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THE NEW CANSOFCOM RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION MODEL: THE TARGETED APPROACH

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Service Paper

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CANSOFCOM RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

AIM

1. The purpose of this service paper is to discuss the Canadian Special Operation Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) current recruiting and retention issues and explore how it can modernize its recruitment processes to attract and keep the right people.

INTRODUCTION

2. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has had many recruitment and retention challenges over the years. The current Canadian population dynamics, generational differences and governmental policy directives on workforce diversity, have directly impacted the methodologies and processes of recruitment and retention. Traditional methods are not working and have become obsolete. New and modern methods must be sought to meet recruitment and retention objectives going forward. CANSOFCOM's recruitment and retention issues include those that are seen in CAF as well as some additional unique challenges. As described in the CANSOFCOM Strategy document, it must "deliver agile forces capable of precision effects, both direct and indirect...producing outcomes that are timely and of high strategic value for modest cost."¹ Canada's new defence policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged, has directed CAF to modernize and improve the current recruitment methods.² As CAF seeks to modernize its recruitment methods, CANSOFCOM must also seek new and improved processes to attract, recruit and retain members with the talent and skillsets required to create the desired agile, intelligent and responsive force. This service paper will discuss the current recruitment and retention situation in both CAF and CANSOFCOM. It will then explore modern recruitment and retention models that move away from passive and reactive methodologies and towards active and deliberate methodologies. Finally, the paper will recommend a methodology that will transform CANSOFCOM's ability to recruit and retain members with the correct talent and calibre that will support its ability to sustain and deliver an agile force.

DISCUSSION

3. In order to determine how CANSOFCOM can adapt its recruiting and retention practice, we first must take a look at the current and traditional model in practice. CANSOFCOM's recruitment and retention issues are unique for five main reasons:

- a. Its current policy is that it must recruit from within CAF. Therefore, if CAF is having recruitment and retention issues, CANSOFCOM will be directly impacted;
- b. CANSOFCOM is a high readiness organization that must recruit and maintain a highly agile and skilled workforce. In order for CANSOFCOM to obtain this agile force, it must seek members with specific skillsets and attributes that are

¹ CANSOFCOM, *CANSOFCOM's Strategic Plan*, [2016]).

² National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, [2017]).

slightly different than the selection standards required in CAF recruitment and selection;

- c. The third challenge is that all sub-units and command have separate recruiting offices. During the recruiting process each of these entities work separately and there is currently no mechanism for information sharing on applicants;
- d. The fourth challenge is that because it recruits from within, there is another level of complexity. Each member that applies and joins CANSOFCOM is coming from another element and branch; and
- e. The fifth reason is more on the retention side. CANSOFCOM is a high readiness organization and the operational tempo is extremely high. This factor greatly impacts the overall health and the ability to retain its members.

4. Currently, both CAF and CANSOFCOM recruit passively and reactively. In other words, they both wait for applicants and then process these applicants through a selection method that would determine applicant suitability. CANSOFCOM has additional and more robust selection methodologies that require more in-depth testing and interviews to determine applicant suitability. Either way, both CAF and CANSOFCOM are picking from a pool of applicants that are seeking employment. What about the pool of potential suitable candidates that are not seeking? Statistical analysis of the civilian job market has determined that 30% of potential candidates are seeking jobs and 70% of candidates are not seeking or already have jobs. However, that 70% may contain highly qualified talent that could be excellent and suitable candidates.³ Although this is a civilian job market analysis, it is still relevant in the military recruiting environment. For CAF, that 30% is the pool of potential applicants and there is an omission of the 70% of unknown potential applicants. For CANSOFCOM, there is no current statistical analysis that indicates the percentage of CAF members seeking CANSOFCOM jobs; however it can be insinuated that the percentage of applicants would be proportionately small to the number of non-seeking candidates that could have the calibre and talent that CANSOFCOM is pursuing. Given that CANSOFCOM is seeking specific members with specific skillsets, it would be reasonable for CANSOFCOM to move away from a reactive and passive methodology and towards a more deliberate and targeted approach. In the CANSOFCOM Future Operating Environment Handbook it states that, “CANSOFCOM may consider targeted recruitment and selection to meet specific needs, even sourcing from outside the CAF to fulfill its requirement for technical and cultural specialists.” Therefore, developing a deliberate targeted approach to recruitment would not only suit the future policy, it would enhance CANSOFCOM’s ability to find and retain the right talent for the right jobs.

