

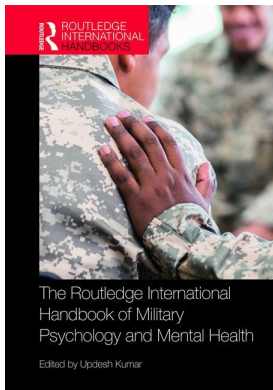
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Updesh Kumar

### **Military recruiting in the United States**

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# 14

## MILITARY RECRUITING IN THE UNITED STATES

### Selection, assessment, training, well-being, and performance coaching

*Stephen V. Bowles, Bettina Schmid, Laurel K. Cofell Rashti, Susan J. Scapperotti, Tracy D. Smith, Paul T. Bartone, and Peter Mikoski*

#### **Military recruiting in the United States: Recruiter characteristics, lifestyle, well-being, and performance coaching**

##### ***Introduction and history***

Maintaining critical force strength and composition is imperative to the national security of the United States. World events continue to demand a strong focus on recruiting personnel for all military services, which can be challenging when the economy is good and it is difficult to recruit applicants. Each military service has a recruiting command organization funded to focus specifically on the recruiting mission. These commands are responsible for sourcing highly qualified applicants to become Airmen, Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers, thus maintaining military readiness for each service.

Historically, the United States relied heavily on conscription, that is, compulsory enlistment. In 1973, the United States transitioned to an all-volunteer force. In the years following, as the United States recovered from the Vietnam War, the military forces were also recovering, and they had to reassess their role, culture, and identity. What eventually emerged was a military force focused on professionalism (Kitfield, 1995). This shift elevated the importance of recruiting, which promotes the importance of serving one's country through recruiting high-quality youth who will make up the emerging professional force (Rostker, 2006).

The U.S. Congress mandates personnel strength requirements for each component (both active and reserve) of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, 2017). Each recruiting command organization headquarters determines the accession goals for subordinate units, down to the lowest levels (e.g., recruiting stations). Requirements are based on data that take into account a number of factors for each geographical area, including demographics, desired military end strength, job specialty, state of the economy, education and income levels, political leanings, and propensity to serve. Recruiters experience the daily pressures of recruiting, a mission they have little input in determining and one that ultimately is the standard by which they measure their success as recruiters.

The U.S. Army was the first service to assign psychologists to support recruiting. The Office of the Command Psychologist in U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) was established in the early 2000s. At that time a recruiter selection instrument was developed and implemented along with an assessment process at the recruiter school along with a professional coaching program that was provided to some USAREC leaders in mid-level management (Borman et al. (2004); Bowles, Cunningham, De La Rosa, & Picano, 2007; Bowles & Picano, 2006; White, Borman, & Bowles, 2001). Today, the U.S. Army continues to be the only service that has assigned psychologists, though all the services continue to have service-specific screening requirements for recruiter applicants. In 2018, the USAREC Office of the Command Psychologist was awarded the Society of Military Psychology's prestigious Julius E. Uhlener Award for their innovative recruiter assessment and selection process providing better candidates (American Psychological Association, 2018). This chapter provides an overview of the U.S. military recruiter and the role of psychology in recruiting. It describes the characteristics and screening of recruiters, initial and ongoing recruiter training, lifestyle and challenges, motivation and positives of recruiting, characteristics of failing recruiters, the healthy workplace, and coaching in recruiting.

## **Future force characteristics of the recruiter**

### ***Service branch-specific screening requirements***

All services screen for the best non-commissioned officers (typically enlisted E-5 and E-6) for both active and reserve military recruiting. The methods for selecting active and reserve component recruiters vary by service. In the past, selection had little to do with the actual practice of military recruiting. The selection criteria included good performance evaluations, passing scores on the physical fitness test, and a good credit history. However, changes in the demand characteristics of the environment and advances in personnel selection practices have resulted in enhanced recruiter selection procedures to ensure candidates have the necessary maturity and skills to serve in this role.

Currently, selection of recruiters is a multistep process drawing from several sources. Information regarding a candidate's personal background, legal history, finances, medical and psychological functioning, and character are taken into account. All branches require the recommendation of the candidate's unit commander who may also be asked to identify any current or past legal, disciplinary, or financial concerns; comment on current hardships or character-related concerns; and describe the individual's occupational and physical performance. In addition, potential recruiters may also undergo formal background checks from various agencies. Military justice databases and personnel records are searched to ensure that any past instances of misconduct are identified. These steps occur simultaneously and effectively winnow down the pool of eligible recruiter candidates (Department of the Navy, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2012; U.S. Navy Personnel Command, 2018; U.S. Department of the Air Force, 2018; U.S. Department of the Army, 2016).

