Why Should Executives and Managers Care About the New Women Army Rangers?


After completing the Army's grueling 60+ day course of climbing, swimming, running and jumping with 90-pound packs in the Georgia and Florida heat, the two were officially inducted as the first female Army Rangers.

Women had sought since the 80s to be allowed to enter the training, but these were the first two to make it through. So difficult that 40% of the men who start wash out, the "Ranger" ranking serves as the portal to higher officer possibilities. Although still barred from some combat roles, the women now have a shot at many positions they previously could not have.

They endured the same training as their male counterparts. Let me repeat that: they endured the same training as their male counterparts. Much of the hullabaloo about women serving in these roles has focused on the potential lower standards, but in this case, no such lowering occurred.

A few years ago I worked for a large oil company that was integrating women into its ranks as diesel tank truck drivers. They had previously been denied these well paying jobs because they were thought not to be strong enough to lift the hoses required to fill up the tanks and the company had imposed a requirement that applicants be able to lift 75 pounds. Finally, someone thought to actually weigh the hoses and found they weighed 50 pounds instead. More women and men could now apply for these jobs.

When we conduct sessions on what the new workforce would look like once women joined, many of the men groused that the company was lowering their standards. Not so. They were simply making sure that the standards required matched what the actual job required. Both the law and common sense would seem to dictate this result.

In your workplace, do the job requirements match the actual duties? Are you excluding any one group because of outdated educational or physical standards that the job doesn't really necessitate?

At least some women -- and a few good men -- can meet the rigorous Army Ranger standards, even though so much of modern warfare doesn't seem to require these skills. Good for them.
In your workplace, however, take care to make sure that you’re not requiring someone to slog through the mud to get the job if they’ll never be required to do that once they start.

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