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# THE PROBLEM OF STAFF RETENTION - Officers' retention in The Salvation Army in Finland

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The purpose of this study is to examine some factors that have influenced officers' decisions and their employment at The Salvation Army in Finland. Based on the literature and previous research, both employee and organizational factors are taken into account.

Data was collected by means of a questionnaire that was sent to ex-officers, in hard-copy, during the first quarter of 2010. The study sample consisted of 19 ex-officers from The Salvation Army in Finland (which is a Christian non-profit organization).

The results show that if The Salvation Army (TSA) wants to retain its officers, it is important to take into account the officer as a whole. There must be a balance between what is expected and what the officer can do. The first 10 years are shown to be the most critical in the life of the officer.

A limitation of this study is that factors are measured through the perceptions of employees. Since the events took place such a long time ago, the subjects might have given their answers based on their feeling or they might have answered the questions in a socially appropriate way. Another limitation is that the questionnaire was voluntarily completed by the respondents; the researcher had therefore no information about the non-respondents.

The paper focuses on the factors influencing officers' retention in TSA in Finland.

Key words: Pelastusarmeija, The Salvation Army, Minister, Ministry, Officer, Withdraw, Leave, Church, Congregation, Non-Profit Organization, HRM, Human Resources Management, Employee Retention, Staff Retention.

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

The thesis concentrates on assessing the reasons why officers decide to leave their jobs as Salvation Army officers and in proposing changes to facilitate retention. Being able to see in advance threats that could make officers withdraw from their activities could be crucial in avoiding future disappointments. Consistency in the way of treating officers can be considered as an important factor. Mutual respect between leadership and officers is another factor that might facilitate the officer's staying in the Salvation Army.

Some debate has taken place informally between the officers and their peers on what could be done to improve the officers' working conditions; however no suggestion has been submitted to the Leaders neither to the Personnel Department. It is likely that these suggestions would be the easiest way to help the Leaders to identify possible reasons that could trigger many officers' departure.

### 1.2 The research problem

1. Finding out and analyzing the factors that might influence the decision of officers to leave their employment in the Salvation Army in Finland.
2. Making subsequent recommendations to the leadership

### 1.3 The research method

The research uses a quantitative method. The qualitative method could be more suitable, perhaps due to the low number of interviewees, however the qualitative method would focus only in two or three case. This is not to say the quantitative method is superior to the qualitative, but it would be important to focus on several different possibilities instead of a few. The author believes that several reasons add up so the decision of leaving officership is made.

The information will be gathered from different sources, such as academic literature and interviews both from officers currently working at the Salvation Army and ex-officers, being the last group the main focus of the interviewer. The ex-officers received a questionnaire and answered it on a voluntary basis and the author could only analyze the answers given and he had no influence neither on the answers of the interviewees or in those who sent their answers and those who did not send their answers.

### 1.4 Structure of the study

The first chapter is the introduction. The introduction is written to help the reader to get acquainted to the issue and give the reader a general view of the reason why officers leave

their duties at The Salvation Army. The introduction is divided in three parts: background of the study, the research problem, methods and the structure of the study.

The second chapter the Salvation Army is presented to the reader. After reading this chapter, the reader will, hopefully, have a better understanding of the Salvation Army's history as well as its main areas of operation and current problems.

The third chapter tackles the issue of employee retention and its importance. The chapter starts with the importance of employee retention for companies in general and how it works for NGOs and finally, the impact that employee retention has in the Salvation Army.

The fourth chapter will deal with the methodology chosen to be used in this study.

The fifth chapter will show the results of the data analysis and comparison with a similar study performed by the Leadership of the Salvation Army in 1977. This comparison will help the author to see if major changes were made or if some factors have remained unchanged.

The sixth part of this study will have some recommendations for the Leadership will be made on things that could be changed or changes that have already happened to facilitate the staying of the officers.

And the seventh part will be the conclusion and final thought to ponder and after that, there is a list of materials used in this study.

