



## EXECUTING A MEMBERSHIP PLAN - A TEMPLATE FOR SUCCESS!

# PUTTING ELIGIBILITY TO WORK

Not everyone joins the American Legion Auxiliary for the same reason. And that's OK. Some women join to have an opportunity to volunteer. Some women join because their grandma made them and it was expected. Some want to connect with others in the community and Yes...some actually joined to gain admittance to our members only Post environment. But Keep in mind...two key points:

1. The reason members stay...is not always the same as the reason they joined.
2. All members share a common element –eligibility. No matter why we joined...we all share a common bond of eligibility ...and that's special.

This year, the membership team would like you to focus on that special element ...to both secure new members and retain those who have already joined. We have some ideas to get you started...but we're looking to you to come up with some new ones too...so come prepared to help us out! Here's our top 10 ideas for Putting our Eligibility to Work for Membership...What's Yours?

### 1. UNDERSTANDING THE GAME - MAKE ELIGIBILITY VISUAL

Encourage your members to surround their activities with pictures of those from whom they gained their eligibility. Put those pictures around your poppy display! Put those pictures around activities that involve the community! Make it very visual to those we engage... we are an organization that supports veterans. A couple of things will likely happen: It will give your members a starting point for conversation..."This is my daughter" ..."This is my dad" ..."This my grandpa" AND it gives your guest a starting point too, "Wow...my grandfather served in World War II also!" Make starting a conversation with a stranger easy by talking about something we all care about...our troops and our families. The membership game is easily solved because the answer is in the law of averages and it's really just math. The more people you ask to join...the more likely you will get someone to join! Helping our members to start and engage in effective conversation with strangers is the first step to making a connection that could result in a new member.



### 2. Shooting Fish in a Barrel – Finding Eligibility

Challenge your chairmen to employ an eligibility component in to their Plans of Action and make sure to include it boldly in your Department's Membership model. Sending mixed messages ...isn't a good plan...and not very effective. Every activity, every opportunity with which you engage neighbors, friends and your communities should include the same core message of eligibility. We've got a few ideas:

**Community Service:** Announce an American Legion Auxiliary "tribute" to veterans. Invite members of the community to submit photos of veterans in their families to be compiled into a memorial tribute over a patriotic holiday. Start out with well-known members of your community: the mayor, the city council, the basketball coach. Reach out to your neighbors. You will find ELIGIBILITY EVERYWHERE.

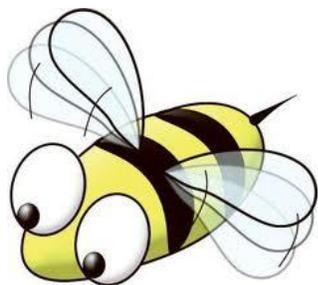
**Education:** Get buy in from the schools...invite the kids to bring a photo of a veteran in their family and design a montage or mural around the photos. Put the mural up for display at the Post and invite the families to come for a "sneak peak". You will find ELIGIBILITY EVERYWHERE.

**Girls State:** Ask your girls state citizens to bring a photo of a veteran in their family (or one of a close friend) to hang prominently on their door. You will find ELIGIBILITY EVERYWHERE.

If you weave eligibility in to your program elements...finding new members will be like shooting fish in a barrel!

### 3. Be Prepared – Get a Plan

The Girl Scouts are prepared...we need to be prepared too! Find something interesting, valuable, helpful to contribute to the cause. Organize an event, think outside the box, think inside the box, just THINK about how YOU can make a difference. Accept responsibility and be accountable and ask other members of your membership team to also be accountable. Be part of the solution...not part of the problem! Solution solvers are women who think, women who plan, women who act and women who identify tasks, evaluate the situation, devise a solution and then put that solution into motion. Not every plan is a winner...but having no plan is definitely a losing proposition. Remember...hey...there is no dumb plan!



### 4. Buzz Words, Consistency of Message and I'm SO Excited!

Act Enthusiastic and You'll Be Enthusiastic. Rule #1 ...if you're not excited about what we're about...trust us...no one else will be either! If you're having a blast...LOVING what you're doing...EXCITED about telling about your dad's picture on the poppy display...TRUST US...everyone else will be too! People think it's cool to be involved in cool activities...and we've got 90 years of history on our side! Use words like...TRADITION and PATRIOTIC when describing what we do and WHY we do it! Make it magical!

### 5. KEEPING IT REAL FOR OUR MEMBERS

Remember we're all eligible but it's our individual differences that make us unique. Ask questions and discover immediately what the "passion" of your member may be. We all have something with which we're passionate about. Their passion may not yet be the Auxiliary...but are they in to legislative issues? Is she a computer whiz? Like to draw? Work in the garden? Discover their passion and find a fit for that passion in one of our programs. There is something for everybody in the American Legion Auxiliary. Identifying that passion, finding a fit and making EACH member feel valued is the key to getting them and KEEPING them!



### 6. SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL!

Shake it Up...Rattle the Cages...Roll the Dice. Our future depends on our ability to manage and merge great traditions with a new, fresh and timely approach to achieving goals and fulfilling the mission of our organization. Be receptive to new ideas and embrace and encourage change. Dare to be different and remember ...different isn't bad...different is just different. We're really more in common than we are different...don't you think?!

### 7. Flexibility and Adaptability in a Changing World

Our world is constantly in motion and standing still is no longer an option. Therefore we must be flexible and willing to adapt to changes that impact our membership efforts. Flexibility means being open-minded, thoughtful, careful and aware of how we're perceived by others and those we serve. Set a standard of excellence in all you do and eligible members will follow your lead.



## 8. Staying Relevant

If we have a purpose (we do) and are perceived as being relevant by the community and those we serve, eligible women will join. It's when we're not relevant and have lost our compass...that we struggle. Think RELEVANCE when planning activities. Supporting America's core values, our veterans, troops and their families is as relevant today as it was in 1919. Be good and noble stewards of our great traditions by finding a place for them in today's changing landscape and use the powerful images of our veterans to help convey this message. It's a proven fact; the service movement is uniting the two largest generations in American history, the baby boomers and the millennials. As Time Magazine mentioned in their annual report on service, "Both of these generations want to increase their service, and both feel they have not been asked to do enough."

## 9. Choosing the Right Path

Sometimes it's hard to know which path to choose. We're faced with many challenges...competition from other Non-Profits, making time for multiple activities, not to mention financial pressures in a difficult and volatile economy. As an organization, we place great value on those citizens whose eligibility has earned them the right for membership. When you engage an eligible member...make them feel patriotic...make them feel honored they're eligible and make them an immediate part of the team. We all know ...there is no "I" in team...so give your new member a task they can manage and recognize their success as a contributing partner to the project. Success takes many forms so be open and generous with compliments and don't forget to say "Thanks."



## 10. WAVE YOUR MAGIC WAND

Gosh...wouldn't it be great if we could all just wave a magic wand and all our membership issues would disappear! Unfortunately, it's not that simple. It takes...time, work, and commitment from our leaders at every level. We're committed ...are you?

# GIVE US YOUR TOP 10!

We think your Department can help us take our organization's membership goals to the next level...so give us your Top 10 Ideas for putting eligibility to work for you! Remember the rules...there are no dumb ideas...and your ideas matter...so let us have it!