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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES  
CSC 31 / CCEM 31

EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

Future Human Resource Management Methods for the Canadian Forces

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper argues that the Canadian Forces (CF) must create a Human Resource Management (HRM) structure that is better reflective of the organization/employee relationship in order to recruit, train, and retain the caliber of personnel required in the future. Establishing this structure requires that a more appropriate HR vital ground be established that acknowledges the importance of achieving an optimum organizational fit. The five key factors impacting organizational fit, namely; the external environment, organizational strategy, the workforce, technology of production, and organizational culture will be examined as they relate to recruiting, training, and retention. This will illuminate new procedures that need to be implemented to improve HR relationships and enhance the quality of personnel. The paper will conclude that it is only through the establishment of a more market-oriented HR vital ground, linked to personnel relationships and organizational fit, that the CF will be able to meet future technological and physical demands.

The current methods of Canadian Forces (CF) recruiting are archaic and not reflective of the competitive employment market. **The complex nature of military occupations dominates the CF's operational capabilities and necessitates that the CF adopt a more robust strategy to recruit, train, and retain its personnel in order to achieve a more effective organizational "fit".** Only a robust Human Resource (HR) strategy, directed at a market segment of technologically and physically adroit candidates will enable the CF to effectively meet its capability requirements. This HR strategy must address five factors which determine a strategic fit. The external environment, organizational strategy, the workforce, technology of production, and organizational culture are critical to the HR process.<sup>1</sup> These factors will be examined as they relate to recruitment, training, and retention in order to provide a framework for future HR methods that will enable the CF to meet its operational needs.

To understand where the CF needs to develop HR strategy, it is important to examine the current strategy. Human Resource (HR) Strategy 2020 identifies ethics and values as its strategic "vital ground" meaning the foundation upon which all HR strategy is constructed.<sup>2</sup> It is this vital ground which determines all follow-on military HR practices. This vital ground is laudable because it establishes the CF as an ethical organization, yet flawed since it does little to address the desires of applicants who indicate opportunity and challenge as the most influential job seeking factors.<sup>3</sup> Just as the

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<sup>1</sup> JN Baron. *Strategic Human Resources, Frameworks for General Managers*. John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1999. p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Department of National Defence, *Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2002), p. 1.

enemy has a vote in war, other organizations competing for quality applicants have a vote in recruiting. Therefore, the CF could theoretically design the optimum HR strategy to support its stated vital ground and still lose the HR battle by not effectively designing a strategy that makes the CF an employer of choice for quality applicants.

Effectively managing military HR requires that the military embrace defence values, ethics, and ethos in order to conduct business with a set of HR principles that reflect Canadian society. The key HR vision of the military is to “Look after our people, invest in them and give them confidence in the future”.<sup>4</sup> From this vision falls the HR mission to “develop programs to recruit, develop, and retain” its personnel.<sup>5</sup> There are three military ethical principles; “serve Canada before self, obey and support lawful authority, and respect the dignity of all persons”.<sup>6</sup> This makes HR management a particular challenge for both supervisor and employee. The supervisor represents the lawful authority and the employee must strive to make their desires known amidst the demands of the service.

There is a contradiction at the heart of military HR. On the one hand, the military wants to focus on the needs of their employees but on the other hand, they are required to obey lawful authority, placing the needs of the service ahead of all others. If the mix is right, an environment can be created where both individual and organization can thrive.

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<sup>3</sup> Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation. *Canadian Forces Prospect Survey: Annual Monitoring Report (April 2003 – March 2004)*. June 2004. p. 9/17.

<sup>4</sup> Department of National Defence, *Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

If the mix is wrong, then cracks and fissures emerge within the organization, creating personnel gaps and operational shortfalls. To help alleviate the inherent awkwardness of the system, Canadian military HR specialists have created a strategy that, while based upon an overall defence vision, takes into account four possible scenarios for the future.<sup>7</sup> Through mapping out these scenarios, in comparison to demographic and labour force studies, the military has been able to develop a comprehensive HR strategy. However, there is still significant room for improvement. Military HR practices must become more personnel oriented and the five strategic fit factors must be better incorporated across the spectrum of recruiting, training, and retention.

