Academy that offers programs and courses distinctly different from those offered in STARFLEET's own Academy.

Yet, with all of these differences, the STARFLEET Marines are still a part of STARFLEET as a whole. The SFMC requires membership in STARFLEET, and follows STARFLEET's policies on promotions and other things like community service. It is this dual nature of the STARFLEET Marine Corps that makes it both challenging and rewarding to be a STARFLEET Marine. We can say with a great deal of conviction that man for man, STARFLEET Marines have to be more professional and competent than their counterparts in other fan organizations.

Keeping that challenge in mind, let's discuss some of the more important concepts involved in being a "professional and competent" STARFLEET Marine. To do that, you must understand both the differences and the similarities between the SFMC and its parent organization, STARFLEET. These differences and similarities are important, as they affect how others perceive and react to you and your fellow STARFLEET Marines.

DIFFERENT YET SIMILAR

OFFICER AND ENLISTED RANKS

Both the SFMC and SFI have a complete set of ranks, both enlisted and officer. The difference lies in how they are modeled after their real world counterparts and the emphasis given to officers over enlisted personnel. STARFLEET modeled its ranks after the traditional naval ranks of the US and British navies, while the STARFLEET Marine Corps modeled its after the traditional Marine and Army ranks of the US and British ground forces. Much more emphasis and respect is given to enlisted ranks within the STARFLEET Marines than is commonly found in STARFLEET. That is not to say that STARFLEET doesn't respect its enlisted members, just that more effort is made to retain and recognize them within the Corps than in STARFLEET.

ENLISTED, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

Grades of rank from E-1 through E-3 are considered "junior enlisted" ranks. Grades of rank from E-4 through E-9 are considered "senior enlisted" ranks. These same grades (E-4 through E-9) are also known as "Non-Commissioned Officers" or "NCOs". You may also hear the slang phrase "Non-Com" used to describe them.

The difference between real NCOs and Officers is that Officers receive a "Commission" from the government, which gives them very broad powers and authority over their troops, as well as responsibilities for the same. Non-Commissioned officers have similar responsibilities, but do not hold "commissions" from the government; they are charged with making sure orders are carried out, but have no authority to administer justice or generate orders themselves. There is an old saying that goes "Officers are the architects and planners of warfare, the NCOs are the managers of men and material, and the enlisted men are the craftsmen". This is a pretty good summary of their correct relationship in the real world military.

In STARFLEET and the STARFLEET Marines, officer ranks are awarded to those members who have met certain requirements through activity and testing. Authority comes from the position a member holds within the organization (Chapter Chairperson, Regional Coordinator, etc.), not the person's "rank" or "commission" they have received. This is important to remember when looking at an organizational chart; there are Brigades, for example, commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel, yet there are units below Brigade level (Battalions and Strike Groups) within that Brigade that are commanded by officers of higher rank. While this would never happen in the real world, it is a reality of a fan club. Authority, responsibility, and the duties are far more closely tied to your position within the organization than your nominal rank within it.

Many STARFLEET Marines, however, choose to accept NCO ranks as a role play choice. It does not imply that they are somehow unfit for "command", nor should it be used as an excuse to deny them the rights other STARFLEET members have — for instance, the right to be a chapter CO, or to serve on the battalion, brigade or other levels of the Corps. In fact, any NCO who wears the Professional Development Ribbon will have completed all the requirements STARFLEET set for officer rank!

UNIFORMS

The SFMC uses a different color scheme than STARFLEET in general, or at least we did until Star Trek: First Contact came out. Since that movie, more and more of STARFLEET is gravitating towards a color scheme similar to ours. Our primary color is Gray, rather than the usual Red, Blue, or Gold of STARFLEET. Within our organization, we have eight different "branches of duty", each with its own unique color. Thus, gray and green (in various combinations) indicates a Marine in the Combat Engineer branch, while gray and black indicates a Marine of the Infantry branch.

