

Branding of the Army Reserve

by

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United States Army War College
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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The Army Reserve has experienced difficulty in attracting recruits, missing its recruiting targets every year since 2011. Some in the Army Reserve have discussed establishing a distinct brand for the Army Reserve to improve the image of the component in the public's mind and alleviate the difficulty in attracting recruits. However, branding an organization is not merely marketing, and the Army Reserve is neither equipped to undertake such an endeavor, nor does it have the characteristics of a valuable brand. A brand has five characteristics that define its position: distinctive, coherent, appropriate, protectable and appealing. The Army Reserve does not have elements at its core identity that meet all of those criteria. In addition, the Army has embarked on a new branding initiative called the Enterprise Army Brand that includes the Army Reserve. Despite the research and effort that has gone into the Enterprise Army Brand, its success is not guaranteed, which calls into question the wisdom of the Army Reserve establishing a separate identity.

Branding of the Army Reserve

It's no longer about what we say, it's what they say about us now that counts.

—Brian Solis¹

The Army Reserve and the Army face a recruiting crisis that is on the horizon. Demographics, recruiting standards and a number of other factors will make the available pool of recruits too small to sustain the military as it stands today. To combat this problem, military forces will have to think differently to either get a larger slice of that recruiting pie, or figure out how to grow the pie. The Army has decided that the latter is the only reasonable path forward. This paper is not about recruiting, but about perceptions of the Army and Army Reserve specifically. The Army Reserve has been linked with the overall Army recruiting and branding efforts for decades, and has not been able to create its own identity. Now, senior Army Reserve leaders, mindful of the difficulties of meeting their end strength objectives and the fact that the Army Reserve has not met its recruiting goals since 2011,² are contemplating how to jump into the uncertain waters of corporate business practices and marketing to create a distinct identity. Branding and brand management are an art with no guarantees and certain failure if executed improperly, and an independent effort by the Army Reserve will likely fail.

This paper will discuss the future problem the military faces, define what a brand is, what a brand is not, and examine the elements of successful brands from a scholarly viewpoint. It will then look at the issues that organizations often have in creating valuable brands and the history of Army recruiting advertising programs. The new Enterprise Army Brand strategy will be reviewed in detail with respect to the Army

Reserve and the recruiting challenges it faces. Finally, it will discuss strategic questions about how the Army Reserve can maximize its visibility and recognition by prospects in the future, with recommendations for the future.

What is a Brand?

To discuss a branding strategy, one must first understand what a brand actually is and the nature of brands. There are many definitions. According to the American Marketing Association, “A brand is a ‘Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.’”³

Some authors have reduced a brand to merely a word that has additional meaning to the customer.⁴ Another author even suggests that individuals themselves are brands.⁵

These are all correct but miss the definition of the pinnacle of branding. The logos, names and designs are merely components of the brand and cause the viewer to see the brand superficially. In its purest form, a brand is “a bundle of values and attributes that define the value you deliver to people through the entire customer experience.”⁶

Succinctly put, a brand is what an organization says it does and how it does it.

Branding and marketing go hand in hand. All branding strategies are by their nature marketing strategies, although not all marketing strategies are branding strategies. The confusion separating the two concepts is not uncommon. While everything can be a brand, the effectiveness of any branding program will be based on the product, its distinctiveness, its identifying markers, and the singularity of its focus.⁷ When these elements work in concert and the organization gets behind the strategy and works to promote its brand image with everything they do, a brand becomes truly effective.

The word “brand” is derived from the Old Norse word “brandr”, meaning “to burn.”⁸ The obvious meaning was associated with livestock, but in the marketing sense, it means an idea or word that “burns” an image in one’s mind. No one needs to tell the public what kind of car a Lexus is because the word is associated immediately with luxury. Apple products are carefully managed to have a sleek design and are easy to use, right out of the box. Red Bull is an energy drink that has identified itself with extreme sports and a lifestyle of adventure and risk. Brands create an impression in the mind of the beholder.⁹ The thing that is branded can be an individual product, a series of products, or even an organization. There are visual elements to the brand that reinforce consumer visions of what a product is or stands for. The visual elements can be integrated in the product like the distinctive grill design of a BMW automobile, or the GE logo that identifies any of the dozens of businesses in the General Electric corporate umbrella. Americans are exposed to hundreds of visual brand elements every day from billboards to the company logo on the back of their cell phones.

