



## **MARKETING SUPPORT SYSTEM VFW DEPARTMENT OF PACIFIC AREAS**

This month we will cover two recommended marketing methods that demonstrates how the DPA is diverse with two general demographic categories. The first is a social media avenue that can cross in varying degrees both demographics and the second is equally applicable for both.

The social media avenue is the use of hashtags. What is a hashtag? A hashtag is literally the pound sign directly in front of the word or phrase you want to turn into a hashtag (no spaces, punctuation or spaces though). It is a social media tagging system that categorizes the content of your article. A hashtag provides two values. First, it is viewable by anyone with an interest in your hashtag even those outside of your network. Second, it expands your reach to anyone interested in that hashtag phrase keyword (#VFWpost2485). Simply put, hashtags drive reach. That is their true marketing value. Some recommended hashtags are #VFWPostPride, #UnmetNeeds, #Veterans, #MyVeteran and Posts can create their own (#VFWpost(insert Post number)).

Using hashtags will expand your reach to those who will search them on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Google Plus. For those Posts who have a good number of technical savvy members, hashtags can be utilized to generate greater visibility in a wide range of events from the results of a community service project to the Post's canteen weekly special. For those Posts whose members are not as technically savvy hashtags can be used to provide visibility of service projects to the world (see below on a National VFW hashtag initiative). For more information, two good websites that explains hashtags in more detail are <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashtag> and <http://mashable.com/2013/10/08/what-is-hashtag/#htTpmkKWvuqN>.

The National VFW is encouraging the use of the hashtag #VFWPostPride to share individual Post events that would be of interest to all (e.g. Clark Veterans Cemetery update). For more information, please login to the National VFW website and go to "How to Get Involved; See What VFW Post Are Doing!" If you desire, you can also post events directly on VFW National's website as well as using the hashtag.

One of the most powerful marketing tools is word of mouth. This can be accomplished by any member whenever they meet fellow veterans whether it be at a Post sponsored event, at the movie theater or even while walking the family dog. What it requires though is motivated members who are proud and willing to help their fellow veterans. In general terms, a category of highly motivated members are your new members. They joined for a reason and they will most certainly know of other veterans who are eligible to join the VFW. It is recommended that Posts bring new members into their organization from day one to capitalize on their enthusiasm. One way to make new members feel they are an important part of your Post is to, as done on active duty, provide them with a sponsor and Welcome Aboard letter. A further welcoming gesture is to provide them with a Certification of Membership to your Post. If we ignore our new members, old ones too for that matter, or treat them badly then they will comment with their feet and not be a productive member of your Post and the VFW as a whole.

Please go to the marketing link on the DPA website. Posted there is an example of a Welcome Aboard letter and Certification of Membership that you might find useful.

As mentioned in last month's letter, this Marketing Support System will not succeed without individual Post inputs. You are encouraged to discuss the above at your Post meetings and provide inputs on these or marketing strategies where your Post has found success. Inputs provided will be posted on the DPA website.

***PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR INPUT, COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS TO:  
Jon Crist at [crstjon05@yahoo.com.ph](mailto:crstjon05@yahoo.com.ph) OR John Gilbert at [johngphil@gmail.com](mailto:johngphil@gmail.com)***

Quote of the Month: "Word of mouth is the most valuable form of marketing, but you can't buy it. You can only deliver it. And you have to really deliver." G-Eazy