

JANUARY 1, 2018



BRANCH HOSPITALITY PROGRAM

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

THE ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION – DOMINION COMMAND
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Introduction

During the Spring of 2017 the Membership Committee commissioned an outside marketing research firm to conduct a survey of members who had not renewed their membership over the previous two years. The survey was comprised of a variety of questions generating numerous responses but one of the major reasons for non-renewal was:

25% of non-renewing members found the branch experience unhospitable.

If the Royal Canadian Legion is serious about addressing declining membership then we must collectively ensure our local Branches are welcoming facilities to both new and existing members.

To assist, The Membership Committee has developed the following suggestions focusing on our Legion core values, key principles of hospitality, customer follow up and some helpful tips on building a great space, all with a goal of providing a more welcoming Legion environment for all.

Core Values

The following are the founding principles of The Royal Canadian Legion and represent the foundation for our hospitality program.

Our mission

Our mission is to serve Veterans, including serving military and RCMP members and their families, to promote Remembrance, and to serve our communities and our country.

The Legion serves all Veterans

The Royal Canadian Legion was founded by Veterans and for Veterans. We advocate for the care and benefits for all who served Canada, regardless of when or where they served. The Legion also provides representation and assistance to Veterans, including currently serving Canadian Armed Forces and RCMP, and their families, and access to our services is available to them at no cost, whether or not they are Legion members. The Legion helps thousands of Veterans each year and makes significant positive changes in their lives.



The Legion exists so that Canada never forgets. The Legion understands the importance of honouring past sacrifices and acknowledging the courage of those who served and still serve today. Through Remembrance Day ceremonies, the Poppy campaign, commemorative activities, youth education programs and more, the Legion helps Canadians to honour and remember.

The Legion serves our communities and our country

Legion Branches are the cornerstone of communities across Canada, and provide one of the largest volunteer bases in the country. With more than 1,400 Branches from coast to coast-to-coast, our members provide local services and supports to build a stronger Canada. Whether helping local Veterans, supporting seniors, providing youth sports programs, raising funds, volunteering to help those in need, or simply offering a place to gather for fun and celebration, Legionnaires provide essential services in their communities.

Note: We need to remember and recognize these core values cannot be achieved without active participation from thousands of Legion volunteers who subscribe to these founding principles.

Key Principles of Hospitality - S.E.R.V.I.C.E.

The word SERVICE represents the following 7 key guiding principles in creating a more welcoming and hospitable Legion environment:

S – Smile

E – Enquire

R – Remember

V – Very nice to see you

I – Introduce

C – Connect

E – Entice to join/return

S.E.R.V.I.C.E

SMILE – Each person (member or visitor) who enters your local branch should be greeted with a smile. Ensure the local branch key personnel are aware of the importance of greeting all with a smile. A smile provides a degree of comfort for anyone entering your branch. Always attempt to reach out to the guest before they reach out to you.

ENQUIRE – Attempt to take time to enquire about all present in your branch. Get their name. How have you been? What are your plans for this weekend? Engaging your membership base automatically creates a more welcoming environment by creating a personal connection.

REMEMBER – Not only is this one of our core Legion values but it also important to remember your members and follow up on any previous conversations you have had. Did your plans for the weekend work out? Did you speak with your wife about attending our Friday night dinner? Remember important dates. Reach out on special birthdays or anniversaries to show recognition of these accomplishments. Again, a key component of creating a personal connection.

VERY NICE TO SEE YOU – This statement goes hand in hand with a smile to create a more welcoming environment. When followed up with remembering a previous encounter it further demonstrates a welcoming environment. Treat everyone with the same level of engagement and courtesy.

INTRODUCE - Make an effort to introduce your members to other people in your branch. The more people one has met the more comfortable they will be on returning, as they will feel part of a larger organization.

CONNECT– Aside from the initial conversations it is important that your branch stays connected to your members when they are not at your establishment. This can be accomplished by having a branch website promoting upcoming events and a regular email newsletter, which are highly cost efficient and proactively keep your members updated on upcoming events.

ENTICE TO JOIN – The chances of attracting new members to join are greatly enhanced once all of the above have been accomplished. If you have created a welcoming environment, your chances will be much higher of signing up new members and retaining current members. Do not be afraid to ask members to join, as it is through our members that we are able to achieve our core values as an organization

Feedback.

Soliciting regular feedback is a suggestion for following up on the overall success of your Branch hospitality program. This feedback will provide an accurate and ongoing understanding of your members' needs and expectations.

- 1) A Suggestion Box is a great way of soliciting feedback. Your branch can create a quick 3 – 5 question survey soliciting feedback on issues important to you. Ensure you leave space for the members' suggestions.
- 2) Collecting Insights from team members who provide direct services. Encourage your staff to ask questions of members and relay the insights they gather back to your leadership team.

These two suggestions help build a bond with your members and staff while stressing the importance of staying responsive to your members needs.

Ensure you follow up personally with a member who has made a suggestion. This will further demonstrate that every opinion matters and is reviewed/considered which is a part of improving the member experience.

Helpful tips on building a great space on a limited budget

We never get a second chance to make a first impression. This statement is key when new visitors first enter your branch. If their first impression is good then you have a better chance of having them return. Here are some helpful tips on improving your space on a limited budget:

1. Declutter – take a close look at your facility. Do you need all that stuff you have got laying around? Decluttering will make the space feel cleaner, more professional and calmer to your members.
2. Rearrange the furniture - a fresh arrangement can improve a space. If you rearrange with a focus on creating better spaces for convening, conversations and easy flow of traffic you will improve the member experience.
3. Improve the lighting – changes in a few light fixtures can provide a new tone to key spaces. Using lamps instead of overhead lights is a low cost way to increase the feeling of warmth while creating a more welcoming space.



4. Add plants (real ones) – plants can add warmth and a fresh feeling to a space.
5. Apply a fresh coat of paint – this may be one of the most cost effective ways to brighten up your space.
6. Keep it clean and tidy – similar to decluttering this can go a long way to making your Branch feel hospitable and inviting. Pay special attention to your floors.
7. Update your upholstery – furniture is expensive, but often you can find upholstery much cheaper. A cost effective way to add a fresh new look!
8. Offer free internet access to your members. Yes, internet connectivity can be costly but in today's society, it has become an expectation especially for the younger generation.

Conclusion

Legion non-renewing members have spoken clearly on reasons for not renewing. By being aware of our challenges, we can hopefully create opportunities for better member recruitment and retention moving forward.

Please consider the discussion points presented in this abbreviated hospitality program. By adopting some or all of these suggestions, we are optimistic on presenting a more welcoming and hospitable environment for all who enter our Legion doors.