Every brand has a brand position that identifies the characteristics of the brand. There are five attributes to a successful and valuable brand which are emblematic of what most experts studying brands identify. A brand must be distinctive, coherent, appropriate, protectable, and appealing.¹⁰ A weakness in any of these elements dilutes the ability to own that specific brand position. A diluted brand position either invites competitors to claim the mental territory the brand has tried to claim or fails to resonate a clear message or image in the minds of the consumers.

What marketers crave is brand value, which is based on the strength of the brand position and the degree to which it is differentiated from the competition. The more

value a brand has, the more likely the company is to get consumers to pay more for products, support an organization, or identify strongly with the message, lifestyle, or characteristics the brand projects. At the pinnacle are iconic brands that require no introduction to the consumer for an identity to be associated with the product or organization (think Apple for consumer electronics or Starbucks for coffee). What is important to know is that brand value is completely virtual and exists only in the minds of the consumer. Any organization, company, or even city can create a brand, but the value of that brand will be determined outside of a marketing campaign, in the conversations and comments that form public opinion.¹¹ In years past, organizations had more control over the public message concerning their products or services.¹² The ability of the consumer to affect brands and wrest control of a brand's public image has been enhanced by social media and today's increased frequency of interpersonal communication. Brand value has to be gauged by sampling the general public or group of likely consumers and their perceptions of the product or organization. The company itself cannot measure this internally and has to accept that despite their best efforts, sometimes brand strategies will fall flat.

Because of brand value's virtual nature, any solid brand must be carefully managed. Customer interaction with a powerful brand is shaped with every contact with that brand. The brand cannot thrive without constant monitoring, evaluation, and tweaking to meet changing conditions in the marketplace.¹³ Consistent and clear messages have to be developed and evaluated. A company whose products are branded as being environmentally sound cannot exploit lax pollution laws in other countries, or the brand is damaged. Employees are part of the brand value equation as

well, since it is their efforts that create the consistency that a successful brand needs.¹⁴ Employees who believe the company's brand and its value will work hard to protect that value by ensuring their actions and interaction with the product or service will reinforce the brand itself. The most effective brands integrate the corporate culture to define the brand and help manage it. An organizational culture that emphasizes quality in its work will manifest itself in quality products that will ultimately be acknowledged by the consumer through repeated contact with both the company and its products.¹⁵ The potential payoff of a strong brand is significant, and companies are willing to invest billions every year pursuing them.

Corporate Brand Involvement

There are several levels of brand involvement practiced in the marketplace. Which type of involvement a company has with its brands depends on what is most efficient and appropriate for the company and the products being offered. Companies that are able to leverage higher levels of corporate brand involvement gain some advantages. Their products benefit from synergies in communication because of the common tie with the corporate brand and the cohesive narrative for all product lines that is realized with higher levels of involvement.¹⁶

The lowest level of involvement is the house of brands, where a company has a number of branded products that have recognition and brand value, but are not necessarily associated with the corporation itself. Belgian beer conglomerate AB-InBev, which owns Budweiser, Corona, Stella Artois, Beck's and a laundry list of other beers, markets its products independently with no ties to the parent company. The next level of involvement is an endorsed brand, where the organizational name is associated with the branded product, but not lead by it. The Marriott group of hotels is a good example

of this level. Courtyard, Fairfield Inn, Staybridge Suites, and Marriott Hotels cater to different clientele, but all have the Marriott name on their brand logos, so the consumer who trusts the Marriott brand will know that Marriott is behind the product.¹⁷

A higher level of involvement is a sub-brand. Sub-brands are often used by companies to extend the life of their brand or to highlight new innovations of a parent company. They can also enhance awareness of a series of products by tying them to the company umbrella brand. The razor companies Gillette and Schick use this practice, where blades are marketed with the company name and a product name side by side. The Gillette Mach 3 and Schick Hydro 5 products use the corporate brand names and product brand names together to enhance awareness. Finally, a branded house is the highest level of corporate brand involvement, where products, services or subordinate companies themselves are marketed solely under the parent corporate brand name. Richard Branson's Virgin Group is a prime example of this strategy. Products from cola and jeans to airlines and even space travel are all marketed under the Virgin name.¹⁸ They are disparate products only branded by the corporation itself.

