PINNACLE: THE ARMY'S EFFORT TO REFORM ITS ACCESSION PROCESS

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PINNACLE: THE ARMY'S EFFORT TO REFORM ITS ACCESSION PROCESS

Finding, attracting and recruiting young men and women for service in America's Armed Forces has always been a challenging mission. Since the advent of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973, the military, especially the Army has often struggled to meet its personnel goals. Successful retention of mid-career Soldiers and the enlistment of high-quality recruits are critical to the continued success and viability of our Army and our nation. Indeed, Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has declared that "the Army is the center of gravity of our military."[1] Failure to adequately resource our Army with the required number and quality of personnel can have far-reaching and strategic implications and threaten our nation's ability to defend its national interests at home and abroad.

Background

United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) is at the tip of the accession spear. Its mission is to provide the strength for our Army. For the most part, it has done this successfully since the creation of the All-Volunteer military. However, in 2005, after several years of war, the Army, as well as several other services, failed to meet their recruiting goals by over nine thousand Soldiers.[2] Not since 1979, had USAREC failed to meet its mission. Why did it fail? What caused the shortfall and what could be done to fix the problem?

USAREC found itself faced with a new external environment. Never before in the history of the All-Volunteer Force had USAREC been asked to recruit during a period of persistent conflict. Casualties from Iraq were increasing at a dramatic pace and pessimistic reports from the field were constantly in the news. Meanwhile the US

economy and the stock market were experiencing steady growth. Domestic job expansion was robust and prosperity was seemingly available to all. The nation's historically low unemployment rate provided alternative job opportunities and increasing competition for America's youth. Minimum wage rates were increased. More and more, parents and other significant influencers began discouraging young people from joining the service. Something had to be done.

In response to this potential crisis, beginning in FY06, the Army increased the number of non-commissioned officers assigned to USAREC by three thousand recruiters.[3] By increasing the number of recruiters on the streets, the Army hoped to improve recruitment. It also increased USAREC's budget by $130 million, fielding new technology with the additional funds.[4] Each recruiter received a laptop that could be used to remotely enlist potential recruits at the point of sale, whether at home or at school, instead of having to return to the sometimes intimidating environment of the recruiting station. Enlistment bonuses were increased to attract recruits to critical and shortage MOS's.[5] In addition, it dramatically increased recruiter production incentives and established a referral program which paid two-thousand dollars for qualified referrals that enlisted and graduated from basic training.[6] Lastly, USAREC rolled out a new marketing campaign plan. The controversial "Army of One" slogan was replaced with the powerful "Army Strong" mantra, which resonated more with the market. Renewed advertising efforts focused on parents, teachers and other influencers and less directly on America's youth.

As a result of these programs and others, the Army was able to achieve its recruiting goals for FY 06 through FY 09, but success came at a price. Recruiters and

staff were forced to work long hours in order to achieve their mission. Stress increased

exponentially on a young recruiting force, many just back from Iraq. In order to achieve

its objective, USAREC also had to accept lower quality recruits.[7] Waivers for

misdemeanor and felony violations increased as USAREC was forced to reach deeper

into the social strata of America for its personnel.[8] Meanwhile global commitments

levied on the Army by the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) were becoming

increasingly unbearable.

By the end of FY 2009 the environment changed yet again. The surge improved

the situation in Iraq, dramatically reduced U.S. casualties and brought relative peace,

stability, security and democratic elections to the war-torn region. Withdrawal from Iraq

became a reality. Meanwhile, the US economy collapsed under the weight of the

mortgage and housing bubble, taking the economy, the stock market, and employment

along with it. Job opportunities decreased due to the economy and interest in military

service returned. With more applications for military service, USAREC could afford to

be more selective. Recruit quality improved. Recruiting eventually became easier, but

not before recruiter suicides reached an all- time high due to the tremendous stress on

the force. Increased retention and a smaller recruiting mission enabled USAREC to

reduce the work load on its recruiters to thirty-nine hours per week and allowed them to

reorganize one of its brigades. The tide had finally turned.

