

This edition of the Training Newsletter features articles on effective leadership, membership retention, and presenting your post in the best possible light.



THE AMERICAN LEGION
VETERANS STRENGTHENING AMERICA

American Legion Training Newsletter

National Headquarters Internal Affairs & Membership Division

Engage - Train - Empower

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EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

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Past National Commander

In the first issue of this training newsletter, April 2017, we talked about whether leaders are born or made and how leaders require training to develop their leadership skills. There are many common threads that run through developing and becoming an effective leader. However, there is one thing common in every leader – every effective leader is working with a group, providing leadership and direction when needed but most often the leader's primary duty is helping the group achieve their goal, not the leader's goal but the group's goal. That is the most important thing that a leader can do – help the group develop and buy into their goal.

The best leaders help each member of the group realize how best they can help the group achieve that goal. This requires recognizing each member's strength and getting them into positions that benefit their strengths. It also requires identifying each member's weakness and providing training to help them develop confidence to strengthen those areas. When the leader accomplishes both objectives, the group truly becomes stronger than the sum of the parts.

An example from the 1965 movie "Battle of the Bulge" comes to mind. The Allies need someone to get to Bastogne to relieve the 101st Airborne. Gen. George Patton says, to the disbelief of the other generals, that he can have three divisions attacking in 48 hours. When asked how he can accomplish that, he replies, "Because they are good soldiers and they realize, as I do, that we can still lose this war."

That is the definition of a shared goal with people that have been trained and put into positions where their strengths are used to the fullest extent. Contrast that with the situation that we have all seen where one of our posts has gotten weak and where only one person is doing all the work in that post.

That person will often say to us, "I can't get anyone to help." And most often they are doing less and less each year.

The odds are that sometime in the past that same person had someone offer to help but turned them away, probably believing that they could do the job better themselves. That violates every principle of leadership. NEVER turn down help! ALWAYS find a place for a volunteer to serve. Maybe you can do it better today, but will that always be true? Will you be able to do more each year or will the day come when less is being accomplished?

A true leader shares the accomplishments and gives the team credit but must know the team members. There is a leadership philosophy that states "People don't care how much you know about them once they know how much you care about them." By them knowing how much you care builds their trust in you and when the time comes to make a sacrifice to reach the goal, they will be willing to make that sacrifice or make that extra effort to achieve the goal.

Maybe the goal is not as big as relieving Bastogne. But an effective leader with a team that has bought in will achieve whatever the goal may be. Be that effective leader. Help your team build on their strengths and train them to overcome the weak points. Training tools are available. Use those tools to build a stronger team. Help your team make you the effective leader that you want to be.



TRAINING TUESDAY

The last Tuesday of each month the Internal Affairs and Membership Division has committed to conducting training with members. These 60 to 90-minute sessions, held through Microsoft Teams, are aimed at post commanders and adjutants. Over the last few months training topics have been on MyLegion.org 2021, Buddy Checks, Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA), National Emergency Fund (NEF), Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW), Mission Blue Post Assistance Program (PAP), post administration and membership retention. Each Training Tuesday session video presentation and PowerPoints are available at legion.org/training/training-tuesdays.

ATTEND: February Training Tuesday

Feb. 23 at 7 p.m. EST

Visit legion.org/training/training-tuesdays for the Microsoft Teams link.



NATIONAL AMERICAN LEGION COLLEGE

The 2020 National American Legion College will now take place Nov. 13-19, 2021. The 2021 college class will convene Dec. 12-17, 2021. The 2021 student application will be posted and available on Feb. 5, 2021, at legion.org/college. Applicants who were not selected for the 2020 class and would like to attend the 2021 class will be required to complete a 2021 application. Class of 2021 student applications are due July 31, 2021.



THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Do you remember your first impression of The American Legion? How about the first time you entered an American Legion post? This question is not limited to entering your own post but posts in the area or even around the country. Now take a second to consider what a prospective member sees and how they are greeted and treated when they first walk into the doors of your post.

Take time to walk through your post building as if you're seeing it for the first time, starting with the outside. Does the post have a clean parking lot and attractive landscaping? Could the building use a fresh coat of paint or a power washing? American Legion posts are stewards of their own facility and operations. They are unique to their community and should present a welcoming atmosphere.

When a new or prospective member enters the post, is there an information table or bulletin board? Better yet, is there a designated greeter at peak times to answer any questions and promote upcoming events and programs?

After the new members' dues are collected, is there a plan to engage them? The items below are suggestions and are in no way mandated by national. Think of this as a timeline of activities that, if implemented, would show new members the value of staying active with their membership.

Day of joining:

- Provide the new member with a Legion lapel pin.
- Conduct initiation process. (see Officers Guide & Manual of Ceremonies)
- Send a New Member Kit from Emblem Sales (Item #735.501, \$6.95, emblem.legion.org).

