

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do.

Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

- Aristotle, Philosopher

The Maine Center for Career Preparation is a private, non-profit committed to improving the economic prospects of Maine citizens.

Improving the linkages between education and workforce development is our goal.

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Education Works!

Education—A Come As You Are War

By Tom Broussard

Leaning Forward

I heard a broadcast on National Public Radio this morning. They were interviewing a US Marine Corps battle group regarding their preparations for battle in the Middle East. They are part of a rapid deployment force the Marines call a MEU, a Marine Expeditionary Unit. These MEU's consist of everything 2200 Marines need to survive anywhere on the planet. The Lt. Colonel went so far as to say that he could survive for two weeks on the moon with everything that a MEU carries with it—tanks, helicopters, machine guns, food, ammunition, medical supplies, etc.

The Marines that the reporter was interviewing referred to themselves as the “tip of the

spear” in reference to their role as the leading edge of any invasion force in the US inventory. The Marines are usually the first to go so preparedness for them is an art form. The Marines call it *leaning forward*—always prepared.

Super Gumby's

Another officer in charge of the logistics for the battle group said they were referred to as “super gumby's” because they have to be so incredibly flexible in support of the mission. Of course, they have to have a Plan B.....but they also need a Plan C and a Plan D...and so on. For these “super gumby's” failure to support the mission is not an option. They are on high alert and must be ready to put Marines and equipment “over the beach” in six hours.

Come As You Are War

The Marine commented that with the speed of change today they have to be ready at a moment's notice. She called it a “come as you are war.” Everything you might possibly need must be ready to go instantly.



There is no time to prepare. There is no time to get ready. There is certainly no time to stage materials for months (or even years) like in WWII. Everything and everyone must be ready at all times. The only thing you can count on is your training and your skills.

The only weapons you have are the ones you have been training with.

Once the bullets start flying it's all instinct borne of practice and habit.

We Are All Super Gumby's

What does all this have to do with education and workforce development?

I began to think of the parallel between the Marines and their level of preparation and that of the modern day worker. The Marines must always have back up plans for their back up plans--so do workers today.

Workers must be ready at a moment's notice should their

company close, move, down size, or get bought.

Once the pink slips start flying it is too late to be learning—it is time to be doing. The battle--for the mortgage, for the kids' clothes, for retirement--has begun. Truth is, it began a long time ago.

We must learn from the US Marines. We must all be "super gumby's."

Today's Workers-The Tip of the Spear

Clearly, today's workers are the tip of the spear in much the same way the Marines use the term. Today's workers are the first ones sent into battle and they are certainly the first casualties.

What happens when there is an economic downturn anywhere on the planet today?

Close the factory, send the work overseas, cut costs, ramp up technology. This isn't wrong. This is the way economic

battles are fought today and workers pay the price with their jobs.

A Gumby of One

So just like a war, when the time comes to use our education, there is no time to *get* ready. You have to *be* ready.

The time to prepare for the next battle—or in this case—the next job, is while you still have a job. This is why lifelong learning is so important. You can never stop preparing for the next engagement, whatever it might be.

You never know when the next call is going to come, when the "balloon is going to go up." You must assume, rightfully so in this day and age, that it is a matter of *when* not *if*.

There is no time left to get ready when you are called to the corner office to be told that your job has been cut. If you are not ready, you will essentially be a casualty of war--a war in which the *only* weapon is education.

We have all heard the TV commercial "An Army of One." Well, it is time that we take a lesson from the US Marine Corps and become....

....a "Gumby of ONE"