Anticipating a reduction in military spending, Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates

directed budgetary cuts across the force in April 2009. "Specifically, the Secretary …

directed each of the services to find a collective $100 billion in cost reductions over the

next five years."[9] Army leaders however, desired to maintain current strength levels in

order to increase dwell time between deployments under the Army's ARFORGEN model. General Casey's long stated goal of restoring balance to the force by 2012, by providing Soldiers two years at home between deployments, could only be realized if Army end-strength was maintained at current levels while simultaneously drawing down in Iraq.[10] The purpose became clear when the Secretary of the Army, John McHugh, later admitted that "the reason they [Army] are trying to find…efficiencies [is] to save [Army] force structure."[11]

The subsequent peace dividend hit USAREC hard. The command was quickly identified as one of the "bill-payers" for achieving the Army's ARFORGEN goals. With the national propensity to enlist increasing, USAREC no longer needed the extra resources given to it over the past few years and they were subsequently withdrawn. Recruiters were sent back to the Army to be used in Afghanistan and other hot spots around the world. Their budget and marketing resources were also decreased. USAREC's FY2010 Strategic Marketing Plan directed a 41% reduction in advertising (from $278,013,365 in FY09 to $163,000,000 in FY10).[12] Specific organizations experienced even greater reductions. For example, Harrisburg Recruiting Battalion saw its advertising budget cut from one hundred eighty thousand dollars in FY09 to thirty five thousand dollars in FY 2010.[13] Once a priority unit for resourcing, Recruiting Command became increasingly responsible for generating the savings required by the rest of the operational force.

USAREC also received a new commanding general in FY 2010. Demand for additional savings and efficiencies grew. Efforts to improve the leadership environment in the command and reduce the stress and workload on recruiters continued. Additional

technological tools, with a potential for increasing recruiter efficiency, were readied for fielding. Since 3rd Brigade's reorganization in 2005, little had been done to apply the lessons learned from that change to the rest of the command. USAREC converted the brigade from an individual to a team-based recruiting concept, but left the rest of the command unchanged. The time was ripe for change.

Plan for Reorganization

Faced with severe budget cuts, but with its recruiting mission relatively secure due to a 9.8% national unemployment rate and a renewed interest in military service, USAREC decided to implement change.[14] Called *Pinnacle*, its purpose is to "streamline the recruiting process, by leveraging technology, reducing the detailed recruiting force, maximizing market share and elevating recruiting duty to an assignment of choice.[15] The *Pinnacle* concept is currently being implemented in one battalion out of each of the recruiting brigades in USAREC. Among other things, it includes the elimination of small, outlying recruiting stations and the consolidation of all remaining recruiters into large opportunity centers.[16] Many of the administrative and applicant processing duties, previously accomplished by recruiters, will be completed by recruiting support teams manned by Soldiers (*Pinnacle-S*). Later, after these Soldiers are returned to the Army, their processing job will be done by civilians (*Pinnacle-C*). Savings will be realized by a reduction in recruiters, an elimination of recruiter incentives, a reduction in marketing expenditures, a decrease in real estate costs, and an increased use of information technology to improve lead refinement.[17]

Pinnacle is a holistic effort encompassing more than just incremental changes to Army recruiting processes and procedures. It integrates numerous recruiting modernizations and past innovations into a cohesive program applied across several

commands and services. This is accomplished by making the best use of America's

greatest military resource, its Soldiers. By relieving Soldiers of the administrative

burden of processing military applicants, it reduces requirements and optimizes their

visibility and interaction with the market in a rehearsed and controlled environment.[18] Its

goal is to modernize a recruiting process that essentially has not changed since the

advent of the All-Volunteer Force, by applying industry best practices and thirty years of

successful recruiting initiatives.[19]

Current Recruiting Conditions

According to the *Pinnacle* Army Research Consortium, recruiting is currently an

individual effort consisting of random meeting engagements with a market suspicious of

their intentions, supported by sub-optimal processes and inefficient systems.[20] Efforts

are not synchronized between services or even components, resulting in gross

inefficiencies. Each of our military services, components and commands compete for

the same young people, deploying valuable resources in competition with each other.

As a result, the American public is often confused and unable to grasp the many and

varied Army opportunities available to them.

Recruiting is characterized by arduous and stressful duty, often times borne by

unwilling Soldiers and leaders working outside their comfort zone, training and

experience, performing tasks unfamiliar to them.[21] Recruiters typically find themselves

overwhelmed by the variety and scope of their duties. They are often miss-employed

performing necessary, but time consuming administrative processing responsibilities.

