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MARINE CORPS RECRUTING PRACTICES NECESSARY FOR A VIABLE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Executive Summary

Title: Marine Corps Recruiting Practices Necessary For A Viable All-Volunteer Force In The 21st Century

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Thesis: Unless substantive changes are made to the current Marine Corps recruiting practices, the Marine Corps will be unable to sustain the force structure necessary to fight the future threats of the 21st Century.

Discussion: Because of the current and future global threats, a force structure of at least 202,000 for the Marine Corps through the middle of the 21st Century will be vital. In addition, significant increases in annual enlistments of at least the quality standards of today will be necessary. Thus far, the Marine Corps has responded by significantly increasing its recruiting budget and the number of recruiters to meet its annual mission. This business practice is unsustainable. The Marine Corps will have to change its current recruiting practices, methodologies, and organization to sustain the force structure necessary to fight the future threats of the 21st Century. Outside of attempting to automate Systematic Recruiting, no substantive changes have been made since its inception in the 1970's. A Marine recruiter must still be actively involved in every step of the Contact-to-Contract chain, which demands that he spend the preponderance of his time and effort obtaining names and prospecting—lead generation—vice selling the Marine Corps, an activity he is better trained and suited. Ironically, a recruiter receives the vast majority of his good leads from referrals—activities outside of the Contact-to-Contract chain. Ultimately, a recruiter is left with only one viable means of prospecting—Area Canvassing. The other forms (Telephone Canvassing, Office Traffic, and Home visits) are either passive in nature or a waste of time compared to the results obtained. Through the use of data mining the Marine Corps could begin to predicts future enlistment behavior based on relative past and present behavior. The Marine Corps could determine with a reasonable degree of accuracy who (by name) has a higher propensity to enlist within a specific geographic region. By scoring this propensity, a recruiter is able to manage his time and prospecting efforts thereby being more productive. In addition, Contact Centers provide a viable prospecting alternative, especially when armed with a by-name list prioritized by highest to lowest propensity. In addition, a Contact Center is better able to penetrate the target youth market.

Conclusion: Through the use of data mining and Contact Centers, a Recruiter's potential for increased productivity is significant. This increase in productivity would allow the Marine Corps to at least meet if not exceed the future accession demands in both quantity and quality. In addition, it would reduce the increasing MCRC demand for manpower.

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Preface

This paper discusses the current Marine Corps recruiting practices illustrating their flaws and proposes alternative methods that in theory will provide greater possibilities for enlisted recruiting through the 21st Century. The Marine Corps is attempting to grow to an end-strength of 202,000 by 2012.[1] This growth will be difficult considering that the developing societal trends and changes in the target youth market do not bode well for the continued success of the All-Volunteer Force. In addition, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are obscuring the many benefits of military enlistment. The current Marine Corps recruiting practices, methodologies, and organization cannot readily adjust to these societal changes and have never been tested during a protracted conflict. The Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) is forced to compensate with an ever-increasing budget and demand for manpower. Though this strategy has yielded moderate success, it is unsustainable for the long-term and has already begun to fail. Unless substantive changes are made, the Marine Corps will be unable to sustain the force structure necessary to fight the future threats of the 21st Century.

Through the use of data mining the Marine Corps could begin to predict future enlistment behavior based on relative past and present behavior. The Marine Corps could determine with a reasonable degree of accuracy who (by name) has a higher propensity to enlist within a specific geographic region. By scoring this propensity, a recruiter is able to manage his time and prospecting efforts thereby being more productive. In addition, Contact Centers provide a viable prospecting alternative, especially when armed with a by-name list prioritized by highest to lowest propensity. A Contact Center is better able to penetrate the target youth market.

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[1] United States Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC), Fiscal Year 2007 Manpower Accession Plan, Memos-01-08, Total Force Accessions. Commandant of the Marine Corps, ALMAR 008/07 Marine Corps End Strength Increase, 02 February 2007.

The target youth market population has been steadily growing and is now almost thirty seven million with fifty percent being male. The Marine Corps only needs to enlist annually just under 2% of that population to sustain a force of 202,000. The necessity to enlist such a relatively low percentage has always been the case and Systematic Recruiting provided a reasonably effective means of contacting that percentage, but that is not the situation today and will not be in the future. The recruiting environment has changed and consequently the Marine Corps recruiting practices must also change.

INTRODUCTION

The Marine Corps is attempting to grow from its current end strength of 175,000 to an end strength of 202,000 by 2012.[1] This growth will be a daunting task considering that the developing societal trends and changes in the target youth market do not bode well for the continued success of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF).[2] The societal shifts among America's youth from collective responsibilities to individual rights are obvious. In addition, youth influencers (parents, teachers, athletic coaches) are having a greater impact than in the past on the decisions being made by the youth. And, though the "millennial" generation has an increased interest in public service, they do not generally equate service in the military with public service.[3] Finally, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are obscuring the many benefits of military enlistment. The current Marine Corps recruiting practices, methodologies, and organization do not readily account for these societal changes and have never been tested during a protracted conflict. The Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) is forced to compensate with an ever increasing budget and demand for manpower. Though this strategy has yielded moderate success, it is unsustainable for the long-term. Unless substantive changes are made, the Marine Corps will be unable to sustain the force structure necessary to fight the future threats of the 21st Century.

