

Journal

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Federal Bureau of Prisons Mission Statement

The Federal Bureau of Prisons protects society by confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, and appropriately secure, and which provide work and other self-improvement opportunities to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens.

Cultural Anchors/Core Values

■ *Bureau family*

The Bureau of Prisons recognizes that staff are the most valuable resource in accomplishing its mission, and is committed to the personal welfare and professional development of each employee. A concept of "Family" is encouraged through healthy, supportive relationships among staff and organization responsiveness to staff needs. The active participation of staff at all levels is essential to the development and accomplishment of organizational objectives.

■ *Sound correctional management*

The Bureau of Prisons maintains effective security and control of its institutions utilizing the least restrictive means necessary, thus providing the essential foundation for sound correctional management programs.

■ *Correctional workers first*

All Bureau of Prisons staff share a common role as correctional worker, which requires a mutual responsibility for maintaining safe and secure institutions and for modeling society's mainstream values and norms.

■ *Promotes integrity*

The Bureau of Prisons firmly adheres to a set of values that promotes honesty and integrity in the professional efforts of its staff to ensure public confidence in the Bureau's prudent use of its allocated resources.

■ *Recognizes the dignity of all*

Recognizing the inherent dignity of all human beings and their potential for change, the Bureau of Prisons treats inmates fairly and responsively and affords them opportunities for self-improvement to facilitate their successful re-entry into the community. The Bureau further recognizes that offenders are incarcerated as punishment, not for punishment.

■ *Career service orientation*

The Bureau of Prisons is a career-oriented service, which has enjoyed a consistent management philosophy and a continuity of leadership, enabling it to evolve as a stable, professional leader in the field of corrections.

■ *Community relations*

The Bureau of Prisons recognizes and facilitates the integral role of the community in effectuating the Bureau's mission, and works cooperatively with other law enforcement agencies, the courts, and other components of government.

■ *High standards*

The Bureau of Prisons requires high standards of safety, security, sanitation, and discipline, which promote a physically and emotionally sound environment for both staff and inmates.

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Aggressive Recruitment

How to develop a multimedia campaign

Peter M. Wittenberg

Corrections has always had an image problem. Most people gain their knowledge of corrections and prisons from popular movies and books that, while marginally entertaining, have no basis in reality. Many still believe prisons are operated by brutes—not a great public awareness foundation from which to recruit intelligent, professional applicants. An additional recruitment problem is the competition prisons face from other agencies that share the same applicant pool. It is often difficult to convince applicants that our profession is just as necessary and challenging as working for a police or sheriff's department.

Regardless of these obstacles, we must continue to fill our positions with honest, qualified staff, while considering such other factors as recruitment of minorities and women. My experience is that if an aggressive recruitment campaign is not maintained, if recruitment is consigned to the "back burner," staffing will suffer to such an extent that retention of staff will decrease, security may be compromised, and inmate programs will deteriorate.

What is meant by "aggressive recruitment?" In my view, it is a comprehensive program that requires far more than participation at college employment fairs and career days. The first step in starting an aggressive recruitment program is the establishment of a plan of action, which should identify the following:

■ **Does the facility have recruitment or retention problems and, if so, why?**

First, is there a recruitment problem or a retention problem? Each situation requires a different response. Does the facility have a good reputation within the community or does it rarely get "good press?" Perhaps a public relations



Courtesy HRM staff, USF Lompoc

program is needed prior to a recruitment program. Be honest in this assessment. There is no need to spend a great deal of money on recruitment if the problem lies elsewhere.

■ **What positions should be targeted for recruitment?**

What are the most difficult-to-fill positions? It's not a good idea to recruit for dozens of positions at once. Opening a recruitment program that lists many positions will often confuse applicants and falsely suggest that your facility isn't a good place to work (after all, look at ALL those vacancies!). My experience suggests that no more than five or six positions at a time should be targeted during a recruitment campaign.

■ **What applicant pool should be targeted?**

The institution's human resource department should consider whether underrepresentation exists within the facility and target specific applicant pools based on demographic statistics. Are women, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, or other

ethnic groups underrepresented? Does the facility house a large number of Hispanic inmates, thus requiring additional bilingual staff? Is the facility located in an area that has a disproportionate number of members of one ethnic group? All of these issues need to be considered before embarking upon the recruitment campaign.

