The United States Marines
“Keep In Memory Sniper” (KIMS) Game

In their December 21, 2001 edition, The Wall Street Journal profiled U.S. Marine Sergeant Christopher G. Jacox and the rigors of working as a military sniper. Heavily trained military specialists, snipers are able to coolly pick out their targets and hit them from as far as one mile (1609 meters) away, even during heavy fighting.

As part of their job, snipers are trained to work and survive behind enemy lines and collect tactical intelligence on their missions, which means remembering tiny details of what they see. “A discarded tin can might indicate something about food supplies and morale. A bunch of cans might suggest the size of the enemy force,” the article explained. “Every little thing counts,” added Sgt. Jacox in the article.

During sniper training, to help teach their snipers to be fully observant and focused, regardless of what is going on around them, the Marines use the “Keep in Memory Sniper” (KIMS) game. In this game, instructors place 10 items on the floor. Then people surround the trainee and the 10 items. The trainee is then instructed to open their eyes and take 60 seconds to analyze the items on the floor, while the people surrounding them yell and throw objects at the trainee to create a distraction. After the 60 seconds expire, the trainee takes a run or attends class. Hours, or even as much as a day, later, the trainee is given three minutes to draw each of the 10 items from memory, describing their nature, size, shape, color and condition. A passing score in the KIMS game is successfully describing eight out of 10 of the items.

Isn’t the business world today, in many ways, like the battle world of a sniper and the KIMS game? You are challenged to focus on a set of extremely important objectives and the end-result of what you are required to achieve. However, while you are trying to keep your focus, the world is trying hard to distract you with yelling, changes, gossip, email, phone calls, faxes, pressures at home, pressures at work, personal and business finance challenges, and unexpected events that demand immediate attention. These flying objects and daily “busyness” can pull you away from the vision you have for your life, your career, and how you contribute to the overall vision of your company, department or team.

As a means of testing employee retention of crucial company vision, mission, values, objectives and tactics – and even to see if you are communicating key company messages in a manner that can be understood and remembered by employees – consider testing these vital corporate messages with the U.S. Marines KIMS game. Another extremely important thing this exercise will accomplish is that it will remind you and all employees of the challenges of maintaining your focus on critical issues amidst the hectic nature of the daily work environment.

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For the purposes of this exercise, we will use the KIMS game to test retention of important messages from Bob Johnson’s “The Visionary Leader” video. Here are some proposed steps to follow.

1. As this version of the KIMS game is NOT intended for military personnel, try to find 10-20 relatively soft items (e.g. rubber or foam balls, wadded up pieces of paper, balled up socks) that you can throw at game participants.

2. Prepare 10 cards that you will place on the ground for the participant to view during the game (please see pages 3-4 of this document for a sample).

3. Gather a group of people who you wish to test (e.g. your department, training class).

4. Select a volunteer and ask them to stand in the middle of the room with their eyes closed.

5. Place the 10 message cards on the floor around the volunteer.

6. Instruct the other members of the group to surround the volunteer, hand them some soft items to throw, and have them think of distracting things they can yell at the person during the game (e.g. yell random numbers; yell, “Where’s my order?” or “Why isn’t this done yet?”).

7. Tell the volunteer that once they open their eyes, they will have 60 seconds to remember as much as they can about the 10 items they will see on the ground.

8. Instruct the volunteer to open their eyes and allow them 60 seconds to view the 10 cards on the floor. This is done while the other participants throw things at the volunteer and yell things to distract them.

9. At the end of 60 seconds, collect the cards.

10. Give the volunteer pages from a book or magazine to read and have them read aloud, or have them walk around the room while talking to another participant (e.g. have them recite the letters of the alphabet backwards, count down to zero from 100, or give a summary of their career and personal background as they walk).

11. In three minutes, have the volunteer recite or write the items they recall from the 10 cards. (You don’t want to embarrass anyone in front of others, so consider this if you choose to have people recite things in front of their peers.)

12. Evaluate the results. Remember, a U.S. Marine sniper must perfectly remember at least eight of the 10 items.

13. The key messages of this activity are:
   - When we create a vision for ourselves, our company or others to follow, we must remember that pursuit of these things is complicated by the daily flying objects of life. Can people understand and remember the vision? Do they know how they contribute to making the vision a reality? Is the vision being constantly reinforced and repeated?
   - Because daily tasks can pull us away from the things that are important, we need to be constantly revisiting critical long-range vision, objectives and goals (as a group and individually) to make sure we are still moving forward in the right strategic direction.

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We manage things; We lead people.

The manager’s prime responsibility is to build people and make them successful.

When you think about vision, you have to begin with the end in mind.

You must “Five-Sense” your vision - help people to hear it, see it, feel it, smell it, taste it.

You must sell your vision to others.

To sell your vision, you must play it on the radio station WIIFM “What’s in it for me?”
Bob Johnson says that management is the ability to enlist the willing cooperation of people and effectively utilize other resources in order to achieve a set of predetermined desired results.

The managerial visionary process begins with:

taking a creative thinking approach.

The action step of management involves 2 things:
communication
delegation

The managerial visionary process adds up to:
motivation