



The U.S. Army's Recruiting Crisis

WHAT IS CAUSING IT AND WHAT ARE
LEADERS DOING TO FIX IT?



“The Army has to recognize that there’s been an evolution in that young population and if you’re going to target that young population for service, you’ve got to make it appealing to them.” - U.S. Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif, chair of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel



SYNOPSIS



SYNOPSIS



Across all of its branches, the military is facing an unprecedented challenge of reaching recruiting milestones to maintain the current service size.





BY THE NUMBERS

75%

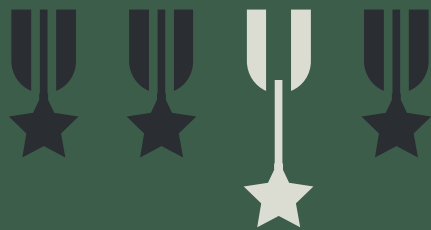
Recruiting goal met
by the U.S. Army in
FY22

15,000

Number of recruits
short of recruiting
goal

23%

Percentage of
Americans aged
17-24 that meet
current enlistment
standards



BACKGROUND





U.S. Military



- Six Service Branches
- 1.3 million active-duty members
- 3rd largest standing military in the world
- All volunteer forces since 1973
- Draft used 4 times in U.S. History
- Selective Service System
- Recruiting offices in every U.S. State including Guam & Puerto Rico
- U.S. Army alone has 9,000 recruiters



TIMELINE OF JOINING

← 4 – 6 Months →



Recruiter

Guide recruits through the enlistment process

ASVAB

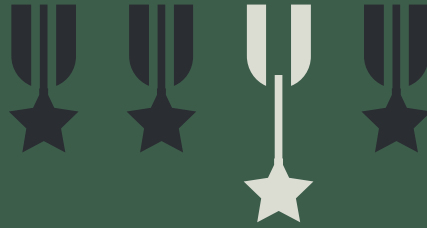
Take a placement exam to verify requirements and job placement

MEPS

Intensive physical evaluation to ensure requirements are met

Basic

Recruits sign a contract, take the Oath of Enlistment and attend Basic Training



ISSUE






“In the Army’s most challenging recruiting year since the start of the all-volunteer force, we will only achieve 75% of our fiscal year 22 recruiting goal”

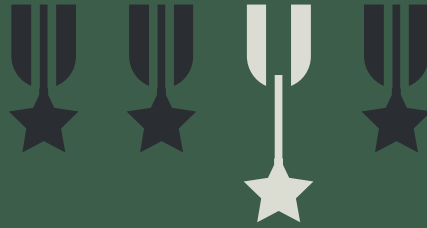
—Christine Wormuth, Secretary of the Army



Issue



- All branches behind on recruiting numbers
 - Army & Navy raised bonuses to \$50,000
 - \$38.5 million spent by Air Force on recruiting alone
 - Navy offering up to \$65,000 in student debt forgiveness
 - Strong labor market = Bad for Military
 - 23% meet requirements (down from 29%)
 - Only 9% of those eligible are interested
 - Generational challenges (9/11, family ties, Patriotism, etc.)
 - Military-Civilian Divide (13% with parents who have served, down from 40% in 1995).
- 



Low

Unemployment



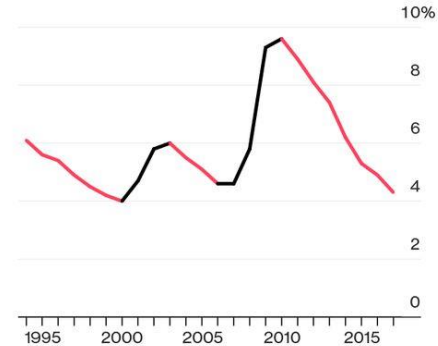
Low Unemployment

- Military recruiting struggles when unemployment is low (historically below 6% - the current rate is 3.5%)
- Cash bonuses are used to overcome
- Benefits and other incentives
- Annual pay raise ~ 3%