Although our uniforms are distinctive (and we have more choices in the variety of uniforms available) they are still instantly recognizable as some form of Star Trek related clothing. Different, but part of a similar group. Stick with this extremely important concept, as you will see it again.

INSIGNIA

Our officer insignia is modeled after STARFLEET's pattern or increasing pips, but we use Civil Air Patrol cadet insignia (diamonds, which are painted gold like STARFLEET's circular pips). We do this to show the difference in our rank structure. For enlisted ranks, which are more common in the SFMC, we use the traditional USMC enlisted pin on ranks to show our 'historical link' with the Marines of the 20th century.

RANKS

All of our ranks are based on the traditional Ground Force equivalents of the British and American militaries, in the same fashion that STARFLEET's are based on the traditional naval ranks. When abbreviating our officer ranks, we only use three letter abbreviations (MGN, CPT, 1LT), where STARFLEET uses four as a general rule. This helps distinguish Marine ranks from their STARFLEET counterparts, especially in the case of Captain. The Marine Captain is an O-3, while a STARFLEET Captain is an O-6 (and almost 'flag rank'). This is the only rank that is normally confused with its STARFLEET counterpart, and can be distinguished in writing as CPT, not CAPT; when announcing it aloud (during a STARFLEET awards presentation, for example) the phrase "Marine Captain" is used to distinguish from STARFLEET's "Captain" rank.

COURTESIES

The STARFLEET Marine Corps follows nearly all of the same customs and courtesies of STARFLEET, with one noticeable exception, the hand salute. STARFLEET personnel do not normally render the hand salute, whereas Marines do. It is another simple reminder of our link to the historical military, and a gesture of respect and courtesy. You should not be offended if a STARFLEET officer nods instead of returning the salute, nor should a STARFLEET officer take offense to the salute you render. Remember, when indoors you do not salute, unless you are armed. You also do not wear headgear indoors, again, unless you are under arms.

INTERESTS

In the area of interests, STARFLEET and the STARFLEET Marines are very similar. There are as many people interested in community service, and as many people not. In the SFMC, there may be a slightly higher percentage of people who wargame, participate in paintball, or have served in the real world military. However, everyone likes Star Trek, and everyone enjoys getting together with friends who like Star Trek. Again, we are more the same than not, despite the differences in appearance.

THE CHAIN(S) OF COMMAND

Probably the most challenging thing that you have to deal with as a Marine is the fact that there are at least two distinct chains of command to deal with, STARFLEET's and the STARFLEET Marine Corps. While they are not opposed to each other, there are differences between the two; these differences can work for you or against you, depending on how well you understand them.

STARFLEET

In STARFLEET, you are a member of a chapter. This chapter is probably a Ship of some type, although there are Shuttles and Stations as well. Within this chapter, you may be assigned to a department, like Tactical or Sciences, and you may have real world responsibilities within that department; Tactical may be responsible for the ship's newsletter, for example. Many ships that have a significant Marine presence may have a Marine Department, or may assign them to Tactical as some kind of sub-department. In any case, you will have duties and responsibilities aboard ship, as part of your chapter. Your chapter in turn, is part of a Sector (state) that may or may not be organized into a community of chapters that cooperate on projects together (an example is the Arkansas Alliance, etc.). Above that, your ship is part of a Region, which is a collection of Sectors. In most cases, few ships will be active beyond their own region, or above it in the STARFLEET organization.

To sum up your chain of command, it goes from you to your department head; from there to the XO or CO of your ship, then to the Regional Coordinator, and through the RC to STARFLEET headquarters. Along the way, you may end up working with people from other departments, ships, states, or regions. This chain of command should be used for any problems related to your membership or status as a member of your chapter — for instance, if you have a concern with receiving your Communique or membership packet, or wish to make a suggestion about Regional administration.

