

## UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS TO IMPROVE RECRUITING EFFICIENCY

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HEATHER GARRETT  
United States Army

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS TO IMPROVE RECRUITING EFFICIENCY**

by

Lieutenant Colonel Heather Garrett  
United States Army

Mr. Elton Manske  
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013



## **ABSTRACT**

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The Millennial generation, born between 1982 and 2003, has been influenced by numerous events in their developmental years such as the 9/11 terrorist attack on the U.S., school shootings, and an economic crisis. Their world has always been globally connected and open 24/7. Digital technology is a fact of life enabling them to think and process information fundamentally different than any other generation.

This paper examines the characteristics of the Millennial generation and the interrelationship with other generations in an effort to improve U.S. Army recruiting efficiencies. Recommendations for modification of existing prospecting techniques and communication methods are provided to address areas that are important to Millennials. Recruiting is a “people” business and the more USAREC leaders and recruiters understand generational interrelationships, influences, and shaping environmental events, the better postured the command will be to achieve mission requirements and provide the strength to the U.S. Army in a resource constrained environment.



## UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS TO IMPROVE RECRUITING EFFICIENCY

Most would agree that in order to maintain the best and strongest ground fighting force in the world, the United States Army must continue to attract and enlist the most qualified young men and women today. Since 2006, the Army has achieved the recruiting mission for the nation.<sup>1</sup> For this trend to continue in a resource constrained environment, the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) must be efficient at recruiting qualified applicants. A large aspect of the extent to which USAREC is efficient can be attributed to understanding the environment, the target population of young adults between the ages of 17 and 24, and their influencers. Through this understanding, and with a forward-looking strategy, USAREC must develop approaches and apply resources to draw young people to commit to serving their nation.

The main purpose of USAREC is to enlist and access personnel into the U.S. Army. Since the Army is an all-volunteer force, personnel must willingly decide to join. For the past five years, the Army has enlisted approximately 75,000 personnel into the active component and over 23,000 into the Army Reserve every year.<sup>2</sup> Many young men and women do not just unilaterally decide they are going to join the Army and then walk into a recruiting station. They talk to peers, parents, friends, relatives, mentors, and an almost innumerable number of other influencers. Recruiters spend many hours trying to find qualified applicants who will listen to information about the Army and ultimately decide to join. Recruiters also talk to a myriad of influencers of this population of young adults. Therefore, it is vitally important that USAREC delivers a comprehensive strategy to support recruiters; based upon an understanding of these factors as well as both internal and external environmental and technological impacts to recruiting operations.

The better the understanding of the target market and their environmental influences, the more the command can improve recruiting efficiencies, resulting in less direct recruiter prospecting and more recruits deciding to enlist in the Army. With fewer requirements necessary on the part of the Army recruiter on the ground, USAREC will have greater flexibility, potentially in both required recruiter strength and recruiter tasks.

### Generational Theory

In order to fully understand the target market and their influencers, one must understand the generational differences. These differences shape the perspective in which an event or action is perceived and acted upon. It is important to understand the history and characteristics of generations as well as the repeating cycles so that one can recognize the current placement in the cycle and use the historical framework to better understand the generational differences, not just in terms of data and characteristics, but in terms of actionable intelligence information that will enable the command to improve efficiency at achieving desired recruiting results. In the case of Army recruiting, three of the four predominate living generations are involved in a young person's decision to join the Army.

It is common to use the term generation to describe a group of people with similar defining characteristics. Generational writers, historians, and demographers generally agree that a generation is roughly a 20 year span during one's lifetime. Depending upon the generational writer, and their assessment of the start year of the generation, a generation will usually have beginnings and endings within a five year variance. Respected generational historians William Strauss and Neil Howe define the length of a generation based upon four periods or phases of life within each generation;<sup>3</sup>

- Youth (age 0-21). Central role: dependence (growing, learning, accepting protection and nurture, avoiding harm, acquiring values).
- Rising Adulthood (age 22-43). Central role: activity (working, starting families and livelihoods, serving institutions, testing values).
- Midlife (age 44-65). Central role: leadership (parenting, teaching, directing institutions, using values).
- Elderhood (age 66-87). Central role: stewardship (supervising, mentoring, channeling endowments, passing on values).

