



THE AMERICAN LEGION

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

15 MAY 2021

CORNELL "IVY-LEAGUE" PENN

*JR VICE COMMANDER
DEPARTMENT OF COLORADO*



Disclaimer

- I am a Department Junior Vice Commander for Colorado
- This course is NOT to be taken as Gospel, but will provide opportunity for discussion and as a guide
- Any views expressed DO NOT necessarily represent those of The American Legion or National Headquarters; they are mine alone
- Efforts have been made to make this presentation generic enough to hold value for all participants
- Attendees are encouraged to follow up with their Post/District & Department staff leadership for specific situations and application



Overview

- Course objectives
- Getting started
- Post Adjutant tools
- Post Adjutant's Manual
- Meeting minutes
- myLegion.org



Course Objectives

- How to Identify Volunteer Leaders
- How to Fix Mindsets that Hold Volunteer Leaders Back (and How to Fix Them)
- ID Essentials of Volunteer Leadership
- How to Avoid Volunteer Leadership Killers



Volunteer Leader

*“A volunteer leader **takes charge and ownership** in coordinating projects and programs that build community assets, meet community needs, and **provide volunteers with a positive experience** so that they continue their journey of service while helping to carry out the mission of the non-profit organization.”*

– Jamey Bachman, personal communication, February 9, 2016



THE AMERICAN LEGION

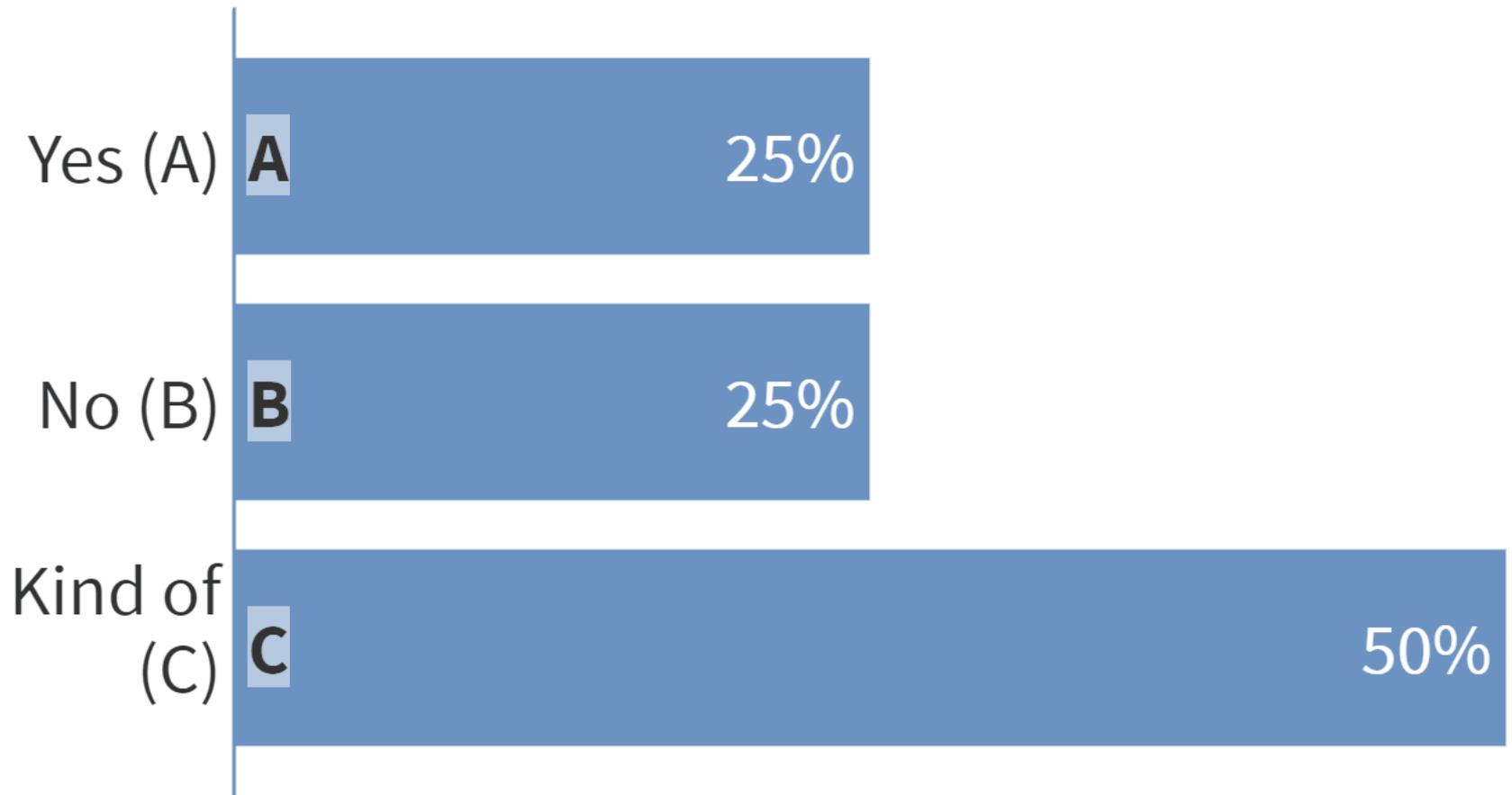
Why are we here?