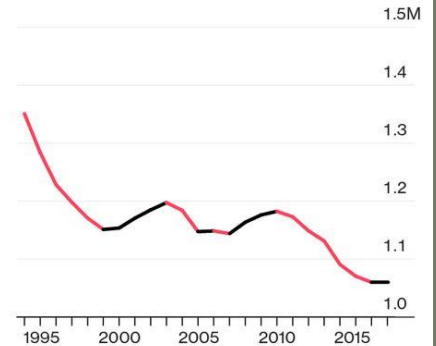
Unemployment and Enlistment

Military enlistment across services tends to **decline** when civilian job prospects improve.

Unemployment rate



Total enlistment of active-duty military personnel



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Defense

Bloomberg



Is it enough?



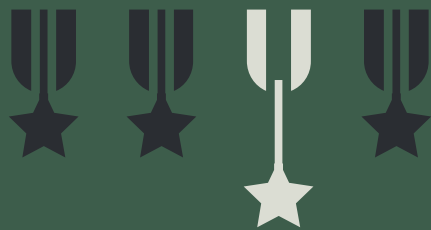
\$2,054.70

Basic pay per month of a U.S. Army recruit who just graduated from bootcamp



\$2,137.00

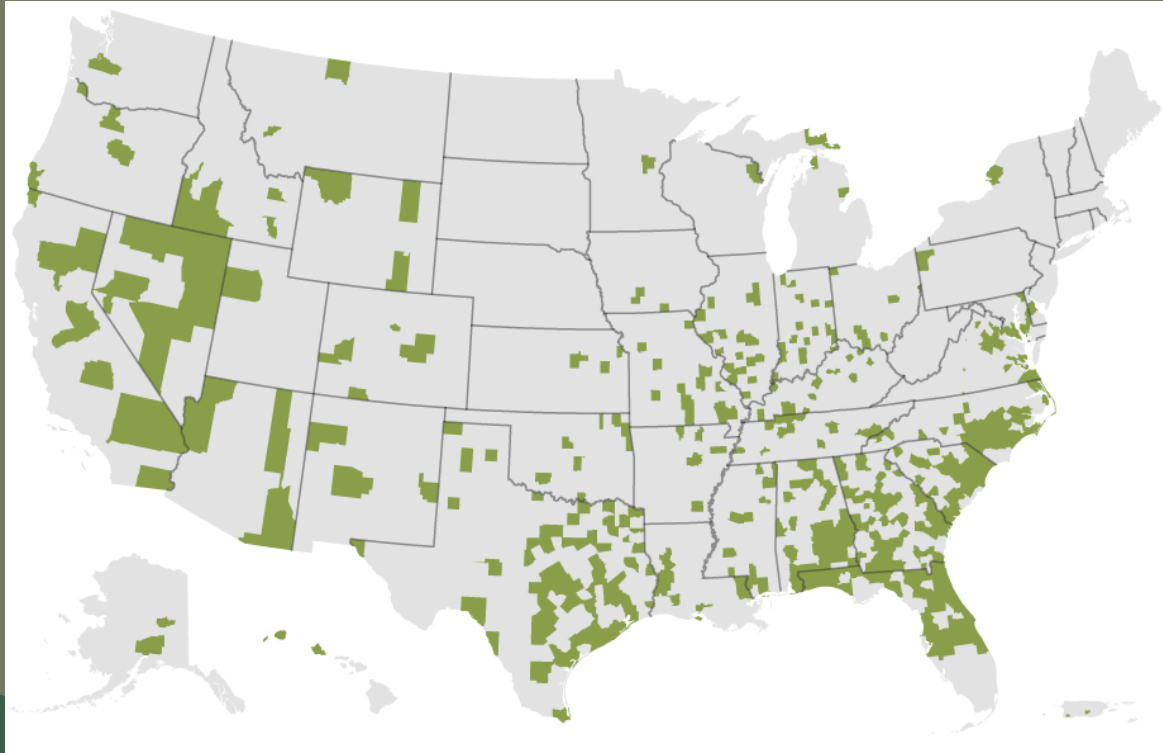
The average pay of a McDonald's fast food worker (40 hours/week)



