

Membership Campaigning at the Post Level



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with suggestions and ideas on how to organize and effectively carry out a membership campaign at the Post level.

To be successful, every Post Commander needs a strong and effective membership campaign. This requires planning and a thorough knowledge of the VFW and its various programs. Then, and only then, can a Post Commander be an effective leader.

Recruiting new and/or reinstated members is a matter of salesmanship, made more difficult by the fact that our salesmen are volunteers who are not paid for their work. To do a good job of selling, you must know the product—in this case, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, its programs and objectives. Questions will be asked and must be answered.

The most serious problem in VFW Posts is planning and effectively carrying out a membership program that covers all phases of membership recruitment: securing new members, reinstating former members and collecting continuous members' dues. A Post cannot rely entirely on dues notices that National Headquarters mails to every Annual member. Therefore, a membership program must be adopted and put into effect in every Post.

A successful membership campaign must be carefully planned and effectively carried out. Organizing a membership campaign must include capable personnel, good planning, continuous supervision and regular evaluation of the results. But most of all, hard work is required in order to get the job done.

PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

No membership program can be successful unless it is carefully planned and has definite objectives.

1. SELECT A COMMITTEE

Post Commanders should appoint a capable comrade as Membership (Chairman) Director, then work with this comrade in selecting a committee and planning a membership campaign. Members of the committee should be comrades the commander knows and trusts, people who are active and knowledgeable, members who are interested and above all, who can be counted on to do the job.

Two key members of the Committee should be the Post Quartermaster and Adjutant.

2. SET A GOAL

A quota should be set. Your quota should include new and reinstated members as well as continuous members. A percentage figure above the quota should also be set, as well as a date to achieve these goals.

3. BRIEF THE COMMITTEE

Dates should be set for the Membership Committee to report to the Commander and Membership Director on the progress of the membership campaign.

4. COMPILE A LIST

A list should be prepared by Post Quartermaster containing names and addresses of current and former members. These members should be contacted in person, by letter, telephone or email.

5. PUBLICIZE MEMBERSHIP EFFORTS

Use your Post publication (if you have one) and the Post bulletin board to emphasize your membership campaign. Post a list of delinquent and former members' names. Ask members of your Post to help sign up new and reinstated members as well as collect continuous members' dues.

Announce contests, dinners and other incentive awards. Advise the membership of your Post on progress of the membership drive, announce winners of contests and awards. Be sure to include District, Department and National contests as well.

CAMPAIGN SUGGESTIONS

The following are ideas and suggestions have been tried and proven to be successful by VFW Posts around the world:

TEAMS

The most successful method of setting up a membership drive is to appoint two (or more) captains who each will head a recruiting team. Team members should be appointed by the Post Commander, Membership Chairman or team captain. The number of members on a team may vary, but generally smaller groups are more effective.

Teams should collect dues from continuous members, call on former members, follow up leads on prospective new members, conduct door-to-door campaigns and telephone round-ups, email campaigns. Contests and/or other incentives should be used to put the teams on a competitive basis.

TELEPHONE CAMPAIGN

Proper use of a telephone campaign can be a most effective way to collect dues from continuous members and/or to reinstate former members. Membership teams should prepare lists showing the names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of continuous members who have not paid the current year's dues. The teams should be divided so that comrades who have a pleasant speaking voice and who are familiar with the VFW work the phones. Advise each delinquent member that the Post is now conducting its annual membership

campaign. Urge the member to pay dues now. You can direct members to www.vfw.org if they wish to renew their dues online, encourage them to visit the Post if that would be more convenient, or set up a time that a member can come pick up the dues.

Telephone campaigning can be done at any time, but is most effective if it is done on Saturday or Sunday, when members are most likely to be home.

When conducting a phone campaign it must be a personalized encounter. Ask questions on how they are doing, if the Post can assist in any way and then ask for dues payment.

Competitions, incentives and awards are ways you can make your membership drive more interesting and rewarding.

COMPETITIONS, INCENTIVES & AWARDS

COMPETITION

After you select your membership teams, set up contests among the teams. Determine a certain number of points for new, reinstated and continuous members. The team with the most points at a given date is the winner. Make the membership drive interesting, fun and challenging.

