

E-RECRUITMENT IN THE MILITARY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. As an efficient e-recruitment system is comprised of organizational, technological and socio-cognitive elements, article focuses on these three elements in military recruitment. Using a series of semi-structured interviews with a specialist in the military recruiting, the research was performed. The interview schedule was developed from the literature and piloted with minor changes to provide focus and clarity on such topics as advantages of e-recruitment system, functions of this system, e-recruitment methods, organization, environment and efficiency. The research reveals that the military focuses on organizational and technological recruitment elements. The tasks allocated for the recruitment system are related to the efficient presentation of information directly to the society groups. Special attention is also devoted to organizational activities including distributing functions. Cognitive activities, its demand and requirements for them are not clearly expressed.

Keywords: military recruitment and selection, e-recruitment, recruits.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Smaliukienė, R.; Trifonovas, S. 2012. E-recruitment in the military: challenges and opportunities for development, *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues* 1(4): 299–307.

JEL Classifications: J1, J5, N3, N4.

1. Introduction

Despite high unemployment rate, many institutions have hard times filling job vacancies with young employers. The military, in particular, has difficulties in convincing young job seekers to pursue a career in the armed forces. It is forecasted that demographic trends in Europe, such as the declining number of young workers and free movement of labour, will continue to aggravate this challenge (DG Employment 2007, Quintini, Martin, Martin 2007, Contini 2009). More and more often the Lithuanian Armed Forces encounter difficulties recruiting necessary number of new servicemen due to the changes in economic and demographic policies that decreased the ranks

of potential recruits. According to the Statistics of Lithuania, during the last 20 years of the Independence the youth of suitable recruitment age (18-19 years of age) decreased by four times. Recruitment is also aggravated by the fact that in 2008 Lithuania suspended the mandatory initial military service thus eliminating the possibility to find necessary conscript among the ones finishing their military service. Free labour migration in the European Union also adds to the aggravated process of recruitment to the Lithuanian Armed Forces as the possibilities to study and work abroad opened up for the gifted youth able to use foreign languages.

The armed forces annually demand 800-900 youth of

18-25 years of age with basic education and healthy physically and mentally. The youth of the particular age dominate the Internet (TNS 2011) and social networks (TNS 2010). Therefore, informational technologies should be used to attract more recruits. To ensure proper army recruiting, the majority of NATO countries use information technologies for recruitment (NATO TR-HFM-107 2007). With the help of technologies, first steps were made to transfer recruiting process to electronic space. Currently NATO countries use websites for recruitment that aim to make contacts and give basic information on the army, requirement and career and make the process of document application simpler.

The research aimed at identifying the key elements of e-recruitment and explored the possibilities of their development. In this regard, the article examined the efforts and assessed the potential of e-recruitment to the strength of recruiting and hiring process in the military. The method used in the research was an interview. Two groups of respondents (recruiting and information technology specialists serving in the Lithuanian Armed Forces) were selected for the research.

2. Theoretical background

The process of present-day employment is more and more often related to the activities in the electronic space; consequently, the researches on the activities are published by the increasing number of authors. The innovative information and communication technologies (ICT) have substantially transformed the conventional process of recruitment and selection in different organizations. The initial changes occurred in announcing job vacancies, applying CV to employer, recruits' selection and communication with them. According to various specialists, e-recruitment system is connected to the Internet and CV databases that can serve as a mediator between an employer and a candidate. Corporate recruiters and governmental institutions recognize this trend and have already made a concentrated attempt to expand their online recruitment efforts (e.g. Pfeffelmann, Wagner, Libkumna 2010; Selden, Orenstein 2011).

As ICT develops, new possibilities are used in recruitment process. Initially they were used on the Internet as job vacancies announcement, now e-recruitment involves electronic databases that contribute to acquisition, development and use of an organization's intellectual (knowledge) capital by us-

ing virtual human resource (Lepak, Snell, 1998; Lee, 2007, Strohmeier 2009, Strohmeier, Kabst 2009). In this process e-recruitment holds dominant position.

