

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS DEPT OF VIRGINIA

RECRUITING HANDBOOK 2007-2008



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Preparing for a Recruiting Event

Let's face it upfront: "Recruiting" is a form of selling, and some people do not like selling anything. *However, recruiting new members can be painless and can actually be fun – if you prepare properly, practice and develop your recruiting skills.*

Step One: Know your "product" – our VFW. Know who we are, what we do, how we do it and what we can do for our prospective members. You begin by reading and learning as much as possible about the VFW: our history, our programs and our organization. Refer to the VFW Facts and Figures of this handbook. A good place to search is the Virginia and National VFW websites: www.vfwva.org and www.vfw.org. There is also a great deal of printed recruiting material available from State HQ in Staunton (1-800-888-3521). Check with them to obtain a supply.

It is not necessary for you to memorize the details of all the programs, etc... Just be aware of them and have easy access to materials that supply the details.

Step Two: Collect the materials needed to setup a recruiting event. For those Posts that really want to get involved with recruiting, there is a Recruiting Kit available from State HQ. This kit includes: a canopy, folding table, table cover, VFW banner for the table front, Posters, applications, handout brochures, etc... Everything you would need to set up for recruiting. Posts may also supply their own table and obtain the printed materials from State HQ or order their own recruiting kit from National. Don't forget to have information about your Post. When you sign up a new/reinstated member, have a card or information flyer with directions and Post meeting information. If you publish a newsletter, have copies of it to hand them.

Step Three: Training and practice. Once your Post has collected the various materials needed, you need to develop and practice your presentation to prospective members. It is recommended your Post request training from the State, for your recruiters. The state will send an experienced recruiter to your Post to conduct onsite training for the volunteer recruiters. This training will include plenty of role playing practice. We have found role playing to be the best way to develop recruiting skills and confidence in one's ability to recruit.

This training session would normally be held at the Post during the morning and then travel to a local recruiting site, such as a Wal-Mart or Food Lion, to do some actual recruiting. At the recruiting site, the State Rep would begin by demonstrating the greeting, the presentation and how to answer various objections to joining. Once the Post members feel confident, they would begin greeting prospective members themselves. The State Rep would observe and offer advice as may be needed.

(NOTE: Always ask both men and women if they look 40 or younger, many women have served!!! If the prospect is a younger Vet and is with his wife, ask her if

she was in the military. Many such couples met in the military. You might be able to sign up a “double.”)

You could also mention the Ladies Aux. if the wife is not a vet. You should have some Ladies applications with your recruiting kit. The Ladies Aux. should also have a member(s) at the recruiting event.)

District Commanders note: *This type of training should/will also be offered at District Meetings.*

Note: for the past 2-3 years State Recruiters have gone to local areas and recruited new members for Posts with very little, if any, involvement from the local Post. We are beginning to move away from this situation in that Posts must now become involved with their own recruiting efforts. In the future, Posts will become more directly responsible for maintaining their membership levels.

Before setting up a recruiting booth or table the following suggestions will help make it more successful. A plan should be established well in advance to insure you get the best results.

Selecting, Scheduling & Setting up the Recruiting Site

The next part is scheduling a recruiting event. This includes selecting a location, selecting the Post recruiters, setting up the recruiting table, etc...

Step One: Select and schedule a location. There are many, many locations and events that would be good recruiting events. Among the best is your local retail stores (Wal-Mart), restaurants (Golden Corral) and Food stores (Food Lion). Foot traffic is always good with many qualified prospects passing by. However, Wal-Marts are a very desirable location for other organizations, so you need to schedule as far in advance as possible – one or two months for some dates and locations. Remember, recruiting events that are going to be outside, should be scheduled when the weather is nice (spring, summer and fall). However, there have been very successful recruiting events in the winter (look for inside events).

Saturdays are the best days, as more working folks will be out and about. Sundays are next best, with Fridays third. You can call, **or better yet**, visit the location and speak to the person responsible for scheduling events in front of the location. Normal hours for recruiting would be 10AM to 2PM, longer, if you have the people to cover the hours.

Step Two: Actual location setup. If the store has more than one entrance, as most will, select the main door to set up. Most stores will require you to set up at least 15 feet from the entrance. Set up your table as near the main entrance as allowed. It is recommended there should be 2 or 3 recruiters present. Having only one person present

does not allow for relief. Also, if a single recruiter is filling out an application, another prospect will pass by un-greeted. Proper attire is important. Although Blue and Grays are not necessarily the uniform of the day; ball caps, shorts and sandals are certainly NOT appropriate. There are many interpretations of proper attire, and many variables which dictate appropriate dress. Use your judgment, but remember your appearance is a prospect's first look at the VFW. In all cases you should wear your dress VFW cap. More than three people at the table can be confusing and leads to "table talk" among the Post members. If several Post members are there to observe and learn, they should stand quietly to one side and observe – not talk among themselves.