### ***Behavioral health mental status exam***

Medical and psychological screenings are part of the recruiter selection process for all branches, with varying degrees of stringency. Psychological suitability for recruiting duty is determined in various ways. For example, prospective Marine recruiters must have a medical examination within 12 months of the recruiting class reporting date; disqualifying conditions may include "problems with stress or psychological dysfunction" (Department of the Navy, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2012). Similarly, Navy recruiter candidates undergo a medical records

screening by a medical provider and may be disqualified for recruiting duty if they have “a history of stress-related problems such as depression, suicidal ideation, nervous breakdowns, and anger management issues” (U.S. Navy Personnel Command, 2018). The policy governing Air Force recruiting selection specifies a “Mental Health review will be evaluated ... No record of emotional instability, personality disorder, sexual misconduct or other unresolved mental health problems that will interfere with the ability to perform Recruiting duty (sic)” (U.S. Department of the Air Force, 2018).

U.S. Army recruiter candidates undergo a stringent psychological screening process. Per Army Regulation 601-1 (U.S. Department of the Army, 2016), recruiter candidates are required to have a behavioral health suitability assessment. This assessment is conducted by a trained clinician and consists of a face-to-face evaluation and review of available medical records, and may include objective psychological measures (Gomez, Agnor, Jenkins, McClenen, & Schmid, 2015). The clinician reviews psychiatric history, substance use history, medical concerns (including pain conditions), social history, current psychosocial stressors, education and work history, legal and disciplinary history, and financial status. Individuals may be deemed unsuitable for recruiting duty if they have a diagnosis or condition that causes emotional instability. Individuals may be temporarily or permanently screened out for current and past psychological concerns as well as a history of problematic behavior.

While some recruiter candidates volunteer for the duty, the majority are chosen by supervisors and may have varying degrees of motivation. Recruiting duty differs from other job application processes in that many of the candidates may not even want the job, and in extreme cases may seek to amplify disqualifying information. Similarly, among those who volunteer to be recruiters, there may be a tendency to minimize disqualifying information. As such, it is important that the screening process address individuals who may try to falsify or overstate positive or negative information.

### ***Recruiter aptitude***

The effective recruiter should possess certain personality traits, interpersonal skills, and technological abilities. Past research indicates there are personality characteristics that successful Army military recruiters appear to share. These include agreeableness, hardiness, interpersonal skills, self-esteem, and social perceptiveness (Borman et al., 2003; Borman et al., 2002). In the past, the U.S. Air Force used the EQ-I emotional intelligence instrument, and found the characteristics most likely to relate to success on the job were assertiveness, empathy, happiness, problem solving, and self-awareness (as cited in Stein & Book, 2011). In the U.S. Army, a series of studies was conducted from 2000 to 2005 with the Noncommissioned Officer Leadership Skills Inventory (NLSI) (Borman et al., 2004; White, Borman, & Bowles, 2001). The NLSI measures characteristics related to recruiter performance for interpersonal skills, leadership capability, and work orientation. In 2008 the instrument was renamed the Warrior Attributes Inventory (WAI), which, like the NLSI, was implemented and administered at Digital Training Facilities worldwide. Since then, a new instrument has evolved out of the WAI called the Noncommissioned Officer Special Assignment Battery (NSAB) (Horgen et al., 2013); however, it has not yet been fully implemented.

Many studies have investigated the relationship between sales performance and personality traits. Researchers have found positive correlations between sales performance and openness and conscientiousness (Furham & Fudge, 2008); a general factor of personality including altruism, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion (Sitsler, Van Der Linden, & Marise, 2013); and multi-tasking (Conte & Gintoff, 2005). Further, Furham and Fudge (2008)

found a negative correlation between agreeableness and sales performance, speculating that high agreeableness is negatively correlated with competitive drive in team sales settings. While many studies, such as the one conducted by Furham and Fudge (2008), have failed to find significant linear relationships between extraversion and sales performance, Grant (2013) found that ambiverts outperformed both introverts and extraverts in sales performance. Such studies can be used to inform selection of military recruiters as well as training recruiters to key skills. Additionally, a meta-analysis found five key drivers of sales performance to be selling-related knowledge, degree of adaptiveness, role ambiguity (negatively correlated), cognitive aptitude, and work engagement (Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011). As a psychologist it is important to understand the training and skills of the recruiting occupation.

### **Recruiter training in the Air Force recruiting school**

Each service has similar training and approaches in meeting the recruiting mission. As an example, we will use the U.S. Air Force to illustrate the process of training new recruiters. The Air Force recruiter falls under one of the three components: Regular Air Force (Reg AF), Air Force Reserve (AFRes), or Air National Guard (ANG). Air Force recruiter training is conducted at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and it is controlled by the Air Education and Training Command. The courses are accredited by the Community College of the Air Force, and the credits can be applied towards an Associates of Applied Science in Human Resources degree (Department of the Air Force, 2017).

