

Good-day Division Presidents.

I want to start off with something that happens to us all once every year. We have a birthday. In August my oldest grandson and I celebrated our birthdays. He turning 17 and me, reverse the numbers and add 1. Here's a thought provoking question from a recent Vets morning coffee *think-tank* - "what if you didn't know your age, how old do you think you'd be? ". I got thinking on David Myles folk song, When It Comes My Turn (see YouTube - Silent Cacophony by Chase March). The first line of the chorus, "I'm getting Old, but I'm not Old yet." Those few words speak to attitude - "*but I'm not Old yet*". Winston Churchill once said, "Attitude is a Little thing that makes a Big difference". We're so fortunate in the Association to have a wide range of ages to share backgrounds, experiences, ideas, talents, interests and service.

Ok, let's get down to work on this recruiting stuff. In Sales there are three basic reasons that a product doesn't sell. *First*, the product is not of good quality. *Second*, the product is not being marketed properly. *Third*, the wrong salesperson is selling the product. So, in our organization we need to evaluate these three basics and make the necessary changes in order to get sales - *New members*.

Our main reference will be the 2010 National Membership Strategic Plan posted on the national website. There are two prime objectives: *Gettin' em* (Recruitment of New members) and *Keepin' em* (Retention of Existing members). The trick is, how do we achieve both these objectives? Let's start with some basic Best Practices. Now I have relied on my own experience in NS Division and only suggest that you may want to try some of these ideas. I've viewed your Division websites and can say for the most part I'm quite impressed. However, I had a very frustrating and time consuming search that should never happen in marketing; this will be Best Practice #1. By the way, there are nine Divisions that haven't yet established a website, so they have no exposure for recruitment.

Best Practice #1: [Membership Application & Accessibility](#)

- There is no standard association **Membership Application**. Currently there are different formats; different information; colour/no colour; references/no references, in other words, no universal, standard form. The Association is a single entity, but the wheel has been invented 30 times. Does the Force have different uniforms for every Division?.
- A new standard form for adoption as the **Association's Membership Application**. It has been designed from viewing current Division versions. It has desirable box formatting so information can be easily extracted for data recording purposes. It is in colour, so there is aesthetic appeal. No references are asked for as this is apparently insulting to some former members.

- The Application form should not be hidden away and difficult to find. When former members visit our websites, they may be looking for information to join the Association. In particular, they may be looking for an **Application**. They should easily find it on the Home page with the marketing piece, *Why Join ?* (hot buttons). In some Divisions an Access Code is actually needed to get into the Membership area where the Application is secretly hidden from any prospective member desiring documentation to join.
- Place on the National website Welcome page, and on all Division website Home pages, the following 3 highlighted left-hand tabs:
 - 1st. tab - **WHY JOIN?**
 - 2nd. tab - **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**
 - 3rd. tab - **DIVISION ADDRESSES & DUES.**

These 3 documents are attached. Now everything a former member needs is on the outside, easily accessible and highly visible. This is good advertising and marketing.

- What happens when a member discharges from the Force? On leaving, he/she is automatically a Transitional Member for one year from date of discharge. This is a complimentary year to allow the member to become familiar with the Association by attending Division general meetings and social events. In the Force's 13 page retirement package, there is 1 page allotted to the Veterans' Association for education and recruitment purposes. It gives a brief history, has the Why Join? hot buttons, and gives directions to the National website to get a Membership Application (see attachment). This retirement package is circulated by the HQ Compensation Branch and is received by every retiring/discharging member in Canada.

Best Practice #2: [Division Membership Committee](#)

- Selection of a **Membership Director**. This is the "key" individual, so select someone who has an affable personality, talent and a keen desire to fill this important position. Someone who has previous training, experience and strong people skills. Perhaps, former recruiting, staffing, community relations, volunteer and charity coordinators. A fairly recent retired member may be a good candidate as he/she should know most the Division's serving members (prospects) and will be current on the Force's operations. Recent retirees will be younger, have new ideas, technical skills and much needed vitality and energy. However, having a committee composed of seasoned and new retirees is an ideal mix that can relate to a wide cross section of former members.
- This committee is your Marketing and Sales leader. Admittedly, finding the right individuals for this vitally important role is not easy. Of course, all members of the executive team must engage in recruitment efforts and be in a sales mode at all times.

