



REVITALIZATION SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION



REVITALIZATION BULLET POINTS

Contribute to the Community

Be seen. Represent the Legion in the community in a way that is largely visible. Plan for 4-5 events over the next year.

Reconnect to Membership

How do we connect our current members back to the post again? How do we get them involved again? How do we get them to participate or at the minimum, get them to attend a meeting or event to reacquaint?

Recruit and Replenish

How do we recruit new members? Where do we look? How can the district or state headquarters help us in this mission? What new and fresh ideas come to mind to recruit new membership?

Communicate and Engage

Once we reconnect to current membership and recruit new membership, how do we continue good communication with those members who are willing to listen or participate? How do we get those members to participate and contribute to Legion activities, happenings, events, projects, or leadership positions?

CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY

Be seen. Represent the Legion in the community in a way that is largely visible. Plan for 4-5 events over the next year.

(ALREADY IN PLACE, SUSTAIN) The Color Guard has been very successful, especially with the funeral honor details. 75-100 funerals are conducted every year. This is a very appreciated service by families. Participation by members of the Legion has diminished over the years, but there is always a full team fielded for each and every funeral that they are called upon to participate in. This is a huge program that has excellent visibility in the community.

(ALREADY IN PLACE, SUSTAIN) The Bike Shop has done good work with bikes for the homeless, for kids, and for veterans. We need to write up a personal interest story or have a TV segment on their work. We must take credit for what we do and publicize these programs. We also need to get more involved with Homeless Veterans all over Fargo-Moorhead. We need to work with these programs and provide advice, help, and fellowship.

We have so many programs that the Legion endorses, we need to capitalize on these programs. We fall short in publically recognizing these programs and events.

Memorial services and public programs should be increased in the community. POW Services, Memorial Day Services, and programs in honor or certain wars.

Picnics on the lawn, Beer Bust on Friday night, meat raffles, baseball games and events, visibility at Legion events and community events wearing the Legion cap.

Promoting troop returns (Freedom Salutes), troop send offs, military unit events, being visible at these events with Legion caps proudly worn to show our presence and support of our current service members.



CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMUNITY

(Continued)

Flags for First Graders Program, which is run by 40 and 8, is a great event to bring not only education to the kids, but to be visible to the teachers who might be veterans.

Do a community Blood Drive.

Start a campaign for the Wounded Warriors or the Comfort Warriors (a Legion program.)

Partner with other community organizations to get better visibility within the community.

Offer our building out to host other satellite veteran organization meetings (i.e. The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans organization.)



RECONNECT TO MEMBERSHIP

How do we connect our current members back to the post again? How do we get them involved again? How do we get them to participate or at the minimum, get them to attend a meeting or event to reacquaint?

It's as simple as ASKING, reaching out to our membership. Social interaction is huge. Ask people to rejoin. Ask them to come to a meeting. Ask them to participate in a program. Ask them to come to a Legion event.

We recognize that time is an issue and we all have priorities. It gets difficult to prioritize the Legion ahead of family, church, work, etc. We must give our membership a reason to prioritize the American Legion in their lives.

Produce a membership directory annually. Just seeing names and pictures may spark a member to reconnect.

We should consider having meetings on the same night concurrently (Auxiliary and Post Meetings), perhaps provide child care if this plan were to be put into place.

Reunite the "American Legion Family."



Emphasize that volunteerism is a huge need in our organization. Based on our budget constraints, having anyone who is interested in helping in any way is key.



RECONNECT TO MEMBERSHIP

(Continued)

In conjunction with future American Legion social events, theme them to host groups (i.e. military branches, National Guard units, wars served in, places deployed to, places assigned to, etc.)

What can the Department or National Headquarters do to help us out in this department?



RECONNECT TO MEMBERSHIP

CONSIDER THIS – HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THE POST DO YOU THINK SHARE IN THIS FEELING?

I won't be at the revitalization meeting tonight, but the topic of Legion revitalization has been on my mind for 10+ years. While I neither have great ideas to share, nor am willing to be part of the solution, I felt compelled to at least send an email to thank those who have been working so hard.

I sincerely believe the American Legion is a worthwhile organization, and I am aware of the importance of its work to veterans and the community. I know that we desperately need members to take on the work of the group in order for the Post to survive. I know that it's my demographic that should be taking over and taking our turn, or that Post #2 will fail. I am aware what a shame it would be for Post #2 of Fargo to fail with its strong history and large veteran population.

