

Reflecting on ‘Age’ in Diversity when Recruiting

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The Auxiliary is an organization with a wide selection of opportunities for its members. Since 9/11, the mission of the organization has expanded to place increased emphasis on homeland security, primarily within the maritime domain. Immediately following 9/11, both the Active Duty and the Auxiliary saw a jump in recruitment, with many people joining for the specific purpose of desiring to support their nation against terrorism. While much of the dramatic surge in recruiting we saw in 2001 has faded, there still exists a large population to draw from. This includes those which stand firmly in their desire to serve their community and country—however, most of those people have never heard of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

A remarkably good pool of potential candidates to recruit from are young college-aged students, particularly those studying the subjects of public administration, homeland security, fire science, and criminal justice. Further, vocational programs such as those which offer specialized training programs to be EMTs and Paramedics are also good locations to affiliate with for recruiting purposes.

While the Auxiliary has some specialized formal programs for recruitment, such as ‘Partners in Education’ and the ‘Auxiliary University Program,’ what I am talking about is simply visiting aforementioned educational programs where you can introduce the Auxiliary. There, answer questions, and while doing so, you develop both knowledge and relationships, leading to new applicants.

These individuals will join for many reasons, including the fact that most have an intrinsic drive to serve. Many like the idea of “something different” yet it is lateral to their current objectives which include working in government service. Once they learn about the existence of the

Auxiliary, they see it as a way to “serve” with the military, without being in the military. Yet, it is the military foundation of the Auxiliary itself, which is often appealing to many of them. Moreover, many like the idea of building their resume with the ‘Department of Homeland Security’ on it as they climb up their career ladder, while learning new things.

Recruiting new Auxiliary members from this pool has the potential to strengthen the national organization on many fronts, including diversity in the broadest sense, which includes diversity in age.

In a thesis published by the well-respected Naval Postgraduate School, a study on the USCG Auxiliary demonstrated, “The membership of the Auxiliary is primarily older....” This is well known; the Auxiliary has an aging population of members—it is spoken about often by the leadership. Therefore, recruiting new individuals from the pool of students mentioned, especially those which are starting out on their career path in government service, could strengthen the organization, and possibly reinvigorate it. Further, it is commensurate with both the ‘National Commodore's Diversity Policy Statement’ and the ‘National Commodore's Strategic Plan.’

The Auxiliary’s ‘Strategic Plan for Managing Diversity’ calls for an “aggressive recruiting program” which will help to increase the diversity of membership and help the organization in the long-term. Yet, while leaders should seek new members, ones which can help revitalize the organization, they should remember the old saying that diversity management is not measured by an organization’s demographics, but by how well its leaders identify and capitalize on its members’ talents.