

Connecting With the Marines: A Campaign for Diversity

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U.S. MARINE CORPS PR CAMPAIGN

According to its website: U.S. Marines Corps- "The few. The proud. The Marines," a part of the corps' mission is to 'make marines,' by building strong moral character, developing quality citizens, strong bodies and minds. (www.marines.com, 2012)

The corps serves our country as the fierce, elite force of choice. Its first priority is to defend our great nation. The Marines are prepared to fight whenever and wherever conflicts arise. Marines are our first responders in global conflicts: they are also compassionate world citizens.

Strengths: Millennials have an overall positive view of the military. They are more likely to approve of military intervention than any other generation. They highly embrace teamwork and personal service. They have a need to belong. Prestige is important to them.

Weaknesses: Millennials have less understanding of the military than previous generations. However, much of the information presented to them is generally negative. Millennials aspire to go to college rather than into the military. Veterans are the strongest influencers for the Marine Corps. The likelihood of millennials having a relationship with a veteran is declining. Competition between military branches is extreme.

Opportunities: When the economy falters, recruitment numbers generally increase. There is a high dropout rate for community college students, which may present an opportunity for recruitment. Millennials are tech savvy and this characteristic, if handled properly, can be used advantageously for recruiters. The millennials' sense of civic-duty and humanitarianism are other traits that can be used effectively.

Threats: Parental disaffection with the military. Millennials' parents are overprotective, strong influencers and likely to dissuade their children from enlisting. (Stafford & Griffis, 2008)

We are positioned as the "elite" brand of the military, "The Few." From its inception, the Marine Corps used a strategy to attract recruits by advertising for the exceptional. Pledging to reshape marines "mind, body and soul." WWI brought heroic slogans: "the first to fight" and "always faithful." The slogan, "The Few, The Proud, The Marines," excluded gender to appeal to women. (Zeliff, 2007) Media campaigns were designed to appeal to today's millennials beginning with "For Us All." Research showed that inclusivity is important to this group. The appeals were to "convey to the general public that Marines come from every community to serve with a purpose," said Master Sgt. Chad Isom. Protection and service was "For Us All." (Flynn, 2010)

Industry Overview:

Although all military branches continue to meet recruitment goals, they face challenges. The U.S. Marine Corps. has had to compete for a limited number of candidates with the other branches, with the private sector, and with colleges and universities.

Competitors:

The army has the largest number of recruits, followed by, successively, the Air Force, the Navy and the Marines. ("The Department of Defense announced," 2011) We are positioned as the "tough, elite" branch of the military. (Windolph (n.d))

Target Audience:

The market for 17-24 year olds is 8.3 million. The prime market consists of 2.2 million males or 7.1 percent of the primary recruiting market. (Choike & Zeliff, 2012)

According to King and Della Volpe, the propensity for blacks to join the military has steadily dropped since the early 1990s. Blacks are also less inclined to view themselves as “very patriotic.” Minority populations are growing faster than the overall population and immigration has increased diversity. (Drago, 2006)

By regions, the Pacific and New England show the lowest levels of confidence in military leadership by millennials. From a 2007 Pew Research study: 93 per cent of millennials are avid internet users, 60 percent create content, and 57 percent share it. (as cited in King & Della Volpe, 2008)

Using online sampling, a survey was conducted with a population composed of adults between 18-34 years old, residing in the continental United States and Alaska. The sample size was 110. From the survey, it was shown what respondent's media habits were and what mediums were used for entertainment and research. The information was used to decide how to best allocate dollars for media buys. It is important to understand our target's use of the internet, what sites are visited most often and for what purpose. The online survey revealed a high usage of video-games. Understanding where and how messages are received helps in tailoring effective campaign tactics. Survey questions showed what level of recall respondents had when exposed to messages through various mediums. Findings revealed the importance of taking into account the value of the internet to this age group and how using social media can affect appeals.

The respondents had a greater interest in celebrities than any other personality type on the survey. What kinds of personalities they respond to most is important, because it can tell us what types of spokespersons or characters would be most appealing and maintain their interest in an advertising appeal. Whom do they listen to and how are they influenced? It's important to know what they responded to when they viewed the ad, which helped with creating effective messages. Are they inclined to traditional narratives? Their input on what kinds of appeals they would use to create persuasive communications is important. It gives insight into what they truly believe can cut through the clutter.

