

Chapter 3A – THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING AND MARKETING ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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3A.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As highlighted throughout this report, a number of economic, demographic and attitudinal issues have increased the challenge of recruitment and retention for military organisations in NATO countries.

The impact of advertising and marketing can be related to the various elements of the models of recruitment and turnover developed as a result of the work conducted by this NATO task group and presented in this report. Advertising and Marketing will have an impact on a potential recruit's perception, knowledge and understanding of the job and attributes of the organization. In terms of recruitment this will influence the individual's perception of how well they will 'fit' within the organization and thus affect the attractiveness of the organization and the individual's subsequent job pursuit intentions. Once an individual has joined an organization how accurate these perceptions were may influence; their transition into the organization, their fit with the organization, their levels of job satisfaction and ultimately their level of commitment to it and thus, whether the organization can retain them or they decide to voluntarily leave.

As advertising and marketing can have such an impact on recruitment and retention, organizations should ensure that these activities are conducted to the optimum affect. This chapter reviews the research in these areas and makes practical recommendations for military organizations to consider. These include: Consideration of organisational branding; Publicity should be used in conjunction with other recruitment activities; Both low and high involvement advertising and marketing strategies should be used; Advertising and marketing material needs to convey clear information about the range of opportunities available within military organizations and the range of entry standards. Advertising and Marketing and recruiters should reflect a realistic picture of military life; any recruitment campaign should ideally be aligned to either a competency model or a set of core military values.

3A.2 INTRODUCTION

Advertising and marketing plays a very important role in recruitment and retention. These activities will have an impact on a potential recruit's perception, knowledge and understanding of the job and attributes. This perception will influence an individual's decision on whether to join or ultimately stay with an organisation.

3A.2.1 The Impact of Advertising and Marketing on Recruitment

As discussed in the topic chapter, *A Proposed Model of Military Recruitment*, there are many definitions for recruitment. Earlier definitions, such as Rynes (1991) and Breaugh (1992), focused on recruitment outcomes rather than the recruitment process. To avoid defining recruitment in terms of its consequences, Barber (1998) adopted a narrower definition: "Recruitment includes those practices and activities carried on by the

organisation with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees.” This definition has been extended to include an element of retention, for example, Taylor and Collins (2000) defined recruitment as “the set of activities undertaken by the organisation for the primary purpose of identifying a desirable group of applicants, attracting them into its employee ranks, and retaining them at least for the short term” (p. 306).

3A.3 LEVEL OF ADVERTISING ACTIVITIES

Advertising and marketing will influence potential applicant’s opinions about an organisation through a number of mechanisms and can work at different levels. The literature on general marketing indicates that advertising strategies range from low involvement to high involvement in nature (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). This also seems to reflect recruitment advertising strategies (Cable and Turban, 2001). Low involvement recruitment practices are designed to require few search and processing efforts on the part of job seekers and high involvement activities require a greater degree of search and processing effort from the job seeker. Figure 3A-1 shows the direction of flow for an individual becoming a job applicant.