You should never attempt to distribute Buddy Poppies, or do any other functions while recruiting. This will only detract from your recruiting efforts.

As mentioned, you may be required to set up your table 15 feet or so from the main entrance. That's OK, because you should **NEVER** be sitting behind the table waiting for a prospect to come up and ask to join the VFW!! For most people, the table will represent a barrier between you and them. Even if you are physically unable to stand, sit next to or in front of the table. When recruiting at Wal-Mart (for example) always stand at the red Posts in front of the main door – even though the table may be 15-20 feet away. Better yet, if there are two or more recruiter's onsite, have one stand at each end of the red Posts. That way no one gets by without a greeting!

In addition to retail stores, there are many other events where you could set up your recruiting table; such as: County Fairs, Gun Shows, Gun Ranges, Boat Shows, Motorcycle events, and many more. Find out what's happening in your area and request permission to recruit ***AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!!***

Step Three: Table/Area set up: Have a table that is in good condition, a nice table cover is preferred. Make sure you have adequate recruiting supplies. Most items you need are available from the National Membership Department at no cost. Items to have: VFW brochures, VFW magazines, applications, clip boards, pens, Post information (directions, phone #, meeting time, news letter, etc...). You might want to have the latest booklet "Federal Benefits for Veterans and Their Dependents". If you have large displays such as military vehicles, set them up beside or behind the recruiting table and make sure there is a dedicated recruiter for that area.

VFW Facts and Figures/Overcoming Objections Facts

Q: What is the VFW?

A: It is the oldest combat veteran's service organization in the United States. It was established in 1899 and subsequently chartered by act of Congress on 28 May 1936.

Q: What does the VFW do?

A: It is a fraternal, patriotic, historical and charitable organization that preserves and strengthens comradeship among its members through the assistance of worthy veterans

and their families (especially widows and orphans), honoring those veterans who have gone before us, assisting in our local communities and maintaining true allegiance to the government of the United States and fidelity to its constitution and laws.

OUR MISSION: “HONOR THE DEAD, BY HELPING THE LIVING”.

Q: Who is eligible for membership?

A: Any citizen of the United States who: Served honorably as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States in a foreign war, insurrection, or expedition, where service has been recognized by the award of a US campaign medal or badge; service in Korea or its territorial waters for 30 days consecutive/60 days non-consecutive; or who has been entitled to receive Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger Pay.

Q: How many veterans are members of the VFW?

A: Total VFW over 1.72 million; in the Department of Virginia almost 35,000.

Q: You mentioned Department, what does that mean?

A: We have 54 Departments in our National organization, which is worldwide. There is one for each state plus the District of Columbia, Europe, Asia/Pacific Region and the Latin American/Caribbean Region. The Departments are divided into Districts and in some cases County Councils which are comprised of the most important element: the individual Posts is where a vast majority of our good work is accomplished.

Q: How many Districts and County Councils does Virginia have?

A: We have 13 Districts. We don't have County Councils because the state is small enough to be able to operate without that additional element.

Q: How do you determine who does what within the organization?

A: Officers are elected by the membership. Any member can run for any office.

Q: When and how often do you hold meetings?

A: Posts are required to hold meetings at least once a month. Some Posts hold meetings twice a month. It is up to the membership to decide the day and time and whether they want to hold more than one meeting per month.

Q: Are members required to attend all meetings?

A: While we encourage all members to attend, it is not required. Some members join just to add their support to helping us carry out our programs and projects.

Q: How does a VFW Post help the community through assistance?

A: In a variety of ways depending on local needs and the resources available to the Post. It may be through highway cleanups, donations to a volunteer fire department, community blood drives, park enhancement/cleanups, providing flags for school classrooms, disaster assistance, election volunteers, and education to name a few ways.

Q: How does the VFW assist the community through education?

A: To name a few programs there is VOD, Patriots Pen, Military Scholarship Program, Teacher of the Year, Scouting and Veterans in the Classroom.

Q: What is VOD and how does it work?

A: VOD is our Voice of Democracy Program. It is a scholarship program that was established in 1947 to provide assistance to high school students in furthering their education. It is an audio-essay contest whose theme changes each year and is open to all students in the 9th through 12th grades who have not participated and won first place at the Department level in any previous year. There is scholarship money to be won at the Post, District and Department level as well as at the National level. All students chosen as first place in their Departments are brought to Washington DC to meet their counterparts and to participate in a week of supervised educational and sightseeing programs during the final week of competition. While the first prize at the National level is \$30,000 the VFW gave out over \$3 million in scholarship money last year alone. This year's theme is "_____".

Q: What is Patriot's Pen?