Politicization

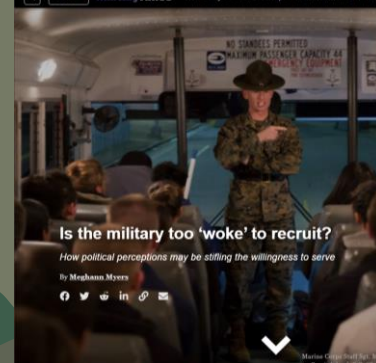


≡ Top Counties for Recruitment ≡



Politicization

- Main predictors of enlistment are geographical
- Exposure to military communities
- Tend to be southern conservative areas
- Conservatives have taken issue with military leadership (DEI, climate change initiatives, etc.)
- COVID-19 Vaccine (thousands still unvaccinated)
- Roe v. Wade ruling





Generational Challenges



Not Qualified



27%

Percentage of 18-24-year-olds disqualified by weight alone



23

States with legalized recreational marijuana



2X

Increase in men ineligible due to weight since 1973



70%

Percentage of Gen-Z who reported depression symptoms (potential disqualifying factor)



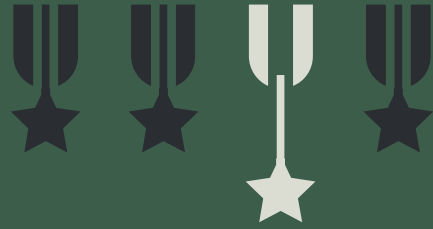
50%

Makeup of ADHD and depression waivers denied by the military



35%

The makeup of 18-24-year-old population still not fully vaccinated (disqualifying factor)



Cultural Issues





30,177

Number of active duty personnel and veterans that
have died by suicide since 9/11



Cultural Issues

- Mental Health
- Racism & Discrimination
- Sexual harassment & assault
- Low pay
- Poor living conditions

The Army's suicide rate is the worst it's been in nearly a century

That's according to a new report from the Defense Suicide Prevention Office.

BY MAX HALPITMAN | PUBLISHED APR 4, 2022 12:52 PM

NEWS

Videos reveal moldy, disgusting Camp Lejeune barracks where Marines are forced to live

"Everyone is well aware of the conditions of the barracks."

BY JAMES CLARK | PUBLISHED NOV 24, 2021 11:05 AM

NEWS

MILITARY LIFE

Deep-rooted racism, discrimination permeate US military

By KAT STAFFORD, JAMES LAPORTA, AARON MORRISON and HELEN WIEFFERING | May 27, 2021

Military sexual assault victims say the system is broken

Two women who made allegations spoke out to ABC News.

By **Ella Torres**

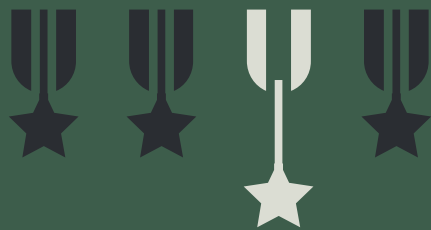
August 28, 2020, 5:06 AM

Share



Military veterans share their sexual assault experiences after McSally's admission
Retired Marine Stacey Thompson and Navy veteran Trina McDonald share their personal ex... [Read More](#)





**Military –
Civilian Divide**

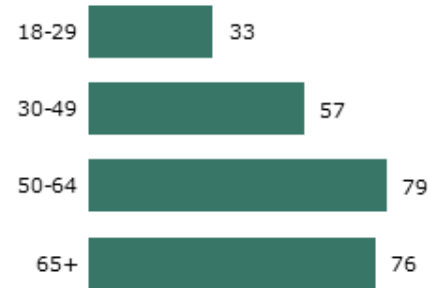


Military – Civilian Divide

- Military is the most trusted institution in America (Morning Consult)
- Divide between troops and civilians is wider than ever
- Decreasing number of military family members
- Family members one of the largest predictors for enlistment

