



2014-2015

Post Commander's

HOW-TO GUIDE

And Membership Planning Addendum

Table of Contents

Title	Page
Introduction	1
<i>Chapter 1: Documents and Certificates</i>	3
<i>Chapter 2: Organization & Teamwork</i>	5
<i>Chapter 3: Programs; Committees & CPR Reports</i>	8
<i>Chapter 4: Post Operations and Volunteers</i>	10
<i>Chapter 5: Post Meetings & Ceremonies</i>	13
<i>Chapter 6: Suggested Meeting Agenda Shell</i>	15
 & Draping of The Charter	
Membership Planning Addendum	18

COMMANDER'S DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

"To you, comrade, is entrusted a very important duty of teaching and protecting the cardinal principles of The American Legion throughout your entire post. To you is entrusted supervision of the duties of all other officers of this post. To you may come the needy and the distressed, and it is your duty to see no worthy comrade is turned away without full justice. It is your duty to see freedom is ever the watchword of those with whom you may come in contact. Loyalty to your post, to its membership, to the state and to the national organization are obligations which you now assume.

*You are more than the presiding officer for meetings. You are guided by the constitution and by the decisions of the post as a body, yet the responsibility for the success of the year's program is largely on your shoulders. You must initiate and carry through programs to completion. You must thoroughly familiarize yourself with the policies and traditions of your post and of The American Legion. By your sincere acceptance and earnest performance of these duties, may the great trust which your comrades have reposed in you be justified. To you, I extend the congratulations of the department, and I wish you well as you assume the responsibilities of your office. I present to you a copy of the **Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies** to serve as your guide during the coming year."*

"CHARGE FROM INSTALLATION CEREMONY"

INTRODUCTION

New Commander, this manual "**HOW-TO-GUIDE**" is written to help guide you through your new journey as Commander of your Post. The information that is contained in this manual has been compiled from various Post, District, Area and Department Commanders experiences as well as many American Legion Manuals. In no way does this manual supersede any Legion Manual that may have changed since this has been written, we hope that this manual is very helpful in your term as Post Commander and we appreciate any feedback you may have. Congratulations and Good Luck in your endeavors. For a more in-depth look at the entire American Legion please refer to *The American Legion's Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies* (current issue).

DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION

Section 1. Departments shall be chartered by the National Executive Committee and shall be composed of the posts within their respective areas, and such other posts as the National Executive Committee may approve. Each department charter shall be signed by the national commander and national adjutant.

Section 2. Each department shall have a department commander, one or more department vice-commanders, a department adjutant and a department executive committee, and may have a chaplain and such other officers as the department shall determine.

Section 3. Departments shall have authority to create intermediate bodies between the posts and department to act as a liaison between such organizations and for the purpose of promoting the programs of The American Legion.

Section 4. The department executive committee shall define the powers of such intermediate groups, but in no event shall such powers invade the rights now vested either in the post or department or national organization.

Section 5. Such intermediate bodies now existing within the departments and heretofore authorized or recognized by such department are hereby officially recognized to the extent of the powers herein granted.

WHAT IS A POST COMMANDER?

If this is your first time as a Post Commander, and you are not quite sure what the job entails, don't feel alone! You're not! Every year over 14,000 Legionnaires across the nation are elected to the position of Post Commander and very few have experience. As a Post Commander you have a unique opportunity to help The American Legion work and in turn to **"HELP AMERICA WORK."** Your term in the office of Post Commander can be one of the most rewarding and satisfying experiences of your life.

RESPONSIBILITY

In many ways the Post Commander is the most important person in The American Legion. District & Department officers learn very quickly that when a Post commander has organized the Post, is meeting his/her responsibilities, and keeping a constant watch on Post & District activities, the Post is on the move. Each post in The American Legion is a separate and distinct unit of our organization.

Each post functions independently of other posts. You, as Post Commander, have the responsibility for providing the link between individuals, District and Department. The Department, in turn, provides the link between the Districts, and your national office ties the 55 departments together.

The part you play in this communication process is vital. Without your leadership, the Legionnaires in your Post will have no way of linking their operations to our much larger District / Departmental network. With your leadership, your Post can become an important part of an organized national effort. The American Legion was founded with a spirit of fellowship, enthusiasm and mutual respect among concerned friends. It was built on understanding, appreciation, and vocal pride of America and its people.

It was built with the awareness that together we can make a difference—together we are **"STILL SERVING AMERICA."** The success of The American Legion in today's world

begins with you and your desire and ability to link your Post to the rest of the organization. Ralph Waldo Emerson once mused that, “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” Enthusiasm indicates excitement about an idea. If we add the necessary ingredients of dedication, personal attention, imagination, and perseverance, we have the requirements for a good Post Commander.

CHAPTER 1. DOCUMENTS AND CERTIFICATES

As a Post Commander in the State of Florida your Charge is simple as read above and given to you at your installation and a lot more that is unwritten. There are certain items that a Post ***MUST HAVE*** to exist and other items that a Post ***MUST HAVE*** if they do certain things.

VERY IMPORTANT CERTIFICATES AND DOCUMENTS

- FEIN # - Federal Employee Identification Number - A Federal Tax ID, also known as an Employer Identification Number (EIN), is a nine-digit number issued by the Internal Revenue Service for banking, tax filing, and other business purposes. The various forms, directions and methods for filing are freely available from the IRS, and you can obtain, file, and receive your Tax ID (EIN) for no charge by researching and correctly filing for it by yourself. However, the requirements to prepare the SS-4 form to apply for a Tax ID vary depending on the circumstances. Different fields on the form are required, the same fields require different types of information in different cases, and the form is filled with terms you may not understand.

- The IRS's own estimates for preparing and filing the SS-4 is over an hour. So you can do that on your own, you can wait in line or on hold for help from IRS agents, you can even try navigating the IRS website, or you can choose our value-added Tax ID service to do it on your behalf in minutes. **MUST HAVE (Copy to Department)**

- a. You must apply as a 501C (19) which identifies your Post as a NON-Profit Organization that is Chartered by Congress. **MUST HAVE (Copy to Department)**
- b. **FORM 990** - A Form 990 must be filed every Year no matter how much income your Post makes. If your Post does not make much money you may be able to file the fast and simple 990N form which takes less than 5 minutes on the IRS website. For all inquires on filing your Post's Income Tax Return FORM 990 please check with a Licenses Tax preparer, your Department headquarters and www.irs.gov website. **MUST DO EVERY YEAR. Tax deadline is May 15th of every year!**
- c. **State Incorporation Certificate** - Must be filed as an Incorporation by the State of Florida (www.sunbiz.org) for the calendar year January - December. For the new year you must renew your incorporation papers with the state as they currently give you through March to do so, after April 1st the State imposes currently a *\$300 penalty*. If your Post is NOT Incorporated every member of your Post can be open to a lawsuit; God forbid something did happen to someone. **(Copy to Department)**
- d. **Insurance** - Every Post must have some type of liability Insurance. This also covers

your members to and from a meeting if you didn't even have a home.