A: This is another scholarship competition designed for the middle school students in the form of a written essay contest. Again there is competition and scholarship money awarded at all levels, and the first prize at National is a \$10,000 bond. This year's theme is "_____".

Q: What is the Teacher of the Year Program?

A: This program is designed to recognize the top teachers in their field at the K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 grade levels where the teachers are regularly teaching and promoting the history and traditions of America. They can be nominated by fellow teachers, supervisors or interested individuals. They receive recognition and awards at all levels to include National recognition in Washington DC as a part of our Community Services Awards Week where they and their school are awarded \$1,000.

Q: Do you have other community recognition programs?

A: Yes. We also recognize Boy Scouts, Law Enforcement, Firefighters and EMTs.

Q: How do you assist veteran's families?

A: Through a variety of programs such as MAP/UNMET Needs, Operation Uplink, etc... Active duty member's families sometimes receive assistance through our "Military Assistance/Unmet Needs Program" which assists them for unforeseen circumstances, such as car repairs, medical bills, appliance replacement or repair, etc... Each case is evaluated on a case by case basis to determine the need. This program also provides assistance in setting up seminars for educational and employment enhancement for returning veterans and their families.

Q: What is Operation Uplink?

A: It is a program that was started using free phone cards to enable the deployed service members and our hospitalized veterans in our VA Medical Centers (Hampton,

Richmond and Salem) to make contact with loved ones back home, but is evolving with a more sophisticated computer age. We're now setting up computer banks with free time that allows instant communication.

Q: You mentioned helping widows and orphans, can you elaborate?

A: The VFW has established the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan devoted to the developmental, social and spiritual needs of the children and families of VFW members in need. The site is a 74 building complex located on 629 acres that is fully integrated into the neighboring community and houses such facilities as 34 single family homes, two duplexes, a library, chapel, community center, guest house, nursery school, children's computer lab as well as administration and maintenance buildings. The Dept. of Virginia VFW sponsors one of the single family homes called the Virginia Cottage.

Q: Can you give an example of veteran's assistance?

A: Each VFW Post has a Service Officer whose duty it is to assist veterans and their families in obtaining rightful entitlements from the federal and state governments, in the preparation of the proper forms for applying for such entitlements and in assembling evidence required in connection with those claims. While the level of expertise varies from Post to Post, each Post Service Officer is provided with a VFW Service Officer Guide that helps answer questions or gives guidance on where to go to resolve issues and questions. That information can be sent to a State Service Officer who will file the claim for our veterans.

Q: Why do veterans become members of the VFW?

A: For a variety of reasons. Some are more interested in the camaraderie; some like to volunteer for work in the community or with our youth; some for the work we do for veteran's entitlements and assistance as I mentioned before, some just to lend their support for our legislative efforts.

Q: What legislative efforts?

A: All veterans entitlements come about as a result of legislation enacted either at the federal or state level. We meet with our representatives in Washington, DC and Richmond throughout the year to bring their attention to our concerns on a variety of issues such as veteran's entitlements, national security, foreign affairs and the like. (In fact we just completed a day on the hill in Washington the first part of September or Richmond in January). Plus the VFW has a full time staff in DC to stay in constant contact with the congressional offices and to keep the membership up to date on issues.

Q: Do VFW members do all this work on their own?

A: No. We are very fortunate in that we have our Ladies and/or Men's Auxiliaries. (If your Post has a Men's Aux) They are invaluable in helping us in almost all aspects of our programs and projects.

Q: What are the Auxiliaries?

A: A fraternal, patriotic, historical and educational organization which assists the Post and members of the VFW in carrying out its mission.

Q: Who is eligible for membership in the Ladies Auxiliary?

A: The organization is made up of wives, widows, mothers, grandmothers, stepmothers (who performed the duty of parent), daughters, granddaughters, stepdaughters (who attain that status prior to age 16), sisters, half sisters, foster and stepsisters (who attained that status prior to age 16) of persons who were or are eligible for membership in the VFW.

Q: How large is the Ladies Auxiliary?

A: There are over 580,000 worldwide and over 8,500 in Virginia.

Q: Do they have programs of their own or do they just assist you with the VFW Programs?

A: While they assist us with our programs, they also have Auxiliary specific programs such as Patriotic Art, Cancer Aid and Research, Junior Girls, Girls Scouts and the Youth Volunteer Programs.

Q: What is the Cancer Aid and Research Program?

A: It is a program designed to raise funds to support cancer research through local, District and Department level fundraising efforts such as raffles, lunches, car washes, etc... These funds are collected locally and then combined with the funds from other Auxiliaries in the Department and then submitted to National. Some of the money is used for individual cancer grants to assist individual members and some of it is returned to the Department to be donated to a cancer researcher within the state. Our Ladies have raised over \$70,000 within Virginia the last four years and Nationally the Ladies raised over \$3,000,000.

