

Recruiting and Retention SOP

Department of Alabama

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This document was created with input from various Jr. Vice Commandants, Commandants, past Commandants and other MCL members. IT IS NOT INTENDED AS AN ORDER. IT MERELY OFFERS SUGGESTIONS IN THE AREAS OF RECRUITING AND RETENTION. Detachments are free to use or not use the content.

This guidance is directed towards Detachment Jr. Vice Commandants because they usually have recruiting and retention responsibilities within the Detachment. It is recognized that some Detachments have committees or other appointees assisting with recruiting and retention. This document may be shared with any MCL member.

It is hoped that this document will grow and evolve. Jr. Vice Commandants and other members are encouraged to share their ideas, what has worked and what hasn't worked so that it may be included in this document. It will be updated and distributed to all Detachment Jr. Vice Commandants as practical. If anyone has ideas or suggestions, please submit them. We all want our Detachments to grow. If we are not growing we are getting smaller. Let's help each other and lead the way.

Please send all suggestions to: Marine@jcsee.com

Disclaimer: *This document is not intended to be the sole source for recruiting or retention. This is intended to be ideas that may work for you and your Detachment. This document is not intended as a list of responsibilities for Jr. Vice Commandants as those responsibilities are defined in bylaws, guidelines and by your Commandant. Any conflict between anything in this document and any bylaws or guidelines from MCL National Headquarters is unintentional. Should there be any conflicts, bylaws and official guidelines have jurisdiction. Please let us know if you notice any conflicts with MCL policy and procedures.*

Recruiting and Retention Guidance

SECTION ONE – RETENTION

Recruiting is a challenge, so once we recruit a new member; let's make the effort to keep them! We need to do all we can to maintain current members. Here are some ideas.

The Basics

Along with the Commandant, Jr. Vice Commandant, Adjutant and Paymaster; monitor and track the quarterly membership roster from national. Check all information and be sure it matches your Transmittals. This is a team effort and of utmost importance.

Meetings

It is up to the Commandant to ensure that every meeting has a purpose or a goal. Members need a reason to attend. It is suggested you announce to members at least one important agenda item when you remind them of the meeting. Give members a reason to attend. Maybe it is a training item such as uniforms, maybe it is a policy discussion or important upcoming event. Lastly, follow the MCL Guidelines and format for meetings.

Renewals

Begin the renewal effort 120 days before a renewal is due. Develop a simple plan. For example:

- At 120 days send a renewal email reminder or call if the member doesn't use email. Be sure to tell them the amount, where to send it and the name to place on the check.
- At 90 days snail mail a reminder and include a self addressed stamped envelope. Also send an email.
- At 60 days call them.
- At 45 days visit them. Nothing works better than a visit to their home.

The above method is proven. It is effective. It can certainly be modified but have a plan and follow it. The current status should be reported on at each Staff Meeting.

Retention Committees

Some Detachments use a committee to follow the above renewal effort or the effort you have in place. Usually the Jr. Vice Commandant chairs the committee. The important thing is to have a plan, execute it, be consistent, and follow up.

SECTION ONE – RETENTION (continued)

Life Membership

Encourage life membership at every opportunity. If you are exceptionally well organized, track the birth dates of your members and when they hit a price break on Life Membership, bring it to their attention and encourage them.

Mentor Program

Detachments that have a formal mentorship program report terrific results. It works! The MCL has mentorship information available but in summary it is quite simple. It should be Detachment policy that a new member is assigned a mentor at the meeting in which they take the oath. In fact, assuming the applicant will be accepted, it is a good idea to assign the mentor before the meeting begins. It may be the sponsor/recruiter, someone he or she knows, or it might be assigned on a rotational basis to volunteers.

