

Strategy Research Project

We Want You: It Takes a Village To Market the Army

by

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

We Want You: It Takes a Village To Market the Army

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Abstract

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Maintaining the highest quality all-volunteer Army serves a vital national interest; therefore, systems should be in place for it to become a national effort. This process begins with the Army's deep reflection, followed by its willingness to change its organizational culture. The Army may find itself suited to adopt a marketing culture while maintaining its warfighting edge. Such a transformation might also help the Army establish deeper relationships with the society and nation it serves. This paper will explore the challenges of Army marketing in an environment of increasing fiscal austerity, and recommend an innovative strategy that incorporates a comprehensive approach to achieve national unity of effort.

We Want You: It Takes a Village To Market the Army

I would encourage you and all young Americans, especially those at the most selective universities who may not have considered the military, to do so.

—Dr. Robert M. Gates¹

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates' call to action at Duke University challenged the aspirations of many young Americans; for amongst them, the propensity to consider military service as a career option continues to steadily decline.² Despite Army advertising efforts to portray its tangible benefits for volunteering such as money for education, enlistment bonuses, and career opportunities; and intangible ones of service to country, honor, and pride,³ an ever-increasing number of the nation's youth see serving in the military as "something for other people to do."⁴ Since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force, the Army's marketing strategy has assumed sufficient numbers of eligible youth would show the propensity to serve and volunteer. It has also assumed that adequate resources would be dedicated to marketing and recruiting efforts. In the face of the continued pace of declining propensity, and the Army's consideration for a massive reduction to its advertising budget,⁵ these assumptions no longer hold. Thus, the Army might need a new strategy, one that begins with truly open-minded reflection, followed by bold and innovative changes to its own organizational culture, and ultimately leverages opportunities in today's environment to reach and attract the nation's youth.

How does the Army effectively market itself in an era of long-term fiscal austerity? The Army's traditional approaches to addressing marketing and recruiting challenges have been to adjust its traditional marketing levers – the size of its recruiting force, the degree to which it can offer financial incentives to prospective candidates, and

the sum total of its advertising budget.⁶ The Army can no longer assume sufficient propensity to serve and must take a more active role as an enterprise in engaging youth, such as in the example given by the former Defense Secretary. Enacting this new behavior requires the Army to challenge its attitudes and beliefs and develop new values, norms, and traditions throughout its organizational culture.⁷ From its visible and most accessible manifestations of culture, its artifacts such as separate organizations and careers, to its unobservable and deepest layers of underlying assumptions and norms and values,⁸ the Army's use of dedicated resources has resulted in an institution-wide culture that views marketing and recruiting as functions separate from warfighting, training, sustaining, and all other unit activities.

To adopt a marketing orientation while maintaining its warfighting edge, Army culture should adopt norms and values that focus all of its activities at two distinct groups of stakeholders⁹ – a nation of citizens who depend on their Army to deter and defeat aggression, and fight and win their nation's wars; and a nation of future Army prospects, influencers, and advocates. For an Army accustomed to focusing on the former, shifting to include such a prominent marketing orientation would require the involvement, dedication, and complete commitment of the entire organization.¹⁰

Change begins with the Army expecting the entire institution to actively participate in all of its marketing efforts. It continues with the organization's collective energies to exhibit the "strength of the nation,"¹¹ and connect the Army to its nation's citizenry in pioneering and cost-effective ways. Finally, the Army should eye far beyond itself, and leverage perhaps the most important driver towards raising the propensity to

serve, our “nation of advocates”¹² – our nation’s citizens, our communities, and even the private sector. In other words, *it will take a village to market the Army*.

How the Army Currently Markets Itself

The Army defines the organizational function of marketing as “a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders.”¹³ Drawing from Narver, Slater, and Tietje (1998) and Deshpande and Webster (1989), marketing culture is the “values, norms, means and behavior, which characterizes the individuality of the organization” and its commitment “to the continuous creation of superior value for customers.”¹⁴ This definition of marketing culture applies to the entire organization, who may (as the Army has) or may not choose to separate marketing efforts from all other activities. Marketing stands for much more than branding, slogans, and advertising; it encompasses an organization’s comprehensive commitment to maintain its identity and ensure its survival. The Army does the former, but less so the latter.

Army recruiting stands for a great deal more than a human resource action of engaging, encouraging, and selecting suitable candidates for filling its ranks. Certain aspects of recruiting are inseparably connected to the communicative side of marketing. Meeting the tenets of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command’s (2010) strategic plan of building “independent yet interconnected relationships with families and communities across the nation”¹⁵ and cultivating these interpersonal connections to foster a supportive environment for considering the Army as a career choice, requires effective communication of the Army’s superior value. A distinct Army niche, the recruiting force and more specifically, Army Recruiting Command, has primarily held these

responsibilities since the advent of the all-volunteer force. However, long-term fiscal austerity means that Recruiting Command may be insufficiently resourced to meet the requirements of its own strategic plan.

For the Army, considering a drastic reduction in its advertising budget presents an intractable culture problem in its own right. Transforming to an organizational marketing culture requires fundamental deviations in the Army's underlying assumptions about the importance of such activities among the operational force. Understanding the nature, character, and characteristics of the current marketing environment for considering military service provides insight to the importance of the Army's dramatic shift in its conventions.