Substantive changes to the recruiting practices will only be necessary if the future world situation is similar to the current and recent past world situations. If the future is decidedly different, perhaps the Marine Corps will be able to continue its current recruiting practices and

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[1] United States Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC), Fiscal Year 2007 Manpower Accession Plan, Memos-01-08, Total Force Accessions. Commandant of the Marine Corps, ALMAR 008/07 Marine Corps End Strength Increase, 02 February 2007.

[2] Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS), *Youth Propensity Update*, August 2007.

[3] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Fiscal Year 07 Recruitment Advertising Plan*, 21-22.

meet success. But, if the future global threats demand the increased employment of the United

States Marine Corps, as is currently the situation, a force structure of at least 202,000 through the

middle of the 21st Century will be vital. This force structure, because of the Marine Corps

mission and current organization, will demand significant increases in annual enlistments that are

of at least the quality standards of today.   The Marine Corps will be unable to mature the force

pushing aside quality for quantity. Since 2003, the Marine Corps has been able to meet its

annual ship mission by significantly increasing its budget and the number of recruiters.[4] At what

point does this strategy begin to fail? This paper will attempt to demonstrate that the strategy of

using overwhelming force—an ever increasing budget and demand for manpower—has already

begun to fail and that the alternatives proposed will create a sustainable long-term strategy that

will be viable through the middle of the 21st Century. The current recruiting practices will be

outlined illustrating their flaws and then alternative methods proposed that in theory will provide

greater possibilities for enlisted recruiting.

<div align="center">

THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

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Future Threats

The end of the Cold War and the beginning of "the long war" or GWOT has resulted in

a strategic environment that is rapidly changing and uncertain with little clarity of all potential

future threats. Martin C. Libicki in 1995 categorized the emerging threats to the United States

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[4] Volume III Guidebook for Recruiting Station Operations, 2004 Edition, 21March 2004.   The Marine Corps Recruiting Command is assigned an Annual Ship Mission from the Department of Defense, which is based on the Marine Corps' end strength and projected losses. This ship mission defines the number by category (male or female) and component (Reserve or Regular) of individuals that must enter recruit training. From MCRC's ship mission it extrapolates its contracting mission. The contract mission is the number of individuals by category and component that must be enlisted annually into the Marine Corps, placed in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP), and prepared to ship to recruit training. Often times the ship and contract mission will differ any given month but when reviewed annually they are relatively equal. The contract mission is a net mission meaning that if individuals are discharged from the DEP before they are shipped to recruit training another individual must be contracted to compensate. For every discharge from the DEP the contract mission increases.

into four groups: Peers, Bullies, Terrorism, and Chaos.[5] Though the world has changed

dramatically since 1995 with the advance of radical Islamic extremism, the advent of the wars in

Iraq and Afghanistan, the increased frequency of wars of insurgency, and an upsurge in nuclear

proliferation, these categories are still very relevant. It is also likely that the United States will

face a large and varied number of threats associated with the littorals. The littorals house over

three quarters of the world's population, eighty percent of the world capitals, and almost all of

the marketplaces for international trade.[6] Consequently, it is probable that most of the potential

conflicts and threats identified above will occur within the world's littoral regions placing ever

increasing demands on the Marine Corps. The present demands and potential future demands

require the Marine Corps to quickly grow in force structure and then to sustain this force at least

through the middle of the 21st Century.

Required Enlistments

The Marine Corps understands these threats and has every intention of increasing its end

strength by 27,000 over the next four years (2011). The Marine Corps will undoubtedly also

attempt to increase its reenlistments to bridge this 27K end strength gap, but due to force

structure requirements, budget limitations, demand for upward mobility, and service quality of

life, its ability to mature the force is limited resulting in at least 70% of this gap consisting of

new enlistments.[7] The Marine Corps intends to increase its annual enlistments from

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[5] Martin C Libicki, "The Next Enemy," Institute for National Strategic Studies: National Defense University Strategic Forum, (July 1995), number 35, 1.

[6]"Operational Maneuver From the Sea: A concept for the projection of naval power ashore," Marine Corps Gazette, (June, 1996), A-1.

[7] Commandant of the Marine Corps, ALMAR 008/07 Marine Corps End Strength Increase, 02 February 2007.

approximately 40,000 to over 47,000 to grow to 202,000, but to sustain this force over 48,000

annual accessions will be needed.[8]

      As of October 2007 the Marine Corps' personnel strength was approximately 184,000.

Over the next five years the accessions mission is projected to increase by 1-7% annually until

total force accessions reach 48K. From 2007 through 2012 the accession mission is projected to

grow by at least 18%. As noted, the recruiting mission is comprised of two parts—the

contracting mission and the shipping mission. Though the shipping mission is the truer indicator

of success or failure, if the Marine Corps continually misses its contracting mission it is only a

matter of time before it misses its shipping mission. The Marine Corps has not met its

contracting mission since 2005.[9] Unless the Marine Corps devotes substantially more resources

and manpower to the recruiting mission, or a dramatic change in methodology occurs, the

Marine Corps will eventually begin to miss its shipping mission.