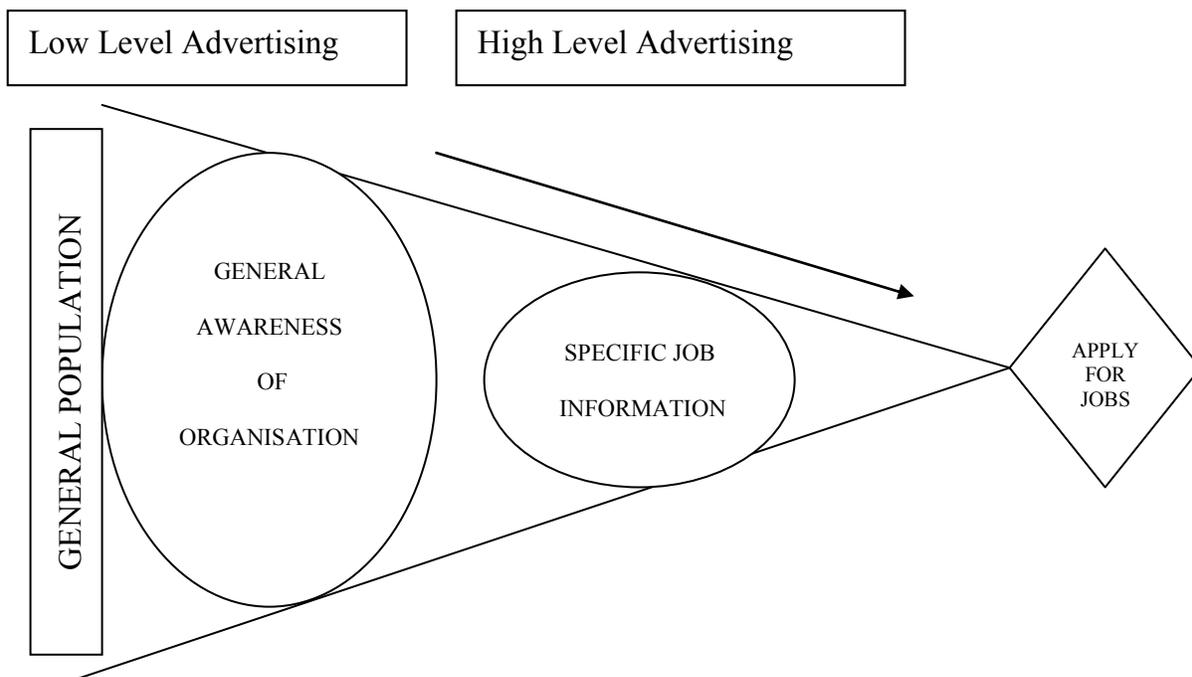


Figure 3A-1: Influence of Levels of Advertising.

3A.3.1 Low Involvement Advertising

Low involvement advertisements influence potential customers by exposing them to organisations in an incidental manner (Shapiro, MacInnis and Heckler, 1997). Similarly organisations are increasingly looking to influence job seekers through general recruitment advertisements that create awareness of the organisation as an employer, and convey positive cues to job seekers through logos, pictures and visual images that require little processing effort (Martinez, 2000). In this way organisations can influence potential job applicants, even when they are not actively searching for information about jobs or careers or even considering changing employment.

General marketing research has shown that mere exposure to a company can increase its attractiveness to consumers (Mitchell and Olson, 1981). This has also been shown to be the case in recruitment research. Gatewood et al, 1993 and Turban, 2001 found that job seekers are more attracted to familiar companies than unfamiliar.

One form of low-level advertising is sponsorship. Market researchers have found that sponsorship is effective because consumers develop positive, general feelings towards the sponsoring company based on their experiences during the sponsored event or activity (Johar and Pham, 1999). Similarly, Collins and Stevens (2002) found that recruitment sponsorship affected application decisions by increasing student job seekers' general attitudes towards an organisation. A recent example of this type of marketing activity was a high profile Everest expedition undertaken by the British Army. The expedition was well publicised in the media, including a dedicated website: www.armyoneverest.mod.uk.

3A.3.2 High Involvement Advertising

High involvement advertising seeks to provide more detailed information about companies or jobs. Examples of high involvement recruitment are detailed job advertisements and company brochures that provide detailed information about specific jobs and company attributes. High involvement practices require greater cognitive effort to process than do low involvement practices because they contain detailed information about jobs or organisations. Due to the nature of the information that they convey, high involvement advertisements cannot be processed subconsciously or peripherally in the way that low involvement ones can. Individuals must be motivated to seek out these sources of information. These recruitment tools cannot influence passive job seekers, but only those who actively look for this type of material and are prepared to process the information that they contain.

3A.3.3 Functions of Advertising

3A.3.3.1 Raising Employer Awareness

One area in which advertising and marketing can influence individual's job application decisions relates to organisational knowledge. Even before individuals consider seeking their first job or career they will be aware of organisations, industries or work environments. Their parents will also have opinions about organisations and career fields that may influence whether they will consider specific careers.

In order to apply for a job, or even seek out information about a particular organisation, a potential applicant needs to know that the organisation exists.

Recruitment activities should begin with increasing potential applicants' awareness of the organisation. At this initial phase of recruitment it is the general awareness and knowledge of a potential employer that is important. Familiarity with organisations can also affect the attractiveness of that organisation. Research has shown that increased exposure to previously neutral objects can lead to increased liking (Zajonc, 1968). Cable and Graham (2000) also found that those organisations perceived as more familiar, were also perceived as more attractive. Research has also shown that when individuals perceive that they have many alternatives with regard to potential employers, they are less likely to perceive a particular organisation as attractive. So organisations also need to focus on building a positive image so they become an employer of choice, rather than have people joining the organisation because they have 'no alternative'.