Although students may have achieved expertise in their previous career field, they often find recruiting to be a new and unfamiliar challenge. The curriculum is demanding and students often find it easier if they connect with fellow classmates. Certified instructors train the students on a civilian sales model that is contracted to the Air Force. Currently, under guidance of the Secretary of the Air Force, the three Air Force components are partnering to merge the three separate recruiting courses into a single Total Force course (Department of USAF, 2017).

The scope of recruiter training consists of time and stress management, sales presentations, sales telephone techniques, persuasive presentation, eligibility requirements for military service, and applicant processing procedures. This training includes basic computer applications and advanced computer technology. Students are taught the sales model by the instructor through lecture and demonstration.

The Air Force recruiting school has a unique approach to student evaluation. First, students must pass a written test. Second, students take a performance test in which they must demonstrate proficiency in accession of a simulated prospect from start to finish. This is accomplished in six phases including the following tasks:

1. Give a speech to fellow classmates (simulating high school or college students) to develop public speaking skills as well as teach fellow recruiters how to prospect for applicants.
2. Collect and prioritize potential leads following the speech.
3. Complete a telephone call to the highest qualified lead (played by the instructor). The student must determine if the applicant tentatively meets eligibility requirements as well as properly demonstrate sales techniques.
4. Meet with the applicant in person (also played by the instructor).
5. Brief the applicant for the military entrance physical exam and complete required documents.
6. Performance of component-specific training and evaluation.

## **On-boarding training for regular Air Force recruiting**

After graduation, RegAF recruiters report to their new assignment where they spend their first year working on certification in recruiting. They begin their training under the supervision of the Flight Chief (e.g., Station Commander in the Army, Leading Petty Officer in the Navy, and Sub Station Commander in the Marine Corp). Training is tracked through the Air Force Training Record (AFTR) database. The supervisor documents the training on the Job Qualification Standards (JQS), which outlines training tasks and timelines for completion. The Flight Chief conducts a 14-day shadowing program that includes demonstration, observation, and feedback. The new recruiter creates an annual, quarterly, monthly, and daily plan of tasks which is reviewed by the supervisor.

Over the course of the first year, the recruiter continues to work with guidance from his/her supervisor. Within the first quarter, a squadron trainer (from a higher echelon) schedules a visit of at least 2 days for training which includes demonstration, observation, and feedback on any training deficiencies. In addition to figuring out the new job and its flow, the recruiter is also assigned a recruiting quota known as their goal. The goal for a rookie recruiter is gradually increased as he/she gains proficiency.

The Squadron Production Superintendent personally reviews the recruiter's training and performance for the first year, and the individual receives certification if all goals and expectations have been met. The recruiter will then join the remaining members within the unit to receive routine professional training. For production, recruiters who miss their monthly assigned goal are placed on a remedial plan which includes close supervision and guidance to help them improve.

## **The inside life of the (Air Force) recruiter**

Recruiting can be a stressful job, but most recruiters will agree that it can also be very fulfilling. Recruiters develop trusting relationships with applicants, providing career guidance, mentorship, and general support in addition to helping them enlist in the military. In the recruiter-applicant relationship, each party has roles and responsibilities. The common expectations of an applicant include being mentally and physically fit for military service, being honest, following recruiter directions, being on time for appointments, and serving as a referral for other potential applicants. Expectations of the recruiter in this relationship include maintaining regular communication with applicants, timely and expedient processing, friendly and courteous behavior, being knowledgeable about the Air Force, and being honest and forthcoming.

Each recruiter is assigned a territory called a "zone." This zone specifies a population of Americans within the age range and demographics that the military strives to recruit. The recruiter makes an annual, quarterly, and daily plan of how he/she will meet the monthly enlistment goal for the assigned zone. The following sections describe core tasks that are typically incorporated into a recruiter's plan, including planning, school visitation, zone advertising, marketing, social media, telephone prospecting, recruiter generated mail, sales appointments, applicant perpetuation, applicant processing, and administrative action. If recruiters can properly plan and act on these core tasks, they should find success within their jobs.

### ***Planning***

Planning is the foundation for a recruiter's job. Thoughtful scheduling will ensure recruiters are working ahead of the timelines. Plans must be feasible and flexible.

### ***School visitation***

Unlike recruiters from other branches of the military, Air Force recruiters have large territorial zones that they cover independently. Recruiters' zones generally consist of 6 to 10 schools (e.g., high schools, community colleges, universities, and vocational schools) they are expected to visit. Prioritizing the schools ensures that recruiters focus their time and effort on the institutions where the students are more likely to have interest in the military. In addition to prospecting for potential applicants, recruiters also focus on influencers within the school. Influencers can include guidance counselors, teachers, coaches, principals, secretaries, and any official within the school who may facilitate contact with the student population. The public school systems generally allow recruiters to access students through career fairs, lunchroom setups, and guest speaking and provide student informational lists to recruiters.