Q: What is the Patriotic Art Program?

A: It is a contest open to youth in grades 9-12. The media used can range from pencil to oil to computer generated pictures. The rules governing entries specifying size, type of matting, use of flag representations, etc... can be found on the national website. Top prize is \$10,000 with the winning entry displayed at the National Convention and published in the Auxiliary magazine.

Q: What is the Junior Girls Program?

A: Junior Girls is a program for girls aged 5-16 who conduct meetings and function as an adjunct to the Ladies Auxiliary. Not all Auxiliaries have Junior Girls programs. The scholarship program is based upon leadership roles the girls take within the Junior Girls and is worth \$10,000 at the National Level.

Q: How is the Ladies Auxiliary connected to the Girl Scouts?

A: The Ladies Auxiliary has an awards program that complements the Girl Scouts Bronze, Silver, and Gold award levels.

Q: What is the Youth Volunteer Program?

A: This is an award program for those aged 12-15 who provided outstanding volunteer service to his or her community. The National award is a \$5,000 Savings Bond and a trip to the National Convention to receive the award. Entry forms and rules are available on the Auxiliary website.

Q: How can you get more information about the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary?

A: For the National organization you can go to our website at www.vfw.org and for Virginia we have a website at www.vfwva.org. For our Ladies Auxiliary the National website is www.ladiesauxvfw.org and the Virginia website is www.vfwvaaux.org.

Objection: “Ain’t anything down at that Post but a bunch of drunks!”

Reply: Well, about 15% of our Posts do have a canteen and of that 15% we may have a bad apple in the basket but that does not make all of them bad apples. Also, we are recruiting those who will help us correct this type of thinking in our neighborhood and I think you are just the person we need to help us. Sign right here.

Objection: “I don’t have any cash on me”

Reply: That’s OK, We take cash, check, credit card or debit card. So, come on over and let’s get you signed up and on your way. The VFW National will accept a Credit or Debit card number on the application. **(Also note they were asked to join again immediately after their objection was answered. Always ask them again to join after answering an objection. Listen carefully to each objection and provide an answer – then ask again to join!)**

Objection: “Just what does the VFW do?” (Or, if after you first ask them to join, they hesitates, use this :)

Reply: Very briefly, the VFW is the oldest, largest, and best combat veterans’ organization in America. We are nearly 110 years old – Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders were among the first members when they returned from the Spanish-American war in 1899.

We have nearly two million member’s world wide, with nearly 35,000 members in Virginia. We have over 160 VFW Posts in Virginia and over 9,000 Posts worldwide. Socially your membership in one Post is good anywhere. So, where ever you may travel, you will be welcomed where ever you see the VFW sign. (Pause, wait for a response, continue if needed).

We are the elite veterans’ organization because not just any military veteran can join. You have had to serve in a hostile fire zone, or earned a campaign medal such as you have.

Our mission is two fold: one our primary mission is to support all military veterans – no matter when or where they served. We have 63 full time people at our office building in Washington, DC whose job is to lobby Congress, congressional committees and governmental agencies for increases in veterans’ benefits and entitlements. (Pause, wait for a response, continue if needed).

In our local communities we provide support to local National Guard and Reserve spouses and families that are deployed overseas. If they need financial assistance or other help, the local VFW Post is there to help.

In addition to military personnel assistance, we also support local Boy and Girl Scout troops, softball and baseball youth leagues, blood drives and other local civic organizations.

Use every time you think the prospect is ready to join. “But, to do all these things, we need membership. So, how about joining us today, again only two minutes and \$___ to join.” (Wait for response) (The above may be modified by the recruiter to fit his style)

Objection: “Let me think about it.”

Reply 1: Well, while your thinking, think about the 250,000 who gave it all in WW II, think about the 34,000 who gave all in Korea, think about the 58,000 who gave all in Viet-Nam, think about the 3500+ who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan and the 3,000 at 9/11. Now, how would you like to pay your membership? Be careful when using this, it might offend the prospect.

Reply 2: It will never be easier for you to join, The Greatest Combat Veterans Organization on the Planet, than right now. Although we encourage becoming a life member, we also offer an annual membership that will allow you to become acquainted with this great organization. That will allow you to think about it, while you are a member. I’m confident that once you become a member you will stay a member, but if you decided it is not for you, you don’t have to renew.

Objection: “I just don’t have the time.”

Reply: I understand that people work two sometimes three jobs and it is necessary to keep the family togetherness. While we encourage everyone to attend meetings and participate in projects, it’s not mandatory. In addition, if you can’t be there in body, then give us the head count support so we can get things done in Washington and Richmond for our veteran’s entitlements.