Quality vs. Quantity

      As every military service undergoes its version of "transformation", it becomes clear that

the demand for service members that have "the mental agility to match their capabilities to new

and unprecedented missions" becomes essential.[10] In addition, the trends in warfare will require

and will most likely increase the Marine Corps' demand for "knowledge workers"— a Marine

who works with information able to correlate various data elements and external information to

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[8] United States Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC), Fiscal Year 2007 Manpower Accession Plan, Memos-01-08, Total Force Accessions.

[9] Marine Corps Recruiting Command Headquarters, *Commander's Attainment Report (CAR)*, Fiscal Years 2003-2007.

[10] Barbara A. Bicksler, Curtis L. Gilroy, and John T. Warner. *The All-Volunteer Force Thirty Years of Service*. Dulles, VA: Brassey's Inc. 2004, 258.

promote analysis and problem solving.[11] Finally, due to the youth of the Marine Corps and the

demand for leaders at all levels the necessity to have smart, mature, and clear thinking

individuals joining the ranks is paramount. Consequently, the Marine Corps can ill-afford to

push aside quality to accommodate the demand for quantity.

Recruiting Burden

Since 2003, MCRC's demand for both manpower and money to meet its accessions

mission has dramatically increased. Over the last five years the MCRC operating budget has

increased by 44% (from 70 million to 101.2 million) and the advertising budget has increased by

142% (from 51 million to 142.6 million). In addition, the manpower demand for recruiters alone

has increased by 38% (from 3,050 in 2004 to 4,220 projected for 2008). Ultimately, the Marine

Corps in 2008 is projected to spend 243.8 million dollars (operating and advertising budget)

while using approximately 4,220 Marine recruiters to net approximately 42,202 new

accessions.[12] Because the Marine Corps intents to grow to 202K by 2011 and then begin

sustaining that total force by 2012, there is clear indications that both the MCRC total budget and

demand for manpower will continue to increase. If both the demand for money and manpower

increase at the pace of the last four years, by 2012 MCRC will spend 406.3 million dollars while

using approximately 5,500 Marine recruiters to net approximately 48,100 new accessions. It is

important to note that the dollar amounts only account for the operating and advertising budgets

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[11] Peter F. Drucker. *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1973, 839.

[12] Marine Corps Recruiting Command (G-1 Administration and Personnel, Comptroller, and G-3 Current Operations), 8411/8412 Total Force, Fiscal Year 2003-2008 Budget, Total Force Accessions (shipping). The MCRC advertising and operating budget has increased mainly due to supplemental money being added throughout the fiscal year. The amount used in all calculations was the total amount spent or in the case of FY2008 the amount used was the MCRC Comptroller projected expenses. Personnel numbers for the 8411 and 8412 force were obtained from MCRC G-1. Though MCRC when missioning accessions to each of the Recruiting Districts and subsequent Recruiting Stations uses determined mission share numbers, they are not the total force assigned throughout the subordinate commands. The total force numbers are greater due to the number of administrative and liaison billets necessary to operate subordinate recruiting commands. The total force numbers were used because they demonstrate the more realistic burden the Marine Corps is having to endure to maintain its AVF.

and the number of recruiters. There are additional costs in both money and manpower that are significant such as the facilities budgets and the support staffs necessary at every level of command. When these costs are added the totals become significant. Perhaps the American public will be willing to pay these costs in order to maintain a viable AVF, but the Marine Corps can ill afford the loss of almost a regiments worth of Marines from the operating force. Almost five percent of the Marine Corps will be used just to contract and ship individuals to recruit training. This cost in manpower is too high to sustain—alternatives must be sought.

CURRENT RECRUITING PRACTICE

Systematic Recruiting

The Marine Corps has been using the Systematic Recruiting practice since the 1970's and its structure and methodologies are detailed in reference manuals known as Guidebook for Recruiting Volumes I through V.   The volumes that guide the actions of enlisted recruiting are mainly I and III. The others, though important, are not relevant to the topic of this paper. Volumes I (Guidebook for Recruiters) and III (Guidebook for Recruiting Station Operations) provide detailed guidance on step-by-step actions at the Recruiting Substation (RSS) and Recruiting Station (RS) levels respectively. The entire system of Marine Corps recruiting is designed to ensure contact with as many potential applicants as possible. The Volume I specifically details how to organize information methodically to assist in planning, it describes the components of Systematic Recruiting and how they are to be used, and then assists in distributing the workload within an RSS.[13] Ultimately, the entire business of recruiting revolves around the ability to collect, contact, and pursue potential applicants. Systematic Recruiting provides the method.

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[13] Volume I Guidebook for Recruiters, 2005 Edition, 05August2005 and Volume III Guidebook for Recruiting Station Operations, 2004 Edition, 21March2004.

The Systematic Recruiting process can basically be broken down into eight components. The components are: Obtaining Names, Prospecting, Screening, Selling, Processing, Pool Program, Shipping, and Command Recruiting. The first five components are considered the Contact-to-Contract chain, which begins with the first contact of a potential applicant and ends with the enlistment of a new recruit. All of the components are important but the first two—obtaining names and prospecting—require the greatest amount of the recruiter's time.[14]

Obtaining Names is what the civilian sales community calls "lead generation." There are several methods for obtaining names. The primary source is through the high school lists. These lists are obtained by the recruiter from his assigned high schools. Depending on the demographic area, a recruiter may experience difficulty in obtaining a list from a specific high school, but throughout the country the vast majority of the high school lists are obtained.[15] The secondary source is from referrals, which are generated mainly through both the Pool and Command Recruiting Programs. Both the Pool Program and Command Recruiting Program are components that assist the recruiter in obtaining names from those individuals that have already joined the Marine Corps and are either waiting to ship to recruit training, or have just returned from recruit training. The last significant source is from Priority Prospect Cards (PPCs). PPCs are cards containing the contact information of a potential applicant that is returned to the recruiter as a result of a request by the applicant via 1-800-Marines, marines.com, or by answering direct mail or some other form of Marine Corps advertising. Considering that PPCs and referrals represent applicants who are more predisposed to considering military service and

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[14] Volume I Guidebook for Recruiters, 2005 Edition, 05August2005.