Overwhelmingly, respondents answered “the internet” when asked where they would go first to research the military.

Understanding how respondents were affected, both negatively and positively, by the “Toward the Sounds of Chaos” ad is necessary to create persuasive messages more effectively.

It is important to know what appeals the respondents would use were they to design an ad for our client. It either shows what they find most appealing or what they believe the majority of their peers would respond positively to.

The survey was voluntarily done through the online site, surveymonkey. Respondents were invited to participate and sent the link to the survey.

Data Analysis:

Electronic Media - Hours used: 12 hrs. or more 32%
 Hours spent playing video-games p/wk: 0-2 hrs. or more 75%
 Time spent online for research: 3-5 hrs. 39.8%
 Most visited social media site: Facebook 90% (followed by twitter) 4.16% 120 responses
 Other uses, entertainment 32.8%
 Personalities-Movie/TV stars most interesting 65.1%
 Respondent's Choice of Appeals-The type of persuasive appeals respondents would choose for communications: First choice, adventure 64.2% Second choice, logical appeal, reasons to join, benefits 53.2% Third choice, inclusion 45.9%

The study shows that the strongest appeal for ads would be adventure. Most of the respondents have a great respect for the military and particularly, for the Marines. Ads with a sense of excitement, while providing information about reasons for joining, added benefits and other logical appeals, appear to be the ones that would have the most positive effect.

Goal: to implement a comprehensive communication plan, which will effectively reach diverse potential recruits from the targeted geographical areas through: enhanced interactive social media initiatives, traditional media and community events.

Objectives:

Awareness:

- to increase awareness of the marines.com website by 30% by June 2013.
- to increase the awareness of the ongoing and heightened need for Marine recruits
- to increase the awareness of the benefits offered to Marine enlistees
- to maintain and sustain awareness of the Marine Corps' social media platforms

Behavior:

- to increase Marine recruits from the targeted regions by 15% by the end of fiscal year 2013.
- to increase visits and interactivity on marines.com by 25 % by June 2013.

Attitudes:

- to change the image of the Marines as the military branch that is predominately white and ultraconservative

to create positive buzz about the Marines through various interactive social media initiatives.

Strategies and Tactics:

To draw more interest in marines.com, there should be more opportunities for site visitors to communicate with one another and with the marines as a brand. The application could either be on Facebook or the marines.com website. The strategy is to make marines.com top-of-mind and the

go-to place for information about the corps by creating a viral campaign.

Enable visitors to communicate with one another and the Marine Corps in real-time with an interactive application similar to Skype. Also, it would allow the U.S. Marine Corps to gain immediate feedback and to consistently evaluate online strategy.

Have celebrity guests and celebrated former Marines have live chats with users.

Have marines.com users create their own content:

launch an arts contest for content that best describes the meaning of “service.” Submissions should be for artist of video, sound, photography or visual arts. The contest should be done by region and winners decided by online voters.

launch a video-game design contest.

Research shows that millennials value service and connection. Humanize ads by focusing on the featured characters’ connections to one another. Victims and Marines can communicate compassion more effectively by retelling their experiences in their own words than by displaying the word “aid” on a box.

Tailor commercials to targeted locations. Potential recruits should be able to see themselves or someone they identify with in commercials. Align Marines with familiar city icons, show how they help their local communities. Show the Marine as a hometown guy/girl.

Have celebrity spokespersons do Public Service Announcements explaining how multiple tours of duty are affecting our service-men and women and how recruits are needed, post 9/11, to be prepared at all times to protect what we hold most dear: the United States of America.

Have free concerts in honor of the Marines and their families.

Tie-in sports events with the Marines.

Have local personalities as spokespersons for the Marines in public-relations materials: magazine inserts, outdoor advertising and PSAs.

Send pitch letters on the Marines as human interest stories that focus on acts of compassion by local Marines, e.g. Marine participation in Hurricane Sandy. Send letters to local magazines and

newspapers.

Send photographs to magazines and newspapers.

Send out media-kits and press-releases for community events.

Have local spokespersons do television and radio-talk shows.

Use winning arts entries as advertisements for the U.S. Marine Corps.

Evaluation:

After the campaign is completed, the overall strategy may be evaluated:

- by comparing the total number of recruits from the targeted regions to the previous years totals.

