RECRUITING and RETAINING MEMBERS

The Flotilla Commander's Guide
FLOTILLA RECRUITMENT PLAN

Create a Recruitment Team: FC, FSOs PS, PA, PE, OP, VE, MV, CC. Call a special meeting of this team and task these officers with establishing and implementing their own recruiting ideas within their departments and to include instruction on recruiting in their annual seminars. Here are a few basic ideas with which to begin:

- **PA**: Monthly recruitment articles in local newspapers, guest speakers to service organizations, fire dept., town board meetings to "sell" the Auxiliary, static displays at shopping malls and libraries, boat show booths, summer festival information booths. Many more ideas can be found in the *PA Guide* COMDTINST M5728.3 series.

- **PE**: Use the Minutes for Membership, *Team Coast Guard* and *This is the Coast Guard Auxiliary* videos at adult classes; distribute *Join the Auxiliary* pamphlets along with information specific to your flotilla or division to your students. Have your best instructor start the course for good first impression; make sure instructors are well prepared and properly dressed. During breaks, show photos, scrapbooks of flotilla activities. Youth classes - distribute literature for parents.

- **OP**: Skippers should carry Auxiliary business cards and *Join the Auxiliary* pamphlets with a flotilla phone number to be distributed to vessel owners along with other boating safety literature. Always leave information with vessel owners who have received assistance from the Auxiliary. Make a follow-up phone call to assure they are O.K. and extend an invitation to a meeting.

- **VE/MV**: Contact yacht clubs and marinas with information on joining the Auxiliary. Hand out a packet of brochures to each person receiving a CME, including a *Join the Auxiliary* pamphlet and an invitation to join from the Flotilla Commander. Take advantage of the one-on-one opportunity to educate about boating safety and the Auxiliary. Talk about the fun we have in the Auxiliary and all the opportunities available.

- **CC**: Deliver recruiting materials and posters to teachers while visiting schools. Contact retired teachers’ associations as a part of your membership effort. Tell students of membership advantages.

- **PS**: Attend all seminars to instruct on "Auxsalesmanship". Determine what materials will be needed by each department and quantity for the season. Work with FSO-MA to order early. Should attend all public safety booths and PE classes to do the "final pitch." Write recruiting article for newsletter each month to encourage members to build their unit. Further guidance for recruiting can be found in *Membership Recruitment and Retention Guide* COMDTPUB P16794.12 series.

- **All Members**: Talk to friends, neighbors with a positive outlook on your Auxiliary experiences. Encourage everyone to recruit and have business cards or pamphlets to hand out to interested individuals.
Formalize your Flotilla Recruitment Plan. Have each officer on the recruiting team make a commitment for selected recruiting activities. Write it down, publish it in the newsletter and solicit support from your members. As a part of your meeting agenda each month, follow-up on the progress on these activities. As Flotilla Commander, your enthusiasm will be the deciding factor in your flotilla’s acceptance of recruiting as an integral part of all other activities.

**FLOTILLA RETENTION PLAN**

Create a Flotilla Retention Team: FC, VFC, FSOs PS and MT. Call a special meeting of this team and task these officers to outline the flotillas problems and determine the needs of its members. Once those tasks are accomplished, develop a schedule of events to fulfill the needs and counter the problems.

- With the help of FSO-IS determine the level of participation of your present members, number of trained members in each mission activity, and discuss the past reasons for disenrollments.

- Create a survey for your members to determine their training needs, fellowship ideas, opinions of flotilla meetings, opinion of flotilla meetings, relationship with the Coast Guard and Division, and member expectations. Mail to each member after presenting its importance at a flotilla meeting. Emphasize full participation, candid responses and be open to suggestions. Set a deadline for return of surveys and call those who do not respond.

- Create a "Mentor System". Each new member should have an established member assigned as a mentor to help with assimilation into the Auxiliary and training. A mentor can also be assigned to inactive members to invite and encourage them to become involved again.