[15] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *High School & Community College Report 2003-2007.*

the Marine Corps as the service of choice they yield the greatest productivity in terms of contracting as opposed to the vast majority of the names on the high school lists.

Contract Sources

The names obtained through referrals have yielded on average 43% of all contracts written from 2003-2007 with the highest being 54% in 2003 and the lowest being 39% in 2007. It appears that 2003 was an anomaly and that there is not a general downward trend considering that between 2004-2007 on average 40.5% of all contracts were written from referrals. The names obtained through PPCs have yielded on average 18.8% of all contracts written from 2003-2007. There does appear to be a general upward trend considering that from 2003 through 2007 there has been an increase of at least 2.25% annually. MCRC anticipates that the contracts yielded from PPCs will continue to increase at least in the near term. This anticipation is primarily the result of refined mechanisms to make the recruiter more quickly aware that an individual in his assigned geographic area has demonstrated interest in the Marine Corps. But, because PPC generation is a passive component being limited by the percentage of the youth population demonstrating propensity for military service—a demographic on the decline—the number of contracts is limited.[16]

It is unreasonable to assume that as the demand for enlistments increase the percentage of over all contracts from PPCs and referrals will also increase or even remain static. A referral or a PPC represents the segment of the population that already has a high propensity to enlist and has either been influenced by a friend who has joined or has requested information about enlistment. The Marine Corps is doing an outstanding job of providing mechanisms to contact these individuals in a timely manner, but this pool shrinking. Since May 2004, youth (16-21

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[16] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Activity Analysis for Enlisted Recruiting*, Fiscal Years 2003-2007.

ages) propensity has declined in eight of the nine Census Divisions and has now reached historical lows in seven of the divisions. The likelihood of a male joining the military in the next few years has dropped from 24% in 1984 to 13% in 2007. Where females have dropped from 10% in 1984 to 4% in 2007 creating an aggregate of only 9% thinking it likely they might serve in the military in the next few years. What is more troubling is that these trends have not leveled and are still going down. The most significant drop is among the white youth which has dropped 16% since 2001 to just 11%.[17] By 2012 the Marine Corps will have to enlist an additional 8,000 individuals annually to maintain a force structure of 202K. In all probability the Marine Corps will not continue getting 60% of its enlistments from referrals and PPCs which will mean that they will have to be found by some other means.

The names obtained through lists have yielded on average 12.2% of all contracts written from 2003-2007. There appears to be a general downward trend considering that in 2003 16% of all contracts were generated from lists, but only 10% in 2007. In 2003, on average a recruiter made 134 telephone calls (TC) to yield one interview—a presentation on the benefits of joining the Marine Corps to a qualified applicant. In 2007, on average a recruiter was forced to make 232 TCs to yield that same interview. On average a recruiter needs to conduct at least six TC interviews to write a single TC contract which equates to 1392 telephone calls. Considering that it takes a recruiter 34 minutes to make 15 telephone calls, a recruiter will spend approximately 52.6 hours of just making telephone calls to write one contract.[18] The significance of these

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[17] Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS), *Youth Propensity Update*, August 2007. This executive note provides a summary of recent trends in youth propensity with specific attention given to recent changes in propensity across the nine Census Divisions. The findings form the June 2006 and June 2007 DoD Youth Polls are available at www.DMREN.org.

[18] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Activity Analysis for Enlisted Recruiting*, Fiscal Years 2003-2007 and David G. DiEugenio Jr, "Business Process Redesign in Marine Corps Recruiting with Visual Modeling and Simulation," *Unpublished Paper*, September 2001, 36-39. David G. DiEugenio in 2001 determined it took between 1-3 minutes to conduct one telephone call (TC), but when a contact was made an additional 15-20 minutes would be required to

numbers is not how many hours of a recruiter's time it takes to write a TC contract, but that recruiters are abandoning the effort of trying to generate contracts from telephone calls. Within the last five years the percentage of contracts yielded from TC prospecting has dropped almost 30%. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue or has leveled, either result is an indicator of significant potential problems.