The Army is interested in communications synergies realized with higher brand involvement, and being able to leverage the corporate brand of "U.S. Army" is important to its name recognition and recruiting efforts. It is therefore necessary to consider the Army as an umbrella brand with a group of sub-brands. It should also be noted that the Army is branding itself as an organization and not a product. This practice, which has been on the rise since World War II, has implications for the organization and the way it conducts its business.¹⁹

Organizational branding, as opposed to product branding, presents several challenges. First, organizations are often too complex to be coherent enough to develop a valuable brand, and while corporations are easily able to pick and choose what products they intend to sell, non-profit organizations such as universities, hospitals and military organizations are not.²⁰ Second, there is often disagreement within organizations as to what the purpose or core identity of that organization is that makes branding difficult. A coherent brand position cannot be communicated to audiences if there is disagreement on what the company stands for. Third, the disparity of targeted audiences detracts from communications efforts as marketers attempt to convey a consistent message across several demographic groups. In the Army's case, it has to communicate not only with recruiting age youth, but also their parents and other influencers in their lives, which are much larger and diverse groups. For these reasons, organizations often find brand management challenging.²¹

The Problem

So why are the armed services interested in their brand positions and brand value? The simple answer is recruiting. The statistics and the reasons recruits make enlistment decisions complicate the issue. It is a fact that all the services are competing for the same recruits with a propensity to join the military. Of the estimated 21 million residents of America between 17 and 21 years of age (the prime years to join the military), only slightly over 11 million meet the academic quality standards to serve (education level, ASVAB scores, etc.). Of that 11 million people, only 4.4 million can pass other eligibility criteria, to include medical standards and criminal background checks. Finally, of that 4.4 million, only 360,000 have a propensity to serve in the military, meaning they would state they are definitely interested in joining or probably

will join one of the services.²² Of those 360,000, many will not join because they will go to college, have family issues or pursue other career opportunities. The military forces set their fiscal year 2014 recruiting goals at 235,903 recruits for all forces, both active and reserve, meaning that 65 percent of propensed youth must join the military for the Department of Defense to reach its goals.²³ These figures do not include the Coast Guard, which siphons off even more recruits.

The problem is exacerbated by the expectation that the percentage of propensed youth is falling or at least remaining stable²⁴ and the fact that the number of 17-21 year olds in America will decline slightly over the next 15 years, further reducing the size of the pie.²⁵ The goal for the military forces, therefore, is to increase the size of the population with a propensity for military service. In the past several years, military recruiters have had an advantage finding youth who may not have had a propensity to join, but did anyway because of the poor economy. However, the number and rate of unemployed youth has steadily dropped since 2010, eliminating a motivator for some young adults to join.²⁶ The Army must deal with the economic reality and help increase the portion of the population with a propensity for service by influencing a change in the attitudes and perceptions of the general public. A way to achieve this change is through effective branding of the Army to influence the general public's perceptions of the Army, create synergies in communicating with the public and increase the understanding of the Army and what it is so that recruits already know what is important about the Army Reserve before they contact a recruiter.

All that is needed is a couple of percentage points of change in the number of propensed youth to overcome this shortfall. In marketing terms, however, this is a tall

order. Not only do public perceptions about the Army have to change, but the desire by prospects to serve and the endorsement of Army service by influencers has to be altered. This is not as simple as consumer products choices, which can reap a company windfall profits by a two percent shift in purchase decisions. Raising the percentage of propensed youth by two percent would be a phenomenal achievement. While the research data shows what characteristics of various services are appealing and important to prospects, they do not clearly point to a strategy or center of gravity that would influence their opinions about serving.