The Marketing Environment

Compounding the effects of the decreasing national propensity for volunteering to serve, current trends and perceptions suggest that the Army is losing against the other services. When compared to the other Department of Defense (DoD) branches of military service for more than a decade, Americans consistently viewed the Army as "ordinary, average, and dangerous."¹⁶ Since 2004, the Army's steady loss of parity with respect to other DoD services in obtaining the highest quality enlisted recruits seems to confirm these perceptions.¹⁷ Critics of the creation of the all-volunteer force predicted that a "market paradigm" would erode the legitimacy and effectiveness of the military as a fighting force.¹⁸ While this conclusion has yet to and will doubtfully ever materialize,¹⁹ the market pattern exacerbated competition amongst the services for the most qualified candidates. Unless the Army can change current perceptions, it may continue to struggle against the other services for the best recruits and be seen as the "choice of last resort."²⁰

Changing perceptions may occur best through personal contact, which serves as the foundation of the Army's marketing culture. When contemplating future career decisions, "having at least one conversation" with a key mentor about military service dramatically increases propensity to serve.²¹ However, the proposed significant reductions to personnel strength over the next five years²² may likely carry commensurate decreases to the size of the recruiting force, thereby adversely affecting the Army's capability to connect with the public on a personal level.

While personal contact matters, a key difference between successful and unsuccessful recruiting is also financial in nature. Massive budget cuts could limit the degree to which the Army may offer fiscal incentives to attract potential candidates. Complicating matters further, the Army is considering options that may cut a significant percentage of its entire advertising budget,²³ the third critically important lever for Army marketing. The convergence of the declining power of these three levers, recruiting strength, incentives, and advertising budget, against an anticipated decrease in the unemployment rate, a key driver for recruiting if it remains above six percent, poses significant risk to the Army's traditional marketing efforts.²⁴

This potential risk indicates that the Army's marketing culture is already misaligned with the environment. Against daunting fiscal challenges, personal contact emerges as the most consistent lever. Without Army organization culture change that emphasizes the importance of increasing personal connections to change misperceptions and generate positive impressions, the Army risks any unfavorable views becoming *lasting* ones. Therefore, the first step in its massive cultural shift

towards adopting an enterprise-wide marketing-oriented outlook may require dramatic changes to underlying assumptions deeply rooted within the Army's psyche.

Underlying Assumptions

The Army's existing marketing culture stems from three fundamental underlying assumptions that are worth reviewing. First, the Army sees marketing as a collateral duty, not one of its core functions, and therefore does not view marketing activities as a priority for the rank and file. Second, the Army's preference for complete control over its marketing activities makes it reticent to outsource them; it desires to accomplish the marketing function primarily on its own. Finally, the Army assumes that it must be in complete control of its brand. I will explore each of these assumptions to show how they manifest themselves in the norms of the Army's marketing culture and why they must be challenged.

Marketing as a Collateral Duty, Not a Core Function

The responsibility for promoting Army service as a career of choice for America's youth²⁵ exists within a small and segregated niche group of accessions organizations. These include the Army Marketing and Research Group, Recruiting Command, Cadet Command, and the Accessions Support Brigade. Physical locations of many of their subordinate units further contribute to the segregation. For example, while five of the six recruiting brigade headquarters operate from major Army installations, the majority of their battalion headquarters exist amongst cities far from bases or on smaller bases, arsenals, and depots. Similarly, the eight Cadet Command brigade headquarters stand on military installations, with their subordinate elements operating in more than 1,400 colleges and universities.²⁶ These accessions units therefore tend to have little routine interface with either training or field units.

Accordingly, the Army's operating and generating forces possess little to no practical experience in marketing the options, opportunities, and benefits of Army service. While units engage with their host communities, socially or otherwise, their activities rarely constitute or show the desire to conduct marketing. Therefore, in a manner similar to which Americans tend to view military service, many within the Army see communicating its superior value as also, "something for other people to do."²⁷ Ironically, any potential reduction in the recruiting force leaves no "other people" to market the Army, which might lead to a burden shift onto the rank and file.

The Army's ability to perpetually fill its all-volunteer force for nearly four decades, including the longest period of sustained conflict in its history, lends itself to the notion that the rest of the Army may take marketing activities for granted. However, the Army's failure to meet accessions goals of 1998, 1999, and 2005²⁸ serves as a reminder of their importance. Recovering from these shortfalls forced the unplanned adjustment of recruiting levers with unprogrammed resources,²⁹ which adversely affected other items in the budget. Scanning the marketing environment requires continuous effort and cognizance of the ability to contend with it.

Marketing on Its Own

Army marketing force mottos such as the former Accessions Command's, "From First Handshake to First Unit Assigned,"³⁰ Recruiting Command's, "America's Army Starts Here,"³¹ and the Accessions Support Brigade's, "Connecting America's People to America's Army,"³² signify the importance that these commands place on personal connections. These artifacts demonstrate the Army's self-view of the depth of its roots and trust with its nation's citizens, which are both very important matters of Army belief.³³ The Army believes that, "People around the world recognize the American

Soldier as a symbol of the United States just as they do the White House or the Washington Monument.”³⁴ The Army describes its uniform’s meaning to Soldiers as, “They have become part of something far bigger than themselves, a chance to serve their country and to change the world.”³⁵ Therefore, inspiring these same motivations and sentiments in prospective candidates through direct interaction with Soldiers makes prudent marketing sense.