Area Canvassing, though a means of obtaining names, is more realistically a form of prospecting. Prospecting is the process of systematically contacting the obtained names attempting to schedule an appointment with the design of conducting an interview. Area Canvassing is when a recruiter canvasses an area that has a high concentration of the target market. Because the recruiter is able to obtain the name and then attempt to set an appointment, it is prospecting. If an appointment is not set, a recruiter will attempt to get the individual's contact information and then systematically call that individual over time attempting to set an appointment. Area Canvassing from 2003-2007 has yielded 29% of all contracts written and has more or less stabilized at 27%.[19] Considering the amount of time a recruiter spends Area Canvassing, less than telephone call prospecting, it yields outstanding results.[20]

The other forms of prospecting not previously discussed are Office Traffic (walk-ins) and Home Visits. Both of these forms of prospecting on average from 2003-2007 have yielded less than 6% of all contracts written with Walk-ins comprising approximately 90% of that total. Generating Office Traffic is a passive form of prospecting requiring relatively no time of the

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build report, screen the applicant, and then set the appointment. According to the 2007 Activity Analysis it requires 15 TCs to get a contact. Therefore for every 15 TCs there will be 14 one to three minute calls and one 15-20 minute call which reasons that a recruiter will spend as little as 29 minutes and as great as 62 minutes to make 15 TCs. Based on the author's experience it is more realistic to reason that a recruiter will not spend more than one minute on a TC with no answer and as much as 20 minutes on a TC with a contact which equates to 34 minutes.

[19] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Activity Analysis for Enlisted Recruiting*, Fiscal Years 2003-2007.

[20] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Activity Analysis for Enlisted Recruiting*, Fiscal Years 2003-2007.

recruiters. Basically, a recruiter while conducting other business waits for an individual to walk into the Recruiting Substation to inquire about the benefits of joining the Marine Corps. Home Visits conversely require an inordinate amount of time in relation to the results achieved. Consequently, recruiters have all but abandoned this form of prospecting which is made obvious considering that less than one percent of all contracts written come from Home Visits.

Problems

If a recruiter is achieving success—contracting individuals into the Marine Corps and shipping them to recruit training—then he is spending the majority of his work-day conducting one of two activities—prospecting or selling. Though there are a multitude of things that recruiters must do to contract and ship individuals to recruit training these are the activities that require the most amount of time and correspond most directly to achieving mission. A recruiter's professional selling skills in relation to his civilian peers with the same amount of experience are superb. On average it takes just over four interviews to yield a contract which means that if a recruiter is able to conduct just one interview a day within a 20 day work-month he will write between four and five contracts. Interestingly though, most recruiters write between one and two contracts in a month which means that he is only able to conduct between five and nine interviews monthly.[21] It becomes painfully obvious that a recruiter is spending the vast majority of his time obtaining names and prospecting, and not selling which is just the reverse of what should be occurring.

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[21] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Activity Analysis for Enlisted Recruiting*, Fiscal Years 2003-2007, *Commander's Attainment Report (CAR)* Fiscal Years 2004-2007, and MCRC G-3 *Production Recruiters Missioning Levels*, Fiscal Years 2003-2007. MCRC missioned for 2650 production recruiters from 2003-2006 and 2850 in 2007. The gross accessions per recruiter (APR) was calculated by taking the total number of accession in a given fiscal year divided by the missioned production recruiters. That total was divided by 12 (number of months in a year) to determine monthly gross APR. For example in 2004 MCRC accessed into the Marine Corps a total of 45,527 individuals and missioned for 2650 productions recruiters yielding 17.2 contracts annually or 1.43 monthly. Interestingly 9,809 of those individuals where eventually discharged from the Delayed Entry Program resulting in the Marine Corps only netting 35,718 new accessions which yields only 1.12 monthly net APR.

As already illustrated, referrals and PPCs provide the recruiter with the best leads, but require relatively little of his time. Area Canvassing (AC) also yields outstanding results compared to the time spent. Conversely, Telephone Canvassing (TC)—when a recruiter prospects from his high school lists—yields very poor results. Why does Area Canvassing yield so much better results than Telephone Canvassing? The answer is multi-fold. When a recruiter conducts Area Canvassing, he speaks face to face with a potential applicant able to quickly discern interests, likes and dislikes, basic goals, and opinions regarding military service. In addition, during this face-to-face meeting, the recruiter is better able to overcome indifference to military service and the Marine Corps while building rapport and trust. And, while Area Canvassing, a recruiter is able to more effectively penetrate the high school graduate market—individuals that have graduated high school being between 18-25 years old. Telephone Canvassing does not readily allow for any of these benefits.

Telephone Canvassing is very impersonal. A list has nothing more than a name, address and phone number for each individual in a particular high school. Nothing else can be determined about an individual until he is called. In addition considering that only 13% of all males 16-21 years of age have any interest in serving in the military, a recruiter is most likely to be rejected almost nine times out of ten. The process is laborious and is a waste of time and effort considering the results obtained. Systematic Recruiting through the use of a Working File has attempted to make telephone canvassing more productive. A Working File contains a variety of cards, the most important of which is the Prospective Applicant Card (PAC), which is completed after a potential applicant is contacted either through the telephone or while area canvassing. The PAC contains all known personal information on an individual to include basic qualifications, and contact history. A recruiter is able to systematically work though all PACs

gaining more and more information with each contact. A PAC is kept in the Working File for at least a year. If the individual has failed to show interest in the Marine Corps after a year, it is most likely removed and destroyed. Based on the continued drop in productivity, it is obvious that this method is antiquated.

