

Brand Ambassador's Handbook

COMMISSARY

Proud. Committed. More.





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BE A PART OF THE CHANGE...

**We're Proud.
We're Committed.
We're More.**



The Commissary is changing.

It's the 21st century. Time to take the Commissary from where it has been to where it needs to be to  serve today's military community. Time to bring contemporary business systems, a workable brand strategy and a more aligned culture to our proud Commissary tradition.

Some changes will come fast. Others will take time. But change is good. Change is exciting. Change is you. We've always responded to the changing needs and priorities of the military community—change is in our DNA.

What is this you're holding?

This is our brand ambassador's handbook. It will help you reframe how you think and talk about the Commissary. You will learn how to be a part of the positive momentum. Most of all, you will learn how to take a leadership role in transforming the Commissary into something that makes us all proud and serves our military families at the highest level.

OUR BRAND

**A consistent
Commissary
experience.**





The Commissary plays a pivotal role serving our military community.

The Commissary doesn't just proudly serve the military community—it helps shape and define what the experience of “community” within the military means. This is fundamental to our DNA and our ambitions for the Commissary brand.



No competitor can justly claim “We’re Proud. We’re Committed. We’re More.” in their relationship to *our* community. The Commissary is more than a grocery store. And the Commissary means a lot more to patrons and staff than low prices, savings, and benefits.

We know our staff understand that the Commissary’s role is unique and go about their work with tremendous pride. Delivering on our promise, consistently, everyday, everywhere and in everything we do, is the most powerful means we have to pay tribute to our patrons and build support for the Commissary.

Changing the Commissary’s logo or store signage might indeed improve staff and patrons’ experience, but truly meeting the promise of being more than a grocery store to the military community requires more than cosmetic changes. It requires a brand-driven culture.

Aligning our staff and resources to effectively *deliver* on our core promise is our purpose here. Embedding this promise in the Commissary’s culture will ultimately come down to the efforts of those individuals vested in a bright future for the Commissary. People like **you**. The inspired, the bold—the people we are proud to call our brand ambassadors.

Branding 101

Who are we? What do we do? Why does it matter?

What is a Brand?

Apple. Starbucks. McDonald's. Big, iconic brands, right?

These brands resonate strongly in our culture because the companies behind them are fully invested in the relationships they've built with their core customers. These brands consistently reinforce who they are, what they do and why they should matter in their customers' lives.

But you don't have to be Apple or Starbucks to be a strong brand. We all interact with smaller strong brands every day. You know they're strong because your experience with them isn't limited to just a store experience, a print ad, a TV spot or a website. These brands live in the hearts and minds of their core customers day in and day out.

We believe the Commissary can and will become a strong brand.

A "brand" can be thought of as the core promise that we keep to the military community. Everything that we do as an organization that is consistent with that **core promise** increases the value of our brand. Everything we do that detracts or distracts from that core promise reduces that value. From how you show up on a daily basis to greet patrons or colleagues, to store signage, to product availability and the check-out experience—*everything* you do and say that is registered or experienced by staff and patrons has the potential to register as a brand signal.

It is this cumulative experience of a brand, *and the consistent delivery of that experience*, that defines us.

Ambassadors of Clarity

The Role of a Brand Ambassador

Reflect for a moment on a brand experience you may have had—stopping to buy gas, arriving late at night at a hotel or dealing with the frustration of returning an item that failed to work or meet your expectations. When you recall this positive (or negative) experience, it's highly likely that you are picturing an interaction of some kind—an engagement with another human being—rather than a logo, a tagline or an advertisement.



We engage with brands in a form of relationship and, much like the relationships we build with other people, these relationships are built primarily on trust.

Every employee, and every patron, has the *potential* to be an ambassador of the Commissary brand, whether they recognize themselves formally as ambassadors or not. Here are some initial thoughts on the brand ambassador's role:

Build trust. The primary role of a brand ambassador is to **build trust in the brand**. This is accomplished, first and foremost, by taking *every* available opportunity to increase clarity in the minds of fellow staff and patrons about what the Commissary *stands* for, not by rigidly following protocols or ticking the boxes on a checklist.

Go beyond “standard operating procedures.”

Brand ambassadors are always on the lookout for what parents call **“teachable moments”**—opportunities to demonstrate pride, commitment and “more”—opportunities to go beyond standard operating procedures and model the core values of the brand.