Changing market conditions oftentimes dictate the number of Soldiers needed in

USAREC as recruiters, resulting in unpredictable personnel costs which impact Army

operating strength already stretched by persistent conflict and war.[22]

Current recruiting station distribution and basing policies have also created inefficiencies. The Army spends more on facility costs than any other recruiting component or service. Stations are usually located in shopping centers or small strip malls. Many still occupy outdated facilities in dilapidated, remote locales populated by aging communities. This is largely because the Army is oftentimes the only service with a physical presence in the most remote areas. Internet and data connectivity, so vital to current and future Army recruiting systems, is often intermittent at best in these smaller markets. Providing critical Soldier and family support services to these on-production stations, their recruiters and families is also a challenge.

Marketing and advertising efforts are orchestrated at the national level with limited local customization.[23] Table and event displays for station events are tired and outdated. Battalion outreach efforts are often unfocused, unproductive and concentrated on big-ticket influencer outreach efforts, like major, minor and college sporting venues and events. Company and station marketing is oftentimes unimaginative, unorganized, unrehearsed and short-sighted. As a result, lead creation, development and refinement at the battalion level is rudimentary at best, leading to a low return on investment and an over-reliance on Soldier generated prospecting efforts.

Pinnacle Change Effort

Pinnacle is a total transformation of the recruiting process. It places Soldiers face to face with America, its communities, schools, and influencers by relieving them of their administrative and processing burden. It does this by creating a recruiting support team which is responsible for developing leads, screening and setting appointments for the center, processing applicants, and general administrative tasks.[24] This allows maximum time for the recruiter to interact with the public and focus on mastering their

primary tasks of prospecting, conducting interviews, and training Future Soldiers.[25] By 2015, government civilian employees will replace military recruiters in each center's support team, returning badly needed Soldiers to the Army.[26]

Another critical part of the reformation process is the closure and consolidation of approximately 600 smaller recruiting stations into larger opportunity centers in more populated areas.[27] "Roughly 80% of all production comes from 60% of stations located in and around the 1,000 largest cities in the U.S."[28] These new centers will be located in high-traffic, easily accessible locations and will include interactive displays.[29] Lucrative rural and suburban territory will not be abandoned, but will continue to be worked using satellite offices, Reserve Centers and mobile recruiting teams using new, high-tech equipment.[30] Multiple and repetitive applicant visits to Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) will become a thing of the past as administrative efficiencies are improved. Personnel duties will be more clearly delineated reducing redundancy and confusion across the command.

Marketing will still be nationally branded, but will be focused locally.[31] Cyber recruiting efforts will be expanded and will be more interactive in nature, providing a virtual recruiting office that enables the growing online market easy and convenient access to Army opportunities.[32] Lead refinement will be improved at all levels in order to deliver only the best possible qualified appointments to recruiters.[33] Customizable marketing will be pushed down to the center level as needed. Public interactions will not be by accidental encounters but will be planned, rehearsed, deliberate events highlighting the American hero, our Soldiers.[34] Prior preparation will result in well-

executed meeting engagements designed to show a young man or woman the full range of opportunities available to them in the Army.

A critical aspect of *Pinnacle* is the successful leveraging of current and future information technology and systems within and outside the command to increase efficiencies and reduce costs. For example, recruiter laptops will be replaced with Blackberry devices and supplemented with complimentary mobile presentation office equipment. Information and programs will be accessed via the internet, increasing data security.[35] USAREC will leverage process improvements such as the Hometown Shipping Program, Livescan, and enhanced cyber recruiting through expansion of Army Career Explorer (ACE) for additional efficiencies.[36] Lastly it will embrace MEPCOM's Virtual Interactive Processing System (VIPS) in order to facilitate online enlistment testing, local physicals, waiver pre-screens, and behavior assessments in order to reduce applicant processing costs, MEPS workloads, and redundant MEPS visits with the goal of totally eliminating MEPS facilities by FY 2015.[37]

Team Concept

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the reorganization includes a desire to change USAREC's culture by converting from an individual to a team-based recruiting and reward system. Although intangible in nature, the proposed change has the potential to significantly affect the productivity, morale and culture of the recruiting force. Historically, one of the unique aspects of the Army's recruiting culture has been a sales climate built upon individual performance and reward. This culture generally runs counter to the military's traditional team approach with which most Soldiers are familiar. As a result, new recruiters often have difficulty adjusting to the command's

organizational climate. When combined with the unique requirements of recruiting duty, the result is often an overwhelmed and stressed Soldier and family.

