

Department of Minnesota, VFW

# **BRAINSTORMING TOPICS RESULTS and SOLUTIONS**



***EVERY PROBLEM --- HAS A SOLUTION!!!  
THINK POSITIVE --- NOT NEGATIVE!!!***

# **“ALWAYS FORWARD!!!”**

The information contained in this manual is an ‘Ongoing’ effort to make a Great Organization “GREATER”... That Organization is: The Veterans of Foreign Wars!

The ‘Brainstorming’ topics outlined within are meant help Posts, Districts and the Department to find ‘solutions’ to problems that are facing the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Used properly, this manual will allow us to find new and ‘creative’ ways to help our Organization grow and at the same time, develop ‘stronger’ Leaders --- both within the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Community.

PRIDE, has been a ‘common thread’ coming out of these sessions. We need to be PROUD of our Service and PROUD of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

During previous ‘Brainstorming’ Sessions, a multitude of ideas were brought forward. We are doing our best to ‘capture’ the primary ideas. Once a Brainstorming Session is complete, we tried come up with a possible ‘Solution’ scenario. The next step, was to recommend some ways of ‘Implementing’ ideas that came out of that Sessions. In actuality, the final outcome of these Sessions will need to be ‘Field Tested’... How will these ideas play out in reality... How will they work at the ‘grassroots’ Post and District levels?

Not every situation, Post or area is alike. The success of the Implementation process, obviously will depend on the individuals involved and the Leadership applied.

Please use this Manual until it is ‘dog-eared’. Within in these pages, lies the Success of your Post, District and the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a whole.

To quote a Marine Corps slogan, we need to: “ADAPT, IMPROVISE, OVERCOME”!

## **KEY WORDS:**

PRIDE  
EDUCATE  
MENTORSHIP  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
TECHNOLOGY  
GRASSROOTS  
ATTITUDE

INVOLVEMENT  
COMMITMENT  
VISIBILITY  
DEDICATION  
BENCHMARKS  
CHANGE  
ADVERTISING

AWARENESS  
COMMUNICATION  
LEADERSHIP  
PUBLIC RELATIONS  
POSITIVE  
OUTREACH  
ENTHUSIAM

## **BRAINSTORMING TOPICS:**

### **100% Membership:**

1. Blind Calling – Go to the phone book. Inform Veterans in the process of joining the VFW and what the VFW is about.
2. National Guard (FRG) Contact – Contact the full time staff at local Armories and establish possible partnerships.
3. Signs and Banners – Have distributors make up signs and banners for your Post to be used at Post Homes or in Recruiting situations.. These signs/banners should promote VFW Membership and Programs.
4. Contacting Family Readiness Groups (FRG) – Ask if there are any families that need help. This would have long term Membership potential.
5. Contact Newspapers, Radio and TV – Use the media to invite Veterans to join the VFW and also offer help to their families.
6. Family Phone Trees – Help families to stay in touch with each other while their Units are deployed. Long-term Membership potential.
7. UNMET Needs – Make sure that the families in the area are aware of the VFW UNMET Needs Program. Long-term Membership potential.
8. Live Radio & TV Broadcasts – Post should contact the local media to take part in live broadcasts talking about the VFW and its Programs. This will create interest in the VFW among potential members. Posts should get involved in local broadcasts featuring Veterans. In some cases, these might be weekly or regular programs.
9. Well worded letters – The District Commander should create a well-worded letter that can be sent to all the unpaid members in their District.
10. Create a “Three Generation Medal”
11. Use the County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) – Write a letter to eligible members in the area of a Post and have the CVSO address it and send it out.
12. Mentoring Program at the Post and District levels – Use ‘qualified’ members to help Veterans to become more aware of VFW Programs and to create new Membership Recruiters. Also, Past Commanders SHOULD mentor current Commanders on their duties and responsibilities.
13. Involving more Female Veterans – Posts and Districts should work to identify the Female Veterans in their communities and get them involved. To find Females Veterans in your area, contact the CVSO and local Armory. Get involved and attend Female Veterans Programs and Conferences.
14. Invite Veterans to functions hosted by your Post – Contact the CVSO and other Veteran related agencies to come and speak to Veterans at meetings hosted and scheduled by your Post.
15. Have a VFW Representative on College Campuses – Setup a meeting with your Post/District and the Student Veterans group on Campus. Let them know what the VFW is about and get a student Veteran to be the VFW Representative on campus.
16. Challenge Coins – Pass out ‘challenge’ coins as a promotion to Membership. Maybe come up with a ‘coin’ from your Post or District.
17. Membership Promotions – Create tie clasps, special pins, etc. to promote Membership.
18. Special Promotions – Create ‘special’ promotions to reach Membership Goals.
19. Retaining Membership – Stay in contact with all your Members at least once a year. By mail, phone or personal visits.

20. Implement multiple year (two-year) Membership Program at the Post level --- especially when it come to the end of the Membership Year. Post pays part --- member pays the rest.
21. Develop a Life Membership Incentive Program. To encourage more members and Potential members to take out a Life Membership. Incentives like 'time pay' at the Post level. (National already has a Time Pay Program.

