

We are nearing the end of our 2017 membership year and it appears that you have set another all time high in membership and will exceed the 100% goal, congratulations! Over all, we seem to be doing what is necessary to continue the growth of our organization, but let's take a look at our membership renewal rate from this past year. Generally speaking we were only able to retain 89% of our current membership, that leaves roughly 11% of our members out in the cold, so to speak. This loss reflects over 36,000 of our brothers in this organization, which we recruited to assist us with supporting the ideals and principles of The American Legion. The loss of over 10% of our membership is nothing new and we should be glad that we retained nearly 90% of our comrades, but continually losing over 36,000 members a year needs to be curtailed.

One of the major causes of loss of membership is recruitment strategy, too many times we rush to sign up a new member without explaining our mission as an organization. Recruiting members properly can be a simple process, provided we start off on the right foot. We must explain that we are a part of a veterans service organization, dedicated to promoting Americanism, and serving our community, youth and Veterans. Enlightening prospective members on how we assist The American Legion with their programs through volunteer service within the organization and involvement in the community is essential. Share some of the accomplishments of your Squadron, the services you have provided and how it made a difference in someone's life. Utilize the words from our Preamble to get the point across and emphasize that we are "Proud Possessors of a Priceless Heritage", honoring the service of a parent or grandparent.

Once you have laid a solid foundation of our organization and have the member on board it becomes your responsibility to retain them as a member. This is done by making them feel that they are part of the team and an important component of the organization. You accomplish this through communication, education, involvement, and welcoming them into your Squadron. Inquire what fields of interest the member possesses, and locate that niche within The American Legion's many programs to get them actively involved.

Send out your own Squadron membership renewal notice with a short letter stating all of the fantastic work that your Squadron did the previous year, include meeting dates and time, and ask members to join you at the meetings. When you mail out the new membership card include another letter thanking them for renewing their membership. Utilize FaceBook or a website to reach out to your membership or prospective members and your community. All of this is quick and easy with the use of computers and today's technology.

Do you have the "Pioneering Spirit"? Are you ready to lead the way, originate a new method of successfully recruiting members and prepare the road for others? Remember who we are, what we do and why we do it.

Courage: "There are risks and costs to action. But they are far less than the long range risks of comfortable inaction."-John F. Kennedy

Respectfully, Danny Smith  
National Commander  
Sons of The American Legion