Objection: “I just don’t have time to get involved in any more organizations.”

Reply 1: I can understand that. I belong to the American Legion, AMVETS and the DAV myself, and I don’t have much time for them either. However, the best thing you can do for the VFW is just to have your name on our membership rolls.

When we go before Congress to lobby for increased entitlements for all veterans, past and present, we can show them that the VFW is a growing organization and that our

votes count. So, join us today, even if you can't get involved at present your name on the rolls will help. (Await response)

Reply 2: We understand that.

We're a volunteer organization, and while we do encourage attendance at meetings and volunteering for projects, we know that it's not always possible what with work and family. After all they have to be taken care of first.

We need the membership to lobby. (Use examples, i.e. Suffolk Cemetery, Radford, etc...).

We are able to use your dues, to help support our efforts and every little bit helps. (Use examples).

Objection: I will think about and get back to you. Can I take an application with me? (We call these folks "be backs" as in "I will be back." Don't believe it! If you don't sign them now, you rarely – if ever – will sign them. Try some of these answers :)

Reply 1: In a friendly, smiling way: Yes, I could give you an application to take home – but we both know what will happen – you will lay it on the dining room table and forget about it. Your wife will clean off the table and throw it out – right? (Chuckle)

The best time to decide is here and now while it is fresh in your mind and I can answer any questions you may have. (If he is an older vet – Korea, Vietnam, etc..., again smiling :)

Reply 2: You've had ___ years to think about it, (depending on which war/conflict they were in) right? What more time do you need? (This approach should only be made in a joking, smiling manner, if they are friendly and in a like mood)

Let's take the two minutes and make you a member. It's only \$___ a year, cash, check, and credit or debit card. (Await response).

Objection: When I came back from 'Nam I went to the local VFW Post and I was treated like dirt!

Reply: Yes, unfortunately that happened to some Vietnam vets. But, to quote the old commercial 'This is not your grandfather's or even your father's VFW.' Years ago, the major portion of VFW membership was WWII veterans. But, as they have passed on, the major portion of VFW membership is Vietnam veterans. In fact, the top three National VFW officers are Vietnam vets. The Virginia VFW State officers are mostly Korea, Vietnam and Southwest Asia veterans.

So, that old problem has gone away. Today, we make sure all veterans, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War and those who followed are welcomed into the VFW. So, join us today and you'll see for yourself. (Await response)

These are a few of the more common objections you will hear from prospects, and you can develop a "comeback" for them. Please keep in mind that recruiting is a "numbers game." That is, most of the people you meet will not be eligible to join the VFW. Many of those who are qualified, for whatever reason will not join. Thank them for their service and wish them a good day, leave them with a professional opinion of the VFW, it might help to sign them up at a later time. So, the more people you ask, the

much better your chances of signing someone becomes. Do not become discouraged if you run into a “dry spell” of no signups. But, keep asking and don’t take “no” for a final answer as long as they will talk to you and let you answer their objections. Many of us have been told “no” at least five times by a prospect before we finally answered all their objections and signed them up.

Scripts for Recruiting

Nearly every person passing by should be stopped, greeted and “qualified.” Do not attempt to guess who may or may not be a veteran. You may often be surprised. A general rule of thumb is to ask every male who looks over 18 and all females who appear 20, 30 or 40 “something.” (Many females of this age group have been in the military)

Below is the standard greeting and qualification to use whenever you’re recruiting (the added comments in brackets for explanation). Each recruiter should develop their own technique, but whatever used should be brief and quickly qualify the prospect as to their eligibility to join.

It is strongly recommended using the below four questions as written. It will quickly tell you if a prospect is qualified or if they already belong to the VFW (this will allow you to ask a prospect to join the VFW within 10 seconds of greeting them).

Recruiter: “Good morning sir/ma’am. Are you a veteran?” (Note: some younger folks think a veteran is only someone who is a military retiree, or was in a major war – so ask younger folks:

“Good morning sir/ma’am. Did you serve in the military?”

Prospect: Yes, I was in the service. (If “yes”, give them a handshake)

Recruiter: “Well, thank you for your service!” (A handshake will stop them from passing on by) Do you belong to the VFW?

Prospect: No, I do not belong to the VFW.

Recruiter: Where did you serve overseas?” (This is a key question – here you will determine if they are qualified to join the VFW. Among the recruiting materials you should have on hand is a small foldout card entitled “Basic Requirements for VFW Membership.” The latest revision is Sept. 2006. This quick reference card lists all campaigns that qualify one for membership. This you should study whenever you have time and learn the major campaigns and dates. Also note on the last page of the card that if someone drew “Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger Pay” even without a campaign ribbon, they are qualified for the VFW)

Prospect: I just got back or served in _____.