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Implement multiple year (two-year) Membership Program at the Post level --- especially when it come to the end of the Membership Year. Post pays part --- member pays the rest.
2. Develop a Life Membership Incentive Program. To encourage more members and Potential members to take out a Life Membership. Incentives like 'time pay' at the Post level. (National already has a Time Pay Program.
3. Implement additional Incentive Programs (in addition to the Life Membership Program). Encouraging members to get involved. This would include Life Membership credit for attending Post and District meeting. Working off a Life Membership by volunteering at/for the Post.
4. Work toward having an ALL Life Member Post. (100% Life Members --- this would solve the 100% problem.) Don't give Membership away --- make your members 'earn' it.  
**"Earning it" --- "Creates Pride"**
5. Make contact (get involved) with other organizations for a possible membership base. Don't stop with just Veterans Organizations. Work with other Community based groups, this will add diversity to your Post and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
6. Work on the parents and family members of deployed or active duty soldiers. By selling them on the Veterans of Foreign Wars --- they will sell their son, daughter or family member on the VFW. Get the parents or family to buy the Veteran a Life Membership.
7. All Post should work on Public Service Announcements. Ads in the newspapers. Spots on the local Radio and TV stations. The new Generation is a 'Public Service' Generation! We just need to ask!

### **IMPLEMENT:**

- PRIDE in the Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Two (2) Year Dues Program
- Life Member Incentive Program
- Be involved in other organizations and groups
- Contact the family members of Veterans Families
- Public Service Announcements

## **100% Programs:**

1. Get Post Inspectors involved – Have the Post Inspector get a Community Service Report and Poppy Order from every Post during their Inspection.
2. More detailed information/instructions – Posts and Program Chairmen should be sent letters and bulletins ‘detailing’ how to complete and accomplish Programs/Reporting. Additionally, concentrate on continuing ‘education’ of VFW Programs and where to find information.
3. Make Community Service more interesting – Using the Community Service Reports, create a list of ‘new ideas’ for Community Service projects/programs.
4. Send Copies of Community Service Reports to the District Community Service Chairmen for purposes of learning and educating.
5. 100 Great VFW Ideas – This is a publication available from National Military Services. Every Post should have a copy of this information.
6. Younger Veterans getting involved – Posts should educate and get younger Veterans involved in programs like distributing Buddy Poppies. Maybe assign them their own area.
7. Need to get more Members involved and allow ‘flexibility’ in their involvement.
8. Get Corporations/Companies involved in our Programs – Form ‘partnerships’ with local companies in an effort to make our Programs more successful. This also creates more visibility for the VFW and the things we do for the Community.
9. Advertising in the local Media – As part of this advertising, the VFW should THANK the Public and others for their Support.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Task the Post and Club Inspectors with checking on Programs. (Make this part of their job.) Department needs to give the Post and Club Inspectors a ‘Check-off’ list for Community Service Reports. (District Inspectors are the Department’s ‘first-line of Defense.) Task the District Inspectors with more responsibilities in helping to build and complete VFW Programs.
2. Posts need more ‘detailed’ information on what constitutes a Community Service Project. Department needs to do a better job of putting together a ‘more’ comprehensive list of possible projects. Department needs to publish ‘Community Service Ideas and Projects’ on a regular basis.
3. Make sure ALL Posts are doing something in their Community. Monitoring the Community Service Report forms. Then getting back to the District Officers and informing them which Posts are lacking Reports and/or potential involvement/activity.

## **IMPLEMENT:**

- Post and Club should check for Community Service and Involvement when inspecting Posts
- A ‘Check-off’ list for the Inspectors to use
- Publish more information on Community Service ideas and Projects
- Monitor those Posts that are not reporting Community Service Projects

## **Locating Veterans in the Community:**

1. Write letters to potential members (See 100% Membership).
2. Watch for license plates on cars and trucks.
3. Look for Military or Veteran related Caps, shirts, jackets, etc.
4. American Flags in yards, on cars or at businesses.
5. Patriotic and Support the Troops related signs in yards and businesses.
6. Every Post and Auxiliary member is a Recruiter.
7. Local Web Sites – Try to get local businesses, groups, etc. to link or advertize your VFW on their Web Site.
8. A Post should consider becoming a member of the local Chamber of Commerce.
9. Contact other Military related Organizations – Posts should seek out organizations and groups like the Enlisted Guard Assoc., TREA, the American Legion, DAV, etc. to locate eligible members within their ranks.
10. Contact local Employers – Create a contest in the community to find out which employer hires the most Veterans.
11. Become a member of “My Space, Facebook,” etc. to seek out Veterans.
12. Contact other Veterans Organizations and find Veterans on their Web Pages. Web pages like “We Serve”.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Stay in close contact with the local National Guard/Reserve Armories and Family Readiness Groups. Build a relationship with these armories and develop activities related to that unit.
2. Signs outside the Post Home: “Are you eligible to be a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars? Inquire within...”
3. Department should make up signs and get them out to the Posts: “Veterans Needed – Did you serve Overseas or in Combat?”
4. Getting more inspirational information out to our Posts: Like Lee’s video and the three T.V. spots. (Recruiting Tools)

## **IMPLEMENT:**

- Contact National Guard/Reserve Armories and Family Readiness Groups
- Recruiting signs inside and outside of Post Homes
- Make each Post a ‘Recruiting Center’
- More ‘Recruiting Tools’ for Posts and Districts

## **Creating Continuity Within Our Ranks:**

1. Sharing Information – Talking to each other and sharing ideas. This could be done – 1-on-1, at meetings, thru email, etc.
2. Productive meetings and sharing experiences (successes and failures).
3. Need more family gatherings – Have more picnics and family gatherings. Maybe invite the National Guard Units and other Veteran related groups.