- e. **Tax Exempt** – filed with the State of Florida. To obtain go to www.MyFlorida.com. Good to Have, if you purchase things and don't want to pay taxes on it (**Copy to Department**)
- f. **Post Constitution and By Laws** – Updated every three (3) years; send 2 copies to Department Headquarters. Department Headquarters will keep one and will send the second copy to the Department Judge Advocate. After its been approved by the Department Judge Advocate and the Department Commander you will receive a letter and that is your start date. If you have NO changes after 3 years, your Posts just needs to send a letter with a copy of the previous approved C & B stating it was reviewed and there are no changes to your current C & B. You will get another letter from Department and your new 3 year window starts right there. However, you don't need 3 years to update your C & B at anytime your Post feels that something needs to be changed then please do an amendment or complete revision and follow the same process above. **MUST HAVE!**
- g. **Restriction of Post Property form** – Call Department Headquarters for this form.
- h. **Liquor License** - If you do serve alcohol. For more information please go to: www.myfloridalicense.com
- i. **Food License** - If you intend to serve Food. For more information please go to: www.myfloridalicense.com
- j. **Food Handlers Certificates** - If you do serve food, you need qualified food handlers (1 day training) and their certificates must be on display.
- k. If you have **employees**:
 - 1. **Federal Forms** - W-2 Wage and Tax Statement, W-3 Transmittal of Wage and Tax Statement, 1099 MISC Income, 940 Employer's Annual Federal Unemployment (FUTA) Tax Return, 941 Employer's QUARTERLY Federal Tax Return and other Federal Forms that may apply to your Post.
 - 2. **State Forms** - UCT-6 Florida Department of Revenue Employer's Quarterly Report, DR-15 Monthly Sales and Use Tax Return and other City or State Forms that may apply to your Post.
- l. Items that should be **safeguarded**.
 - 1. Property Deeds of ALL Real Property
 - 2. Insurance for Post
 - 3. Previous Years Tax information (7 or more years)
 - 4. Checking & Savings accounts - Authorized signatures as per your Post Constitution & Bylaws'.
 - 5. If your Post requires members DD-214's on file should be under lock and only limited officers access, recommend that all SSN's be blackened out and

double locked (cabinet & door to office).

6. Any Papers or information's that your Membership feels worth safeguarding.

CHAPTER 2. - ORGANIZATION & TEAMWORK

As Post Commander you should possess some type of organizational skills and managerial skills to ensure that all faucets of your Post is covered.

Organize Team

As Post Commander, your first order of business is your “team”—the people with whom you can work and those who can best perform the tasks necessary for a successful year during your term of office. You must select the cast, set the stage, and it’s up to you to:

1. Move those projects that are most important, following a definite timetable;
2. determine both long-range and immediate objectives;
3. organize fully and communicate exactly your ideas and your enthusiasm; and
4. make sure the lines of communication are tightly drawn so the flow of information will be easily available to the public, post, district, department, and national.

Organizing The Post

The first two months following the election of the Post commander can and often do determine the success or failure of the entire administration. This is the time the selection of the key persons who will assist is completed, a timetable of future events is established, and it’s made certain that the posts are getting organized. The Post Commander is normally the elected representative of the legionnaires in the Post, but an obligation to provide guidance and supervision is also implied.

Legionnaires are responsible to carry out the objectives and programs of the Legion and to fully comply with the obligations assumed under the post, department and national constitutions. When a post is inactive, it begins to falter or fails.

Supervision means organization. Responsibilities must be assigned to Post Vice Commanders. Other Post officers must clearly understand the duties of their office. The most effective way to organize is to use an early meeting to bring together the team that will make the Post function.

Prior to that meeting, the Post Commander should know what has been the past success or failure of the programs and objectives of the post. Post Commanders of previous years should be consulted. The commander should learn all that is possible to learn about the Post, and should have clearly defined objectives and assignments to present.

A well-prepared agenda will furnish a pattern for all future meetings and go far toward getting the Post organization functioning quickly and effectively.

a. **Post Planning:**

1. **Your year** - You must be familiar with your Post and Community as there may be annual events that your Post is involved in and must be part of your Plan. Include in your plan ways to stimulate your membership and community to be involved with each other to better not only your Post but your community as well.

Remember that your Post was placed in its current place with the community in mind. When times and the community changes your Post must also change to meet the needs of your community as well. Surround your Calendar of events around your Post Programs, include the entire American Legion Family with your planning and produce a fun filled calendar of events. When executing it, you should always be three plus months ahead of the event, with high visible events may need to be planned up to a year in advance.

2. **Posts Long Range plan** - Your Post should have a long range plan or vision for your Post in 5 years and it should always be adjusted every year accordingly. A good Committee to place on this would be Past Post Commanders as they have been through at least a year of service in your Post and knows firsthand what it needs in the future.

- ## b. **Relationship with Legion Family:**
- Together, members of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion make up what is known as The Legion Family. All three organizations place high importance on preserving our American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation's children, caring for veterans and their families, and perhaps most importantly, teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship.

1. **American Legion Auxiliary "Unit"** - Remember that The American Legion Auxiliary is a separate organization and have no part in the Post business as well as TAL has no part in the Auxiliary business. It's very important to include them with your planning and assist them in any way possible, at the end of the day you may have to go home with one of them :-). Auxiliary has their own non-profit charter.

2. **Sons Of The American Legion "Squadron"** - Founded in 1932, Sons of The American Legion exists to honor the service and sacrifice of Legionnaires. Although Sons has its own membership, the organization is not a separate entity. Rather, SAL is a program of The American Legion. Many Legionnaires hold dual membership in SAL.

SAL's mission: to strengthen the four pillars of The American Legion. Therefore, squadrons' campaigns place an emphasis on preserving American traditions and values, improving the quality of life for our nation's children, caring for veterans and their families, and teaching the fundamentals of good citizenship.

You should appoint a Legion member (preferably a dual member) to attend their meetings and report back to both your Executive Board and General

membership meetings on their membership, funds, programs and fundraisers at the minimum.

3. **Legion Riders** - The American Legion Riders was formed in 1993 in the Department of Michigan, as Post members of Post 396 shared an idea to start a motorcycle enthusiasts association within the organization. The two longtime riders wanted an environment where Legion family members could come together to share a common love for motorcycles. The ALR is also a Program of TAL and the ALR program is not a separate entity, to gain membership into the ALR you must be an Legion, Auxiliary or SAL member first.

The ALR mission is to Participate in parades and other ceremonies that are in keeping with the Aims and Purposes of the American Legion. To promote motorcycle safety programs and to provide a social atmosphere for American Legion members who share the same interest. To use our Association to promote and support programs of the American Legion through service to our Community, State and Nation.

You should appoint a Legion member (preferably an ALR member) to attend their meetings and report back to both your Executive Board and General membership meetings on their membership, funds, programs and fundraisers at the minimum.

- c. **Administrative Manuals:** As Commander you will need various manuals to get you through your year not only with planning but with the conduct of your duties as well as your officers. Every Post should have these at their Post, if not they can be found at www.legion.org or www.floridalegion.org or a simple call to department headquarters.