These notions show the distinctive and esteemed manner that the Army views its Soldiers and its relationship with the nation’s citizens. Contrastingly, the Navy and the Air Force marketing campaigns emphasize different messages, particularly in relation to their strong affinities for their platforms, technology,³⁶ and activities. Under an environment of adequate resources, the Army has been able to use this service cultural mismatch to avoid joint marketing and instead, prefer to compete with the other services.

The Army Must Be in Control

Army policy prohibits any endorsement or the appearance of endorsement to any commercial firm or product.³⁷ This standard manifests itself in the Army’s tight controls over its marketing activities. While policy governs Army behavior, principles of marketing shape it as well.

In marketing, the brand should aspire to represent and convey the distinctive identity associated with the product, organization, or symbol.³⁸ The Army Marketing and Research Group defines a brand as, “a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme.”³⁹ A brand represents a promise,⁴⁰ it elicits a visceral response.⁴¹ To the Army, its brand embodies its product, the reputation of value for its

experience,⁴² through its symbol of the Army star, messages, and images conveyed through advertising. The Army brand aspires to be exclusively identified with “strength.”⁴³ Gaining “strength for lifetime success”⁴⁴ and inspiring strength in others represent the distinct benefits, or value proposition,⁴⁵ it promises. Accordingly, for its brand to maintain this distinguishable value, the Army carefully manages it.

The Army Marketing and Research Group (2012) recommended several control measures for the Army’s brand to senior Army leaders. It advised guarding against any dilution, substitution, and alteration of the brand; building of brand equity through branding “one Army with one brand;” and emphasizing consistent branding and messaging from every platform.⁴⁶ These recommendations demonstrate the Army’s discomfort with the prospect of loaning its brand to others; however, long-term fiscal austerity might warrant doing so. Tight controls, when combined with diminishing resources, risk the Army falling behind in staying connected with America’s youth.

Embracing a Different Marketing Culture

With the current marketing environment no longer able to support sustaining the cultural status quo, the Army should embrace a different marketing culture with new underlying assumptions, norms, and values.⁴⁷ Reinforcing the resulting shared norms and values might encourage innovative activities and behavior that would manifest itself in the Army’s creation of new artifacts.⁴⁸ It might also promote the use of existing visible symbols of Army culture in pioneering ways. The foundation of the proposed marketing culture comprises three different underlying assumptions, explained below.

Marketing as a Core Function

Army strategic direction, shaped by US law, DoD policy, and the nature of landpower, drives the Army’s mission,⁴⁹ roles, and core functions. Therefore, at its

organizational culture perspective, the Army views landpower as its product. However, a marketing culture perspective would also perceive the Army's product to be its *experience*.⁵⁰ To adopt the assumption of marketing's fundamental role requires the use of embedding mechanisms, which "emplace assumptions in an organization."⁵¹ Some example mechanisms offered by Gerras, Allen, and Wong show promise. Three cost-effective embedding mechanisms proposed here are leader use of role-modeling, personnel policies, and allocation of rewards and status.⁵²

Role-Modeling

Role-modeling represents leader actions that visually signal to the organization the issues that leaders deem important. As an embedding mechanism, role-modeling may serve to instill a sense of transparency and openness to the public in the Army's consciousness. This mindset would lead to encouraging greater degrees of access to the visible aspects of its culture, its installations, customs and traditions, and personnel. Ultimately, openly communicating the Army's uniqueness and value could, "allow Americans to become familiar with their Army once again."⁵³ However, increasing the public's understanding, confidence, and appreciation of value of the Army and its lifestyle, while simultaneously eroding false perceptions of it,⁵⁴ requires unity of effort.

Senior leaders Army-wide should place consistent emphasis on the importance of Army marketing as a norm and the shared responsibility of all in support of this effort. The Army's strategic guidance should convey marketing's position as a central competency. Marketing the Army should occur through a comprehensive total force marketing effort, in which its people recognize its importance and employ innovative displays of artifacts – the Army's unique traditions, customs, and symbols. These public

displays of the Army's artifacts through personal associations play an important role in generating positive Army impressions.

Unveiling the layers of mystique and unknowns of Army service should become the norm. It may transpire through the example set by 2nd Ranger Battalion as it emerged from secrecy to openly conduct a valorous award ceremony in the Tacoma Dome in Washington State, which provided the public with a rare opportunity to become familiar with their heroic neighbors inside the fence of the installation.⁵⁵ It may happen through Fort Benning's collaborative efforts to showcase the Army through impressive capability demonstrations in conjunction with a pioneering Army marketing event created by the Army Marksmanship Unit for national-level youth and collegiate shooting sports, such as the "Army Strong Experience" and "Army Strong Collegiate Shooting Championships."⁵⁶ It may also occur with Soldiers of all ranks proudly wearing their Army service uniforms while travelling on domestic flights.

Should these individual examples become the Army norm, the effects of role-modeling might be that America's youth become more likely to visualize themselves as Soldiers. Generally, this visualization should occur by the age of 13; however, any conversation with Army recruiters about becoming one occurs at the age of 17 or older.⁵⁷ Therefore, creating opportunities that promote early visualization becomes increasingly important.

To become norms, embedding the assumption of marketing's core function should be top-driven. Senior leader emphasis on the importance of personal contact and encouragement of commanders to engage and develop relationships with their local communities⁵⁸ may initiate this trend. The Army as an institution should view its

entire force as a cost-effective marketing capability. Although this effort places added burden on the force, the institution can help with additional embedding mechanisms such as instituting new personnel policies and rewards and status.