Analyzing the environment entails looking closely at our society, the military work environment, and the current job market environment. Military recruiting is not immune to the effects of the environment. Social, political, legal, and economic factors all play a role in determining effective HR practices. The military has been gradually migrating towards the norms of society. It operates under the stern gaze of the media and is answerable to the Canadian public for its conduct and actions. Therefore, HR practices must reflect those of mainstream Canadian society. This society has been changing and Canada has been lucky to have a prolonged period of political stability which has led to military stability. This has allowed the military to spend some time focusing on its people. Changes to Canadian legal rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms brought about radical changes to military HR including new policies to administer same sex relationships and parental leave rights. The military has succumbed to decades of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp. 12 – 14.

economic cutbacks that have seen the size of the military fall from 120,000 personnel in 1970 to approximately 60,000 personnel today.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, the military has experienced its busiest period since World War II. Operational tempo, turnover, and attrition are high. Combine this with a market that is rich in civilian job opportunities and it creates an extremely complex military HR challenge. An effective military HR strategy must adapt itself to reflect the environment in order to be competitive, particularly when developing recruiting practices.

The Canadian Military work environment has always been challenging with offers of excitement, adventure, and training forming the basis of its recruiting campaigns. However, times are rapidly changing and the military must now shift its organizational strategy focus in order to compete and prevail in the current battle for recruitment, training, and retention. The military is at a distinct disadvantage compared to commercial organizations since it must operate within a strict framework of ethical guidelines while representing Canadian culture and values. This does not suggest that civilian organizations are unethical in their hiring practices. However, the CF is more restricted in ensuring that its applicants pass rigorous pre-screening checks with respect to education, work history, criminal records, and physical fitness. These checks, imposed as a requirement to conform to the stated HR vital ground, mean that the CF recruiting process is lengthy when compared to its civilian competition. This has an impact when developing HR strategy to compete in the current job market.

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<sup>8</sup> DND Website. [www.dnd.ca](http://www.dnd.ca). Internet. Accessed 19 Mar 05.

A recent article published by the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group stated that “nearly 8 thousand applicants simply gave up and withdrew in mid-process.”<sup>9</sup> This statistic is clearly unsatisfactory and needs to be addressed since it sends a message of over-bureaucracy and inefficiency to the potential job market. The CF needs to refine its methods to allow it to concentrate only on those applicants who have the highest probability of a quick and efficient screening leading to enrolment. At present, everyone who meets the minimum requirements has the right to apply which taxes the system. The CF needs to better advertise the stringent requirements that an applicant requires in order to be competitive. This will encourage suitable applicants while allowing less qualified applicants to screen themselves out before becoming an administrative burden on the recruiting system. Concentrating recruiting efforts towards only the highest quality applicants will help create a more healthy organization.

The current organization strategy of the CF is stagnant. It is too fixated upon the needs of the organization when compared to the needs of its personnel, does not effectively address non-performing personnel, and does not apply regulations consistently. The military needs to understand that it is involved in an open-ended relationship with its employees who are just as likely to quit as in any other organization. The military is experimenting with flexible terms of service but these terms are only beneficial to new employees or employees nearing retirement. The introduction of a new mandatory retirement age, changing from 55 to 60 years effective July 1, 2004 is a prime example of this.<sup>10</sup> This change was instituted to mirror Canadian society and to enable

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<sup>9</sup> Adam Day. *Going Through the Hoops to be in the Forces*. Legion Magazine. March/April 2005.



the CF to use the skills of its personnel for a longer period of time. Consultation on these policy changes takes place on a regular basis and HR expertise is shared among departments through organizations such as the Human Resource Advisory Board. These efforts are primarily designed to cater to the military's needs. As such, they fall short of any real employee benefit or overall strategic fit. The military needs to provide flexibility of employment, performance pay, and pay for skills achieved.<sup>11</sup> At present, there are few such mechanisms to compete with other employers such as GE who provide stock awards for their top 25% of personnel while "weeding out" their bottom 10%.<sup>12</sup>