1. **Officers Guide and Manual of Ceremonies** - Will contain the basics of how to prepare your meetings and ceremonies as well as canned speeches. For up-to-date speeches on each holiday please go to National's website www.legion.org.
2. **Post Administrative Manual** - You received this at the Department Convention, it goes over the entire year month by month, has a tracking sheet to track members volunteer hours each month to help you fill out the end of year (CPR) reports. On the first few pages there will be a 3 page report that needs to be filled out **ASAP** for your Post Chairman. It is a **MUST** for this to get filled out right away and sent to department for your Program Chairman to get their manuals. Also, if your Post doesn't do a certain program it is recommended to place the Commander or Adjutants name down so your Post will get the Program Manual and take it to your meetings as you may have someone that just may be interested in doing it.
3. **Membership Processing and Information Manual** - This Manual is very helpful on ALL aspects of membership. It will have the transmittal sheets for sending paid membership cards to Department as well as Credit Card

slips. It will also go over all goal dates, membership awards, how to get membership brochures and gifts for when you do a membership drive. Also many tips and ideas of how to conduct a membership drive and sample letters.

4. **Membership Team Training Guide & Adjutants Manual** - these two manuals will assist your Adjutant and membership team with the conduct of the duties of their positions. For the Adjutant it will assist them on what to look for in military documentation, how to help a veteran obtain their documentation they lost and lots of questions can be answered in this one manual. For the Membership Team it will go over on how to make a Post membership plan as every Post is different and one plan would not work for all. Have lots of ideas and tips in running a very successful membership campaign.
5. **Constitution & Bylaws'** - Your Post, Department & National organizations have them. You must be familiar with all 3 as your Post's C&B cannot counteract anything that either National or Departments C&B states.
6. **Roberts Rules of Order** - If anything to do with running your meeting is not covered in the Post, Department or National's C&B then you refer to Roberts Rules of Order for running your meeting, Your Post Judge Advocate should have the latest copy of this book and should be very familiar with it as well as all the C&B.

CHAPTER 3. - PROGRAMS; COMMITTEES & CPR REPORTS

- a. **Appointing your Chairman** - See your Post C & B if there are particular appointments that is required of you. The programs that your Post does and the ones you would like to also do there should be at least a program chairman appointed. The reason for this is that is the person that will be getting the Dept Program Chairman's Guide to better help them execute the program, Also, it's the person who would be reporting back to you and the membership on the program. All Programs that require funds to run it, the Program Chair should conduct fundraisers to support it. They will need help and forming his/her committee and other help is the best in program management.

Selection and Use of Committees

No task is more fundamental to a smoothly functioning Post than is the selection and proper use of committee chairs and committees. Whenever possible, the chair should be someone with personal interests in the program assigned, and should be a person with enough stature to make effective contacts throughout the community with others of like interests.

It is essential to distribute appointments and not give someone to many committees, but sometimes this may not be able to be avoided.

Once a Commander has decided upon the chairs, personal contact should be made with each head to determine a willingness to serve. A meeting should be arranged where the Commander can meet with each of the more important chairs and committees to formulate the program for the coming year. The Commander has an additional obligation to see that each chair and committee is furnished with all needed information and materials.

All of these preliminary procedures are geared toward each of the committees being able to build a timetable of events under its supervision that will fit into the overall program and can be presented as a complete projection for the year at the first Post meeting. As the year draws to a close, careful attention should be given to the selection of a nominating committee. This committee will be responsible for selecting qualified persons to carry forward the progress you have made.

Sources of Assistance

Your department adjutant will have information or aids available from the department, National Headquarters, and from outside sources. The other major sources of assistance are within your own Post. Don't be too proud to consult with past Post officers. In fact, you may wish to establish an advisory committee of Past Commanders for your Post. The experience of this group, when properly sought and utilized, will avoid many pitfalls and errors for you.

Value of Reporting

Preparing reports is rarely pleasant, except when results are favorable. But the value of a Post commander is in no small part determined by the ability to report both the favorable and unfavorable situations in the Post to the District Commander and by the ability to report department and national actions to the Legionnaires of the Post. It is a two-way street, and again emphasizes the importance of the Post Commander as a link in a chain. You are the communications key, Membership results should be checked weekly.

b. **Programs and Tracking** - You should develop a one page tracking sheet for your entire year to include deadline dates for all events, membership goals, programs etc. All of this information is helpful when you start to construct your meeting agendas. This sheet should list the Event, who is responsible and deadline date at the minimum for easy tracking. You can always contact the person that you will be needing an update on that event at the next meeting.

c. Consolidated Post Reports

Post adjutants are the key to how well The American Legion as a whole will be able to report to the American people its actual accomplishments for the past year. Department headquarters send each post one of the report forms as the reporting year comes to a close. This is a three-part, snap-out form. The third copy is to be retained by the post for its files and the first two copies go to department headquarters.

Please be sure all reports from posts in your district are sent to department headquarters on or before the deadline set by department that is located in your Post Administrative Manual as well as the mailing with the CPR Reports set to the Post. **If a Post fails to submit a CPR Report they will not be able to Register at the Department Convention and will be placed on the Department Executive Committee agenda for removal of charter.**

The Consolidated Post Report form covers participation in the basic programs—Americanism, Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Economic, and National Security. But the report goes further than the major program areas, asking for information such as post involvement in community service, legislative endeavors, public relations efforts, etc. The report also inquires whether the post sponsors a uniformed group and distributes a regular publication to the membership.

Information from Consolidated Post Reports is frequently shared with Members of Congress and should be shared with local leaders as well. This information provides Members of Congress with a snapshot of the valuable community service provided by The American Legion family. This report demonstrates community involvement that has been the hallmark of The American Legion's commitment and service to country.

d. Replaces Former Program Reports

Because the Consolidated Post Report replaced the former Children & Youth and Americanism Reports, it is a good idea to attach a narrative covering in greater detail a post's accomplishments in these program areas. This will enable your Department Americanism and Children & Youth Committees to consider the work of a post in determining its possible qualification for national recognition. Don't be discouraged if the post doesn't have something to report in every blank on the report form.

Very few posts carry on every Legion program. Many outstanding American Legion posts devote their energies and resources to just two or three programs or activities, which more than justify their existence.

Many posts now have an American Legion Riders program, an activity for motorcycle enthusiasts. You should encourage these posts to report on the activities of their Riders as well.

CHAPTER 4. - POST OPERATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS

As Post Commander you should already have a good idea of the Operations of your Post and your Volunteers. Every Post is operated differently and all volunteers react differently

Post Operations:

Post Operations manual was written for suggested ideas on how to run your Post. There are a lot of good ideas in it and if you get stuck I would get this manual and open it up and read it. Read it anyway as it may open your eyes on something that is not being done.

a. Lounge Operations - Must appoint a Lounge or Bar Manager. A House Committee

or Board of Trustees to police the Lounge and its operations. This should be spelled out in the Posts C&B on their duties. These areas will just be highlighted, for more in-depth information please see the Post Operations Manual.

1. Must establish a Bartenders SOP or Responsibility.
2. Control of Lounge Funds.
3. How to avoid spillages / free drinks / Theft
4. Recorded Cash Register
5. Sales by product
6. Minimal Cash on Hand.
7. Beverage Cost Control.
8. Inventory Control.
9. Labor Costs
10. Study all shifts, identify off-peak days/hours
11. **MUST ESTABLISH HOUSE RULES!**

b. **Kitchen Operations** - A Kitchen MGR should be in charge, most Posts they have one of their Vice Commanders as the main person. This should be spelt out in the Posts C&B on their duties. These areas will just be highlighted, for more in-depth information please see the Post Operations Manual.