Army Branding

The Army Marketing and Research Group has decided that a new Army branding program is needed to influence America's mind about the value of serving while trying to steer prospects to the Army at the same time. The key terrain in military brand value is dominated by the Marine Corps and the Air Force. In surveys of recruiting-age youth, the Marine Corps and Air Force hold significant perception advantages in most of the career values they perceived as important, such as "making a good living," "something to be proud of," and "an attractive lifestyle." The Army only dominates one category of the 15 surveyed, rating highest in "serve as a protector of your country," which was the least important to the subjects.²⁷ The images in the minds of the Army's target audience favor the competition.

The Army does have some advantages. The "Army Strong" slogan and the Army star logo are well recognized by the public,²⁸ and the Army has successful advertising, including the most well recognized military ad slogan in history.²⁹ So the badge and slogan of the Army brand are well recognized, but beyond the skin deep components, the Army's brand suffers. The Army is the largest of the four services with the largest

demand for recruits and the widest scope of capabilities, which makes it difficult to define to give its brand a coherent message. While the Army wants the highest quality recruits, the public perception is that of a force with lower standards, suitable for recruits with lesser aptitude.³⁰ This leaves the Army in the unenviable position of needing the most recruits and the least incentive to offer them in a recruiting pitch. As one writer commented, the Army is perceived to be “the bureaucratic meat grinder of the underprivileged.”³¹

These perceptions were built over a long period of time as the Army developed its messages and advertising pitch but paid little attention to owning a brand position itself. From 1971 to 2006, most Army marketing campaigns have had a theme that appealed almost exclusively to the individual’s desires for self-improvement rather than defining what the Army was:

- Today’s Army Wants to Join You (1971)
- Join the People Who’ve Joined the Army (1973) / This is the Army (also 1973)
- Be All You Can Be (1980)
- An Army of One (2001)³²

In 2006, the Army changed course and launched a focused attempt at branding with the “Army Strong” advertising and marketing campaign. The slogan was memorable, but the Army failed to own all five dimensions of this brand position (distinctive, coherent, appropriate, protectable, and appealing), causing poor name association with the core strategic message of physical, emotional and mental strength. Army Strong in effect was a failure in creating a successful and valuable brand.

Research showed that in 2013, the general recruiting-age population associated the Air Force over the Army in mental strength and the Marine Corps over the Army in physical, mental, and emotional strength.³³ In addition, the message of strength was diluted by the Army itself, as programs throughout the force attached one form or another of the “Army Strong” brand message. Many of them, such as suicide and sexual assault prevention, did not reflect the Army’s best face, adding to the confusion of what “strength” the Army was talking about in the first place.³⁴ In short, the Army did not “live” its brand to the public’s satisfaction.

Further diluting the Army’s brand was the ego of every organization within the Army to have recognition of their patch, logo, or slogan. While some Army units have instant brand recognition through their names or patches such as the Army Rangers, 1st Cavalry and 82nd Airborne Divisions, most others are anonymous to the general public and distract from the Army brand effort. While all of these organizations are important as components of the Army, they are more likely to display only their unit brand elements on their websites, publications, social media, and presentations than to tie a clear link to the Army as a whole. The result is a cacophony of brand messages with no association to the Army umbrella brand. This method of brand dilution is so pervasive that The Army Branding and Marketing Program regulation, AR 601-208, specifically dictates a policy for unit branding to stop.³⁵

The Army Reserve brand suffers even more from a lack of a defined position and identity than the Army itself. Not only is the Army Reserve brand affected by the problems with the larger organization, but it also has yet to create an impression in the marketplace. Public knowledge about the Army Reserve is significantly worse than that

of the active Army. The awareness issue is not that the recruiting demographic has a negative opinion of the Army Reserve, but they have no opinion at all.³⁶