INCENTIVES

Set up awards for individuals or teams who perform the best during the membership campaign. Utilize National, Department and District membership awards.

Stimulate competition by announcing that the top recruiters will be guests at a dinner paid for by the Post. Have the losing team treat the winning team to dinner or have the losing team prepare a dinner for the winning team.

Offer prizes to individual members who sign up the greatest number of members over a certain period of time. Publicize in your Post publication and on the bulletin board the winner's name, awards, citations and prizes.

CONTESTS

There are many types of contests you can employ. The majority of National and State contests extend over a year. Posts should supplement these contests with contests of their own. They should be original and should run for shorter periods of time, four to six weeks for best results. Contests should be geared to retaining current members, reinstating former members and recruiting new members.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE U.S.

OBJECTIVES

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is an association of overseas campaign veterans dedicated to preserving and strengthening comradeship among its members, to assist worthy comrades, to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead and to assist their widows and orphans, to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States of America, to foster true patriotism and to preserve and defend the United States from all of her enemies.

ADVANTAGES OF VFW MEMBERSHIP

1. The expert assistance of State and National VFW Service Officers, as well as the Service Officer in your own Post, is available should you need to file a claim for hospital care, educational, pension or other benefits.
2. VFW provides assistance to protect existing veteran benefits, that you now receive or that you may be entitled to in the future, through the efforts of our VFW National Legislative Service in Washington, D.C. and your own VFW State Legislative Committee.

3. In the event of death, your children receive free admission to the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, with complete assurance that they will have every opportunity to grow up as proud, healthy and educated citizens.
4. An opportunity to take an active part in your VFW Post's patriotic, community service and youth activity programs.
5. An opportunity to become an officer of your Post; thereby developing your talents as a competent public speaker and respected civic leader.
6. Satisfaction in knowing that you are supporting an organization that fights for maximum defense and security of our country.
7. Receiving the VFW magazine each month which keeps you informed on all matters pertaining to your status as a veteran and those subjects that are close to your heart as a patriotic American.
8. The feeling of true comradeship that exists only among veterans who served overseas in time of war.
9. (If applicable) Social functions at the Post home and/or Post canteen. Activities for yourself as well as other members of your family.
10. The opportunity for your spouse and family to join the VFW Auxiliary, which works hand-in-hand with Post members in all functions and programs.
11. Personal benefits (refer to current Member Benefit flyer).

PERSONAL CONTACT

While well-run Posts can keep going with continuous members, they cannot grow without new blood. A constant campaign for new and reinstated members must be conducted, mainly to replace members who die, move out of town or for reasons of their own drop out of the VFW. The best method of convincing veterans they should belong to the VFW is by personal contact.

One method is a door-to-door campaign. This involves two or more members going door to door introducing themselves and asking eligible veterans to join the VFW. Each member should take another member along for training in the aspect of door-to-door campaigning. As a result, your working force will increase significantly and a wider area can be covered.

The “grapevine” or referral system produces a certain number of new and reinstated members in every Post. Each member knows veterans who are eligible and might be interested in joining the VFW. Encourage each member to furnish names of eligible veterans to your Membership Committee. If possible, have the member personally contact the eligible veteran along with a member of your Membership Committee.

Recruiting booths can be set up in shopping malls, state fairs, trade shows, military bases, gun shows, armories and other public places where people gather. Brochures and/or information of value to veterans can be distributed. Names and addresses of eligible veterans should be obtained for later contact.

Departments have unpaid and relocated members lists. Please contact them for updates.

PROSPECT LISTS

Your parents
Your children
Your in-laws
Your grandchildren
Your other relatives
Your mail carrier
Your grocer
Your barber
Your electrician
Your garbage collector
Your doctor
Your dentist
Your pharmacist
Your police officer
Your firefighter
Your lawyer
Your religious leader
Your co-worker
Your banker
Your car dealer
Your insurance agent
Your teacher
Your local reserve center or armory
Your local colleges (student veterans)

Past and present membership files should be checked. Compile a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of members who have not paid their dues. Consult these for further leads as well as referral names submitted by present members and Department veteran count lists. Prospects obtained from these sources should be contacted personally at home during the week in the evening, Saturdays or Sundays.