Personnel Policies

Establishing career enhancing personnel policies through embedding mechanisms associated with marketing activities could aid in changing opinions, instituting norms, and creating artifacts that would collectively enhance the Army's ability to promote its superior value as a career choice. As a norm, the Army should recognize the important, professionally developing, and career enhancing nature of the Army's marketing function. Therefore, it should consider creating and awarding a skill identifier (SI) for officers and an additional skill identifier (ASI) for warrant officers and enlisted personnel for such activities. SIs and ASIs would be awarded by the Department of the Army, based on recommendations of commanders and an individual's successful completion of practical work experience and appropriate training⁵⁹ in marketing activities.

Of the 504 total SIs and ASIs for all personnel,⁶⁰ the absence of one to recognize marketing experience stands out as an artifact. The officer SI for recruiting officer and the enlisted military occupational specialty for recruiters account for recruiting duty and training. However, these artifacts exclude marketing experience gained while serving in applicable assignments outside of Recruiting Command, such as the Army Marketing and Research Group, Cadet Command, the Accessions Support Brigade, and the recently disestablished Accessions Command. Further, the current artifacts in place do not represent other efforts throughout the Army that may qualify, nor do they provide sufficient motivation for Army-wide embracement of the marketing function.

The Army's promotion and command selection board processes might also serve to embed assumptions of marketing's importance. Adopting a command selection policy similar to that of US Marine Corps, which considers selection for command in recruiting as a unique distinction for one of its most demanding missions,⁶¹ might serve to instill a notion of equal preference for all types of commands. Correspondingly, promotion and selection board guidance should direct board members to equally consider operational and institutional unit assignments.

Rewards and Status

The Army links much of its allocation of rewards and status to its personnel actions. Therefore, institutionalizing the above personnel policies and other actions should bring commensurate emphasis on the importance of considering marketing as a core function. For example, implementing the award of SIs and ASIs should convey status and be required for promotion of general officers and sergeants major.

In a manner similar to the implementation of joint officer management through the joint qualification system,⁶² the Army should establish similar qualification criteria to uphold career progression that recognizes marketing's significance. This line of thinking includes ensuring that officers serving as general officers and noncommissioned officers serving as sergeants major have the requisite experience and training to be highly proficient in communicating the Army's superior value to its nation's citizens. This mechanism also aims to prevent the Army's operational focus from allowing its leaders and personnel to lose sight of their roles of sustaining an all-volunteer force in a democracy.⁶³ The Army should also consider marketing experiences retroactively and award constructive credit for marketing experiences.

Emphasis on the importance of marketing activities might also be embedded through mandatory comments in evaluation reports and consideration for promotion and schooling.⁶⁴ Gerras, Wong, and Allen assert that the power of these mechanisms “cannot be overstated.”⁶⁵ For instance, successful completion of recruiting command in the Marine Corps results in follow-on attendance at highly-selective professional military schools without being subjected to a school selection board.⁶⁶

Marketing By, With, and Through Others

When contemplating a life-changing decision such as joining the Army, the “first handshake” might not necessarily come from a Soldier. When making significant choices, prospects often look to the advice of their most trusted mentors.⁶⁷ These influencers include a network of parents, teachers, guidance counselors and other role models.⁶⁸ Within the majority of these circles of trust, very few have individuals with military experience. As time passes, the number of these circles containing anyone with military service will continue to decline.⁶⁹ For example, in 1988, only 40 percent of 18-year-olds had a parent who served.⁷⁰ Over a decade later, in 2000, that percentage dropped by more than half to 18 percent with a veteran parent.⁷¹ With fewer influencers possessing credible knowledge about the realities of Army service, the likelihood of fueling misperceptions may increase.⁷²

To contend with this challenge, Accessions Command launched a concerted effort in 2007 to increase its outreach to the trusted influencers, whom the Army refers to as centers of influence (COIs), of potential prospects.⁷³ Coined the “Grassroots Outreach Program,” this initiative provided relevant and accurate information about Army service to community leaders to “foster a more favorable recruiting environment at the local level.”⁷⁴ After starting with a pilot program in the Dallas/Fort Worth market,

Accessions Command expanded the program, which includes 45 markets to date⁷⁵ and widely-shared best practices for outreach to both its marketing force and prospective COIs.⁷⁶

Through command emphasis, Accessions Command embedded an underlying assumption that communicating the value of Army service may be accomplished through civilian influencers, rather than limiting this activity to recruiters. Its subordinate units adopted this practice and expanded their reach to candidates, which reinforced the importance of working by, with, and through COIs. In partnership with the Army, COIs across America further expanded the Army's marketing network. They established advisory forums, referred to as either grassroots or community advisory boards or, in some cases, civilian advisory councils.⁷⁷

These convening bodies emerged as visible manifestations of an Army marketing culture. COIs know their communities, influence others, and understand the challenges in the Army's marketing environment.⁷⁸ Through mutually-beneficial relationships with them and their advisory boards, Army marketers gain additional access and reach to share their own unique Army stories; build deeper relationships with communities; and improve perceptions of the Army. For example, efforts to engage with educators led to the development of the "Partnership for All Students' Success" or PASS project, which teamed the Army, the National Association of State Boards of Education, and the Department of Education together to motivate students and reduce high school dropout rates.⁷⁹

The very nature of human relationships adds to the complexity of this endeavor. While the Army benefits from the connections with COIs, arguably it does not have

relationships with them, individuals within the Army do.⁸⁰ However, with partnerships with education programs such as PASS, there is no reason to believe that the Army cannot. These relationships would require cultivation and maintenance, which demands ensuring that they transcend personnel transitions such as permanent change of station moves or changes of command and responsibility. The creation of other partnerships could signal the full inculcation of marketing the Army through others as an Army norm.