Recruiter: Well, again, thank you for your service to your country! Do you know you have **EARNED** the right to join the VFW? (Short pause) We are signing up new

members today for the local VFW Post here in _____. It takes only 2-3 minutes to fill out the application and the dues are only \$_____ per year. (Note: the amount charged a new member should be as low as possible, i.e. \$20-\$25, to make the signup as easy as possible)

Prospect: I was aboard ship in Cuban waters during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. I don't know if I'm qualified or not.

Recruiter: OK, let's check the Eligibility card – yes, it shows you earned the AFEM, which qualifies you for the VFW. (Now use the close in the above paragraph and wait for a response).

Other Scripts

IF YOU KNOW NOTHING OF THE PERSON:

Scenario One:

Recruiter: Hi, how're you doing today? Are you a veteran by any chance?

Prospect: Yes.

Recruiter: Which branch?

Prospect: Army.

Recruiter: Where bout's overseas if you don't mind my asking?

Prospect: Vietnam.

Recruiter: Welcome home, Brother!* I was a grunt corpsman with 2/3 and 3/9 out of 3rd MARDIV in I Corps. (Shake hands for god's sake)**

Go from there,

*Do not use term "brother" if you're not a Vietnam Vet – may seem patronizing.

** Handshake and having served in like units/locations establishes a personal tie to the veteran. This makes it easier for both of you to talk to each other.

Scenario Two:

Recruiter: Hi, how're you doing today? Are you a veteran by any chance?

Prospect: Yes.

Recruiter: Which branch?

Prospect: Army.

Recruiter: Did you put in any time overseas?

Prospect: Just got back from Iraq/Afghanistan.

Recruiter: It's good to have you back home. (Shake hands)

Go from there,

Scenario Three:

IF YOU HAVE A GOOD IDEA THEY ARE A VET (Person wearing Squadron/Company/Fleet hat, shirt, or patch)

Recruiter: When did you serve with the

Prospect: Recently.

Recruiter: Must be Iraq or Afghanistan. I was with 2/8 from 1963 thru 1967 as a grunt corpsman. That was back in ancient times though. (Again this will establish a personal tie with the prospect).

Prospect: Iraq.

Recruiter: It's good to have you home. (Shake hands)

Go from there –

Scenario Four:

Recruiter: (Extending your hand shake) Good morning/afternoon Sir/Ma'am
Are you a Veteran?

Prospect: Yes, I am.

Recruiter: Your name?

Prospect: My name is Jimmy/Penny Smith

Recruiter: Thank you Mr. /Ms. Smith for your service to our country. I am a (name your qualification) Veteran and today I'm recruiting for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the largest and greatest veteran's service organization on the planet. I know you have heard of us. Where did you serve Mr. /Ma'am? (Name)

Prospect: I served in the Viet Nam War and came home and was disgraced by my own country. People spat at me, cursed me and called us baby killers and numerous other names. We deserved better and never received the respect that was due us and I don't think the VFW can correct that.

Recruiter: Yes Mr. /Ms. Smith, the Viet Nam Veterans were heroes then and today and hundreds of thousands of them belong to our 2 million member organization and they have worked very hard as VFW members to help us restore the respect our Viet Nam veterans deserve. We need you as a member to help add to our voice in Washington DC where we have 63 VFW employees who speak up everyday for our veteran entitlements and to insure that our veterans never have to face the kind of coming home reception that we faced from Viet Nam. I know you would like to help change that and be a part of this great opportunity to help.

Prospect: How much is the cost.

Recruiter: \$___ will pay your first years dues.

Prospect: Give me one of your applications and I'll think about it.

Recruiter: Mr. /Ms. Smith, while you're thinking at this moment, think about all your friends who didn't make it home from Viet Nam (or other wars/conflicts). If they had the opportunity as you do today I think you would agree they would want to help you. I think you want to do the same for them. I can sign you up in 5 minutes if you have \$___

cash or Credit Card and your driver's license or a form of identification. Just sit right down here. You may not want to use this if not a veteran from the same war/conflict.

Prospect: Oh well, I guess you convinced me.

In this situation I did not go into the programs because the veteran was more concerned about his Viet Nam service. Be prepared to explain in short order our programs.

Application Completion

“The job's not over until the paper work is done.” It would be a shame if you work hard to get someone to join the VFW and the membership is rejected because the application is not filled out properly. It is recommended you carefully fill out the application yourself so that all data is legible, complete and accurate.

Pay careful attention to the addresses, dates, and spellings of all items. Ensure credit card numbers and effective dates are accurately recorded, if used. Make sure applicant signs on the back and for his credit card. Collect cash or check for proper dues amount. (NOTE: Social Security Number is OPTIONAL)

Submit the completed package to your Post Quartermaster or to the State Quartermaster for processing. State will process by e-membership and the membership will become effective within days, instead of weeks if processed by mail.