E-recruitment is becoming actual means for implementing human resource strategies. It is e-recruitment that encourages organizations reviewing the processes of human resource management and applying information communication technologies. For an effective reform of the process, specialists advise specifically directing e-recruitment not only to recruits but to the particular part of the society influencing organization's activities.

For evaluation of e-recruitment efficiency, it is compared to e-services. The majority of e-specialists claim that e-recruitment and e-services have the same operating environment - virtual space that enables communication 24/7 worldwide (Furtmueller, Wilderom, van Dick 2010, Ettinger, Wilderom, Ruël 2009). Both e-recruitment and e-services require identical organizational, financial and technical resources, therefore, the majority of recruiters equate e-recruitment with e-services.

The development of e-services and e-recruitment is related to integration of activities in the virtual space (Selden, Orenstein 2011). The organization has to go through particular stages in arranging e-recruitment process. The degree of the process integration identifies the complexity of e-recruitment decisions used and serve as a criterion for description of different stages (Malinowski, Keim, Weitzel 2005, Girard, Fallery 2011).

The use of information technologies in the initial stages allows only rare decisions for separate recruiting actions. For instance, filing recruits' data in the electronic database, uploading job vacancies announcements on organization's official website or job search portals, search for recruits' CV in the databases. Further developed e-recruitment system includes the whole recruiting process of organization. It starts with attracting recruits, uploading job vacancy announcements, inviting recruits and finishing with selection. One of the key criteria of evaluating system efficiency is interaction of information (Sylva, Mol, 2009). It is related to the level of communication between the organization and recruits. Information interaction indicates the ability of virtual space to influence recruits and exchange the information in real time. To increase the information interaction of the e-recruitment system, appropriate mechanisms are suggested to be able to give the an-

swers to the candidates' questions straight away, have a possibility to apply for a job position anytime, perform early selections and participate in job interviews online. The higher level of information interaction, the greater possibility is to find a recruit of desirable qualification in the shortest period possible.

In the further development of the e-recruitment system, other organizations, mediators of the process (e.g. employment agencies) are included into the recruitment process. The highest level of the system integrity is reached when e-recruitment is integrated into social networks, i.e. it becomes an integral part of public relations in organization. This level offers a possibility to include both an employee and his community in the e-recruitment process.

Efficient e-recruitment system is comprised of organizational, technological and socio-cognitive elements. The analysis of the organizational element indicates that it organizes and ensures distribution of information to different levels of human resource and organizes recruit search in other databases. The technological element is responsible for technical support, e. g. installation of appropriate software to the e-recruitment system in order to ensure its continuous operation. The socio-cognitive element describes the basis the organized cooperation between organization and recruits should be built on. This element includes organization ethics, confidence in it, uphold of cultural norms and traditions. The best example

of this socio-cognitive element is Maurer and Liu's (2007) model of e-recruitment. In their opinion, e-recruitment is an inseparable part of promotion. A job-seeker is a participant in the marketing process, hence he is enforced to look for a job and use modern information technologies; whereas the aim of the recruitment specialists is to fill virtual space with the greatest amount of information influencing recruits' decision when choosing a workplace.

These theoretical provisions reflect general tendency in the recruitment process. However, considering the peculiarities of the military activities, the research question arises as follows: what integrity level of e-recruitment system is necessary for the military? With the aim to answer the question, we raise supporting questions: what advantages of e-recruitment system are perceived in the military? What functions of e-recruitment system are necessary? What methods of e-selection are applicable? How to organize e-recruitment? What technical requirements are imposed for e-recruitment system? How to ensure the efficiency of e-recruitment system?

3. Method

A series of semi-structured interviews were held with a specialist in the military recruiting. The interview schedule was developed from the literature and piloted with minor changes to improve focus and clarity (Table 1).