The network-centric, grassroots community marketing strategy continues to expand, which offers enormous future potential for Army marketing, and may serve as a new Army cultural norm. With merely five years of implementation, this approach has much more room to grow and should take deeper hold within the Army's marketing force. Based on indicators of potential, the Army should consider implementing this program across the institution.

Adopting a marketing culture requires Army-wide commitment and involvement. Terms such as COI, grassroots and community advisory boards, and civilian advisory council should become part of Army-wide vernacular and artifacts. This process starts with adjusting professional military education curricula at all levels by incorporating elements of the program of instruction from the Army's Recruiting and Retention School and Recruiting Pre-Command Course. It continues through Army-wide implementation of public speaking and engagement programs as graduation requirements, similar to that of the Army War College. These steps should reinforce the norms and assumptions while serving as part of the marketing certification process for SIs and ASIs. Culture change continues with grassroots efforts from the field.

With broader Army involvement, indicators of success might be the formation of more community advisory boards to include ones that are affiliated with units and installations, not solely recruiting units. Additional signs might include the creation of more media opportunities with increased exposure to relevant and accurate information about the Army, increased participation in the Hometown Recruiter program, and more views of the Army's website. Most importantly, success should bring closer working relationships between recruiting units and the rest of the Army.

Gallup polls show that the level of trust and confidence remains as high as it ever has been⁸¹ and the Army should capitalize on it. Doing so requires dramatic change to the broader Army's introverted predisposition in order to become more extroverted, where it actively looks beyond the fences of its installations and builds mutually-beneficial relationships with its nation's citizens and communities. Private citizens may want to help, but may not know how to. An Army-wide effort might accelerate the expansion of an already growing network of pro-active citizens who are willing to advocate the superior value of the Army as a career choice. Capitalizing on the nation's trust also means considering the competitive marketing experience of the private sector and enlisting their help to endorse Army service as a cause.

Willingness to Cede a Degree of Control

In the face of long-term fiscal austerity, the Army might reconsider its policy of total control of its brand and embrace a third bold and daring underlying assumption. This notion calls for its willingness to cede a degree of control in order to "get more in return."⁸² To compensate for any potential shortfalls in advertising capability, ceding a degree of control could entail the Army's willingness to loan its brand in prudent ways to carefully selected private sector partners. This transfer would generate greater

marketing power and allow others to establish their identities with the Army to increasing degrees.

An affiliation between the Army and trusted, recognized, and reputable private sector allies intends to create marketing power through cause marketing of the value and nobility of Army service, not endorsement for business purposes. This relationship completely differs from corporate membership programs, such as those under the Association of the United States Army (AUSA). AUSA's corporate membership program provides local businesses, large corporations, and civic and community groups and societies with incentives to strengthen their own business prospects through demonstrating support to the Army.⁸³ AUSA's incentives to companies include offers of low cost advertising and increasing visibility in the military market.⁸⁴

Unlike corporate membership, the Army's loaning of its brand to private sector supporters willing to publicly campaign for the national cause of Army service, offers opportunities for good corporate citizenship through increasing "community goodwill" and "corporate respect."⁸⁵ Therefore, the prospect of performing an important public service, in support of the vital national interest of maintaining the all-volunteer force, provides the motivation for the private sector. To be perceived as credible endorsement marketing, there would be no costs⁸⁶ to the Army associated with this effort, nor would the Army reciprocate with cobranding in its own advertising. While federal law, DoD, and Army policies prohibit the Army from endorsing non-federal entities, they do not prohibit the private sector from communicating the superior value of Army service. However, careful consideration must still be given to any potential adverse effects that

private sector endorsement or cause marketing may have on the brand and any perceived divergence from the Army core values.

Growing cause-related marketing efforts for hiring military veterans already provide military and the private sector connections that Army marketing efforts may benefit from. For example, many private sector programs actively recruit former service members in order to bring distinct values, military skills and experience, and leadership talent of these veterans to their respective organizations. To galvanize this effort, legislation through the 2011 *Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act* encourages the creation of post-service employment opportunities through offering monetary incentives to those companies that hire veterans.⁸⁷ For the Army, by changing its underlying assumptions regarding affiliations with the private sector, it can take these veteran employment initiatives one step further and create a revolutionary unified marketing campaign with the private sector for attracting potential recruits.

In this regard, Army has already taken steps towards private sector partnership through marketing post-service job opportunities as enlistment incentives under its “Partnership for Youth Success” (PaYS) program. After serving, PaYS guarantees potential recruits, who volunteered under this program, an interview and priority consideration with a business community PaYS partner of their choice.⁸⁸ In 2000, the Army launched its PaYS program⁸⁹ with six partner companies.⁹⁰ With this program’s exponential growth to 400 PaYS partners,⁹¹ backed by the intent of the *VOW to Hire Heroes Act*, and substantiated by the recruiting practices of numerous private sector organizations, opportunities emerge for conducting collaborative, mutually beneficial, and cost-effective Army marketing to unprecedented levels.