The New Initiative

Because of the failure of the Army Strong advertising and marketing program to claim a strong identity for the Army, the Army is implementing a complimentary position that meets Murphy's five criteria of a brand position. It is complimentary because the Army Strong campaign is familiar and resonated positively within the Army itself.³⁷ The new brand position statement aligns with consumer desires of what they believe the Army should be. Consequently, that research matched the Army's internal beliefs of what the Army already is. The position statement reads:

The U.S. Army is the nation's most versatile force meeting the ever-changing challenges of today. It has the scale and scope to adapt to challenges that arise both at home and abroad. The Army is constantly evolving its competencies and capabilities to prevail in complex environments to protect and preserve our nation.³⁸

The Enterprise Army Brand also uses the elements of the Army brand that are working well. It breaks out three components of Army service, active, Reserve, and civilian, as sub-brands to the Army's umbrella brand. Each sub-brand of service will have its own distinguishing and continuous color on its ads that use the familiar Army star logo. Active service marketing uses a black color for its background, Army Reserve uses gold, and civilian service uses white.³⁹

The brand position statement in short, is that the Army is big, versatile, and evolving to meet the challenges it faces anywhere. It is a promise to the American people that the Army will figure out how to adapt by developing new strategies and tactics and will continue to prevail. While other components of the military can claim portions of this statement, only the Army can claim the whole (primarily the "big" portion

of the statement), making the position distinct and protectable. The question of attractiveness with this portion of the position still remains. Size of the force seems to be a weak enticement when evaluating the motivating factors propensed youth are interested in, and nimble and evolving can be used to describe other services.⁴⁰

While the thought and marketing skill behind the new campaign are outstanding, the proposed brand position does not establish the transcendent connection with the public endemic of great brands. What is it to be part of the Army? How does it feel? Most importantly, how does the Army live this statement? How do they translate big, versatile and evolving in everything they do? While some transformations of the Army fit this description (i.e., adapting to enemy attack methods, the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell), most images of the Army outside its advertising do not. This is evident with the Army's current major challenge concerning its budget. A versatile and evolving force would be offering reshaping opportunities, discussing innovative ways it will face future challenges and help the nation meet its budget restrictions. It would offer new alternatives on the active/reserve force balance and communicate clear options America has with regards to its national military strategy. Instead, the Army fights tooth and nail for every dollar it can to maintain its current structure. There is also a perception by many Americans that while the troops performed admirably in Iraq and Afghanistan that the Army as a whole never truly understood the environments of the two countries and was unable to adapt their operations enough to win the war.⁴¹ This does not help change the public perception of the Army as big, lumbering and bureaucratic.

The marketing of the Enterprise Army Brand may be successful in portraying the desired image of the Army at some level, but to have a truly effective organizational brand, the Army must overcome public perceptions and consistently prove the image of a large and bureaucratic institution incorrect. If not, the American public won't believe the Enterprise Army Brand any more than they believed the Army somehow symbolized strength over the other services. It will merely be another routine evolution in Army advertising.

As in any effort to effect a major change in a brand's position, the Enterprise Army Brand campaign will take several years to fully implement. There will be competing ideas from within the Army as to what the essence of the Army is and should be in the minds of the public. The Army has always had difficulty describing itself succinctly. Its mission statement is a perfect example. At 77 words in length, it includes far more information than can be easily remembered.⁴² The Army's Strategic Vision is little better at 73 words.⁴³ Neither of these core statements contains a succinct central theme that could be used as a basis for its brand beyond "landpower." The Army has yet to define itself adequately yet expects the public to understand it on their terms.

Additionally, a successful brand campaign of several years in duration will require the continued acceptance of several generations of senior commanders, who all have the power to derail the program by promoting their own units and their own images that may detract from the brand's focus. Soldiers throughout the Army will also need to accept the Enterprise Army Brand, which is in its nascent stages. Accepting a unified position across the Army about how the Army needs to present itself will require a

culture change and motivation to change it. The elements necessary to implement that degree of change are just not present in the organization yet.⁴⁴

Branding the Army Reserve?