Table 1. Interview schedule

Theme	Questions
Advantages of e-recruitment system	What is the role of recruit search while performing recruitment to the National Defence System (NDS)? What is the role of recruit attraction while performing recruitment to the NDS? What is the use of IT in recruit attraction?
Functions of e-recruitment system	What information functions should recruitment have while performing recruitment to the NDS? Should recruitment information system have a possibility to exchange data with foreign countries' information system databases? What are they?
E-recruitment methods	What selection methods may be applied while performing recruit selection to the NDS? How they should be applied? Which of your mentioned methods may be applied while performing selection in the electronic space? What needs to be done to transfer some stages and methods of selection to the electronic space?
E-recruitment organization	Which organizations should be included while performing recruit attraction using information technologies? What functions these organizations should perform?
E-recruitment environment	What website should recruitment service of the NDS have? What requirements for the website do you consider necessary?
E-recruitment efficiency	How IT application can increase efficiency of recruitment to the NDS?

The research included 14 interviews with experts, 10 of which were carried out with recruiters and 4 interviews

were given by the information technology specialists. The experts were selected according to the following criteria: position, education, and work experience. The criterion of expert position includes respondent's competence. Two groups of informants – recruitment and IT specialists – were chosen for the research. The selection criterion for recruiters was their participation in the stages of recruitment planning, preparation, organization, and development and for the IT specialists it was both the website of the Ministry of National Defence and the recruits' databases administration during the research. For the reasoned and reasonable answers, the experts' education was taken into account. The selected respondents were recruiters having higher education in personnel management. They also completed additional courses on planning and organizing recruit attraction. Higher education in IT and additional courses on website administration and database creation were subjects to the requirements for the IT specialists. For thorough

answers to the questions the experts' experience was taken into account. The selected recruiters had the experience of at least 2 years and the IT specialists had the experience of at least 3 years.

4. Findings

Advantages of e-recruitment system

Compared to classic recruitment, many arguments in favour of advantages of e-recruitment may be found in theoretical literature. Organizations choose e-recruitment for different reasons: 71% of organizations used e-recruitment to reduce recruiting costs, 60% to broaden the selection pool and 47% to improve the time to hire (CIPD 2006). Similarly our interview transcripts revealed six advantages of e-recruitment in the military: increase of attracted recruits, vivid attraction, possibility to join the groups of recruits of different specialties, quick and reliable dissemination of information, and possibility to reach online information anytime (Table 2).

Table 2. E-recruitment benefits in the military

Codes included in theme	Sample quotations
Number of recruits	“the innovations increase the number of recruits significantly” “I assume the information technologies will increase the military”
Vivid attraction	“thanks to the technology recruit attraction becomes more easily conceivable” “it makes more possibilities to present video material on the NDS” “computer games may serve for acquaintance with military peculiarities”
Targeting specialists	“we can efficiently concentrate our efforts on specialists of narrow specialization”
Information availability	“information is available 24/7” “in this way the speed of information transfer may be increased and reliability of transfer ensured” “there is a possibility to communicate in the electronic space with servicemen on duty”
Reducing expenses	“the system decreases recruiters' amount of work, saves time and material resources” “having transferred informing function online, every recruit can be effectively and inexpensively informed personally”

Informants consider information technologies to allow informing more recruits; advertising would be more detailed and expressive, thus informing recruits of their future assignment and what they may expect of the service. The use of information technologies enable creating overall recruitment information system that is the channel between the candidates and recruiters of the NDS. Such system enables recruiters to concentrate all the efforts thus concentrating the units of the NDS related to recruitment for more efficient cooperation and mutual connection of recruiters and recruits. Other benefits are as follows: information technologies can group recruits of narrow specialties, quickly and reliably distribute infor-

mation for the recruits having access to the Internet. Lithuania has favourable conditions for the process.

During the process of recruit attraction, possibility opens up to transfer efforts quickly and efficiently from one source to another or concentrate them to several sources of different recruits at the same time. Information technologies provide new means for communication with candidates, e.g. specialized chat rooms for direct communication between recruits and servicemen on duty in exchange for information on service peculiarities, daily routine, etc. Such way of communication can help recruits to make up their mind on the unit and military specialty.