STARFLEET MARINE CORPS

The STARFLEET Marine Corps also has a chain of command, although it is deliberately structured to a slightly higher level of organization than STARFLEET. As a Marine, you belong to a Strike Group of some type, either an MSG, MTU or MEU. That Strike Group belongs to a Battalion (all the units in a state); above that level there is a Brigade (all the units in your Region). Above that, several Brigades are grouped together to form a Division. Above Division, there is only the SFMC Headquarters, similar to STARFLEET's situation with Regions. There is also a "chain of support", based on the NCO corps of the SFMC. Basically, every level of the chain of command has an equivalent NCO assigned to it. While this does not replace the chain of command, NCOs may use this informal "chain of support" to communicate issues and problems that would otherwise be difficult to handle through more formal channels. These issues usually involved enlisted personnel and activities, but not always.

As a Marine, your chain of command goes from you to the Strike Group OIC, then the Battalion OIC, then the Brigade OIC; from there to the Division OIC and then on to SFMC Headquarters. As a Marine NCO, you also have access to the NCO "chain of support", which is a less formal avenue of information and advice. The Marine Chain of Command should be used only for matters exclusively Marine — for instance, questions about the Marine Academy, or inquiries for information on Marine awards, uniforms or publications.

THE MARINES ARE PART OF STARFLEET AT EVERY LEVEL

As you can see, a Marine has a lot of connections to and through STARFLEET and the STARFLEET Marine Corps. A Marine can and should be an active part of both organizations. Marines have a wealth of support and information available to them, provided they use and support the chains of command correctly (whether they are an officer, NCO or enlisted member).

THE MARINE AS A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL CHAPTER

Within your chapter, you should try to be as active and supporting as you can. First, this helps your ship grow and prosper as a group, which is in itself a worthy goal. Second, by helping your ship grow, you increase the membership base and therefore the number of people you can recruit more Marines from. More Marines (and more friends) means more fun for everyone.

Consider what you may be able to do as a Marine. Community service is a big part of most STARFLEET chapters. Maybe you could participate in the annual March of Dimes Walk-a-than? That is a charity that requires no special equipment or training, and might make an excellent 'first contact' for you and your fellow Marines. There are many community service projects that you could help with, if you haven't already. Consider the fun activities possible in your area. Is there paintball or Lazer Tag available? Maybe you could get a group together to go try it out; there are a lot of STARFLEET members who enjoy paintball, and this might be a good way to get a friendly competition going with other departments or other ships. Remember this important phrase: One Marine can make a difference.

THE MARINE AS A MEMBER OF A SHIP'S DEPARTMENT

Within your ship, consider the department you are assigned to. In most cases it will be Tactical, but other departments are certainly possible (especially in the case of Reserve Marines). What does your department do? Is there anything you can do to help? As an example, let's say the Tactical department (to which you are assigned) is responsible for Security at group meetings and publishing the ship's newsletter. If you aren't inclined to writing or editing, perhaps you can volunteer to take the newsletter to the copy place. Helping out with folding and stuffing envelopes is always appreciated, and requires no special training or equipment. As part of the Security force, you can help newcomers find a place to sit, or answer questions about your group. Maybe you can get CPR qualification from the Red Cross or a local hospital (it is free in some areas, and the SFMC will give you an award for getting certified!) This is always welcome in any group, and it could save someone's life. Even if you are part of a large group and don't feel you are as qualified as the rest of the mob, you can find something to do that will help out and make you part of the team.

Don't limit your enthusiasm to your own department, either. If there is another department that has fewer people assigned to it, and your department is over staffed, ask your department head if you can assist that other department. No department on a ship can function alone; each is necessary for the success of the ship as a whole. You can be part of that success, but you have to get motivated and get involved. If you help out enough, you may end up recruiting more Marines and eventually forming your own department. As a Marine you are unique, but not alone.