The Accessions Command's Commanding General recognized the marketing potential unique to the Army's PaYS program. Through emphasizing the importance of encouraging PaYS partners to also become COIs,⁹² this senior Army leader embedded the notion that PaYS could be taken even one step further. Specifically, PaYs provides a private sector vehicle for promoting the value of Army service to prospects. For private sector programs in which hiring veterans serves as the cause, following an example set by PaYS enables the cause to become filling the ranks of the all-volunteer force. This mindset provides occasion for more private sector participation, public service, and elevation of their image.

Unlike distinct Army capabilities required for producing landpower, achieving marketing power does not uniquely belong to the Army or other branches of service. On the contrary, the Army faces many challenges similar to business, such as recruiting and retaining the most qualified people.⁹³ This circumstance provides opportunity for the Army to learn and integrate capabilities from the private sector to better enable it to accomplish a core marketing function in a complementary effort with the nation it serves.

Before proceeding, the Army must identify private sector partners who exemplify a shared set of values, beliefs, and norms. They must also possess a strong and trusted reputation within America. Correspondingly, the potential partner must feel that assisting the Army aligns with its own mission, values, and philosophy.⁹⁴ It must also be willing to formally agree to publicly advocate for the superior value of Army service.

Public advocacy for Army service offers additional potential benefits to the private sector. It stands out as a "socially responsible business practice."⁹⁵ Open and visible

support to a trusted organization with a strong reputation such as the all-volunteer Army may also increase the pride that individuals have in their business.⁹⁶

If the Army becomes willing to loan its brand and message, it stands to gain as well. Through cooperation, the Army may achieve increased market presence accompanied by strengthened brand and brand statement⁹⁷ positioning. These effects help gain heightened awareness of the Army as a prominent career choice.

After serving, Army personnel inevitably return to the nation's communities and the private sector. This reality enables these veterans to convey and demonstrate that their service made them physically, mentally, and emotionally stronger. Their personification of the Army's promise, its brand, enables spreading the message to prospective candidates that "being a soldier strengthens you today and for the future."⁹⁸ This message may also be strengthened, but it will take a village – a network of Soldiers, veterans, communities, and even the private sector – to market the Army.

Conclusion

Maintaining the highest quality all-volunteer Army serves a vital national interest; therefore, systems should be in place for it to become a national effort. The first step in creating this vision should start with the Army's earnest reflection. Embracing an enterprise-wide marketing culture would not sacrifice its ability to meet its landpower obligations to the nation. This organizational culture transformation would require the use of leader-driven internal embedding mechanisms such as role-modeling, personnel policies, and rewards and status to change its deeply-rooted underlying assumptions pertaining to marketing. It continues with the expansion of its network-centric, grassroots community marketing strategy with the goal of adopting this effort Army-wide. Finally, the Army's willingness to loan its brand in prudent ways to carefully

selected private sector partners might generate greater marketing power through revolutionary unified Army marketing campaigns.

This effort would spark a new marketing approach amongst the total force, willing advocates amongst our citizens, and Army veterans in prominent positions in the public and private sector. Achieving unity of effort would enhance the overall effectiveness of the Army's marketing activities. More importantly, it would enable this core function to withstand future fiscal uncertainties.

As a volunteer, mission-focused, and values-based organization, entrusted with the responsibility to perform the nation's most important missions in support of its vital interests, the Army finds itself well-suited to maintain the trust of its nation's individual citizens. In turn, this trust provides opportunity for marketing Army service as a groundbreaking cohesive effort between the Army, the public, and the private sector. Collectively, this powerful team could convey a strong message in encouraging those contemplating Army service that, "We want YOU to be a soldier today; OUR future will be better for it."

Endnotes

¹ Robert M. Gates, "Remarks by Secretary Gates at Duke University, North Carolina," September 29, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4691>, (accessed November 3, 2012).

² U.S. Department of Defense, "July 2012 Youth Poll Executive Summary," *Joint Advertising Market and Research Studies*. http://dmren.org/static/document_library/2012-10-16/July%202012%20Propensity%20Monthly%20Update%20FINAL.pdf (accessed October 29, 2012), 1.

³ Bernard Rotsker, *I Want You!: The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Arlington, VA: RAND, 2006), 753.

⁴ Gates, "Remarks by Secretary Gates."

⁵ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Army Marketing & Research Group (AMRG) Strategy Map," briefing slides, Alexandria, VA, U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, November 14, 2012, 16.

⁶ COL John Keeter, Deputy Director, U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, interview by author, Alexandria, VA, October 16, 2012. COL Keeter discussed the three levers of Army marketing (advertising budget, recruiting strength, and incentives) and the primary driver for recruiting (unemployment rate).

⁷ W. Warner Burke, "Organization Change: Epidemics, Integration, and Future Needs," in *Organization Change: Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 286.

⁸ Stephen J. Gerras, Leonard Wong, and Charles D. Allen, *Organizational Culture: Applying a Hybrid Model to the U.S. Army* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, November 2008), 5. I found the authors' use of the Edgar Schein organizational culture model to be a very helpful tool to approach Army cultural change. Schein asserts that artifacts, norms and values, and underlying assumptions comprise the three levels of culture.

⁹ Rohit Deshpande and Frederick Webster, "Organizational Culture and Marketing: Defining the Research Agenda," *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January 1989, <http://www.cnr.it/benessere-organizzativo/docs/bibliografia/137.pdf> (accessed December 5, 2012), 10. The authors stated that assessing an organizational culture's emphasis on customer satisfaction is one way to analyze marketing management.