5. CANSOFCOM as an organization is still in the growth phase. According to CANSOFCOM’s Strategy Document, it is expected to achieve Full Operation Capability (FOC) by 2025.⁴ Additionally, “CANSOFCOM is on schedule for modest, incremental personnel

³ Liam Mooney, "The Difference between a Headhunter and Recruitment Consultant," (07 January, 2015). <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/difference-between-headhunter-recruitment-consultant-liam-mooney>.

⁴ CANSOFCOM, *CANSOFCOM's Strategic Plan*, [2016].

growth until 2022.”⁵ If CAF numbers are in an attrition rate, then how would it be possible for CANSOFCOM to sustain a growth rate? The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) recruitment and retention reports both in 2002 and 2006 indicated that the recruiting targets in CAF fell short of the needs of the organization.⁶ Not only were the numbers not met, the attrition rate was faster than the ability for CAF to recruit. In 2016, the OAG conducted another recruitment and retention audit which indicated that “the total of Regular Forces members has decreased.”⁷ The OAG further indicated that “it is unlikely that the Regular Force will be able to reach the desired number of members by the 2018–19 fiscal year as planned.”⁸ The inability for CAF to meet its own targets directly reduces the pool of potential candidates that could be recruited into CANSOFCOM. Annex A is a visual chart of the gap between the actual and required trained and effective members. In 2016 according to the OAG report this gap of actual to required trained and effective members was 4,200.⁹ That is a significant increase in gap from previous years. CANSOFCOM’s current policy requires that applicants must be recruited from CAF and must “have completed their operationally functional point (OFP) in their current occupation.”¹⁰ CAF would have to ensure that its new recruitment methods reverse this downward trend. However, CANSOFCOM should think about revising the strict policy on having to recruit from CAF members. According to CANSOFCOM’s FOE Handbook, “CANSOFCOM must expand its pool of potential recruits and develop a more culturally intelligent (CQ) organization.”¹¹ If the trend in gap were to continue with the decrease in pool of potential recruits, in order to expand there would be a need to look outside the CAF organization to draw on potential candidates. If CANSOFCOM were to loosen the strict policy and expand to recruiting outside of CAF, it would also be conducive to look at the active and deliberate/targeted approach to recruitment regardless.

6. CANSOFCOM’s current recruitment method is also slightly disjointed. Each sub-unit has its own recruitment office. If one were to apply to one sub-unit, the other sub-units may be unaware of that particular applicant. Each sub-unit has slightly different selection methods and the information sharing on applicants between Command and the sub-units is currently lacking. If a member in the application process selects multiple units, they will be going through separate selection processes to each unit. Even the units may be unaware that the individual is being assessed in other units. This lack of information sharing is detrimental and ineffective. As part of CANSOFCOM’s Program Analytics Campaign Plan, over the next three to five years it will develop a robust analytic capability through all its core “5F” functions: Force Management, Force Sustainment, Force Employment, Force Development and Force Generation. Annex B depicts the timeline of the campaign plan. The analytics journey will involve the operationalization of a powerful analytic platform called SAP HANA. During the operationalization process, each 5F function will conduct a deep dive on current practices in order to develop strategies and methodologies towards a modern and effective approach. As

⁵ CANSOFCOM, *CANSOFCOM's Strategic Plan*, [2016]).

⁶ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence," (2016). http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201611_05_e_41834.html.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Government of Canada, "How to Join Canadian Special Operations Forces Command,"

¹¹ CANSOFCOM, *CANSOFCOM FOE Handbook*, [2017]).

depicted in the timeline, the FM function is set to begin in 2019. The JSIS network already has an HRMS instance as well as its own personnel tracking database. Using HANA to further develop this database with in-depth information on job requirements and applicant information would help transform CANSOFCOM's ability to conduct analysis on the information.