## 2 Study Case - The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an Evangelical Christian Church that was founded in East London in 1865 by Rev. William Booth. His emphasis on helping people in need and caring for the out-cast by the society were his trademark. This characteristic, naturally, became also the main area where the Salvation Army has been known for.

The Salvation Army spread its religious and social reach throughout the World and, while its most glorious days were in the beginning and the middle of the 19th Century (in terms of active members), some sparkles of growth can be seen in some places.

The Salvation Army started its work in Finland in 1889 and rapidly became a very well respected Christian organization that emphasizes equality and focus on the social part of those who are in need.

As of 2010, The Salvation Army in Finland counts with 56 active officers<sup>1</sup>, 3 cadets and 425 employees. There are 28 corps (local expressions of TSA), 8 outposts, 3 Goodwill Centers and 25 Institutions. As of members, TSA has 806 senior soldiers (regular members), 91 Adherents (people who identify themselves with TSA however do not want/cannot become soldiers) and 48 junior soldiers (members between 7-14 years of age). The Salvation Army in Finland is present in the following cities: Helsinki, Turku, Oulu, Vaasa, Kouvola, Kokkola, Pori, Porvoo, Kotka, Salo, Tampere, Hämeenlinna, Lohja, Mikkeli, Rovaniemi, Savonlinna, Jyväskylä, Parkano, Joensuu, Hyvinkää, Lahti, Kajaani, Kuopio, Rauma, Tammisaari, Heinola, Kemi and Uusikaarlepyy.

People who decide to work (for God) in The Salvation Army, attend the Officers' School (Training College), which consists of both theoretical and practical training in different areas such administration, leadership and spiritual. These classes will help the Officers to perform all the duties that they are expected to execute. Usually the training takes place in the same Country (Territory) and it lasts 2 years. After the training the, now officers, can be appointed to several places. The majority of them are sent to corps<sup>2</sup>, some to Salvation Army social institutions and some to THQ. The officers are appointed to different appointments according to the necessity in a specific Territory and their skills. After they fulfill the requirements established by the government they retire.

Though the employer-employee relationship exists, it is not as evident as in other companies. The Salvation Army does not like to think they pay a salary, but an allowance. This thought comes from England, where the difference between civil workers (non-officers) and spiritual workers (officers) seem more evident. However, in Finland, the officers get an allowance ('*palkka*', which means "salary" in Finnish). This allowance remains the same for the Territorial Leader and recently ordained officers (the only difference are the increments based on years of service).

### 3 Theoretical Aspects

Human resource management (later referred to HRM) is the management of the staff of any particular company. HRM is responsible for dealing with many processes during the time the employee remains in a specific company. Some of these processes can be outsourced but ultimately they will be dealt with in the lifetime of the employee within the company. These

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<sup>1</sup> A Salvation Army officer is a Spiritual leader who perceives to holistically take care (soul, body and spirit) of those who decide to take part in any Salvation Army activity.

<sup>2</sup> Corps is the spiritual expression of TSA.

processes include: planning the workforce, recruitment and hiring processes, training and developing, and personnel administration (payroll, benefits, employee relation, compensation, and payroll).

On a very broad article, Ramlall analyzes several employee motivation theories and makes comparisons that help one to grasp better the reasons why one decides to stay and why others decide to leave (Ramlall 2004). He points several employee motivation theories such as “The Needs Theory of Motivation”; which states that every employee has needs and that these needs are influenced by environmental factors, in other words: they may vary according to time and place (p. 53). He also points out “Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory”, which states that the employees aspire to have a self-actualizing life at work. This theory also affirms that there are five basic needs every employee has: physiological, safety, love, esteem, self-actualization. Ramlall quotes a very bold statement that is made by Steers and Porter: “Failure to provide a proper climate would theoretically increase employee frustration and could result in poorer performance, lower job satisfaction and increased withdrawal from the organization” (p.54). Another theory he mentions is “McClelland’s need Theory”, which states that employees have the need three things: achievement, power and affiliation. The equity theory shows that it is not always about the benefits/rewards one gets but the comparison between what one gets and others get. When people identify a discrepancy between the received benefits/salaries and their peer, tension is created. He analyzes these theories and some others, such as “Expectancy Theory”, “Vroom’s Original Theory”, “Porter and Lawler’s Extension”, “Job Design” and “The Motivator-Hygiene Theory”.