With this awareness, it makes me sad to say that I am not willing to do my part to keep the Post alive. I honestly do not feel capable of or compelled to take on any additional responsibilities in my little world. I realize EVERYONE is busy, not just me, and I look up to those who have figured how to balance in their schedules. I sincerely thank those who have worked so hard and poured so much heart and soul into the Legion over the years, doing their best to compensate for all of us who have not been contributing. I'm sorry to let you and the organization down.

I will pay my membership dues to the American Legion for at least as long as there is a Post #2, then, if the Post much go away, probably continue to pay dues elsewhere. I am sincerely sorry to not be part of the solution for this worthy organization. But my honest feedback is that if it is on my shoulders to keep the Post going, it will not happen. I cannot blame those who are tired of doing all the work, and if it comes to the point that this post can no longer go on, I will only blame myself and my peers. The few active members and leaders have sure made a valiant effort and should be proud of that.

RECRUIT AND REPLENISH

How do we recruit new members? Where do we look? How can the district or state headquarters help us in this mission? What new and fresh ideas come to mind to recruit new membership?

A good portion of the attendees for the revitalization were WWII and Korean War veterans and members over the age of 40. The big focus should be on recruiting new younger members into the ranks of the American Legion. But the challenge is how do these younger members contribute to the Legion in the busy world that we live in? No matter, the future of the American Legion is dependent on identifying and aggressively recruiting these young veterans. Regarding recruiting, it could be as simple as just asking a veteran if they have ever thought of joining the American Legion or if they even know what we do. Ask twenty people and if even one person shows up to a meeting and joins, that is a good thing. Fellowship and a social experience is a must within the organization both for perspective and current members.

“People don’t join a building. They join PEOPLE.”

Make sure you keep some membership materials in your car or in your bag or purse just in case. Ask veterans if they are interested in knowing more or just checking out a meeting. If you need more materials, just ask! There are plenty of membership materials in the office!

We have members who work at large corporations- we strategically need to get those members to identify veterans and ask them to join! There are members who work at places such as the Forum, Microsoft, and US Bank. You don’t have to pester the entire company, but more than likely you can identify veterans through your work relationships.



RECRUIT AND REPLENISH

(Continued)

To get younger veterans involved, we need to do **FAMILY EVENTS** so that the family can be included- pizza party, picnic, concert, etc.

Utilize the principles of the **“JUST ASK CAMPAIGN”**. Look for folks who have identification on their vehicles that they are a veteran, ask them if they’re interested in joining the American Legion. Look to **Guard units around the state, Air Force bases, recruiting offices**. Look to colleges and identify veterans there. Look to the younger veterans as they are the future of the American Legion.

“We need to focus on them (young veterans), not on ourselves at this point. We are a dying organization and we must reverse it.”

Free food always attracts younger potential members. We could host an event to reach out to them, but perhaps not at the Post, perhaps at the university or a “more hip” location such as Rhombus Guys.

We need to make sure we don’t pigeon hole ourselves by only acknowledging only wartime veterans or combat veterans. Non-combat veterans who fall into the dates of inclusion should be recognized too.



Could we have social membership for veterans who do fall into the dates of inclusion to be American Legion members?



COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE

Once we reconnect to current membership and recruit new membership, how do we continue good communication with those members who are willing to listen or participate? How do we get those members to participate and contribute to Legion activities, happenings, events, projects, or leadership positions?

Bring back the monthly bulletin, newsletter, web newsletter, etc. Get businesses to sponsor these newsletters. It's the easiest way to keep in touch with membership. This must be done consistently. It takes volunteers and time to make this happen.

How do we bridge the gap between our generations? Especially in communication.

Keep the website and Facebook up to date. Focus on modern ways to communicate (e-mails, Twitter) while also keeping in place more traditional forms of communication (letters, mail, phone calls.)

We need to be literally talking to our membership more often in face-to-face or phone conversations. Go-Getters are almost extinct, we need to go to our membership and talk to them in person if possible.

Put together work committees and make sure they stay on task. Ensure that the committees meet regularly and set and accomplish tasks. Ensure that there is some social time as well for the team.





TAKE AWAY THOUGHTS



Based on the attendance at the Revitalization Meeting, the ages of the group of the attendees were older, on average in the 50's on up. Were we asking the wrong people about revitalization?