Getting rid of poor performers is essential to civilian organizations who can ill-afford employees who do not perform. The Canadian Forces needs to adopt a similar approach. One of the key dissatisfiers in a recent CF survey indicates a feeling that the "CF is too lax in dealing with unproductive military and civilian personnel".<sup>13</sup> Quality performers act as force multipliers, generating up to five times their salaries in profit while poor performers are a drain on organizational resources.<sup>14</sup> Currently, the CF does not have a system that functions efficiently. To function efficiently, the organization must have a system in place that recognizes great performers, grows average performers

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<sup>10</sup> CF Personnel Newsletter 7/04. *A New Compulsory Retirement Age for CF Members is Here!* July 2004.

<sup>11</sup> JN Baron JN. *Strategic Human Resources: Frameworks for General Managers*. John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1999. p. 243.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur A. Thompson Jr. et al. *Crafting and Executing Strategy: The Quest for Competitive Advantage*, 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. McGraw-Hill Irwin, New York, 2004. p. 323.

<sup>13</sup> CF Personnel Newsletter 11/04. *Building and Sustaining a Retention Culture in the CF*. 15 Dec 04.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. John Sullivan. *The Business Impacts of Not Firing a Bad Employee/Low Performer*. Head of Human Resource Management, San Francisco State University. Nov 1998.

into great performers, and facilitates dismissal for poor performance. Not all great performers in the military will make the cutoff for promotion. As promotion is the main method for recognizing military achievement, this creates a discrepancy between strong and weak performers at the same rank level who essentially receive the same pay and benefits. As the technological and physical demands upon the military increase, there must be a system established which recognizes key achievements, particularly at the junior levels, and rewards those achievements accordingly. Only in this way, will the CF be able to remain competitive in the recruitment market of quality applicants.

Canada has never been a particularly big player on the military scale but it is a quality player. Canada's military is the smallest in NATO, yet it remains one of the busiest. Canada promotes safety and security at home and abroad and its HR practices must take this into account. This is particularly important given Canada's new Security Policy. A force must be created that can operate in a high threat war environment or conduct flood relief. Increasingly, the CF must be able to operate jointly with other international military elements and government departments. A good mix of capable and flexible employees, both full and part-time is required to achieve these aims. Realizing an optimum mix of personnel requires HR policies that are both integrated and consistent. The military is effective at temporal consistency, treating its employees the same from day to day, irrespective of change. However, the CF falls short of the mark with respect to employee and among-employee consistency, creating effective compensation, promotion, and HR practices to reduce turnover and treat employees equally.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> JN Baron JN. *Strategic Human Resources: Frameworks for General Managers*. John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1999. pp. 40-42.

The military used to have different pay scales for both Reserve Force and Regular Force staff, despite the fact that they may have been working side by side, performing exactly the same duties. This is one example of among-employee consistency that has been rectified but many more inequalities remain. For example, in the Navy, a non-commissioned sailor may choose a “home port division”, essentially allowing them to serve out their career on the coast of their choice. This choice is denied to commissioned officers who are expected to serve where the Navy dictates. It is an inequitable HR policy that has resulted in some officers leaving the military. More effort is required to ensure that policies are equally applied throughout the CF at all rank levels. This would support the HR sustainment policy by protecting the well-being and retention of all employees and their families while lessening the dissatisfiers that lead to attrition. Changing the organization strategy to be more focused and fair will help to create a more cohesive workforce.

The workforce is continuing to change. The CF must address changing demographics, closed labour market procedures, personnel dissatisfiers, and management of the personnel cycle in order to remain competitive. It is anticipated that by 2021, visible minorities will comprise 30% of the Canadian population (figure 1). The recruitable population of 15-29 year olds is projected to decrease from 20.2% in 2002 to 16.6% in 2026.<sup>16</sup> The labour market is more competitive and demanding and the military labour pool is shrinking. This is further evidence that the CF must refine its recruiting methods in order to attract and retain this shrinking market.