FACE-TO-FACE

- Present a well-kept appearance and a positive and helpful attitude.
- Talk to both the veteran and spouse at the same time (if possible).
- Be confident and knowledgeable about VFW procedures and programs.

- Offer background and history of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (advantages of belonging to the VFW).
- Explain membership requirements and goals of Post, District, Department and National.
- Know your product thoroughly.
- Present in simple language.
- Adapt your approach to the reaction of each prospect.
- Sell the VFW, its past achievements and its future goals.
- Don't forget to ask the prospective member to JOIN, and ask for referrals.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, tell them you will get it for them.

DOOR-TO-DOOR

Teams of two or more should be assigned certain blocks or areas (preferably blocks or areas with which they are familiar).

Teams take one street at a time, going door to door in the evenings, on Saturdays and Sundays. Introduce yourself and ask if any veterans live there. If so, ask if they served overseas. If no veterans live there, or they are not eligible to join the VFW, thank the person you talked to and move on to the next house. Because residents generally know their neighbors, you can ask whether any veterans live next door or across the street, thus avoiding your having to stop at every house.

The more teams that work the door to door canvass, the faster you will be able to canvass a city or area. If enough recruiters are not available and/or willing to do the job, train

others to be membership recruiters. Put an experienced person with a new recruiter. After 15 or 20 houses, the new recruiter should be able to make the presentation. Thereafter, he or she can also train additional recruiters.

Try this method. You will be amazed at the results. You will gain new members, plus have more members active in your Post.

WHAT TO SAY

*Hello, I'm _____
(your name)*

*with VFW Post _____
(number)*

*We are in the neighborhood (today/
this evening) talking to veterans.*

We would like to ask you a few questions.

*Are you or is your spouse a veteran?
Is there a veteran living in this house?*

*Did you or your spouse serve overseas?
During what years?*

*Did you or your spouse receive a
campaign service medal?*

*Do you or have you or your spouse ever
received any veterans benefits?*

If the answer is NO to the first question, thank them for their time and ask if they know whether any of their friends or neighbors are veterans. If so, ask for contact information.

If the answer is YES to the first question, and after asking the other questions you believe the veteran is eligible for membership in the VFW, continue on. If the veteran is not home, set up an appointment for a later day and time.

WHAT TO WRITE

We are conducting our annual membership drive. Membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is restricted to veterans who served overseas in times of conflict or war.

I believe you are eligible for membership in the VFW, and we would like to have you join. (Give advantages of membership in the VFW) All we need to do is check your last separation certification (DD214) or other proof of eligibility to verify your eligibility. We will fill out the application form and you may make a check out to VFW Post No. _____ for \$ _____ which represents one year's dues. Unless of course you desire to become a Life Member. (Explain Life Membership Program)

Other Proof of Eligibility:

- *Returning orders*
- *Leave and Earnings Statement*
- *Free mail/War Zone Pictures*
- *Hostile fire/Imminent Danger pay*
- *Qualifying award citation*

MEMBERSHIP BOOTHS

- Another method of recruiting new and reinstated former members is a membership booth. This method is fairly simple and can be used by nearly any Post, regardless of its size or location.

The following general outline will produce new members and help to reinstate former members.

A. START EARLY

- This will work best as a joint VFW and Auxiliary operation. Cooperation is key.
- Contact the manager of a shopping mall, trade show, state or county fair, or any place there is a large public gathering. Ask

permission (or pay) for space to set up a membership booth. Serve refreshments (if possible) at the booths.

- Give advance news releases to your local newspaper and radio stations regarding your membership booth.
- Place recruiting posters and signs in store windows, post signs at the entrance to your city and along major thoroughfares or any place the public will notice them.
- Obtain an adequate supply of recruiting and informational material. Some material is available from Department and National Headquarters. Other material can be obtained from the VFW Store.