### ***Zone advertising***

Recruiters are given a budget to advertise within their zones. Advertising is targeted to the positions and demographics for their component's needs. If resources are low, recruiters will normally set up take-one boxes or hang up flyers within their zones to promote awareness. Schools usually designate a location that allows military recruiters to leave information for the students.

### ***Marketing***

Joint Advertising Market Research Studies (JAMRS) aids and assists the branches of the military with market research. This agency ensures the campaigns for each of the branches are based on empirical data. As Air Force recruiting moves toward the Total Force model, the marketing strategy will adjust accordingly. The budget and campaign strategies vary from year to year at the national level.

### ***Social media***

Social media has become a new, inexpensive tool that allows recruiters to attract a larger pool of applicants, connect with younger generations, and target specific audiences. In order to make this tool effective, the recruiter looks at social media trends and peak times for posting and strategically incorporates these into the recruiting plan.

### ***Telephone prospecting***

Telephone prospecting is a way in which recruiters can identify people who may be interested in military service, with the goal of the call being to schedule an appointment with a qualified applicant. Recruiters collect lists of leads obtained from various sources such as schools and ASVAB testing lists.

### ***Recruiter-generated mail***

Recruiter-generated mail consists of mailing out fliers or brochures advertising the Air Force to potential applicants. However, it is becoming an obsolete tactic of recruiting.



### ***Sales appointments***

By meeting face-to-face, the recruiter attempts to help an individual meet their career and or life goals through joining the service. Recruiters focus on getting to know their applicants and understanding their needs and circumstances. This information guides the discussion on the benefits of military service. Recruiters are also trained on overcoming objections. Applicants may have personal concerns or misguided information, and recruiters help them work through those concerns. Recruiters establish trust with the applicant, determine their eligibility, and help determine the next step in the process towards joining the military.

### ***Applicant perpetuation***

This is the process of asking satisfied customers to provide referrals to the recruiter. Recruiters are taught to perpetuate with anyone they encounter. They perpetuate through applicant appointments; applicants who have already enlisted; handing out business cards; and asking school guidance counselors, teachers, friends, and family members if they know of anyone interested in hearing or learning more about the Air Force.

### ***Applicant processing***

Applicant processing is mandatory for all applicants of the Armed Forces. This includes taking the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a timed multi-aptitude test (may be completed at various locations such as a local National Guard Armory), and completing a thorough medical examination at a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS).

### ***Administrative action***

Recruiters have many administrative responsibilities. Attention to detail by recruiters is crucial to ensure that the applicants' forms are completed correctly the first time to avoid delays and errors.

A week of recruiter activity will normally consist of the following:

1. Two to three planned school visits.
2. Two to three appointments per day (1 hour per appointment).
3. Telephone calls (approximately 100 per week).
4. One to two hours of social media advertising/posting per week.
5. Ten hours of Administrative Action per week.
6. One to two hours of zone posting/canvassing per week. Zone canvassing is considered any type of act or action that promotes the U.S. Air Forces with the goal of generating leads and brand awareness. Zone posting is when the recruiting posts information all around the community to aid in recruiting efforts.
7. MEPS processing (e.g., transporting applicants to and from MEPS at least once per week).

Recruiting duty can be rewarding, and the connection between applicant and recruiter can ultimately make the difference in an applicant's life. The job can be demanding and stressful at times, but those who stay positive and strive to improve their skills can find success.



### Challenges of recruiting

Irrespective of service, most new recruiters suddenly enter a world of selling, far different from their previous military career occupation. This can be challenging for many recruiters, as they may have to make more than 10,000 contacts to produce 50 to 60 recruits that successfully complete basic training (Randolph, 2012). To gain more insight on the lives of recruiters, a survey was conducted at the U.S. Army Recruiting and Retention School with 26 recruiters and 11 junior-level recruiting managers. These 37 soldiers participated in focus groups to discuss the three-year cycle of six specific areas in recruiting (Table 14.1).

In conjunction with the results of this survey, we have used extensive observations, experience, and discussions with recruiters to illuminate many of the challenges that recruiters typically face. To begin, recruiters usually move to an environment miles away from any military installation and are not afforded the typical support systems to which they have become accustomed. The recruiter has to adapt to a new home, possibly fewer hours with his or her family, and life outside of a military installation. Many recruiters have neither the interest nor intention of making this duty into a permanent career. They often have less time for themselves and their family due to the long hours demanded on the job.

For the recruiter, working a 60-hour week is not uncommon. In addition to the long hours, this is one of the toughest military jobs outside of combat deployment. Once recruiters have accomplished their monthly mission, the pressure begins again to find the next applicants for the upcoming month.

