

GRAND COMMANDERY of OHIO
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Sir Knights and Ladies of Ohio,

It's January – halfway through the Templar Year for our Commanderies. It is the start of inspection season, where our concentration often turns to finding candidates both for inspections and upcoming festivals.

Does that mean this is a talk on membership? Oh no! Not that!?! I have always hated, and still do, talks about membership and how we need to get candidates! To me, it initiates the fight or flight mode in me, usually leading to tuning out and running away.

But I have learned something from the study of taekwondo and jiu-jitsu. You may not know it, but I am a black belt master – of looking up stuff like taekwondo and jiu-jitsu on the internet to find out what these arts teach. That led me to learning that sometimes running away isn't the answer – sometimes you need to instead get in close, face your demons, and tackle the problem. And we all know; membership is a big problem we need to overcome.

It is not an easy problem, nor is there a easy, simple solution. If there was, we wouldn't have a problem. And, if somebody came up with a solution, and patented it, they would be a gazillionaire. But then, who are we? We are Knights Templar – if we can't find a solution, who can? We have something that nobody else has – we are the path to making somebody a Knight Templar!

Every civic organization is having trouble recruiting, even the military! In November I read an article that made the front page of the Dayton Daily News (go figure, as Dayton is home to Wright-Patterson AFB) about problems with recruiting in the military. [The article was sourced from a New York Times story written by Dave Phillips.]

In that story: The Army, Navy and Air Force have tried almost everything in their power to bring in new people. They've relaxed enlistment standards, set up remedial schools for recruits who can't pass entry tests, and offered signing bonuses worth up to \$75,000. They still fell way short of their recruiting goals.

Tell that to the Marines. The Marine Corps ended the recruiting year on Sept. 30 having met 100% of its goal, with hundreds of contracts already signed for the next year. The corps did it while keeping enlistment standards tight and offering next to no perks. When asked earlier this year about whether the Marines would offer extra money to attract recruits, the commandant of the Marine Corps replied: "Your bonus is that you get to call yourself a Marine. That's your bonus."

In a nutshell, that is the Marine Corps' marketing strategy: Dismiss financial incentives as chump change compared with the honor of joining the Corps. Brush off the idea of military service as a steppingstone to civilian career opportunities. Instead, dangle the promise of the chance to be part of something intangible, timeless, and elite.

At the main Marine recruiting office for the state of Arizona on a recent morning, Gunnery Sgt. Daniel Burrell mused about what might have been the hardest part of finding enough recruits this year. Nothing came to mind. They simply tell young people — mostly men — what the Marine Corps offers: "The opportunity to call yourself a Marine, to earn that title." "But I have to tell people, it's not for everyone," he quickly added.

Katherine Kuzminski, who studies military personnel issues at the Center for New American Security, said the Marine Corps' tough message has changed little in 50 years. "The message they sell is, 'You should be so lucky to be one of us,'" she said.

My takeaway is that offering incentives, lowering standards, making it easier to become a member serves up the opposite effect. This is the benchmark recruiting methodology I see from studying the Marines: We are elite — you should have to work at it to become one of us!

Why would I want to join an organization that lowers its standard to make me a member — what would being a member of such an organization be saying about me? No, not interested. I want to be a member of an organization that is difficult to get into — one where I have to prove myself worthy.

This goes back to what I said earlier in this article: Who are we? We're Knights Templar! That is what we should be promoting — the opportunity to be one of us. Not everyone is cut out to be one. And shouldn't. We are and should be selling ourselves as being the 'best of the best'.

You're going to hear this theme from me repeatedly throughout the year. Who are we?

I said: WHO ARE WE?!?

WE ARE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR!

Courteously,

Richard L Ganion, KCT

Right Eminent Grand Commander

Knights Templar of Ohio