Best Practices for a Successful Legion Year

By Randy Goodman

It is often said that “Programs equal Membership” and “Membership equals Programs.” These two statements become clearer when we relate who we are to what we do. For those looking to make an impact in their local communities, The American Legion has endless opportunities. I often describe us as an organization of volunteers impacting the lives of veterans, their families, and the youth of America through programs of the four pillars of service to America. From Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation to National Security to Americanism to Children & Youth, the Legion Family is there to assist their communities.

I recommend each post conduct a Post Responsibility Audit to determine how you are responding to the needs of the community. The primary purpose is to see if the post is attracting veterans and benefiting the community. The results should be readily available to the post membership and the district/county commander.

We make our organization stronger when each member understands the goals and objectives of the organization, past accomplishments, and their role in keeping The American Legion as a strong voice for veterans. All Legion Family members should take the free online “Basic Training” course offered through legion.org/alei. Trained individuals can be instrumental in helping the post achieve stated goals.

Finally, each post should develop membership teams to focus on recruitment, retention and reconnect. The post leadership can learn more about reconnect activities by accessing our publication “Access Granted.” Let your post commander know you are ready to reach out to servicemembers assigned to installations in your area.

This Legionnaire-driven newsletter highlights available training resources. It features training initiatives of posts, districts, departments and individuals throughout The American Legion.

Randy Goodman is a past department commander (GA) and current national chairman of the Membership & Post Activities Committee.
When Training, Be Specific and Make It Fun

By Brett Holt

Giving a class to Legionnaires demands we make the class or program interesting to all participating. It also must be relevant to the audience. Another challenge is to take repeated material and make it sound new. When I was department membership chairman two years ago, that was the challenge to myself. Membership is talked about all the time. We talk about membership, membership, membership like Brady Bunch fans speak about Marcia, Marcia, Marcia. Legionnaires who have been around a while have heard it all before, or have they?

Taking the old and making it new

The American Legion National staff have always put together great material for Legionnaires to use to train new members. The Membership Team Training Guide is full of great information for growing and retaining membership, but instead of trying to train on the entire manual I decided to go very specific in my approach.

Three Specific Topics

When I trained my district commanders and the department membership team I used three specific items from the manual that everyone could take home and

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concentrate. I wanted my training to be fun, specific and limited in its topics. I choose three:

1. Post Audit
2. Scripts
3. 50 ideas on renewing, retaining and recruiting

I developed handouts on those specific pages in the manual. Giving the whole manual can be overwhelming and easy to forget. I wanted them to walk out with the attitude “Yes, I can do those things.”

Why the post audit? Doing a post audit from the book helps you and your team figure out what the strengths and weaknesses are within the post. It gives you ideas on what to highlight to members or potential members. Knowing where you are is important.

I have learned most Legionnaires are not sure what to say to members who have not renewed or who are not members yet. The manual has scripts they can use when telephoning members or potential members. The scripts are easy to read and takes the “What do I say?” question out of the equation.

I made training fun too. At the time the movie “50 Shades of Grey” was popular, so I took the 50 ideas the manual had and turned them into the “50 Shades of Membership” manual. I then highlighted some the ideas by circling them, highlighting them, or putting an arrow next to them. Like no. 5, “If an important issue comes up, call inactive members to ask for input.”

Engage members with no. 26 (new member newsletter) or a survey like no. 29 suggests.

Training does not have to be boring and we can use old material, if it is relevant, and make it new again. If you would like to see the materials I handed out at the training, head over to our website: michiganlegion.org/rrr.html.

FIND IT ONLINE: myLegion.org is a FREE website designed to connect members of The American Legion to their post and department leadership.
Online Video Resources

Take advantage of American Legion videos on Vimeo and on YouTube. Use these tools at meetings, awareness tables, kiosks, in your lounge - anywhere you want to engage others about The Legion.

vimeo.com/americanlegion
www.youtube.com/user/americanlegionHQ

Want to kickstart your training right? Take BASIC TRAINING at legion.org/alei using your legion.org login and start!

Are YOU a Trainer?
Can you write?
We need your submissions!
Send your training ideas to train@legion.org.