THE MARINE AS A MEMBER OF THE REGION

As you move up the organization, your opportunities to excel increase. Work with other Marines and STARFLEET members to accomplish some Regional goal. Is there a Regional Color Guard? If not, maybe you're the Marine who can get one organized and trained. Are there any Regional projects that need a helping hand? If you think you can make a difference, then by all means step forward and let them know that the Marines are here! Again, no matter what the job entails, there is something you can do to help.

One of the nice things about working at the Regional level is that you probably won't have to do it alone. Marines are always handy at Regional Summit, both as Security and Color Guards. People need rides to and from events, as well as crash space; if you've got a vehicle or room to spare, why not carpal or volunteer to put someone up for a night or two? These are things that people remember and appreciate, and as I have said before, they don't take a whole lot of training or equipment. As your reputation as a useful and cooperative member of the Region grows, you'll find it easier and easier to find support for your own Marine activities. As I've said before, if you've been active, recruiting will be easier.

THE MARINE AS A MEMBER OF STARFLEET

Every member of STARFLEET, Marine or otherwise, supports the organization through membership dues, volunteer work and representing STARFLEET to the rest of the world. Keep your membership in good standing, support your Regional and National staffs, and always remember that people outside STARFLEET will be watching and wondering about us. Set the example for professionalism with your appearance and conduct, be friendly and courteous, and take pride in being part of the largest fan run Star Trek club in the world. As STARFLEET Marines, we have the finest personnel, training and communication of any fan club on Earth, and it shows. We remain so, as long as the members of STARFLEET and the STARFLEET Marines treat each other with respect and courtesy.

"WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY..."

The biggest problem facing any fan club, of any type, is prejudice. For one reason or another, one group of people starts looking down on another and talking about it. This spreads like a chain reaction, until the whole organization is fragmented into dozens of overlapping and conflicting little groups. Anarchy and self destruction are inevitable after a certain point is reached. Groups of people leave the organization to start their own; these splinter groups either grow and then complete with the original organization, or they wither and die. Either way, the cycle of bitterness and prejudice is fed again, and the process repeats itself until there is nothing left to enjoy. No friendship, no cooperation, no respect.

As you may have guessed, prejudice is neither professional nor becoming of a STARFLEET Marine. Prejudice is present to varying degrees in most everyone. The professional keeps a tight grip on his prejudice, and an open mind. If you slip into one of the common "mind sets" that we will cover below, you will not enjoy being a STARFLEET Marine, nor will anyone else around you. Practice Self control, respect, and courtesy. These three things prevent prejudice from growing and spreading.

INFIGHTING AMONG STARFLEET AND THE STARFLEET MARINES

The most obvious form of prejudice is derived from the interaction of two basic groups within STARFLEET and the STARFLEET Marines' opposition to them. In the interest of simplifying things, and preventing further problems, I've taken the liberty of using some nicknames for certain mind sets. Not everyone falls into these categories, but they are common enough to warrant discussion.

EVANGELISTS AND HEATHENS

The basic two conflicting attitudes within Star Trek fans are that the late Gene Roddenberry would or would not approve of STARFLEET Marines in the Star Trek universe. The Evangelists claim that Star Trek is completely non militant, and that Gene would be horrified at how violent and militaristic it has gotten. The Heathens, of course, say that Star Trek was intended to be an adventure story like "Wagon Train to the Stars" and therefore has to have Indians and Cavalry to sell the story line.

Evangelists point to the constant references in Trek stories of peacefulness, the defensive and exploratory nature of Starfleet, and the lack of crime, etc. The Heathens point to the constant warfare with the Klingons, Cardassians, and even Kirk's use of a mortar in one episode.

Both groups consider the other seriously off base in their interpretation of Star Trek.

HAWKS AND DOVES

The Doves are the peace loving members of STARFLEET, the fan club, who feel that there shouldn't be Starfleet Marines in Star Trek at all, just not STARFLEET Marines in STARFLEET. Their view is that STARFLEET is an organization devoted to community service and charitable work, and there is no place for such an obviously militaristic group as the STARFLEET Marines. They point out that STARFLEET is not a paramilitary organization, and that it tries to be more respectable than some of the other 'fringe' groups in fandom.

