

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION



Leader Recruiting & Development

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Field Leadership Development Team**

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What I'll Cover



- High- & lowlights from surveys
- 6 myths that hinder leader recruiting and development
- Leader recruiting
 - Primarily chapter-level but applicable to states and regions too
- Leader retention and development

Field Leader Surveys



- Upward-looking (Jan – Apr)

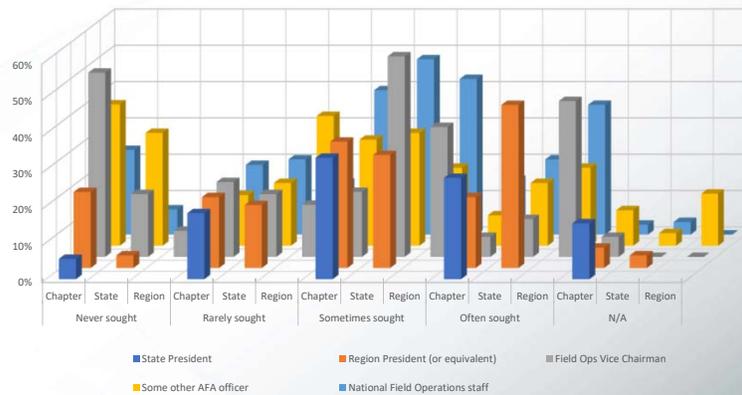
	#	Sent	Completed	Not Opened
Chapters	147	213	73 (50%)	137 (64%)
States	39	48	30 (77%)	18 (40%)
Regions	15	17	14 (93%)	3 (18%)

- Key findings
 - Relatively few Presidents at any level ask for advice
 - Recruiting/retention advice generally not valuable
 - Advice on duties, officer development pretty good, when sought

Upward-Looking Surveys



How Often Advice Sought



Most Field leaders don't seek advice often, if ever

This chart shows how often what percentage of chapter, state, and region presidents sought advice (front-to-back columns) and who they sought advice from (colored bars). Notice that the combinations of bars in the “Never Sought,” “Rarely Sought,” and “Sometimes Sought” sections together far outweigh those in the “Often Sought” section.

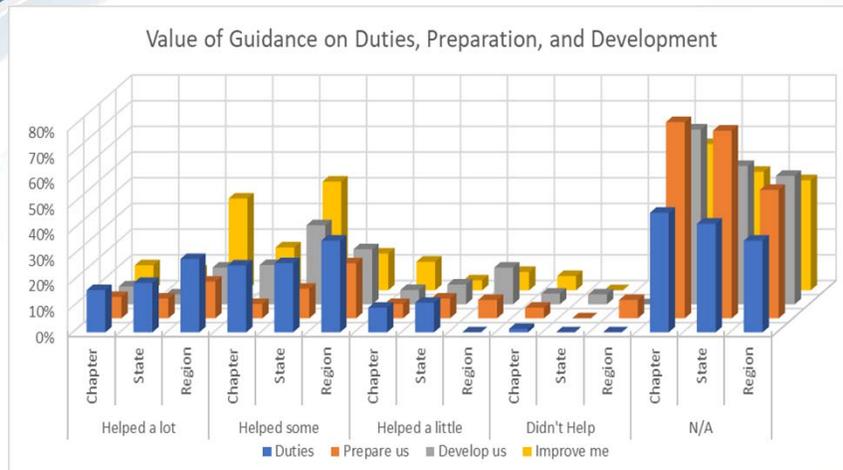
Upward-Looking Surveys



Recruiting/retention advice/guidance needs to be better

Notice first in this chart how large the percentages are of chapter, state, and region presidents who did not seek advice (the “N/A” section). Of those who did seek advice, notice how little of the advice they received on any of the three topics was rated something other than “Helped a lot.”

Upward-Looking Surveys



Duties/growth advice pretty good but not often sought

In this chart, “Prepare us” means advice that helped prepare officers to assume a higher role, “Develop us” means advice to help the officers develop in their current role, and “Duties” means advice on the officer’s current duties. As with the previous chart, notice how large the percentages are of officers who did not seek advice on these topics (the “N/A” section). At least most of the advice offered here was assessed as having helped more than a little.