The mentor has several responsibilities:

- Make the new member feel welcome; introduce them to the officers and other members.
- Sit with them at the first three meetings they attend. Watch their reaction to topics discussed during the meeting. They may need further explanation or maybe they showed interest in something particular.
- Determine their interest and what they hope to get out of joining as well as what they want to “give”. Get to know them.
- Explain to them about uniforms, procedures, committees, protocol, roles of the various officers, where to get uniforms, and what the Detachment does. Be sure they have the Detachment, Department and National web sites. Show them all the wonderful information available at the National web site.
- Call them several days after the first meeting to see if they have any questions.
- Contact them before the next few meetings to be sure they plan to attend. Be sure they have transportation to the meeting.
- Get them involved! This is imperative. Get them involved in a committee or upcoming project or even preparation for a meeting; something, anything, but get them going in something. Maybe they want to be a mentor.
- Encourage them and be positive.
- Once you have accomplished all the above and three months pass, your mentor job is officially done.

SECTION ONE – RETENTION (continued)

Fire Teams

This is a promising idea but suggested procedures are in its infancy. We look forward to feedback from Detachments who have this in place or who give it a try. First you need to have membership buy in. Maybe discuss it at a staff meeting to obtain key member buy in. Then in the staff meeting you can work out the details to fit your Detachment.

Basically you divide your Detachment into approximately 4 person Fire Teams. It could be 5 person Fire Teams, it is up to you. At least one Detachment uses a squad concept, again it is up to you. Their first task is to elect a Fire Team Leader. Their second task is to select a name. Whether or not the Commandant and officers participate is up to you, but it is probably a good idea take part and set the example. You might exclude the Commandant and Sr. Vice particularly if they manage the program.. Follow the KISS principle but be sure retention is a primary focus.

Each Fire Team is responsible for its members. They see to it that dues are paid in a timely manner. They also mentor new members as they are assigned to their Fire Team. It might make sense to take this concept even further. For example a Fire Team might take on certain responsibility like planning an event. Or you might create some sort of competition, like recruiting new members or participation at events. Your imagination is the limit.

It is important to have diverse Fire Teams. If you allow members to form their own teams you'll end up with the more active members on the same teams and the inactive or occasional attendees on the same teams and this will defeat the purpose. For this reason, in a closed Staff meeting you might create several categories. For example one category might be those that are always there and always participate, another might be those who attend some meetings or events, another might be those you rarely if ever see. You should also separate the Associate members so there is a mix a regular and associated on each team. Write each members name on a small piece of paper and separate by category, then randomly draw the names for each Fire Team or Squad. .

Announce the Teams at a meeting. Keep in mind you may have members who don't like each other on the same team. First off it is only for one year; secondly, adapt and overcome.

Develop a plan on how to roll it out to the Detachment. Have a plan to present your case in a positive manner with encouragement. Point out the benefits such as increased retention and growth. It may have to be "sold" to the Detachment, but this is why you are paid the big bucks..

Try to make this fun and competitive. A point system comes to mind but this is time consuming for the person responsible for tracking points. On the other hand you could define a simple point system, distribute it and let each team track it themselves on the honor system. For example, 10 points for each member who pays their dues on time (life members also count), one point for each member who attends a regular meeting,

SECTION ONE – RETENTION (continued)

Fire Teams (continued)

maybe a couple points for each member each time they participate in any Detachment event, 10 points for recruiting a new regular member and 5 for an associate member, things of this nature. If a fire team volunteers to organize an event, they should be given extra points. These are just ideas, how far you want to go is up to you.

You should consider having a recognition program of some type for the superior performing Teams. Announce or distribute the standings at meetings. Have some fun with it. You might even have point deductions for certain things such as cell phones ringing in a meeting or improper uniform, just don't embarrass anyone too much or you might not see them again.

Following each annual election of officers, the process is repeated with all new teams unless the Detachment decides otherwise. The Detachment makes the rules.

Involvement

Obviously it is important to get members involved in Detachment activities and functions, particularly new members. Try to match a member's interest and skills with committees, functions and new initiatives.