The Hawks of course, resent this. They think there is plenty of room for STARFLEET Marines within STAR-

FLEET. They point out that the Klingons and other 'militant' races have their own fan clubs and do quite well in the community service and respectability areas. They point out that being 'militaristic' or a veteran of the military is nothing to be embarrassed about, and take offense at the implied attitude of being incapable or disinterested in community service or charitable work.

Both groups consider the other to be an embarrassment when dealing with the public.

INFIGHTING AMONG STARFLEET MARINES

The most dangerous form of prejudice facing the STARFLEET Marine Corps is the internal strife that occurs between its own membership. This is evidenced in how people want the manuals written, and how they treat other Marines and groups of Marines when they get together.

JOE SNUFFY VS. JOHN Q. PUBLIC

There is a common attitude that because you are a veteran, you are somehow better than those that haven't served. Not just different, but better. Anyone who is a member of the STARFLEET Marines who didn't actually serve in the military must therefore be trying to climb the social ladder up to acceptability. While many veterans are professionals, there are just as many who use their veteran status as a tool for abuse of others. It only takes one such 'war hero' to ruin the reputation of other veterans, in the eyes of the public.

Some members of the public (including some members of STARFLEET, etc.) take the opposite view. They have the opinion that because you are a veteran you are somehow less civilized, intelligent or peace loving than they are. They attribute all kind soft psychological problems, bad habits and criminal tenancies to veterans. This can range from "reverse discrimination" to the belief that all veterans are the stereotypical arrogant, elitist, kill crazy sociopaths that so many "Nam movies" portray them as.

JARHEADS, ARMY DOGS, WINGNUTS AND SWABBIES

As if it weren't bad enough, the various types of veterans within the STARFLEET Marines snipe at each other. Obviously, because you aren't in the military any longer, it must be okay to insult your fellow veterans. Everyone knows that his or her particular branch of service was the only real military service out there, and if you didn't serve in that branch, then you were either too lazy or too cowardly to do so. Former Marines are especially known for this, since feel a certain ownership of our organization because of the "Marines" in STARFLEET Marines". The Army veterans look down on the Marines as mindless, while both of them agree that the Air Force and the Navy barely qualify as military service. Of course, the Navy and the Air Force have their own opinions of the Marines and the Army, which are no kinder or accurate than any other expressed so far.

Worse yet, this attitude spills over into every aspect of the Corps - from uniforms to names to the place of certain "traditions" within the SFMC.

The point that is missed here is that they have more in common with each other than not, and that their attitudes and actions would be an embarrassment to any of the respective branches of military service. Furthermore, the SFMC is modeled on a military organization four centuries in the future — an organization that would no doubt be an amalgamation of several armed forces, and not just a replay of the Army-Navy game.

INFIGHTING AMONG STARFLEET MARINES AND OTHER TREK MARINES

The form of prejudice that makes the least sense (well none of them make much sense, I agree) is the rivalry between STARFLEET Marines and other Star Trek style "Marine" organizations. The most obvious conflicts occur with Starfleet Marines International (SMI), but happen with other groups as well. No one is sure what point there is in having a rivalry, of course, it just seems like some thing to do no matter how much it damages and degrades both organizations.

MINE'S BIGGER THAN YOURS

The old story of who's bigger, better organized or just plain better. Unfortunately, the majority of the sniping comes from organizations that never were too impressive in the first place. Nor will they be in the future, unless they stop acting like children. The world of fandom is a big place, and there's room enough for everyone to play. It's fiction, folks...who need the fighting?

OUTCAST OR ORIGINAL RECIPE?