E-recruitment can reduce work load for recruiters (e.g. the system can automatically check the forms filled and inform every candidate individually) and material resources in particular cases.

Functions of e-recruitment system

Besides recruit attraction, e-recruitment can partially integrate a particular part of selection process. With reference to the research, we distinguished 8 functions (Table 3). As for e-recruitment functions, the informants indicated that one of the key functions of the system is recruit attraction. They consider the

system to facilitate the attraction. E-recruitment system has to perform automatic recruit selection in accordance with particular criteria, such as education, health group, etc. This function accelerates selection to the military.

During the interviews integrity of e-recruitment system with other public institutions' information systems was emphasized (exchange of information with other databases). Informants claim this recruitment function to accelerate recruits' documents and data check and some selection tests to be transferred to electronic space.

Table 3. Functions of e-recruitment information system

Subcategory	Sample quotation
Recruit attraction	“it helps organizing recruits' quick search“ “thanks to the system, it is possible to redirect quickly and efficiently recruits' attraction in accordance with their needs“
Contact establishment	“recruits can be informed online about the beginning of selection“ “it is very convenient to establish contact using modern technologies“
Checking and correcting mistakes while filling applications and forms	“interactivity may occur while correcting mistakes in additional forms“ “technologies allow to inform the users automatically on missed or unfilled boxes in application forms“
Collecting and updating information	“candidates' data are constantly collected“ “information is concentrated in one place thus facilitating the work with data”
Recruits' initial selection	“the application of technologies open up a possibility to transfer initial selection to the Internet“ “using major personal data, such as age, education, an appropriate candidate can be quickly found”
Exchange of information with other databases	“the exchange of information among databases accelerates candidates' personal data check“ “there are many other public databases that contain much important information on the candidates“
Informing candidates	“modern technologies allow announcing the results very expeditiously“ “there is no need to puzzle over it as a computer will inform them“
Real-time communication	“the users should have a possibility to ask the recruiters questions and receive answers on real-time communication“ “the website has to ensure direct connection between candidates and recruiters”

In their analysis of transferring selection stages to electronic space, the informants claimed that invoking the Internet potential, the candidates can be efficiently and reliably invited to the selection as nowadays the Internet is available in almost every town and village in Lithuania. Having technically improved appropriate information systems and made law amendments, recruits' provided information check can be transferred to the electronic space.

Some tests of initial selection can be placed in the electronic space. Such tests do not influence recruitment much; however, they would provide more information on the candidates. In the analysis of e-

recruitment development, another crucial function was mentioned. It was informing candidates automatically online about the results of initial selection. E-recruitment system can ensure real-time communication between recruiters and candidates. The experts claim that real-time communication can be performed by texting or having a direct video and audio connection between a recruiter and a candidate.

E-recruitment methods

Now selection process in the military includes the tests on: cognitive capabilities, personal qualities, honesty, work imitation, physical skills and inter-

view. Even 3 of them – cognitive, personal qualities and honesty tests (Table 4) may be transferred to the e-recruitment system. Then, however, their function will be changed as they belong to recruitment, not selection. The tests should allow the candidates to decide on the service individually and should motivate to continue participation in the selection process. Other tests should include usual stages of selection.

According to the experts, nowadays the military demands servicemen very strong mentally, particularly in the hot spots during the missions, therefore, the tests should help identifying and excluding susceptible to stress candidates or the ones having difficulties managing it. It is done with the aim to reduce at most the accidents and deaths during the service.