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:** (Did not go into Problem Solving stage.)

## **How do we become Accountable members of the VFW:**

1. Leadership Lost – We need to be more accountable to our Leadership --- and our Leadership needs to be more accountable to us as members. (Hold each other Accountable --- “Hold their feet to the fire”)
2. A more ‘Positive’ attitude within our ranks.
3. Remove the ‘Negativism’ from our Posts and ranks.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Thanking members and the Public for attending or taking part in your functions.
2. Make sure you know the History of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and your Post.
3. Be friendly. Represent your Post and the VFW in a Professional manner. Welcome everyone to your Post --- make them feel Welcome.
4. Let everyone know who are the ‘key’ Officers and people in your Post (District & Department).
5. Wear VFW Cap whenever you go to a VFW Function.

## **IMPLEMENT:**

- Learn the History of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (and your Post)
- Thank Members and the Public
- Be friendly
- Know the ‘key’ Officers in your Post. District and Department
- Wear your VFW Cap

## **How do we “Blow Our Own Horn”?:**

1. Strive to have our events and accomplishments published in the Media (Newspaper, Radio, TV, etc.)
2. Producing more effective, informative and ‘to the point’ columns/items for our Membership. Offering ‘Praise’ to our volunteers.
3. Fundraisers – Get out Press Releases to the local Media and statewide Media. Invite them to cover the event. If the event is successful, publish that too!
4. PSAs – Seek out FREE media coverage. Tell the public (and potential members) about the VFW.
5. Mail letters to media, businesses and members concerning VFW Progress.
6. Get the Youth Involved – By getting the youth of the Community involved, you are gaining a potential ‘foothold’ with their parents and other adults in the area. If the Post does ‘good’ by their involvement in youth activities --- the news about the VFW will spread!

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. When representing the Veterans of Foreign Wars, wear your VFW cap or something showing that you are with the VFW.
2. Put together a card or handout telling of the successes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and your Post (District or Department). What has the VFW accomplished at the Post, District or Department levels. Carry this information in your pocket or billfold. This will help us explain the VFW to others.
3. Use “Veterans of Foreign Wars” --- not VFW.
4. Put together items that will educate members, potential members and the public. Such as brochures, signs, newspaper articles and T.V. spots. Tri-folds work well for this type of promotion. Distribution of Buddy Poppies is a good time to tell the Public about the VFW. Something we can leave at libraries and other public venues.
5. Contact schools: Get your Color Guard involved in educating children in such things as Flag folding, Patriotic events and Holidays and volunteering for Sporting events. (Getting exposure.) Conduct a “Veterans in the Classroom” Program and discuss various wars and the sacrifices made by Veterans to keep our Country Free. Discussing some of the ‘safety’ programs --- like Drug Abuse, Driving Safety, etc. With donations to Youth groups and other groups, we should ask them to come into the Post and help us with certain events. This will help to educate them about the VFW.
6. Find those Programs of interest in the Community. Get your Post involved and ‘visible’ in those events and functions.

### **IMPLEMENT:**

- Show that you are Proud to be a Veteran (Headgear or clothing)
- A card that ‘briefly’ explains the accomplishments of the VFW
- Use “Veterans of Foreign Wars” --- not VFW
- Educate your Members
- Contact schools and other community groups
- Get involved in Programs of interest to the Community

## **Learning About VFW Programs:**

1. Read off educational information at Post/District/Department meetings in an effort to teach the membership about VFW Programs. Get your Chairmen to give more informative and educational reports at your meetings.
2. Study the History of the VFW.
3. Learning about the past --- will help with developing the future.
4. Put a VFW 'Cross-word' puzzle about VFW History and Programs in the Gopher Oversea'r.
5. Challenge Posts to read portions of the VFW History or VFW Story at Post meetings.
6. Create ideas that help our Posts learn the History of the VFW.
7. Educate ourselves and others --- as to the reasons why things are the way they are... Like – our VFW caps or the Cross of Malta.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Publish what the VFW does.... Get our 'Story' (use information from the VFW STORY) out in the Community. Send VFW Story out to every Post. Have the Posts use it to get information out to the Community.
2. **VISIBILITY:** Posts, Districts and Department needs to have more visibility. We need to publish more items about what we do --- get more on our Web Sites, Facebooks, etc.(electronic media). (see #6 under 100% Membership). The 'younger' Generation is more apt to use or access the electronic media than traditional methods --- like newspapers, etc. Posts should organize and use a 'phone tree' to alert their officers and members of events, where the VFW can get visibility.
3. Get more visibility with groups like the Patriot Guard and other Veteran/Troop related organizations/groups. Get more VFW Caps out to public or Community events where they can get more visibility at various functions.
4. Educate, know and understand the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Programs.
5. Taking Programs like Flag Etiquette and developing 'instructional tools' to not only educate our Membership, but the Community as a whole.

## **IMPLEMENT:**

- Get out the "VFW Story"
- VISIBILITY
- More VFW caps at public events
- Educate
- More 'instructional tools'

## **What Do We Do --- Who Are We:**

1. Get the word out... NOT VFW --- but rather "Veterans of Foreign Wars"! We need to have more PRIDE in Ourselves!
2. District and Department Officers need to carry more information to the Posts and Membership. "We need to educate ourselves – so we can educate others."
3. Take Pride in Who We Are!
4. We need to EARN IT!
5. Prospective Members need to 'Beat a Path to OUR door'!