Young Adults Much Less Likely to Have Family Ties to Military

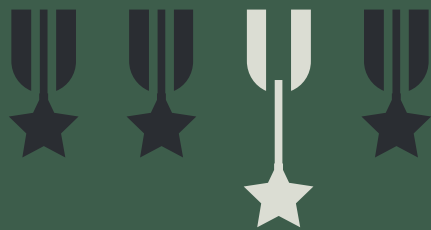
% saying they have an immediate family member who served in military



Note: For this analysis, immediate family members include parents, spouses, siblings and children.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, Sept. 1-15, 2011, N=2,003 adults.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Appealing to Gen-Z





“They want community. They want purpose. They want what they’re doing to matter. I think we really need to reintroduce the Army to the country, to young people, to their parents, to influencers”

—Christine Wormuth, Secretary of the Army





“In summary, a typical Gen Zer is a self-driver who deeply cares about others, strives for a diverse community, is highly collaborative and social, value flexibility, relevance, authenticity, and non-hierarchical leadership, and while dismayed about inherited issues like climate change, has a pragmatic attitude about the work that has to be done to address those issues.”

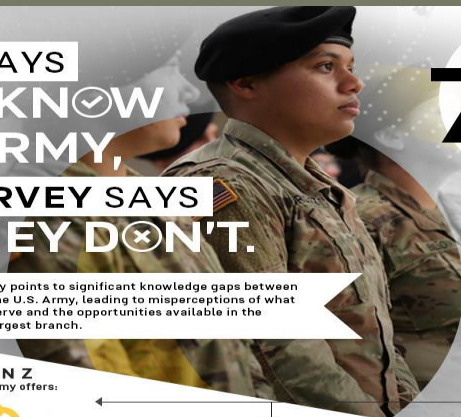
—**Stanford University, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences**

“Know Your Army” Survey

GEN Z SAYS THEY KNOW THE ARMY, SURVEY SAYS THEY DON'T.



A new survey points to significant knowledge gaps between Gen Z and the U.S. Army, leading to misperceptions of what it's like to serve and the opportunities available in the military's largest branch.



73% OF GEN Z

CLAIMS TO BE FAMILIAR WITH THE ARMY – THE HIGHEST OF ANY GENERATION – yet they lack an accurate understanding of the opportunities available today.

HERE'S WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT ...

WELLNESS

83% think Soldier health CENTERS ON PHYSICAL FITNESS

DID YOU KNOW?

THE U.S. ARMY'S HOLISTIC HEALTH AND FITNESS SYSTEM (H2F) IS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO IMPROVING SOLDIERS' OVERALL HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PERFORMANCE,

addressing five domains, including physical, mental, sleep, spiritual, and nutritional readiness.

JOB

3 IN 10 believe most Army jobs are COMBAT ROLES

DID YOU KNOW?

The Army offers **200+ CAREERS**, spanning nearly every field imaginable, including **LAW, MEDICINE, ENGINEERING, THE CULINARY ARTS, AND BEYOND.**



BENEFITS

% OF GEN Z who knows the Army offers:



TUITION ASSISTANCE 53%
ABILITY TO EARN UP TO FULL COLLEGE TUITION 53%
ADVANCED TRAINING CERTIFICATES 36%

DID YOU KNOW?

Comprehensive training and education benefits include access to tuition assistance and **MORE THAN 1,500 ADVANCED TRAINING CERTIFICATES, MAKING IT EASY FOR SOLDIERS TO NOT JUST ADVANCE THEIR CAREERS, BUT CHANGE THEM – and many do!**

% OF GEN Z who knows the Army offers:



HOME-BUYING BENEFITS 34%

DID YOU KNOW?