■ **What will be the campaign's scope?**

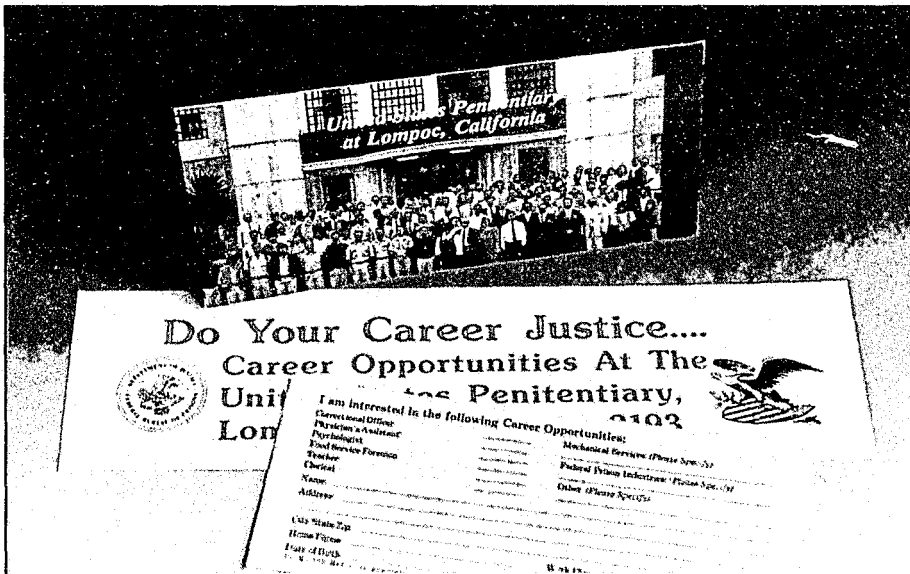
Decide how much money you are willing to spend. Some recruitment programs can cost thousands of dollars. Can you afford it? While I believe that recruitment of qualified staff should be the highest priority, and is, in the long term, cost-effective (less turnover, less overtime), often the purse strings are controlled by higher levels of authority who may take a different view of your recruitment needs.

Second, decide where you will get "more bang for your buck." Will a simple newspaper advertisement work or is a larger media campaign necessary? Usually, a newspaper advertisement is not enough to meet continuing recruitment needs; if it takes only a single ad to fill a vacancy, your facility does not have a recruitment problem to begin with! Finally, consider if you should use media advertisements only, or follow a "three-tiered" approach, such as that described later in this article.

Once your plan of action is established, you must now decide upon your recruitment strategies. These can fall into several general categories.

Print advertisements

This is the cornerstone of almost all recruitment programs and, like any strategy, has pros and cons. The pros include the fact that most unemployed



people look for jobs in newspaper classifieds. However, a major minus is that such ads probably won't be seen by *employed* individuals who might consider a career change if they knew of vacancies. A newspaper advertisement is usually a one-shot effort, and might easily be missed by that "perfect" applicant. In addition, the institution will receive very little name recognition from print advertisements.

Another issue to consider is the type of position that needs to be filled and the publication's readership. It probably would not be cost-effective to run an advertisement for a correctional officer position in the *Wall Street Journal*, or for a physician assistant in the *Shotgun News*.

Many newspapers target specific minority groups, and many organizations publish newsletters and magazines targeting specific groups such as doctors, lawyers, accountants, police officers, and the like. These should be used to the widest extent possible.

Print advertisements alone are appropriate if you do not have a major difficulty in recruiting. However, if you do have problems finding qualified staff, print advertisements should be combined with some other strategies.

Radio advertisements

When you begin radio advertisements, you will soon be visited by hundreds (or so it seems) of account executives boosting their stations. During one particular week at my former facility I was visited by four account executives telling me they were the number one station in the market—and each had the statistics to prove it. What they meant was that somewhere in the demographic statistics they were number one in a portion of the market. Be wary. Check the market listing very carefully before signing a contract with a particular station to ensure that their market share meets your target audience.

Radio advertising offers several advantages. While it isn't cheap, it is usually not cost-prohibitive except in the largest markets such as New York and Los

Angeles. You get excellent name recognition, and a well-produced spot does a great deal for public relations. It seems that the best rule of thumb when using radio advertisements is to place them in "drive time" (usually 4-6 p.m.), when most people are listening. Pick two or three stations to run your spot, and use the same advertisement on all of them so you can reach "channel jumpers." Normally, for radio advertisements to be effective, they need to play for a few weeks on a regular basis.