### **Additional Thoughts:**

1. Prospective members may not feel any 'connection' to the VFW --- Don't feel like they 'fit in'!
2. Put a 'current' conflict Veteran on the Council of Administration to speak on behalf of the current Era of Veterans. "A voice from that Generation."

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. We are PROUD! **PRIDE!** We need to exemplify that PRIDE!
2. Develop 'challenge' coins. Like the Vietnam Veterans coin.
3. Design a State VFW coin. (This is in the works.)
4. The VFW Welcome Home Coins --- shows who we are and we do...
5. Bringing PRIDE back to our Posts --- if a coin can do this --- then that's what we should do....

### **IMPLEMENT:**

- PRIDE – bring Pride back to our Posts
- Interest in the VFW --- like 'Challenge' coins

## **FEMALE VETERANS:**

How do we recruit more Female Veterans?

1. Ask if they served in the U.S. Military.
2. Involve them – ask them to participate as an equal.
3. Mentor them.
4. Look for Military related clothing, caps, license plates, jewelry, etc. that may indicate that they are Veterans.
5. Ask male Veterans if they know any Female Veterans.
6. Check with Church groups, other Military Service Groups, etc. for possible Female Veterans.
7. Setup VFW booths or tables at Female Veteran functions or at events where Female Veterans might visit or participate.
8. Run Female Veteran related ads in local radio, TV or newspapers.
9. Make changes (articles, ads, etc.) to VFW Publications (magazine, newsletters, etc.) that would appeal to Female Veterans.
10. Contact local National Guard/Reserve Armories. Get invited to their functions and make an appeal to eligible Female Veterans.
11. Make efforts to publish or advertize VFW Eligibility. Many Female Veterans do not know they are eligible.

How do we get and hold their attention?

12. Keep Female Veterans involved.
13. Explain what the Veterans of Foreign Wars has attained or accomplished in recent years. (The new G.I. Bill, expanded benefits/entitlements, She Serves)
14. A letter to Female Veterans from the Post Officers, asking them to get more involved. (Tell them about your Post and what it has to offer them)

How do we get them to accept Leadership roles?

15. Appoint more Female Veterans to Post/District/State level Chairmanships and allow them to 'spread the word'.
16. Need to increase mentorship of Female Veterans. Possibly by allowing other Female Veterans Leaders to accept this challenge.
17. Ask them to accept Leadership positions and Welcome them into the Post/District/State.
18. Use our publications and other communications to 'showcase' Female Veterans that are in Leadership/Chairmanship positions. Give other Female Veterans someone to identify with...
19. Move qualified Female Veterans up the ranks of the Organization. (There are 1.8 million Female Veterans eligible for the VFW.)

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Have 'key' female Veterans at Post and other functions. Posts should be encouraged to seek out and invite Female Veterans into their ranks. Develop a Female Veteran Network. (eg. She Serves)
2. Develop Mentorship Programs among Female Veterans. Ask Post Officers to Mentor Female Veterans. These Mentors could be male or female.
3. Isolate (go through the rosters) on Female Veterans that are currently members. Send information out to them explaining some of the Programs that are available to Female Veterans.

4. Ask Post/District Officers to 'target' Female Veterans and get them involved and active.
5. Female Veterans should not be alone at a meeting. They should have other Female Veterans at these meetings. (Again, mentorship is valuable here.)
6. Inform Posts of the "Sister Assister" Program.
7. Use local National Guard/Reserve Armories to make contact with Female Veterans.
8. Work up a 'point' sheet that will help Posts (District/Department) recruit and work with Female Veterans.

## **IMPLEMENT:**

- A 'key' female Veteran in the Post
- Mentorship Program for female Veterans
- Locate female Veterans in the Community and on Post rosters
- Districts – target and involve female Veterans
- "Sister Assister" and other female Veteran Programs
- A 'point' sheet or recruiter information --- geared to female Veterans

## Offering Eligible Veterans something 'Tangible'

What can we offer current and potential Members (the "Pet Rock")?

1. Create sub-committees/work groups to get more Veterans involved on the Post/District/State levels.
2. Establish 'Recognition' Programs on all levels. Make an effort to recognize members for what they do in the Post/District/State and the Community.
3. Look for 'skills' that will/would help the VFW to grow and prosper. Give them an opportunity to use those skills in a positive way. Don't turn them away or 'off'!
4. Show PRIDE! Brag about Our Elite Organization.
5. We, as members, need to SELL the VFW to current and potential members.

How do we develop Leaders/Leadership within our ranks.

1. Get members involved. Through their involvement, they have opportunity to become Leaders.
2. Encourage potential Leaders. Give them some room to grow. DO NOT CRITICIZE!!!
  1. How do we develop Mentorship for Younger Veterans?
    - i. Work the College campuses and invite College Veterans to attend Post functions to discuss the VFW. Offer your help and experiences in an effort to help them attain their goals.
    - ii. Make it known, that members of your Post/District/State are willing to 'mentor' younger Veterans. OFFER YOUR HELP!
    - iii. Let younger Veterans ask questions. Give them the opportunity to expand their horizons. Develop a "Sponsorship Program".
    - iv. Leave a Business Card in areas where younger Veterans frequent. (Sports Shops, exercise gyms, Sports and Family Restaurants, etc.)
    - v. Leave or Post copies of Officer/Chairman responsibilities in the Post. Publish to your Membership – what every Officer or Chairman does and what their responsibilities are for that job. Be ready to explain and answer any questions that may arise.
    - vi. Use newsletters, Web Pages, etc. to offer Mentorship to younger Veterans. Get involved – to get them involved.
    - vii. Leave Gopher Oversea'r, VFW Magazines or Post Publications at Armories, Campuses, etc. and let young Veterans read about the VFW and our Programs. Be prepared to explain the information that was published. (This would include 'Special Edition' magazines. And, also those undeliverable publications that your Post may have received.)
    - viii. Mentorship starts with 1 on 1 contact. (See the 'tear' sheets that were in your packet.)