In response, *Pinnacle* calls for a team approach to recruiting, similar to what was implemented in USAREC's 3rd Recruiting Brigade in 2005. Individual recruiting missions and rewards are now replaced with team missions. All members of an Opportunity Center, both military and civilian, are collectively responsible for the accomplishment of the team's recruiting goal. "Recruiters no longer earn points for incentive awards based on production; instead they will earn recognition based on their tactical and technical proficiency."[38] The only individual reward that can be earned under *Pinnacle* is the Master Recruiting Badge. Similar to earning an Expert Infantryman Badge, the Master Recruiting Badge is awarded after the recruiter has demonstrated proficiency in their job.[39]

Pinnacle Benefits

Implementing *Pinnacle* will provide immediate benefits to the U.S. Army. First, it reduces USAREC personnel requirements by returning approximately 3,850 Soldiers to the operational force, replacing them with 3,000 civilians.[40] The return of a Division's worth of Non-Commissioned Officers to our military formations, during a time of war, will help increase dwell time and a return to the goals of our ARFORGEN model. As a by-product of this effort, *Pinnacle* should also reduce the fluctuating personnel requirements of the command during changes in the market.[41] It also provides a badly needed restructuring of the Military Occupational Speciality, 79R recruiting force by removing them from recruiting duty and placing them in supervisory positions, thereby capitalizing on their extensive and hard-earned experience and training.[42]

USAREC projections for the potential long- term financial savings of Pinnacle are breath taking. After a four-year investment of $175-250 million, Army Recruiting Command estimates that the reorganization will save the Army between $67.5 - $85 million per year.[43] According to the USAREC G5, conversion of the administrative support positions in each Opportunity Center will cost another $200 million.[44] The up-front costs and potential savings are significant and speak to the scope of the change effort. Indeed, *Pinnacle* represents a total reorganization of one of the most expensive endeavors in the military: successful recruitment of the All-Volunteer Force.[45]

Army Recruiting Command claims numerous additional positive benefits from *Pinnacle*. The most significant include sustained community relationships, improved quality of life for recruiters, higher recruiter quality, a reduction in recruiter misconduct cases, reduced Future Soldier losses, less risk of equipment and information loss, reduced recruiting time, and condensed recruiting cycles. [46] The creation of a Soldier Relationship Management System, better integration with ROTC, Army Reserve and the National Guard, and the successful leveraging of community-based, locally focused marketing, and outreach efforts, such as Army Grassroots Advisory Boards, promise even greater advantages through integration, networked relationships and the synergy they create.[47]

Critical Assessment of Pinnacle

The challenges facing USAREC are numerous and formidable. The size and scope of the *Pinnacle* change effort is enormous. Although, the reorganization brings about the required reformation of the Army accession process, how it is implemented will largely determine the perceived success and long-term viability of the undertaking. Some of the current issues affecting the implementation of Pinnacle include the timeline

for the reorganization, optimistic cost savings, unrealized productivity and efficiency enhancements, and uneven results attributed to a rolling implementation strategy. Successfully overcoming these program challenges, while dealing with equally important periphery issues, will be critical to realizing the full potential of this important change effort.

Current plans call for the complete conversion of all recruiting battalions to *Pinnacle-S* by 2013 and *Pinnacle-C* by 2015.[48] This is fifteen years after 3rd Recruiting Brigade converted to their team-based recruiting concept. Army leadership has ruled-out a faster conversion because of the potential risk it would place on the mission.[49] Arguably, mission risk will increase, not decrease, the longer the conversion is dragged out. The most significant risk is the potential accelerated recovery of the U.S. economy. U.S. GDP growth is already increasing. Recently revised upward to an annual 2.5 % rate, the Commerce Department expects growth to continue to accelerate.[50] Economists forecast that once growth reaches 3.5%, the unemployment rate will decrease.[51] Historically, a decrease in the unemployment rate results in a corresponding decrease in the propensity to enlist by America's youth.[52] A long conversion process increases the risk that the organization will be caught in the midst of its reorganization when the economy rebounds and recruiting becomes more difficult. The time to change is now.