Direct mail

I received the most impressive results at my last facility with this program, and I believe it is the single best recruitment strategy. It is a simple concept. Prepaid, preaddressed postcards listing career opportunities are mailed to every address within a certain ZIP code via "batch mail." The recruitment specialist determines which ZIP codes should be targeted in light of institution needs and demographic statistics. Both the post office and private organizations offer direct mail services; however, private firms are usually more cost-effective and more responsive to customers' needs. My staff was told by batch mail representatives to expect a 1- to 2-percent return, but we averaged about a 3-percent return on most of our mailings.

There are many benefits and few drawbacks with a direct-mail program. You can target ZIP codes around military bases and colleges and reach all individuals living in high-unemployment areas. One major drawback is the difficulty in screening applicant requests. Many cards returned will be from unqualified individuals.

Three-tiered approach

Combining the three recruitment programs listed above is best illustrated by an example. Suppose your facility is recruiting for correctional officers, and you have determined that Hispanic employees are underrepresented at your facility. You know that there is a large Hispanic population in a nearby city. Under the three-tiered approach, you first take out newspaper and radio ads in the target city stating that an information card on career opportunities will be arriving shortly in residents' mailboxes. After a week or so, send your direct mail cards to the areas covered by the advertisements. I have no doubt that you'll have difficulty answering all the responses you receive.

Television advertisements

This is the most costly way to recruit, but it is effective if used correctly. First, only a general employment advertisement should be used with this program. If you recruit for specific positions, the commercial will quickly become stale. Second, if cost is a factor, consider creating a 10-second, rather than a 30-second spot. Finally, have a professional produce the commercial—it's not a home video! If you do select TV commercials, remember that the "drive-time" rule of thumb for radio ads is inappropriate. Decide on who you wish to recruit, then check the station's demographics to determine when most of your target audience will be watching. Finally, ensure that your commercial is placed within or alongside a TV program that you can be proud of.

Onsite recruitment

While it is important for recruiters to visit college campuses and job fairs, this cannot be the sole strategy. Often, it is useful to visit colleges and job fairs for public relations purposes, and to recruit applicants for *future* vacancies. However, if you have a major recruitment problem, or need vacancies filled immediately, onsite programs appear to be the least effective of the types discussed here. If you do extensive onsite recruitment, I suggest that you invest in some giveaways—key chains, pens, pencils, or other inexpensive trinkets—that will help you with recognition and continued good public relations.

Word of mouth

A final recruitment strategy, which often is the most cost-effective and ideal for public relations, is the recruiting that staff do when talking to friends and acquaintances. Management that offers strong incentives for staff to recruit applicants usually receives qualified candidates and increases morale within the facility. In addition, management should consider employing qualified spouses. This strengthens the family concept among staff and often decreases security and disciplinary problems.

How to "sell" your facility

Once you select a strategy, you now must decide what you wish to convey. You must "sell" your facility, agency, or vacant position to the public. Many will hear the term "correctional facility" (or worse, "penitentiary") and associate it with the negative images noted earlier. You must counter that perception if you want to reach a pool of qualified applicants.

Ask yourself: What does this facility (or agency) have to offer? What benefits will make the position attractive? Remember,

you are competing with hundreds of other organizations attempting to recruit the same applicants. List benefits, incentives, special programs, promotion opportunities, pay insurance, or the multitude of other items that make your facility unique. Place your agency seal in the advertisement. Use good graphic design in your print ads to separate them from the competition. Be innovative; create ads that will stimulate curiosity about your career opportunities. If you have never advertised on radio, create a radio spot. If all your print ads have been in black and white, use color. Use direct-mail cards of vibrant colors. Do whatever you can (in line with professional standards and good judgment) to get an applicant's attention. If you are unsure of yourself, local advertising firms may help you develop a strategy at no cost for an opportunity to represent you to newspapers, television, radio stations, and other media sources.

No recruitment program is successful if the candidate cannot reach the human resource department or does not receive requested information. Nothing hurts recruitment programs more than not being immediately accessible to candidates, or not following up on requested information. The establishment of a 24-hour career "hotline" is one of the best, and most cost-effective, methods for enabling applicants to reach you at any time. This "hotline" does not have to be manned by staff at all times. A business-type answering machine, with a professional announcement explaining your job opportunities, will ensure that you never miss a call from an interested applicant. The entire "hotline" can be set up for under \$800—well worth the cost if you consider the total investment.

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