The VA loan is a guaranteed, lifetime benefit for qualified Soldiers which boasts **NO DOWN PAYMENTS, COMPETITIVELY LOW INTEREST RATES,** and no need for **PRIVATE MORTGAGE INSURANCE (PMI).**

% OF GEN Z who knows the Army offers:



EARLY RETIREMENT 31%

DID YOU KNOW?

Army service allows Soldiers to **RETIRE AFTER ONLY 20 YEARS OF SERVICE** and receive benefits for qualified Soldiers from the Army's retirement income fund **AFTER ONLY TWO YEARS.**

% OF GEN Z who knows the Army offers:



FREE HEALTH CARE FOR THOSE WHO QUALIFY 44%
AND COMPLETE HEALTH CARE COVERAGE 42%

DID YOU KNOW?

Soldiers never have to worry about health care coverage because **THEY GET HEALTH CARE AT LITTLE TO NO COST** (for themselves and their families).

% OF GEN Z who knows the Army offers:



AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE 23%
PAID PARENTAL LEAVE 21%

DID YOU KNOW?

The Army supports parents and **OFFERS GENEROUS PAID PARENTAL LEAVE, INCLUDING 12 WEEKS FOR BOTH PARENTS** (a non-gender benefit) which includes 6 weeks of convalescent leave for mothers.

% OF GEN Z who knows the Army offers:



WORK-LIFE BALANCE ONLY HALF OF GEN Z 51%

DID YOU KNOW?

With hours that may mirror typical civilian jobs, and more paid vacation days than the average American (30!), **SOLDIERS HAVE TIME TO BE PARENTS, SPOUSES, FRIENDS, GAMERS, ATHLETES, CHESS-PLAYERS, SIDE-HUSTLERS, AND MORE.**



GOING FORWARD



URBAN FOCUS

Increased efforts in 22 U.S. cities – not just the rural South



Online Presence

Utilizing social media to clear misconceptions and educate target population



Easing requirements

Debt forgiveness, medical waivers, easing tattoo standards, expanding parental leave, etc.



Military Ads



THEN

NOW

If the glove fits...

There's a lot that you have to give you're always prepared. In short, you have to be ready to go. It's a profession that you won't count on all the time when the going gets tough. However, it's the toughest job in the world. It's respected, it's going to be there for you when you need it. It's the only one that you can't wear the same United States Marine. It's not just a job, it's a way of life. It's not just a job, it's a way of life.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN.



TIMES CHANGE, RANGERS DON'T RANGERS LEAD THE WAY!

JOIN THE RANGERS

This man is a Ranger.

Ask your Army recruiter what it's like to be one.

THE US ARMY INFANTRY

70% of employers said that they prefer the qualities of discipline and self-discipline. Qualities that the Army develops. Qualities that will help you in any career, and throughout life. We the Army can help give you an edge on a job. **MY ARMY. BE ALL YOU CAN BE.**

"I'VE DEFINITELY BROKEN OUT OF MY BUBBLE A LITTLE BIT MORE."