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. What's in it for me? Explain what is offered by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. How they can benefit from belonging. The benefits that the VFW has gotten for our Nations Veterans.
2. Invite Veterans to be involved. Ask them to come to a meeting. Something they can add to their resume'. Things that we do – 'networking'. Appeal to their trade or hobbies. Offer them Leadership positions. (like the JCs, they appeal to individuals need to grow within themselves.)
3. Develop a Mentorship Program Book. (Set-up a Committee to develop this Program.)
4. Work with the current conflict group. (Conducting meetings at State functions for the 'younger' Veterans.)
5. Work harder to reach out to the Vietnam Veteran population.
6. Study the feasibility of recruiting members from other organizations. (Offer to share members with other VSOs.)
7. Start a Committee or sub-committee (under Membership) to study what is needed to recruit more Vietnam Veterans. This Committee (or another sub-committee) could also study what is needed to get the 'younger' generation(s) of Veterans interested and involved in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
8. Talk to Vietnam Veterans and make them feel Welcome.
9. Get more Veterans involved.
10. Tell members and eligible members about their Benefits (the Veterans of Foreign Wars fought for ALL the Benefits that Veterans have today.) Help them get their Benefits and entitlements (Agent Orange, PTSD, G.I. Bill, etc.)
11. Offer to get Veterans HELP with their benefits. "We can DO THAT!"

## **IMPLEMENT:**

- MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS and a Mentorship Book
- Explain what the VFW has to offer Veterans
- Get Veterans Involved
- Reach out to Vietnam Veterans
- Recruit from other Organizations
- Create Committees and Sub-committees
- Make Veterans feel Welcome
- Provide information on Veteran Entitlements and Benefits
- Offer help with Veteran Entitlements
- Start 'current' conflict (war) groups

## **BRINGING LIFE BACK TO OUR POSTS:**

1. Creating more interest in OUR Activities and Programs.
  2. Participate in the Adopt-a-Unit Program and communicate with Deployed Units. This will bring Veterans/Members to the Post after the Deployment ends. Communicating with the families of Deployed Troops can also reap benefits to the Post.
  3. Invite Guest Speakers (Celebrities, dignitaries, etc.) into your Post. Ask your Members to come, listen and meet these individuals/people. This would generate interest in what your Post is doing within the Community.
  4. Let your Membership know what Awards your Post has earned/received. Also, make the Membership aware of the VFW and Community Programs that the Post is involved in or working on. (This can be accomplished via the use of Newsletters, Web Pages, local newspapers, bulletin boards, etc.)
  5. Personally invite members to Post or VFW functions. Use phone banks, go door-to-door or 'special' mailings.
  6. "Blow our own horn" in the local media, to get/create interest in what the Post is doing.
  7. Invite people from the community to judge contests or participate VFW Programs. By doing so, they will come to understand what the VFW does and what the VFW is about. It gives the Post an opportunity to explain their Programs to the Community.
  8. Each Post/District/State should have a Public Relations person to get information out to the Community. This person(s) should be able to write effective News Releases.
  9. Have contests or raffles in the Post to create interest and raise funds to pay for things like Life Memberships.
  10. Create surveys for Post and Auxiliary members. Ask them what their 'likes and dislikes' are and how the Post (VFW) can be improved. This survey could also be used to create a demographics database of your members.
  11. Create something like the "Good Neighbor" Award. Highlight a Veteran in the Community. Make it a regular event.
  12. Name a "Man of the Month/Year" on the Post/District/State levels.
  13. Certificates to Veterans for doing work in the Post/District/State. Recognize them for the work they have done or are doing. Make sure that you publicize this recognition as well. Put in the newspapers, on Web Sites --- make it 'Public'.
  14. To get Younger Veterans, use the "Social Media" --- things like Face Book, Web Pages and other electronic forms of communication. Develop a Post/District/State "Communications Plan".
  15. Use Children's events and other Community events to place focus on Veterans and the VFW. Have the Post/District/State sponsor or get invited to these 'public' events and make sure that a portion of the event/program is focused on Veterans.
- How do we get ALL Post Commanders/Representatives to attend District Meetings?
1. Enforce the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.
  2. Drawings or promotions at the District meetings to draw Posts to the meeting. The District should promote this incentive at every Post in the District.
  3. Ask the District Commanders what they think the impact would be on their District.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Get more members to our Post and District meetings. Conduct interesting and informative meetings. Content!

2. Appoint Great Chairmen that are interested in their Program and give good comprehensive reports.
3. Conduct Brainstorming Sessions at the District level. Do this under the 'Good of the Order'. Invite key Veterans to these sessions (such as Female Veterans, etc.). Get everyone involved in the issues of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Challenge your members into 'Problem Solving'.
4. Put in the General Orders that 'we' are going to discuss certain issues at specific meetings. (Such as problems Club Problems, Membership, Recruiting, etc.)
5. Post Officers must educate their employees on VFW Programs and agendas of the VFW (Post). (Standard Operating Procedures.)
6. Publish a list of ideas – "What your canteen Employees should do...."
7. List of Post activities and agenda items.