Table 14.1 Survey conducted at U.S. Army Recruiting and Retention School, Fort Jackson, SC 2004

	<i>Year 1 recruiter</i>	<i>Year 2 recruiter</i>	<i>Year 3 recruiter</i>
What are the hardest aspects of recruiting to stay motivated in?	Time management Locating quality prospects Salesmanship	Time management Locating quality prospects Delayed entry maintenance	Time management Delayed entry maintenance Work hours/time off
Which areas of your training enabled you to be the most effective?	Salesmanship Time management Product knowledge Locating quality prospects	Salesmanship Time management Closing	Delayed entry maintenance Product knowledge Locating (maintaining) quality prospects
What aspects of your job are most problematic?	Workload Time management Locating quality prospects	Time management Mission completion Workload	Time management Mission completion Workload
Which aspects of your life, other than your job, are the most problematic?	Health lifestyle Time management Education opportunities	Health lifestyle Recreation opportunities Time management	Health lifestyle Time management Spouse/relationships
What are the most stressful aspects of your life?	Work Time management Spouse/relationships	Time management Work Spouse/relationships	Work Time management Spouse/relationships
What best helps you to cope with the stresses of your life?	Spouse/significant other Exercise Talking to friends	Spouse/significant other Exercise Talking to family	Spouse/significant other Exercise Talking to friends

With the pressures of the job environment, the recruiter needs a supportive family. Most spouses, parents, and siblings are supportive of the recruiter; however, there are challenges. Families of recruiters are constantly adjusting to new environments, as the service member changes assignments and duty locations every few years. The long hours of the job mean less time at home, which may become a source of marital conflict and cause children to act out. It is not uncommon for a recruiter to miss eating meals with the family on a regular basis. Due to the high cost of living in some areas, housing may be less affordable and recruiters may live in less desirable areas.

Recruiters are often left with little time for themselves, and may experience a decline in healthy lifestyle habits. Some recruiters report sleep problems due to the stress of the job. Generally, they report being in worse physical condition than before recruiting and often gain weight. Most do not maintain a healthy diet. Often, they eat fast food out of their car since they are usually travelling between appointments. Such time constraints are worsened when many feel pressured to work while on vacation. Recruiter production cycle over three years may be low as they start their jobs and low as they end their recruiting duty and begin planning to move back into their previous occupations.

### **Recruiter motivation and personal resources**

Though many aspects of recruiting are stressful, it can also be extremely rewarding and motivating. Many acknowledge their time in recruiting was a period of personal growth. They develop business skills, including marketing, advertising, and sales techniques, and further develop human relations skills. Many recruiters also grow in cultural awareness when moving to a different social environment (e.g., military to civilian).

One of the most rewarding aspects of recruiting comes from the satisfaction of helping a young recruit find direction. Recruiters stated that once a new recruit returns from basic training, they display significant growth, with a greater sense of discipline and new values. They have been given an opportunity and a means to meet their goals and to develop as individuals.

This change reflects positively on the military as well. When a community witnesses the dramatic transformation of one of its youth, the reputation and image of the military is enhanced. Recruiters also find satisfaction in promoting the military while helping out in the community. Recruiters are the ambassadors of the military services for the civilian sector, serving as great role models and positive forces for our youth and communities.

Staying motivated is necessary for recruiters to be effective and successful in their jobs. In the previously mentioned survey and focus group, participants were asked to identify the factors that motivate them to be successful at work. The most common responses were the feeling of success (i.e., achieving recruiting goals), positive feelings associated with helping others (they saw themselves helping applicants find solid career paths and ways to serve their country), time off with family and friends, and providing a good quality of life for themselves and their families. These factors were inter-related in that recruiters placed importance on having balance in their lives. The success at work provided time off and the opportunity to spend time with loved ones, and this gave them a chance to recharge and have energy for the next week.

Taking a different approach, Dertouzos and Garber (2006) looked at recruiter motivation and production from a human resource management perspective. Their study of Army recruiting suggested the combined effect of implementing multiple policies could have a significant effect on production. One key implication of this study is that having an understanding of individual recruiter characteristics associated with production (and the interaction with local markets) can be used to inform decisions about selection of personnel for recruiting and where to place them

(e.g., recruiters are more productive when assigned to a station in their home state). This study also confirmed that setting performance goals is associated with increased effort and productivity. The authors also found that completing a recruiting assignment was beneficial to a soldier's career, and high-performing recruiters were promoted ahead of their peers, which may be a motivating factor for these soldiers. In a subsequent study, Dertouzos and Garber (2008) looked at models of recruiter performance evaluation, noting that the standards by which recruiters are evaluated must be perceived as fair in order to have a motivating effect.

### **Psychologists work with failing recruiters and work settings**

With new recruiters, the transition into sales may be difficult. Recruiters were once confident high performers in their previous military jobs. However, in recruiting, they are dealing with the civilian world, having a harder time completing their mission, and may begin to question themselves. It can also be hard, especially in times of complicated social and world issues, to work outside of a normal military structure; some may find it difficult to work with civilians when they feel that they do not offer much gratitude or support.