Strauss and Howe further demonstrate there are generational types and cycles that define generational behavior.<sup>4</sup> Based upon their extensive research of American generations, dating back to the first births of those in the beginning of the colonial cycle in 1594,<sup>5</sup> they identified four types of generations normally reoccurring in a fixed order determined by age location relative to social moments. They define a social moment as a brief period in which people perceive that historic events are significantly altering their social environment.

Social moments are further described in two ways. One is a secular crisis in which the society focuses on reordering the outer world of institutions and public behavior. The second is a spiritual awakening focused on changing the inner world of values and private behavior. For example, the social moment starting the Baby Boomer generation (those born from 1943-1960), was a secular crisis; the attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entrance into World War II. Strauss and Howe identify the following four types of generations.<sup>6</sup>

- An idealist generation encounters a spiritual awakening entering rising adulthood and a secular crisis entering elderhood.
- A reactive generation encounters a spiritual awakening entering youth and a secular crisis entering midlife.
- A civic generation encounters a secular crisis entering rising adulthood and a spiritual awakening entering elderhood.
- An adaptive generation encounters a secular crisis entering youth and a spiritual awakening entering midlife.

These four types of generations occur in successive order and the cycle is repeating.<sup>7</sup>

Today, there are several generational names to describe the same generational time period. For the purpose of this paper and ease of explanation, the year period and naming convention defined by Strauss and Howe will be used.

<b>Generation</b>	<b>Silent</b>	<b>Boomers</b>	<b>GEN X</b>	<b>Millennial</b>
<b>Type</b>	(adaptive)	(idealist)	(reactive)	(civic)
<b>Birth Year</b>	1925-1942	1943-1960	1961-81	1982-2003
0-21 years <b>Youth</b>	Suffocated	Indulged	Criticized	<i>Protected</i>
22-43 years <b>Rising Adulthood</b>	Conformist	Narcissistic	<i>Alienated</i>	<i>Heroic</i>
44-65 years <b>Midlife</b>	Indecisive	<i>Moralistic</i>	<i>Pragmatic</i>	Powerful
66+ years <b>Elderhood</b>	<i>Sensitive</i>	Visionary	Reclusive	Busy

*Highlighted italics indicates current phase of life in 2011.*

Figure 1: Generational Types and Characteristics<sup>8</sup>

The generation following the Baby Boomers, or Boomers, is Generation X, those born between 1961 - 1981. Generation X or GenX are also known as Xers, the Lost Generation, the MTV Generation or the Thirteeners. The generation following GenX is

the Millennial Generation or the Millennials. They are born between 1982 - 2003. Millennials have also been referred to as Generation Y, Generation Next, Echo Boomers, Net Generation, or the Boomerang Generation. Figure 1 above describes each of the current generations with their associated characteristics as described by Howe.

It is important to understand the generational cycles and types, as well as the periods within each generation to fully comprehend baseline characteristics that are common to groups of people. Recruiting is a “people” business and the more USAREC leaders and recruiters understand generational interrelationships, influences, and shaping environmental events, the better the command will be at recruiting operations. A generational analysis foundation should underpin and drive future recruiting operations and a comprehensive understanding of this historical generational framework will enable the command to improve efficiency at achieving desired recruiting results.

### The Millennial Generation

The current Army recruiting target market population are the Millennials, those 17–24 years old. The arrival of the Millennials was a time when adults changed their mind about children. Children were desired. Fertility rates increased and throughout society children were recognized and welcomed.<sup>9</sup> The Millennials are one of the most protected and celebrated generations in their youth. They always wore a seat belt, rode a bike with a helmet, and had parents that sought to protect them. In the past 20 years many laws have been passed and organizations have been established to protect children.