Ramlall concludes his article writing about the critical factors that should be tackled when implementing employee retention practices. They are: Needs of the Employees, Work Environment, Responsibilities, Supervision, Fairness and Equity, Effort, Employee’s Development and finally, Feedback.

Another article that tackles the reasons why people decide to leave or stay, Mitchell, Holtom, Lee and Erez; talk about a very relevant subject: job embeddedness. Job embeddedness is described as “a net of net or web in which an individual can become stuck” (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Erez; p. 1104). The job embeddedness theory includes three dimensions: link (which are connections the employees have with other people and/or activities), fit (which is the comfort/compatibility of an employee and his/her environment) and sacrifice (which is the cost of benefits one may forfeit by leaving a job). The easier for employees to break these links, the effortless it will be for one to leave their job (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee and Erez, p. 1105).



The above mentioned article is a remarkable article because it generated a new concept to the field of Human Resources. In fact, several other authors use this theory in their articles such as Holtom & O'Neill (Holtom & O'Neill, 2004), Brown and Yoshioka (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003) and Hedberg and Helenius (Hedberg & Helenius) just to name a few.

Hedberg and Helenius (Hedberg & Helenius, 2007) bring a different perspective on employee retention, that is employee retention viewed by the company's point of view. According to them, retention management concept includes: motivation, recruitment, rewarding, employee job opportunities, work environment, the role of leadership, as well as communicating and understanding (Hedberg & Helenius, p.1).

They state that key employees should be retained as they are the ones who drive the company forward. They also state, in the same paragraph, that the average worker is likely to change jobs around ten times by the time when these are aged between 18 and 37 (Hedberg & Helenius, p. 2). Surprisingly, it seems that the theory about company loyalty being smaller now a days as opposed as in 30 years ago, which presented as a change proposal in this thesis later; is confirmed (Hedberg & Helenius, 2007).

In the same article, the authors state that companies, in today's society, tend to hire younger, recently graduated students; as a form to deal with retiring personnel, which is also a problem faced by the Salvation Army - which will be addressed later in this paper (Hedberg & Helenius, p.2).

Hedberg and Helenius also emphasize not only the importance of having a retention plan but the importance of planning ahead when dealing with employee retention. They say that managers have to be able to make long term plans because the number of highly educated people might decrease in the market due to opportunities in this ever globalizing World. According to them, highly educated personnel tend to leave their countries to face new challenges in other parts of the globe and, in order for managers to avoid that, it is important for them look at a long term plan to retain their key employees (Hedberg & Helenius, p.3). Specifically, if one thinks of the Salvation Army, as an organization working in 124 countries; and with every country providing different salary plans, benefits and perks; it can be tempting for Finnish officers to try to enroll for positions in other Territories.

The issue of "hiring the right person for the job" is also addressed; they state that "the recruitment process plays an important role in employee retention... the recruitment process might be more important to companies than they think" (Hedberg & Helenius, p.3). This issue is also addressed in the "Change Proposals" section.

The main message in Hedberg and Helenius' article is that one of the most important points is that managers (leaders and supervisors) are the ones who are really able to influence in a positive or negative way whether if the employee will leave or stay. They declared that the

workforce is little influenced by the decisions of the CEOs, but rather, on the day-to-day atmosphere (where one works) their immediate supervisor provides. Among the remarkable theories they present, one that catches one's attention, is the fact that they emphasize that financial reward is only momentary (Hedberg & Helenius, 2007).