There is also constant pressure to perform at high standards. Individuals may notice that other recruiters in their station display symptoms of "cracking under the pressures" of recruiting. They may be consistently late for work, show lower performance, engage in unsafe driving, avoid going home, gain or lose weight, experience sleep problems, increase their dependence on alcohol/drugs, show signs of burn out, and demonstrate changes in their interpersonal behavior (angry outbursts or negative attitude). Recruiters coming back from war settings may also exhibit anxiety or depressive symptoms described above after experiencing the stresses of recruiting. They may seek help in performance enhancement training to get back on the right track, and at this time, the trainer and/or supervisor may recognize more help is needed. Work stresses, along with a lack of family time (and the guilt associated with it), may result in a supervisor or self-referral by recruiters and self-referral by family members for counseling to address family needs with those of military operations.

### ***Resources for struggling military recruiters***

Struggling military recruiters may engage in treatment with civilian or nearby military healthcare resources, but may also seek help from resources like Military One Source, a contracted service that provides a broad range of consultation and mental health services, or Reserve chaplains or chaplains from nearby installations. Given the stigma still associated with seeking mental health services, recruiters may turn to resources with strict confidentiality and may not tell their leaders that they are seeking help.

Recruiters with significant problems may require coordination of care with their healthcare provider and command. This serves the purpose of ensuring the service members receive the needed care and leaders are able to modify the individual's work requirements appropriately. In some cases, based on the mental health recommendation, struggling recruiters may need to have their duties limited or modified to allow time for treatment. If a recruiter has been away for a period of time for treatment, the process of returning to work will vary depending on the circumstances (e.g., seriousness of their condition, time away from work). If the recruiter is not able to integrate back into recruiting, he/she may be assigned less stressful administrative recruiting tasks. In some instances, a return to production recruiting may be difficult and not fit into the member's life circumstances, resulting in a transfer back to another military assignment. In other more serious cases where a member is not fit for duty, further medical and administrative

actions may occur. Healthcare providers can assist command by helping leaders understand which duties (described “Inside the Life a Recruiter” section) the recruiter is likely to be able to successfully execute.

### ***Promoting recruiter well-being***

Many recruiters do not have easy access to the usual resources located on U.S. military installations. Managing personal time has to include an investment in exercise, getting adequate sleep, and eating nutritious food. Managers have a vested interest in ensuring that recruiters maintain physical well-being, in part because a physically fit recruiter provides a better representation of their of service. In addition, recruiters who are not engaging in basic self-care are placing themselves at risk for unsafe driving, safety mishaps, and decreased performance (Litwiller, Snyder, Taylor, & Steele, 2017).

Maintaining family support is also critically important for recruiting communities. Recruiters may work long hours and be away from home, and the support network typically present at military installations may not be available. If family members are not inclined to get involved in “non-military” social or community avenues of engagement, recruiting duty may be a very lonely assignment. Commander efforts to bolster family support may include regular gatherings at family-friendly venues during a time that is generally convenient for all and does not require extra time at work. Ultimately, however, recruiters and their families should be encouraged to engage in community events and be given the time to do so. These efforts not only improve family support and engagement but may also provide prospects through community contact, such as religious or community organizations. Leaders may encourage recruiters’ families to visit the recruiter during certain events, such as fairs and other public engagements. This approach also supports a “family-friendly” military image that may appeal to potential recruits.

### ***Promoting an ethical recruiting environment***

Just as senior leaders can impact the psychological health of the workplace and employees, senior leaders and managers can also foster a workplace culture that encourages unethical or dangerous conduct, also known as behavioral drift. In their review of the literature, Appelbaum, Iaconi, and Matousek (2007) identified several common factors that may contribute to workplace deviance, some of which may occur in recruiting environments. First, organizational culture factors, such as a “bottom line” focus on numbers and quotas, may tempt individuals to cut corners to meet mission requirements. A real-life example of this may be falsifying documents to push forward an unqualified prospect.

Conversely, a sense of shared well-being and organizational concern with individual welfare may decrease politically deviant behaviors such as showing favoritism and undue criticism, whereas job-related frustration is likely to result in interpersonal deviant behaviors. Organizations that uphold high standards of behavior and hold individuals accountable for maintaining organizational policies have fewer instances of property deviance, such as stealing from the organization.

Ensuring leaders model ethical values is also critically important. If individuals in roles of authority are allowed to act in a deviant manner, the behavior they embody becomes acceptable, and over time the degree of deviance may increase, resulting in a significant shift in organizational norms. Appelbaum et al. (2007) also identified several factors that can encourage “positive deviant behaviors,” such as innovation. By setting up environments in which employees are engaged, feel a personal stake in the organizational outcomes and a sense of shared mission, and are rewarded

for process improvement and innovation, leaders can encourage positive innovation. Finally, leaders can encourage their service members to intervene if they become concerned about the behavior or well-being of a peer by providing bystander intervention training. As Elliman, Shannahoff, Metzler, and Toblin (2018) have demonstrated, peers are often the ones observing deviant or concerning behavior and may be most able to intervene at an early stage. Because recruiters are usually placed in small units and have significant autonomy and minimal oversight, it is critical that organizational culture encourage ethical behavior.