Some Detachments use questionnaires. Create a questionnaire to determine why members originally joined the League. What do they hope to get out of it? What would they like to see the Detachment get involved or more involved in? Try to keep it fairly simple. Whether you ask for names on the questionnaire is up to you. Some people might be hesitant to bring up ideas in a meeting, maybe something like this might help.

Fun Activities

All work and no play makes Pvt. Jarhead bored and uninterested. Try to have some purely fun events. Marines like to hang out with Marines, they like to socialize with them. We have our formal events like the Marine Corps Ball, Installation and Awards Ceremonies, Department and other conventions, but it is suggested you also do some simple fun functions. They can be as simple as meeting at a local restaurant for breakfast, lunch or dinner, or maybe a movie. Something this is optional, no uniform required, family and friends are invited. Just have some fun. I can attest that it picks up morale and brings the Detachment closer to each other, which can lead to many good things.

Other Retention Ideas

Submit them. Share them. We'll add them to this document.

Recruiting and Retention Guidance

SECTION TWO – RECRUITING

After retention, recruiting is our number two goal. Many Detachments do well in this area, some need a little help and we hope this document provides a few ideas. As we add to it, we hope it becomes an effective tool for each Detachment. Quality recruiting is important, you want members who are going to stick around.

Bumper Stickers

The Semper Fi store at National sells bumper stickers for \$0.50. They have the MCL emblem and say “Marines... Once a Marine, Always a Marine. Join the Marine Corps League”. At \$0.50 each, some Detachments have a stock and issue them to every new member. If you can, encourage their use. Also, encourage your members to get the Alabama Marine License Plates. It helps get the word out and helps the League.

Business Cards

Members sometimes purchase their own business cards but some Detachments buy large quantities without names (some have a space to print a name). If the Detachment can afford it, it might be a good investment. Ideally it would have the MCL emblem, Detachment name, web site, a contact email address, mailing address, contact telephone number if you have one, date and time of meetings (for example - 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM at VFW Post 111). If every member has them to pass out when they meet a Marine, it can have positive results.

Suggestion: if you have business cards, keep some in your car. When you pull into a parking lot and see a Marine sticker on another automobile, place your card (and/or brochure) under their windshield wiper.

One Detachment recently ordered some online. We are working with this company to create an online template for any member or Detachment to use. You'll be able to customize it and they'll have the logo. More will follow on this.

Elevator Speech

When you were looking for a job you may have been told to always have an elevator speech prepared. In other words be prepared to tell someone about yourself in the time it takes an elevator to go up a few floors. This may not have gotten you a job but you hoped it created enough interest to get an appointment. The same applies to the MCL. Every member should have a 30 second speech that will peak the interest of a Marine in the MCL.

The elevator speech is important but listening is even more important. Time permitting, ask them about their Marine Corps service, where, when, etc. The more they talk the better. Try to relate to them. This shouldn't be difficult, after all, you are both Marines. Try to relate something they say to the MCL and/or your Detachment.

SECTION TWO – RECRUITING (continued)

Elevator Speech (continued)

A prospective MCL member will want to know why they should consider joining. What does the MCL and more specifically your Detachment do? And ultimately what will they get out of it? All of these are valid questions that we have faced and answered in the past. With your input, future editions will contain some samples and ideas provided by members, at least I hope so. Please submit your thoughts on this to my email address on the front of this document. We'll assemble and distribute.

Get the prospects name and telephone number or email address. It's just like asking someone for a date, without contact information, you are going nowhere. Don't be hesitant to ask them. Get their contact information and you at least double your chances of recruiting them.

Observe a Meeting

One of the better approaches might be to try to get someone to attend a meeting just to observe, no obligation. Let them see what is going on. Reinforce your commitment to support Marines and let them see how you do it at a meeting. Sit with them at the meeting, talk up the MCL and all your Detachment does. But again, get them to talk, ask them questions and show interest. Explain how we support our Marines, MCL members, other veterans, and any other activities your Detachment might be involved. If possible, showing is much better than telling. Lastly, Marines like to hang out with Marines, try to get them to tell you about their time in the Marines, you know, the old war stories. This should create a bond. Introduce them to other members.