If you can't claim clear superiority in other areas, you can always claim to be more original or older than your opponent. Remember the splinter groups mentioned earlier in this chapter? Well, this is the common argument that each uses. Who is older? Who cares? Who is more original? Difficult to tell, when the genre and fan clubs of "Starfleet Marines" are so intertwined and based on such flimsy background. One or two cameos in a Star Trek episode is pretty thin material to work with. Who is better at serving its members? Who knows? If someone is unhappy with one organization, he is welcome to try out another, a significant difference between the fiction and the reality of being a STARFLEET Marine.

Who benefits from these little organizational comparisons? No one, except of course, the people who want to see the Marines in Star Trek removed or outlawed. If it continues the way it has, they won't have to remove us, we'll do it ourselves.

EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

Please note: This is not the final exam. Do not turn these exercises in to the SFMCA.

I. KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Explain each term in your own words.

1. Junior Enlisted

2. "Non-Com"

3. Commissioned Officer

4. Evangelist

5. Heathen

6. Hawk

7. Dove

II. PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. In your own words, describe the three most important differences between the SFMC and the "Fleet" aspect of STARFLEET.

2. In your own words, describe three most important similarities between the SFMC and the "Fleet " aspect of STARFLEET.

III. SELF ANALYSIS

1. Describe two activities that your chapter could do that would interest both Marines and members of other departments.

2. What department is your unit (or, if you don't have a unit, your Marines) assigned to? What are the duties of

that department? How can you contribute or assist with those duties?

3. If your department has no duties assigned, talk to your department head or CO. What can you and/or your department do to contribute to your chapter?

4. Do you know your Battalion OIC? Your Brigade OIC? Who are these individuals, and how can they be contacted?

5. Describe two things you and/or your unit can do to contribute to your Battalion or Brigade. Using your chain of command, you may want to discuss these proposals and implement them.

Think of a time when you have witnessed the mindsets discussed in this chapter.

1. Does one of these mindsets apply to you? If so, which one? What steps can you take to correct this?

2. How does infighting like this weaken the Corps and STARFLEET?

3. What can you do to reduce such infighting?

CHAPTER FIVE: THE HARD PART

THREE BAGS FULL, SIR?

Time to put all of this high speed training to use. This chapter is a review of the important points you should use to evaluate yourself. If you aren't meeting the standard, then you need to start working on it, right now. It won't mater how good a Marine you are, if every one thinks you look like a ragbag. Likewise, it won't matter how good you look in your dress uniform if you act like a dirtbag. Obviously, if you look like a ragbag, and you act like a dirtbag, then you are going to get a reputation as a scumbag. You don't want that, now do you?

Of course not, that's why you've read this far through the course, right?

Let's do it then, one step at a time.

THE LOOK

First impressions count, and your appearance is going to say a lot about you, your unit, and the STARFLEET Marines. Ask yourself the following questions.

DO I LOOK LIKE A PROFESSIONAL...

...When I'm at STARFLEET functions? (Ship meetings, Regional Summit, etc.)

...When I'm representing the SFMC to the public? (Marine activities, charity drives, recruiting, etc.)

...In my uniform? (Is it clean, insignia correct, complete?)

If you can project the image of a sharp, professional Marine, you're already halfway to being one. It's just easier to act like a sharp Marine if you dress like one. Take a moment to consider your friends in STARFLEET. What were you wearing when you met them? Did you look sharp? Did they? What about the people you are or are not impressed with? What were they wearing then? What do they usually wear now?

Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. Make that first impression count, Marine!

THE WALK AND THE TALK

Okay, so you look like they replicated you from a STARFLEET Marine recruiting poster, and your uniform is so "strack" it makes the locals whistle when you enter a room. Now what? If you open you mouth and say something really foolish, it will tarnish that polished professional image of yours. This goes for written as well as verbal communication. We've all met people with spotless uniforms and filthy mouths, right? Anybody want to be like them?

I didn't think so, not the way you're reading this and shaking your head.

So, if looking the part is half the battle, then acting the part is the other half. How do you act? That's a tough one, isn't it? Well, think about the last time you wore your SFMC uniform, and ask yourself these questions.