Actions speak louder than words. Demonstrating pride, commitment and more doesn't require dramatic gestures or inspiring speeches; research shows us that modeling the behaviors we want to see in others is likely to be the most effective way to align your team and make a difference. Each day, look for one event, ritual, process or opportunity to demonstrate your personal take on “more.”

Explore your “signal-to-noise ratio.”* Some brand signals are simply more important than others, and your intuition can probably already tell you which moments, interactions or signals have “priority” in the minds of your team or your patrons. Ambassadors develop highly attuned antennae for opportunities that have a strong “signal-to-noise” ratio and make sure those interactions are memorable.

***Signal to noise ratio:** getting your message to consistently cut through distraction and clutter in order to reach your audience effectively.

OUR PROMISE

**The brand position
that drives our
service.**

With our brand promise, the Commissary joins the ranks of brands who are defining who they are, who know what they stand for and who stick to their marching orders.

OUR BRAND PROMISE

**We're Proud.
We're Committed.
We're More.**

Core insights supporting this promise:

Our patrons and staff believe that we are more than a grocery store.

We play a pivotal role in influencing the quality of life within the military community.

We have a unique understanding of that community.

We take pride in both serving and being an essential part of that community.

Our brand promise and tone of “Proud. Committed. More.” draws from the Commissary’s long history and DNA and clearly states our aspiration to be not only a grocery store but also a supportive, proud and essential part of life within the military community.

The big idea that defines the Commissary is a simple one—but only we can truly claim it: The Commissary’s relationship to the military community is unique. No other grocery store provider or competitor can justly claim the same relationship to this community.

Our brand promise is simple, but it becomes clearer when we add language and put it in context:

“ *The Commissary — we’re more than a grocery store. We’re proud to be part of the military community. ● We strive to deliver the Commissary benefit with the excellence and respect our patrons deserve. We commit and dedicate ourselves to serve and support them and their lifestyle. ● We understand the unique challenges our community faces and know we exist solely for its benefit. The Commissary — proudly serving the military community.* ”

OUR STRATEGY

Aligning expectations by envisioning our future.

A vivid picture helps align our team's expectations by creating a shared vision of the future. By describing in detail what it would look and feel like to experience the Commissary of the future, we create a clear picture of the brand strategy in action. Both headquarters and field employees sat down together to envision a bright future for the Commissary brand—here's the picture they painted.

PROUD

Own It



Clean



Stock, Block & Roll

COMMITTED

One Voice



Stop/Start/Keep



**Consistent
Transparent
Communications**

MORE

Inspire More



Meet, Greet & Feet



Share Your Story

Proud = Own It

Taking true pride in our role means taking the time to always present a clean, professional appearance. It means remembering to send a personal note to thank that colleague, supervisor, employee or vendor for going the extra mile, and it means juggling meetings or duties to ensure we spend time checking in on the lives of our staff and their families. We model the behaviors we expect from our colleagues. New hires are left with little doubt about the Commissary's expectations, not because they "read the policy and procedures" but because they are constantly exposed to the example set by colleagues in every corner of the operation. We will occasionally make mistakes or fail to meet expectations, but we quickly try to make corrections. We realize that we are always going to be dealing within a severe set of limitations and struggling with bureaucracy and paperwork—but we are driven by a sense of purpose and by the need to maintain a standard—we are serving those who serve, and we are therefore uniquely privileged to make this contribution to their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

Departing the store, our office or HQ, we take advantage of the immediate feedback available to register our level of satisfaction for the day and are secure in knowing that negative issues outside our personal control will be looked at seriously for improvements that might be made. *We own it.*



“Employees are empowered and engaged... Everyone is being held accountable... Employees are owning the process.”



BARBARA
Sales Associate

MILK & COCAINE
THEY'RE LIVING IT UP

OFFICE COMMUNITY

Committed = One Voice

Patrons told us through surveys, in-person interviews and focus groups that they consider shopping the Commissary a privilege, they describe us as a “positive” constant in military life and they believe we support them in ways retail grocers can’t or won’t. It is those perceptions that set us apart from retail grocery stores. We commit ourselves to maintaining and enhancing those perceptions through customer service qualities our patrons know they can expect only from us.