Furthermore, it will help create a mechanism for applicant information to be shared across all the sub-units and Command. To fully operationalize this platform for the FM stream, it would be in CANSOFCOM's best interest to determine recognizable dimension of both jobs and applicants that can be used for analytical analysis. Given HANA's machine learning capability, over time it will be able to develop algorithms that can predict candidate success probabilities based on past results of candidates of similar talent and calibre. In addition to HANA, CANSOFCOM could look at incorporating the SAP Recruiting and Onboarding software that fits nicely with the SAP HANA platform. The SAP Recruiting software helps "engage the right talent with a solution that provides metrics and guidance at every step of the recruitment process – from sourcing and candidate experience to applicant tracking."¹² The onboarding portion of the software helps manage new hires to ensure that their integration into the organization is successful and smooth, for further details refer to Annex C.

7. Recruiting from CAF as stated before, creates friction points from the elements and branches the applicants are coming from. The members selected as Special Operators will leave their original elements and branches and join CANSOFCOM as a lifetime career. These personnel may be coming from elements and branches that are already experiencing shortages. The other difficulty is with the members selected as supporters and specialists that will stay with their elements and branches. When a member joins CANSOFCOM, it takes time to learn the unique organization, culture and business practices. The specialists and supporters that succeed in the organization are often highly valued. When they end up having to leave the organization to go back to the elements they came from, they end up taking with them great amounts of experience and knowledge. This in turn often disrupts the evolution and progress within the institution as it takes time for a new specialist and supporter to begin performing at the same level as the person they had replaced. In order to mitigate this issue, CANSOFCOM must look at creating proper succession planning for not only all of its operators, but also its supporters and specialists. There is a requirement to ensure that there is early engagement with the branches and element career managers, on a plan that brings these supporters and specialist back to the organization at each rank level, to help create continuity throughout the organization. William Rothwell states in his book *Executive succession planning*, that "human beings are enormously creative – a key thing that sets them apart from machines, gizmos, and gadgets – this ability to think creatively has economic value."¹³ Proper succession planning for all of its members would be key to the development of the agile and dynamic workforce going forward.

8. Finally, the fact that CANSOFCOM has an organizational high tempo; it can greatly increase the risk of burnout that will in turn impact its ability to retain personnel. Efforts will have to be made to increase the ability to care for its personnel. In CANSOFCOM's FOE

¹² SAP, "SAP Recruiting and Onboarding," <https://www.sap.com/canada/products/human-resources-hcm/recruiting-onboarding.html> (accessed 12 October, 2018).

¹³ William J. Rothwell, *Executive Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*, Fifth Edition ed. American Management Association, 2010).

Handbook it states that in order “to enhance the care of its personnel, CANSOFCOM may consider partnering with the medical and technology sectors to improve personnel holistic health care.”¹⁴ Through the operationalization of the technological tool SAP HANA, it would be important to ensure that the database is tracking key personnel information that assesses member’s deployed time and combine this information with robust and holistic care to ensure optimal health of its members. CANSOFCOM should look at investing in holistic health care capabilities that combine preventative and proactive health care maintenance, along with reactive health care in the event that mental or physical injuries occur.

CONCLUSION

8. CANSOFCOM’s recruitment and retention challenges are extremely distinct. CANSOFCOM is currently dependent on CAF’s ability to recruit and retain personnel from the civilian job market. With the growth and expansion that CANSOFCOM hopes to achieve over the next decade, it must seek new and modern methodologies to improve its ability to attract and retain people with the right talent and caliber. To achieve personnel growth, it would be conducive for CANSOFCOM to adopt a recruitment and retention model that is has a deliberate, dynamic and targeted approach. Having a proactive approach to recruitment would help overcome the challenges that CANSOFCOM is currently experiencing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Refer to Annex D¹⁵ for the recommended CANSOFCOM recruitment model. In order to attract and retain the right people to create the agile and adaptable force that is culturally intelligent it is recommended that:

- a. CANSOFCOM broadens its horizons. Look at revising the current policy on recruiting from within CAF and consider the idea of recruiting from highly talented people within the civilian job market;
- b. Move away from a passive and reactive approach to recruiting and adopt a more deliberate and targeted approach. This will involve the operationalization of the SAP HANA platform that will assist with creating full analytical capabilities on job requirements and potential applicants. It would also involve creating a team that works to seek out the right talent rather than waiting for applicants. This would involve not only looking into the percentage of applicants but also looking at the percentage of non-applicants and targeting them specifically for recruiting;

¹⁴ CANSOFCOM, *CANSOFCOM FOE Handbook*, [2017].