1. Must establish a Kitchen SOP.
2. Control of Kitchen Funds.
3. How to avoid over cooking / free meals / Theft
4. Recorded Cash Register or accounting system
5. Sales by product
6. Minimal Cash on Hand.
7. Food Cost Control.
8. Inventory Control.
9. Labor Costs (Recommend ALL Volunteers unless a very large Post)
10. Study all events as you would want to tie in special events with a meal, establish regular meal days and hours.
11. **MUST ESTABLISH RULES!**

c. **Post Entertainment** - You should have an Entertainment Chairman, it should be one that is on the Lounge or House Committee but don't have to be. A person that knows what is going on in the Lounge so they can plan accordingly.

d. **Post Finances** - The Post Finance Officer (or Finance Team for large Posts) is in charge of the Post funds to ensure that all of the funds are accounted for and properly recorded. As Post Commander you should ensure that an audit is completed as per your Post C & B and no later than prior to installation of new officers to clear your name as well as the Finance Officer. It is highly recommended that the Commander does not take over the Post funds; in fact should stay at arms distance away from it but should monitor it closely with accurate reporting to the Post membership. A detailed accounting of Post funds and HOW TO Guide can be found in **The Department of Florida Finance Officer's "HOW TO GUIDE"** and the Post Operations Manual.

1. Monthly Report of Post Finances to Post Membership concerning the status of all financial activities of the Post as per Department of Florida Constitution; Article X Section 21.

2. Any member of the Post that handles money shall be Bonded. Check your Post Insurance to ensure that each person is covered or if you need to add additional insurance.

e. **Post Grounds & Maintenance** - As Post Commander you should know your entire grounds of your Post. Know where all the main switches, knobs valves etc. You should know where to isolate your water, the main circuit breaker for your electric and who picks up your trash if the dumpster needs to be emptied. Having someone in charge of your Planned Maintenance is a must! Establish a Planned Maintenance Schedule "PMS" for all your routine and preventive maintenance.

Depending on the size of your Post and Post grounds it is suggested that a weekly walkthrough be conducted. You don't want to find out about that water main leak in 2 months when the water is starting to rush to you Post or after you received 2 very high water bills! You should know the operations of key equipment within your Post as well as where all is kept. Where all the air filters are located, how to change them as well as the supply on hand, light bulbs, Post security system etc. I think you are getting the idea, have you thinking now!

f. **Post Public Relations / Post Information Officers** - A Post Public Relations / Post Information Officer should have a Team established. If a small Post 1 person can do it, but we recommend a team of members. PR should be broken up in 2 parts:

1. **Internal (or Post Information Officer)** - Internal Team would be in charge of the Post Newsletter to ensure that an accurate newsletter and functions is submitted to the members on a Monthly/Bi-Monthly basis. Should establish a member email system to send out weekly email updates to the Legion Family members as well as any emergency notices.

2. **External (or Public Relations Officer)** - External Team to handle all news releases to the media (print, TV, Radio); Website and social media such as Facebook or Twitter. This is an on going thing and should have a good working knowledge of the entire set of events of the Post on a daily basis. More PR information can be found in the National PR Manual.

g. **Volunteers** - As Commander when you ask for Volunteers for a certain function and you only may of needed 5 and 10 showed up; Don't ever turn those extra 5 away as you will lose them. Everyone wants to be part of the team, it is to your interest that you ensure that they feel that way.

1. **Working with Others** - You have members in your Post from all parts of the world. Everyone has a different mindset and reaction to things. When you ask for Volunteers keep that in mind, also keep in mind that not everyone would like you. **Imagine that someone doesn't like the Commander!** You need to get over that and in a hurry! When working with that situation and you know the person would do a great job in that position, maybe use reverse sociology by having another officer ask that person to do volunteer for that position.
2. **Build Volunteer Teams - Burn-Out Factor** - ensure that you get fresh Volunteers and try not to burn out those who constantly raises their hands in doing so. Give them a break every once in awhile. Building Volunteer Teams will kind of stop the burn-out factor, think about it as it will build Team Spirit within those teams.
3. **Praise / Reprimand** - Always Praise in Public and reprimand in private! Don't make one of your Volunteers look bad in front of others. You will lose that Volunteer as well as others that see this.
4. **Communicate-Motivate-Reward** - You must be a good Communicator as everyone should have a clear and concise idea what they are doing, so a Team Leader (Chairperson) should be in charge. Don't forget prior, during and after the event that you are the cheerleader as you must constantly motivate your Volunteers. At the end of a big event or even the year. Reward your Volunteers by a certificate, plaque, dinner or however you want to do it. My favorite Fortune Cookie read "**Recognition is the greatest motivator**"; Reward them!

CHAPTER 5. - POST MEETINGS & CEREMONIES

Meetings:

You have the Gavel take control of the meeting. One sign of weakness at the podium will show others that you are overwhelmed or are lost and will invite for others to try to take over your meeting. Make sure that:

1. **Meeting Agenda** - You and your officers prepare a meeting agenda of all the items that is unfinished business & new business and don't forget to look at least 3 months ahead in planning your events and functions so they go smoothly. Have a one page sheet for the members to obtain prior to your meeting so they know what you plan on speaking about during the meeting.

Agenda items should include:

- a. Membership potential, goals, target dates
 - b. General discussion of program status throughout the Post
 - c. Personal objectives of the Commander
 - d. Assignments to officers, chairmen and committees
 - e. Initial planning for Post meetings
2. **Meeting-Ceremony** - Treat EVERY meeting like it's a Ceremony. IT IS! Use the proper Agenda format located in the last Chapter of this guide, this way any Legionnaire that is visiting or a member that transferred in is used to the same type of meeting.
 3. **Post Everlasting / Draping of the Charter** - It is highly recommended that your Post Drapes the Charter during your meetings to honor your deceased Comrades. The Draping of the Charter Ceremony is conducted right after you convene the meeting and prior to regular business. The outline for Draping the Charter is located in the last Chapter with Meeting Agenda. Don't get Draping the Charter and Post Everlasting Ceremonies mixed up, there is a longer version and is a Ceremony on its own called Post Everlasting located in the Officers Guide.
 4. **Pledge of Allegiance** - Remember that everyone is uncovered during the Pledge of Allegiance, when we served whenever you saluted you must remain silent! Only one that can salute during the Pledge is an active duty member in uniform (with the exception of The Honor/Color Guard) but they must remain silent!
 5. **Motions - Reports that require Audits** - If you have a report that requires an audit by your members like your Finance, Lounge Kitchen etc.. the proper motion would be:

"I Move the Finance Report approved subject for audit or file for audit"

Ceremonies & Speeches:

Whenever you are planning a ceremony for a holiday, dedication or other event there are suggested speeches and organization of the ceremony located in the Officers Guide. For additional help with these ceremonies for planning please go to www.legion.org/media/eventplanning.