Our role in supporting military families and the broader military community is clear and front and center in our communications. When people talk about us, the narrative they use is no longer framed only around prices, savings and benefits. They also speak in terms of our reputation worldwide for going above and beyond to serve the military community. Unlike typical retail grocery stores, the Commissary has the ability to understand and provide support for the unique needs of the military community.

We know when we are in a Commissary, anywhere in the world, because the experience, signage, presentation and staff present a consistent and unified front. Staff passion and pride in our commitment to customer service is evident whenever, and wherever you go—from HQ through to the most remote corner of the most remote store. Our commitment to customer service demonstrates our promise that, “We are more than a grocery store.”



**“There is a sense of energy...
Passionately delivering the benefit...”**





More = Inspire More

Our staff is engaged and our patrons are delighted by the advances in technology that allow for more customer focused interaction. Our social media platform and Customer Comment Program (Your Action Line) allow our patrons to express their opinions about their store experience, whether sharing a “raving fan” experience or one that leaves something to be desired. Navigating the store, we are consistently struck by three key impressions—the staff are excited to be here and to serve us, every corner of the store is unquestionably clean and there’s no clutter or distraction—we are experiencing a seamless flow of service. We trust that the Commissary will lock neatly into the pattern of our day and we know that they are proud members of the military community, without being told.

Departing the store we take advantage of immediate feedback to register our satisfaction with this experience. The Commissary isn’t just a benefit to us anymore, but an essential part of our busy lives and a central feature of what it means to be part of the military community.



“Everyone is greeted with eye contact.”

“Raving fan customers are what we strive for.”

OUR ACTIONS

**Defining our
community
& culture.**

What Defines the Commissary's Community & Culture?

Strong brands are built on strong, readily identifiable cultures. Strong cultures share certain beliefs and habits—community members will act to defend them, sometimes even at a personal cost, to maintain the integrity of the group and its values. “Culture trumps strategy” because our sense of identity and need to belong in a community are two of the most important and defining characteristics of our species.

Many aspects that define a culture are “hidden” to outsiders and newcomers—it takes time to learn the ropes—“How we do things around here” can’t necessarily be captured in a set of text bullets and a mission statement. But it’s equally true that all teams or groups develop their own “social code” and tend to use memorable catch phrases to reinforce the core elements of that code.

The Commissary’s social code is structured around our promise, three core strategies for consistently delivering on that promise and two key actions that support each strategy. In the following pages we have provided examples of putting this “social code” into practice, but the most important thing for you to remember here is that wherever you sit within the Commissary’s culture, every day provides opportunities to demonstrate that you are “Proud. Committed. More.” Every task you and your team implement can be improved by asking: “How can we own this?” “Are we showing up with one voice?” and “How can I inspire more here?”

How does our brand promise of

**We’re Proud.
We’re Committed.
We’re More.**

start to show up in the real world?

Proud

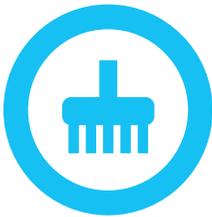


“Proudly Serving the Military Community”

We never forget that the Commissary’s culture exists within the larger culture of the military community. Taking pride in our work, in our appearance, in how we show up on a daily basis, is the primary means we have to communicate the pride we have in serving this community.

“Owning It” is a succinct reminder to demonstrate pride—to take full responsibility for everything within our sphere of influence. We know when we have truly “owned” a task and when we haven’t. Where appropriate, we can remind a co-worker to “own” their responsibility, or lend a hand to help a colleague struggling to own it today. We may very well be in their shoes needing that hand tomorrow. Owning a task, owning our role as a manager or mentor, is what allows us to walk proudly alongside all members of the military community.