¹⁵ MMIS Management Consultants, "Executive Search and Selection (Headhunting)," <http://www.mmis.net/en/our-services/executive-search-and-selection-headhunting/> (accessed 13 October, 2018).

- c. Operationalizing the SAP HANA platform in order to integrate applicant information and create information sharing across all the sub-units and command;
- d. In combination with the creation of a recruiting team that adopts a targeted approach to recruitment, look at incorporating the SAP Recruiting and Onboarding software to assist with full analytical development of the recruitment and retention process;
- e. Concentrate on proper succession planning with all of CANSOFCOM members that include the supporters and specialists. This will also involve increasing the communication and developing more cohesive relationships with the elements and branches that the members are coming from; and
- f. Develop and invest in building proactive and preventative holistic health care capabilities along with reactive medical care. Operationalize the SAP HANA platform to properly track personnel exertion, stress and chemical exposure and combine this information with a proactive and cutting-edge health care plan tailored to individual needs.

ANNEXES

Annex A: OAG 2016 Report Gap Chart of Required and Actual
Annex B: CANSOFCOM Program Analytics Campaign Plan Timeline
Annex C: SAP Recruiting and Onboarding Software Details
Annex D: Recommended Recruitment and Retention Model

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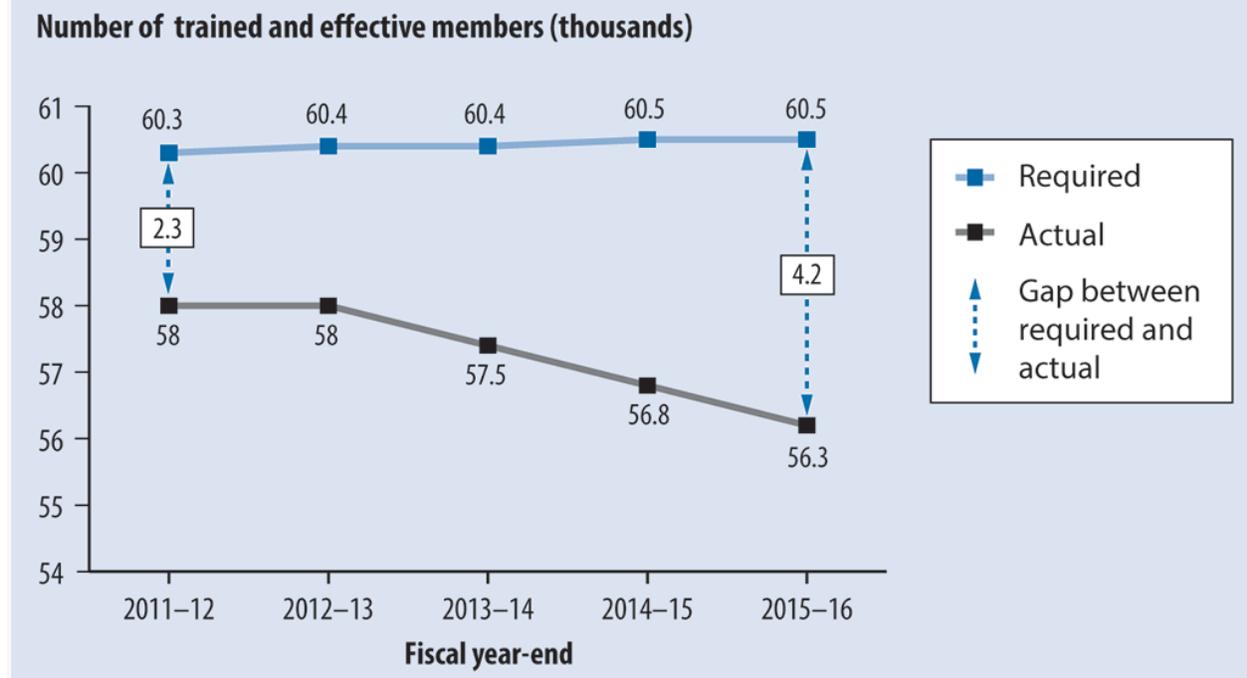
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Annex A

Exhibit 5.1—The gap between the required and actual numbers of trained and effective Regular Force members increased from about 2,300 at the end of the 2011–12 fiscal year to about 4,200 at the end of the 2015–16 fiscal year



Source: Based on data from National Defence (unaudited)—numbers have been rounded

Exhibit 5.1—text version¹⁶

Annex B – Program Analytics Campaign Plan Timeline

¹⁶ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, "Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence," (2016). http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201611_05_e_41834.html.