- by comparing the numbers of visits to the marines.com to previous years totals.

- through a follow-up and more expansive survey of millennials between 18-34 years of age and their attitudes towards the military

- by tracking mentions of marines.com on other sites

- by comparing visits to the U.S. Marine Corps Facebook site to the previous year

- by analyzing the numbers of arts submissions to the U.S. Marine Corps contest

- by asking new recruits if or what media tactics influenced their decisions to enlist

Marines: My in Hometown

Video	Audio
<p>Five young, African-American men are sitting at a table at an urban coffee shop. Teasing each other, good-naturedly.</p> <p>Cut to Man 1</p> <p>CU: Man 2, smiling shyly</p> <p>Pan the table.</p> <p>Cut to Man 3</p> <p>CU: Man 2</p> <p>Cut to Man 4</p> <p>CU: to Man 2</p> <p>They all laugh, CU: Man 3</p> <p>Pan to table.</p> <p>Cut to Man 4, nudging guy next to him.</p> <p>Camera pans on an African-American in dress blues, walks up to the counter. He looks proud and distinctive. Cutaway to table: everyone except Man 2, mimics his posture and adjusts imaginary uniforms.</p> <p>Cut to Man 1</p> <p>Cut to Man 3</p> <p>Pan to table. All except Man 2 shake heads in agreement.</p> <p>CU: Man 2 (He looks away, half smiling, thinking as he speaks)</p> <p>Cut to man 3</p> <p>Montage of scenes with Man 2, first with his girlfriend, his family, a neighborhood vendor and finally, at church with his pastor.</p> <p>CU: Man 2</p> <p>Pan to table, they all look dumbstruck.</p> <p>Man 3</p> <p>Pan to table, all laugh, Man 3 starts to rise, the rest, except Man 2, follow and start to leave.</p> <p>Cut to Man 2</p> <p>Pan to marine, he tips his hat and smiles at man 2, man 2 smiles back.</p> <p>Camera on Man 2</p> <p>Camera on Marine</p> <p>Cut to Man 2 in training uniform at boot camp.</p>	<p>Man 1: I saw someone out last night with Angie. Everyone except Man 2, guffaws</p> <p>Men: Awe!</p> <p>Man 3: How's that goin' for ya?</p> <p>Man 2: It's goin' okay.</p> <p>Man 4: Sounds like to me someone's in love.</p> <p>Man 2: Go on, man, get outta here.</p> <p>Man 3: Hey, let's go to the court after this and play some ball.</p> <p>All: Okay.</p> <p>Man 4: Hey, check him out</p> <p>Man 1: I don't get it why would someone wanna do that?</p> <p>Man 3: You know that ain't about us. You and me.</p> <p>Man 2: I don't know.</p> <p>Man 3: What?</p> <p>Man 2: What about my girl? What if something happened on our block. Who would look out for her? I keep hearing about all these guys that keep comin' home and goin back what's that all about? Hey, if more guys joined, they wouldn't need to go back over and over.</p> <p>Man 3: Naw, man, you ain't goin nowhere.</p> <p>Man 3: Come on. You comin' (to Man 2)</p> <p>Man 2: In a minute</p> <p>Caption: the few</p> <p>Caption: the proud</p> <p>Caption: the marines.</p>

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

No one expected to see them. The Marines came on to city streets, to help residents devastated by Hurricane Sandy with much needed assistance.

New Yorkers are known for being tough. We have face incredible challenges daily and win battles against tyrants in the city that only we can understand.

However, there are those times, those exceptional times when even the most hardened pavement jockeys are taken aback.

Hurricane Sandy pummeled New York. It brought death and destruction to communities that never anticipated being sucker punched by an act of God.

Suddenly, impervious residents in places like the Bronx and Staten Island were left unguarded and in despair.

Enter the Marine Corps. Teams came in all over the affected coastal areas, distributing food and water, cleaning up demolished communities, working to help us whenever and wherever there was need.

Marines worked to pump water from homes in Queens, Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit flew as first responders in heavily hit areas and volunteers worked with other military branches to aid the Hurricane's victims.

The Marines are known for being tough. They are tough. And we're glad they are. Toughness and compassion let us know that we are not alone. We have a team ready to fight for us when we need them, here, in New York against Sandy. Tomorrow may bring other disasters elsewhere in the country.

The Marines are ready.

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