Table 4. Selection methods in e-recruitment

Subcategory	Sample quotation
Tests on cognitive capabilities	“using information technologies in testing can reveal recruits’ general knowledge” “this kind of tests can demonstrate candidates’ general mathematical capabilities and ability to express their thoughts briefly and clearly in Lithuanian”
Tests on personal qualities	“some psychological tests may be transferred online, however, only a small part; the major part should be performed with a specialist” “only simple psychological tests, such as defining the temperament or communication skills, can be uploaded online”
Tests on honesty	“these tests save everybody’s time”

Organizing e-recruitment

The process of e-recruitment organization should include the following 4 functional units: battalions (designs specialized chat rooms and blogs), Communication and Information System Service (improves the recruitment website and uploads video material and specialized games; organizes dissemination of informative links), Personnel Department of the Ministry of National Defence (uploads the information on the Intranet on vacancies for the military service)

and (Table 5).

The informants pointed out that besides the centralized units, the process of e-recruitment organization should also include military units (battalions). In the experts’ opinion, particular divisions of battalions could design chat rooms (blogs) for discussing daily routine in a battalion. They also suggest readdressing all the candidates’ questions regarding battalions and their activities to the battalions for more comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date information.

Table 5. Distribution of e-recruitment functions

Subcategory	Sample quotations
Battalions (designs specialized chat rooms and blogs)	“it is high time the battalions were included in the recruitment process for only they can give precise answers to the questions related to battalion peculiarities” “it is an excellent chance for the battalions to make their contribution to the recruitment of future servicemen using chat rooms”
Division of Information and Communication System Service (improves e-recruitment website)	“currently only Information and Communication System Service specialists can improve the Intranet website” “especially teenagers enjoy military games, maybe it is high time this kind of games were created and uploaded to our website” “under their authorization the website link is allowed to be placed on popular websites”
Personnel Department of the Ministry of National Defence (uploads information on the Intranet on admission to the military service)	“we talk much about the Internet; however, we should not forget the Intranet either, it can also help solving recruitment-related problems” “some organizations (e. g. Personnel Department) with a help from information technologies can publish information on the vacancies on the Intranet”

The informants give the ICT the leading role for its responsibility to make the website of the military more popular on the Internet with the help of the links to the recruitment website. These links would open up the possibilities to attract more candidates and would allow using the advantages of the recruitment website. Fol-

lowing the experience of other states, the informants assume the recruits' attraction should start at school. They claim that the majority of teenagers enjoy military computer games; therefore, specialized online games can reveal them comprehensively servicemen's daily routine and the peculiarities of peace support missions carried out at the moment. It could influence teenagers' decision to choose service in the military after finishing the school. More intense activity of the Personnel Department in the e-recruitment system would enable using both internal and external recruitment resources thus allowing more candidates to fill the vacancies and choose the best candidate at the same time.

E-recruitment environment

The interviews revealed that the key requirement

set out for the e-recruitment environment (Intranet website) is its topicality and reliability (Table 6). Topicality is related to precise, updated and vivid information. According to the respondents, the website and intended functions should always operate (be available) as it increases candidates' confidence in the institution and its website. Another requirement set out by the informants was simple navigation. The website should make favourable impression and attract the candidates so that they revisit it not once and recommend it to others. These provisions are similar to the results of other researches. For example, Cappelli (2001) claims that "because prospective employees commonly encounter companies' electronic representations early in the job search process, organizational home pages should be designed with potential recruits in mind".

Table 6. Requirements for the e-recruitment environment

Topicality	"the information should be sorted and catalogued for quick search for necessary information" "all the specialists should aim for smooth operation of all the website functions, as this is the only way to satisfy users' expectations"
Reliability	"reliability is a business card of every website" "it has to be available all the time"
Easy performance	"even children should be able to use it" "the tools (e.g. print, to the top, etc.) should be at hand"
Security	"currently security of electronic information is a top priority" "law on information security obliges us to preserve all the data"
Interactivity	"interactivity is the basis for up-to-date website" "the users should have a possibility for real-time communication"
Individuality	"the application of website to the user's needs indicates its popularity" "it should be easily recognizable and look great even using old computer"

Efficiency of e-recruitment

In the last part of the interviews the informants were asked on the factors enhancing the efficiency

of the e-recruitment system. They offered to centralize recruits' attraction and decentralize their search (Table 7).