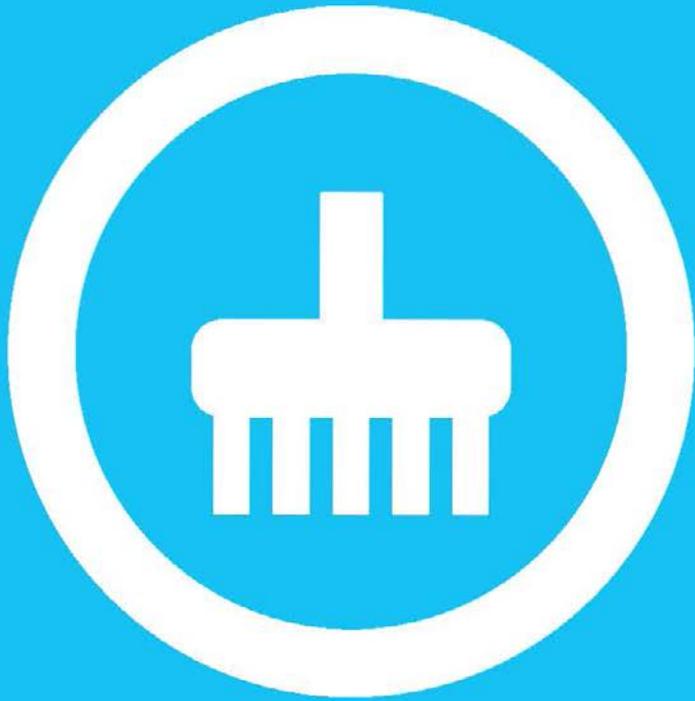
While the concept of owning it has broad application across our entire culture, we have chosen two key actions to illustrate this strategy—“clean” and “stock, block & roll.”



Clean



Stock, Block & Roll



Clean

Examples of Clean

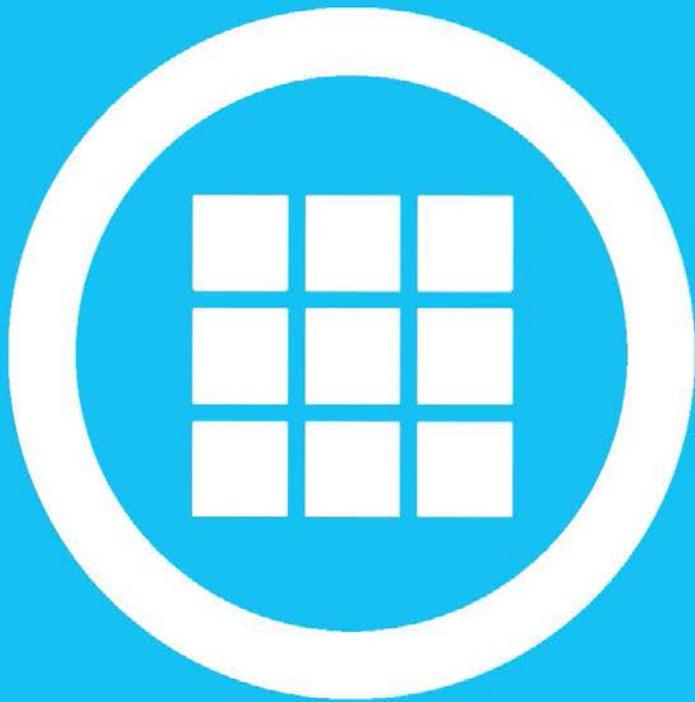
- At store level, keep a constant eye on produce bins, checkout stands and belts, and any other areas that will help to present a clean, organized impression. When walking from your car to the store, bring in a cart.
- A clean store should start with a clean patron bathroom and progress to the point that all corners of the store are kept sparkling clean.
- Reports and emails are free of errors, cubicles are free of clutter.
- Clean break rooms and employee refrigerators.
- “Clean” on my to-do list—I’m up to date and on top of my responsibilities.
- Leaders at all levels modeling concept of clean—don’t pass the trash, jump in and help out!

Stock, Block & Roll

Examples of Stock, Block & Roll

Stock, Block & Roll means the right product, at the right place, at the right time, but what we do within the organization defines our product. For stores it means keeping shelves fully stocked at all times. For Area Office and Headquarters employees it means making sure you have the right tools and supplies, have the needed information and/or training to accomplish your task, and accomplishing those tasks fully every day. Additionally, for above-store-level employees, it's important to know that almost every task performed above store level ultimately has an impact on store-level staff and our patrons.

- **Stock means:** Product on shelf; staffing, resources, equipment.
- **Block means:** Knowing that what you have and what you need are ready to be utilized, whether internal or patron facing.
- **Roll means:** Execution and follow through with details, and applies to all levels of operations whether at store-level or above store-level.



Committed



Our commitment is to *consistently* deliver on the Commissary’s promise of “Proud. Committed. More.” continuously building trust in the Commissary’s brand.