Gerges and Sonander state that there are different factors to consider while dealing with voluntary turnover. They say that job autonomy, task repetitiveness or job variety, employee job performance, pleasant working condition and monetary compensation can influence one's decision of staying or leaving a job. However they state that there are three crucial factors that will determine whether an employee will stay or leave the company: Motivation, Job Satisfaction and Commitment (Gerges & Sonander, 2004).

The Motivation theories explain behaviors that can focus on both internal and external variables. Internal (or intrinsic) variables are the beliefs one has that motivated themselves to seek, find and carry out work that satisfy their needs or at least makes them feel that these needs are satisfied. This is influenced by the freedom of act of the individual, given responsibility, whether if the work is interesting or not, possibility of developing skills, etc. External (or extrinsic) variables refer to what is done to people to make them motivated or unmotivated. These variables include raise, rewards and punishments. They also present a couple of theories and in one of them, it is stated that there must be a balance between these two variables in order for one to remain in the company (Gerges & Sonander, p.30).

Job satisfaction was another variable mentioned by Gerges and Sonander. They affirm that job satisfaction is the attitude and feelings that people have towards their job. According to them, it is hard to measure the relationship between the level of job satisfaction and performance of a particular employee, however, it seems to be clear that; the higher the job satisfaction, the smaller is the probability of turnover. It is however, rather interesting to read that employees with more visibility and wider networks tend to have higher job satisfaction, however they tend to consider their options outside their company - probably because of their exposure (Genger & Sonander, p.32).

Commitment is also addressed in Gerges and Sonander's article. They state that generating and up keeping employee commitment is become more and more important for today's managers. A rather bold statement is made: "commitment is a concept that should be seen as a decision rather than as a feeling" (Gerges & Sonander, p.33). In one way or another, motivation and commitment are connected to each other; because the more motivated an employee is, the higher the commitment he/she will be to the company.

Lee and Kim, affirm that there are several factors that will determine one's staying, depart and moving intentions within an ONG. The same principles and variables can be seen on non-profit organizations such as the Salvation Army: "age, education, tenure, number of children, and perceived job availability" (Kim & Lee 2007, p. 229-230). These are the factors that will determine whether if the employee will stay or seek for new opportunities.

Employee retention has been, for years, a very important subject among the World's greatest administrators and Human Resources Directors/managers, as well as employee renewal. It has been a sensitive relationship between employees and employers, where many factors dictate the probability of employees staying where they work and the point where is no longer worth keeping them in the Company.

Among the most significant factors one can argue that salary, recognition, career development possibility, workload and employee/work availability are ranking among the most sensitive areas that could or could not make one to stay or make one seek for new opportunities.

Holton and O'Neill have stated that employee retention is one of the most expensive and frustrating areas faced by organizations today (Holton & O'Neill 2004, p. 1). There are costs involved in the process of replacing a former worker that are not always so visible to the managers such as hiring (placing ads), training and uncertainty if the "replacement" will adjust to the company and overtime pay to the remaining personnel. In fact, Kim and Lee declared that a high rate of withdraw can have not only these costs (mentioned before), but also negative impacts on those who stay as the workload will be greater, the personnel morale and, it lowers the quality of the service (Kim & Lee 2007, p. 228).

This is also true on Non-profit organizations; however there seems to be a consensus with scholars in saying that an important factor plays an important role in whether if the employee will stay or leave: mission attachment (Brown & Yoshioka 2003, p. 5; Kim & Lee 2007, p. 227).

Mission attachment is identification the employee has with the company's core values. Mission attachment, in other words, is one of the ways non-profit organizations find to attract employees who identify themselves the organization's mission. It can be very effective in attracting people; however, it can be not as effective in keeping them.

Holton and O'Neill have stated that "the traditional model of voluntary turnover suggests that people become dissatisfied with their jobs, search for alternative jobs, compare their options with the current job, and leave if any of these alternatives are judged better than the current situation" (Holton & O'Neill 2004, p. 2). This seems to be a natural way of changing working places.

In the Salvation Army in Finland (TSA) is no different. Though the Officers of the Salvation Army are Spiritual Leaders (therefore working for a higher Being - in TSA's case: God), they are employed by an organization that has to deal with them as employees.

