

Reservist motivations to serve

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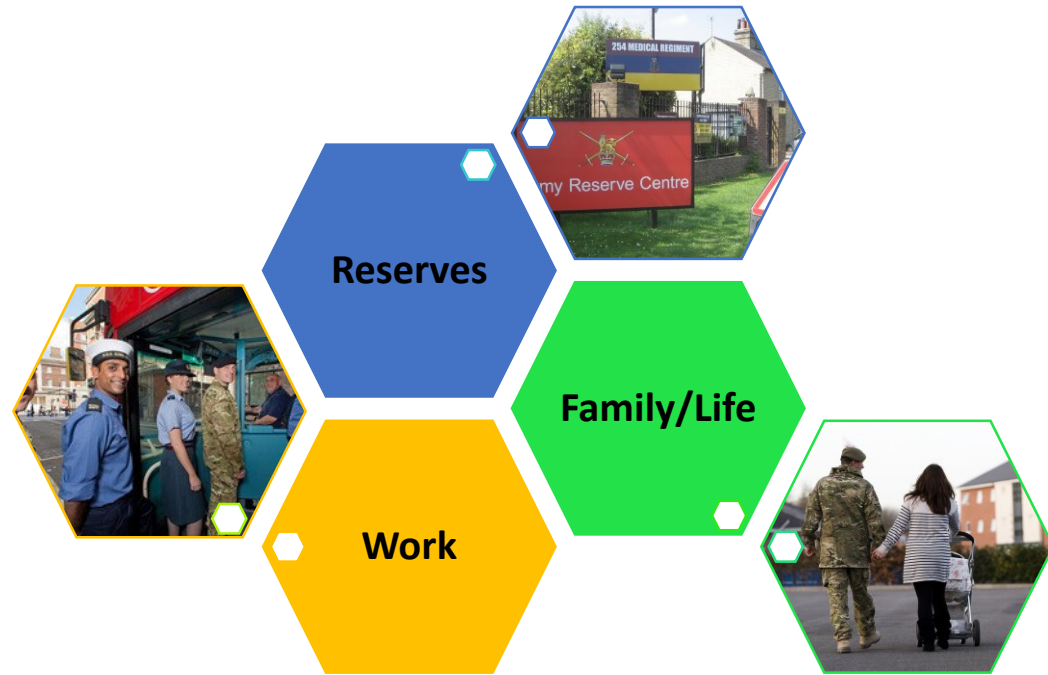
Professor Vince Connelly

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A highly committed force

- Despite wide range of motivations to serve, reservists revealed extraordinary commitment in terms of time and effort not only to serve in the Reserves, but also to negotiate and carve out “spare” time to balance other obligations.
- Motivations change over time as obligations and negotiations change over time.



“To soldier”. The thrill of adventure & deployment

- Many Reservists want to be, and feel, useful to the military.
- Epitome: deployment experience.
 - Measure up their skills and operational readiness.
 - Regulars: benchmark of professionalism.
 - Lack of deployment opportunity (Potential negative retention factor).
 - Deployment must be carefully negotiated with employers and families.
- Short of deployment, Reserves have to provide entertainment:
 - “Beers, bangs and breathlessness” – Regimental CO.
 - MATTs

Personal development, Comradeship, Pay

- Challenges, adventure, learning and (self-) development opportunities unavailable in civilian life.
 - Reservist, Sharad: “In my daily line of work I would never be in a situation where I have to think that quick[ly] on my feet and have to be so physical.... This is why I’m enjoying the Reserves, this is the kind of thrill that I don’t get in my day to day job.”
 - Rank/career progression viewed as more transparent than in civilian jobs.
- Comradeship
 - Meet like-minded people (Recruitment).
 - Although some developed unforeseen close-knit relationships (Retention).
- Pay
 - Pay, bounties and perks are appreciated, but not major motivating factor.
 - Unless student, unemployed, part-time worker or low income earner.
 - Pay/Bounties: currency used to buy/negotiate family support (holidays, gifts, etc.).

Disorganised administration/Poor Management

- Reservists' most precious resource: Time, or rather, "Spare Time".
- Reservists relinquish their spare time knowing it might negatively impact other areas of their lives.
- Sense that Regulars have not quite understood their limited spare time.
 - Unit and sub-unit level training often regarded as not very organised.
 - Admin.
 - "Hurry up and wait" approach:
 - It's very easy that the enthusiasm of someone joining can very quickly ebb off when you've had a hard week at work and you're trying to get out the door for 7 o'clock to go and sit in an Army centre waiting for transport. It can be utterly ridiculous (Adam, Reservist).
 - Training not finishing on time (esp. weekend training).
 - Training & education opportunities missed due to Regular-centric schedule.

Integration or Co-Optation of the Reserves?

- There was evidence of some notable progress in Regular/Reserve integration, but many Reservists still perceived a “culture gap” and thought that many Regulars judged them negatively for simply being Reservists.
- Feeling valued is a key motivation to serve and being valued by Regulars is especially prized.
- Regular-centric policies and practices: negative retention factors.
- Reservists want to be recognised as different and not as a watered down version of a Regular.

Recommendations

- The Reservist experience must continually offer “something different” unavailable in civilian life and that develops a close sense of comradeship.
- Reservist training should maximise time as a key principle and be designed (and resourced) to deliver progressive and differentiated training for Reservists.
- Single Service policies and procedures should be designed with both Regular and Reserve in mind from the start.
- Recognise Reserves have different needs, geographical limitations and differentiate where necessary to succeed in the integration process.