Follow Up

After your chance encounter or after the meeting they observed, follow up. Give them a call, get their thoughts. Find out what their interest might be and work that into something the Detachment does or a committee, or anything that comes to mind. Make them feel a part of something. In a sense, convey to them that MCL members supported the Corps when they were in, now it is our turn to support today's Marines and those veterans in need.

Brochures

Professionally made brochures about your Detachment and the MCL can be expensive and not all Detachment can afford them. But you can always substitute a single page typed document that someone in your Detachment has the skills to produce. Call other Detachments and exchange copies, get some ideas. Keep it simple, people won't read a long document. You might use bullet points and include a picture or two.

Once you have a "brochure", be sure every member has a few. If the Detachment has them available, members should always have a brochure, business card and application in their car. Pass them out at events, at stores, be ready no matter where you are. Place them under windshield wipers of cars with Marine stickers.

SECTION TWO – RECRUITING (continued)

Recruiting Events

Most Detachments have various fund raising events and no doubt you also recruit at these events. It is sometimes a good idea to have events with the primary purpose of recruiting.

If you are in an area with multiple small communities, schedule a recruiting event. Ask the local Wal-mart or any heavy traffic area if you can set up a canopy or booth. Weather permitting wear undress blues as this always attracts people. Put your Marine Corps Flag in the air. Anyone who served in the Marines will see you and more often than not seek you out. Then all you have to do is recruit them. Start by asking them about when and where they served. Get them to talk. They didn't approach you to hear your war stories, get them talking, show interest by asking questions. Then, use your elevator speech and invite them to observe a meeting. Get their contact information!

Press Coverage

The Detachment as a whole needs visibility and exposure. Newspaper articles or press releases give great exposure to your Detachment. If there is an interview, we need to look sharp and act like a Marine. Don't send someone out there who has poor bearing or doesn't speak well, you are setting them up for failure. Wear your red blazer or undress blues, personally I think the undress blues attract the most attention.

Getting press coverage can be a challenge. With today's cutbacks in the news world it is getting more and more difficult to get reporters to cover an event. The key seems to be that you need to do the work for them. In today's newspaper world, you basically have to write the story for them and include a picture if possible. Nine times out of ten if they print the story it will have a reporter's name to it but who cares? If you are writing a press release, keep it concise and to the point. It should be written in a way that the news agency will see how it is of interest to the community. Adding a picture (identify anyone in the picture) is helpful. Surely you have someone in your Detachment with good writing skills. Be sure to have several people proof it. Bottom line, if you do the work for them, you have a better chance of getting it in the paper.

If an important event is planned such as welcoming home a wounded warrior or something that will be of interest to the general reader, be sure the press knows about it far in advance. I can't tell you how many times no one told the television stations or newspaper about something you know they would have covered if they knew about it. Try to develop a relationship with the news outlets.

SECTION TWO – RECRUITING (continued)

Telephone Number

The Detachment, if possible, should have a telephone number. It can be a member's telephone number who doesn't mind receiving calls from prospects and other requests. One Detachment was able to obtain a telephone number from a locally owned telephone company at no cost. The company donated the number. It is set up to automatically go straight to voice mail. The caller hears a short message with meeting information and is invited to leave a message and is told their call will be returned. The number is set up so that a member automatically receives an email notifying them they have a voice mail.

Social Media

Websites, Facebook, Twitter, etc. cannot be stressed enough. Today, particularly younger Marines rely heavily on social media. They will research and evaluate your Detachment based on the information they find on your website and Facebook. Don't underestimate their value. Creating them is the first step but keeping them up to date is just as important. An outdated web site tells the reader you either aren't doing anything or don't care. It doesn't do much good to have two year old information on a website or on Facebook.

