

The American Legion Department of Nebraska

Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth

Introduction: The following Strategic Plan was prepared by the Department Adjutant, David W. Salak, with input from Department Commander Jim Sidel, Department Senior Vice Commander Dave Bruckner, Past Department Commander George Cyboron, Membership Chairman Mike Landkamer and Membership Committeeman Bruce Husted. Also in attendance was Nebraska's candidate for National Commander, Mike Helm. It was updated on July 20, 2016 by the Department Commander and Department Adjutant.

Background: The National Executive Committee passed Resolution No: 64 giving authority to create a Strategic Plan for Sustained Membership Growth. The strategic plan focused on five specific strategies which are: (1) Brand Awareness, (2) Communication, (3) Training/Education/Leadership Development, (4) Post Development and Revitalization, and (5) Membership Recruiting and Retention.

Mission Statement: To increase membership and post development by creating a culture of growth. To better communicate with the membership, veterans, and the general public about whom we are and what we do. To have educational opportunities for Legionnaires throughout the Department. To develop leadership training and mentoring programs for Legionnaires who display potential for further advancement in the organization. To establish a new virtual post while revitalizing those in existence.

Overall Objective: To grow membership over next five-years using five strategies.

Strategic Plan:

- (1) **Brand Awareness:** The focus is to target members/non-members to create awareness of who we are and what we do. The Department of Nebraska will use six different tactics to fulfill this strategy:
 - (1) Urge individual post to order Legion-family shirts/hats
 - (2) Use outdoor welcome signs/marquees to attract veterans
 - (3) Contact local newspapers to run one-day advertisements
 - (4) Obtain permission to post American Legion signs at city limits (The American Legion of (Town) Welcomes YOU!)

(2) **Communication**: The focus is to ensure dissemination of accurate and essential information to all members and public. The Department of Nebraska will use internal and external tactics to fulfill this strategy:

(1) Internal:

- a. Remove bottlenecks up and down the chain. Information is not being relayed down to the post-level and in some cases from the lower echelon to Headquarters. Instruct Area Vice Commanders and District Commanders to share information from the Department/National and forward information from posts.
- b. Update Department/Area/District email books so information can be readily passed both up and down the chain.
- c. Promote MyLegion at the individual and District levels. Too many empty profiles at the individual level and the majority of Districts fail to utilize this handy tool.
- d. Update our Speaker's List so posts know who to call should they desire a speaker for a particular event.
- e. Department Committees to provide monthly feedback to Department Commander as to the contacts made with posts and districts during the previous month.

(2) External:

- a. Establish a relationship with Offutt Air Force Base, US Strategic Command and Army/Air National Guard. These entities need to understand what programs we have that will directly affect their service men and women. This includes Department as well as local posts.
- b. Submit monthly Public Service Announcements (PSA) to local radio and television stations throughout the state.
- c. Maintain FACEBOOK presence and ensure information is accurate and timely.
- d. Promote discount brochures in our Nebraska Legionnaire newspaper. Entice prospective members by showing them some benefits of membership.
- e. Investigate the possibility of having a "Dining-In" for Department Personnel and management persons from local media outlets. The idea is to establish a relationship so media is more likely to run PSA and other Legion articles. Local Posts can do likewise.
- f. Promote Operation School Talk where veterans educate children in classrooms on flag etiquette and other Americanism and proper citizenship ideals.
- g. Investigate National's School Awards program then advertise the program to gain support at the local level.

(3) **Training/Education/Leadership Development**: The focus is to improve knowledge of TAL by implementing educational tools and leadership development. The Department of Nebraska will use five tactics to fulfill this strategy:

- (1) Promote the online American Legion Extension Institute course. Make it a mandatory requirement for all members of the Department Executive Committee. Every Post Commander and Post Adjutant will be “highly encouraged” to complete the course.
- (2) Promote National’s LEAD program. Explore interest with Legionnaires then iron out details with National.
- (3) Establish a Department Legion College by 2017. Obtain curriculum from other Departments that already have their own Legion College program and tailor that curriculum to Nebraska.
- (4) Change Department Bylaws so that Area Vice Commanders are designated “Training Coordinator” for their region. Certify the four Area Vice Commanders so they are able to teach the Department Legion College curriculum.
- (5) Create a Department “Mentoring Board” consisting of Past Department Commanders and other prominent Legionnaires. The idea is to interview potential Legionnaires that demonstrate the capacity to hold leadership positions and keep them on track.

(4) **Post Creation, Development and Revitalization**: The focus is to develop new posts, revitalize or consolidate existing posts. The Department of Nebraska will use four tactics to fulfill this strategy:

- (1) Create a new “Virtual Post” for the 21st Century.
- (2) Revitalize posts throughout the Department. Focus on making current posts a fun place for Legionnaires and their families. Consider making all posts WIFI accessible (hotspots) and look into providing babysitting services during Department, District, and Post meetings.
- (3) Consolidate posts that failed to maintain the minimum membership number for past three years. Send Department Membership Committee to those posts who show a track record of barely meeting the required membership number.
- (4) Establish a District revitalization effort over five-years so that the Department Membership Committee has reviewed all 14 Districts and visited every troubled post throughout each District that has the potential of closing its doors.

(5) **Membership Recruiting and Retention**: The focus is to increase membership through recruiting and retention strategy. The Department of Nebraska will use five tactics to fulfill this strategy:

- (1) Utilize Post 500 data. Encourage Area and District Commanders to review this tool monthly and provide copies to their respective Post Commanders and Post Adjutants.
- (2) Encourage local membership drives at community events and military facilities. Ensure Legion brochures are attractive to particular audience. For instance: An active duty member might be more interested to know they can have their Spouse phone a Legion Post when they are deployed. A retired member in the community might rather have information on discount programs and veteran benefits.
- (3) Make the post FUN! People won't come back unless they feel welcomed and that the post provides a positive atmosphere for the entire family.
- (4) Promote our ROTC scholarships. For veterans applying who meet eligibility dates, look at the possibility of a \$400.00 scholarship with the remaining \$100.00 going towards two or three years of membership versus a blanket \$500.00 scholarship? ROTC students are short on money and are more likely to see and use the benefit of various retailer discount programs. This action also brings the younger generation into our organization.
- (5) Solicit more help from Offutt Air Force Base, US Strategic Command and the Army/Air National Guard in the promotion of our programs. Encourage their participation so that The American Legion programs are mentioned at their meetings and become a more recognizable organization.

Summary: None of this is possible without the buy-in from our Department Executive Committee and our members-at-large. This revised plan will be briefed to our DEC in October 2016 during the Commander's training event and again at our Mid-Year conference in January 2017.