¹⁰ David W. Cravens and Nigel F. Piercy, *Strategic Marketing*, 8th Edition (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2006), 3.

¹¹ "Strength of the Nation," <http://www.army.mil/strength/> (accessed November 5, 2012).

¹² McCann Worldgroup, "A Nation of Advocates: Maintaining Momentum with COI Outreach," briefing slides, New York, NY, McCann Worldgroup, June 14, 2012, 1. I found the words in McCann Worldgroup's title phrase to be the very appropriate here.

¹³ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno, U.S. Army Chief of Staff," briefing slides, Alexandria, VA, U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, September 13, 2012, 26.

¹⁴ John C. Narver, Stanley F. Slater and Brian Tietje, "Creating a Market Orientation," *Journal of Market Focused Management*, Vol. 2, Issue 3, September 1, 1998, http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/mkt_fac/11/ (accessed December 5, 2012), 2. The authors viewed "marketing culture" and "market orientation" as synonymous and defined market orientation as, "a business culture in which all employees are committed to the continuous creation of superior value for customers." Deshpande and Webster defined marketing culture as, "a component of organizational culture, comprised of a set of the dominant values, norms, means and behavior, which characterizes the individuality of the organization though it's interaction with market actors." I found both definitions useful and combined them into a new definition.

¹⁵ Headquarters, U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), "USAREC Strategic Plan Update," (Fort Knox, KY: USAREC, G5 Strategic Management Directorate, March 31, 2010), 8.

¹⁶ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno," 10. The GfK Custom Research North America study for the Army in April 2008 entitled, the "US Military Image Study", led to this conclusion. GfK Custom Research conducted similar earlier studies in 2000 and 2004.

¹⁷ Ibid. A data comparison of the percentage of enlisted recruits possessing the highest Armed Forces Qualification Test scores across DoD led to this conclusion.

¹⁸ Rotsker, iii.

¹⁹ Ibid., 332. One theory, the institution-occupation thesis of Charles Moskos, posed that the all-volunteer nature of the military would shift it from being an institution to an occupation. The consequence of which would be that, "the all-volunteer force could not be counted on to fight on." Rostker asserted that after thirty years, "what has come to pass as a direct result of the all-volunteer force is the professionalization of the military, an increase in 'commitment' of service by men and women, as has been demonstrated by their sterling performance on battlefields worldwide."

²⁰ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno," 10.

²¹ U.S. Department of Defense, "Conversations and Their Effect on Propensity" (Washington, D.C.: Joint Advertising Market and Research Studies, July 2012), 1.

²² Walter T. Ham, "Human Resources Command Commander Discusses Army Personnel Policies," November 28, 2012, <http://www.army.mil/article/91912> (accessed December 10, 2012).

²³ Mark Davis, Director, U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, interview by author, Alexandria, VA, October 16, 2012.

²⁴ Keeter, interview.

²⁵ U.S. Army Accessions Command, "FY12 Campaign Plan Mission Analysis," briefing slides, Fort Knox, KY, U.S. Army Accessions Command, March 21, 2011, 5.

²⁶ U.S. Army Cadet Command, "U.S. Army Cadet Command: The Official Home of Army ROTC," <http://www.cadetcommand.army.mil/> (accessed January 10, 2013).

²⁷ MG Donald M. Campbell, *2010 U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) Strategic Plan Update* (Fort Knox, KY: HQ, USAREC, March 31, 2010), 8. MG Campbell's, former Commanding General, USAREC, vision for USAREC identified a primary goal for the command that an assignment within it must be viewed "as a desirable place to serve" and that "it is a career enhancing assignment." Based on his statement, "The Army shouldn't feel like they are detailed to serve in USAREC, but are selected after submitting a request to serve," I felt applying Former Secretary Gates' quote to this situation seemed fitting.

²⁸ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Army Marketing & Research Group (AMRG) Strategy Map," briefing slides, Alexandria, VA, U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, November 14, 2012, 16.

²⁹ Ibid., 17.

³⁰ U.S. Army Accessions Command, "About Us," <http://www.usaac.army.mil/aboutus.html> (accessed December 20, 2012).

³¹ U.S. Army Recruiting Command, "About Us," <http://www.usarec.army.mil/aboutus.html> (accessed December 20, 2012).

³² U.S. Army Accessions Support Brigade, "U.S. Army Accessions Support Brigade (USAASB) Overview Brief," briefing slides, Fort Knox, KY, U.S. Army Accessions Support Brigade, July 23, 2011, linked from the U.S. Army Accessions Support Brigade Home Page at <http://www.usarec.army.mil/asb/index.html> (accessed December 20, 2012), 1.

³³ Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 20.

³⁴ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *ADP 1: The Army* (Washington, D.C.: September 17, 2012), vi.

³⁵ Ibid., v.

³⁶ Builder, 18-19.

³⁷ Headquarters, Department of the Army, "Recruiting/Reenlistment Advertising Program," *Army Regulation 601-208* (Washington, D.C.: May 15, 1983), 2.

³⁸ Cravens and Piercy, 272.

³⁹ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno," 26.

⁴⁰ Jeff Sterling, Civilian Brand Manager, Army Marketing and Research Group, interview by author, Alexandria, VA, October 16, 2012.

⁴¹ Davis, interview.

⁴² U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno," 26.

⁴³ Sterling, interview.

⁴⁴ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Army Positioning," briefing slide, Alexandria, VA, U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, no date. The Army brand statement promises, "Strength for lifetime success; the edge you need to achieve your goals; serve your community and country as a citizen soldier; inspire strength in those you lead, the nation, and your generation."