Phased Approach

HANA – Core business analytics



SOTF C2



MAiSR



SAP SuccessFactors Recruiting

Employ and engage the right talent with a solution that provides metrics and guidance at every step of the recruitment process – from sourcing and candidate experience to applicant tracking. Centrally manage recruiting, adopt comprehensive best practices, and post jobs to over 4,000 sources, including social media networks.

- Cloud deployment
- Global job distribution
- Responsive career site and mobile applications
- Flexible applicant management
- Recruitment analytics

SAP SuccessFactors Recruiting

SAP SuccessFactors Onboarding

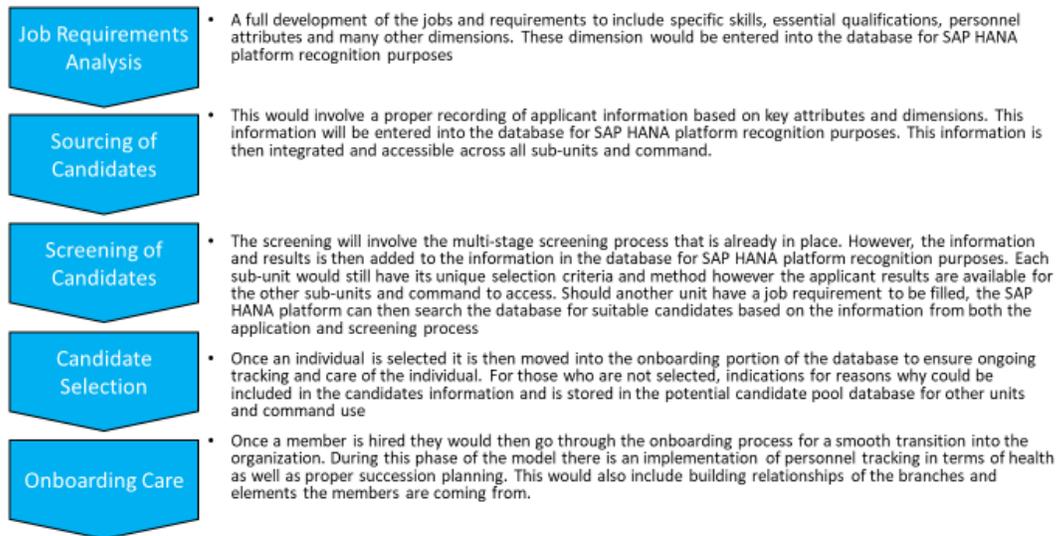
Make employee onboarding a part of your overall talent strategy by empowering new hires and internal hires to ramp up and contribute to corporate goals quickly. Provide engaging, meaningful experiences that are aligned with learning, goal setting, recruiting, and core HR processes to improve talent retention.

- Cloud deployment
- Mobile new hire paperwork
- Pre-day one engagement
- Cross boarding internal transfers
- Offboarding exiting employees¹⁷

Annex D

¹⁷ SAP, "SAP Recruiting and Onboarding," <https://www.sap.com/canada/products/human-resources-hcm/recruiting-onboarding.html> (accessed 12 October, 2018).

New Recruitment and Retention Model



- This model is derived from MMIS Management Consultants Recruiting Model¹⁸
The key to this model will be the full operationalization of the SAP HANA Platform. Once the job requirements and the candidate information are in the system, it can then be shared across all the sub-Units and Command. Furthermore, the information can then be used for analysis and create algorithms that will match suitable candidates with jobs as well as provide machine learning capabilities that would help predict future success rates and probabilities based on the talent and caliber of the individual. This model would work in combination with a deliberate and targeted approach to recruiting. The recruiting team should be looking for and seeking individuals from not only the available applicants but also beyond that percentage. This may involve broadening the scope to looking for applicants outside of CAF.

¹⁸ MMIS Management Consultants, "Executive Search and Selection (Headhunting)," <http://www.mmis.net/en/our-services/executive-search-and-selection-headhunting/> (accessed 13 October, 2018).