TSA during the last 20 years has faced a decrease in numbers of active Officers which has been a concern for the Leadership of TSA in Finland. Perhaps due to the fact that the Human Resources Department was not able to follow the changes that happened in the world, or perhaps important HR concepts used in 'secular' (non spiritual) organizations; the fact is TSA has lost valuable people.

One of the things that can catch one's attention when one is visiting different Salvation Army's Centers is the different age range of its workers. While in any company, the age of the employees tend to follow a certain pattern, in the Salvation Army most of its workers seem to be closer to retiring than in their most active years.

This is a possible threat to TSA because without renewal of the personnel, soon The Salvation Army will have properties and premises where to do its work but very few (or no) workers to perform the work.

Looking at the trends of the last 20 years, one will wonder why there has been a decrease of officers, and: has the people's interest in becoming Salvation Army ministers diminished? What kinds of impacts this decline would have? Could another "wave" of officers leaving the Salvation Army as there was one in the 80's happen again?

Officers from other Territories could come to help out with the officers' shortage in Finland, however the language and the weather present themselves as major challenges. Also to take into account, that, usually; officers coming from abroad serve for one term (three years) and this period can be extended or not, depending on the Territory's needs.

According to Major Marja Meras (Personnel secretary), in two years more than fifty percent of the Salvation Army officers will be retired. This represents a great threat for the future of the Salvation Army in Finland, as the Salvation Army wishes to continue its activities in Finland for the years to come. The following chart shows the number of officers organized according to their current age. As it can be noticed, the number of active officers with less than years of working life is far greater than the number of younger officers.

Age group	# of Officers	Percentage
20-30	0	0
31-40	15	28%
41-50	8	15%
51-60	19	35%
61 and above	12	22%
Total	54	100%

Figure 1: Number of Active Officers by age group

Officers are one of The Salvation Army's greatest assets. It is through them, that the Salvation Army spreads its area of action. McDuff and Mueller (McDuff & Mueller, 91) state that; when there is a high occupational viability, employees and employers tend to depend less on each other. In other words, the more professionals there is for a particular profession, the easier it is for the companies and the workers to hire new employees and to remain employed, respectively.

Major Eija Kornilow, the TSA's Education secretary, was asked about the interest of people on entering the Training College for officers. According to her, the trend of people willing to enter the Training College is quite worrying as it has decreased. The numbers for the past years are shown below:

Years	Cadets
1987-89	6
1990-92	1
1994-96	2
1995-97	3
1999-01	1
2002-03	1
2002-04	2
2003-06	2
2004-07	3
2005-08	3
2007-09	3
2008	1
2009	2
2011 (expected)	3

Figure 2: Number of Candidates per year (1987-2011)

As it can be observed on the graphic above, the number of people willing to enter the training college has not been high during the last couple of decades. This is a clear indication of two things: 1) the future of The Salvation Army will be seriously in jeopardy if TSA fails to bring new people to the training college and 2) Officership might not be a very interesting career for outsiders to pursue, as the number of “outsiders” (people coming to TSA basically willing to work before they did have a deeper knowledge of TSA) has been low, however, the transition of ministers from other denominations should be easy

Mrs. Kornilow has also stated that finding suitable people to enter the Training College is not always easy. There are some steps that need to happen; some conditions one must meet in order for the Candidate to join the training:

- The candidate (Training College applicant) must be at least 18 years old and must have completed the compulsory education (primary school).
- He/she must have been a soldier in the Salvation Army for about 1 year.
- The corps officer and the corps’ pastoral care have recommended him/her as a candidate.
- Health and psychological evaluation
- The members of the Candidate Board (Cadet Secretary, Training Principal and Section Head of Program) have interviewed him/her
- He/she has been officially accepted by the Candidate Board as a candidate
- Half a year period of probation at some corps before he/she can start his/her studies.