Millennials are a civic generation, protected in their youth and heroic in their rising adulthood years. True to Strauss and Howe's generational cycle,<sup>10</sup> Millennials have been shaped by the 9/11 terrorist attack on the U.S. This secular crisis occurred just as they entered rising adulthood. Numerous other factors occurring in their developmental years have influenced them. They have seen heroism emerge through the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as through school shootings. Digital technology is a fact of life enabling them to think and process information fundamentally different than any other generation. Through blogs, instant messaging and other methods, they openly share their lives with others all over the world, making them the most racially and ethnically diverse generation. They see the world globally connected and open for business 24/7. Millennials have come of age during the greatest worldwide economic crisis since the great depression causing them to be less selective about their job choice.<sup>11</sup>

In their book *Millennials Rising*, Howe and Strauss identify seven distinguishing traits of the Millennial generation that represent a "sharp break from the traits that are associated with GenX".<sup>12</sup>

- **Special.** Older generations have instilled in the Millennials a sense that they are, collectively, vital to the nation and their families. Parents obsess endlessly over them, as in the "helicopter parent" phenomenon, where children are hovered over even into college and into the workforce as they begin their careers. Millennials have come to believe and accept that they dominate America's agenda and their problems are the nation's problems.<sup>13</sup>

- **Sheltered.** Since the Millennials arrival, they have been the focus of the most sweeping youth safety movement in American history.<sup>14</sup> From the surge in child-safety devices to the post-Columbine lockdown of public schools, America has taken action to keep this generation safe. Parents feel that this generation is special and must be protected and as a result, they routinely have stepped in and spoke up on behalf of the children. Unlike previous generations, the Millennials have been accepting this protection with little resistance.<sup>15</sup>
- **Confident.** The majority of teens today say they are excited and happy about their future having high levels of trust and optimism. Many Millennials believe they will be financially more successful than their parents and their generation can make the world a better place.<sup>16</sup>
- **Team-Oriented.** Millennials are developing strong team instincts and tight peer bonds through collaborative projects and sports, community service, and peer feedback activities. As they get older they will bring this collaborative mindset into the workplace, especially with their proclivity for 24/7 connection with peers through technology advancements.<sup>17</sup>
- **Pressured.** Millennials are pushed to excel and take advantage of all the opportunities presented to them. As such, they have much more structured time and spend less time outdoors than previous generations. They feel pressure to excel, not just participate.<sup>18</sup>
- **Achieving.** Millennials are taking academic achievement seriously and are subsequently scoring higher on tests. They are giving serious thought to

planning for their future and see preparation as important. They are also showing more interest in math and science where success can be more objectively measured than in the more subjective arts or social sciences.<sup>19</sup>

- **Conventional.** Millennials are more comfortable with their parents' values than any other previous generation in living memory.<sup>20</sup> Creativity and originality are less important to them than to prior generations.<sup>21</sup> Their conventionality stems from their general sense that rules and standards can help make life easier.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to these seven distinguishable traits, Millennials as a collective group are also one of the largest and most diverse generation. They are almost equal in size to the Boomer generation (77 million) and include the most Hispanics, blacks, and Asians compared to previous generations with 39% of the Millennial population of non-Caucasian heritage (Figure 2 below). In 2008, seven percent of all Millennials under the

