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Training NCOs to Recruit During War

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Training NCOs to Recruit During War

I have served in the U.S. Army Recruiting Command for 18 years. During my tenure in the Command, I served in the following positions: Field Recruiter, Station Commander, Recruiter Trainer, Assistant Inspector General, and two tours as a First Sergeant. I last served as the Leadership Department Director at the U.S. Army Recruiting and Retention School. I supervised the training of all recruiting leadership courses which included the Pre-command Course, Company Commander Course, First Sergeant Course, Station Commander Course, Guidance Counselor and Operations Course, Company Operations and Trainer Course, and the Health Care Recruiting Course. Additionally, I provided oversight in the daily operations of the basic Army Recruiter Course.

Simply stated, the primary mission of the U.S. Army Recruiting School is to teach NCOs how to recruit an all-volunteer Army. However, recruiting an all-volunteer Army during a sustained conflict provided a new challenge to the command.

Prior to the war, we recruited using a sales based approach. We offered enlistment incentives such as, cash bonuses, college money, job training, health benefits, and retirement benefits. Our approach mirrored any other sales organization. We convinced the buyer that our product was the best option available. As the war continued, convincing a potential enlistee that our incentives were worth more than the possibility of dying increased in difficulty. Parents, spouses, and other influencers stood as the major obstacles a recruiter would face. Enlistments decreased and the Army needed foxholes filled to sustain the war on terror. Recruiting tactics needed revision immediately. We changed our tactics by applying Army operations to recruiting terms. Our new doctrine uses leadership and counseling techniques to tell the Army story instead of selling a product. With the change in doctrine, we now face the challenge of training our NCOs

to recruit during war.

A noncommissioned officer performs recruiting duties by one of two methods. They volunteer or they are Department of the Army (DA) selected. The volunteer is usually easier to train for obvious reasons. They elected to be a recruiter and are motivated to be the best because all eyes are on them. The DA select recruiter doesn't necessarily want to be one. Many of them prefer to stay in their previous job or assignment. We take them out of their comfort zone and teach them a new Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). For some, it is just like going back to Advanced Individual Training (AIT).

The majority of the DA select recruiters; are currently serving or have recently returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). This brings a new challenge to the leaders and instructors. Before the war, it was an exception if we had someone that didn't want to fulfill their obligations to recruiting duty. It became the norm when we started receiving OIF/OEF veterans. Many of the NCOs are leaving their Soldiers and friends still in harm's way. Some feel responsible for the Soldiers they trained, some feel like they are abandoning their friends, and some feel they could best serve the Army by being deployed.

I counseled or mentored one of these NCOs on a daily basis. On more than one occasion, a NCO would state "I will purposely fail all of the exams just to go back." Others stressed that they trained the Soldiers that are still there and it is their responsibility to bring them all safely home. Two NCOs were told by their chain of command to just leave the school and report back to their unit for deployment. Several tried to find a way to get in trouble so that we would kick them out of the school and send them back to their units. One NCO was arrested for brandishing a firearm, one was found in a crack house, and many were arrested for some type of alcohol related incident. Whatever the case was, they all had one thing in common; the NCO didn't want to be a recruiter.

During my counseling or mentoring sessions, I tried to be empathetic towards their

feelings. I admired them for their loyalty, selfless service, and honor. However, I was equally disappointed in their lack of duty and obligation to serve the Army where they were needed. I stressed the importance of the mission they had been chosen to do. I told them they were going to be responsible for enlisting quality young men and women to serve along side their comrades. If they failed in that mission, then they were putting their friends in harm's way. If enough people are not recruited for the Army, then their squad or platoon won't have replacements to fill the empty foxholes. I also stressed to them that the Army chose them for a reason. They are in the top ten percent of their MOS and displayed the ability to lead and operate on their own. The Army needs them now more than ever. They are needed to tell their story. I successfully convinced the majority of these NCOs that completing their tour as a recruiter was the right thing to do.

The Army Recruiter Course is six weeks in length. The NCO is taught the qualifications to join the Army during the first week. We stress the fact that even though someone may be qualified, it is your call as the recruiter whether or not to recruit them. If you would not go to war with them, then don't enlist them. Additionally, they are taught advanced leadership and counseling techniques. The recruiter is expected to find out what the applicant's goals are. Once they uncover their goals, they are required to provide leadership and counseling to guide or mentor the applicant in the best direction.

During the remaining weeks, the NCO is taught how to develop and tell his or her Army story. This is the primary focal point of their training. First, they are required to conduct research and find an Army story that exemplifies the warrior ethos. Audie Murphy's story is an example of this. They use this story during their interview with an applicant. The purpose is to establish credibility with the applicant and relate to them the meaning of the warrior ethos. Although, it does not fully counter the "chance of death" objection, it does help an applicant or their parents understand our beliefs and values. They are taught to develop their own Army story next. We

encourage them to use a personal experience from their time in the Army. If the NCO has been involved in combat, we want this to be the topic of their story. I personally tell all of the OIF/OEF veterans to develop their story on an experience from their deployment. When interviewing an applicant, we know that the topic of going to war is going to be discussed. It is best when the recruiter initiates the discussion and talks about their experience. The applicant or influencer will appreciate the recruiter's honesty and forthright demeanor. This approach goes a long way when guiding them to enlist in the Army. If the NCO is not an OIF/OEF veteran, we teach them to base their story on something about the Army that has helped them. Maybe the Army paid for their entire college degree with tuition assistance or maybe they bought their first car with an enlistment bonus. Whatever the story is, I share with each NCO that if you are honest, ethical, moral, and trustworthy; you will accomplish the mission. The minute you lose any of these attributes; you are guaranteed failure. The majority of your applicants enlist because they want to be like you.

Once the NCOs are comfortable with their Army story, it is time for them to display what they have learned in a culminating exercise. They will conduct an Army Interview. During an Army Interview, the NCO will qualify an applicant, tell an Army story, tell their Army story, uncover the applicant's goals, and then counsel the applicant on the best direction to take. The NCO will graduate and officially become a U.S. Army Recruiter when they can conduct the interview to standard.

The days of selling the Army like a car are gone. I experienced the American public's attitude towards enlisting in the Army during war. Many times I heard the remarks; "it's an honorable profession, but it's not for my son", "my daughter is not going to fight in any war", or "are you kidding, there's a war going on". The NCOs returning from OIF/OEF are going to hear these remarks also. Some will be hurt, some will be angered, and some will want to take it out on the person that says it. I encouraged the NCOs to not take it personal. The people saying this are

not saying no to you, they are saying no to the Army. We must remember why we serve in the Army. We protect their right to freedom of speech. We must continue the mission because the entire Army is counting on us.

I feel a sense of pride when I think about the NCOs I have trained to recruit during this conflict. They are writing history. We are tasked to recruit an all volunteer Army during a sustained conflict and we are successfully accomplishing the mission.

Training NCOs to Recruit During War

Click here and type your paper. In the Introduction, you should:

- 1) Introduce the problem (APA 1.08).
- 2) Develop the background (APA 1.08).
- 3) State the purpose and rationale (APA 1.08).

Method

Describe what you did and how you did the experiment (APA 1.09).

Participants

Disclose the demographic characteristics of your sample population (APA 1.09).

Apparatus

Identify specialized equipment by supplier's model number and location (APA 1.09).

Procedure

Summarize every step in the execution of the research (APA 1.09).

Results

Report and summarize the results of your experiment (APA 1.10).

Discussion

Evaluate and interpret the implications of your results (APA 1.11).

References