## **IMPLEMENT:**

- More members at Post and District meetings
- Appoint competent and interested Chairmen
- Brainstorming Sessions at District meetings
- Concentrate on 'specific' Problem Solving issues
- Post Officers should educate their employees on the VFW
- Publish: "What your canteen employees should do...."

## **HOW DO WE GET MINORITIES INVOLVED:**

1. Send Recruiting Teams into minority areas. (Native American, Hmong American, African American, Mexican American, etc.)
2. Why did some of our previous Minority Posts fail?
3. How do we integrate minorities into our existing Posts?
4. We are/were Soldiers FIRST --- this is OUR Common Bond!
5. Create a sub-committee on minority involvement and recruiting.
6. Understanding minority Veteran needs.
7. Combat Veterans --- are a Minority.

(This subject has not been fully discussed --- nor has it went into a 'Solution' stage.)

## **FUNDRAISING:**

1. Need to create more Fundraisers that involve the Districts, Posts and Members. Things like the State Garage Sale and IntuComm Technologies.
2. Need to create more interest enthusiasm within our Members (Posts) to do more on the local level to get involved in their Communities.
3. With declining Membership, we need to generate more revenue to keep our Programs alive --- on all levels.
4. We need to get the Ladies and Men's Auxiliaries involved in our Fundraising efforts. How about Auctions?
5. We need to build on what we have done --- with the Garage Sale and other activities.

## **PRIDE: (Are you Proud of YOUR Post and the Veterans of Foreign Wars?)**

***“Let’s see if we can ‘find’ that Pride... Let’s ‘put’ it back into the Veterans of Foreign Wars!”***

**PROBLEM:** Checking the Unpaid Rosters, contacting those members and get them signed up.

**INSPIRATION:** We need to know what we are about. We need to be PROUD of what we have done as Veterans. We need to be COMMITTED. Our Service was Honorable. We need to continue to GROW. Our Service was Honorable.

- I. How do we bring Pride back to the VFW? (Where do we as Leaders... Start the process?)
  1. Contact the Media concerning visits by VFW and other Community leaders. Get them in front of the ‘public’ to help bring Pride back to Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Community.
  2. Posts need to turn out their Members and other Veterans during these Media events.
  3. Each Post should take it upon themselves to contact the media concerning any Veteran (VFW) related event. This would include past, present or future events. The Veterans of Foreign Wars needs to tell its ‘story’!
  4. We as an Organization need to take advantage of visits from Officers like the National Commander-in-Chief.
  5. When contacting the media, provide ‘background’ information on the VFW (individuals, Post, District, Department or National). Provide a ‘history’ --- like who the Post is named after or a biography on a visiting dignitary.
  6. As members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we need to ‘push’ ourselves on the media in a ‘positive’ way.
  7. The Veterans of the Community are ‘interested’ in what Veteran Leaders have to say on ‘issues’ that concern them.
  8. Advertise the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Veteran related events with signs, banners and media ads.
  9. So Pride in the accomplishments of Officers and Members --- by publicly recognizing those efforts. (Awards, etc.)
  10. Develop better Media tools and Public Relations (Press Releases)
  11. Get involved in local Cablevision programs. Create a ‘program’ hosted by the local VFW Post. Show your Pride within the Community. Use this venue to promote Veterans and related issues in the Community. (There are a number of Posts that are already doing this.)
  12. Use the “VFW Story”.
    - a. Insert the VFW Story in Post newsletters
    - b. Use the VFW Story at Recruiting events --- such Reintegration Programs.
    - c. The VFW Story is a good way to show the VFW Pride to returning Troops, our members and the Community.
  13. As Leaders, we should be asking everyone we meet.... “Did you serve?”. This is a positive way to show Pride.
  14. ALWAYS --- Be Proud of your Service and the American Flag!

II. How can 'Pride' span the Generations? (Do we have 'common' bonds with younger and older Veterans?)

1. We may have a 'Lost Generation' --- the Vietnam Veteran. Show your Pride by Welcoming these Veterans into the VFW ranks.
2. Younger Veterans are the Computer Generation. Older Veterans, must understand their needs... And in turn they must understand the needs of older Veterans. Older Veterans may learn about computers from younger Veterans.
3. Find some common 'ground' with all generations of Veterans (We are ALL Veterans). Ask questions. Shared hobbies. What interests do they have in common.
4. Install things like 'WiFi' (internet access) in Post Homes. This is something that will draw the 'younger' --- and 'older' Veterans into the Post. (Maybe a 'Coffee Shop' or relaxed type of environment.)
5. Allow 'younger' Veterans to help with the 'decision' making in the Post (District, Department and National).
6. Communicate with the Student Veteran Groups on College/University campuses. Get involved in the activities and help out where you can. Get these groups involved in the activities of your Post.
7. Don't hurry younger Veterans into Leadership roles before they are ready.
  - a. Gauge their ability, time and commitment before moving them into various roles within the Post (District, Department or National).
  - b. Start a 'Mentorship Program' within your Post (District, Department or National) to assist new Veterans and members (sometimes Mentorship is needed for 'older' members as well).
  - c. Don't 'push' new members into certain responsibilities or roles before they are ready.

III. How does the Veterans of Foreign Wars find Pride at the 'Grassroots'? (As Leaders, how can we get our local members to be Proud of their Post?)