USAREC's conversion to *Pinnacle* should be accelerated by two years to correspond with the Army's ARFORGEN goals and to meet the recently announced personnel cuts by Defense Secretary Robert Gates.[53] "The Army's goal is two years at home for every year deployed, a 1:2 ratio by next year and 1:3 by 2014 for the active

force, and 1:5 for the guard and reserve."[54] Skipping the intermediate transition to

Pinnacle-S, by converting directly to the *Pinnacle-C* organization, is one way to

accelerate the change process. The early return of thousands of non-commissioned

officers to the operational Army will help to rebalance the force and place it on a more

sustainable footing for the future. Speeding up Army Recruiting Command's civilian

conversion will return Soldiers to the Army in time to be used in other critical areas of

the world. The Obama administration has stated, and NATO leaders have endorsed a

plan to end combat operations in Afghanistan by 2014.[55] More than a mere gesture,

accelerating the Pinnacle reorganization will allow USAREC Soldiers to share the

burden of their brothers-in-arms, closing the book on our commitment in this region of

the world.

Second, the cost estimates and projected savings from implementing *Pinnacle*

appear optimistic. Long term leases on the closed recruiting stations will prevent their

closure and subsequent savings for several years. Although approximately 600 stations

are projected to be closed, the remaining centers will have to be expanded to

accommodate the additional recruiters, incurring additional costs.[56] Obtaining the funds

for this expansion at the same time the Army is looking to save "$1.4 billion in military

construction costs by sustaining existing facilities" will be challenging.[57] Similarly,

although the total number of GOV's will be slightly reduced under *Pinnacle*, the amount

of mileage placed on each remaining vehicle will increase. Training costs will also

remain high as civilian turn-over offset any gains from a reduced recruiter training load.

In addition, information technology costs will not decrease significantly until recruiter

issued Blackberrys and iPads are able to be used as recruiting platforms and ACE use

becomes more mainstream. Finally, while lodging costs are expected to decrease under the Hometown Shipping Program, applicant travel costs have actually increased not decreased since the program was implemented.[58]

Third, many of the productivity and efficiency gains expected from the *Pinnacle* reorganization and its force multipliers have yet to be realized. Blackberry handsets delivered to the field cannot access USAREC's recruiting website, Recruiter Zone.[59] In addition, station I-pads have yet to be delivered.[60] The additional vehicles distributed to *Pinnacle-S* test companies were not configured optimally.[61] Recruiters have to spend more time on the road driving back and forth to appointments in the rural areas vacated by the Army.[62] The stations that were closed cannot be used as satellite offices because internet access and utility services have been discontinued.[63] Meanwhile, recruiters have to share desks and chairs in some of the consolidated Opportunity Centers because they are overcrowded and have yet to be expanded as planned.[64]

Lastly, the recruiting units that have already converted to *Pinnacle-S* and team-based recruiting have enjoyed uneven results. The Recruiter Journal, the professional magazine of United States Army Recruiting Command, has published several articles about the benefits of the *Pinnacle* reorganization.[65] While the vast majority of these articles articulate the benefits of the reorganization and the Pinnacle change process, actual results have been mixed at best. The recent mission success of 3rd Recruiting Brigade immediately comes to mind. While it is true the brigade is on track to exceed its assigned mission for the year, the reason for that performance cannot be attributed solely to its new organizational structure. On the contrary, for the first three years after their conversion 3rd Recruiting Brigade's production actually dropped.[66] Other

organizations within USAREC have reported similar production decreases after implementing *Pinnacle*. [67] It wasn't until after the U.S. economy slowed and unemployment increased that production finally picked up.

Foundation for Team-Based Recruiting

For many years, an unspoken catalyst of the team-based approach to recruiting has been a desire of Army leadership to make USAREC look more like the rest of the Army. This re-greening of Army Recruiting Command started in the mid-1990's, when USAREC fundamentally changed recruiting prospecting techniques from a sales-oriented approach to one of career counseling with an emphasis on mentorship. Pinnacle completes this decade-long transition by eliminating individual production incentives, instead stressing Army centric ideals such as teamwork and leadership. Concepts like self-motivation and individualism are apparently no longer part of Army recruiting culture. In reality recruiting duty is unlike any other endeavor in the U.S. Army. Ignoring this truth does not make it go away. The fact is, recruiting for the All-Volunteer Force has always been and will always be, a sales oriented venture.