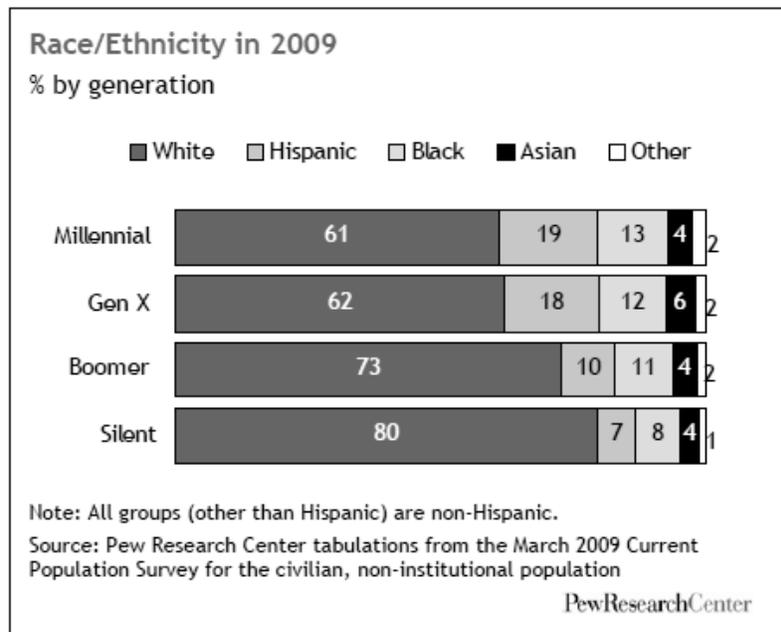


Figure 2: Generational Ethnicity<sup>23</sup>

age of 18 were born to immigrant parents.<sup>24</sup> Figure 2 also shows over time generations are becoming more ethnically and racially diverse.

Another distinguishable attribute of the Millennials is their confidence and savvy in using technology. Most have never experienced life without computers, the Internet and mobile devices. They lead all generations in their attitudes and use of technology<sup>25</sup> and are usually more knowledgeable about the latest technology than their parents and educators. Three quarters of all teens and 93% of adults ages 18-29 have a cell phone. 73% of connected teens and 72% of young adults age 18-29, use social networking sites. Due to the Internet, satellite news, porous national borders, and the end of the Cold War, Millennials are also becoming the world's first generation to grow up thinking of itself as global.

The most common and biggest generational misunderstanding is that the younger generation is just an extension of the previous generation.<sup>26</sup> Most Americans erroneously assume that the future will be a "linear extension of the recent past and that somehow the next generation of youth will lose the capacity to reinterpret the world and forge its own fresh path".<sup>27</sup> For example, Gen Xers are focused on themselves; the individual. When the Millennial generation began, America thought they would be like GenX; more cynical, more individualistic and so on. They were even called Generation Y. This generational extension of GenX did not happen and could not be farther from the truth.<sup>28</sup> For example, when it comes to change and a person is not satisfied with their current environment, the individual focused GenX person will create change by removing themselves from the situation. The team focused Millennial on the other hand, wants change to occur where they are. If the Millennial is unable to create the change

by himself, he will reach out to his parents or higher authority figure, such as a top management official, a community leader or congressman. This trend is clearly evident in USAREC, where over the past several years, the command has seen a distinct rise in the number of congressional inquiries originating from dissatisfied applicants.

### Recruiting Millennials

So what does all this generational information have to do with Army recruiting? Everything. Through a comprehensive understanding of the historical cycles of generations, one has context for understanding the generation currently being recruited; the Millennials. Not only must one understand this generation, but one must also understand how they interact and are influenced by previous generations.

One must understand the interaction and interrelationship of each generation to another. Understanding this information as well as the historical and cyclical nature of generations combined with the types, characteristics and principles that govern generations, a foundation of generational knowledge can be established. It is not enough to simply understand the characteristics of the Millennial generation, one must know how to use and apply the information. Through application of this knowledge, one can better understand how to connect with and gain the commitment of Millennials for an enlistment in the Army.

### Current Recruiting Operations

Similar to Army operations combining warfighting functions, recruiting operations also consist of functions that serve the same purpose as outlined in Field Manual (FM) 3-0.<sup>29</sup> They are a “group of tasks and systems (people, organizations, information, and processes) united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions

and training objectives”.<sup>30</sup> Both warfighting and recruiting functions share the same operational concept. All recruiting functions are linked and must be balanced to achieve synergy of action. Good market intelligence facilitates efficient and effective prospecting, which leads to applicant processing, and ultimately enlistment.<sup>31</sup> This interrelationship of the art and science of recruiting is the hallmark of effective recruiting.