- Develop a Member Training Schedule. Using the information from your survey, arrange training for desired courses. Auxiliarsts are busy people. If they know ahead of time when training will be available, they can schedule for it. Line up instructors and schedule QEs ahead of time and work towards that date for completion of training. Include leadership training, qualifications and AUXOP training. Get help from Division if you need it.

- Publish a Newsletter and send out minutes from your meetings. Publish survey trends. Communications is the key to retention. Keep your members informed. Make sure your articles are positive and uplifting; recognize accomplishments; exciting upcoming activities; personal congratulations, etc. A newsletter that makes your flotilla look good, will make your members feel good about belonging.

- Plan a Calendar of Meeting and Fellowship Events. Using the information received from the survey, plan your meeting agendas on a quarterly basis so that your members know why they are coming to each meeting. Make it interesting. (See page 3 for ideas on meetings). Plan your fun. See what your members want to do and schedule the dates ahead of time.
• **Create a "Complaint Department".** The FSO-PS should be a "people person" and should be able to handle this. Your members need to know if they have a problem, they can talk it over with an objective listener who will help direct them through proper channels to effect a solution. This action can be done in a way that does not affect the flotilla in a negative way.

**Formalize your Retention Plan.** Have your VFC take charge of the membership survey of the membership and its feedback. Ask the Retention Team to submit, **in writing**, a planned activities list. **Follow-up** on your part is very important. Make sure that training schedules, meeting and fellowship events and newsletter articles are planned and executed. Check with the FSO-PS periodically on the mentors’ effectiveness and any complaints received.

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**MEETINGS, ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS**

The disenrollment surveys done across the country show that some of our meetings are boring and the fun has gone out of the Auxiliary. Here are some ideas to help to make the Auxiliary experience more enjoyable:

**MEETINGS:**

- **Advertise** - send meeting notices, call members, announce topics for discussion ahead of time, let members know their attendance is important.

- **Agenda** - all meetings MUST have an agenda. Write it, print it, distribute it and follow it!

- **Information** - highlights: short and concise - interesting and timely. Consider a separate staff meeting or committee meeting for prolonged discussions.

- **Activities** - training activity (active or passive) or guest speaker (Auxiliary or non-Auxiliary) or discussion topics. Plan ahead, alternate for interest. Don't try to do everything.

**ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS:**

- **Fellowship** - birthdays, anniversaries, awards; awareness of members situations (illness, graduations, etc.)

- **Variety** - try a new time or a new location - make it interesting so members will want to be there.

- **Conclusion** - Did your meeting meet its goal, solve a problem? Did every member have a role in the meeting? Do you feel accomplished or frustrated? Did your members feel your meeting was a worthwhile way to spend their time?

- **Boating** - overnight or weekend flotilla trips; scavenger hunts, raftouts, picnics, rendezvous.

- **Training** - night SAR, drills - preplanned followed by a debriefing, interagency on water drills, person or body recovery drills, communications (use intercoms), marine maintenance, CPR, plus traditional AUX training.
ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS:

- **Food** - Change of Watch, holiday parties, family barbecues, pig roast, dinner meetings; picnics, steak roast; clam bake. Dress up, dress down, outside, inside - variety!

- **Coast Guard** - more involvement: training at the station, include in your social events, have a liaison with the station, guest speakers at meetings, help teach BS&S, coordinate drills between flotillas and other agencies.

- "**Fun Raiser**" - make it a game: heave a monkey fist into a bucket, relay race to try on mustangs, swimming in PFDs. Combine training and fellowship. Picnic and team spirit.

- **Guest Speakers** - Red Cross, fire department, Power Squadron, historical society, Department of Natural Resources, EMT, fiberglass repair, MSO, local law enforcement, border patrol, boat maintenance.

Recruitment and retention are vital to the health of any volunteer organization. Growth in quality membership requires planning and professionalism. Retention of members requires a plan to fulfill members’ needs as well as the needs of the organization.

The **PLAN** is the key.

The ultimate responsibility for the recruitment and retention of members lies with the elected officers. The information which follows has been designed to aid the Flotilla Commander in exercising leadership and management in these areas, utilizing staff officers and other flotilla members.