Army leaders need to be open to the proposition that recruiting is really about salesmanship. Telling the Army story, the current USAREC recruiting construct, involves a recruiter sharing their personal testimony on their product, the United States Army, in order to entice an applicant to join. It is a technique that maximizes the strength of the current recruiting force. It was implemented as a key component of Army recruiter training in order to make the duty more agreeable to a non-volunteer force. Today's recruiters often avoid being selected for recruiting duty, even though they have inspirational and adventurous stories to tell. While this change may have been an excellent way to make recruiting duty more palatable, relevant and

understandable to combat hardened Soldiers, it did nothing to advance the professional development of recruiting leaders. If this trend continues, USAREC will lose the internal marketing expertise and sales acumen it once had and increasingly have to rely upon contractors, civilian marketing companies and a select few senior staffers to craft the organization's future in an increasingly crowded and segmented marketplace.

Relevant literature on salesforce management is not studied at the Army Recruiting School because the word "sales" has literally been stricken from organization vernacular. The concept of sales is often mistakenly connected to the old days of aggressive, pushy recruiting and is therefore considered unprofessional. Studying or referring to recruiting as a sales endeavor is frowned upon within the command. Selling the Army is now largely seen as unnecessary, unseemly and beneath the dignity of a professional Army and its Soldiers. This avoidance of the realities of recruiting has stunted the professional growth of the organization, has reduced the effectiveness and efficiency of our recruiting efforts, and could potentially place our recruiting mission at risk when the economy eventually recovers.

Marketing-based Conceptual Recruiting Framework

A review of contemporary management literature on marketing and salesmanship reveals several potentially relevant and interesting concepts that pertain to the ongoing implementation of *Pinnacle*. Management expert Philip Kotler emphasizes the importance of market conditions on organization design and strategy. According to Kotler, "Companies need to give the deepest thought to issues in salesforce design…objectives must be based on the character of the company's target markets and the company's desired position in these markets."[68] In other words, market shifts and marketing strategies should be the driver in workforce development.

Changing market conditions and strategies will necessitate adjustments in organizational structure. This infers that organizations must be flexible enough to quickly adopt alternative sales strategies and structures.

Robert McMurray, in his classic treatise entitled, "The Mystique of Super-Salesmanship," classifies five types of sales representatives: deliverers, order takers, missionaries, technicians, and demand creators.[69] Deliverers provide the product or service to the consumer.[70] A good example of a deliverer in today's recruiting environment is the Army MEPS counselor. This individual qualifies the applicant for military service and provides them their job. The second type of sales representative, according to McMurray, is the order taker. Order takers are essentially inside sales personnel.[71] Recruiting support teams could be considered order takers under *Pinnacle*. Missionaries, the third type of sales representative, "are not expected to take an order, but [are] called on only to build goodwill or to educate the actual or potential user."[72] Technicians are sales representatives that provide expert knowledge on the product or service to the public, while demand creators grow or expand the market for the organization and its products or services.[73]

In recent years, USAREC has largely transitioned their recruiting force from "demand creators" to "missionaries." For example, in 2008, the Army created a multi-million dollar Army Experience Center in Philadelphia, not as a recruiting tool, but as a place where the public could experience the Army. This year, 1st Recruiting Brigade implemented a policy which no longer allows its recruiters to recruit in our nation's high schools, the primary source of Army applicants.[74] *Pinnacle* completes this transition by establishing its Soldiers not as recruiters but as "the Army's Ambassador[s] to the

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community."[75] According to Kotler and McMurray, these changes are appropriate only if they fit the current market and objectives of the organization. It is important to note that uneven market conditions may necessitate different types of sales structures and strategies across the command. When the market changes, and it eventually will, USAREC and its subordinate units must first recognize and then be prepared to pivot, returning to its historical roots of "demand creation" or face irrelevancy and possible mission failure. This will eventually necessitate a return to a more creative "sales" mentality.

Basic marketing principles also address the importance of selecting effective sales representatives. According to Kotler, "At the heart of a successful salesforce operation is the selection of effective sales representatives. The performance difference between an average and a top sales representative can be considerable."[76] USAREC has made significant improvements in the process it employs to screen and select its recruiting force. *Pinnacle* will provide further improvements with recruiter testing and selection. However, ideally the command should be manned not by detailed recruiters but only by volunteers that meet a specific psychological profile historically shown to be successful in recruiting. These traits include, "a habitual wooer, an individual who has a compulsive need to win and hold the affection of others….a high level of energy, abounding self-confidence… a well-established habit of industry, and a state of mind that regards each objection, resistance, or obstacle as a challenge."[77]