In summary, the earliest recruitment activities should aim to increase general awareness of the organisation within the general population. Also, advertising and marketing at this stage should create a positive image of the organisation to the general population.

It has been shown that a major function of advertising and marketing is to raise the profile of the organisation with the general population. However, it should also increase the awareness and realistic knowledge of the employer within the target recruitment pool. Cable and Turban (2001) define ‘employer knowledge’ as ‘a job seeker’s memories and associations regarding an organisation as a (potential) employer.’ Employer knowledge provides applicants with a template to categorise, store and recall employer-related memories.

3A.3.3.2 Promoting Employer Image/Branding

Employer image consists of the beliefs that applicants hold about the employer: ranging from ‘employer information’ (beliefs about objective aspects of the organisation, such as historical information) to ‘job information’ (the attributes of a specific job they might apply for). There is a general awareness of military organisations; however, this awareness is not always positive or accurate.

In order to try and promote an accurate image of an organisation there has been a rapid growth in the importance of the ‘employer brand’ and communicating a consistent message is becoming a vital part of the advertising mix. Employer branding is far more than the tactical application of a logo or trademark to a company’s packaging or other communications. A brand is to a company what a personality is to a person (The Recruitment Society, 2004). In its broadest sense, branding is a process, an ongoing practice where all the tangible and intangible elements that constitute a company’s image and reputation are organised and communicated. In this sense, branding takes on a life of its own, it becomes a driver of satisfaction and loyalty. It can be a significant differentiating factor between organisations competing for job applicants. In the same way that attitudes affect the way people react to other people they are also more forgiving and trusting of a brand they know and feel good about (Hunt and Landry, 2005).

Two dimensions of employer branding that have been shown to impact on applicant intentions to apply for jobs with an organisation are; general attitudes towards the company and perceived job attributes (Collins and Stevens, 2002). These in turn have been identified as being affected by the early recruitment activities of publicity, sponsorship, word of mouth endorsements and advertisements (see Figure 3A-2).

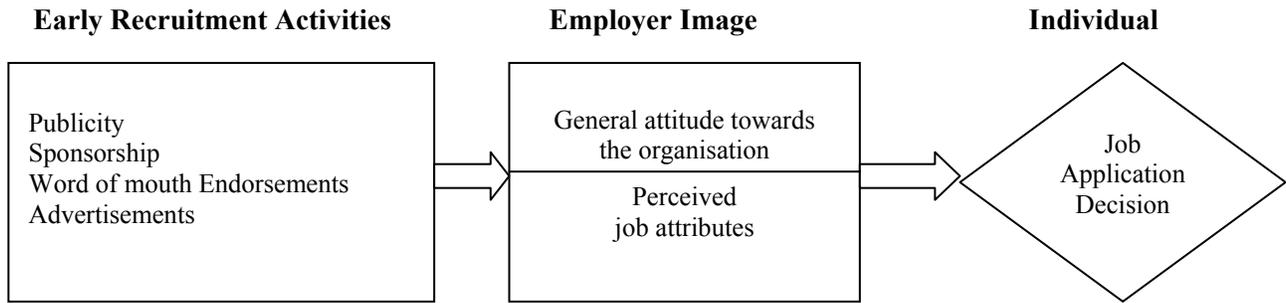


Figure 3A-2: The Interaction of Early Recruitment Activities and Employer Image on Individual Job Application Decisions.

In addition, those early recruitment-related activities interact with one another such that employer brand image is stronger when organisations use publicity in conjunction with other early recruitment-related activities.

3A.3.3.3 Enhancing Employer Reputation

Another factor that contributes to the employer image is the reputation or prestige of the organisation. Highhouse et al (2003) suggest that social reference is the basis for the construct of organisational prestige. An organisation is considered to be prestigious if it inspires thoughts of fame and renown in the minds of those who hear of it. This prestige reflects a social consensus on the degree to which the company's characteristics are regarded as either positive or negative. Employer reputation also relates to the public evaluation of an organisation. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) put forward a 'trait-oriented' perspective of employer reputation. They suggest that potential candidates reliably and meaningfully ascribe traits to organisations. These traits describe the organisation in terms of subjective, abstract, and intangible attributes. They also convey symbolic company information in the form of images that applicants assign to organisations.