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<sup>16</sup> Department of National Defence, *Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2002), p. 11.

## Demographic Timeline

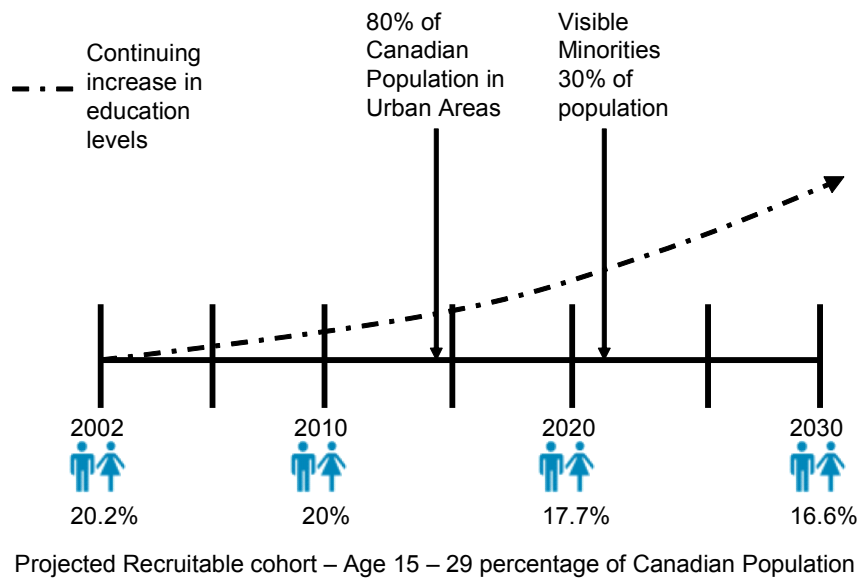


Figure 1 – Canadian Demographic Timeline

The military essentially operates a closed labour market, choosing to promote from within rather than hire directly into senior positions. This can lead to employee dissatisfaction through a perceived lack of fair process or a realization of one's limits.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, attrition occurs during a time when new recruiting pools are diminishing. Overall, CF voluntary attrition is currently only at 3% which some argue is a low and acceptable rate when compared to civilian attrition.<sup>18</sup> This argument does not support the distinct culture or needs of the CF, nor does it address the stated vital ground. Eighteen hundred personnel leaving the military voluntarily on an annual basis is cause for

<sup>17</sup> JN Baron JN. *Strategic Human Resources: Frameworks for General Managers*. John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1999. p. 97

<sup>18</sup> CF Personnel Newsletter 11/04. *Building and Sustaining a Retention Culture in the CF*. 15 Dec 04.

concern. An organization, which is entirely dependent upon its personnel to meet Canada's needs, should not be benchmarking its attritional performance against civilian standards.

To offset dissatisfiers, the military is offering cash incentives to recruits who sign up into occupations that are considered "stressed" due to a lack of qualified employees. For example, a skilled engineer is rewarded with a \$40,000 bonus and a doctor receives \$225,000.<sup>19</sup> Despite these large cash offerings, the CF has failed to generate significant applications. This is not surprising since the practice of signing bonuses is not in touch with the most recent Canadian Forces Prospect Survey. The survey indicates that "career opportunities, challenging work, and pride in the job" are the only factors that have a very strong influence upon a potential recruit. "Pay and Benefits" was listed as only a moderate influence.<sup>20</sup> Another example is the lack of incentives being offered to employees with existing contracts or contracts up for renewal. The military needs to recognize all of its employees, not just its potential ones. Civilian business concentrates on developing relationships with good customers and growing the average ones in order to achieve maximum benefit for the organization. The military needs to develop better methods of building relationships with good personnel. Recruiting incentive to attract more personnel will do little to address the concerns of existing employees. The military HR organization must respond to the dissatisfiers of its people by developing pro-active incentive programs that mirror commercial competition.