Working with Guard and Reserve Units

Recruiting at National Guard and Reserve units can be a very effective way to sign up a large number of members at one time. However, there are pluses and minuses to this recruiting method. The pluses are you will have a “captive” audience of qualified prospects to recruit. They will be assembled in one group, so you only have to make one presentation. Nearly all of them will be qualified for membership. The minuses are the troops will be from a large geographical area, so you need to convince them to join a Post away from their home town.

One way to approach this is to use this as an opportunity to bring them into the organization as a Member-at Large and explain the way to affect a no-cost transfer when they have decided upon a Post where they would like to settle. Also be sure to explain that socially, their membership card is good worldwide. The renewal rate for membership may be lower for out of town members.

You will need to discuss with your Post officers and members if you want to offer free or discounted memberships to all prospects – keeping in mind the above pluses and minuses. (It is recommended you do not sign up anyone using “MIPS,” as these free memberships do not count as members for your Post the first year).

Several Posts have gotten together to sponsor free memberships. For example, in the Winchester, VA area, there is a large Reserve unit. Three Posts in that area sponsored free memberships and they signed over 30 members each.

How to Contact a Guard or Reserve unit

The initial contact with a Guard or Reserve unit in your area is a very important step and it should be thought out prior to the visit, what you will charge for membership and what will you say to the person(s) in charge of the unit to convince them to let you address the troops.

It is highly recommended you find out the name and rank of the senior enlisted person in charge, normally a top three enlisted member. It is recommended you do not contact the commanding officer, as the “top enlisted” may be more receptive to your request. You may find out this person’s name by phone and make an appointment with them to drop by, or as I do, just stop in and ask to see them.

The first thing you must determine is the number of qualified troops in the unit, how many have come back from a deployment, how many are deployed overseas now, and how many may soon be deployed. (NOTE – if the unit will shortly be deployed overseas you can sign them up at the meeting, hold the applications until they arrive “in country” and then submit the applications to VFW National. You do not have to wait until they return).

Explain what you would like to do and ask to address the troops during an assembly. This may have to be scheduled for the next drill weekend. It’s important you ask to address them in one large group; “they” will introduce you and have the group “listen up.” If “they” are a VFW member (you did sign them up on the first visit, didn’t you?) they will often put in a good word for you and the VFW as part of your introduction.

Script for Mass Briefing

As mentioned, your presentation should be no more than five minutes and should be interesting and informative to the troops. For example, if they are shortly to be deployed, empathize how your Post can assist families of the deployed; MAP, Unmet Needs program, free Phone Cards, etc... Your presenter should be someone comfortable addressing large groups and can make a positive impression. Below is a sample presentation that may be modified to meet current needs:

“Good morning troops!

Is it a great day to be in the guard? (Or whatever unit)

My name is _____. I’m with (or your title) the Veterans of Foreign Wars, for Post_____ in _____.

First of all of behalf of the VFW, I would like to thank each of you for your service to our country. Thank you. Your service is appreciated.

Today I would like to take a few minutes to tell you a little about the VFW.

Many of you have probably heard of the VFW but you may not know much about whom we are and what we stand for.

Simply put - the Veterans of Foreign Wars is the oldest, largest and best combat veteran's organization in America. We are nearly 110 years old and we were formed in 1899 by combat veterans of the Spanish-American War, Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders were early members.

World wide we have nearly 2 million members. In Virginia we have nearly 35 thousand members with 160 VFW Posts.

We are a very exclusive organization, in that just not any military veteran can join the VFW. You must have served honorably as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States in a foreign war, insurrection, or expedition, where service has been recognized by the award of a US campaign medal or badge; service in Korea or its territorial waters for 30 days consecutive/60 days non-consecutive; or who has been entitled to receive Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger Pay.

So, by your service, you may have **earned** the right to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The mission of the VFW is two fold:

First we are advocates for all veterans, not just VFW members, but for anyone who has served in the military. In Washington DC we have our own building next door to the Sam Rayburn Congressional Office Building. We have 63 employees whose full time job is to lobby Congress, congressional committees, the Department of Veterans Affairs and other government organizations to ensure all veterans receive the entitlements they deserve.

The VFW has been very successful in improving veterans' benefits. For example, lobbying by the VFW was very instrumental in getting congress to add nearly one billion dollars the Department Of Veterans Affairs budget for increased medical care for all veterans.

On the local level, the VFW is very supportive of local National Guard and Reserve units. The VFW gives away thousands of free "Operation Uplink" phone cards each week to service members deployed overseas. These phone cards allow them to call home at no cost to the service members or their families. The local VFW Posts provide a support system to families of deployed service members, where the families can get assistance when needed.