B. THE OPERATION

1. Decorate your booth with recruiting posters. Display informational material on the table. At least one VFW member and one Auxiliary member (wearing VFW caps or ball caps with Post or VFW logo) should be in the booth at all times. Display a sign large enough to let everyone know you are there.
2. If local and state laws allow a drawing, get a member or merchant to donate a gift, prepare tickets with stubs that show name, address and telephone number, hold the drawing and save the stubs for later contact.
3. As eligible veterans visit the booth, inform them of the VFW programs and pass out informational material.
4. This is the most important! As eligible veterans visit the booth, have them fill out a form giving information on their military service and whether they are interested in joining the Veterans of Foreign Wars. If they wish to join immediately, SIGN THEM UP. If they don't wish to join at this time, DON'T BECOME DISCOURAGED. Just make

sure that you get their names and addresses and find out when they will be home.

C. THE FOLLOW UP

1. Within a few days, send out teams of members to contact the eligible veterans and talk to them about joining the VFW. This is the time to verify their eligibility and collect their dues.
2. Be sure your membership teams are prepared to answer questions about the various programs the VFW sponsors.
3. When a new member joins, make the new member feel welcome. Ask the new member to take an active part in the Post and to help recruit others. Remember that everything you do prior to calling on a prospective member is a form of advertising and public relations. Actual selling is done in homes where a veteran feels at ease and can give full consideration to the importance of being a member of our organization.

Try this program. We're sure it will pay off in new and reinstated members.

TELEPHONE CAMPAIGN

Past and present membership files should be checked. Compile a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of members who have not paid their dues. These can be called at home evenings, Saturdays and Sundays.

TELEPHONE APPROACH

- Be sure to smile just as you would if you were meeting a prospect "face to face."
- Use a pleasant and even speaking voice.

- Speak clearly and slowly into the phone.
- Be specific and to the point.
- If the first attempt to obtain payment of dues is not successful, suggest the advantages (see page 7) of belonging to the VFW. Again, make it personal. Ask questions about how they are and if they Post can assist them in any way. The last step is asking for dues. Evaluate the situation first.
- If a member's reason for refusing to pay dues is vague, try to overcome it and try again for the dues.
- Sell the VFW, its past achievements and future goals.
- Don't get angry. Accept criticism of your Post, District, Department or National. Overcome criticism by emphasizing the positive aspects of the VFW.
- Stay calm, cool and, above all, dignified. You represent your Post and the VFW.

WHAT TO SAY

_____, *this is*
(member)

_____, *I'm with*
(your name)

VFW Post No. _____.

I hope I am not disturbing you. Do you have a minute to talk?

IF YES:

Our Post is conducting its annual membership drive. I noticed that you have not paid your current year's dues. Our goal is to collect the dues of every one of last year's members and to recruit new members as early as possible. Some members

are in your area today collecting this year's dues. I would like to know what time it would be convenient for someone to stop by and pick up your dues? (If no time is stated, suggest one).

(if there is no objection)

*Thank you very much, _____.
We certainly appreciate your continued membership in our Post. We will have a member stop by (repeat time). Stop by the Post (club room, etc.) the next time you are in the area (downtown, etc.). We would be glad to see you.
Goodbye.*

(If there is an objection)

*Well, _____,
we feel there are many advantages to belonging to the VFW (name one or two advantages and wait for reaction, then try again to collect his dues.)*

IF NO:

I'm sorry I called at an inconvenient time. When would it be convenient for me to talk to you for a moment? (If the response is such as "what's this all about?" go back to "Our Post is conducting its annual membership drive and ...")

*If no time for a call back is specified by prospect, would _____ (day)
_____ (time) or _____ (day)
_____ (time) be better?*

**SAMPLE OBJECTIONS AND ANSWERS:
I CAN'T BE ACTIVE.
I CAN'T ATTEND POST MEETINGS.
I DON'T HAVE THE TIME.**

*Well, _____,
I realize that you (state the objection). We*

feel that every member who pays his dues is active and makes a contribution to the VFW. Your name on our membership roll lends support to all of our programs. Without people such as you, we would not be able to carry on the programs that benefit not only veterans but citizens of our community as well.

I DON'T HAVE THE MONEY.

I certainly can understand that. Would (state a time and day) be more convenient for you. (If no stated time, determine real objection and overcome it).

WHAT DO I GET FOR MY MONEY?
WHAT DOES THE VFW DO FOR ME?