Adeptly applying the art and science of recruiting at all levels of USAREC is vital to the successful accomplishment of the mission. The science of recruiting is the “study of market data and using this knowledge to predict market behavior”.<sup>32</sup> Leaders at all levels apply recruiting science to operations. At the ground level, recruiters must be proficient in both the art and science of recruiting.<sup>33</sup> They must use their “interpersonal and conceptual skills to win over America’s young people and promote the merits of Army service”<sup>34</sup> as well as “know their target market to be in the right place, at the time, with the right message.”<sup>35</sup> Understanding the Millennial generation and applying recruiting techniques in harmony with this understanding will result in a stronger connection to today’s youth and increased recruiting efficiency and effectiveness.

#### Applying Generational Understanding to Recruiting Operations

When one considers the Millennial generation, both prospective soldiers and young recruiters as well as some company commanders are of this same generation. Generally, those under the age of 30 are Millennials. Not only must USAREC understand this generation from a target market perspective, but also from an internal young leader perspective.

According to authors Lynn C. Lancaster and David Stillman, one’s current generation impacts one’s perspective towards others.<sup>36</sup> Americans that are currently 30-50 yrs old are mostly GenX. In USAREC, these leaders are primarily station

commanders, first sergeants, and battalion commanders, with some of this generation also company commanders and command sergeants major. Other command sergeants major within USAREC are of the Boomer generation. With a distinctly different generational perspective among leaders at various levels of responsibility within USAREC, it is imperative that these generational differences are understood. Failure to do so is resulting in inefficient mission accomplishment as well as potential leader frustration despite aggressive dedication and work ethic. Trying harder implementing the same recruiting techniques that worked 10-15 years ago simply will not improve operations nor increase results. USAREC must adapt, beginning with generational understanding to improve recruiting techniques, functions and operations.

### Recruiting Millennials

One of the most readily identifiable characteristics of the Millennial generation is their use of and reliance on technology. Most non-Millennials understand and accept this characteristic, but few understand the far reaching implications of this fact. Since Millennials fundamentally think and process information differently than any previous generation,<sup>37</sup> this means that one cannot simply use more technology or just have an organizational social media site to influence Millennials. Understanding this fundamental difference and its interrelationship with other Millennial characteristics is vital to establishing a holistic understanding and approach to Millennial recruiting.

USAREC must adapt policies to change how recruiters are interacting with young prospective future soldiers and recruiters must understand how their actions, or inaction, is unknowingly influencing the target market they are trying to recruit. The Millennial must feel that they are special,<sup>38</sup> especially during the recruiting process.

Recruiting operations can be improved by modifying existing prospecting techniques and communication methods to address areas that are important to Millennials. Items such as an increased role for texting and social media, including friends in the recruiting process, improving recruiter mentorship, developing greater recruiter trust, and increasing parental involvement can be implemented to truly connect with the Millennial generation.

As mentioned previously, Millennials are team oriented and in constant communication with others, but this is rarely on the phone or face to face, it is through texting and social media sites. They love interacting with others and want to enjoy life. Multi-tasking is not only commonplace for them, but expected. They do not want to be bored with the same daily routine, but rather have a fulfilling, meaningful life with new challenges. They are used to having choices and busy lives.<sup>39</sup>

USAREC's current and predominant recruiting prospecting techniques are face to face prospecting and telephone prospecting.<sup>40</sup> In today's recruiting environment, Millennials are minimally responding to a recruiter's initial contact. With telephone caller identification and less households with home phones, recruiters are experiencing significant challenges just to get a phone call answered, let alone speak to the prospective recruit. When it comes to personal interaction, unlike previous generations, Millennials generally are less experienced at face to face people skills, contributing to a recruiter's uphill battle when attempting to make first time contact with a potential recruit.