The remaining component of systematic recruiting is the High School Community College Program (HS/CC). The High School Community College program does not provide any direct source for accessions, but sets the foundation for an effective Pool and Command Recruiting Program. No substantive changes need to be made to these programs except how to obtain lists from high schools which is a component of the HS/CC program.   Ultimately, the Marine recruiter is left with only one viable means of prospecting—Area Canvassing. The other three forms are either passive in nature (Office Traffic) or are grossly ineffective considering the results they yield (Telephone Canvassing and Home Visits). Though the processes of Systematic Recruiting have been refined throughout the decades and are currently being automated to save money and create greater efficiency, they are doing very little to make the Marine recruiter more effective. These refinements and automation are doing little to directly assist the recruiter in collecting, contacting, and pursuing leads that have a higher propensity to enlist which has necessitated the demand for a greater budget and manpower.

CHANGES TO RECRUIITNG PRACTICES

MCRC keeps data on every perceived important facet of recruitment and has over the decades become "data rich", but unfortunately "information poor" in relation to the amount of data collected. MCRC is easily able to determine who is joining the Marine Corps, but cannot explain why nor can they predict with any more certainty than in the 1970's who will join the Marine Corps in the future. MCRC has successfully attempted to target advertising to segments

of the population that have demonstrated a higher propensity to enlist than others, but has failed

to place any meaningful data in the hands of the recruiter, which would directly assist his

recruiting efforts. MCRC, through the work done by Joint Advertising Market Research and

Studies (JAMRS), has determined from what segment of the population the majority of

enlistments are coming from, what these segments are interested in, and how these segments can

be influenced through advertising. Ultimately, JAMRS has determined that town and rural areas

account for almost 45% of all enlisted accessions though this segment accounts for under 40% of

the youth population of the nation. This segment can best be reached by advertising through

country music, car racing, and outdoor recreation venues.[22] This information is very helpful

when designing an advertising campaign, but is relatively useless to a recruiter. A recruiter

needs names within each of these segments that have a higher propensity to enlist than the others

and why. In addition, just because another segment fails to provide unique advantages in

advertising does not mean that there are not individuals within that segment who do not have a

higher propensity to join than others. The recruiter's productivity will be enhanced significantly

if he could be provided a by-name list of individuals within the target market that have a higher

propensity to enlist than others.

Data Mining

Data mining is functionally defined as a process of gaining essential knowledge from

large amounts of data stored in large databases, the World Wide Web, or some other form of data

warehouse to generate predictive information. This knowledge is gained or discovered through a

multi-step iterative process. Basically, specific data is extracted and then run through a designed

mathematical algorithm (engine) that will begin to associate, correlate, classify, and analyze the

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[22] Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS), "Trends in USMC Accessions- Conclusions & Recommendations: National Overview FY00-FY06," 2007, slides 62-66.

data. The search is focused even further through the utilization of additional mathematical

algorithms (engines) that will begin to demonstrate patterns and additional knowledge that can

be applied to decision making, process control, information management, and query processing.

Data mining is not simply the retrieval and aggregation of large amounts of data or the summary

of the analytical processing of data.[23] Data mining is unique because it determines future

behavior based on relative past and present behavior.

There are multiple data mining functionalities and a variety of patterns that can be mined.

Essentially, data mining and its usefulness works along the same principles as the empirical

cycle (observation, analysis, hypothesis, prediction) though with greater speed, complexity, and

repetition. For example once a potential applicant's behavior has been modeled and future

actions predicted with an accepted level of validity, the model can be used repetitively,

constantly and then adjusted incorporating an ever increasing number of variables to either

change with the target market or make more accurate predictions.[24]

Data Mining & Marine Corps Recruiting

Through the use of data mining the Marine Corps would be able to analyze and access

what demographic would be more likely to enlist in the Marine Corps. A model (a series of

mathematical algorithms) would be built using historical data. This model would assess what

demographic in a particular geographic region (city, town, zip code, high school, etc) had a

higher propensity to enlist and most importantly why. A second model would then use new data

gathered in order to make predictions about future propensity to enlist based on those defined

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[23] Jiawei Han and Micheline Kamber, *Data Mining: Concepts and Techniques*, Second Edition., San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann, 2006, 1-9.

[24] Jiawei Han and Micheline Kamber, 21-29. Pieter Adriaans and Dolf Zantinge, Data Mining, Harlow, England: Addison Wesley Longman, 1996, 14-36.

geographical and demographical characteristics. Though generalizations can be made that are representative across the United States, it is very important to determine propensity at the lowest geographical level in order to provide the most accurate and valid predictions. There are forty eight Recruiting Stations spread throughout the fifty states and territories. None are alike; they are all organized, manned, and worked differently. Consequently, propensity in each is unique enough that at least forty eight different models would have to be used, most likely many more.

JAMRS has demonstrated the necessity of working at the lowest geographic level. When helping the Marine Corps determine trends in accessions for more focused advertising, they used census data to determine geo-demographic segmentation down to the zip code plus four digits. Each segment differed based on socioeconomic rank (income, education, occupation, and home value), social group (level of urbanization, population density, and affluence), and life-stage group (children in household, and general age).[25] This level of detail is outstanding for more focused advertising, but is the minimal data needed to begin to determine individual propensity.