It is not important to future members what the past is. We need to talk to the younger folks and ask them what they want us (The American Legion) to be. We need to ask Post 400 why they did not join us in the first place. Old methods are not going to bring young people in. It may reengage older membership, but won't help the future and the future is what we should be most worried about at this point.

"Forget about all of the stuff that what WE think is important (and relevant) and let's ask them (young veterans) what THEY think is important (and relevant). We ask Post 400, 'What do you want?' We need to talk to the Post 400 folks, the young kids, to tell us how to grow. We have a lot of young patriotic veterans out there, and we're not reaching them. How do we do that? We're missing the mark by talking to the wrong people. We need to go directly to the young veterans. We can sit here for three weeks and we will never come up with the answer. They have the answer. We cannot come up with the answer, but they can."

Post 400 wants to be involved in community service. They want to be involved in high energy events that have visible results. They're not as concerned about tradition and ceremony, but want to be active and do good things for veterans and the community.



TAKE AWAY THOUGHTS

(Continued)



That all being said, this does not mean we forget about our current members! We must still engage in events and activities in support of our current membership. We must continue to support and foster current programs that our veteran members have progressed to their current successful state. We must not forget about those members who have given so much to the organization. This must be a part of the long-term plan. WE FOCUS ON THE PAST WHICH HAS BUILT UP THE STRENGTH OF OUR ORGANIZATION, WE FOCUS ON THE PRESENT TO IDENTIFY WHICH DIRECTION TO GO AND HOW TO ACCOMPLISH NEW GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, AND WE FOCUS ON THE FUTURE IN ORDER TO PRESERVE AND PROLONG OUR CORE MISSION FOR YEARS TO COME – TO SUPPORT OUR VETERANS.

While it is wonderful for our Post Officers to graduate to the Department level and higher, it seems to rob us of our best and brightest leaders and experts.

Whatever we do no matter what age group we are catering to, it needs to be FUN and WORTHWHILE. Legion activities compete for a person's free time, A Legion activity has to have ACTUAL VALUE.



TAKE AWAY THOUGHTS

(Continued)



“Fail to plan, plan to fail”, a concept to think about. Questions to ask: where do we want to go, how do we plan to get there, who will be involved, how will we know when we arrive? We must answer all of these questions. We hit the “what’s” but if we don’t hit on the other questions, we will accomplish nothing. We need a strong unified plan that answers all of those questions.

Using the “go where they are” method of thought, is our building the right place to be anymore? We should consider getting rid of this building again. We don’t need all of this space to accomplish our mission. We can make this work easier without the financial burdens that we’re taking on. Is it a buoy or an anchor? We need to collectively look in the mirror.



POST 400 INITIAL REACTION



“Our generation, as you know, isn’t concerned with Pomp and Circumstance, but rather with making tangible differences that changes the community and our culture as a whole. It is hard for younger Veterans, especially those who are not young Caucasian males, to walk into a Post full of older men and feel accepted. Many members of Post 400 felt this way. That being said, we still need guidance form the older generation if our interpretation of the American Legion is going to be successful. I suppose the take away story is that we need to find a balance and the old way isn’t it.”



IMMEDIATE PLANS



PROMOTE CURRENT PROGRAMS
**PRESS RELEASES AND PUBLIC INTEREST PIECES TO
TV, RADIO AND PRINT HIGHLIGHTING OUR
STRONGEST PROGRAMS AT THIS TIME:**

- COLOR GUARD**
- FLAGS FOR FIRST GRADES (40 AND 8)**
- BIKE SHOP**
- BOYS AND GIRLS STATE**

EVENTS TO PROMOTE THE LEGION TO THE COMMUNITY
SPONSORED MUSICAL EVENTS ON THE LAWN STAGE (JASS, OTHER POSSIBLE EVENTS)
BLOOD DRIVE
PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
SOCIAL MEDIA, FACEBOOK, TWITTER, E-MAIL NEWSLETTER, WEBSITE

BRING MEMBERS BACK TO THE BUILDING AND ORGANIZATION
ST. PATRICK'S DAY CHILI COOK-OFF EVENT
MEMBERSHIP DRIVES
LEGION MEMBER SOCIAL EVENT (SUCH AS A SPAGHETTI DINNER)
LEGION FAMILY PICNIC
LEGION FAMILY NIGHT AT A POST 2 BASEBALL GAME
NEWSLETTER, MAILINGS, WEBSITE



YOUR IDEAS