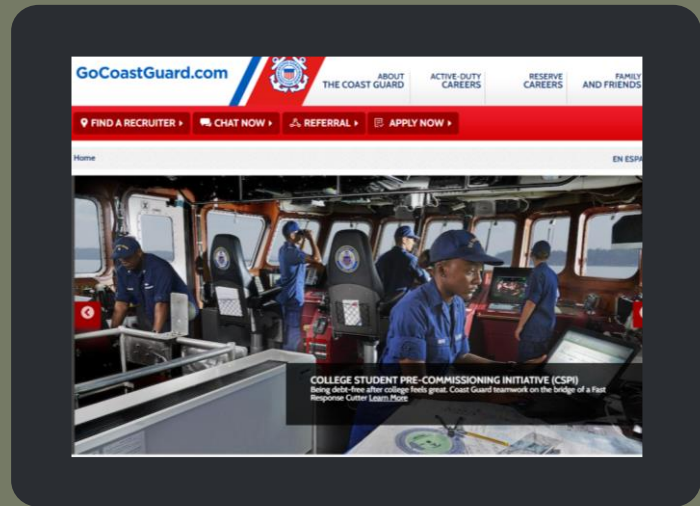
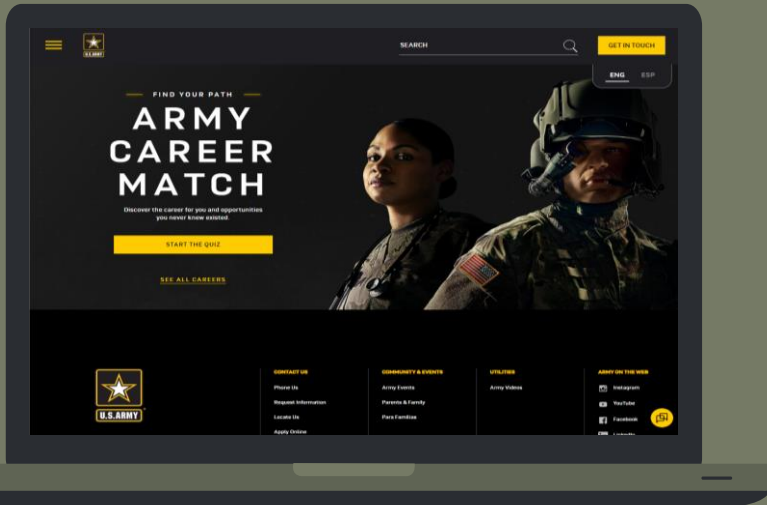
PROUD TO SERVE

What's your passion?

#WeHaveAJob4That



GOING FORWARD



Page Principles

Tell the truth

Military recruiters should be transparent and honest with potential recruits about the risks and challenges associated with military service and the benefits and opportunities. “Honor” is one of the Army’s core values. In recent years, the Army Recruiting Command has taken a holistic approach to recruiter development and training to ensure the standardization of the recruiting process. The Army is also constantly updating its requirements and expectations of military service through online channels to ensure there are no surprises for potential recruits when they walk through the door.

Prove it with action

The Army has taken concrete steps to address the issues that are contributing to the recruiting crisis, such as improving the treatment of service members with mental health issues, addressing sexual assault and harassment through swiftly prosecuting offenders and increasing prevention training, and improving deployment and conflict management. The Army has also demonstrated an investment in training and development programs to help prepare members for civilian careers outside of the military and offering competitive financial incentives and benefits to attract talent.

Page Principles

Listen to the customer

The Army has taken definitive steps to seek out and listen to feedback from potential recruits and their families to understand their concerns and needs and is actively using this information to improve the recruitment process. Through the use of surveys, focus groups, and interviews, the Army is proactively seeking insights into what the target population is looking for in a career, what concerns they have about military service, and what factors are most important to them when considering whether to join the military. By listening to the target population, the military has been able to gather valuable insights that have helped them improve recruiting efforts to make them resonate better.

Manage for tomorrow

The military is proactively addressing potential long-term challenges and anticipating future needs in order to ensure it is able to attract and retain the best talent. Doing so is critical in maintaining an all-volunteer force. By developing initiatives to improve its image and reputation, the military has demonstrated a collective effort to show that it is addressing the concerns held by those who are apprehensive about military service. Further, the Army has invested in training and development programs to help service members grow and succeed in their future careers after the Army and are offering competitive financial benefits to attract top talent.

Page Principles

Conduct public relations as if the whole company depends on it

By emphasizing the importance of effective and ethical communication, the Army has revitalized its recruiting strategies to reach the target population. The Army has ensured that military recruiters are well-trained and knowledgeable about the military and its mission, and are able to clearly and accurately convey this information to potential recruits. It has also revamped its public outreach methods by using a variety of communication channels such as social media, and online advertising. The Army has also reintroduced itself through in-person events such as high school visits and job fairs which were unavailable during the COVID-19 pandemic. All of this is done in an effort to reach potential recruits by using persuasive and compelling messages that resonate with the Gen-Z population.