In summary, the impression that the general public has of an organisation will increase or reduce the attractiveness of that organisation as an employer to potential applicants, and very importantly for military organisations, the parents of potential applicants. Thus in order to increase the number of applicants, organisations should consider their image and how to portray this in advertising and marketing campaigns.

Marketing and advertising are major ways of influencing the impression that individuals have of an organisation. However, in the case of military organisations the media also has a huge impact on public opinion and this is not always positive. When the reputation and prestige of military organisations is reduced it is even more important to use appropriate marketing and advertising campaigns. Research has shown that both recruitment advertising and positive word of mouth can mitigate the effects of negative publicity on organisational attractiveness (Van Hoye and Lievens, 2005).

3A.3.3.4 Increasing the Recruitment Pool

The primary goal of early recruitment activities should be to attract the largest possible pool of qualified applicants to an organisation. Early phases of recruitment are crucial as later recruitment practices can only maintain and degrade the size and quality of the initial applicant pool and not increase it (Carlson, Connerly and Mecham, 2002).

When recruitment levels are low and target numbers of new recruits are not being met, then one way of attempting to address the problem is to aim to reach a larger pool of applicants. This is achieved by targeting sections of the population not normally considered as potential applicants. This strategy includes targeting a wider range of potential applicants than has previously been considered, and the use of new, innovative practices to reach potential applicants.

For example, one of the Republic of Singapore Navy's recruitment campaigns looks to spur response rates by sending potential applicants a personalised book that resembles thrillers written by such authors as Tom Clancy and John Grisham. Aiming to dramatise the core message, "Join the Navy and lead a life that has the makings of a great story," the books were sent out to approximately 4,000 final year students at Singapore's ITE and Polytechnic institutions. Three different books were sent out with the titles, *Courage at 640 Knots*, *Uncharted Depths*, and *Stealth Force*, followed by the subtitle, *A true story*. The books were personalised by using each recipient's name as the author of their specific book. In addition, the recipient's name was printed on the spine, and the recipient's address was included as part of the copy on the back cover. Inside the book, a personalised letter provided details of the life on offer at the Navy.

Another example of creative advertising is the UK's radio campaign for the Territorial Army (TA). Six advertisements illustrate the specialist areas within the TA, and then use a dialogue between a member of the regular Army and a member of the TA to challenge the listener to figure out which is which, leaving the listener realizing there is very little difference. The campaign also aimed to increase the response by the fact that a texting response mechanism supplemented the usual website call to action.

The Spanish have highlighted the changing focus of the military from war-fighting to peace-keeping in their marketing campaigns.

3A.3.3.5 Providing Accurate Information for Potential Recruits

Once the low involvement advertising and marketing of a company has achieved its aim of increasing general positive awareness of an organisation in the general population, high level advertising techniques should be used to provide accurate and detailed information about specific jobs and the attributes required for that job. As high involvement practices communicate detailed information about both the rewards and requirements of a job, these practices affect applicant pool quality by attracting appropriately qualified applicants (Collins and Han, 2004).

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) can be used to explore the individual's motivations to apply to a company. Vroom suggested that individuals are motivated by instrumentality (likelihood that job has certain attributes), valence (the attractiveness of those attributes) and expectancy (the individual's belief that they would be successful in the process). Expanding on this theory Rynes (1991) argued that although high involvement practices may increase attraction, the detailed information they convey is likely to decrease the expectancy for less-qualified applicants. In contrast, job seekers with greater qualifications are likely to have high expectancies and should, therefore, be more likely to apply to firms that have used high involvement recruitment practices. Barber (1998) also found evidence that qualified individuals are more likely to respond to job advertisements when they provide specific information on what the organisation has to offer.

In summary, advertising and truthful marketing has the potential to educate individuals in order that they can fairly assess the organisation against the factors that make an organisation attractive to them. In addition, accurate information regarding entry requirements allows potential applicants to judge their likelihood of success in applying for a job to an organisation and thus increase the quality of applicants, which will impact on recruitment. As military organisations tend to have a wide range of job opportunities requiring varying levels of qualifications it is important that potential recruits are made aware of all the options available for them to consider.