Best Practice #3: *Structure Division Into Regions*

- Most Divisions need to be partitioned into Regions. Most jurisdictions are too large for members to travel regularly to attend Division general meetings and social events.
 - Review nominal rolls and observe where large groups of members congregate in various communities on a regular basis, i.e. - coffee gatherings.
 - Recruit from these regional/community groups two (2) individuals to be Regional Directors as part of the Division Executive team.
 - Encourage each Region to organize their own local social functions and business meetings while still supporting Division events and activities.
 - Every spring, the President accompanied by executive members of the large Central Region, travel to the other Regions and conduct a business meeting and socialize with the local members and their spouses/partners. Have the Regional Directors invite non-members and the local RCMP members to attend these annual functions. They are prospects for future membership. This annual member visitation circuit is called a "Roadshow". It solidifies the Division's membership and new members are always gained during these visitations.
 - My Division has seven (7) outside regions that we visit during the Roadshow in May. The Cape Breton region is the longest drive at 5 1/2 hrs. We visit Colchester Region (Truro) mid-morning; North East (New Glasgow) for afternoon lunch; stay overnight in Cape Breton (Sydney), and have breakfast and a business meeting the next morning. On our return to Halifax, a luncheon stop is made in Port Hawkesbury. And, that ends week #1. Every week during May we travel to a different part of the province.
 - During the visits we Induct new members, present service pins, sell inventory items, do a 50/50 draw, get to know serving members attending, and we sign up new members. In sales, success is achieved when you go out and "see the people".
 - For a sample Division regional membership model, see Page 9 of the 2010 Membership Strategic Plan.
 - Annually in the Fall, the Halifax Central Region hosts a day-time General Meeting and Social for the entire Division membership and their spouses/partners. Saturday is preferred as some members are still employed during the week and it allows for driving time. The meeting runs from about 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Lunch is then served, and the rest of the afternoon is filled with social events, i.e, turkey shoot; musical talent, good conversation and lots of fun.
 - My Division has followed this annual routine for the past 5 years. Each year we ask, "do you want us to come back next year?". The answer is always in the affirmative.

- It is noted that some Divisions are mostly Urban and others, Urban/ Rural. This partitioning of a geographic area into regions will work well in both types of jurisdictions.

Best Practice #4: Support & Advocacy

- This is an area that is so crucial to the welfare of our members. At times of illness, hospitalization or death, it is vitally important to provide assistance and comfort to the member and the family. Recently a National Advocacy Committee has been put in place and consists of Advocates from the Divisions for this purpose.
- A formal Sick & Visiting committee is required to visit members having health problems at home or in hospital and to extend comforts and help were needed.
- A major reason to be in the Association, is the extensive committee work that is done to assist member's secure deserved disability benefits related to service in the Force.
- The work of this committee should be loudly promoted to all non-members as a primary reason to join the Association to "get in the loop".

Best Practice #5: Prospect Inventory

- As mentioned in my last communication, there are approximately 16,500 former members and we only have about 4,600 as Association members. So, let's look at where we can go fishing to hook some of these elusive individuals to build a Prospect Inventory.
 - VetsNet - currently there are 4,446 former members who have registered on this website by Jim Forysth. Obviously these individuals want other members to know their location or they wouldn't post. Just by registering and exposing themselves as former members and veterans, they should not be opposed to being approached by your Division membership committee. Of course, some on the site are already Association members but many are not. I did a check from A to E for NS Division and found 10 non-association members to add to our inventory.
 - Quarterly - every edition of the Quarterly has listed those members who have retired/discharged from the Force. Add to your inventory all those who have left the Force in your Division jurisdiction. The postings in the Quarterly can almost be a year old but follow up on those members who have not joined during the Transitional Year.
 - Retirement Parties - usually the Division Messes will notify the Vets on announcements regarding members being honoured at their retirement. If possible, a membership committee member or an executive member(s) should attend and extend an invitation to the retirees to join the Association.