Realize a company's true character is expressed by its people


The Army has emphasized the importance of attracting and retaining the best talent in the military by highlighting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of current service members as well as the opportunities for personal and professional growth that military service can provide. The Army is also emphasizing the values and principles that it upholds, such as Honor, Duty, and Service, and how these values are reflected in the actions and behaviors of its service members. By focusing on the character and quality of people, the military can demonstrate to potential recruits that it is a values-driven organization committed to attracting and retaining the best talent.

Page Principles


Remain calm, patient, and good-humored

Although concerned with the current challenges and setbacks, leadership within the Army has remained positive and patient in addressing the current recruiting crisis. By encouraging recruiters to stay calm and composed when dealing with the difficulties of frustrated recruits, the Army is able to put recruits at ease and build rapport. By remaining patient and good-humored, the military has demonstrated that they are approachable and understanding of the difficult and stressful process and that the military values its relationships with potential recruits and families.


Discussion Questions

1. What are the key challenges that the military is facing in attracting and retaining talent?
 2. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the military's recruitment efforts?
 3. What steps is the military taking to address the recruiting crisis?
 4. How can the military improve its image and reputation to attract more potential recruits?
 5. How can the military compete with other employers for top talent in today's job market?
 6. What role can ethical and effective communication play in the military's recruitment efforts?
 7. How can the military listen to and address the concerns and needs of potential recruits and their families?
 8. How can the military support the personal and professional growth of its service members and retain top talent over the long term?
 9. What role can values and principles play in the military's recruitment efforts?
 10. How can the military demonstrate that it is a values-driven organization to potential recruits?
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Class Activity

1. Divide the class into small groups.
 2. Have each group brainstorm a list of challenges that the military is facing in attracting and retaining talent.
 3. Have each group select one challenge from their list and develop a plan to address it.
 4. Have each group present their plan to the class and explain why they think it would be effective in addressing the challenge.
 5. As a class, discuss the pros and cons of each group's plan and identify common themes or strategies that emerged.
 6. As a class, brainstorm a list of additional steps that the military could take to address the recruiting crisis.
 7. Have each group select one step from the list and develop a plan to implement it.
 8. Have each group present their plan to the class and explain how it would contribute to addressing the recruiting crisis.
 9. As a class, discuss the feasibility and potential impact of each group's plan.
 10. As a final step, have the class come up with a comprehensive plan to address the military recruiting crisis, incorporating the best ideas and strategies from each group's plan.
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Individual Assignment

1. Read the case study on the current state of military recruitment in the United States.
 2. Using the Page Principles as a guide, develop a plan to improve the military's recruitment efforts. Your plan should include specific strategies and tactics that the military could use to address the challenges it is facing and to improve its image and reputation.
 3. Write a paper outlining your plan and explaining how it would address the challenges the military is facing in attracting and retaining talent. Be sure to support your ideas with evidence from your research.
 4. In your paper, be sure to address the following questions:
 - How would your plan address the challenges the military is facing in attracting and retaining talent?
 - How would your plan improve the military's image and reputation?
 - How would your plan demonstrate the military's commitment to ethical and effective communication?
 - How would your plan align with the Page Principles?
 5. Submit your paper for review and feedback.
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Individual Assignment

1. Take some time to look over the recruiting websites of each different branch of the military (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Airforce, Coast Guard, Space Force).
2. Write a paper outlining your findings. Compare and contrast the different strategies that you found. Be sure to provide examples.
3. In your paper, be sure to address the following questions:
 - What messages did you find to be strong and why?
 - What messages did you find to not be as strong and how could they be improved?
 - Is there anything missing from these recruiting websites that potential recruits would want to know about?



Questions?