1. The Post Officers and Chairmen, must learn to "Blow Their Own Horn"!
2. COMMUNICATE:
  - a. Post Newsletters
  - b. Meet and Greet members and potential members when they come into the Post or attend Post functions.
  - c. Find 'new and creative' ways of telling your members what is going on in the Post and Community.
  - d. A Post Web Page, Facebook and email address.
  - e. Use the local newspapers and media.
  - f. Publish a Community events calendar.
  - g. Tell the Community and your members about the Post Programs.
3. Every Post needs to 'work' the Programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their local Post. Programs like Buddy Poppies, Voice of Democracy, Youth Programs, etc.
4. The Post should seek "Public Visibility"!
5. Bring a 'new' member to a District meeting. Here, they can see 'first-hand' how the Programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars work on a higher level.
6. Post Officers, Chairmen and members should get involved with other Veterans Organizations and Civic Groups. This is an opportunity to share ideas, show Pride in your Post and seek 'potential' members.

- IV. How do we find 'Pride' in Ourselves? (As a Leader, what makes you Proud to be a member? -or- How do we carry Our personal Pride to Our members and Posts?)
1. As Officers, we need to be PROUD to be a member and PROUD to do a 'Great Job' at what we do! Be PROUD of the Leadership position --- 'desire (seek) recognition'.
  2. We should be PROUD of our Military Service! And we were 'judged' by the job we did for our Country.
  3. Leaders need to 'work harder' in their positions. They should take Pride in the work they do...!
  4. Post Commanders (Past Officers) should get involved in the Mentorship of new Commanders and leaders.
  5. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. LEARN by those mistakes.
  6. As Leaders, we need to get our Members 'Hooked'!
    - a. Avoid 'trivial personalities and petty jealousies'.
    - b. As a Leader, find some 'Common Ground'.
    - c. Work through your 'problems and mistakes'.
    - d. BE POSITIVE – Never Negative!
  7. As a Leader, "Do Your BEST" and ask for help.
  8. Appoint 'effective' Chairmen. Don't be afraid to replace a 'bad' Chairman. That's part of being an 'effective' Leader.
  9. Pride works both ways --- in 'Self' and in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
    - a. Look toward your Friends (and enemies, if need be).
    - b. Solve your 'differences' for the "Good of the Order" and for your personal 'wellbeing'.
  10. Show 'personal' Pride in yourself, your Post and the Veterans of Foreign Wars by:
    - a. Writing 'editorials' in the local newspapers and media.
    - b. Don't be afraid to 'brag' about your 'personal' accomplishments as a Leader or those of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
    - c. Wear shirts, jackets, caps, etc. --- that show your Pride in your Military Service and your Membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
    - d. Your Post Home, your car, your home, etc. --- are venues by which you can show that you are PROUD to be a Veteran!

#### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. Contact and Use the Media to tell the Story of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
2. Establish PRIDE by having Media events when National and State Officers visit your Post or area.
3. Find a Dedicated Public Relations Chairman to get the 'word' out to the Media and the Community.
4. Appoint a committee to work on events of interest to Veterans and the Community.
5. Establish events that 'span' the Generations. Look for 'common ground'. (Like WiFi or Computers in your Post Home.)
6. Seek a specific era of Veteran and work to appeal to their needs (Vietnam Veterans).
7. Seek out Student Veterans Groups.

8. Appoint a 'committed' Newsletter Editor and develop a Web Page.
9. Learn to 'gauge' younger Veterans and new members – gradually work them into a position or office.
10. Appoint effective Chairman --- someone that will bring Pride to a Post and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
11. Develop Leaders that are Proud of their Service and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.
12. Past Commanders need to assist 'new' Leaders. They need to use their experience to help establish Pride in the Post and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

### **IMPLEMENT:**

- A Dedicated Public Relations Chairman
- Have the "VFW Story" available for distribution
- Committees to accomplish more 'visibility'
- Public Visibility
- Technology in the Post Home
- Events that appeal to a certain era of Veterans
- A presence on College Campuses
- Effective Newsletters, Web Pages, Etc.
- A Mentorship Program
- Program Chairmen that are Proud of their accomplishments
- Public Visibility
- Bring 'new' members to District and State functions
- Pride in Leadership Accomplishment
- PRIDE in the Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Develop Mentorship amongst Past Commanders
- Leaders – that want to Lead

## **DISTRICT PROBLEM SOLVING:**

**PROBLEM:** How are our Districts communicating, Interacting and Problem Solving with their Posts?

**INSPIRATION:** Without involvement and 'energy' at the Post or 'grassroots' level, we are basically 'dead in the water'! We need to create this 'energy' to stay 'alive'. The Districts are a 'key' element to 'nurturing' 'grassroots' involvement.

### **BRAINSTORMING:**

- I. The District – Problem Posts
  - A. How do the Districts deal with these Posts?
    1. Interact with Problem Posts.
    2. Indicate these Posts are a problem.
    3. "We have always done it that way"!
    4. Deal with attitudes.
    5. Replace Problem Officers.
    6. Use technology to move forward.
    7. Resistance to change.
    8. Fax General Orders and other information to Post Officers.
    9. Have Post pay the \$35 for mailings.
    10. Just send 'General Orders' and no other information.
    11. Have District pay \$35 for Posts that will not pay for mailings.
    12. Someone in the Post always has a Computer.
    13. Store General Orders on Computer at Post or Officers home.
    14. Have District send General Orders to Posts.
  