Field Leader Surveys



- Self-Assessment (Jun – Aug)

	#	Sent	Completed	Not Opened
Chapters	147	154	42 (29%)	94 (61%)
States	39	44	14 (37%)	25 (57%)
Region	15	15	8 (53%)	5 (33%)

- Key findings

- High frustration with low member participation
- Some ExComms very thin
- Leaders believe recruiting leaders is HARD
 - Many Presidents believe members aren't interested

Turning around this situation is key to AFA's future success

Significant fractions of the ExComms at all levels had only a small number (2-4) of individuals filling the team's positions.

6 Myths



- These attitudes and beliefs can stop leader recruiting in its tracks
- #1: “Young people” don’t want to join
- #2: “...or it will reflect” (Commanders should *make* people join)
- #3: “They oughta know”
- #4: Everyone should participate
- #5: Snow White/Godot (“Some day my prince will come”)
- #6: You can’t set standards or expectations for volunteers

These beliefs can color how we act & what we say

#1: Young People Don't Want To



- Widely held belief
 - Based on past failed attempts to recruit “young people” to be AFA members, much less chapter leaders
- Places blame for failure outside the organization rather than inside
- Unintentionally disrespectful term
 - “Young people” may be parents (even grandparents!), commanders or senior enlisted leaders, combat veterans
 - What message are we sending?

Disrespect, even when accidental & unintended, will push people away

A “young person” is often anyone more than 20 years your junior! Why? Because that person is likely to be roughly the age of your own children.

#1: Young People Don't Want To



- WHY aren't they joining?
 - Beware the easy answers: family, military or job commitments, social media or video games
 - Some truth in these, but not the whole truth
 - Look inside
 - What are YOU doing that is NOT attractive or convenient for them?
 - What are you NOT doing that would be?
 - Not sure? Ask!

It's YOUR job to make your chapter / leadership team attractive

Taking responsibility for not being able to recruit new people of any age to your chapter's, state's, or region's leadership team isn't easy to do—it's far easier to blame outside forces and factors—but it's necessary.

#1: Young People Don't Want To



- What IS attractive?
 - People WILL join a group / leadership team that's doing something that interests or benefits them
 - When recruiting, match YOUR activities to THEIR interests
 - “Hot Links”
 - Expand personal and / or professional circles
 - Improve existing skills or learn a new one
 - Give back to a particular community

This information is from leadership maven Cynthia D'Amour

Cynthia D'Amour calls those bottom three bullets “hot buttons,” but I prefer “hot links” because “links” emphasizes the connection you're trying to make between the individual and your organization.

#2: “...or it will reflect”



- Commanders / Senior NCOs used to be able to coerce subordinates into joining organizations
 - Some wish for a return to that world
 - Not going to happen: Joint Ethics Regulation prohibits it; that's not changing
- Finding an external cause for an internal problem
- Solution: stop “wishing on a star” and work on making your chapter / leadership team attractive

USAF leaders can do some things but not force people to join

And oh, by the way, the men and women in today's Air Force do not live in that culture of coercion and will resent being told that's the way things should be.

#3: “They oughta know...”



- ...why they should be a member of AFA or part of your leadership team
- Maybe “they” *should*, but what if they don’t?
 - It’s not their fault
 - How are *you* communicating the value?
 - What *IS* the value?
 - Does it connect with one of their “hot links?”
- Solution: spread the word
 - *Personal* contact
 - “Go where they are”

PERSONAL, one-to-one communication is VITAL!

Blaming potential leaders for not knowing why they “should” be part of your team again attempts to shift the responsibility away from you. When they fail to act the way they “should,” things won’t get better.

#4: Everybody in the pool!



- Many AFA leaders dissatisfied with participation rate (39 of 42 chapter presidents in self-assessment survey)
- Our military experiences lead us astray
 - Military: >95% participate, <5% slackers
 - True volunteer organizations, all kinds, across the US
 - **~6% participate, ~94% are happy just being members**
 - Cynthia D'Amour, volunteer organization leadership coach

We're not in Kansas (or the USAF) anymore, Toto

That average 6% participation rate may be shocking, but it's consistent with what we see in AFA, according to the self-assessment survey responses.