### ***Creating a healthy workplace***

Leaders are encouraged to develop policies that require subordinate leaders to follow or develop programs that promote recruiter well-being. Some research suggested important areas of well-being related to production were realistic work demands, co-worker support, spirituality, friendship support, and medical services support (Bowles, Bartone, Cooke & Swisher, 2018). Hardiness has also been found to predict performance in recruiting (Bowles & Bartone 2017). Further, Bartone & Bowles (2018) have shown that personality hardiness interacts with active, problem-focused coping to predict improved recruiter performance. One model that has demonstrated success in corporate America is the American Psychological Association Center for Organizational Excellence's "psychologically healthy workplace."

Psychologists can facilitate a "psychologically healthy workplace" by encouraging recruiting organizations to adopt practices in five different domains: employee involvement, work-life balance, employee growth and development, health and safety, and employee recognition. Recruiting commands can incorporate each of these domains while still meeting and in many cases facilitating organizational goals. Supervisors can improve work-life balance by ensuring that the recruiter has projected their vacation time throughout the year in their annual planning. They may also limit the number of hours worked per day, ensure that time off is predictable, and allow family participation when appropriate. Ensuring that recruiters get adequate time for rest and leisure is another way to promote workplace health and safety, as fatigue is a significant contributor to workplace mishaps and decreased productivity (Hafner, Stepanek, Taylor, Troxel, & Van Stolk, 2017). Leaders can promote a safe and healthy work environment by ensuring that the recruiter has budgeted their time with exercise and wellness check-ups as well as provide a physically and psychologically safe and secure workplace environment.

Organizational leaders can also recognize individual employee strengths and interests and allow employees to "self-sort" into particular tasks or missions, thereby improving employee involvement and self-determination in taking ownership of their duty schedule and responsibilities. Further, leaders can promote growth by allowing the recruiter to become an office trainer to newly assigned recruiters and or offer development opportunities such as coaching or attendance at career-enhancing military training or schools. Finally, leaders may use existing means of recognition, such as awards, or may develop their own processes for recognition at lower levels of the organization, potentially using incentives such as time off. These strategies, which may contribute to a psychologically healthy workplace, not only promote employee satisfaction, morale, and stress management, but also result in improved work quality, performance, and productivity (Grawitch, Gottschalk, & Munz, 2006).

### **Coaching**

Research since the mid-2000s found mixed results for non-psychologist coaching of leaders in military recruiting for production. Two studies on coaching military leaders have directly investigated

the impact of coaching in military recruiting. Using a within-subject design, Bowles and Picano (2006) found that coaching enhanced the quality of life for First Sergeants in the U.S. Army Recruiting Command. In an effort to determine the utility of coaching in this military environment, the researchers measured participant changes in goal attainment, quality of life, and productivity as a result of coaching interventions. Nineteen participants attended 8 to 12 hours of instruction (leadership and goal setting) and agreed to participate in telephone coaching sessions over the next six months, conducted by a coach highly experienced in Army recruiting. After controlling for the age of the recruiter, results revealed a significant correlation between adherence and work satisfaction such that individuals who closely followed the advice of the coach reported higher work satisfaction than those who did not adhere to the advice of the coach. Further, a relationship between life satisfaction and adherence approached significance, indicating that life satisfaction might increase alongside adherence to coaching. Perhaps due to the small sample size and shorter coaching time period, there was not a significant relationship between coaching and productivity.

In a subsequent study, Bowles, Cunningham, De La Rosa, and Picano (2007) attempted to address some of these methodological concerns. Thirty Station Commanders (middle managers) and 29 executive managers (Company Commanders and First Sergeants) were recruited to participate in both an 8 to 10-hour leadership, energy management, goal setting training, and a series of coaching sessions over the course of one year. As in the previous study, the non-psychology coaches were individuals with extensive backgrounds in military recruiting, supervised by a psychologist. Using both within- and between-subject designs, the investigators found that participants both outperformed their un-coached more experienced incumbent peers and developed stronger leadership competencies. The results indicated that coached participants developed stronger skills in the areas of task-goal planning, time management, daily progress reporting, analysis, and general leadership. Further, the benefits of coaching were strongest for middle managers when compared to executive managers. This limited number of studies found in our review provides support for the value of coaching for either greater work satisfaction or productivity for these leaders in the recruiting environment.