1. **Updated Speeches** - You can get updated speeches for most holiday's that is designed for the National Commander and you located on Legion.org and MyLegion.org. These are there for you to use, they are updated with the time today and you should consider tailoring it to fit your Post and community. Don't forget your own speeches!
2. **Dedications - Funerals** - These Speeches are in the Post Officers Guide which will help assist you as Commander, Chaplain, Honor-Color Guards etc on how to prepare

and the proper order of events. There is different events and actions by the members for a Funeral that is at a Grave Site, Church or Post.

3. **Certificates** - Don't forget during some Ceremonies you may need to award a certificate, especially to a dignitary making a speech or even your Volunteers. You should have a lot of people at your event and that is always a good time to reward someone. You can get Certificates by purchasing Certificate Maker on Legion Emblem Sales website and there are also others located at www.legion.org//media/eventplanning.

21st Century Post:

You need to be with the times, your Post should adapt to any changes within your Community, members, potential members and the new things in society today. Always look for new ideas to attract new members, here are some suggestions to turning your Post to a 21st Century Post:

1. Flat Screen TV's (Modern TV's)
2. WIFI for your members & guests
3. Post Website & Email
4. Post Facebook Page
5. Post Newsletter
6. Post Weekly Email updates on events at your Post

CHAPTER 6. - SUGGESTED MEETING AGENDA SHELL & DRAPING OF THE CHARTER:

GENERAL OR EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING SAMPLE AGENDA

AMERICAN LEGION – XXXXXXXX POST # XXX SOME WHERE, FL AGENDA – General / (Executive Board) Meeting Agenda

1. **COMMANDER:** The meeting is about to open. All Officers shall take their stations.
2. **COMMANDER:** One rap of the gavel and the SGT @ Arms shall close the doors of the meeting hall.
3. **COMMANDER:** Three raps of the gavel and all who are present shall stand at attention.
4. **COMMANDER:** “With the Colors of our Country in Place” (Or Post the Colors)

“Hand salute.” “Two.”

5. **COMMANDER:** "UNCOVER"
6. **COMMANDER:** “The Chaplain will offer prayer.”
7. **CHAPLAIN:** “ALMIGHTY GOD.....AMEN
8. **COMMANDER:** Resolution 288, adopted at the 67th National Convention, calls for designating a POW/MIA “Empty Chair” at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all the wars and conflicts involving the United States of America. Accordingly, at this time the Vice Commander (**or who the CDR designates**) will place the POW/MIA flag on the “Empty Chair” as a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American Prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty, and a full accounting of those missing. Let us dedicate ourselves for this vital endeavor.

(Place the POW/MIA flag on the Empty Chair). Please observe a moment of Silence for those who are serving and who served in defending our country from all wars and conflicts (60 seconds should be observed).

9. **COMMANDER:** Please follow me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.”
10. **COMMANDER:** “I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”
11. **COMMANDER:** “Everyone will recover.”
12. **COMMANDER:** The Vice Commander (**or who the CDR designates**) will lead us with the Preamble.
13. **VICE COMMANDER:** “For God and Country.....
14. **COMMANDER:** One rap of the gavel, “I now declare this General / (Executive Board) Meeting of XXXXXXXXX American Legion Post #XXX of the Department of Florida, regularly convened.”
15. ******Ceremony for Draping American Legion Charter (Done at General Meeting)******
16. **COMMANDER:** SGT @ ARMS do we have any Guests or CDR will announce Guests?
17. **SGT @ ARMS:** Commander we have Guests. (Always introduce Past Officers, then lowest Office to Highest Office last. The Highest Office should always receive the respect as prior to announcing his or her name/office 3 Raps of the Gavel and then announce that person.)
18. **COMMANDER:** Adjutant Roll Call of Officers, Reading of the Minutes and Correspondence Review.

19. ADJUTANT:

a. **Roll Call** to determine if quorum is present (XX Members for E-Board or XX members for General Meeting).

b. Reading of minutes:

1. Regular Meeting: Motion by _____ to approve the General Meeting Minutes as Read; 2nd by _____ Motion Passed.

2. Executive Board Meeting: Motion by _____ to approve the Executive Board Meeting Minutes as Read; 2nd by _____ Motion Passed.

20. Correspondence Review:

Officer Reports - Remember ANY Report that you do an Audit on the Proper Motion should be " I _____ **Move to File the Finance (*Finance, Kitchen, Lounge or any other Report*) Report for Audit;** 2nd by _____ Motion Passed. This goes for ANY Report that in your C & B that requires an audit. If its approved at the meeting then it can never be Audited.

Committee Reports:

Are there any other Committee Reports?

Unfinished Business

New Business

For the Good of The American Legion

COMMANDER: Is there any further business to come before this meeting?

COMMANDER: Three raps of the gavel, UNCOVER, The Vice Commander (**or who the CDR designates**) will retrieve the POW/MIA Cover from the empty Chair.

COMMANDER: The Chaplain will lead us with a closing prayer.

CHAPLAIN: Our Heavenly Father.....AMEN.

COMMANDER: COVER

COMMANDER: "Till we meet again let us remember our obligation to our Country can be fulfilled only by the faithful performance of all duties of citizenship. Let service to the community, state and nation be ever a main objective of The American Legion and its members. Let us be ever watchful of the honor of our Country, our organization and ourselves, that nothing shall swerve us from the path of Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

COMMANDER: ""With Colors in place (Or Retrieve the Colors), "Hand salute." "Two."

COMMANDER: I now declare this General Meeting / (Executive Board) of XXXXXX Post # XXX, The American Legion, Department of Florida adjourned! (One rap of Gavel).

CEREMONY FOR DRAPING AMERICAN LEGION CHARTER

Commander: “It is my sad duty to report that Comrade (or Comrades) _____ has (have) been called from our midst. He/She (they/have) gone to the Commander of us all in Post everlasting.

Commander: “Before proceeding with other business of this meeting, we will Drape the Charter in memory of Comrade (Comrades) SGT @ Arms, obtain Drape in preparation for Draping Charter.”

Commander: "Chaplain; Place the Holy Bible and our Departed Comrades Hat".

Commander: (Rap gavel three (3) times) “Members please rise and face Charter; attention.”

Commander: “SGT @ Arms, you will now Drape our Charter in memory of our beloved Comrade (Comrades) who has (have) passed on.

Commander: (While SGT @ Arms is Draping the Charter) “By this act we, as members of _____ # _____ of the Department of Florida, proclaim solemn tribute to our departed Comrade (Comrades) Hand salute! Two!” (After “Two,” SGT @ Arms returns to his/her station).

Commander: ***"Honor Guard will play Taps".***

Commander: "Chaplain will offer Prayer".

Chaplain: “Almighty God and Heavenly Father, who has dominion over life and death, grant to us the grace to remember with love and reverence our valiant and honored departed Comrade (Comrades). Grant peace and eternal rest to those who have gone before us, and make us ready for that last hour. Strengthen and console those in sorrow and bestow upon us thy everlasting blessing Amen.”