For example, we recently made the mortgage payments on the home of a young troop stationed in Iraq when his wife had financial difficulty and was about to lose their home.

Our local VFW Post's here in Virginia contribute thousands of volunteer man hours and tens of thousands of dollars each year to non-profit organizations in their home towns.

But, to continue to provide this level of support on a national and local basis, we must continue to recruit new members to replace our older VFW members.

Here is a grim statistic: in the past, the largest group of VFW members were WWII veterans. But, these WWII veterans are dying at the rate of over 1,000 per day, I repeat; the WWII veterans are dying at the rate of more than 1,000 per day.

The largest group of VFW members is now the Vietnam veterans, and as you can see, these vets are beginning to age. So we must work to recruit younger members to replace the present vets as they pass on.

We realize many of you do not now have much time to devote to VFW activities; with your jobs, raising families and so on. But that is ok. The most important thing you can do for the VFW right now is have your name on our membership rolls, so that we can show Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and others that the VFW is growing and they still have to listen to us.

It's easy to join the VFW; it takes only 2-3 minutes to fill out a membership card. To join is only \$___ cash, check or credit card. (Or, a free membership)

(Note: Some Post's offer free, or discounted memberships for eligible active duty troops. This is a good way to increase Post membership but, the renewal rate maybe low unless you work to renew them).

If you live outside this area, that's no problem. Your membership in this Post is good at any VFW Post you care to visit. So, once you sign up today you can visit any VFW Post in the world.

So, please take the time to join today, you will help the VFW to help all veterans to include you.

We will be at the table with membership cards, membership cost is only \$_____cash, check or credit card. And again – we thank you for your service to our country, and now help us to continue to serve all veterans.

Keeping Current Members

One of the most important tasks as a Post Commander is maintaining Post membership. As mentioned, it is much easier to renew an annual member than it is to go out and try to recruit a new member. Therefore, maximum effort by the Post should be made to retain all possible annual members. For example, once you have recruited a new member for the Post, make sure that they are welcomed to the Post (personal letter, phone call, etc...).

NOTE: If an annual member has not renewed his/her membership by December 31st they are no longer a "member in good standing." And are not eligible to attend Post meetings or vote.

If the unpaid annual member is a Post Officer and has not paid dues by December 31st, they will be removed from office by the State Commander and cannot hold an office for the remainder of the year. It recommended the Post keep track of all unpaid annual members and take positive steps to collect their dues.

VFW National sends out up to five or six dues renewal notices to each annual member during the membership year. However, a Post should not rely on National

notification alone to collect dues. The Post Quartermaster may printout a list of all unpaid annuals from “Memstats” on the national website at anytime. This list, or current membership cards, should be checked at each Post meeting and/or visit to the Post canteen to determine if the member is in “good standing.” If not, they should be turned away.

If the Post has a newsletter, membership renewal should always be mentioned in each edition.

Starting in October, the Post should send out letters to each member asking them to renew and reminding them of the December 31st deadline.

In November, personal phone calls are a good method of collecting dues.

When all else fails, starting in December or January, a visit by the membership committee or Post members to the member’s home can be very effective. Many unpaid members will write a check when you visit them.

Summary

This brief handbook should give you a start to recruiting new members. Remember, the more you practice recruiting and the more you learn about the VFW, the more effective you will become as a Recruiter. Should you desire more training, please contact State Headquarters to request a State Recruiter to assist your Post.

Happy Hunting!

I would like to thank:

Roy Swanner

Rex Faris

C.D. “Doc” Crouch

Ray Wells

(They are proven recruiters and contributed a wealth of information to this project.)

I would also like to thank “Jimmy Lee Wallace” for the opportunity to expand our recruiting efforts.

Well done gentleman,

Hal Roesch

Recruiting Checklist

Preparation:

- Select a date or event
- Get permission to recruit as early as possible
- Request a recruiter and supplies from State (if required)
- Start collecting materials needed
- Learn about the VFW (National, State and Post)
- Hold training classes and practice

Setting up the site

- Wear proper attire and dress VFW cap
- Get there early
- Set up the table(s) and display(s) (if any)
- Display materials (have rubber bands, paper weights and such if it's windy)

Recruiting

- Always greet the prospect with a smile and handshake
- Don't take "no" for an answer
- Stop talking as soon as they agree
- Complete the application
- Give them information about your post
- Wish them a great day

Completion

- Carefully store the materials used, they can be used at a later date
- Take down table(s) and displays
- Clean up the area. Leave a good impression, so you can come back

Follow Up

- Discuss what worked and what didn't, will help for the next time
- Process the applications
- Return any items borrowed from State
- Contact your new members; invite them your meeting, Post, Canteen etc...
- Start planning the next recruiting event