Millennials are also more team oriented and do not want to get hired alone. They would rather get hired with their friends.<sup>41</sup> Recruiters can capitalize on this team

oriented aspect of Millennials by making initial contact with potential recruits with their friends and including friends in the recruiting process. USAREC has a buddy team enlistment option that could be more fully utilized. It is a program that allows friends to enlist at the same time and go to basic and advanced individual training together.<sup>42</sup>

Due to the Millennials' team oriented perspective, connection to peers 24/7 and expectations of instant information at their fingertips, they do not initially respond positively, if at all, to an Army recruiter, but instead seek information validation from their peer group; both virtual peers and those peers they physically know. Therefore, USAREC must place more emphasis on texting and social media contact with prospects as well as ensure recruiters are familiar with and using all the tools at [www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com). It is an excellent USAREC developed interactive website with information for multiple audiences such as recruits and parents and it has a virtual guide, SGT Star, as well as question/answer, videos, and interactive links to additional information.<sup>43</sup> USAREC should also establish systems to make texting and social media prospecting a leader verifiable activity. Currently in the command, texting and social media contact is an ancillary activity that is not required or valued as an "approved prospecting method".

Due to the high value Millennials place on constant 24/7 contact, the recruiter must maintain consistent interaction with the potential recruit throughout the entire recruiting process from initial contact up until he/she leaves for basic training. By implementing a well developed social media and texting plan, recruiters can break down barriers and provide a stronger, more readily accepted mentorship role to the Millennial.

Prior to an assignment in USAREC, all recruiters have demonstrated leadership skills and served as a small unit leader. The new recruit is now the young squad member recruiters must lead and mentor. Mentorship is very important for Millennials. Many that grew up with “attachment parenting” often look for “attachment managing”. They seek a more personal relationship with their employer than previous generations and they also want managers “who act as trustworthy mentors with whom they can consult about personal challenges and career or life plans.”<sup>44</sup> This Millennial characteristic nests nicely with the intent of USREC future soldier programs, however actual program execution is not always effective.

Once a person enlists and is waiting to ship to basic training, they are considered a future soldier and immediately become a member of the Future Soldier Training Program (FSTP) led by recruiters in the local recruiting station. The FSTP is similar to a formalized mentor program that is a Millennial preference. When it comes to mentors, Millennials prefer and respond more readily to mentors that play the role of coach rather than taskmaster.<sup>45</sup> The longer the time period the Millennials serves in the FSTP the greater the mentorship role of the recruiter.

Future soldiers will remain in the FSTP until they depart for basic training. Currently, the longest wait time between a future soldier’s enlistment date and the date he/she ships to basic training is 14 months.<sup>46</sup> USAREC has systems and processes in place to track each recruiter’s communication progress with the future soldier and as such, each recruiter is expected to follow-up with his/her assigned future soldiers via a weekly phone call and a bi-weekly face to face meeting.<sup>47</sup> A frequent shortfall among recruiters in USAREC is following up with applicants and future soldiers within the

expected time frame. When contacting Millennials, recruiters must remain diligent. According to the authors of *Generations at Work*, when recruiting Millennials one must “be tolerant of their “swiss cheese scheduling”-an hour or two here, a half an hour there.”<sup>48</sup>

Millennials do lead busy lives, however as a future soldier, they are expected to attend weekly training sessions as part of the FSTP. USAREC can capitalize on the achievement and team oriented aspects of the Millennial by making them an integral team member of the FSTP training planning and preparation. Recruiters can continue to guide, coach and mentor, however by giving the Millennial tasks with a purpose. By working together with others, the Millennial future soldier will improve his/her commitment and feelings of team through their collaborative efforts and success. Recruiters can create ways to recognize and reward accomplishments for the future soldiers, thereby making them feel valued and special.

When it comes to future soldiers, it is common knowledge among recruiting professionals, that the longer a future soldier is in the FSTP, the greater the risk of the future soldier changing his/her mind about an Army enlistment and deciding not to go to basic training. This is especially true for the multi-tasking, always busy Millennial.<sup>49</sup> When this change of heart occurs, the recruiter has lost time and effort, and must find a replacement for the future soldier. Therefore, it is imperative that the recruiter understands the required level of involvement with the Millennial recruit and future soldier. It is equally important that the recruiter establish credibility and trust with the Millennial, as well as with their primary influencer, which are usually their parents or fellow Millennial best friend.