- Serving Members that are Associates - a lot of information about movement of personnel can be gained in social settings such as coffee gatherings with serving members. Endeavour to recruit senior serving members as Division Associates. They will be automatic Active members on retirement and of course, good sources for information along the way.
- Weddings, Funerals, Golf Tournaments, Special Events - it may have been years since you've seen members whom you served with, until meeting them again at special occasions like a wedding or a funeral. These can be casual conversations and it's surprising how many say they just didn't get around to joining the Association but would be interested now.
- Do you remember, "Have Gun will Travel"; in our case, "Have Application will Travel".

Best Practice #6: [Original Regimental No.](#)

- In the Veterans' Association there is no rank. It is a related organization, but a different organization from the Force.
- The Membership Application form asks for the member's "**Original** Regimental No."
- It would be courteous, and a recommendation to use only "Original Reg #s" on Nominal Rolls and all other Association documentation.
- It is just Tom, Dick and Harry again.

Best Practice #7: [General Meetings](#)

- General meeting format and content is very important to maintaining member interest and attendance. Every Division has their own approach and presentation style. The following are some ideas that you may want to consider and try:
 - These are business meetings and should be held regularly during the year, except for summer break in July and August and December for the Christmas season. By meeting regularly there is continuity of issues and the social contact is maintained throughout the year.
 - Two or three days before the meeting send out a prepared agenda to the membership. Include the order of dress for the Executive and the Members.
 - Try to keep the time of the meeting to a reasonable length and allow ample opportunity for socializing a half hour before and more time after the close.

- Have a 50/50 draw for a bit of fun and to build up a social slush fund.
- Bring in guest speakers on topics of interest to the members. i.e. - Medical Practitioners (Chiropractor); University Professors (Cyberbullying); Force DSRs; Tax & Estate planners; Canadian Legion (disability claims processing), etc.
- At Induction of new members, present the crested Membership Pin along with an Induction Folder. The folder might contain a Welcome Letter from the President; a list of the Division Executive team; the current Nominal Roll; the orders of dress; a Quarterly application, and the Survivors & Executors Guide & Checklists. These documents can be in hard copy or placed on a CD.
- Vary the usual Evening meetings with daytime, or luncheon meetings. Particularly in January and February when there is severe winter weather. This may be restricted somewhat depending where general meetings are normally held, particularly if in Force facilities.
- There are members attending the meetings who have hearing loss, hence miss a lot of speech content. A simple solution is to use a microphone and to stand at a podium when speaking instead of sitting at a table. By standing at a podium at the front of the room, all in attendance, up front and at the back, will be able to hear, see, and lip read. It would be embarrassing to the older hard-of-hearing members to be segregated in the front pews. Using a microphone and standing while speaking should solve many hearing problems.

Best Practice #8: [Bi-Annual Checkup](#)

- When you have clients/members, they need to be serviced/touched in order to determine the state of their welfare and for business retention. It's like the fellow who has the plates spinning on the poles, when he gets to the last one he must return to the first one and reeve it up again. Our members need the same attention to keep them invigorated.
 - Prepare a Bi- Annual Check-up form. Verify address, phone #s and e-mail address. Gather other information - any health issues?; receiving newsletter?; have Survivors & Executors Guide?; able to attend general meetings, coffee gatherings & social functions?; interested in servicing on committees or filling an executive position?; know anyone who might wish to join the Association?; do you need any assistance? and, do you have any questions/issues/concerns. (See sample form attached)
 - Take the Division nominal roll and assign each executive member a certain number of Members and Widows to contact by Phone to have a conversation and to complete the form. There are a number of members that can't make it to meetings or social events because of health restrictions, geographic location and employment. They faithfully pay their dues, and will most certainly enjoy receiving

an unexpected call from the Division executive. They won't feel forgotten and it's a good opportunity to update Division records. Do Not send the form out electronically for completion. The whole idea is to touch the person by having a personal conversation on the telephone. The most convenient time to conduct the check-up in a two year term is during the Fall of the non-election year.