Table 7. Factors influencing e-recruitment efficiency

Subcategory	Sample quotations
Centralized recruits' attraction	"centralized attraction enables information technologies to be more efficiently adapted in the recruitment process" "effort concentration facilitates the process of attraction using modern technologies" "the aim should be taken at centralizing the attraction process as it will facilitate the use of computer technologies more flexibly"
Decentralized search for recruits	"the number of recruits should be considered according to the regions" "decentralization in the search for recruits could give flexibility while using information technologies" "due to the centralized search and with the help of the Internet, it is possible to concentrate the efforts in one place at the necessary moment" "the recruitment divisions should be able to use information technologies independently and flexibly in the search for possible recruits"

Summarizing the informants' opinions on the means boosting efficiency of information technologies, the conclusion can be drawn that centralized recruits' attraction can ease the use of information technologies in the process of recruits' attraction. In their opinion, centralized attraction enables recruiters to prepare the programme that makes the attraction process simpler and more easily manageable. These factors assure easier and faster inclusion of information technologies to the attraction process.

Informants also claimed that the search for possible recruiters should be performed in a decentralized way as it allows the recruiting units to perform recruit search in accordance with the demographics of the region and to use the information technologies more flexibly concentrating all the efforts to the right place at the right time.

5. Conclusions, limitations, and future research

E-recruitment includes organizational, technological and socio-cognitive elements. Our research reveals that the military focuses on organizational and technological recruitment elements. The tasks allocated for the recruitment system are related to the efficient presentation of information directly to the society groups. Special attention is also devoted to organizational activities including distributing functions. The majority of these functions are related to the dissemination of information, familiarization and explanation answering the candidates' questions. Cognitive activities, its demand and requirements for them were not clearly identified in our research; their topicality can be supposed from the informants' suggestions. Basically there were no considerations on the way the military should change while applying active e-recruitment methods, such as chat rooms, interactive games, etc for a long period of time. Only a few episodes from the interviews hint that e-recruitment should include not only recruiters but also battalions, the future service places of the recruits.

In the theoretical literature of the past years the integrity of e-recruitment and public relations of an organization were actively analyzed. Only some episodes of the research allow us claiming that these processes in the military are perceived as related. The informants devoted close attention to technical analysis of e-recruitment system. Technical elements were of equal importance to recruiters and information technology specialists. Accordingly, the conclusion

may be drawn that technical part of e-recruitment remains problematic, therefore, there is no need to analyze cognitive elements of the system.

The research had some limitations. As characteristic of qualitative researches, it is difficult to generalize reliably the research results. The questions for the informants included just a small part of the whole problems of e-recruitments. The focus of attention was the clarification of e-recruitment benefits; therefore, the aim was to reveal the key functions of e-recruitment and the institutions participating in the process. Within the limits of recruiters and information technology specialists' survey, we did not ascertain how public relation specialists evaluate the e-recruitment system, its development and integration. Conducting further researches, attention should be paid to the fact that it consists of two previously separately performed activities: human resource management and public relations. According to the theory, e-recruitment changes the principles of the recruits' search. As both e-recruitment and public relations use the same means of information dissemination, share the same website, aim to include not only specialists but the whole organization to the process as well, the need arises to combine human resource management and public relation strategies.

The research reveals how e-recruitment can be used in the military, however, it does not evaluate it. The system evaluations allow defining the level of e-recruitment, integrity of its decisions to organizations' strategic decisions. Our research cannot give such evaluation. Further developing the research on e-recruitment, more attention should be paid to the change of human resource management in the military. The targeted possible recruits are receptive to innovations, fearless of web space and able to manage it. The new recruits attracted by e-recruitment expect efficient use of information technologies in human resource management as well as joint activities to be organized according to the principle of social networks. Thus, e-recruitment determines not only persons to be admitted to the service but also human resource management in the organization.

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