In turning to the civilian literature, the coaching articles focused on other valuable areas, but none were related to sales and performance. Grant, Curtayne, and Burton (2009), using a randomized controlled waitlist design, assigned 41 high-level managers to receive 10 weeks of professional coaching (four coaching sessions administered every two weeks). Participants both scored higher in measures of goal attainment, resilience, and well-being and scored lower on measures of depression. Similarly, MacKie (2014) investigated the impact of strength-based coaching on senior-level managers. Using a non-equivalent group waitlist design, MacKie assigned 37 Australian senior managers to either an intervention or a waitlist control group (who received coaching after the intervention group had finished). The study utilized 11 professional executive coaches to provide goal oriented coaching over six 90-minute sessions. Results indicated that members of the intervention condition reported higher levels of transformational leadership, satisfaction, and willingness to put in extra effort than members of the control condition.

As indicated by Grant and colleagues and MacKie, professional coaches provide effective, targeted coaching that leads to increased well-being and productivity. In a 2016 meta-analysis of coaching research, Jones, Woods, and Guillaume found that results were significantly higher when coaching was provided by an internal member of an organization rather than an outsider. Coaching presents a promising way to effectively enhance military recruiters' well-being and performance, though further research needs to be conducted in military recruiting. Finally, some best practices identified by successful coaching that may be applied in the recruiting community that are used in business are goal setting, consultative feedback, and cognitive restructuring of ideas (Vandaveer, Lowman, Pearlman, & Brannick, 2016).



## Summary

Recruiters are the face of the U.S. services they represent, tasked with attracting and hiring high-quality men and women to meet military personnel end strength and readiness goals. Recruiting is a military career field that is both challenging and rewarding. Psychologists have had an important role in studying, advising, and supporting military recruiters and leaders on behavioral health matters inherent in selection, training, operations, resilience and well-being, and professional growth.

Researchers and leaders in recruiting have gradually gained a better understanding and refined the selection and screening process to bring on board service members who will best represent the military and have the requisite skills for success, such as communication skills, assertiveness, optimism, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, well-being, adaptability, self-awareness, and stress resilience. In recruiting school, psychologists have provided consultation to leaders and faculty on various aspects of training, as recruiters obtain skills such as product knowledge, time management, marketing, locating prospects, selling, communicating through social media, and processing recruits.

Today's recruiters face a fast-paced, goal-oriented lifestyle that includes a varied schedule. Recruiters often spend long hours focusing on production, which leaves less time for attention to personal health and fitness, family, and recreational pursuits. New recruiters often struggle with learning how to organize and manage their time, as well as learn key skills specific to this field such as locating prospects in a shrinking pool of propensed individuals and influencing people about the value of military service. The resulting imbalance can take a toll on the individual recruiter, as well as his or her family. The spouse or significant other can be one of the most important sources of support, but this relationship is also vulnerable to the strain of the recruiter's demanding job. Research from surveys, focus groups, and observation indicates that it is important, though, for recruiters to schedule time for activities that promote resilience and well-being such as exercise, connecting with family and friends, and spirituality. In some cases, professional psychological intervention is needed for those who have become overwhelmed and show signs such as interpersonal work problems, domestic difficulties, substance abuse, misconduct, or health problems. Further study is needed on the topic of sustainment of recruiters.

Despite the stresses, there are many positives to recruiting. Recruiters improve their interpersonal and business skills while offering exciting opportunities to young citizens. Areas that motivate recruiters include spending time with family members, providing quality of life to their families, accomplishing mission goals, and the positive feeling of putting a young person in the military and watching them excel. Additionally, a recruiting assignment can help to accelerate one's career.

Leaders in recruiting can have a great deal of influence over the lives of recruiters. A poor leadership culture can be a factor in behavioral drift, in which the workplace becomes a negative environment. Positive leadership, in which proper standards are upheld and healthy workplace practices are in place, can provide a productive and positive work environment. These can be furthered by involving psychologists and other professionals for training, consultation, and coaching.

There are three recommendations we would make to sustain recruitment: First, senior leaders at the highest levels can incentivize "psychologically healthy recruiting centers" by recognizing and rewarding recruiting units and centers that are especially adept at managing dimensions of workplace well-being. Second, in order to ensure adequate attention is paid to sustaining recruiter well-being, we recommend that wellness initiatives be codified in regulations and policies put forth by higher-level recruiting commands. Third, recruiting commands should provide coaching by psychologists to help recruiting units that struggle with meeting mission goals or desire to improve their organizational culture.



The field of psychology has positively influenced recruiting in multiple ways and still has much to contribute in supporting those who serve as military ambassadors to communities throughout the United States and inspiring young citizens to serve their country by enlisting in the armed forces.

**Note:** The conclusions and opinions expressed in this chapter are those of the authors. They do not reflect the official position of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, National Defense University, United States Air Force, United States Army, Department of Defense, or the United States Government.

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