Your membership in the VFW benefits veterans in this community as well as the state and nation. While you may not be receiving any veteran benefits directly, your membership in the VFW allows us to maintain and improve veterans' benefits so that they will be available to you, if and when you might need them.

Perhaps you have or are currently taking advantage of some veterans benefits, such as: VA Home Loan, VA Education, VA Hospitals, Compensation, Pensions, etc.

I DON'T DRINK.
I DON'T LIKE THE COMMANDER.
I DON'T LIKE THE WAY THE POST IS RUN.

For these situations, you must remove any reference to personalities, operations of Post home and/or canteen operations.

Be positive. Talk about the advantages of membership, what the benefits can be to the individual and other veterans.

There are many other objections that you possibly will encounter. Deal with each objection in a positive manner. Be polite, don't hang up. Overcome the objection and collect their dues.

EMAIL CAMPAIGN

This is one of the best and most efficient ways to communicate with your members. By building an email data base for your post you will be able to set up an email newsletter, or a dues reminder. One of the most important aspects of membership is to know your members and communicate with them. This is just another medium to use to get your message out to your members.

MEMBERSHIP IDEAS

It is not the responsibility of Post membership teams to do all the work. Every member should be involved and made to feel a part of the membership program. Post activities attract members. A strong, active Post helps promote membership. Some membership “builders” are:

- Activities in community service, Americanism and youth programs.
- Capable service officer to assist veterans in the community.
- Dances, dinners and other social functions for VFW members and their guests.
- Publicize all Post events.
- Clean, well-managed Post home and canteen (club room).
- Interesting Post meetings.
- An active, cooperative Auxiliary.

Once again, establish a membership program. You must initiate action, be aggressive, use some originality, publicize your program, exercise all your abilities to activate and motivate members within your Post:

- Personal Contact
- Telephone Campaign
- Dues Reminders
- Incentives
- Awards
- Contests

ADOPT A PLAN – PUT IT INTO ACTION

DUES REMINDERS

A substantial number of continuous members' dues are collected by dues reminder notices that National Headquarters mails to every member.

Additional letters and dues reminder notices should be mailed to members by the Post at times other than the mailings National Headquarters sends out.

Membership recruiting is a continuous process. Membership growth cannot be accomplished without (1) retaining our continuous members, (2) reinstating former members and (3) recruiting new members.

A membership campaign should start early and continue throughout the membership year. Add ideas of your own to the suggestions that are offered herein and you will have a successful membership program.

FOLLOW UP

START EARLY

This will allow more time to devote to other VFW programs. If your membership year is drawing to a close, or a contest deadline is approaching and your membership goal has not been reached, then you should go back to the basic ideas and suggestions offered in this handbook. Put your membership plan back into action.

- Start a telephone round-up to collect continuous dues.
- Organize a door-to-door campaign to recruit new and reinstated members.
- Always ask for referrals.
- Set up membership booths in public places.
- Set up an email campaign.

It is never too late to plan a membership campaign. This could spell the difference between success or failure for you.

MENTORING

Just what does your Post want when it puts on a membership drive? Does it just want more money in its treasury; does it just want a large and sudden increase in its numbers for the purpose of making a Department record or winning an award? Or does it primarily want to build itself into a strong permanent organization whose members are not just so many names on the roster, but definitely are integral parts of the Post and of the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a whole?

Posts would do well to remember that the Veteran who is worth recruiting is worth retaining.

WHY DOES THE VFW NEED MENTORS?

The general public knows the VFW as a group of veterans who share the experience of overseas service. However, as members, we recognize the organization as much more. To us, VFW is a fraternity brought together by a common experience. We are committed to certain values, including concern for fellow veterans, honoring and serving those in uniform and their families, patriotism and service to our communities and nation. Another common trait we share is our desire to see this organization and our values continue to future generations.

This is where mentoring becomes a vital factor.

To ensure the VFW and its values persevere for another century and beyond, we must do all we can to raise individuals who will lead this organization, remember its history and accomplishments, and carry on the legacy of service and patriotism for which we are known. In short, we need leaders who value the future of the VFW enough to invest their time in guiding future leaders from young veterans. We need VFW mentors.



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