3A.4 ALLOWING POTENTIAL RECRUITS TO ASSESS THEIR PERCEIVED FIT WITH THE ORGANISATION

Perceptions of the job and organisation have a positive, direct effect on applicant attraction. Organisational attributes (i.e., advancement, opportunities and location) all influence individual fit assessments. Schreurs found that job and organisational attributes will have a positive indirect effect on organisational attractiveness through influencing perceived fit (see topic chapter, *Realistic Information or Not? Short-Term Consequences of (Mis)Information*).

Individuals will be more inclined to pursue jobs that match their skills, abilities and values. Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003) noted that those people who have accurate information about all aspects of a job

will be better able to assess the extent to which they will 'fit' in their new positions. This impacts on both recruitment and retention, as individuals are more likely to apply for jobs in organisations that they feel will match their requirements. By the same token, people who apply for jobs on the basis that the position will match their abilities and preferences rather than on the basis of limited information are more likely to report high job satisfaction and lower intentions to leave. This highlights the importance of the need to inform the recruitment pool of the military ethos and specific job opportunities in order to attract not only a large number of potential employees, but also the right ones.

The initial information that a potential recruit receives during recruitment will contribute to the psychological contract between the organisation and employee. (See topic chapter, *The Psychological Contract: A Big Deal!*). As the psychological contract is important for organisational commitment, setting appropriate expectations is of great importance in recruitment. Although Advertising and marketing campaigns must sell the organisation care should also be taken to ensure that they do not over-sell the benefits of working for an organisation. For example to offer a new recruit to the military geographical stability, a standard 35-hour week, civilian qualifications and a large bonus each year may be unrealistic. Recruiters should not try to 'over-sell' positions; they should focus on what is offered, and introduce candidates to other benefits of working for the armed forces. For example; many people join the military to travel, but recruiting offices should not suggest to new recruits that they will be posted to an exotic location within months of joining.

3A.5 THE IMPACT OF MEDIUM USED FOR ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

The choice of media used for advertising is important because media differ in their ability to communicate certain types of information effectively. Media Richness Theory (MRT) was proposed by Daft and Lengel (1984) and provides a framework for understanding the effects of communication media on organisational communication. MRT suggests that the effectiveness of recruitment media will depend on the match between communication requirements and media richness. Richer media possess the capacities or channels needed to communicate information that is high in volume, complex, ambiguous or unfamiliar to receivers. Therefore richer media should be used for the high level advertising. Four specific types of capacities are proposed to differentiate richer media from leaner media: opportunity for two-way communication, ability to convey a multiplicity of cues (e.g., verbal, non-verbal), ability to convey a sense of personal focus (e.g., warmth, personal presence), and language variety.

Some media are linked to a single type of communication channel (e.g., the radio uses only audio channels). Video messages on the other hand may provide audio, visual and text channels, whilst face-to-face recruitment will go further and may additionally support two-way communication between sender and receiver.

The style of advertisement will impact on its effectiveness. There is evidence that vivid persuasive information that uses colourful images, graphics, pictures, personal anecdotes or emotionally stimulating information has stronger effects on attitudes (Keller and Block, 1997). This also relates to classic long-term memory theories: if the information is portrayed in a vivid manner, and is rehearsed on a number of occasions, it is more likely to be recalled at a later date. Thus advertisements should be designed with these theories in mind.

It is also important to consider the target audience when deciding where to advertise the organisation. A recruitment advertisement aired on television in the daytime would reach a very different audience than an advert posted on a commuter train. The impact of advertising will therefore depend upon targeting the correct

audience. However, when the aim of the advertising is to increase the applicant pool, as previously discussed, then it may be beneficial to consider additional placement of advertisements.

3A.6 TRENDS IN RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING

The UK recruitment society identified the following trends within recruitment advertising at their 2005 conference. The previous three years had seen a year on year decline in recruitment advertisement, with a 35% drop in billings. However, public sector recruitment has grown and now accounts for 70% of the recruitment market. More recently there have been signs of a recovery with an increase in recruitment advertisement. For the military this could mean more competition for potential job applicants and therefore even more need to use effective advertising and marketing campaigns. The society concluded that there is evidence that the market is tightening still further and employers will have to become ever more innovative and imaginative.