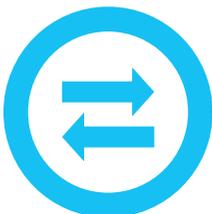
This commitment to consistency—to showing up with “One Voice” wherever and whenever someone experiences the Commissary’s brand—is the most important tool we have at our disposal to demonstrate that we can authentically deliver on our promise.

The “One Voice” strategy calls upon us to set aside distinctions between different parts of the agency, different stores, or different departments within a store. Our patrons don’t care about these distinctions and in the interests of serving them best—neither should we. We are all here to deliver a consistently great brand experience. Each of us has the power to do so through great customer service with everyone we meet. Everything we do is for our patrons, and they deserve the best.

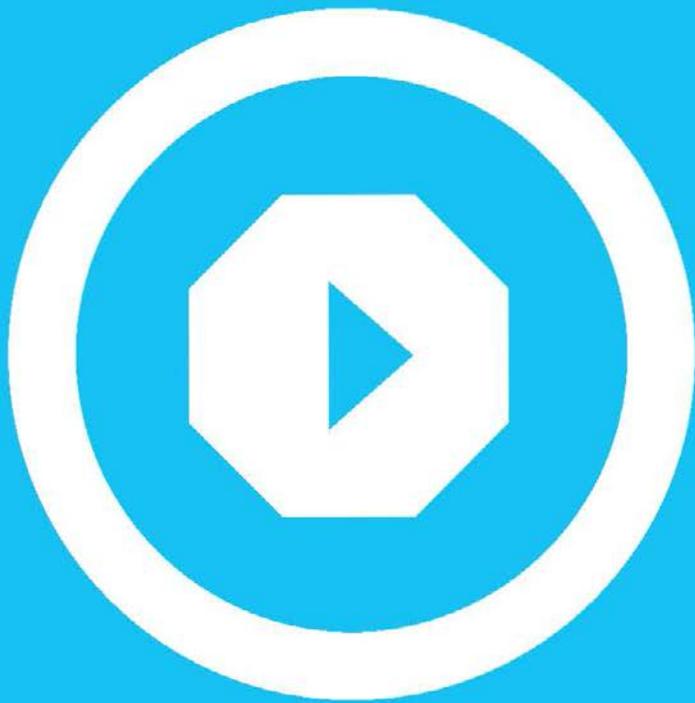
The two primary strategies we have chosen for demonstrating One Voice are “stop/start/keep” and “consistent transparent communications.”



Stop/Start/Keep



**Consistent
Transparent
Communications**



Stop/Start/Keep

Examples of Stop/Start/Keep

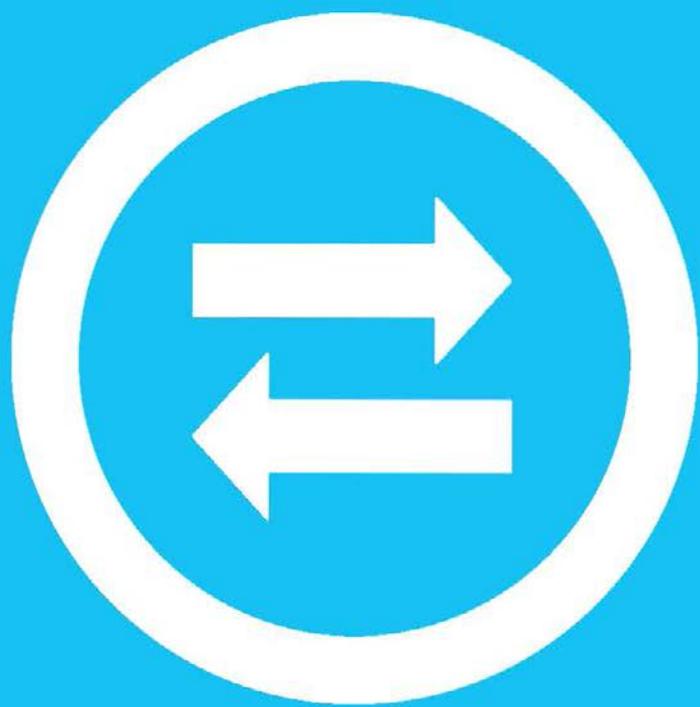
Stop/Start/Keep is a simple management technique based on common sense and a reasonable approach to becoming more efficient, effective, and successful. It can be applied to individual responsibilities, to groups or teams, and to management at all levels.