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<sup>19</sup> Adam Day. *Going Through the Hoops to be in the Forces*. Legion Magazine. March/April 2005

<sup>20</sup> Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation. *Canadian Forces Prospect Survey: Annual Monitoring Report (April 2003 – March 2004)*. June 2004

Existing CF personnel indicated that they were dissatisfied with method of linking competencies to promotion and that the military was not supportive of their needs with respect to work/family life.<sup>21</sup> The military has many different funds that it uses to enhance the lives of its personnel, often through programs provided through Personnel Support Programs (PSP). However, this funding is usually centrally controlled and not available for individual member discretion based upon their needs. Therefore this method of program disbursement does not effectively recognize or support the individual needs of employees. Some of this funding needs to be turned over to individual employees as “cafeteria benefits”, to be used as the employee sees fit depending on their current needs.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the program would be better linked to individual needs as they change commensurate with lifestyle changes.

Cafeteria benefits make sense because they involve special and de-centralized funding which is linked to an individual’s career anchors. This is extremely important since a career anchor forms the basis of a member’s job motivation. Essentially, it is the employee’s vital ground for which they are willing to sacrifice other aspects of their career in order to maintain the integrity of that anchor. The problem is that the anchor changes and grows as the employee grows both internal and external to the organization. For example, a 19 year old may join for the career opportunities whereas current employees indicate that they achieve satisfaction based upon the level of their “voice in the workplace”. Travel may be a critical anchor early in one’s career only to be trumped

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<sup>21</sup> CF Personnel Newsletter 11/04. *Building and Sustaining a Retention Culture in the CF*. 15 Dec 04.

<sup>22</sup> JN Baron JN. *Strategic Human Resources: Frameworks for General Managers*. John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1999. p. 305

by the needs of the family part way through the personnel cycle. The current HR structure falls well short of addressing these individual career anchors, causing undue stress as employee vital ground is tested. Cafeteria benefits would allow employees some freedom of action to decide how to utilize their benefits to meet the critical needs of their current situation, thus alleviating stress and increasing productivity and consistency.

The military workforce can be expected to work in close proximity with one another and often in isolated locations. It takes time to train staff to a level where they can be effectively employed and turnover rates can be high. For example, it can take 2 – 7 years to train personnel to deploy to an operational theatre such as Afghanistan. These facts make the CF workforce unique and place additional demands upon its members. Increasingly, military operations are coming under intense scrutiny resulting in significant stress and task ambiguity as a myriad of Standard Operating Procedures must be absorbed. Motivating personnel under these conditions is a challenge and HR practices must be put into effect that optimize both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational needs of each individual employee.

To help meet employee needs, the military operates a “Personnel Cycle” (Figure 2).<sup>23</sup> This personnel cycle addresses each stage of an individual’s career in association with the military’s needs. First, the military identifies its HR needs through occupational analysis and personnel forecasting. Next, recruitment and selection is carried out which culminates in an enrolment and first assignment to training. The employee then enters a developmental phase where initial and occupational training is carried out along with

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<sup>23</sup> Department of National Defence, *Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2002), p. 8.

personal development and continuous learning. This is followed by employment and deployment where the trained employee is posted and benefits from performance management, terms of service, and promotion. The final stage is a transition stage where the employee can take advantage of second career assistance, prepare for retirement, or possibly re-enrol. The personnel cycle begins to address the fact that every employee needs a transition stage and that no transition is the same. Some may exit the service on retirement while some may exit and return later on in life.