The Army Reserve, regardless of its status as an Army sub-brand, seeks distinction from the active force. However, the difficulties the Army faces in its current branding effort are compounded when the Army Reserve is considered separately. Such an effort is infeasible. First, it would add another voice to the already crowded marketplace claiming the title of "Army." This is bound to be confusing to the public, which already has difficulty separating the Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard. Not only would this be confusing, but it would also undermine the Enterprise Army Brand, which is designed to help the Army Reserve in the first place by leveraging advertising efficiencies provided by the Army umbrella brand. The Army Reserve would no longer be able to reap the benefits of its position as a sub-brand. Its best position is to remain part of the Enterprise Army Brand

Second, there is nothing at the core of the Army Reserve to distinguish itself. While the Army Reserve contains a majority of the Army's legal, civil affairs, quartermaster and medical units, the Army Reserve both lacks a core definition and does not own any attributes distinct from the active force or the Army National Guard.⁴⁵ Differentiating the Army Reserve from the active Army may have the opposite effect from what is intended anyway. While a distinct image would be a benefit to an individual brand, it may repel more potential recruits than it attracts by exclusion. The most daunting problem for creating an Army Reserve brand position has been its appeal. Young males are most likely to associate active Army service with the things they want, such as better training, respect, and appealing career options (females see

active and reserve components identically appealing).⁴⁶ Opinions of the Army Reserve are also affected by former active soldiers who are often influencers for propensed youth and generally have less than favorable opinions.⁴⁷ Separating the Army Reserve could enhance those negative perceptions.

Finally, the Army Reserve does not have the infrastructure, expertise or resources needed to properly launch and manage an independent branding effort. The Army Reserve currently relies on the Army Marketing and Research Group for its marketing advertising and has a combined marketing budget with the active Army, which allows the Army Reserve to gain more in the marketplace through increased media buying power and production efficiencies. While there is Army Reserve specific advertising, its branding effort is tied to the active force's brand for management. Nor does the Army Reserve have the capability to create the infrastructure for its own brand management function similar to the Army National Guard, especially in a climate of dwindling resources and elimination of full-time positions. If the ability to do this were available, positive results would not be guaranteed either. Research data shows that despite managing its own advertising and marketing, the lack of familiarity among youth about the Army National Guard is virtually identical to their unfamiliarity with Army Reserve.⁴⁸ There is no compelling reason to believe that an independent Army Reserve marketing organization would perform any better. Consequently, the Army National Guard has also had difficulty in meeting its recruiting targets over the past several years, although they have been more consistent than the Army Reserve.⁴⁹

Recommendations

If the overall goal is to improve brand awareness of the Army Reserve and thus increase the propensity for service among recruiting age adults, the Army should not

take on this endeavor by itself. If the Army proceeds as the only service concerned about increasing the propensity among young adults, the effort is less likely to succeed. The perceptions that have to be altered among the public will require a sustained and consistent campaign that should encompass all the armed forces. A joint effort is required to solve this problem, because it will not be only the Army that suffers if propensed youth are too few in numbers to meet the nation's demands. The Office of the Secretary of Defense should initiate a program that emphasizes and promotes the importance of service to the nation, the benefits our society reaps by fulfilling our national interests and the competitive skills service members gain that make them more effective in the civilian sector.

The question remains as to what the Army Reserve can do to enhance its image to the general public, influencers and prospects. It would be wise to not pursue an independent brand strategy based on the disadvantages outlined, but instead promote an awareness strategy. There are several recommendations, starting first with tackling the dilemma of understanding of the Army Reserve. Ideally, the Army Reserve needs to be employed regularly with the joint force and used in a substantial manner so that it is more closely identified with the Army as a whole. While the Army Reserve has had many deployments and mobilizations curtailed, recent rhetoric about the impact of budget cuts however, indicate that a reverse trend may occur.⁵⁰

To combat perceptions by the active force, the Army Reserve should double down on the Total Force Policy and recommend the Active Guard and Reserve program be significantly curtailed and the shortfall replaced by active duty personnel as a normal tour of duty. This will help dispel some prejudices of the Army Reserve among the

active force, lead to increased interaction between the components and increase training opportunities with active duty counterparts. This would also draw the public perception of the Army Reserve ever closer to the image of the Army as a whole. The reduction of the AGR program will enhance the Army Reserve's association as an Army sub-brand.

