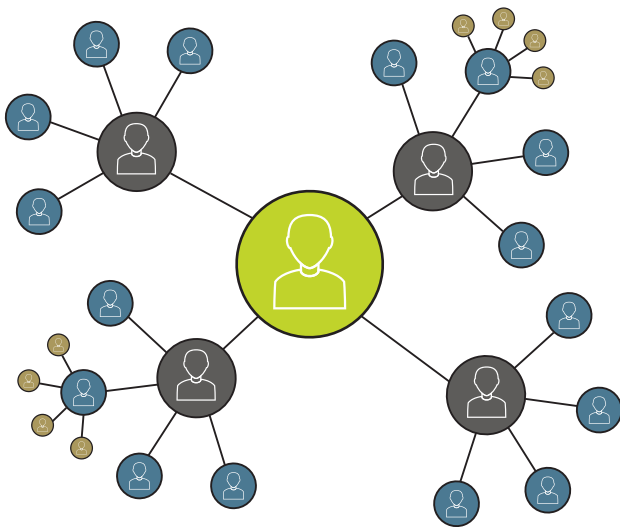


BUILDING A NETWORK OF NETWORKS FOR DAV

Generally speaking, individuals are most sympathetic to ideas disseminated by the small group of people who are closest to them (immediate family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, etc). Also, a message can be spread easily when group members of one group are connected to members of other groups. Establishing a network of networks can be a highly effective way of assuring your message is disseminated to large numbers of individuals, both within your inner circle of family, friends and acquaintances and outside your sphere of influence.

TELEPHONE TREES One of the most effective methods to ensure that important messages are widely disseminated is the telephone tree. It is best to assign no more than three to four calls to each individual in the tree. In this way, each individual will spend no more than 15 to 20 minutes on their calls, which should not be a burden.



For example, the department Benefit Protection Team Leader (DBPTL) might assign to himself or herself the department commander and two Chapter Benefit Protection Team Leaders (CBPTL). The commander could be assigned to call the adjutant and two line officers, each of whom could be assigned to

call other CBPTLs or department officers. The CBPTL could be assigned two other chapter team leaders and the chapter commander, who could be given responsibility for calling the chapter adjutant and chapter line officers. As you can see, a telephone tree rapidly expands, gathering more and more people as it branches out; however, it is important to keep track of each individual's responsibilities in case someone is not available or for replacement purposes.

EMAIL Establish a contact list with all the email addresses of your Benefit Protection Team Members, including your commander, adjutant and line officers. When you receive an alert from DAV, you can quickly forward the message to your benefit protection team contacts and personal contacts, asking them to get the message out to their contacts.

In order to facilitate communication through email to multiple recipients, a good idea is to establish email groups. The task of creating a group with one address is easily done in Outlook, Gmail, and Yahoo Mail. It's prudent to address these email lists "blind" to protect people's privacy and prevent the participant addresses in your network from being used for purposes outside the point for which you create your list. By placing your email contacts in the "BCC," or blind carbon copy, address field, you could avoid complications that come with everyone on the distribution receiving "reply all" messages that could derail the purpose of your communications. If you have difficulty establishing a group address list as described, ask someone who is more savvy with technology. You can also contact the legislative or communications staff at DAV National Service and Legislative Headquarters for assistance.

SOCIAL MEDIA If you are on Facebook or LinkedIn, post or share DAV alerts, and also share DAV's Facebook posts on these issues. If you haven't already done so, "like" the DAV Facebook page to be sure you receive all of DAV's Facebook posts.

Facebook is also a means to send out private messages to individuals or groups.

If you tweet, retweet DAV's messages to your Twitter followers.

If you are a blogger, copy DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) alerts to your site and post them.



If you are not on social media, you may easily join. (If you are not on social media, it is free and easy to join.) Alternatively, recruit someone who is and send them DAV's information to post or tweet.