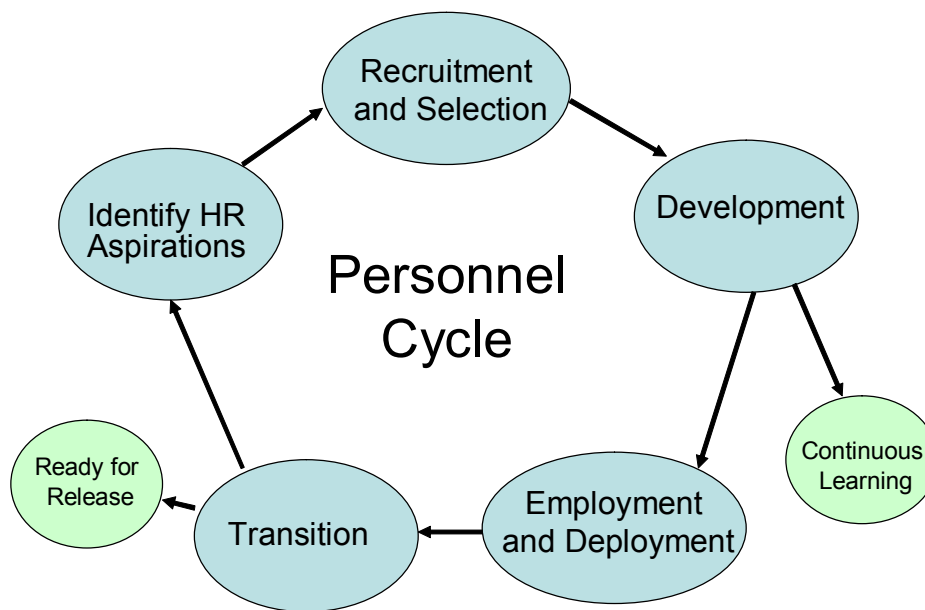


Figure 2 – The Canadian Forces HR Personnel Cycle

The Personnel Cycle does not go far enough though. If an employee reaches a stage where they are transitioning out of the company prior to expectations, then the company has failed in its HR practices. More robust methods need to be instituted in the



military to cater to an individual's needs before they become chained to an anchor that impedes progress. One possible solution is to advertise positions that will be coming available and invite competition from within the organization rather than having one HR manager slot people in where they see fit. Arguably, this will retard the time it takes to arrange for turnover of personnel. However, the benefits of situating a well qualified and motivated person in a job greatly outweighs any added processing time. Another possibility is to allow individuals the right to deny a posting once in their career for personal reasons without having to institute a lengthy compassionate case which entails career restrictions. At present, no such mechanism exists and it can create adverse conflict within the organization. This option has the potential to temporarily impede the upward progress of personnel that is inherent in a rigid military system. However, the advantage of this option cannot be understated since it breeds loyalty. Addressing the shortfalls in the personnel cycle will ensure a smooth transition throughout one's career but most importantly, during the initial stages where an individual's aspirations are linked up with recruiting needs. This stage requires that technology form an integral part of production and be geared to meet both the needs of the individual and the CF.

The technological demands on CF employees will only increase with time and we must improve enrolment standards if we are to meet our future HR needs. Between 1995 and 1999, only an average of 58% of Non-Commissioned Member (NCM) enrollees had a grade 12 level education.<sup>24</sup> This statistic is extremely telling since it shows that we failed as an organization to attract educated applicants through our doors. In the CF June

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<sup>24</sup> Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation. *The Impact of Increasing Canadian Forces Non-commissioned Member Entry Level Requirements*. May 2001

2004 Prospect Survey Report, only 12.3% of total applicants, both officer and NCM, had completed an undergraduate or post graduate degree.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, the average age of a CF applicant has risen from 20 years old in 1981 to 24.5 years old in 2004 which clearly shows that the CF is not an employee of choice for quality applicants who are choosing to go elsewhere.<sup>26</sup> Stopgap measures such as raising the mandatory retirement age to compensate for change in average applicant age do not address the core issue of attracting young and highly capable applicants.

CF initiatives, such as on-line recruiting and paperless recruiting, help exploit technology to reach the target audience but do little to impact processing time. In the case of the CF recruiting web page, these initiatives offer little stimulation to address the 3 key applicant motivators of opportunity, challenge, and pride. In March 2005, the CF Recruiting Webpage highlighted women in the military, the aboriginal entry program, and the recent pay raise.<sup>27</sup> This approach is completely in line with the HR vital ground of promoting values and ethics yet completely out of touch with what applicants are looking for. Conversely, the Australian recruiting website emphasizes “courage, initiative, and teamwork” while highlighting the complexity and cutting edge of the Army of today.<sup>28</sup> This approach is far more appropriate for targeting the required market segment.