- Stop negative actions or patterns in the work process that cause inefficiency in the process and discontent among employees. Take actions to stop frustrating workplace behaviors that never seem to go away.
- Start thinking about actions you can take to demonstrate our brand culture of “We’re Proud. We’re Committed. We’re More.” These actions can be at any level within the agency.
- Keep policies and procedures that are identified and recognized as strengthening Commissary operations at all levels, and that give our brand culture positive recognition, both among employees and patrons.

Consistent Transparent Communications

Examples of Consistent Transparent Communications

- Ensure that employees are listened to.
- Call employees by name.
- Empower employees to assist and execute actions to fulfill our brand promise.
- Have leadership send messages directly to employees explaining how branding impacts them, makes our agency stronger, and makes the workplace better for everyone.
- Have regularly scheduled informative meetings between managers and employees at all levels (directorship leadership, first- and second-line managers, store directors, department managers, front end managers, etc.)
- Hold team meetings before the start of shift or end of a shift to debrief and go over expectations and get suggestions and general buy in.
- Use more collaborative tools (Communities of Practice, SharePoint, etc.)
- Encourage regular information sharing among and between groups at all levels of the organization.



More



Our patrons have made their position crystal clear—they see the Commissary as far more than a grocery store.

We know that our relationship with our customers is unique—delivering “More” is our opportunity to prove it. Throughout our history, we have taken the opportunity to go above and beyond our patrons’ expectations and deliver the Commissary experience to every corner of the globe, often under extremely trying circumstances.

We know that we deliver more on a daily basis, we know how often our staff go above and beyond standard operating procedures to delight our patrons. But we also know that these essential stories get lost, and that some patrons haven’t yet experienced the full potential of “More.”

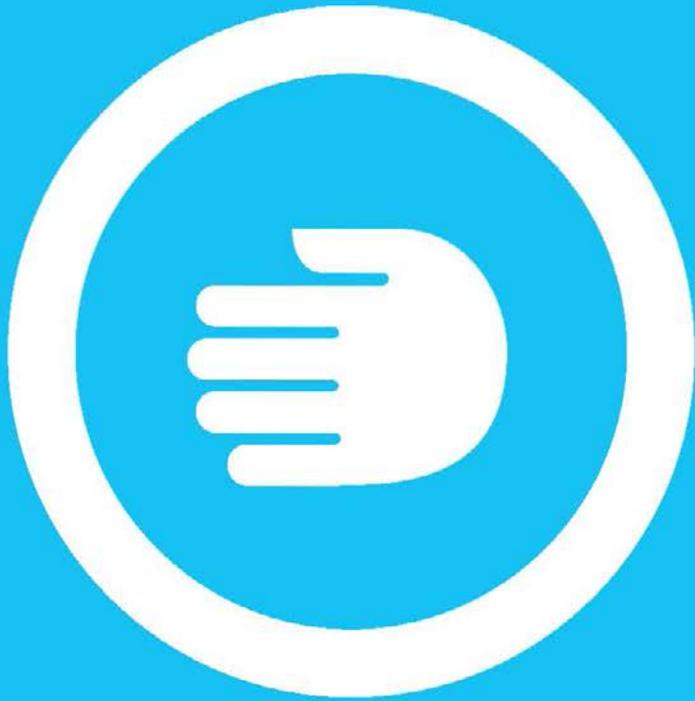
We’ve chosen two strategies to ensure this is no longer the case—the first is to underline, once and for all, that both our staff and patrons deserve to be appropriately acknowledged, greeted and assisted, no matter the circumstances. And the second is to let all staff know that they share the responsibility of gathering and sharing those great stories that make us who we are.