#4: Everybody in the pool!



- Solution
 - Accept that:
 - AFA is not the USAF
 - Volunteers will only do what THEY want to do, not what YOU want them to do unless...
 - You connect with one of their “hot links”
 - Grow your leadership team from your active members, CPs, others who share your goals
 - Stop grumbling about the inactive ones
 - Reach out to them anyway, but in ways that are more likely to pique their interest

Start with those more likely to say “yes”

#5: Snow White / Godot



- Again, our past military experience leads us astray
 - Leaders need to be developed
 - Few will just appear
- In Disney's Snow White, she sings "Some day my prince will come"



In the Air Force, people sought and competed for positions of higher responsibility and authority. We know that's not true in AFA, but if we act as if it is, we'll continue to be disappointed and frustrated.

#5: Snow White / Godot



- If you're like Snow White, waiting for your prince (a.k.a. your next chapter president) to just show up, who might you get?



← Prince William



Prince→

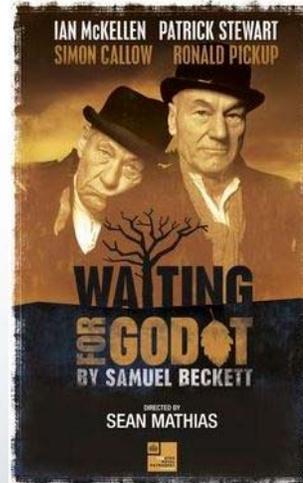
- Not my place to say who's the better choice for YOUR chapter or leadership team, but...

OK, maybe your organization could use the energy and creativity someone like Prince could bring, but the likelihood of someone like him just showing up is low.

#5: Snow White / Godot



- Don't be like the tramps in "Waiting for Godot" either
- They don't know:
 - Who Godot is
 - When he's coming
 - IF he's coming
 - What he'll do or bring when he arrives
 - If he even exists!
- But they're waiting for him!
- Go FIND your chapter leaders!



Samuel Beckett wrote the two act, “absurdist” play in French in the late 1940s. He translated it into English and it was first performed that way in 1955.

#6: Standards/Expectations



- Myth: You can't set expectations or standards of performance for volunteers
- Oh, yes, you can!
- Volunteers with a military background will actually appreciate them
- Make them reasonable: develop them together
 - Active duty/ANG/AFRES/Civil Service have extra challenges: respect them
- Remember that you have to uphold them differently
 - No UCMJ to back you up!
 - Real leadership and engagement required

You CAN relieve someone who isn't living up to their commitments

It's important to respect the time and other commitments of anyone you're trying to recruit into a leadership position.

The idea that you cannot fire a volunteer could be myth #7. There's no reason why a chapter, state, or region leadership team should have to suffer with a person who does not live up to his or her commitments. While such people can and should be given the opportunity to improve, if they can't or won't, they should be let go. The organization will be better for it.

Recruiting Leaders



- So how do you build your leadership team?
- Step 1: define what you want / need done
 - Think in terms of jobs to be done, NOT positions to be filled
- Step 2: Build a list of candidates you want to approach
 - Meeting attendees
 - Activity participants
 - Community Partners
 - Like-minded groups (not just military / veteran!)
 - Other people you know who share your interests
 - Be sure you've done your homework on these people so you can connect with them

Your officers ARE out there!

It's tempting to try to fill positions, but the higher or more responsible the position is within the organization (e.g. President or Vice President for Aerospace Education), the harder it can be to fill when potential candidates learn how much is involved. It's far better to focus, especially with a new candidate, on a smaller task and let them grow into a larger role.

Recruiting Leaders



- Step 3: Get out there and TALK to people!
 - ONE-ON-ONE, PERSONAL CONTACT
 - General, mass appeals like in newsletters, social media, chapter meetings DO NOT WORK!
 - Why? Because
 - It's human nature to let someone else go first
 - They don't touch anyone's "hot links"
 - "Hot links" review
 - Expand personal or professional circle of contacts
 - Expand one's skills or learn a new one
 - Give back or contribute to a particular community

Personal contact may be scary at first but it's vital

Actively recruiting people into leadership positions is something we generally did not have to do in the military, but in AFA it's a necessity.

