

Membership Engagement

Creating Excitement in your post

By Jason Castleberry

Slide 1: Intro Slide

Slide 2: Learning Objectives

- Discuss Marketing Strategies Both Internally and Externally
- How to get Volunteers
- Strategies for Engaging Your Members

Slide 3: Do You Know Who This Is?

- I wanted to create a presentation that millennials would understand. So, I added this guy up here. Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh. Now Eeyore was always sad right. He continually lost his tail and was always depressed because of it. Now I am sure we have all had an Eeyore in our post or a negative nancy or that member who is always critical.

Slide 4: How Many Have a Tigger in their Post?

- Now Tigger was always super excited right? He hopped around on his tail was always looking for something to do. We all have Tigger at our post, right?

Slide 5: How Do You Go From This to That?

- So, our goal is take the negative Nancy or Eeyore in your post and motivate them to be your tigger.
- That's what I am hoping to do but more importantly I want you to share what you do to motivate and engage your members.

Slide 6: Marketing Strategies

- Marketing doesn't just apply outside of your post to your community. It also applies to your members. Part of marketing your post is showing your members what your post is doing and the people in your post that is

making a difference in the lives of others. You must give your members a reason to be a member of your post. More than ever veterans want to join an organization that is making a difference.

- Newsletters can be used in multiple manners to promote your post. You can craft articles that promote a member's service in the military. Our post has a member profile section where we highlight a member of our post. This feature helps other members relate to the veterans in the post. You can also use the newsletter to market your programs and the successes you have internally. Showcase a program you want to have and ask for volunteers. Even in the day of social media a powerful newsletter can have numerous benefits both internally and externally.
- Why is the Legion Times so important? The Legion Times is the Department of Texas newsletter. My post utilizes this newsletter to not only share what the commander has to say or the chaplain. But when we have an article in it I share the newsletter and explain to the members about how the Department is sharing our stories across the state of Texas, this is a powerful message to our members. It tells them that their hard work is being recognized by higher levels of this organization.
- Emails and Phone Calls are often an underutilized tool that we have especially in larger post's. You must communicate with your members and show a personal interest in your members wellbeing. When the members don't feel like a number they will be more engaged and more likely to renew. Ask how they are doing? Find out something about them?

Slide 7: Marketing Strategies Continued

- I utilize Legiontown like I utilize the Legion Times. When we have an article published on Legiontown I tell the members that national has shared our story. This becomes a powerful message that shows that their hard work is recognized by other people. They can share the story on other social media platforms.
- Social Media is a platform that most of us use. But are you really maximizing the opportunity here. Just a few things that we do at our post is Facebook Live our meetings. 1st I love doing this because as an adjutant I can re watch the video back and do the meeting minutes. But most importantly doing facebook live allows members who are working or

cannot make the meeting to feel like they are part of the post. It also allows transparency with the public. Also, you can use social media to market your post. Do a top 18 stories of 2018 for your post. This is a great way to showcase the best programs you worked all year long. Or create a veteran's day video that showcases your members in a slide show type video. Your members will appreciate it and so will their families. Create events that will achieve more attendance. These are just a few tips to help you.

Slide 8: How to get Volunteers

- Your programs need to have importance. But more importantly you need to listen to your members and create programs that they want to do. First Responder Awards is meaningful program, School Awards, Scholarships, care packages are all programs that make a difference and have strong purpose. There is a tangible benefit to these programs. But like I said when in doubt ask your members.
- Make the programs fun. Include some social aspect to your post. There are members that joined for the social aspect. They miss the comradery that they had in the military. Plan a post campout or banquet or just an evening social at a local pub or sports bar. When possible try to make it family friendly or do the opposite and make it a Ladies Night Out or Couples Night Out. Think outside the box, be creative and have fun.
- To get volunteers you need to ask. If possible, you need to ask them one on one. Make it heart felt and sincere. When possible don't do it in a group setting. Don't ask the same member repeatedly. Remember the point is to get as many members involved as possible. So spread the wealth and get to know your members; what they like, what they do for work and find out their hobbies.

***** SCENARIO *****

What do you do when you have a member who joins and states they foster kids and are unable to come to meetings and may not participate? How do you get them involved?

ANSWER: What we did is asked them to have their foster kids make up Veterans Day cards for the elderly at our nursing home. This got the member involved

and the family too. But you can plan a camping trip and invite them to your Halloween Party.

- Lastly Reward their hard work. By a show of hands how many people have an awards program for Legionnaire of the Year or Post Officer of the Year? How many participate in the Lone Star Recruiting Pin or National Commanders Pin? How many posts encourage their members to complete the basic training course and when they do you print their certificate and present it at a meeting? Remember we are in a volunteer organization and we need to reward the members that work our programs or take our courses or recruit new members or even go above and beyond by retaining existing members. This will provide an incentive for other members to get involved.

Slide 9: Strategies for Engaging your Members

- Have a new member orientation. Something we started at our post is having a three-hour training session. That covers the 4 pillars, the history of the organization, how to wear an American Legion Cap, Meeting protocols, District, Division and Department organization and convention schedule. Then at the end we provide an initiation certificate. We finish at noon and go eat lunch and enjoy some fellowship. Now when they leave the training they know how to order a cap and how to wear it. They know they need to stand at the sound of three gavels etc.
- Why is the American legion Basic Training Course important? ***ask the audience*** This course goes into detail about the 4 pillars and the history and programs of the American Legion. It shows the amazing work our fore fathers did and shows us what we are doing today. Members who complete this course are more likely to renew and be involved.
- You need to have committees and invite your newer members to be a part of the committee. If they accept train them and give them a meaningful role not just the stuff you don't want to do. Our seasoned members don't be afraid to take a support role and mentor these young legionnaires. Being a mentor is probably one of the most important roles in the post. Don't discount the importance of mentorship.

- You need to do your best to find a role for as many members as you can. But a 2,000-member post isn't going to have a role for everyone. But if you get involvement from 10% of the members that's 200 people all working to accomplish a mission. Have a Public Relations committee that manage your social media, newspapers, newsletters and more. Have a few people manage your post campout, or disabled veterans fishing trip. There is so much out there you can do so I encourage to be diverse in your programs and try to involve those new members.

Slide 10: Strategies for Engaging Your Members Continued

- Be creative and think outside the box. Just because you haven't done it does not mean you cannot do it. Think campouts or holiday events. Get the members involved in the planning and execution. Hold a benefit for a needy family and have someone plan it.

****** Scenario******

You have a veteran reach out to your post for assistance, but you don't have the funds to financially support them. What are some things you could do?

ANSWER: Couldn't you do a Gofundme? Or email your members and see if they know of any resources. Wouldn't that get them involved in solving the problem? Maybe the veteran has some car problems and you have a mechanic in your post or they need some repairs to their home and you can have post service project.

One simple problem could create membership involvement by just thinking outside the box. In return you get good PR and recognize the member or members who stepped up to solve it.

- We need to ensure that we include some fun social events in the calendar. Members want to make a difference, but they also want fellowship and comradery. Our younger veterans want events that they can include their families in. Spouses want to be around other spouses. Invite your female veterans to have lady's night out's so they can have fellowship. Do

campout's or cookouts. The possibilities are limitless. Be creative and have fun.

Slide 11: What are you doing to create excitement in your post?

*****ASK THE AUDIENCE*****