In order for recruiters to capitalize on the connectedness of Millennials, they must establish trust with the Millennial and his/her family. This is imperative to the recruiter-Millennial relationship. If no trust exists then the Millennial will not give time or listen to what the recruiter has to say. With their connectedness, any bad experience that a Millennial has with a recruiter will be virtually spread to others within their peer group and will immediately have a farther reaching negative impact than in years past prior to a time of virtually connected youth. The converse is also true, in that a positive experience with a recruiter can easily transcend previous recruiter barriers and open a potential recruit network to the recruiter.

USAREC Manual 3-0 states this is an “era of profound change” and “to keep pace and succeed, recruiting commanders must use-and train their subordinates to establish and use-the recruiting network.”<sup>50</sup> USAREC does emphasize the important of networks in manuals;<sup>51</sup> however the emphasis is on “improved information sharing enabling collaboration and support to increase mission effectiveness”<sup>52</sup> as well as internal and external networks that are described as “made up of people, organizations, and technologies that manage, process, and provide information in support of recruiting efforts.”<sup>53</sup> Although USAREC acknowledges the importance and recruiting potential in networks and networking, this description and doctrine of network centric recruiting does not sufficiently address networking as a required element of prospecting for and maintaining contact with the required target market. USAREC must re-evaluate and establish doctrine regarding how recruiters are to develop and use networks, especially those networks of Millennials. The just-do-it-and-use-technology approach will not uniformly work across the command. USAREC must establish a deliberate Millennial

prospecting approach and not rely on each recruiter in the command to individually try to figure out how to effectively prospect for Millennials.

When prospecting for Millennials, one must remember the importance of family to the Millennial. They are a generation that has been highly valued, sheltered and protected by their parents.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, their parents play a significant role in their lives, regardless if the Millennial is still in high school, out of high school, in college, living at home, or living outside their parents home. Therefore, the recruiter-family relationship is also very important and expected by the Millennial. USAREC's national Army Strong advertising campaign has magnificently addressed this parental relationship in select recruiting commercials and advertisements. However shortfalls exist in the linkage to the recruiter on the ground.

In a commercial targeted to both the Millennial and his Boomer parents, the commercial introduces different technology skill jobs and shows a son sitting down with his parents to discuss his Army enlistment choices. The commercial ends with the line, "You made them strong, we'll make them Army strong".<sup>55</sup> The two main themes of technology and family in the advertisement resonate strongly for both the potential recruit and the parents. The Millennial is attracted to the technology skill specialty choices<sup>56</sup> and the parents with their Boomer characteristics of love of self and need for control, think of themselves as a very important aspect of the "family decision" for their child to join the Army.<sup>57</sup>

From a national advertising perspective, one can assuredly purport that the Army, and the supporting national advertising agency, understands the current generation to include the parents' role in recruiting the current target market population.

The Army Strong campaign resonates with multiple generations, and as time is nearing to reassess the advertising contract, the Army has decided to keep “its “Army Strong” positioning and tagline.”<sup>58</sup> Unfortunately this generational knowledge is, at best, minimally understood in organizations subordinate to the USAREC headquarters.

There is a disconnect between national advertising and actions at the recruiter level. Generational characteristics are not clearly understood as actionable intelligence for the recruiting force to implement improved and effective recruiting techniques that enable efficient recruiting of Millennials. There is not a consistently strong linkage within the command to explain national advertising messaging methodology to the recruiter on the ground. It is commonplace for recruiters to gain access to the publically released commercials, but there is no training that links the commercial to recruiter actions. For example, in the parent commercial previously mentioned, the command would be well served to simultaneously publish supporting information to the recruiting force. The information would include the key messages of the commercial, a brief explanation of why the message resonates with the audience, and what actions are expected of the recruiter to support the message. Leaders at all levels would follow-up to ensure the training was conducted and required actions implemented. By providing the recruiting force national advertising generational support information, USAREC will ensure that the command is synchronized with messages in the local community as well as improved efficiencies for the recruiter on the ground.