Commander: (Rap gavel once) “We will continue with the regular meeting”

MEMBERSHIP PLANNING ADDENDUM

INTRODUCTION

Even though you are the Commander, you are entrusted with the supervision of all the duties of the Post Officers. You must know what their job details at a minimum and the most important thing is the life-blood of The American Legion is to Recruit new members and retain the ones you currently have by renewal. Without the membership you are representing you may as well be dead in the water as it takes members to do the programs and the everyday activities of your Post.

a. Eligibility

As provided in the National Constitution and By-Laws, Article IV, **Section 1**. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950 to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990, to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any of said periods; provided, however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably during or after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any one time of more than one post.

Section 4. No person who has been expelled by a post shall be admitted to membership in another post without the consent of the expelling post, except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such post, he may then appeal to the executive committee of the department of the expelling post for permission to be admitted to membership in another post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

b. National Guard & Reserve Eligibility

Members of the National Guard and reserves are required to meet the same eligibility requirements as federal active-duty veterans.

To be eligible, the National Guardsman or reservist must have served at least one day on federal active duty during any of the delimiting periods as set forth in Article IV, Section 1 of The American Legion Constitution. The person must either have an honorable discharge or currently be serving either in the Guard, reserve or on federal active duty.

The key to determining if a Guardsman or reservist has been on or is currently serving on federal active duty is the authority line on his or her activation orders.

In both cases, **Title 10, Subsection 672 or 12301** are orders from the Secretary of Defense and are federal orders. The authority a governor uses to activate the National Guard, both individuals and units, is Title 32 orders, i.e. weekend drills and annual training. These are not federal orders. The reserves have similar orders, which are Title 10, Subsection 270. This authority code gives the reserve component the authority to activate the reservist for weekend drills and annual training.

Use the chart below when determining eligibility for National Guardsmen and reservists.

	<u>ELIGIBLE</u>	<u>NON-ELIGIBLE</u>
National Guard	Title 10, Subsection 672 or 12301	Title 32
Reserves	Title 10, Subsection 672 or 12301*	Title 10, Subsection 270

**This subsection was created following Operation Desert Storm to replace 672.*

The above information is taken from Military Law Chapter 39.

Note: A DD 214 is issued for the time on federal active duty only if the reserve component member has been on Title 10 status for 180 days. A DA-1059 is issued for completion of a school with a character type of discharge. All reserve components send their members to basic training using Title 10, Subsection 672/12301 orders.

c. National Guard (example)

If a traditional National Guard soldier or airman (i.e., one never stationed with an active-duty unit) performed basic training during one of the Legion's eligibility periods, he or she would qualify for membership because that time on active duty was federal Title 10 duty.

If this soldier/airman performed basic training outside the dates, he or she may still qualify for membership if ever activated for federal service. Two-week annual training (AT) does not usually qualify one for membership, but if AT was under federal control, going out of country for two weeks to drill, those orders were federal orders. If that time was during an eligibility period, he or she qualifies for Legion membership. The soldier/airman would not have a DD 214 (see note above), but would have a copy of his or her orders qualifying the reservist as for membership (see chart above).

d. Reserve (example)

If a traditional reservist (i.e., one never stationed with an active-duty unit) performed basic training during one of one of the Legion's eligibility periods, that soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coast Guardsman would qualify for membership because that time on active duty was federal Title 10 duty.

This reservist would not have a DD 214, but would have a copy of the orders qualifying him or her for membership. All reservists are under federal control, so all their orders are Title 10, Subsection 270. These do not qualify a reservist for Legion membership, but if he or she receives Title 10, Subsection 672 orders that would be active-duty service qualifying him or her for membership (see chart above).

As with all membership eligibility, if further clarification is needed, contact your department headquarters. Reserve component service members are a large and growing pool of eligible members.

e. Direct Membership Solicitation (DMS)

The DMS program is a form of direct marketing used to solicit membership in The American Legion. Mailing lists are rented from commercial list brokers and compared to our membership files to remove the names of members from the rented lists.

National Headquarters mails out a letter over the signature of the national commander (or his representative) outlining The American Legion's achievements, its current priorities and reasons why we need the prospective member's support.

If the prospect wishes to join, he or she completes the application form enclosed, certifying dates of service in the U.S. Armed Forces, character of discharge, branch of service and birth date. Then the applicant returns the form with a check in the envelope provided. National Headquarters sends a membership card signed electronically with the signature of the national adjutant, a welcome letter, and other information. These new members are placed into the department headquarters post of their state in accordance with the current policies of the National Executive Committee.

Lists of the DMS or headquarters post members in your area are available from your department headquarters. Contact your department membership chairman, DMS chairman or department adjutant. Utilizing these lists is an excellent way to increase your post's membership, thus boosting Legion activities in your communities and giving The American Legion a louder voice in Congress.

For the DMS program to truly be effective, it is imperative these new members are personally contacted and invited to transfer into your local post. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the post receiving a DMS transfer to verify the new member's eligibility (IAW Post C&B), using a DD 214 or other official proof of honorable service with the U.S. Armed Forces and dates of TAL eligibility.

f. Direct Renewal Notices

Direct renewal notices are currently available to American Legion posts from National Headquarters as a service to posts in billing present members for the ensuring year's dues. The renewal notice is mailed from National Headquarters directly to the member. The member pays dues directly to the post. All renewal notices are mailed by National Headquarters at no cost to departments or posts.

Each year a post data form will be mailed to the post from department headquarters asking for the amount of the post dues and the address to which the member is to mail dues. As closely as possible posts should use a permanent mailing address, either a post office box or the address of the post home, this is mailed in February/March time frame and should be sent back as soon as possible as in April the new year cards and 1st renewal notices will start to me printed for all 55 Departments.

g. Member Data Form (membership processing and transfer)

The Member Data Form is a multipurpose form for tracking and providing accurate

information on post members. There are separate forms for Legion (Stock No. 30-001) and SAL members (Stock No. 00-007). Both forms are available from department headquarters.

Instructions for the use of the Member Data Form can be found on the reverse side of the form. The American Legion Member Data Form can be used to report:

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| a) Deceased member | b) Continuous years | c) Name correction |
| d) Change of address | e) First war era served | f) Branch of service |
| g) Telephone number | h) Date of birth | i) Honorary life member |
| j) Post transfer | k) Email address | |

Always include the 9-digit member ID number, post number and department name. The signature of the authorized post officer is required at the bottom of the form. Route the parts of the Member Data Form as follows:

Parts 1-3: Mail to department headquarters Part 4: Retain in post files

The information reported on the Member Data Form should also be entered in the appropriate area on the post membership register for easy reference.

h. MyLegion.org

myLegion.org is a **FREE** website designed to connect members of The American Legion to their Post and Department leadership, myLegion includes a site at each level of the organization:

Members - allows members to view information on file at National Headquarters, view messages and events published through the department and post myLegion sites, and network with other myLegion members using networking tools.

Departments - provides membership information, reports and electronic membership tools such as data change forms for all posts and squadrons within their department.

Posts & Districts - provides Legion and SAL information for all members in their post. Allows post to submit member data change forms and Consolidated Post Reports electronically. Upload post image, newsletter, message, and calendar. Create membership listings, view members renewing online, search for members who have expired or are members of the department headquarters post, and chat with other officers discussing veterans issues and sharing membership ideas.

Post Adjutants can do many administrative actions on MyLegion.org that before required a Member Data Form for. You can change a members address, correct a minor name misspelling, war era, email address, birth date and also if a member is deceased you can mark deceased so the family don't get unwanted mailings. You can also see who has renewed online using a credit card with National headquarters.