Mrs. Kornilow also stated that TSA officer is continuously under training, especially during the first five years after the officer is commissioned (when a officer finishes his/her training at the Training College). This training happens during the first five years as officers and it is held once a year and it lasts one week. These courses have as main objective to teach subjects that were, by one reason or the other, not been able to be taught at the Training College, but also subjects that the Leadership believes are essential for the further development of the officer.

#### 4 Research Methodology and Data Analysis

A Quantitative research was carried out in the beginning of the year 2010 and 28 ex-officers were contacted. These people were former officers and were contacted to clarify the reasons behind their decision to leave their duties as Salvation Army officers.

Although the number of respondents, recognizably, is small, one must bear in mind that the period in question is 20 years. To take into account former officers that left over 20 years ago

would not only be; firstly: irrelevant, as information would have aged and probably many of the processes would have gone some sort of change and secondly: unreliable/inaccurate, as the respondents would have to recall an event that happened a long time ago.

It is important to bear in mind that not all the ex-officers left the Salvation Army on good terms and therefore, some might have let their feelings be reflected in their answers. This is understandable, because, although they had a work relationship with the Salvation Army, when it comes to personal interest, one, naturally, tends to look after one's best interests.

The respondents were presented with both closed and open questions. The questions were categorized in four different categories: general questions, questions related to the time before they were officers, questions that were related to the time of officership and questions that dealt with things that happened after they left the Salvation Army.

#### 4.1 Hypotheses

One of the major hypotheses was that the low-salary would have a negative impact on officers. This was not proven as true as absolutely none of the respondents (0.00) have stated that money was the main reason why they have left.

Some of the assumptions were not confirmed such as the following: the officers were not ready to assume their duties (maturity), the assumption that they had to move too often and the assumption that there was little possibility to further ones career. All these assumptions had a very low score (0.05 each).

For the Pressure factor, the author did not expect it to be so big of an element; however some of the respondents might have interpreted Pressure as being pressure to perform, pressure to raise money, pressure to make the congregation grow and pressure from the everyday activities. This represented 0.27 of the answers the respondents gave as the main reason why they had left officership.

The hypothesis of leaving because of change in change of philosophy was confirmed; having the highest response from the participants: a staggering 0.37. This is comprehensible as this was a very wide factor (it included marrying a non-officer, different opinion on sacrament and other theological or personal view).

#### 4.2 Questionnaire analysis and Results

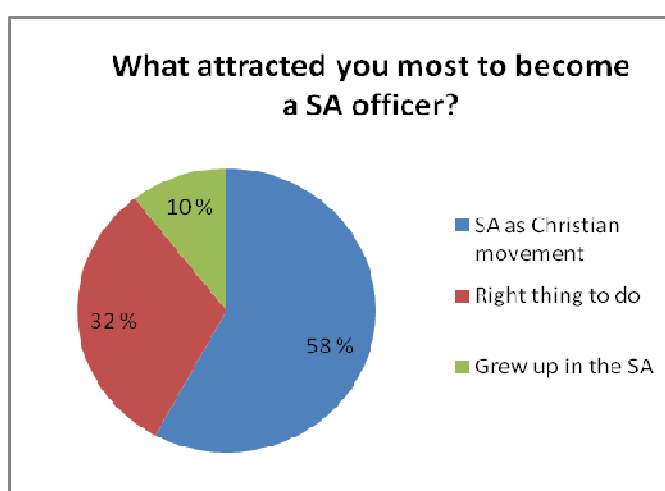
The questionnaire was divided in four parts: general questions, questions related to the time prior to one's working relationship with the Salvation Army, questions related to the time

when the subjects were officers and finally; questions related to the time after they left and things related to officership.

Among the questions to be regarded as most important, one would consider the questions that address the reason why one would choose this specific line of work (question 9), questions that dealt with one's everyday life's difficulties (questions 12 and 13), the question that tackles the reason why they left (question 16), the questions that deals with the subjects finding a new job (18-19) and finally, the questions related to their working conditions at the time (question 25).