Meet, Greet & Feet



Share Your Story



Meet, Greet & Feet

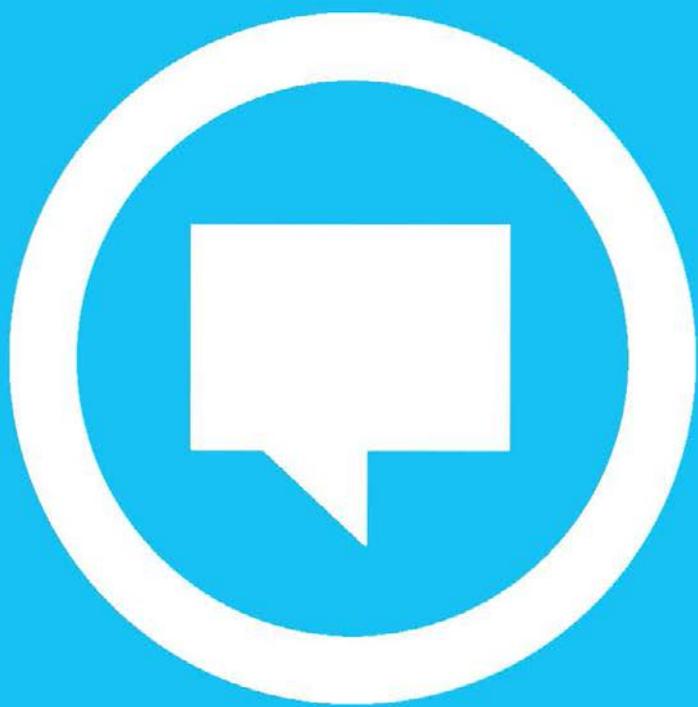
Examples of Meet, Greet & Feet

- Set a regular reminder to get out of your office, your cubicle or your station and to connect with other staff, visitors or patrons.
- Approach patrons and check in on their experience—if you can help them find a product by walking them there, great! But if you can help them leave the store feeling that their experience was personalized—that someone cared enough to stop and chat with them—even better.
- Take time each week to learn more about the aspirations, interests and families of your colleagues or your reports—there are few things more motivating to the human spirit than feeling seen, known and understood.

Share Your Story

Examples of Share Your Story

- Integrate the “Proud. Committed. More.” (PCM) brand promise into regularly scheduled staff meetings by allowing employees to share recent PCM moments they have recently witnessed in others or experienced from their own actions.
- Maintain a “Share Your Story Box” at store, area offices and headquarters locations where all employees, including managers, can leave written accounts of PCM moments.
- Collect and publicize a collection of these Share You Story articles in internal communications vehicles such as DeCA 2020 employee newsletter and *Vision Magazine*.

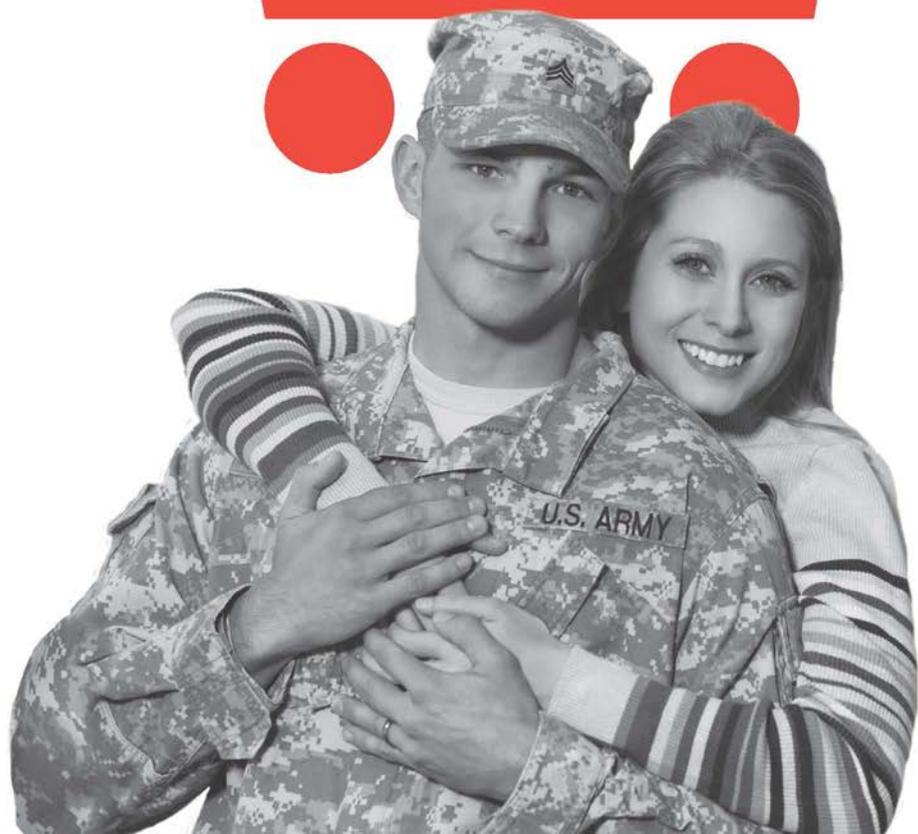


CONCLUSION

No other brand can reasonably lay claim to the Commissary's promise of "We're Proud. We're Committed. We're More." but we will have to work hard to underline this promise and differentiate the Commissary brand in all venues, actions and signals.

