

AB-38 - Paper

Using YATS to Recruit for the 21st Century

**LCDR William G. Kelly
LT Catherine W. Tobias**

United States Coast Guard

Background

In 1997 enlisted attrition in the Coast Guard increased approximately 50 percent from its historical rate. This increased rate of attrition, particularly among junior enlisted members, created a void in the Coast Guard's overall personnel strength. The Congress identified a disparity in the number of personnel the Coast Guard received funded for and the actual number of personnel on the payroll. In response to threatened Congressional action, the Coast Guard chartered the Nonrate Workforce Structure Study (NWSS) to examine the world of work for the most junior personnel (i.e., nonrates) in the service.

The study was initially chartered as a Quality Action Team and focused on the issue of ensuring that nonrates were engaged in "meaningful" (i.e., career-developing and challenging) work. It soon became apparent that the scope of the study extended far beyond the bounds of a Quality Action Team and called for an extensive study. The subsequent team that was brought together consisted of enlisted, officer, and civilian employees. They were tasked with examining how the Coast Guard brings in its people, trains them at the accession point, and deals with them at their first units. Consequently, the team broke its study into three phases, each led by a sub-team:

Phase 1: The Nonrate Team

Phase 2: The Recruiting Analysis Team

Phase 3: The Recruit Training Team

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The Phase 1 Team accomplished the bulk of the work for the study. Germane to this report was their work identifying the core qualities that every nonrate must possess to be successful in the Coast Guard. This was key for the Phase 2 Team, which was tasked with identifying the recruiting system to attract 17 - 24 year old men and women who possess these core qualities of success. Turning to the 1996 YATS helped the Phase 2 Team accomplish this task.

Methodology

The NWSS teams utilized Human Performance Technology (HPT), a systematic approach to solving problems-or realizing opportunities-related to the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations. It results in solutions that help an organization achieve its goals.

HPT begins by identifying an organization's desired outcomes. The next step is to capture the actual state of the organization. By comparing the desired outcomes with the actual state, HPT practitioners work closely with subject matter experts to identify gaps, or needs, in the organization. The team of practitioners and subject matter experts then analyzes the gaps to determine the root causes of each. Causes may stem from any of three categories:

- knowledge/skills (e.g., a recruiter does not know the elements of the Coast Guard recruiting process),**
- motivation/incentives (e.g., a recruiter is not rewarded for the critically important role they perform in the Coast Guard), and**
- environment (e.g., a recruiting office is not properly located to attract the number of potential recruits required).**

The final step of needs assessment is to develop a set of recommended interventions to remedy identified performance problems.

For example, a desired outcome of Coast Guard recruiting is to enlist the proper number (load) and mix (diversity) of people. In 1997 recruiters did not meet desired loading quotas and diversity goals. Data from the 1996 YATS conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), along with sound HPT methodology revealed a myriad of causes for these shortages, or gaps. Clear gaps were identified in the lack of a sound methodology for identifying the ideal location for recruiting offices to meet their assigned quotas and goals, gaps were also identified in the methodology for staffing recruiting offices. Once the root causes of the gaps were identified, recommended interventions became readily apparent.

Recruiting Office Location and Staffing

Unlike the Department of Defense (DOD) recruiting commands who are resourced to recruit in just about every city in the United States, the Coast Guard is resourced with approximately 250 recruiters to cover the entire United States. When examining the resource constraints the Coast Guard is faced with it becomes readily apparent that the desired outcome of recruiting office location is to position and staff those offices to best meet the services desired quotas and goals. In FY96, although recruiting offices met their quotas, they were 20 percent below minority goals and 34 percent below female goals. By making extensive use of YATS data, in

addition to other factors, the study team developed a list of optimal recruiting office locations and staffing allocation.

The study team started by reviewing Census Bureau data on overall population density by city and minority population by state. The team targeted highest density areas and then cross-referenced those with the locations of Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS), where every Coast Guard applicant is medically and administratively processed into the Service. Furthermore, data from Coast Guard recruits at boot camp revealed that exposure to Coast Guard units and missions largely influenced their desire to enlist. Therefore, after considering population density and MEPS locations, the team identified those cities with a Coast Guard operational presence (i.e. Coast Guard cutter, aircraft base, or station) within 60 miles. Finally, recruiting offices with a history of high performance indicated the existence of a strong community network, so those locations were considered as well.