The Army Reserve needs to scrap the operational and functional (O&F) command structure that was implemented in 2008 and revert back to regional commands. The advantage the reserve components have over the active force is that they are integrated throughout America unlike the active forces. However, since the introduction of the O&F command system, the Army Reserve has largely ceded this opportunity to the state forces. Before, the commander of the 94th Regional Readiness Command in Massachusetts could muster all of the thousands of Army Reserve forces throughout New England for community engagement. Now, no major commands are headquartered in New England. All of the troops in the region belong to commands headquartered elsewhere from New Jersey to Utah. Any community engagement there is now either small in scope or done on an ad hoc volunteer basis. The sense of ownership is gone, along with the Army Reserve's ability to show its presence consistently in a coordinated manner.

The Army Reserve should accept the Enterprise Army Brand and examine how it can further "live" its brand image. This effort cannot be dictated from the halls of the Pentagon, Army Marketing and Research Group or Office of the Chief, Army Reserve Army Reserve Communications. The leadership at all levels of the Army Reserve need to take ownership of the Army Reserve's image, understand the Enterprise Army Brand

program, why it is being conducted in the manner it is, and what specific actions they can take to support the program. The Army Reserve, which has often felt disconnected from its branding and advertising, must become more involved and aware of the Enterprise Army Brand program and “be” the brand. Commanders need to be evaluated on how they promote the Army Reserve to enhance the future of the force. They should claim versatility and show it in the training and operations they conduct. Training should be done with civilian agencies whenever possible to enhance the connection with the public, and the media and local influencers should be integrated or invited to training events regularly. In addition, the Army Reserve should enhance its web and social media presence through its network of public affairs officers. Plans for promotion of the Army Reserve should be developed at every command, coordinated by the U.S. Army Reserve Command public affairs office, and target platforms frequented by young age adults. This is a total team effort and requires the organization’s total involvement.

Finally, the Army Reserve must stop practices that diluted Army Strong and give the Enterprise Army Brand the best chance of success. The Army Reserve needs to ensure that the Army star logo with the words “Reserve” below it becomes omnipresent. The Army Reserve logo and color gold need to be incorporated in every briefing, pamphlet, brochure, website and communication the organization makes. Individual commands must abandon their own promotion campaigns and join in force with the Enterprise Army Brand. They must stop using their logos and patches in lieu of the new Army Reserve brand logo. Finally, programs cannot be allowed to “latch on” to the

words and logos of the Enterprise Army Brand and threaten to dilute the overall message of the branding effort.

Conclusion

Branding is a complex process that does not hold guaranteed success. The difficulty in influencing the public's mind and perceptions about a product is not an endeavor for the timid. Positive results are more likely by adhering to the general principles that govern good brand positioning and staying with a single unwavering script. The Army has failed to brand itself well and now must redefine itself in the minds of a public that has already defined it themselves. This is necessary, however, if the Army and the Army Reserve are to have success in the next 10 years in finding enough recruits to fill their ranks. The demographics and national trends that eliminate large sectors of the population from eligibility threaten to cut the available pool of young adults below a critical point.

The Army has designed the Enterprise Army Brand program that follows the best industry practices to address these challenges and influence the public opinion of the active Army, Reserve, and civilian workforce. This is a complex effort to brand a complex product, and its success is far from certain. The Army Reserve has desired distinction from the overall Army, but has been unable to make an imprint on the public's mind over the past several decades of marketing. The Army Reserve has neither the differentiation nor the appeal to create its own brand and should not pursue such a course on its own. It is best for the Army Reserve to work with the tools it has and turn its focus back to engagement with the community rather than embark on a venture it neither understands nor is prepared to undertake. Further consideration should be given to bolstering the understanding and image of the Army Reserve by

focusing on the successes of the reserve components throughout the past 12 years of mobilization and also by publicizing the good and important work the Army Reserve does throughout the world. This needs to be done in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, but will go far in achieving the recognition Army Reserve leaders seek through branding.

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