Additional information would need to be gathered to create more accurate predictions. For example, if those who play organized sports enlist at a higher rate than those who do not, then when this data can be retrieved it should be. Ultimately, in addition to name, address, phone number, socioeconomic rank, social group, and life-stage group, specific characteristics determined to represent higher propensity would need to be gathered. All of this data would then be associated, correlated and analyzed through a model and scored, for example between 0 and 5 with five being the most likely to enlist. A list of names would be generated that would contain every individual within the target market (between 17-25 years of age) within a given geographic region prioritized based on the score received. By obtaining names using this method, a recruiter

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[25] Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS), "The USMC Recruiting Segmentation analysis: the United States and Selected Districts-What is the Claritas Segmentation System?," 2007, slide 3.

would be able to account for everyone within the target market in his assigned sector. As it stands now those that have already graduated high school are not accounted for with any accuracy and only basic contact information is obtained for those in high school. Through the use of data mining, a recruiter could be given a list of names with each individual having more accurate contact information, race, marital status, age, socioeconomic and social background, email address, and basic interests. In addition, because the list would be prioritized, a recruiter could begin to prospect starting with those that have a higher propensity to enlist and systematically work down to those with less propensity. Through the use of data mining, Telephone Canvassing would again become a viable means of prospecting making the recruiter more effective and productive. To yield even greater productivity, every list generated using data mining, before it is to be worked by a recruiter, should be validated, additional information gathered, and each individual contacted.

Contact Centers

The Marine Corps recruiter is the most productive when he is "selling" the Marine Corps vice generating leads and prospecting. Data mining provides a method that generates much stronger leads and therefore would enhance prospecting efforts, but to allow a recruiter to focus the preponderance of his efforts on selling, the majority of the prospecting activities would need to be conducted by another method or organization. Contact Centers, also known as Call Centers would be the most economical and effective means to conduct this activity. A Contact Center is used by many and varied businesses to manage and conduct activities ranging from outbound/inbound teleservices, to market research and analysis, to web interaction. Contact Centers within the business community have become a more economical means to create lead generation, prospect potential customers, and care for existing customers. Conveniently, the

Marine Corps Recruiting Command currently uses a Contact Center—Inktel Direct. Inktel

Direct currently runs 1-800-MARINES and any outbound calling initiatives. The Marine Corps'

Contact Center acts primarily in an inbound teleservice capacity handling requests for additional

information about service in the Marine Corps, but little else.[26]

Contact Center Capabilities

The Marine Corps should at a minimum require its Contact Centers to conduct at least

three activities: verifying information (validate call lists), active lead generation and appointment

setting, and market research and surveys. Once data mining has built a reliable model and that

model has been used to score the propensity of a desired demographic by name, the list is ready

to be prospected. But to ensure the recruiter maximizes his efforts within the selling vice

prospecting activity, before the list is handed over to a Recruiting Substation, the information

should be verified and each individual on the call-list basically screened to determine minimum

qualifications. Based on the information verification and screening the individual would be

further assessed and his propensity re-scored. The call-list would be regenerated and could then

be presented to the Recruiting Substation. The increase in productivity for a recruiter could be

significant. Because the list is prioritized with the most inclined to enlist at the top, a recruiter

has a greater probability of contacting a likely applicant with every phone call.

To generate even more productivity, a Contact Center while verifying and screening

these individuals would actively prospect a potential applicant and attempt to set an appointment

for a specific RSS. It stands to reason that because a Contact Center is able to focus throughout

the entire day on outbound teleservices, the number of contacts that demonstrate a propensity to

enlist would be significantly higher than the normal recruiter conducting Telephone canvassing

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[26] Marine Corps Recruiting Command, <u>FY2007 Recruitment Advertising Plan</u>. Headquarters United States Marine Corps, September 2006, 94-95.

activities. Consequently, there is a higher probability that Contact Centers will reach an individual that has thought seriously about military service and is willing to agree to an appointment with a recruiter. There are multiple courses of action when this occurs. The Contact Center could attempt to put the potential applicant in direct contact with a recruiter, or it could set the appointment within a specific RSS, or it could generate an electronic PPC, which would enable a recruiter to call the individual later that day to set the appointment. Any of these courses would most likely yield greater productivity. The important point is that Contact Centers are capable of generating viable leads for the Marine Corps.

Lastly, there are occasions throughout every year when the target youth market in a specific geographic region is unpredictable and begins to act contrary to recent past behavior. There are no tools given to the local Marine Corps recruiting commands to assess trends in the market. A Contact Center has the capability to begin to understand the desires of the market and determine future trends by conducting surveys and research. In addition, if a Recruiting Station or Substation begins to fail, Contact Centers are able to canvass the market to determine recruiting conduct, availability, opinions, and influencers.

Proposed Implementation

It is difficult to determine the cost associated with data mining and Contact Centers, but the Recruiter's potential for increased productivity is obvious. This increase in productivity could be significant and would allow the Marine Corps to at least meet if not exceed the future accession demands in both quantity and quality with potentially less recruiters or at least the same number of recruiters currently assigned to MCRC.

Though prudent to implement the changes described above in a phased and graduated manner, it is vital that MCRC begin to make and then exceed its contracting mission before it

destroys its "Start Pool" to make its shipping mission.[27] A plan that is both phased and graduated, but relatively aggressive, would require each of the six recruiting districts to implement theses changes immediately in its poorest performing Recruiting Station (RS) which would equate to just 12.5% (6 of 48) of MCRC's productivity. This sample size is sufficiently large and comprehensive enough to be able to work through the many and varied details of designing and implementing the data mining engines and establishing the Contact Center contracts, computer software, scripts, and measures of effectiveness while also being able to validate the degree of increased productivity.