To authentically represent that promise across the board demands that staff and contractors, from the leadership at HQ through to the check-out aisle in a remote store, are armed with appropriate tools and systems to engage this brand strategy and effectively implement it.

Participants in this process have worked hard to capture what makes the Commissary unique and to translate those attributes into simple concepts that can inform every level of the organization's daily work. We invite you to continue this conversation with your peers and embrace the role of brand ambassador. The future of the Commissary will be shaped by your pride and your commitment to our military community.



Appendix

WORKSHEET

Performance Audit

Proud. Committed. More.

At this point you should have a good sense of the Commissary's aspirations as a brand, and a growing sense of the commitment required to live up to the organization's refined brand promise.

Now it's time to get "practical and tactical" as a brand ambassador in your own right, creating a crystal clear plan for putting the brand strategy to work for you.

In the two pages that follow, we are going to walk you through exercises designed to make that transition as efficient and effective as possible. First, you will complete a simple self-assessment of how you, your team or your functional unit are currently performing in terms of living the Commissary's brand promise of "Proud. Committed. More." Next, you will identify your own set of priority signals, using your intuition to focus on those interactions with staff and/or patrons that have the greatest potential return on investment. And finally, we'll get you up and running by breaking the goals down into readily approachable tasks and dealing upfront with perceived barriers and constraints.

- 1 Grab a pen, a pad of yellow stick-it notes and any colleagues you want to be part of your “signals audit.”

- 2 You’ll need a decent amount of wall space and about 30 minutes for this exercise.

- 3 First, with one idea per note, think about all the brand signals you send in your work, listing as many as you possibly can (e.g., how we greet each other/patrons, the appearance of our office, how we deal with complaints, performance reviews, our signage, how we organize stock in the warehouse).

- 4 Next, organize each note into one of three categories on the wall—“High,” “Medium” and “Low.” Putting a signal in “High” means you believe you, or the Commissary more broadly, are already doing a great job of living up to “Proud. Committed. More.” with this signal. Medium means you are doing a reasonable job. Low means there’s a lot of room for improvement.

- 5 Finally, identify the three signals you believe have the most potential to represent the brand promise—the three that your intuition and that of your colleagues tells you really have the most impact on the staff and patrons with whom you interact. Note that these signals may currently be in the High, Medium or Low category. What’s important is that you believe there’s real potential to make these the most powerful signals of the brand strategy to your audience.

Your Roadmap

A One-Page Action Plan

Now that you've identified the signals with the most potential for you and your team, we are going to pull together a one-page action plan to put those signals to work for you.

- Vivid picture—Write a brief paragraph describing your vision of what this signal would look like if you were doing a first-class job of executing it. What would be different, what would people have started or stopped doing in response to the changes you would make—and what would people be saying about it?

- How would you measure success? Your metric could be quantitative or qualitative, such as checking in with your team verbally once a month.

- What are the six steps you would take to implement the improvements for this signal during the next 18 months?

Pre-Assessment What Will You Be up Against?

A pre-assessment can be a lot more useful and timely than a post-assessment.

- What are the three most important barriers or constraints to success?

- Who or what can help you address those constraints effectively?

- Are you looking at a barrier or constraint that looks truly insurmountable? If so, you may need to go back to your signals audit and re-prioritize. Start your effort with a signal you feel is within your immediate control—one you can gain traction on relatively easily.

Start Small
What Can You Do Today?

For all the actions you identified and prioritized, what's the smallest thing you could do that would represent an improvement in how this signal represents the brand? Adding a smile or a word of thanks can make a significant difference if it's extended with authentic intent and consistently executed.



Prioritize Impact
Find the Low-Hanging Fruit

Go back over your audit and identify three more signals you can readily tick off your list this week—low-hanging fruit that would give you and your team a sense of momentum. Brands don't change overnight, they evolve...and evolution happens with an accumulation of baby steps.

Proud. Committed. More.

Defense Commissary Agency
1300 E Ave., Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800
www.commissaries.com