A fourth poignant principle of salesforce management that contains relevancy to the implementation of *Pinnacle* involves recruiter motivation. Here the research is absolutely clear and confirms the experience of many recruiting commanders and sales

managers. That is, "proper compensation, incentives, or rewards will produce a motivated salesperson."[78] Additional research confirms that "the majority of sales representatives require encouragement and special incentives to work at their best level."[79] In "Sales Force Management: Planning, Implementation and Control," Churchill, Ford and Walker state, "the higher the salesperson's motivation, the greater his or her effort; greater effort will lead to greater performance; …greater rewards will lead to greater satisfaction; and greater satisfaction will produce still greater motivation."[80] Despite these findings, *Pinnacle* calls for the total elimination of individual recruiter production awards. Why?

According to the Army, individual recruiter awards were discontinued because they are not compatible with a team-based recruiting concept.[81] While this may be true of the *Pinnacle-S* intermediate recruiting structure, it does not apply to the final *Pinnacle-C* formation. Most would agree that giving individual awards to recruiting Soldiers under *Pinnacle-S* would not be fair to those Soldiers whose job is processing applicants. However, under *Pinnacle-C*, civilians replace Soldiers as recruiting center processors. With the exception of Future Soldier Trainers, all remaining Soldiers under *Pinnacle-C* are employed as recruiters. As a result, all Soldiers would have an equal opportunity to earn individual awards, removing any sense of inequity. The elimination of individual recruiter awards is simply not necessary to establish a more team-based approach to recruiting. Instead their removal appears to be driven by cost and the Army's continuing effort to re-green its recruiting force.

Organizational Resistance to Change

As one might imagine, the proposed *Pinnacle* organizational changes have met with some resistance. Radical organizational changes, by definition, require a change

in organizational culture.[82] Failure to recognize and plan for this fact invites resistance

and possible failure. The Army underestimated the amount of cultural change that the

program would place on the organization and the resulting affect across the command.

As a result, it has not effectively managed that change. From overcoming resistance, to

describing a future state, to providing effective resourcing, it has not anticipated the

magnitude of the change.[83]

From the beginning, USAREC did not provide adequate guidance, resources or

training to successfully implement the *Pinnacle* program. Instead they relied on the

ingenuity and can-do attitude of a few select organizations to test the feasibility of the

Pinnacle concept. Some Pinnacle test battalions and companies did not receive

adequate implementation guidance, training, or the promised resources to improve

recruiter efficiency as part of the program. As a result, they had to expend limited

resources and time in order to develop their own reorganization and training plan. Their

initial results were lackluster at best. Other test units fared better. The result has been

an uneven and un-resourced change process across the command.

Second, USAREC is attempting to implement *Pinnacle* at the same time it has

decided to eliminate all recruiter production incentives. As a result, recruiters have

associated *Pinnacle* with the loss of their recruiter incentive pay; a program that has

been in existence for decades. The result has been a decrease in recruiter morale and

productivity, which has thus far been masked by the turbulence created by the

organizational change and the current favorable recruiting market.[84] Resistance to the

program would probably be much less if USAREC would decouple the organizational

changes from the loss of recruiter incentives.

Third, and similar to the previous issue, the entire command has implemented significant budgetary cutbacks while trying to implement the organizational changes in *Pinnacle.* As a result, some members of the command have associated the reorganization with severe austerity measures. The significant cuts in marketing funds for USAREC battalions are but one example. No amount of productivity improvements can make up for such drastic cuts in the marketing budget of an organization in such short a time. Because so many organizational variables have been changed in conjunction with the implementation of *Pinnacle*, it has become difficult to measure *Pinnacle's* true effectiveness.

Fourth, the work redesign called for in the *Pinnacle* program makes the recruiter the center of USAREC's formation. Recruiter engagement teams are no longer responsible for office duties, applicant processing or Future Soldier training; tasks they were most comfortable performing. Instead, their primary place of duty is now in the high schools, colleges, and interfacing with the public; tasks that make many of our recruiters uneasy. Recruiter selection and training will become more important as we place them increasingly in the public eye. All of these changes will drive a corresponding change in organizational culture.