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<sup>25</sup> Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation. *Canadian Forces Prospect Survey: Annual Monitoring Report (April 2003 – March 2004)*. June 2004

<sup>26</sup> CF Personnel Newsletter 7/04. *A New Compulsory Retirement Age for CF Members is Here!* Jul 2004

<sup>27</sup> CF Recruiting Website. [http://www.recruiting.forces.gc.ca/engraph/home/index\\_e.aspx?bhcp=1](http://www.recruiting.forces.gc.ca/engraph/home/index_e.aspx?bhcp=1). Internet. Accessed 20 Mar 05.

The Canadian Forces operates 39 recruiting centres located all across Canada, employing over 500 staff.<sup>29</sup> In 2004, over 17,000 applicants were processed resulting in 7500 hirings into both the Regular and Reserve Force.<sup>30</sup> This means that 66% of the applicants that were processed were a wasted effort. The CF spent valuable time and resources to process 9500 applicants for which there were no job opportunities. This sends entirely the wrong message. There is no need to have an applicant go through a lengthy recruiting process if we can establish that they will be unsuitable or not competitive from the outset. Weeding out weak applicants and re-focusing our efforts towards quality applicants will reap better dividends. On-line recruiting is cost effective and can result in speedy data collection. However, telephone pre-screening of applicants would allow the CF much more control over the quality of the sample recruiting audience that can be selected for subsequent processing.<sup>31</sup> At present, anyone who meets the minimum eligibility requirements is entitled to complete an application and the CF goes to great lengths to ensure that no Canadian is disadvantaged due to location. This results in a manpower drain on recruiting resources due to lengthy mobile recruiting operations. Complementing on-line application and testing with telephone pre-screening would enable recruiters to focus their efforts towards the target audience, inviting only the most

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<sup>28</sup> Australian Recruiting Website.  
<http://www.defencejobs.gov.au/default.asp?initMedia=1&media=flash&bounceBack=/default.asp&p=60>.  
Internet. Accessed 20 Mar 05.

<sup>29</sup> Captain Vance White. *We Need the Best to Recruit the Best*. CF Personnel Newsletter 02/04. Feb 04

<sup>30</sup> Vice Admiral Greg Jarvis. Assistant Deputy Minister (Human Resources – Military). *The HR Mil Group: Year End Round-Up*. CF Personnel Newsletter 11/04. 15 Dec 04.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong. *Principles of Marketing: Tenth Edition*. Pearson Education Ltd. 2004. p. 155

competitive applicants for further processing. This will enable recruiters to focus their efforts on applicants who best match the organizational culture of the military, resulting in a superior strategic fit.

The military mirrors society, yet it possesses a separate and distinct organizational culture from society, predominantly due to the commitment and sacrifices that are required of each employee. Aptitude testing, academic standards, and the physical demands of the military need to be at the forefront when determining a cultural fit. Managing this distinct culture is as much an HR issue as any other and mis-management of the military's culture can lead to negative sub-cultures such as the Somalia Incident. The military relies heavily upon its relation-specific assets such as respect, responsibility, and unique culture. While this may serve to initially attract applicants, the realities of long periods away from home and poor compensation are soon realized. The military has produced "Duty With Honour", the governing culture document of the Canadian Forces.<sup>32</sup> The military is also conducting an extensive culture project in order to re-vamp its image as an employer of choice. These initiatives serve to educate the populace on military culture but little is accomplished in terms of illuminating working conditions to help applicants better understand their forthcoming commitment. Cultural fit is critical to any organization and time invested up-front will reduce the chance of making a costly cultural mistake.

