

SUCCESS STORY

Australian Defence Force: Creativity and Rebranding Spark Diverse Hiring for a Military RPO

Business Issue

ManpowerGroup Solutions' recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) with the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is considered one of the largest and most complex RPO projects in the world. The effort includes recruiting for all three Services within the Australian military – the Navy, Army and Air Force.

When ManpowerGroup Solutions was first engaged in 1999, the effort was primarily volume-driven. The ADF needed to fill thousands of positions each year but was challenged by a lengthy recruitment process that was more challenging than the process other employers utilized. For example, the ADF recruitment process includes extensive psychometric and physical testing, comprehensive medical assessments, criminal background checks, security screening and alignment with the requirements for the military, the individual Service (Navy, Army or Air Force), and specific job needs. Addressing these issues involved advertising and communications campaigns to raise awareness, dispel myths and inspire people to envision a future in the military.

By 2012, the ADF sought to increase gender, racial and ethnic diversity. Initial efforts were successful, but that growth plateaued by the second year of the program for each service.

“ More impressive were the truly incredible results in the diversity space with 41 percent of full-time enlistments for both Navy and Air Force being female. This means that both Services are recruiting above the rate that women are represented in the full-time workforce in Australia (which is 36.7 percent). In reviewing Army full time enlistments this year, 22 percent were female which is a substantial improvement on previous years, and for non-combat roles, the proportion of women joining Army was 36 percent. ”

—CDRE TONY PARTRIDGE, RAN, DIRECTOR GENERAL AND GLENN MCPHEE, DIRECTOR, RECRUITING SERVICES, DFR BUGLE, JULY 2017

Diversity centered strategic plan was launched to focus on increased hiring of women, Indigenous Australians, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) candidates focused on leadership, training and operations.



Results

Outcomes of this effort far exceed industry standards. Diversity-focused results for Financial Year 2016/17 include:

- » Highest number of women ever recruited (1,800) which included 43 percent growth over the previous year.
- » Between FY15-16 and FY16-17, the proportion of female recruits in the Army increased from 14 percent to 23 percent. In the Navy, the increase went from 23 percent to 39 percent, while the Air Force saw a jump from 31 percent to 40 percent.
- » Highest number of Indigenous candidates (454) ever recruited.
- » Indigenous recruiting grew from 3 percent in FY14-15 to 9 percent in FY16-17. This is particularly significant given that Indigenous groups make up only 3 percent of the overall population.
- » The number of Indigenous candidates increased by 94 percent compared to the previous highest year.

Solution

In 2012, a Diversity Strategic Plan was launched to focus on increased hiring of women, Indigenous Australians, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) candidates. These efforts started with the Army and extended to the Air Force and Navy in the following year. The Diversity Recruitment Plan is focused on several key areas:

Leadership: The initiative focuses on leadership's role in establishing cultural expectations of a diverse and inclusive workforce. For example, the Chief of the Army recorded a YouTube video that made clear his expectations for acceptable behavior. As of November 2017, the video had been viewed 1.8 million times.

Training: Learning and development modules for recruiting staff were designed for one-day and multi-day training sessions focused on cultural understanding, gender differences, neuroscience, and cultural and linguistic awareness.

Attraction: Advertising, social media and the ADF's web presence were all geared toward recruiting diversity. Digital content was hyper-targeted through the latest technologies with content and language designed to reach niche audiences.

Operations: Operational changes were introduced to reduce barriers to entry. For example, assessment waivers were considered for all diverse candidates, meaning that a surgeon might not be required to pass the same tests as an infantry soldier. In addition, the program offers pre-conditioning fitness programs with additional coaching for those who could meet the standards, targeted recruitment sessions designed to address the needs of specific populations, and flexible job offers. For example, rather than requiring diverse candidates to wait several months to enlist, candidates are provided with more immediate start dates. In addition, diverse recruits who are from a town with a military base can be offered assignments within their home town.

In addition to process improvements, the ManpowerGroup team developed an overall cultural change strategy focused on Seven Steps to Conscious Inclusion. This includes core tenets such as "Hire people who value people" and "Change yourself first." This model is based on more than 2,000 CEO interviews on gender.