⁴⁵ Cravens and Piercy, 278.

⁴⁶ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno," 13, 16.

⁴⁷ Gerras, Wong, and Allen, 5. Schein asserts, "norms are closely associated with values and are the unwritten rules that allow members of a culture to know what is expected of them in a wide variety of situations."

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *ADP 1*, 1-1.

⁵⁰ Sterling, interview.

⁵¹ Gerras, Wong, and Allen, 17.

⁵² Ibid., 18-19.

⁵³ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno," 12.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ David Poe, "Army Rangers hold Rare Public Ceremony to Celebrate Service, Sacrifice," *Northwest Guardian*, <http://www.army.mil/article/79824/> (accessed December 13, 2012).

⁵⁶ Lt. Col. Daniel C. Hodne, "USAMU Hosts Army Strong Experience," *Recruiter Journal* (Fort Knox, KY: U.S. Army Recruiting Command Public Affairs, August-September 2011), 20.

⁵⁷ Davis, interview.

⁵⁸ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, "Update for GEN Raymond T. Odierno," 16.

⁵⁹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, "Military Occupational Specialty Structure Development and Implementation," *Army Regulation 611-1* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, September 30, 1997), 17. This language is consistent with this regulation.

⁶⁰ Headquarters, Department of the Army, "Smartbook DA Pam 611-21," <https://smartbook.armyg1.pentagon.mil/DA%20PAM%2061121/Forms/AllItems.aspx> (accessed December 15, 2012). This number reflects the SIs and ASIs listed on the Officer, Warrant Officer, and Enlisted spreadsheets, not including those that have been rescinded.

⁶¹ Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, "Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) Recruiting Station Commanding Officer (RSCO) Selection Board Announcement," <http://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/MessagesDisplay/tabid/13286/Article/110520/fiscal-year-2013-fy13-recruiting-station-commanding-officer-rsco-selection-boar.aspx> (accessed December 14, 2013).

⁶² Office of the Secretary of Defense, "DoD Joint Qualification System Implementation Plan," (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, March 30 2007), 1. I chose to use language that was consistent with an actual personnel policy implementation plan.

⁶³ Davis, interview.

⁶⁴ Gerras, Wong, and Allen, 18-19.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁶ Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, "Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) Recruiting Station Commanding Officer (RSCO) Selection Board Announcement."

⁶⁷ McCann WorldGroup. "A Nation of Advocates: Briefing Army Leadership," information paper, New York, NY, McCann Worldgroup, no date, 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁹ Gates, "Remarks by Secretary Gates."

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² McCann WorldGroup. "A Nation of Advocates: Briefing Army Leadership," 2.

⁷³ John Myers, Director of Marketing, U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, e-mail message to author, October 13, 2012.

⁷⁴ McCann Worldgroup, "Grassroots Outreach: The Foundation of Local COI Outreach," briefing slides, New York, NY, McCann Worldgroup, March 1, 2012, 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Myers, email. The Army Advertising Agency created a web-based tool called, "The U.S. Army Grassroots Community Relations Playbook," which may be found at www.armygrassrootsplaybook.com. It also launched a website for COIs at www.goarmyadvocates.com.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ McCann Worldgroup, "A Nation of Advocates: Maintaining Momentum with COI Outreach," 20.

⁸⁰ Davis, interview.

⁸¹ Gallup, "Confidence in Institutions," <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx> (accessed October 27, 2012). When asked the question by Gallup, "Now I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one -- a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?," Americans respond that they have the most confidence in the military.

⁸² Bob Johansen, "Environmental Scanning for External Future Forces," lecture, U.S. Army War College, October 3, 2012, cited with permission from Dr. Johansen. Dr. Johansen

described this concept as reciprocity-based innovation and defined it as, “giving things away in intelligent ways, in the faith that you will get more in return.”

⁸³ Association of the United States Army, “Corporate Membership,” <http://www.ausa.org/membership/corporate/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed December 20, 2012).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee, *Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the Most Good for Your Company and Your Cause* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 211.

⁸⁶ Andy Sernovitz, *Word of Mouth Marketing: How Smart Companies Get People Talking* (Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2012), 34.

⁸⁷ House Committee on Veteran’s Affairs, “VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011,” <http://veterans.house.gov/vow> (accessed December 18, 2012)

⁸⁸ Headquarters, Department of the Army, “MyArmyBenefits,” [http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/Benefit_Library/Federal_Benefits_Page/Partnership_for_Youth_Success_\(PaYS\).html](http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil/Home/Benefit_Library/Federal_Benefits_Page/Partnership_for_Youth_Success_(PaYS).html) (accessed December 18, 2012).

⁸⁹ John Head, “Innovative Public-Private Partnerships: The United States Army and the Private Sector,” (New York, NY: The Conference Board, 2001), 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁹¹ Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, “Your Partners at PaYS,” *Recruiter Journal* (Fort Knox, KY: U.S. Army Recruiting Command Public Affairs, August-September 2011), 18.

⁹² Ibid., 18.

⁹³ Head, 4.

⁹⁴ Kotler and Lee, 239.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 209.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 218.

⁹⁷ U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group, “Army Positioning.” The Army positioning statement reads, “Being a soldier strengthens you today and for the future because the Army develops your potential through relevant and challenging training, shared values and personal experience. Soldiers consistently take pride in making a difference for themselves, their families and the nation.”

⁹⁸ Ibid.