DO I ACT LIKE A PROFESSIONAL...

...When I'm at a STARFLEET function? (Did I set the example for teamwork, courtesy, and respect?)

...When I'm representing the SFMC to the public? (Did I act like someone worth imitating, or like a costumed clown?)

...When I send email or letters? (Do I use courtesy and respect to set the right tone?)

...When I interact with other STARFLEET Marines? (Do I set the standard for others? Am I part of the team?)

...When I interact with other Trek-based groups, Marine or not? (Do I promote cooperation and mutual respect between the organizations?)

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It is obviously important to maintain high personal standards for appearance and conduct, but it is also important to work with other STARFLEET and STARFLEET Marines. Cooperation makes difficult jobs easier. Teamwork is the key to success, in anything as fun as a paintball game to something as serious as saving a life. To be a good team member, you have to understand the principles of being a good follower as well as a good leader, and how to manage things like time, resources, and manpower to get the job done. Think of your local chapter and the Marine unit that you belong to, and consider the following questions about your actions as part of the team.

AM I A GOOD FOLLOWER?

If someone else has the lead in a project, do you try to support them? Do you work with them to reach the common goal? If you have concerns or objections, do you find a polite way to voice them? Do you criticize constructively? If you see a problem with the plan, do you consider a solution before you speak up? Do you accept responsibility for your part in the team effort? Do you demand recognition for your part in the team effort?

The best way to become a good leader is to start as a good follower, and learn from others mistakes (while helping them correct them, if you can).

AM I A GOOD LEADER?

Do you set the standard for conduct and performance? Do you make allowances for those who cannot meet your standard? (Notice the word "cannot", as opposed to the phrase "will not"). Do you accept criticism with an open mind? Do you admit your mistakes? Do you praise in public, criticize in private? Do you support the members of your team? Do you accept responsibility for your part in the team effort? Do you demand recognition for your part in the team effort?

AM I A GOOD MANAGER?

Do you set realistic deadlines? Do you complete your activities by those deadlines? Do you overextend yourself, promising more than you can reasonably expect to accomplish? Do you set deadlines for others? Do you waste time? Do you waste other people's time? Do you keep a list of "things to do"? Do you work on that list?

IMPROVE YOURSELF

Well, after that little self check, you probably found a few things that need improvement. Get out a piece of paper, right now, and make a list of things you can do to improve yourself. Most people can find five or more things they can do to improve themselves, can you? Here's a short list of the three most common things a STARFLEET Marine can do to improve himself.

SQUARE AWAY THAT UNIFORM

Get at least one good looking uniform. The Mess White and Mess Black uniforms look sharp during meals or other formal events, like award presentations. The BDUs look the most military, and are easy to come by. Get a uniform or two, and make sure the insignia, patches and accessories are all correct.

TALK THINGS OVER WITH YOUR FELLOW CREW MEMBERS

Find out what they think about the STARFLEET Marines, and you, too. See if you can find other people interested in the STARFLEET Marine Corps. Do you like the Marine Academy courses you've taken? If so, show them to others. Building interest in the Corps will help build the Corps. The more Marines you know, the more things you can do as a group, and the more fun you can have.

GET ACTIVE!

Are you doing anything in your chapter, or are you one of those that just shows up at meetings because there's nothing on TV? Are there any projects going on in your chapter, that you can get involved in? What about the other Marines in your area? What about the national campaign that the SFMC is doing this year? What about training? Can you get CPR or first aid qualified? Have you taken any other STARFLEET or STARFLEET Marine Academy courses? Is there another Marine in your unit who could use a hand getting his uniform together? What about writing some articles or fiction for the SFMC fanzine, or your local newsletter?

CONGRATULATIONS!

You've taken the first steps toward a more professional and enjoyable experience as a STARFLEET Marine. Apply the information you've learned, and set the example for others to follow.

One Marine can make a difference — you are that Marine!