Recruiting Leaders



- Step 3 continued
- Possible conversation flow:
 - Describe generally what the chapter does
 - Explain that you're looking for people to do certain things (recruit to task)
 - Identify those things. Be honest about the time involved.
 - Make "The Promise"
 - You will ask them to do ONLY ONE THING
 - If they want to do more, great, but you will not ask them to
 - Ask if any of those tasks might interest the candidate

This is an example of how a recruiting conversation MIGHT evolve. What this slide does not show is that the conversation needs to be two-way. The recruiter MUST avoid the temptation to simply blurt out everything they feel they need to say, while failing to listen to what the candidate might say—or try to say—and ignoring what their body language is saying.

Recruiting Leaders



- Step 3 continued
 - LISTEN for those “hot links” clues
 - Match your pitch to their interests
 - “Inverse JFK”: Ask not what you can do for your chapter, ask what your chapter can do for you
 - Watch [Part 4 of the Recruiting New Members video series](#)
 - No whining! It’s NOT the candidate’s job to solve your problems!
 - “I don’t have the time” means “You haven’t connected with me, so I don’t want to MAKE the time for you”

Do more listening than talking

The new member recruiting video features seven video vignettes in which a chapter officer tries to recruit a new member. Four of the attempts fail for various reasons, while the other three succeed. Those vignettes involve recruiting the candidate to do something in the chapter in almost every case, so they’re examples of “recruiting to task.”

People will not “find” time for your organization (it’s not hiding under the sofa cushions!). They will make a decision to either *make* time for you or not.

Recruiting Leaders



- Step 3 continued
- What if you're turned down?
 - Not every recruiting attempt will succeed. It's NOT personal (usually).
 - Be gracious in “defeat”
 - No begging, no guilt-tripping, no pressure
 - Ask for feedback: why did they say no?
 - Afterwards, analyze how YOU came up short

Be sure to learn the right lessons when this happens

Any sign of desperation on the recruiter's part will only reinforce the candidate's judgment that they made the right decision by saying no.

Requests for feedback need to be unemotional: “May I ask why you said no?” rather than, “Well, why *not*?” The later self-analysis then is not about placing blame but about determining how to do better with the next candidate.

Retaining / Developing Leaders



- Stage 1: Bring them on board
 - Discuss/set expectations together
 - Make “The Promise” again
- Stage 2: Initial training
 - Point them to the training & other resources they need
 - Duties as defined in FOG
 - Training videos
 - Resident experts
 - Mutually set a completion date
 - Defines expectations and standards of performance
 - Follow up to answer questions, make sure training gets done

Personal involvement doesn't stop once the member is on board

Developing a chapter's, state's, or region's leadership team—that is, improving how well they do their jobs, expanding their range of abilities, and developing their potential for greater responsibility-- is the president's responsibility.

Retaining / Developing Leaders



- Stage 3: “Continuation” training / experience-building (year 1)
 - Point them to other training resources to build their understanding of AFA and the chapter / state / region
 - Other training videos
 - Participation in ExComm
 - Attend higher-level meetings
 - KEEP “THE PROMISE”!
 - Let *them* decide when they want to do more, and what they want to do

More personal contact & involvement

Retaining / Developing Leaders



- Stage 4: Growth (year 2 and beyond)
 - Discuss *their* interests and desires for growth within and beyond the current level—jobs, positions, time frame
 - Remember / review their “hot links!”
 - Build a plan with them for that growth

Conclusions



- Finding and developing leaders is an ACTIVE task for current leaders
 - Disney’s First Law (“Wishing will make it so”) does NOT apply
 - You cannot just wish for new leaders to show up
 - Those six myths are myths unless you believe them
 - If you do, you will act on them and drive potential leaders away
- Make a plan and execute it
 - No plan survives first contact with reality
 - That’s OK: you can adjust it later
- “The most important thing a leader can do is find his replacement”
 - Former GE CEO Jack Welsh

Chapter (and state and region) leadership situations won’t get better until Chapter Presidents take the task on. Some are doing great. Some need active support and guidance. That’s what the Field Leadership Development Team