America is becoming more ethnically diverse as evidenced by the statistics of the Millennial generation.<sup>59</sup> This wave of changing demographics is occurring faster than some experts predicted;<sup>60</sup> therefore USAREC must continue to emphasize recruiting

from all demographic areas. In doing so, it will ensure the demographics of the Army are ethnically representative of the country at large. Since Millennials have the greatest ethnical diversity of any generation, it is likely that recruiters will be interacting with potential recruits that are of a different ethnicity than themselves. They must be sensitive to concerns that may arise and understand that different perspectives may exist, not only from prospective recruits, but also from non-Millennial parents. If the recruiting force is trained to maintain sensitivity and consideration of the differences of others, the Millennial will feel better about diversity and service in the Army.

Recruiting the Millennial requires USAREC to adapt and improve operations to become more efficient. Efficiency will come when generational understanding is put into daily practice. In order for this to occur USAREC must develop a comprehensive training program in which recruiters and leaders at all levels are trained on the implementation of generational understanding. This training cannot be just the facts or characteristics of the Millennials. Although the facts and characteristics are essential to understanding generations, a critical component of the training is the application of the information. It must be focused towards recruiting applicability and the generational interrelationships.

### Millennials as Recruiting Leaders

In addition to the target market generation, Millennials are also recruiters and leaders within USAREC. From their perspective, they clearly understand this generational information about themselves, perhaps more applicably than non-Millennials. As part of a large organization and bureaucracy with established rules and processes, they have had to adjust their natural Millennial inclinations to a less Millennial recruiting approach. When one considers working relationships across

generations within USAREC, most all Millennial recruiters are working for predominately non-Millennial professional recruiting Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Corps leaders serving as station commanders, first sergeants and command sergeants major. Therefore it is imperative that this core of recruiting professionals understand their role in the changing of recruiting operations to a more Millennial approach. They must understand their potential biases and recognize they are looking at recruiting operations through their generational lens. Techniques and procedures that worked well for the non-Millennial NCO when they were recruiters may not be applicable nor resonate with recruiting Millennials today. More importantly these old techniques are less efficient in the current fast-paced environment.

This same non-Millennial recruiting NCO professional is the recruiting battle buddy and technical expert for the predominately Millennial Company Commander. The senior NCO must ensure they give appropriate value to the ideas of their Millennial company commander and fully support his/her initiatives, even if the ideas seem a bit out of the usual way of doing business. A Millennial leader's innovative approach is sure to yield results.

These Millennial leaders want more freedom as they lead their company. They are focused on collaboration and relationship building. They are innovators and constantly looking for new ways to collaborate, entertain themselves, learn and work.<sup>61</sup> USAREC has established Recruiting ProNet which is part of the Battle Command Knowledge System, an element of Army Knowledge Online.<sup>62</sup> It is a "virtual community where recruiting professionals can come to freely share their experience and expertise."<sup>63</sup> This forum is an excellent collaborative tool aptly developed and fully

supportive of the Millennials in USAREC. As the command maintains this forward looking approach with initiatives such as Recruiting Pro Net, Millennials will be postured for even greater success within the command.

Battalion leaders must also capitalize on these Millennial characteristics within their company grade ranks and provide venues to meet the needs of subordinate leaders. Now is the time, to listen to these recruiters and leaders so that the command can improve efficiencies.

### Conclusion

Many of the ideas presented in this paper are not new innovations, but rather a way of understanding people coupled with specific actions that must be accomplished to resonate with and influence the target market to select a term of service to the nation in the U. S. Army. Recruiting the Millennial generation is much more than just following a set of standard sales or recruiting practices, but rather a comprehensive approach grounded in generational understanding to drive actions. When the recruiter on the ground can translate Millennial characteristics to required recruiting actions and leaders can effectively capitalize on generational differences by adapting recruiting techniques and procedures, then USAREC is postured to efficiently achieve mission requirements and provide the strength to the U.S. Army in a resource constrained environment.

### Endnotes

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 84-96.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 70-75.

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