In addition, the Post Adjutant can download a register of the Posts current membership as well as look up members that are currently in the area that are part of Posts 208 (cyber Post), Post 400 (Dept holding Post) and the DMS (National Holding Post).

Most importantly you can also look up past members who are now delinquent in their dues within a 99 mile radius and it will show their prior membership number, address, phone number and what Post they used to belong to. You can do everything on this website with the exception of renewing a member.

i. Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Plan

Each summer, when American Legion posts receive their membership cards for the coming year, there will be an increasing number of Legionnaires whose dues are already paid for the following year and for every year thereafter as long as they live. They are Legionnaires who have voluntarily chosen to become Paid-Up-For-Life members under the National plan.

MUST BE IN GOOD STANDING

A Legionnaire must be in good standing to become a Paid-Up-For-Life member. To be in good standing, the member must have a valid membership card for the current Legion year.

The average Legionnaire is most apt to decide to become a Paid-Up- For-Life member at the time when dues are usually paid for the coming year. Post commanders, adjutants, and membership workers are asked to make sure their members know that with one payment they can take care of dues for all future years.

NOT A DISCOUNT MEMBERSHIP

The National Constitution & By-Laws of The American Legion is very clear that “there shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.”

POST RECEIVES DUES PORTION ANNUALLY

That part of the total dues now being retained by the post will be returned every year for all Paid-Up-For-Life members. For example, if the dues of the post are \$26.00, and of this amount \$21.00 is sent to the department to cover National and department dues, the \$5.00 now being kept by the post will come back for current dues, and every year thereafter the post will get its same share. It doesn't make any difference what happens to National or department dues in the future; the post will always get its \$5.00 share. Many posts are purchasing Paid-Up-For-Life membership for their longtime members, and in calculating the cost to remit, they may leave out their share of the dues . . . this will reduce the amount to submit with the application. Let's use the example of a 70-year-old Legionnaire based on the post's dues rate of \$26.00 so the cost of a Paid-Up-For-Life membership would be based on \$26.00 dues. However, if the post decides to forego its share of the dues (\$5.00), the cost would be based on \$21.00 annual dues.

The application forms for Paid-Up-For-Life memberships can be found in National Manuals

as well as the yearly Department Membership Processing and Awards manual. The member fills out the application and turns it over to the post adjutant along with the appropriate payment and a copy of the member's separation form (i.e. DD214) or current active duty military card.

The post adjutant endorses the application, certifies the post's current dues, and that the member is in good standing. The application and payment is then sent to the department headquarters, and from there to National for final processing.

Each Paid-Up-For-Life member receives a permanent plastic card, as well as an annual paper membership card, directly from National, to verify continuing membership in The American Legion. The annual card will be mailed in July of each year.

Upon request, a replacement plastic or paper card can be provided at no additional charge to the Paid-Up- For-Life member. The cost of a Paid-Up-For-Life membership, which is based upon the member's age at the time of application and the current annual dues of the post, can be found on the rate schedule at www.legion.org/join/pufl.

Members of The American Legion may use the time payment plan to purchase a National Paid-Up-For-Life membership. No interest and no service charge will be added to the fee. Time Payment Plan instructions/established rules for application:

1. Applicant must be a member in good standing. This means the member must have a paid membership card for the current Legion year.
2. The total Paid-Up-For-Life membership fee has to be paid within thirty-five (35) months from the date of application.
3. A copy of the member's separation form (i.e. DD214) or active duty military ID must be attached to the completed application.
4. On the application, please check the box for the time payment plan.
5. When the application is submitted to the post for certification, the first month's payment must be included as the deposit.
6. The member can pay more than the minimum each month; however, payment is expected each consecutive month.
7. The member's permanent Paid-Up-For-Life plastic card will only be issued after the total fee is paid in full. If you need assistance or have any questions, please contact the PUFL processing representative at 317-630-1221.

j. Project Stay Active

Americans are on the move and Legionnaires are no exception. The Membership Input Services Section processes 30 to 32 thousand address changes per month. National Headquarters has set up "Project Stay Active" to help local posts maintain contact with these members who move into your area. Utilizing the computer, National prints out a summary of the veteran's membership on a 3 x 5 card. Each card will have listed on it: both the new and old address, the department the member belongs to, the post number, the

number of continuous years, and the date the card was printed. If the member is a Life Member, it will be noted as well. The cards are printed in zip code order and mailed to department adjutants for distribution to the post most accessible to the member. The posts are then asked to contact and welcome the member into the area. This would be an opportune time to offer assistance and invite the member to visit your post.

In many cases, the Legionnaire may wish to transfer membership to a post in the community. As may be expected, some of these Legionnaires are involved in temporary moves, some may have a Life Membership “back home,” and others may have sentimental feelings toward their hometown post. However, many of them will be receptive to an offer to transfer to a post in your district/county when asked.

“Project Stay Active” has been in operation for several years and has proved beneficial to the post, the Legionnaires, and their families. Departments actively participating in “Project Stay Active” are generally distributing the cards each month through the district or county commander. These departments always have a reserve of prospects to “get involved” in The American Legion. Please encourage posts to take part in this program. The individuals listed on these “Project Stay Active” cards are already interested in The American Legion because they have already joined. It is everyone’s duty to ensure they “STAY ACTIVE.”

k. Operation Reconnect

Operation Reconnect is a culmination of efforts by The American Legion and the Department of Defense to “Reconnect” America to its military. This includes recruiters, active duty, National Guard and Reserve forces. Partnerships and events with the total force is an opportunity to get the Legion’s message out as well as showcase our commitment to every soldier, sailor, airman, marine and coast guardsman.

l. Recruiting Commands

This partnership gives The American Legion a new tool in the membership toolbox. Recruiters are stationed in more than 1500 communities across the country. These recruiters are usually far from home and will be very open to the idea of a support network for them and their families. These recruiters also have the first contact with new soldiers who are volunteering to serve their country. This gives us a membership potential of not only the recruiter and his/her family, but the new soldiers and their families.

Eighty (80) percent of all people volunteering for military service are the sons and daughters of a veteran. The parents understand the importance of a support network and the values of The American Legion. This partnership with Recruiting Commands gives Legionnaires the opportunity to make an impression on that young soldier that will last the rest of his/her life. The new recruit will more than likely tell the story of The American Legion to other individuals in basic training with them, especially when the care packages roll in from the post.

This is not a onetime event. This is a project that will carry on for as long as there are recruiters and new recruits.

SUGGESTED PROGRAMS

- Invite recruiters to special dinners at the post home, i.e., Birthday Dinner, Installation of Officers. Invite recruiters to be guest speakers at post meetings.
- Attend recruiter training events to brief on Legion benefits.
- Create “Welcome” packets for new recruiters and their families. These should include discounts from local merchants, lists of hospitals, doctors, daycares, etc.
- Conduct tour of the local area. Introduce recruiters to Mayor, City Council, Police Chief, teachers, principals, etc.
- Send care packages to troops while they are in basic training.
- Place American Legion brochures and posters in recruiting offices.
- Ensure newspaper editors are aware of recruiting efforts and names of new recruits.
- Place stories about successes in post/district newsletter and forward to department and National Headquarters.
- Celebrate branch of service birthdays, invite recruiters to be guests of honor.

m. National Guard & Reserve Recruiting

New member acquisition is essential in order for us to grow and prosper as an organization. With this in mind, one market area that has gone virtually untouched is the National Guard and Reserve. These military organizations are laced with eligible veterans that may have an interest in becoming members of The American Legion, but have not done so because they have not been asked or are unaware of what we do, and have done, on behalf of all veterans. Many of these veterans have chosen to affiliate with reserve components due to the downsizing of the active military and as a result, the membership potential is great.