First Month:

- Check on the new member with a phone call from the post commander.
- Send an email to the new member on post activities.
- Assign someone from the post as a mentor to the new member.
- Ensure the new member has been formally introduced to all post officers and key volunteers.
- Encourage the new member to take the free online American Legion Basic Training course at legion.org/alei.
- Encourage the new member to sign up for a free, secure account at MyLegion.org to manage their membership.

Second-Third Month:

- Have the post commander/adjutant sit with the member at meetings/events.
- Invite the new member to participate in post activities and sponsored youth programs.
- Explain the membership renewal process and how it can be done through their MyLegion.org account.

BUDDY CHECK TIME!

Why?

- Our most sacred responsibility is to look out for each other and our fellow veterans.
- It's what we do for our battle buddies.
- To reconnect with veterans who may need assistance but don't know where to go or who to ask.

When?

- Buddy Checks were originally designed for twice a year, around American Legion Birthday (March) and Veterans Day. However, due to their success and importance, Buddy Checks can be conducted throughout the year.
- During an emergency situation, like the ongoing pandemic, it is advised to conduct Buddy Checks to reach out to veterans and check on their wellness.

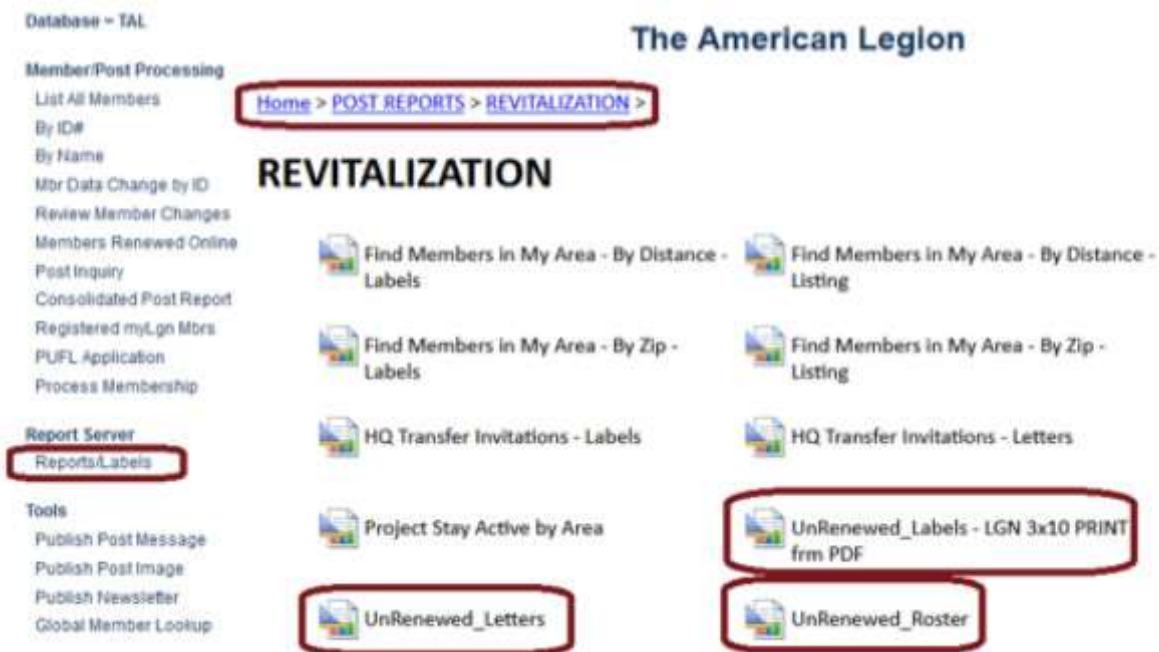
How?

- legion.org/buddycheck

RETENTION: OUR NO. 1 MEMBERSHIP PRIORITY

National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford issued a Call To Action in January to contact, engage and renew at least 90 percent of the 2019 and 2020 expires between Feb. 1 and March 15.

- Use MyLegion.org to review rosters for non-renewed (see below).
- Contact members and ask them to renew.
- Transmit dues ASAP to department/national as members renew to department/national.
- Send membership cards to members in a timely manner.



MyLegion.org has many membership tools to assist posts, districts and departments with retention efforts.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This bi-monthly and Legionnaire-driven newsletter, produced by the Internal Affairs & Membership Division, is designed to address best practices, ideas and training that every Legionnaire needs to know to engage our membership through effective training now and into the future.

Highlighting new training ideas and resources becoming available, it will also feature essays from successful leaders and training ideas of posts, districts, departments and individuals throughout The American Legion. Are you a trainer? A writer? We need your submissions!

Send your training ideas and articles to LegionTraining@legion.org

The American Legion

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