Aptitude tests need to be re-vamped to incorporate cultural testing prior to the subjective interview process. The current Canadian Forces Aptitude Test (CFAT) was

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<sup>32</sup> Department of National Defence. *Duty With Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*. 2003

established in 1998 and includes testing in verbal, spatial, and problem solving skills.<sup>33</sup>

The CFAT helps to link potential applicants to the military occupations where they are most suited. These tests only cover the academic potential of candidates and do little to analyse whether the applicant will be able to adapt to the culture or working environment. Therefore, culture testing needs to be incorporated into the recruitment process. This will become increasingly important as the Canadian Forces shifts towards a joint vision. Occupational boundaries will blur and the ability of an individual to perform under varying environments will become an organizational necessity.

The CF wants to promote the CF as an employer of choice yet its enrolment standards are set quite low. At present, NCM enrolment education is set at grade 10. How can the military be challenging when entry requirements are so basic? How can we ensure that we have quality people who can respond in a crisis? A report was conducted to look into the effects of raising the standard to grade 12. The report concluded that raising the standard could be “instrumental” in establishing the CF as a challenging “career of choice for young Canadians.”<sup>34</sup> However, the report also stated that raising the entry level requirement could prove problematic for the Reserves who may find up to 50% of their applicant pool (students) affected by such a policy. The solution is to accommodate the Reserves with special dispensation for students provided that they complete grade 12 within three years of enrolment or prior to full time employment. This

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<sup>33</sup> Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation. *Canadian Forces Aptitude Test (CFAT): Reassessment of Norms*. April 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation. *The Impact of Increasing Canadian Forces Non-commissioned Member Entry Level Requirements*. May 2001.

would allow the Reserves to continue offering opportunities and training to suitable applicants without impacting operations.

The CF culture is also unique in both technology and environment because employees must be able to work with high tech equipment, under demanding physical conditions. This is further compounded by the fact that employees may suddenly find themselves thrust into a situation where the chain of command disappears. As a result, it is important for all military employees to be generalists, able to assume the roles of their supervisors or subordinates as the situation dictates.<sup>35</sup> The advent of more complex technologies will make it more difficult for employees to retain the required skills for every eventuality. Therefore, it will be critical to recruit and train technologically adept and physically robust employees. The military must adapt HR practices that are heavily oriented towards intrinsic motivation, providing employees with the opportunity, challenges, and rewards that attract quality applicants while developing current employees.

The Canadian military has taken concrete steps to map out an HR strategy that will meet its needs for the future. However, by not aligning this strategy more closely with the HR strategies employed by the competition, it is selling itself short. Regardless of the advantages offered by a military career, the military will continue to lose out to companies who can offer better incentives, more flexible work environments, and career anchors that appeal to the target audience. Flexible terms of service, along with honours and awards are beginning to address the competition but do little to financially

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<sup>35</sup> JN Baron JN. *Strategic Human Resources, Frameworks for General Managers*. John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1999. p. 331

compensate employees who will seek to stay no longer than what is personally advantageous to themselves.

The military needs employees who are both flexible and adaptable and is ideally poised to take advantage of the situation. The military can offer a challenging, multi-faceted career that few civilian organizations can match. Recruiting focus must be realigned to exploit the target market, selling the military as a career of challenge, opportunity, and pride. Recruiting practice must be better streamlined to focus upon quality applicants, instituting telephone screening and cultural testing. HR practices must then be realigned to facilitate recognition of good performance, linked to performance pay at all levels. Cafeteria benefits, and cross-training opportunities will appeal to the target market and current employees alike, lessening dissatisfiers and increasing productivity. Lastly, the CF needs to “get tough” on non-performers. Poor performers, who no longer fit the culture and are a drain on resources, need to be expedited out before they negatively impact on the organization. Dedicated action in these areas will ensure that we receive quality applicants, retain and grow them through pro-active and individually focused practices, and limit the damage caused by non-performing personnel. This will create a vital resource of quality personnel who will be far more capable of meeting the future technological and physical demands of the CF.

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