

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE ARMY'S INCENTIVE PROGRAM FOR RECRUITERS

John W. O'Hara, Paul A. Gade, Timothy W. Elig,
Newell K. Eaton, and Allyn Hertzbach

US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences
Alexandria, Virginia 22333

Introduction

Increasing recruiter productivity through the use of incentives is a continuing concern of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command. The problem of increasing productivity becomes more crucial as the need for highly qualified recruits increases. Recruiters are now expected to recruit for quality as well as quantity. The specific purpose of this research effort was to assess the research needs and operational problems of the current U.S. Army recruiting incentive awards system.

The current recruiter incentive system can be divided into three components: performance measurement, consequences of performance, and management of the system. Recruiter performance is measured by how well a recruiter meets his or her "mission box" requirement. The mission box requirement is based on army needs for several categories of recruits with emphasis on quality. To satisfy mission box requirements, a recruiter must each month contract specified numbers of individuals in categories based on education, prior service status, gender, and performance on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. A variety of recognition awards are given to recruiters for successfully meeting mission box requirements and a variety of corrective actions may follow when recruiters fail to meet these requirements. The management of the current system is accomplished primarily at recruiting command headquarters.

Method

This research was part of a larger data collection effort conducted between August and October, 1981. Recruiters and station commanders were interviewed and surveyed to determine their knowledge of and attitudes about the current incentive awards program. Recruiter attitudes toward the current award system were examined as a function of gender, performance, satisfaction with recruiting, and recognition received from commanders. Recruiter and station commander suggestions concerning changes in performance measurement, consequences of performance (the awards), and system management were examined as well.

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Army Research Institute or the Department of the Army.

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Survey and Structured Interviews

The survey consisted of a paper and pencil questionnaire that solicited information about demographics, productivity, job satisfaction, personality characteristics, and job preferences. The structured interview covered several topics, one of these was recruiter incentives and motivation. The interview questions were essentially the same for recruiters and station commanders. These were open ended questions, with no restriction on the number of responses an individual could give. The interview responses were content analyzed to identify major categories of responses, and the frequency of responses in those categories reported.

Survey and Structured Interview Sample

Recruiters and station commanders were sampled equally from each of the 5 regional recruiting commands. The total sample included 53 station commanders and 103 recruiters.

The 50 stations were divided among 5 ARI interviewers for survey administration. Survey forms and interviews were completed in the recruiting stations during regular working hours. Interviews were conducted in a private location within the station. Participants were promised confidentiality.

Results

Are the Current Awards Effective?

Recruiter attitudes toward the current awards program were examined by asking: "Do the awards available to recruiters motivate you?" The percent of the sample of recruiters responding "yes" and "no" to the question is shown in Table 1 as a function of recruiter gender, productivity in terms of percent of objective achieved, job satisfaction, and certificates of appreciation received from high-level commanders.

Only 27 percent of the sample of females said that they were motivated by the awards compared to 52 percent of the sample of male recruiters, $\chi^2(1)=5.67$, $p=.017$. Clearly, female recruiters feel especially unmotivated by the awards available to recruiters. Since females were represented at a higher percent in the sample than in the actual recruiting force, the total sample was weighted for the proportion of male and female recruiters in the force. Weighted responses for all recruiters were 46.5 percent "yes," 46 percent "no," and 7.5 percent "no response."

Productivity in terms of percent of objective achieved in the last 6 months was supplied by recruiter self-reports on the questionnaire portion of the survey. The reported effectiveness of the awards was related to the productivity of recruiters, $\chi^2(2)=13.39$, $p=.001$. Recruiters who were below average in productivity said they were extremely unmotivated by the awards while those at exactly 100 percent said they were somewhat unmotivated.

High or low job interest was determined from responses to three questions on the questionnaire part of the survey. These questions dealt with job importance and job activities. Recruiters who showed high job interest said they were especially motivated by the awards available to them, $\chi^2(1)=13.82$, $p=.0002$. Also, recruiters who received certificates of appreciation or commendation from high-level commanders at an above average rate said they were especially motivated by the awards, $\chi^2(1)=8.93$, $p=.0028$.

The opinions of station commanders about the effectiveness of the awards system were also assessed. They were asked, "Do the awards available to recruiters motivate them?" Responses were 45 percent "yes," 38 percent "no," and 17 percent "no response."