From the statistical information provided by the VA, we know there are over 26 million veterans, and the challenge we are faced with is to make contact and recruit eligible veterans. Over the past several years we have learned that acquiring new members is becoming more and more difficult. We must look beyond the traditional methods of recruiting. This is a potential marketplace with a captive audience – veterans.

More often than not, formulating a plan is the most difficult aspect of any initiative. A great deal of thought and preparation must be applied in order to have a successful campaign.

The following is a recommended outline of those necessary steps to ensure we accomplish our goal of increasing membership:

Write a letter to the State Adjutant General asking for their permission and support to approach subordinate units. The body of this letter should contain who, what, when, where, and why. This letter should include the signature of the Department Commander in order to get the appropriate attention and response.

Identify locations of units/armories in your geographic area you wish to approach. Many

National Guard and Reserve units have been activated and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Organize at the district level. The district will normally draw the Legionnaires who are both dedicated and active. Establish recruiting teams that are knowledgeable about Legion programs and display a favorable image of The American Legion.

REMEMBER – You will be selling our organization in a military environment and first impressions will set the stage for future opportunities. Legionnaires who belong to these units may be beneficial to your cause. Solicit their assistance when forming your recruiting teams. The focus should be service first and membership second.

The initial contact. This may be accomplished in one of two ways; first, a letter from the district commander to the commander of a specific unit asking for an appointment to discuss a date and time when you and your team could present an overview of The American Legion. At this point you are simply trying to get your foot in the door.

Your letter should mention just a few of our programs and how they could benefit the citizen soldiers in this unit. Examples of beneficial programs are: Service Officer discussing VA benefits, National Emergency Fund, Temporary Financial Assistance, Family Support Network, TS2, Heroes2Hometowns, Operation Comfort Warriors, etc. Secondly, initial contact could be made in person by visiting the unit and talking with the full-time duty person, most likely the Training NCO.

Each unit has at least one person who works in the unit on a full-time basis. Prepare ahead of time a letter addressed to the Commander, outlining the same information as above. Take this opportunity to sell yourself and The American Legion during this visit. This full-time person has direct communication with the commander and can help you in establishing rapport. Once you have made the appointment to meet with the commander the hard part begins.

The preparation for the appointment. Your presentation should be no more than 30 minutes in length. This includes the warm-up, your training plan, questions, and answers. Ensure your team knows their material and are prepared to answer questions during this appointment. Your presentation should have merit and must be of benefit to the members of the unit. The Public Relations Division at the National Headquarters has the Operation Outreach DVD and booklet that can assist you with your presentation.

Be prompt for the appointment. **Be prompt. Be prompt. Be prompt.**

Military leaders are very time-conscious and consider tardiness as an insult. Discuss the purpose of your visit. High- light the benefits of presenting information to this unit. Ask for a date and time to present The American Legion to the members of the unit. Remember we are trying to get our foot in the door, so do not state the purpose is for recruiting new members.

Do have brochures and handouts to leave with the commander (brochures and materials are available from department headquarters). These will reinforce the need for you to return in the future. Commanders are usually looking for speakers to present information to their unit, but keep in mind leaders plan the training schedule several months in advance, and

this schedule may not permit you an opportunity immediately. Be patient. The purpose is to get a date and time.

Plan the event. Ensure you have the resources and manpower necessary to make the event a success. A well thought-out agenda will prove to be invaluable in the planning phase. Assign your team specific duties to perform during the presentation (match needs with skills). Plan to have an information table at the event, complete with additional literature and brochures about The American Legion. Have a sign-up roster for those who may wish additional information. This roster should include name, address, phone number, dates of active duty, etc. This is important for follow-up purposes. Remember not to lose sight of the program you are presenting. This must be successful if you are going to get an invitation to return.

Execute the event. Do wear Legion attire with cap. This will identify you as The American Legion and we want to be remembered. Be professional in all aspects of your presentation. Again, be prepared for questions addressed by members of the unit. Tell your audience how they may contact you and where The American Legion is located. Finally, extend an invitation for them to visit a local post at a pre-determined date and time.

A critique should be accomplished as soon as possible after the event to go over what went well and any area that may need improvement. Lessons learned from previous experiences help us to strengthen our skills and make us more effective the next time.

n. Recruiting Active Duty Military

Another area in which we can pursue new member acquisition is the active duty military market. These installations offer us the opportunity to present The American Legion to a captive audience. The first question you are probably asking yourself is HOW do we gain access to this group of veterans? It's not easy, but if you follow some simple guidelines listed below, you could possibly overcome some of the hurdles long before you reach them.

The basic process is as follows:

Prepare a letter for the department commander, addressed to the commander of the installation, stating who, what, when, where, and why. The purpose of this letter must be precise. A recommendation is to seek permission for your department service officer to address those members that have decided to separate concerning VA benefits. Another option might be to request permission to set up an information booth in the vicinity of the Commissary and Post Exchange/Base Exchange facilities. Whatever you decide to use as a reason, do not state your reason is for the purpose of recruiting members. Offer The American Legion as a benefit to the service member.

Organize at department or district level. Establish recruiting teams that are knowledgeable about American Legion programs and display a favorable image. Personal appearance is a very important consideration since you will be selling The American Legion in a military environment and first impressions are often lasting impressions. You may have members in your department that are either active duty military or work on the installation. These Legionnaires could possibly provide insight or act as a liaison to support your cause. Seek

their assistance in this endeavor. They may be able to expedite the process or at least open a door or two.

Plan the event. Ensure you have the resources and manpower necessary to make the event a success. Assign your team specific duties to perform during any presentations (match needs with skills). Plan to have an information table at the event, complete with additional literature and brochures. Have a sign-up roster for those who may want additional information. This roster should include name, address, phone number, etc. This information is important for follow-up purposes.

Execute the event. Do wear Legion attire with cap. Be professional in all aspects of your presentation and follow-up work. Be prepared to address questions that arise during presentations or those questions that may come up during the event. Inform your audience how they may contact you and the locations of American Legion posts in the area. Let them know how they can get additional information. This is where the roster will serve as a tool for follow-up. Depending on your audience, you might want to extend an invitation for them to visit a local post (open house type of activity).

A critique should be accomplished immediately after the event to go over what went well and any area that may need improvement. Lessons learned from previous experiences help us to strengthen our skills and make us more effective the next time.



THE AMERICAN LEGION

DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

P.O. Box 547859

Orlando, Florida 32854-7859

 www.floridalegion.org

Follow The American Legion Department of Florida online:

 facebook.com/Floridalegion

 twitter.com/FloridaLegion