Social media is an excellent way to attract younger veterans and get them involved in DAV, and to spread DAV's message far and wide. These social networking techniques not only broadly spread the word on issues important to DAV, our members and supporters, but also create greater influence on elected officials to make the right choices in policies affecting ill and injured veterans. Truly, there is strength in numbers, so use the power of social networking to advance our cause and protect veterans' rights.

COALITIONS It is important to find new ways to develop and strengthen relationships with other organizations, especially other service organizations in your area. By identifying, contacting and forging partnerships with other patriotic charities who share DAV's concerns on key issues, your campaign will broaden its perspective, enhance its credibility, expand its resources and out-organize any opposition or obstacles.

Tip O'Neill, the Massachusetts politician and long-time Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, once observed, "Power is the appearance of power." Coalitions represent large numbers of people; as such, they can provide that crucial appearance of power. Coalitions can also bring much-needed credibility and efficiency to organizing efforts.

The more diverse a coalition is, the more legitimate. Many coalitions exist mostly on paper and are made up of organizations that work on very similar issues. Once you've identified the groups you want to recruit, meet with them to educate them about all facets of the issue.

If your DAV department or chapter is part of a veteran coalition, make the members of the coalition aware of the grassroots campaign and ask for their assistance. Some of their members might be affected by the issue and would appreciate finding out more and learning what they could do to help.

A coalition is a group of individuals and/or organizations with a common interest who agree to work together toward a common goal. That goal could be as narrow as obtaining adequate funding for VA health

care, or as broad as trying to reform the VA health care system to ensure veterans receive timely access to quality health care from the VA. Coalitions may be loose associations in which members work for a short time to achieve a specific goal and then disband, or they may become a more formal structure that continues to fight for better benefits and health care for veterans. They may draw from a local community, a region or a state (or even on a national level, like The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform, which DAV formed with the American Legion, DAV's Independent Budget partners, MOAA and other national veteran and military service organizations). Regardless of their size or structure, they exist to create and support efforts to reach a particular set of goals.

In general, coalition goals may be as varied as coalitions themselves. For our purposes, however, coalitions should focus on influencing or developing public policy on issues important to veterans, their families and survivors.

- In general terms, the coalition can concentrate the community's focus on a particular problem, create alliances among those who might not normally work together and keep the approach to veterans' issues consistent. Consistency can be particularly important in addressing our issues.
- A number of organizations and individuals together may have the resources to accomplish a task that none of them could have done singly.
- A unified community coalition can advocate for the issue more effectively than a number of disparate groups and individuals working alone. In addition, a wide-ranging coalition can bring to bear political pressure from all sectors of the community and wield a much larger amount of political power than just one organization.

There are a few ways to approach assembling a core group:

- Start with people you know. You may have lots of contacts, particularly among others concerned with veterans' issues. Use those contacts, either to pull them into the circle or to get the names of others who might be part of a core group. Someone who knows you, assuming you have a positive relationship, is usually more easily persuaded.



- Contact people in organizations and institutions most affected by the issue. Other local service organizations are the most likely contacts. VA employees might have an interest in the issue. Other local civic groups could be motivated to engage.
- Talk to influential people or people with lots of contacts. These may be business or civic leaders, ordinary citizens with high credibility or others who have influential networks, including elected officials and community leaders.

Make sure that lines of communication within the coalition, the media and the community are wide open. Open communication will assure that no one feels left out of the loop and that everyone has the information necessary to make coalition efforts successful. Good communication with the media

and the community will increase your chances for publicity and support when you need them.

Work at making the coalition a group in which anyone will feel welcome, and continue to invite people to join until your campaign ends successfully. Try to involve everyone in the coalition in planning and major decisions. The more people feel ownership of the coalition itself, the harder they will work to achieve the ultimate goal and the less likely they will be to allow turf issues or minor conflicts to get in the way of the coalition's efforts.

Finally, in addition to success itself, the celebration of success is a great way to cement the bonds among members of a coalition. Celebration of achievement will help the coalition thrive and will give you a much-needed opportunity to memorialize the effort you have made to secure DAV's goals.