- II. The District – Military Units (Are Districts and Posts in contact with National Guard Units?)
  - A. What are we doing with these contacts?
    1. Signing the contacts up to the Post.
    2. Making presentations to the Units.
    3. Using members of the Guard in Post activities.
    4. Get Guard Units involved in Color Guards – have them wear their Military Uniforms.
    5. Get Guard members involved and others will come.
    6. Get involved with the "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Program".
    7. Have a Post member (National Guard member) be a liaison between the Unit and the Post.
    8. Contact retired members of National Guard Units. See if there is a 'Retired' Association.
    9. Use Armory Bulletin Boards to advertise VFW Post activities.
    10. Use State, District and Post Web Pages to link with National Guard Units
    11. Get a knowledgeable individual to supply Web Service to the local Post.
    12. Use retired Military members to gain access to or contact with Armories and Military bases.
    13. Use Facebook to get exposure for your Post.

- III. District – Community Events (Are the District/Post using Community events to promote the VFW?)
  - A. What is working?
    1. Advertising in the local media.
    2. VFW Color Guards at Sporting events (exposure).
    3. Visit Nursing Homes. Especially Veterans that are residents.
    4. Parades – Create exposure and visibility by getting involved in these events.
    5. Signage on vehicles, floats, etc. (Public Advertising.
    6. Thanking the media and community for the exposure they have given Veterans/VFW. (Spreading Goodwill)
    7. Patriotic Holidays – get involved or take part in school events. Getting Veterans exposure at schools and Patriotic events.
    8. Work with the schools on programs such as Voice of Democracy and Teacher of the Year.
    9. Getting involved with Community Colleges and Universities. Make contact with Student Veteran groups at these Colleges.
    10. Leave Veteran and VFW related brochures and information in the areas of Colleges, where Student Veterans might frequent.
    11. Produce effective Press Releases concerning Veteran events and put those releases on local and Post Web Pages.
  
- IV. District – Outreach
  - A. How are District/Posts responding to ‘Outreach’ requests and events --- such as colleges?
  - B. What are the successes?
  - C. What is working for the Posts?
    1. Get Student Veterans as members of the Post.
    2. Visit Student Veteran Lounges on campus.
    3. Donate to the Student Veteran functions at Colleges --- to help their causes.
    4. Respond to ALL requests that come from Colleges. Always supply a VFW Information/Recruiter Team.
  
- V. District – Interest in Membership
  - A. How do we keep everyone enthused about Membership after the first six (6) months of the year?
    1. Don’t hold onto Membership applications for a long period of time.
    2. Send a Thank You to new members for joining. Make them feel Welcome.
    3. Make sure new and annual members are on your mailing lists.
    4. Make sure all members get on the Membership Board at the Post.
    5. Pay a member’s first year Dues --- if they pay the second year (two year membership).
    6. Explain to all new members how the Membership year works.
    7. Explain VFW Member Benefits to all members --- as an incentive to renewing membership.

8. Maintain enthusiasm for the last six months of the Membership year.
9. Keep up the pressure for Membership and Programs at the District/Post levels.
10. Do not rely on "100%" --- the GOAL should be to RECRUIT 'All-Year'!
11. All Post Officers should be ENTHUSIASTIC!

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:**

1. District Officers and Chairmen should visit Posts on a regular basis. Assist them in their Membership and Programs.
2. District Officers should be up-beat and 'create' enthusiasm within their Post Officers and Members.
3. District and Posts need to become more involved with local National Guard/Reserve Armories, Recruiting Stations and Family Readiness Groups.
4. District and Posts need to 'reach out' to local Colleges and Student Veteran Groups.
5. District and Posts should seek out 'Retired' Military Associations for members and assistance.
6. Posts need to make an 'effort' to contact and be involved with schools in their Community.
7. District and Posts need to get more involved with the 'media' and use the media to their advantage. They also need to THANK the media for any coverage they get.
8. District and Posts need to concentrate on 'advertising'. Not only in the media, but also signage, posters, placement of brochures/information and the internet (Web Pages).
9. Posts need to be more observant of their members. Make sure that they are recognized and acknowledged.
10. Posts need to be more involved in Community events. They should work on 'creating' Community events. CREATE VISIBILITY!
11. Districts need to be more 'creative' in their approach to their Problem Posts. Each Post and situation is different. The Leadership should be 'up-to-the-task'.

### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

1. Both the District and Post should 'seek' out 'effective' LEADERSHIP.
2. Develop a Team of 'Creative Problem Solvers'.
3. Create a 'base' set of Guidelines that ALL Districts and Posts can use and 'build' on for the future.
4. Establish positive 'contacts' with National Guard Units, the Media and local Colleges/Universities. A set of Guidelines need to be developed to accomplish this goal.
5. District and Posts MUST set 'Positive' Benchmarks and Goals

## **SOME BRAINSTORMING and PROBLEM SOLVING:**

1. Share information and communicate the same messages to everyone.
2. Establish (maybe 3) priorities. Ask everyone to 'traffic' or push these priorities.
3. Strongly encourage all Posts to continue to communicate via their newsletter or letter.  
(Some of the 'traditional' methods.)
4. Continue to integrate 'traditional' processes with 'new' methods.
5. Get more Posts to go 'electronic' (Computers).
6. Get involved with other 'networks' from outside Organizations/entities of similar interests.

# SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

(See Attached)