

The Complexity of the Recruiting Processing Cycle Creates

Ethical Dilemmas for the Recruiters.

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Automation upgrades in the last 10 years have greatly enhanced the Army's ability to carry out its mission. This holds true in almost every career field and job specialty. New weapons systems, satellite communications on the battlefield, radar reducing uniforms, and even Meals Ready to Eat represent breakthroughs that distance the Soldier of the United States from the service personnel of every other nation on the globe. Even garrison has benefited from upgrades in technology including My Pay and eArmyU. The United States Army Recruiting Command finds itself caught in the technology web to process its applicants faster and smarter. In this instance, it is not for the better. Technology is hurting the people centered business of recruiting. The processing cycle contains so many steps that recruiters find ways around the system, creating ethical dilemmas. This could be anything from not reporting an appointment the recruiter made, to avoid entering it into the computer, to withholding medical information in order to streamline processing through the physical. At each decision, the Soldier must use the ethical reasoning steps to decide what the right course of action. A central database and automation provide a way for the Brigades and the Command to monitor to individual recruiter level.

After numerous changes and acronyms like TOS, which stands for Top of the System, the system is a quagmire of checks and balances. Neither a recruiter, station commander, nor First Sergeant can complete everything required, in the current system, in an acceptable business day. Faced with a limited amount of time, they must make the ethical choices everyday to accomplish the mission and recruit with integrity. Each choice is its own problem. The rules are a mixture of regulations and recruiting policy letters changing the qualifications and ways to process future Soldiers. Recruiters have a split second to develop courses of action and then choose an action. All the time the suspense for each step of the processing cycle and the Army's dire need for new Soldiers loom overhead.

The processing cycle scenario goes on everyday in the command. This is an illustration of what will happen to an applicant thru the cycle. The recruiter makes an appointment. After entering the information in the computer, he has to manually, write the appointment's name, address and telephone number, along with the date he/she made the appointment in his planning guide. Before that appointment will count on daily reports, the recruiter has to replicate again. After they replicate, the station commander has to connect to the server, view that appointment, and approve the action. The ethical dilemma is whether to report the appointments to the First Sergeant, and subsequently the Sergeant Major, or just report what is already showing on the system. That buys enough time to figure out any one of a myriad of problems that kept that applicant off the report. The system repeats when the recruiter conducts the appointment.

The next step in the cycle is the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). The testing process is void of most ethical dilemma unless you consider a "Ringer." A "Ringer" is when an individual tests for an applicant in the hopes of achieving a passing score. This goes beyond ethical and into a legal dilemma. A reasonable Soldiers using the Army values will never choose this course of action.

The physical is where most ethical dilemmas occur. The recruiter and the applicant complete a three page prescreening form and submit it to MEPS three days before the scheduled physical date. The scheduling occurs in the same way as the test scheduling. If the applicant checks "Yes" on any question, the recruiter is to gather whatever medical documents needed, regardless of how trivial they seem. A common example is for counseling in school. The pre-screening form only states counseling. If a recruiter has the applicant answer "Yes" in this scenario, the MEPS will "NoGo" the pre-screening form, causing the recruiter to need medical documents. The MEPS does not review pre-screening forms until the day prior to processing, so recruiters don't find out their applicant can't process until they are preparing to go to MEPS. If they do get

counseling letters from the school, usually in about 5 days due to archiving, you have to resubmit the pre-screening form again and wait for approval. Nine times out of ten, the applicant will draw a psychiatric consult, which takes about 3 week to schedule. On the other hand, the recruiter can question the applicant and parents to determine whether or not it is relevant. The regulation states that it is always relevant. Experience is the enemy of the recruiter at this point.

Soldiers in today's Army see the work force shortages. They have had empty foxholes in their own units. Now they find themselves with what they consider a routine medical condition. They know someone in the unit that could do his/her job with a similar condition. They hear how MEPS disqualifies 50% of those who process for one condition or another. The field recruiter undergoes a loyalty dilemma. Are they loyal to the Army and its established standards for enlistment or are they loyal to this young American who wants to serve their country? Do they go with the gut instinct that says this kid could make? Do they send this patriot on his way for some antiquated regulation that changes with the wind? If the Army needed them enough they would change the standard to let them join. All of these things race through that Soldiers mind. At that point, they make the ethical decision. That decision will be based on the recruiter's upbringing, at home, in the Army, and in recruiting. They will determine courses of action and choose one they think is in the best interest of the Army, the applicant, and themselves.

What can the Army and the Recruiting Command do to help the recruiters caught in these dilemmas? The first thing that needs to happen is streamline the processing steps and create an environment of cooperation with the MEPS. MEPS cannot be a separate entity with a different mission from Recruiting. They have to fix their steps so they serve the recruiter and the applicant. Once a recruiter sees that MEPS is working with and not against them, they are less like to circumvent the system. Alleviating the complexity of processing a new Soldier at both the automation and MEPS level will remove much of the dilemmas recruiters face.