If possible, establish your own website and Facebook page. Search other Detachment websites around the country and draw from them, there are some good ones out there. Maybe someone in your Detachment has the ability to create a webpage, if so it is very inexpensive. If you don't have anyone, talk with local developers, you might find a company or individual willing to do it for cost or for free. There are also companies that allow you to create your own website using templates. Whatever route you choose it is important that once it is built, that you can quickly and easily change the content without having to go back to a programmer. You need control of it and it must be easy to change content and upload pictures. Surely you have someone in your Detachment with the skills to maintain if not build it.

The web site should allow the viewer to immediately see what you are about and what you do. When someone visits your site, you have to gain their interest within about 20 seconds. A few pictures showing your Detachment in action, making an impact on Marines, veterans or the community will get their attention. The picture should have a short caption explaining what the reader is viewing. Avoid profile pictures of members (such as a picture of each officer) on the main page, a prospect isn't interested in how handsome or ugly you are, they want to know what your Detachment does and why they should join.

SECTION TWO – RECRUITING (continued)

Social Media (continued)

It is advisable not to have lengthy narratives, particularly on the main page of a web site. Attention spans are short. A lot of words turn people off. Short, simple paragraphs of a few sentences or bullet points are best. Use action words and adjectives. What have you recently accomplished and/or what your Detachment does for Marines, veterans or the community. A few impactful statements with a couple pictures showing you doing it can work wonders.

The main page has to capture their attention and provoke the thought “I would like to be a part of that”. If you can do that, you’ve taken a huge step forward. Also, change up the main page, update it, make them want to come back to see what you have been doing. Then, after you get their attention, they will dig deeper into your other pages for more detail.

On every page be sure to have a contact telephone number and email address. Invite prospects to attend a no obligation meeting where they can observe you. (If someone shows up at a meeting, quietly assign someone to sit with them and befriend them, and to get their contact information).

For your Facebook and other social media accounts, use a similar strategy as described above for a website. Also, monitor the site. Watch out for unfriendly or unfavorable comments. When they appear, and they will, either eliminate them or respond in a positive and professional Marine manner. Ask all members to keep it positive. Social media is not the place to discuss internal conflicts or Detachment politics. Do not allow political conversations.

Younger Marines and many others live on the computer. Take advantage of it.

Job Fairs

Most communities have job fairs. Sometimes there are job fairs targeting veterans. When there is one scheduled in your area, get in touch with the organizers and ask if you can set up a table. All you need is a few volunteers, a table, some brochures, and applications. If you want to go all out you can have some small giveaways. Remember, a Detachment brochure can be simple and as simple as just a typed paper. Again, stay away from long narratives, use bullet points if possible.

SECTION TWO – RECRUITING (continued)

Other Events and Opportunities

Color guards, participation in community parades, booths at local fairs, anything like this is helpful and brings community awareness to your Detachment. The Detachment needs to be visible. If you provide a color guard, don't pack up and leave as soon as your part is completed. Stick around a bit, Marines in the audience will seek you out when they can. Recruit them!

Join the local Chamber of Commerce and attend their functions in uniform. Great exposure and many new contacts will be the result.

Show up at local city council meeting in uniform. If your council permits comments from the public have a short speech prepared, like a minute or so. Just approach the podium or whatever they use and tell them who you are and that you are a member of the local Detachment of the Marine Corps League. Inform them of how many members you have, when and where you meet, and that your purpose is to serve and support Marines, wounded warriors and other veterans. Tell them you also serve the community and if there is anything the MCL can do for the community you will do your best to assist. Also let them know you are available for color guards. End it by saying we just wanted to let you know that we are here, we want to serve our community, and thank them for their time and then say Semper Fi!

If you do become involved in community activities, always keep in mind that you represent the Marine Corps and Marine Corps League. We always do our best to look and act professionally.