Table 1

Percent of Recruiter Responses to:
 "Do the Awards Available to Recruiters Motivate You?"
 By Moderating Variables

	Percent (Frequency) Moderating Variable	
	Yes	No
Gender		
Male	52 (32)	48 (30)
Female	27 (9)	73 (25)
Percent of Objective Achieved		
Above 100	62 (25)	38 (15)
100	40 (10)	66 (15)
Below 100	19 (6)	81 (25)
Level of Job Interest		
High	59 (32)	41 (22)
Low	21 (9)	79 (33)
Number of Certificates Received per Year from a DRC or Higher Command		
High	58 (26)	42 (19)
Low	27 (12)	73 (33)

Note: Total N=103, but there were a few omissions in each section of the table.

In summary, the current award system is most likely to be perceived as a source of motivation for recruiters who are male, above average in

productivity and job interest and receive many certificates of appreciation or commendation. It is least likely to be perceived as a source of motivation for recruiters who are female, average to below average in production, below average in job interest, and receive few certificates of appreciation or commendation. The overall interest in the award system was not high.

What Other Incentives Might Be Used to Motivate Recruiters?

Many recruiters and station commanders listed a variety of potential incentives when they were asked: "What would motivate you to do even better in recruiting?" or "What motivates recruiters?" These potential incentives are shown in Table 2, listed by percent of recruiters giving the response. The frequencies in this table represent relative importance of responses. There appear to be several potential incentives beyond the recognition awards currently used that are meaningful to recruiters and might be used to motivate them.

Table 2

Potential Incentives Identified by Recruiters and Station Commanders

Incentive	Percentage of Recruiters	Percentage of Station Commanders
Awards	---	38
Better pay and benefits	24	15
Time off	23	15
Better opportunity for promotion	13	19
Choice of assignment	7	---
Personal approval and recognition	6	19
	a 64	a 60

a

Percents do not sum to the total because individuals could make more than one response. The total is less than 100 because other types of responses were also given.

How Can System Management and Performance Measurement be Improved?

Recruiters and station commanders were also asked "How can the award system be improved?" Many of the responses dealt with performance measurement and system management.

Recruiters preferred that performance measurement be based on total numbers put in the army rather than the mission box categories. There was concern with aspects of system fairness such as geographical area differences and the difficulty of earning awards. Other suggestions were that the reception of awards should be more prompt, that the system should be explained better, and that the system should not change so often.

Conclusions

While more evidence is needed before causal interpretations of these relationships are possible, some ideas are worth consideration. Low productivity recruiters might be more motivated by the awards if they had a better chance to get them. Recruiters and station commanders commented that the awards are too hard to get. Hamner and Hamner (1976) state that for rewards to work, people should have a chance to succeed. Of course the above must be balanced by the necessity to differentiate rewards based on performance (Hamner, 1974). Nadler and Lawler (1977) state that individuals have expectations that they can accomplish a level of performance and expectations of outcomes for that level of performance. Individuals would therefore have expectations concerning their chances of getting awards, and those with low expectations might lose their motivation for the awards.

That female recruiters were not as motivated by the awards as males might be further evidence for sex differences in job orientation as reported by Marhardt (1972) and Schuler (1975). These and other researchers have reported that females show greater interest in social aspects of a job while males show greater interest in career objectives of the job. These differences have been questioned by many investigators reporting no sex differences in job orientation such as Voydanoff (1980), but the issue is not yet settled. Awards might be an aspect of career objectives for recruiters, and therefore of greatest interest to males.

Receiving certificates of appreciation or commendation from high-level commanders correlated positively with being motivated by the awards. That certificates of appreciation or commendation used judiciously would motivate is consistent with recruiter and station commander comments that praise and personal recognition are a desired reward.

The direction of causation between job interest and motivation for the awards must be determined. It is not clear whether poor job interest is the cause or result of poor job performance. It is also not clear whether poor job interest is the cause or result of low interest in the current awards program.

The reward preferences expressed by Army recruiters (Table 2) are more similar to those of civilian sales forces than to those of other military personnel, manufacturing personnel, or public sector personnel (Spector, 1982). This suggests we can be more confident in using information from civilian sales incentive programs to develop hypotheses about recruiter incentives.

These survey results provide information concerning which recruiters are most in need of further incentives, and what changes in the incentives or the system of management are preferred by recruiters. The results will be used in the development of an improved incentive system for Army recruiters.

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