



American Legion Training Newsletter

National Headquarters Internal Affairs Division

Honor - Serve - Prepare

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Keep a Sharp Axe



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How important is training and learning? Think about this story...

Back when logging was done only by swinging an axe, there was a young man who wanted to be a lumberjack. Finding a logging camp, he explained to the foreman that he had no logging experience but was a hard worker and eager to learn. Recognizing enthusiasm when he saw it, the foreman agreed to give the young man a chance. Before he would hire him, though, the fore-

man told the young man that he first needed to display his skill by falling 15 trees every day for the next five days, and then handed him an axe. The first day he brought down 21 trees. The young man proudly thought himself a natural if he was capable of bringing down over 20 trees in one day when the goal was only 15. The next day he brought down 16 trees. Undaunted, the young man remained enthused, however, as the next three days went on, he brought down 10 trees, then six, and on the final day, only three trees. On that last day, the young man trudged up to the foreman saying, "I reckon you don't want to hire me now. I just don't understand – I had the right tool and thought I had the skill because at first it just didn't seem to be a problem, and even though I thought I was working just as hard each and every day, as the week went on I brought down fewer and fewer trees." Putting his arm around the young man's shoulders, the experienced foreman assured him, "You do have the skills, son,

I recognized that right off. But what I also saw is that you didn't take the time and effort necessary to sharpen your axe. If you'll just stop regularly to sharpen your axe, you'll be successful!"

So what's the morale of the story? We shouldn't become so busy that we overlook the benefit and importance for keeping sharp by

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This newsletter...

...is a periodic, Legionnaire-driven newsletter, produced by the Internal Affairs Division. It is designed to address best practices, ideas and training that every Legionnaire needs to know, from mentoring to setting goals for the future.

We are highlighting new training resources as they become available, and featuring training initiatives from posts, districts, departments and individuals throughout The American Legion.

Are you a trainer? Can you write? We need your submissions! Send your training ideas and articles to train@legion.org.

Increase Your Membership



By Holly Lewis

☆ 10th district commander, Department of Ohio
☆ 2017 National American Legion College graduate

Define a strategy

Strategy is sometimes a scary word. We've all heard only certain people are good at strategy. I'm here to tell you that's not true. Strategy is a goal and a plan to get to that goal. Set a finite goal for membership with timing. For example, our district will reach 100 percent membership

by Spring Meetings. Or, our post will increase its membership by 20 members by May of next year. You get the picture. The goal should fit your circumstances.

Now that you have defined the goal, there needs to be a plan. This plan is a guideline of what you are going to do to get to the goal. Some things will work and some will not. Review your plan on a regular basis with your team to adjust as necessary.

It has been our experience that you will need to add 10 percent of your quota as new members if you want to ensure growth and hit quota. This also brings in new ideas and new participants to our great American Legion programs. This could mean planning events where new members can be recruited, new relationships with the military community, and contacting National Headquarters

members to get them into your post or district. You need to plan whatever you think will work for your post, district and department.

Communication of events, programs, legislative efforts, etc., via multiple means (social media, radio, tv, mailers, email) is extremely important to the renewal effort. You must continually be answering the question of "What's in it for me?" for the member. Your plan needs to include how you will communicate.

Hope is not a strategy. If you hear yourself or others saying the word "hope" when speaking of membership, you need to step back and come up with a goal and a plan.

Measure and communicate

You can't fix what isn't measured. At any given time, you should be able to answer questions about your membership numbers. We do analytics every week in our district to see how our posts are doing. If we see that they haven't turned in membership in more than two weeks, we are on the phone with them to figure out the issue. We send out an email to our posts every week to let them know important upcoming milestones and our current

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Increase Your Membership (continued)

standing. We also encourage this kind of focus at the post level.

At the district level, in-person visits with the posts are extremely important. Get to know your leaders so that they can partner with you to make the goal. Make sure the district team is getting to every post in your district.

Leadership

Don't make excuses and don't accept them from others. Find a way to succeed. A common excuse we hear is, "We can't get younger members." We turn that around to encourage each member to recruit one new member. It doesn't matter if they are "young" or not. Another common excuse is, "I don't have time." Really what they are saying is that this is not a priority for them right now. Figure out a way to help them see the importance so that it becomes a priority. Be an example. Pay your dues as early as possible. How can you

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ask members to renew when you have not done so yourself? Recruit new members and transfer head-quarter members. If you are a district officer, you should be doing everything possible to make sure your own post is making their membership goals.

Finally, gather a team. Find people who believe in the goal, have them help formulate the plan, and set them loose. Membership success is rarely the result of one person's efforts.

-HL

Keep a Sharp Axe (continued)

seeking and engaging in ongoing training and learning – it is what helps individuals, programs and organizations achieve continual progress and growth. Any carpenter will tell you that using sharp tools is efficient and satisfying, while dull tools cause laborious, wasted effort. It is no different with learning and leadership. As a good example, each year hundreds of Legion Family members are dedicated to coming together at the annual National Americanism and Children & Youth conferences to hone their youth

program expertise by learning with, and from, each other through formal training, informational presentations, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and the synergy of brainstorming.

Whether it is in the role of conducting a youth program, being a post leader, membership recruiting, or just wanting to know more about how The American Legion works, no matter what it is, remember to take the time, opportunity and enjoyment for keeping a "sharp axe."

-RA

FIND IT ONLINE : myLegion.org is a **FREE** website designed to connect members of The American Legion to their post and department leadership.

National Online Resources



Encourage all your fellow Legionnaires to take BASIC TRAINING.

Just send them to www.legion.org/alei, log in to the website, and earn their certificate!

Training Events Calendar

is now active! Check out www.legion.org/training/events for trainings in your area.

Are you a department or district trainer and want your event on this calendar?
Add it today!

Don't see the training you know should be there?
Contact your department training team and ask them to input the training on- to the training events page.

Are YOU a Trainer?

Have a hot training tip? We need your submissions! Send your training ideas to train@legion.org.

Upcoming Issue Topics:

- * NC Denise Rohan on Training Observations
- * Bob Sussan (VA) on Post Audits (3 part series)
- * Brett Reistad (VA) on Training Vision
- * Dave Woodward (VT) on Importance of Training

Ready to Train CHECKLIST

- ☐ Most Recent Approved Script?
- ☐ Most Recent Appropriate Presentation?
- ☐ Helpful Handouts?
- ☐ Appropriate Attire?
- ☐ Your current Legion cap
- ☐ Winning SMILE



*Applications for
National American Legion College
are now being accepted!*

Visit www.legion.org/college to download an application, complete and submit to your department before July 31st!

MISSING AN EDITION?



Go to www.legion.org/training/newsletters and download the edition you are missing!