

VAVS RECRUITMENT STRATEGY RECRUITING TACTICS

Title

“An Invitation to Service: Serving Those Who Served” Recruiting Tactics

Theme

Changing the Face of the VAVS – recruiting the younger generations

Background

Total volunteers and hours continue to slip; a trend that must be reversed with aggressive recruiting tactics at all levels of the VAVS. A coherent VAVS recruitment strategy and recommended organizational structure have been developed and adopted by the NAC. To preserve and replenish our aging volunteer force, the strategy must be implemented. NAC members must be organized to implement the strategy and sound, proven tactics must be employed from the VA Central Office (VACO) VAVS Director down to the individual VAVS volunteer diligently serving our Veterans at our VA medical centers. *At all levels, recruitment is a full time, year-round responsibility.*

Preparation for Effective Recruiting

- Every VAVS “recruiter” must have a thorough knowledge of VAVS history, organization and culture, nationally and locally.
- VAVS policies, procedures, indoctrination process and paperwork established and implemented at VACO, at each VAMC, and within each NAC organization, should be continuously reviewed with the goal of updating, streamlining, or eliminating unnecessary procedures, forms and policies that are an impediment to recruiting. **The Goal: Put that volunteer to work in very few days!!!!**
- At all levels, undertake a review of programs, activities, incentives and recruiting strategies.
 - What works, why is it working, how can it be expanded, exploited and improved for greater success
 - What is NOT working, what are the problems encountered, what barriers must be overcome, is it worthwhile fixing, and what actions or changes can be implemented to overcome the problems and barriers to success
- At each VAMC, form a recruitment committee made up of experienced, innovative volunteers from NAC organizations able to think “outside the norm”.
 - Set recruiting goals for the month, quarter, annually
 - Assist VAVS staff with ads, development of brochures, and other recruiting materials
 - In conjunction with VAVS staff and member organization representatives, identify volunteer needs, meaningful assignments and position descriptions; then develop the recruitment plan based on these needs
 - With VAVS staff, plan, organize and execute periodic recruiting campaigns, hold “open house” programs for potential volunteers
- Clearly understand the **benefits** and the **cost** of volunteering.
 - Benefits:** Positive impact on community, make professional contacts, strengthen leadership skills, feel needed and valued, make a difference in a veteran’s life, pay back for honored service

- Costs:** Time away from family, possible adverse impact on hobbies, social activities, career-related pursuits, travel from home, parking, childcare, other expenses
- Update or develop new brochures, recruitment materials, ads
 - At VACO, each VAMC within each NAC organization
 - Each brochure should address:
 1. What is VAVS mission?
 2. Why are volunteers important to the VHA and VAMC?
 3. What volunteer opportunities exist?
 4. How do I volunteer?
 - Highlight VHA improvements, successful programs at VHA and at local VAMC level
 - To attract a “younger” generation for volunteers, ensure pictures and materials reflect a “youthful” focus in both patients and volunteers
 - Include contact data for VAVS office, NAC VAVS representatives

Where to Find Volunteers

- At NAC level, identify potential new NAC member organizations; invite to join NAC
 - Appropriate service, fraternal and civic organizations
 - Emerging veteran service organizations (VSO's) unique to recent operations, e.g. Soldiers Angels, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans for Freedom
 - At VAMC level, identify and approach local organizations for both fully scheduled and occasional volunteers, and for specific one-time events, e.g. Stand Downs, Welcome Home, etc. These might include:

<i>Business and Professional</i>	<i>Churches/Religious Groups</i>
<i>Volunteer Centers</i>	<i>Colleges (sororities/fraternities)</i>
<i>Unions/Trade</i>	<i>Youth Groups</i>
<i>Veterans Groups</i>	<i>Retired Military/Local Military Units</i>

Recruitment Tactics

- **Recruiting Goals** – At each VAMC, increase total number of volunteers and hours; lower average/median age of VAVS volunteers to 55-60
 - Recruiting by Age Demographics: Effective recruiting may depend on understanding of volunteer task have intergenerational appeal, i.e. what motivates a person to volunteer, what type tasks appeal to specific age groups

Great Depression and WWII Generation (1925-1945)

Affiliates with MISSION - Target this group with marketing that promotes a positive version of the VAVS such as reputation, mission, community pride, honor, duty and dedication. Keep busy with essentially non-physical tasks.

Baby Boomers (1945-1963)

- Highly skilled and educated
- Motivated by volunteer opportunities that meet their skill-set
- Team-oriented but prefer to work independent of management

- Need to see immediate results; assess impact their effort has
- Marketing message: emphasize opportunities to learn, give and grow, and the great value of their experience and individual talent
- Tasks: Assign to committees and positions of responsibility, e.g. recruitment committee, team leader for particular event, program

Generation X – the “Me” Generation (1964-1981)

- Motivated by personal benefit, “what’s in it for me; not working with others
- Overeducated and underemployed
- Gravitate to volunteer assignments that are fun but with compensation
- Marketing message:
 - Avoid overused phrases, clichés
 - Focus on flexibility, minimal supervision
- Tasks: Virtual volunteer tasks are appealing; do not assign to committees

General Y (1982-1999)

- Motivated by volunteer opportunities with positive outcomes
- Typically cynical, need to change the world, very questioning
- Very protective of their time
- Marketing message:
 - Appeal to their interest in issues
 - Short, snappy phrases
 - Recognize their technological knowledge and skills
- Tasks: Technical tasks, web-based work