Once the original six RS's have stabilized and begun to see positive results—within six months—an additional RS in each district would be directed to implement the changes every four months until half of the RS's (24 of 48) have been incorporated. At the eighteenth month mark, MCRC will conduct a comprehensive review of the changes implemented and their effectiveness. Once corrections and adjustments have been made—approximately six months, an additional RS will incorporate the changes every three months. Full implementation should take no more than three years.

Through the use of both data mining and Contact Centers—a method to better determine propensity and to generate and validate "good leads", a recruiter will be able to spend the majority of his work day "selling" the Marine Corps to young, highly qualified individuals. As

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[27] Volume I Guidebook for Recruiters, 2005 Edition, 05August2005 and Volume III Guidebook for Recruiting Station Operations, 2004 Edition, 21March2004. A "Start Pool" is the number of individuals by category and component that have been enlisted into the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) and have been assigned a date to ship to recruit training. Individuals are placed based on job availability, needs of the recruiting commands, and desires of the individual. Ideally, the ship pool should be full sixty days out with the next sixty days 65-75% full. If this is not the case and the ship pool for the next sixty days is not full due to either poor placement or low enlistments, recruiting commands are forced to enlist individuals and then almost immediately ship them to recruit training, or to move individuals forward to ship early—emptying the "Start Pool." If this tactic is used for too long, the start pool becomes relatively none existent and the likelihood of missing the ship mission dramatically increases. Once MCRC begins to miss its ship mission because of a relatively empty "Start Pool", it would most likely take at least a full year to recover even if substantial changes are made.

demonstrated, a recruiter currently conducts between five and nine interviews monthly with roughly every fourth interview eventually becoming an enlistment. The most significant measure of effectiveness would be that a recruiter conducts at least twice as many interviews monthly with the majority of the increase coming from the synergistic combination of data mining and Contact Centers as opposed to increased referrals and Area Canvassing.

CONCLUSION

At least into the near future, the US manpower procurement policy is to maintain an AVF that is mentally, physically, and morally equipped to defeat the future threats, but the AVF success is not guaranteed. If the Marine Corps expects to enlist the quantity and quality necessary to confront these future threats, it will have to gain and maintain every possible recruiting advantage over the other military services. The current recruiting practice—Systematic Recruiting—has been herald as a great success, but has in recent years been insufficient to meet the demands of enlistments. As a result, the Marine Corps has been forced to steadily increase it recruiting budget and the number of recruiters on the streets of America.

Outside of attempting to automate Systematic Recruiting, no substantive changes have been made since its inception in the 1970's. A Marine recruiter must still be actively involved in every step of the Contact-to-Contract chain, which demands that he spend the preponderance of his time and effort obtaining names and prospecting—lead generation—vice selling the Marine Corps, an activity he is better trained and suited. Ironically, a recruiter receives the vast majority (60%) of his good leads from referrals—activities outside of the Contact-to-Contract chain. Ultimately, a recruiter is left with only one viable means of prospecting—Area Canvassing. The other forms (Telephone Canvassing, Office Traffic, and Home visits) are either passive in nature or a waste of time compared to the results obtained.

We are living in the "Information Age" where the ability to associate, correlate, classify, and analyze data is developing at a pace not seen before in history. The organization, be it a business or a military service, that recognizes this fact and adjusts it practices and methodologies to leverage this information will gain significant advantages over their competitors. The use of data mining would provide the Marine Corps with the fulcrum to leverage the vast amounts of data it already collects to gain that advantage. As stated, data mining predicts future behavior based on relative past and present behavior. Consequently, data mining can determine with a reasonable degree of accuracy who (by name) has a higher propensity to enlist in the Marine Corps within a specific geographic region. By scoring this propensity, a recruiter is able to manage his time and prospecting efforts thereby being more productive.

The Marine Corps has determined that the best person to sell the benefits of service in the Marine Corps is a Marine. This only seems reasonable considering the dynamics of service in the Marine Corps, but must a Marine be the only one to conduct prospecting activities? Contact Centers provide a viable alternative, especially when armed with a by-name list prioritized by highest to lowest propensity. A Contact Center is better able to penetrate—contacting as many individuals as possible—the target youth market. As it stands, systematic recruiting provides no active means to contact the Graduate market, other than Area Canvassing, which in many areas constitutes almost three quarters of the available market. In addition, Contact Centers provide the recruiting commands at all levels a means to interact with the community through email, direct mail, or teleservices conducting research or opinion surveys.

Ironically, the target youth market population has been steadily growing and is now almost thirty seven million with fifty percent being male, but the Marine Corps is having a more and more difficult time finding qualified individuals to join its ranks. Considering that

approximately 13% of that market has any propensity to serve in the military, the Marine Corps would only have to enlist annually just under 2% of that population to sustain a force of 202,000.[28] The necessity to enlist such a relatively low percentage has always been the case and Systematic Recruiting provided a reasonably effective means of contacting that percentage, but that is not the situation today and will not be in the future. The recruiting environment has changed and the Marine Corps recruiting practices have not.

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[28] Mark Hugo Lopez and Karlo Berrios Marcelo. "Youth Demographics." The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, November 2006, 2-6.

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