Although the *Pinnacle* program was a necessary change within the Army accession process, its initial implementation has been flawed. In order to increase acceptance and reduce resistance to the changes across the command the need for radical change must be clearly communicated. According to Cummings and Worley, "Organization members generally do not support change unless compelling reasons convince them to do so."[85] USAREC should establish a clear strategic vision and end-

state for the change. This vision should be separate and distinct from the reductions associated with the budget cutbacks affecting the organization. Doing so will provide the command with a true assessment of the effectiveness of *Pinnacle* and help to reduce organizational resistance.

It is also imperative that the Army adequately support and resource the change by providing the necessary implementation guidance, training and resources to ensure success. Failure to do so risks continued resistance. Initial successes are critical to any successful change effort. Implementation of *Pinnacle* has thus far been uneven, resulting in mixed results. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, a change in organizational culture must also accompany the program. Recruiter selection, training and incentive programs should re-embrace salesmanship in order to improve organization efficiency and effectiveness. This cultural transformation should accompany the *Pinnacle* organizational redesign.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In order to provide a quicker return on investment to the Army, the pace of USAREC's reorganization should be accelerated. A more aggressive, top-driven, fully resourced reorganization would also reduce resistance by preventing alternative viewpoints and actors from coalescing. Reinstating individual recruiter awards would help offset the increased disruption caused by accelerating the change effort, while simultaneously minimizing risk to the organization and its mission by reducing resistance to change.

In order to sustain the changes called for under the *Pinnacle* reorganization, a change in organizational culture is also necessary. Recruiter selection must be improved and training must be reoriented from applicant processing techniques and

focused more towards public engagement. Sales and marketing management techniques should be taught and embraced at the Army Recruiting School in preparation for a change in market conditions. Implementing a team-based approach to recruiting at a later time would require additional cultural change.
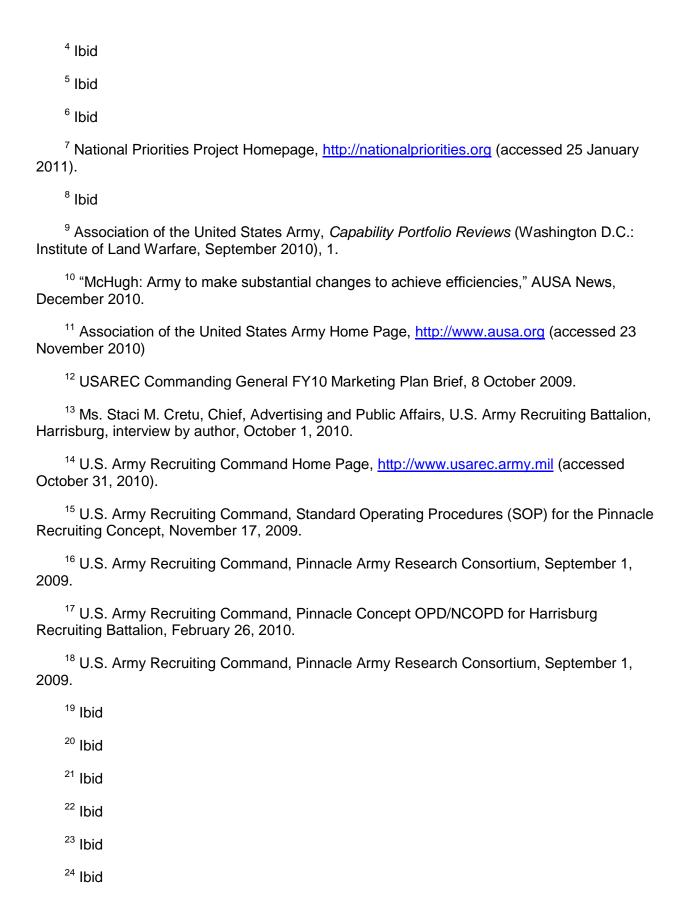
Recent trends and the current operating environment have combined to provide a unique opportunity for change in the military accession process. The relatively favorable recruiting market will likely continue to assure success for the immediate future. Current and projected demand for savings, increased efficiency, and a return of noncommissioned officers to our operational Army have combined to create compelling incentive for change. *Pinnacle* is Army Recruiting Command's holistic change effort designed to reform the Army's accession process and establish the base for additional integration with MEPCOM and other service components. The *Pinnacle* concept appears to address many elements critical to achieving Army and USAREC objectives. As described in this effort, a number of systemic and organizational approaches must be further defined or refined to achieve success. *Pinnacle's* successful implementation must increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our recruiting process and ensure the continued viability of our All-Volunteer Force for years to come.

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