In order to determine ideal staffing numbers for each recruiting office, the team considered three factors: propensity of youth to join the Coast Guard, population density by city, and a Coast Guard operational presence within 60 miles.

With a methodology in place for determining the optimal location and staffing for Coast Guard recruiting offices, the study team turned to the YATS report to assist in paring down the list of potential locations (approximately 100) and determining the proper staffing based on a resource neutral recruiting staff. In the YATS study the DMDC surveyed 10,000 youths nationwide on their propensity to join the services by region. DMDC divided the nation in to four regions: northeast, north central, south, and west. 26 percent of youths who indicated a propensity to join the Coast Guard in particular were in the northeast, 13 percent in the north central, 28 percent in the south, and 33 percent in the west.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the YATS data by region along with the actual recruiting productivity of Coast Guard recruiting offices by region. The study team utilized this information to make the final recommendation on what the team determined as the 45 ideal locations to recruit nationally. Included in the 45 locations were Oakland, CA, Virginia Beach, VA, Detroit, MI, and Milwaukee, WI, all met the requirements, but they did not currently have Coast Guard recruiting offices.

Table 1

Propensity to Join the Coast Guard by Geographic Region

Region	Projected # of enlistments based on propensity to join the Coast Guard in FY-96	Actual enlistments in the Coast Guard in FY-96	Gap
Northeast	858/3300 (26%)	700/3300 (21%)	-158 (-5%)
North Central	429/3300 (13%)	407/3300 (12%)	22 (-1%)
South	924/3300 (28%)	1318/3300 (40%)	394 (+12%)
West	1089/3300 (33%)	875/3300 (27%)	-214 (-6%)

Once the 45 locations were identified, the study team utilized information summarized in Table 2 to make recommendations on the distribution of recruiters throughout the 45 locations. Key recommendations included increasing the number of recruiters in large cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Houston to properly recruit the large and diverse populations in those selected cities.

Table 2

Recruiter Distribution Compared to Propensity to Join by Geographic Region

Region	Optimal # of Recruiters per region	Actual # of Recruiters per region	Gap in Recruiters per region
Northeast	58 (26%)	41 (18%)	17
North Central	29 (13%)	30 (14%)	-1
South	62 (28%)	99 (45%)	-37
West	73 (33%)	52 (23%)	21

With the recommendations for location and staffing in place the required purchase order for nonrates was determined by dividing the number of purchase orders by the number of recruiter billets. This would determine the annual recruiter productivity rate, which, when divided by 12 months, equaled the monthly recruiter productivity rate. See Figure 1.

Figure 1

Purchase Order = 5100

of Recruiters = 222

$$5100/222 = 22.97$$

$$22.97/12 \text{ months} = 1.91 \text{ contracts per recruiter per month}$$

Quota assignment is then simply multiplying the recruiter productivity rate by the number of recruiters per office, assuming that the recruiters have been distributed logically. See Figure 2.

Figure 2

Recruiting Office Boston – 9 Recruiters

$$9 \times 1.91 \text{ contracts per recruiter per month} = 17 \text{ contracts per month}$$

Key Assumptions

Key assumptions linked to the analysis were that each recruiting office is properly funded and staffed to meet their quotas and goals. Also the team identified several gaps in the training and tools provided to a recruiter to conduct their mission. In order to meet the mission the recruiters would not only need to be in the right location but they would have to possess the proper knowledge and skills to recruit effectively. The study team provided complete recommendations on tolls, training, policies, procedures, and resources, in addition to the analysis regarding location, staffing, and quota assignment.

Conclusion

With the challenge of recruiting the best people to meet the Coast Guard's needs becoming increasingly more demanding, the information the DMDC provides through the YATS study should play a key role in ensuring the service is properly staffed into the next century. The fact that YATS is a valid and reliable survey conducted on an annual basis provides the Coast Guard, as well as the DOD services, with the best analysis of what the youth of today are thinking and feeling with regards to a potential career in the military. Our study team recommended the continued use of YATS, as well as a review of the other key data points noted throughout this report, as a gauge on whether or not we are properly positioned to recruit the youth of today.

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Professional Development and
Technology Center
Navy Advancement Center Dept
Dr. Grover Diesel, (850) 452-1815
6490 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, FL 32509-5237

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