The society also identified the following issues that will have to be confronted by advertisers:

- There has been and is likely to continue to be rapid growth in the importance of Employer Brand. The employer brand will influence the use of the media mix and more complex decisions will have to be made on the mix of media used. These decisions will increasingly be dominated by brand positioning and development.
- Client and candidate expectations have changed. The traditional waiting for responses by candidates will no longer be tolerated. The use of the internet has changed attitudes in the sector and this will have huge implications for employer behaviour and deployment of resources. This will be a particular concern for the military as the recruitment process is typically very long within the military, and therefore there needs to be an added focus on ensuring that strong interpersonal relations are maintained with the candidate throughout, and that the 'candidate-employer bond' is strengthened through reinforcing marketing campaigns. The attraction of candidates needs to be maintained up to the point they begin work, as they can pull out of the process at any time.
- There has been a growth in on-line recruitment. However, the offline market will not disappear. Creative solutions will be needed for effective use of this medium alongside online.
- Employers and agencies need to become more proactive in order to attract the best candidates. This means making more resources available for recruitment campaigns, including better research. Employers and agencies need to move more swiftly into new strategies.

3A.7 CONCLUSIONS

Advertising and marketing can have a significant impact on recruitment and retention in general employment areas and therefore it can be assumed it will also have an impact on the recruitment and retention of military personnel. Indeed as the military is well known to the general population and often receives negative publicity, it could be argued that military marketing and advertising campaigns have to work even harder than those of other organisations. Research has shown that a number of factors are important to be considered and these are summarised below in Table 3A-1. This is followed by practical recommendations for the military to consider.

Table 3A-1: Summary of Research

RESEARCH FINDING	PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS
Recruitment sources affect the characteristics of applicants attracted.	Use sources such as referrals (e.g., from current employees) that yield applicants less likely to turnover and more likely to be better performers.
Recruitment materials have a more positive impact if they contain specific information.	Provide applicants with information on aspects of the job that are important to them, such as salary, location and diversity.
Organisational image influences applicants' initial reactions to employers.	Ensure all communications regarding an organisation provide a positive message regarding the corporate image and the attractiveness of the organisation as a place to work.
Applicants with a greater number of job opportunities are more attentive to and more influenced by early recruitment activities than those with fewer opportunities (i.e., less marketable individuals).	Ensure initial recruitment activities (e.g., web site, brochure, on-campus recruiting) are attractive to candidates as later activities.
Recruiters' demographics have a relatively small effect on applicants' attraction to the organisation.	Worry less about matching recruiter/applicant demographics and more about the content of recruiting messages and the organisation's overall image in terms of diversity.
Applicants will infer job and organisational information based on the organisational image projected and their early interactions with the organisation if the information is not clearly provided by the organisation.	Provide clear, specific, and complete information in recruitment materials so that applicants do not make erroneous inferences about the nature of the job or the organisation as an employer.
Recruiter warmth has a large and positive effect on applicants' decisions to accept a job.	Individuals who have contact with applicants should be chosen for their interpersonal skills.
Applicant's beliefs in a 'good fit' between their values and the organisation's influence their job-choice decisions.	Provide applicants with accurate information about what the organisation looks like so that they can make accurate fit assessments.

Taken from Ryan and Tippins (2004).

3A.8 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Military Organizations need to carefully consider their image. Having a brand that is consistently communicated will help differentiate between organizations. Where negative publicity exists recruitment advertising and word of mouth endorsements can mitigate the effect. Organizations should use publicity in conjunction with other recruitment activities such as sponsorships and word of mouth endorsements to improve their image with potential recruits.

Military Organisations should use both low and high involvement advertising and marketing strategies in order to increase potential applicants. Low involvement strategies should be used to increase the general awareness of the organisation and to present a positive image of the military to the general population. Low level advertising and publicity could also mitigate negative publicity. High involvement strategies should be used to provide accurate and detailed information regarding the range of jobs available within military organisations and the various levels of qualifications required.

Advertising and marketing material needs to convey clear information about the range of opportunities available within military organizations and the range of entry standards. It should be designed to allow potential applicants with a variety of backgrounds and ability to have realistic expectations of their chances of success with the organizations.

Advertising and Marketing and recruiters should reflect a realistic picture of military life to ensure recruits do not feel that they have been miss-sold the military life. Many recruits feel that their expectations of military life are not met, at least during training, and this will have an impact on retention.

It is important for the military to consider who they are recruiting, and their motivation for applying to the military. Any recruitment campaign should ideally be aligned to either a competency model or a set of core military values (see topic chapter – Values Research). The advertising campaign should then be tailored to attract the ideal candidate.