Respond at PollEv.com/rmyers929

Text **RMYERS929** to **22333** once to join, then **A, B, or C**

Who felt they were ready to be the Post Adjutant? (If not an Adjutant do you feel you are ready now?)





Developing Volunteer Leaders

- **Managers** do things right, while **Leaders** do the right things!
- Volunteer leaders are typically **non-paid** individuals with a formally defined role within the organization
- An important goal of TAL is to motivate & develop volunteer leaders to take us into the future
- **BAD** Example – “I walked into an office with stacks of papers and no guidance or place to turn.”
- **GOOD** Example – “I felt confident and prepared to become the Post _____ Officer.”



The Path To Success

Start with First Steps

- Successful Post volunteer leaders become successful and knowledgeable District volunteer leaders
- Successful District volunteer leaders become key leaders at Department
- Successful Department volunteer leaders become influential National volunteer leaders
- We need great leaders in all parts of our organization
- It all starts at the Post



The Ideal Volunteer Leader

*The only indispensable qualifications
are honesty and willingness.*

The Post Adjutant's Manual, page 3



How to ID Volunteer Leaders

- **Remember Context:** Each of your volunteers has different talents and abilities
 - “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” – (Einstein)
- **Observe Work Ethic:** Watch your volunteers day-to-day
 - Who meets deadlines consistently? Who takes initiative on new projects? Who owns up when they make a mistake? Who lends a helping hand when others need help?
- **Determine Motivation:** Why are you/they volunteering?
 - **Altruistic:** “the belief/practice of disinterested & **selfless** concern for the well-being of others”
 - **Egoistic:** “the practice of talking & thinking about **oneself** excessively because of an undue sense of self-importance’ reasons”
- **Ask Their Peers:** Chances are they will name the volunteer who they think might be a good fit for your leadership position
- **Challenge Them:** Develop a short project that showcases the leadership traits you’re looking for
- **Let them Tell You:** Help them identify their own strengths and motivations



How to Fix Limiting Mindsets

- **Controlling Mindsets:** feels like they cannot delegate tasks to others or feel personally responsible for every decision
 - Encourage your volunteers through team building exercises
- **Pessimistic Mindsets:** colors every aspect of their life
 - Encourage the practice of gratitude and positive thinking
- **Low Self-Confidence Mindsets:** Halts volunteers and can often mask their leadership abilities
 - Offer thorough training
 - Highlight their progress and the skills they've mastered



Essentials of Volunteer Leaders

- **Use Tenure:** Don't discredit rookie enthusiasm
 - People who are deeply connected to your cause will be more likely to take on leadership roles
- **Intro Informal Opportunities:** Invite volunteers to be informal leaders
 - Ask volunteers for their advice on strategic directions/goals
- **Team Building:** presence of training will impact how much your volunteers seek out volunteer roles
- **OJT:** might be the most difficult but most important development tactic
 - Volunteers will retain 90% of training



THE AMERICAN LEGION

Volunteer Leadership Killers



Overburdensome Meetings

- Lacks RESPECT of volunteers precious time
- **BLUF: DO NOT** conduct meetings for the sake of meetings! The ONLY goal for a meeting is to "decide and commit." No other objective is worth meeting for.
- DO NOT conduct meetings to "discuss," to update," to "review," to "inform," to "report," to "present," to "check," to "dialogue," to "evaluate," to "connect," to "think," to "consider," or to "educate"
- In order to "decide & commit" it is necessary to share information, monitor progress, provide updates, review materials, discuss ideas, analyze options, evaluate costs & benefits



THE AMERICAN LEGION

- Those are intermediate goals; the **final** goal is to **PERFORM**
 - To "perform" effectively a team needs to decide intelligently, commit resolutely, and execute impeccably
 - A good meeting focuses on the first two, in order to accomplish the third
- **The Acid Test:** Pick a **RED** marker and search your agenda for terms such as "discuss," "updated," "review," and other non-decisive verbs
 - Cross them out and see what is left over
 - It is very likely 90% of your intended meeting is reprioritized once you



THE AMERICAN LEGION

- Test any remaining items with the following three (3) questions:
 1. What will we do differently, if we succeed in the meeting?
 2. Why do we need to meet to accomplish this?
 3. How will this help us further the goal of the team?



Lack of Praise & Recognition

- Admonish in PRIVATE, but praise in PUBLIC
- Volunteers are offering their sacred personal time
- Be GRATEFUL of ANY offered assistance...constantly



THE AMERICAN LEGION

Questions?