- **VAVS Invitational Recruiting Strategy**

- One on One, Face to Face Recruiting: Tips for Success**

- Possess strong knowledge of VAVS history, plans for the future
 - Impart what the VAVS has done for you
 - Explain the benefits the potential volunteer will gain from volunteering for VAVS
 - Have copies of VAVS brochures, newsletters, position descriptions, and important articles published about the VHA, VAVS programs and activities
 - Identify a particular position(s); have the job description available
 - “Invite” the person to volunteer and wait for the answer
 - Have an application form with you, ask the prospect to fill it out right there, then offer to mail it for him/her or provide self-addressed stamped envelope, or take personally to VAMC VAVS office

- Targeted Recruiting**

- Family Volunteering** - Identify positions:
 - with a low age requirement
 - allow the family to work together
 - ideally require little commitment
 - available during times convenient to the family
 - with a “measurable” impact

- Youth/Teen Volunteering**

- identify positions tailored to age group (generally 13-18)

- recruit through parents, teachers, school principals
- recruit through recognized organizations, e.g. Boy/Girl Scouts, Church groups, Civic/Fraternal Youth organizations
- emphasize VAVS hours meet volunteer requirements for high school graduation
- push idea that VAVS volunteering helps prepare teens for the workplace
- teaches customer service, punctuality, dealing with diverse groups, personalities
- use teen VAVS volunteers to recruit other teens; excited, interested teen volunteers best recruiters of other teens

-OIF/OEF Veterans Volunteering

-VACO/VAMC VAVS Office

- each VAMC VSO consider creating 3-5 volunteer assignments specifically for OIF/OEF veterans
- create brochures and recruitment materials aimed at OIF/OEF veterans highlighting potential volunteer assignments tailored for OIF/OEF veterans
- identify positions and create job descriptions that allow volunteers to work with returning OIF/OEF veterans, e.g.:
 - Recreational therapy
 - Prosthetics
 - Mental Health/PTSD – Vet Centers
 - VA Social Work Office (support OIF/OEF program managers, peer counselors)
 - Fisher House
- Plan National Salute events highlighting VAVS service, e.g. use the National Salute Chairman (for 2008 Michael Vogel) to do press releases; participate in news stories with an OIF/OEF veteran about his/her military experiences, motivation to join VAVS as volunteer and what it means to the veteran

-NAC Member Organizations

- Develop organization specific brochures/recruitment materials for, or update existing materials directed at recruitment of OIF/OEF VAVS volunteers
- Establish internal and be familiar with VAVS procedures to be certified as a volunteer
- Set up booths at various OIF/OEF centered events, e.g. Welcome Home celebrations, Stand Downs, etc., to explain role of VAVS and sign up new veterans to “serve those who served”
- Connect with local active and reserve units prior to and after deployment, adopt while deployed. Ask family members to join VAVS as volunteers while the unit is deployed. Recruit veterans upon return for voluntary service; provide information on VA benefits/services available, e.g. 5-year free medical
- Distribute and display VAVS flyers at local universities, college bulletin boards aimed at OIF/OEF students; advertise internships, volunteer assignments available in medicine, physical therapy, radiology, ER services

- Encourage OIF/OEF volunteers to invite family, friends from college, work and military unit to join VAVS
- Encourage OIF/OEF veterans to complete Veteran History Project
- Publicize in national magazine, e.g. Legion, Columbia, etc. stories of OIF/OEF VAVS volunteers "From front lines of Iraq, Afghanistan volunteering at VA medical centers to serve those who served"

-Broad-Based Recruiting

- Maintain high profile with media, i.e. frequent VAVS news releases, invite to specific VAVS programs, e.g. Stand Down, Salute Events, Welcome Home, etc.
- Distribution of up to date, quality materials, i.e. brochures, ads, posters within our NAC organization. Veterans groups/centers, etc.
- Network with businesses, community groups and leaders

-Managing Volunteer Recruitment

- Tailor to the organizational structure, network within NAC member organization
- Enter into collaborations and partnerships
 - with other NAC member organizations, veterans groups
 - share recruitment techniques and materials with other NAC organizations
 - share marketing and public relations materials, techniques
 - develop collaboration with other organizations with similar goals/interests
 - with colleges, universities

-Volunteer Retention

- Meaningful work with positive feedback
- Allow for personal growth, flexibility in assignments
- Be respectful of volunteers
- Eliminate barriers to use of volunteers
- Establish incentive programs for volunteers that reward hours worked, volunteers recruited, e.g. gift certificates, a gas allowance to help offset high gas prices*
- RECOGNITION** of volunteers' efforts key to personal satisfaction and retention

Summary

- Partnership and constant coordination between NAC organizations and VAVS at all levels is essential
- Understand what your organization brings to the table
- Be knowledgeable about the VAVS history, culture, value to the Veteran, the Nation
- Identify volunteer needs; develop, update, maintain volunteer position descriptions
- Continually review, update recruiting materials, ads
- Develop a coherent, flexible recruiting plan; follow that plan

- Provide meaningful recognition and feedback to volunteers you have
- Be sincere, innovative, flexible, always courteous***
- Have passion; it is contagious!***

“THE POWER IS IN THE ASK”