- This regular contact will also facilitates collection of unpaid annual dues and hence, the retention of members.

Best Practice #9: *Advertising & Promotion*

➤ In order to attract customers/members we have to advertise and become visible. To that end, certain action is currently happening with regard to *Advertising Placements* as follows:

- A Veterans' Association page has been drafted and will be in the Force's 13 page retirement package which is given to every member who is discharging in Canada. These are Transitional Members who are in that status for one (1) year from date of discharge.
- An appeal is being made to have all COs circulate an annual information communiqué on the Veterans' Association to all serving Division members.
- A proposed Ad and bilingual Membership Application form is being drafted for publishing in the Quarterly.
- The VetsNet is being asked to post the *Why Join?* pamphlet and an Membership Application form on the site.
- Division Coordinators for Auxiliary Members will be supplied with an information package on membership eligibility.
- A Veterans' Association glossy, professional pamphlet will be prepared for distribution and placement in Force offices.

➤ Promotion - offer to do a Veterans' Association Information presentation at Force workshops and seminars. For example, we were invited three years ago to do a Vets presentation at an Aboriginal, Diversity, Volunteer POWPM. It was very well received and after the session senior serving members approached to inquire if they could join "their" Vets. Assoc. Needless to say we were surprised at this request.

In the end, provisions were made to accommodate serving RCMP members to join as Associates. This has created a great hand-in-glove relationship with the serving Force to the mutual benefit of both parties. Take every opportunity to speak at Force functions to promote and educate serving members about the Association.

- Any suggestions for other *Advertising Placements* are most welcome.

Best Practice #10: [Annual Recruitment Campaign](#)

- Most organizations like ours conduct a regular recruitment drive each year (i.e. - FSNA, Legion, Service Clubs). The Association established the **Howard Kearley Membership Award** three years ago to encourage Divisions to compete for top recruiting honours. To date it is obvious that little competition is taking place as one Division has been the winning recipient the past two years. So what is needed is a formal, structured campaign with set recruitment targets and measurable results.

As I previously mentioned, the **2013** Recruitment Campaign will involve all Divisions at kick-off on January 1st. This is meant to be a friendly competition to challenge everyone to really focus on bringing in new members to this proud Veterans' Association of ours. It time to stop saying, " *it can't be done* " but rather, " *let's get it done!* "

- In conjunction with this national HK competition, you might want to try running an internal Division campaign amongst your own regions. We have done this with our 8 regions the past 3 years and it has focused the members on achieving a set local goal, which in turn has resulted in capturing the national HK award. There is a plaque presented to the winning region during the spring Roadshow along with a \$100 refreshment bonus for a celebratory 'wee' drink.
- Don't get discouraged if a former member says he's not interested in joining. This is your first approach but should not be your last. In sales, if you have a good prospect you do not discard him/her on the first meeting. Circumstances at the time may just not be conducive for that person to get involved. It takes time and patience to build a rapport between individuals and only after five encounters should you consider this individual a lost cause; case concluded here.

A lot has been suggested to try by the Best Practices presented. All these activities together have produced positive, measurable recruitment results. No doubt all Divisions have some good methods that have been successful in the past. In my first communication, Divisions were asked to send in their best recruitment ideas; only two Divisions responded. The Best Practices shown here are just some initiatives for consideration; other ideas are most welcome for addition to our recruitment strategy.

As Division Presidents you are the leaders; the Team Captains. As the Recruiting Chair; I'm the Coach. We'll work together so every Team/Division achieves its targeted goal. Good luck, good recruiting and let's kick butt.

Best regards,
George

Thought of the day - " *People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it.*" ~ *George Bernard Shaw*

[\(902\) 864-0555](tel:(902)864-0555) (h)

[\(902\) 483-7806](tel:(902)483-7806) (c)

georgeasavage@gmail.com

Attachments:

1. Why Join? Veterans' page - is included in the Force's retirement package to discharging members and is posted on the National & Division websites.
2. Membership Application - print application page then put in printer tray and print on the reverse the Membership Criteria.
3. Veteran Division Addresses & Dues - contact information found on Division home pages.
4. Bi-Annual Division Check-up