The questionnaire had a response of 67,86% (N=19) and among them, 68% were women, 22% were men and 10% decided not to mention their gender.

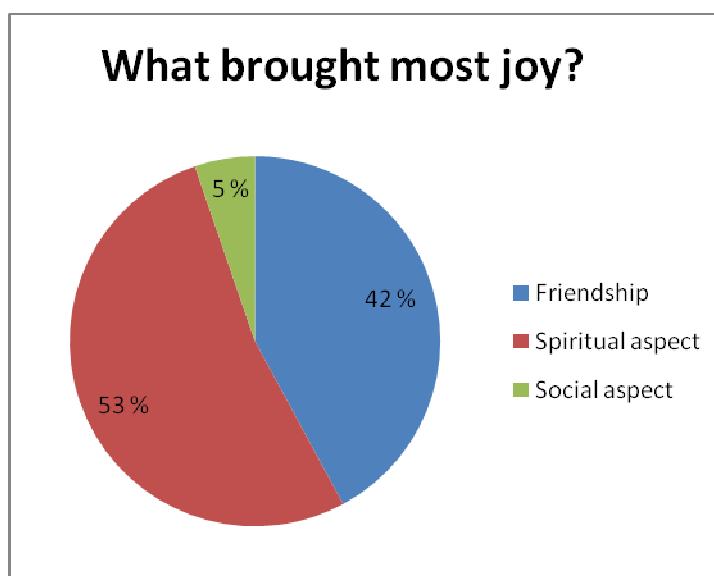
When asked about their reasons for entering officership, more than 50% of the respondents seemed to have pinpointed what the Salvation Army claims to be as an institution: "(The Salvation Army), an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church..."<sup>3</sup>. This is an important result as it shows that more than 58% of the interviewed people stated they joined for the right reason. What is worrying, though, is that 10% of these people have thought that just because they attended the Salvation Army as children; that they, somehow, were "supposed" to be officers. Another important fact is that 32% of the interviewed people stated that "it was the right thing to do". This is not very specific; however, some of the interviewed have said that they took the decision of entering officership as an impulse resulted of their conversion into Christianity. This is a decision that could jeopardize the officer's future, as people tend not to live in the past (when they had their first experience), but rather in the present and if the present experience is not similar or close to the one they remember, the chance in leaving officership might augment.



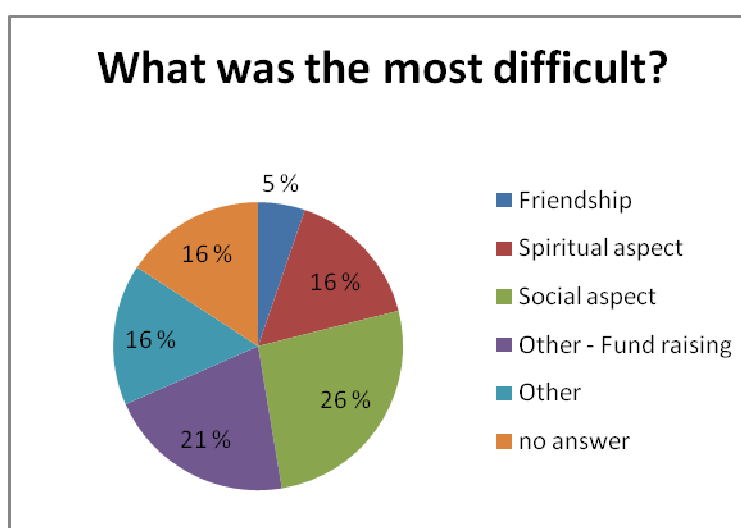
<sup>3</sup> The Salvation Army international Mission Statement



When asked about the things that brought them the most joy, the officers can be said to have two major joys in their lives: the friendship and fellowship that is developed throughout the years with the members along with the feeling of comradery; and the Spiritual aspect of the work, such as preaching and helping people to grow Spiritually (or to help them to deal with life's everyday issues from a Christian perspective).

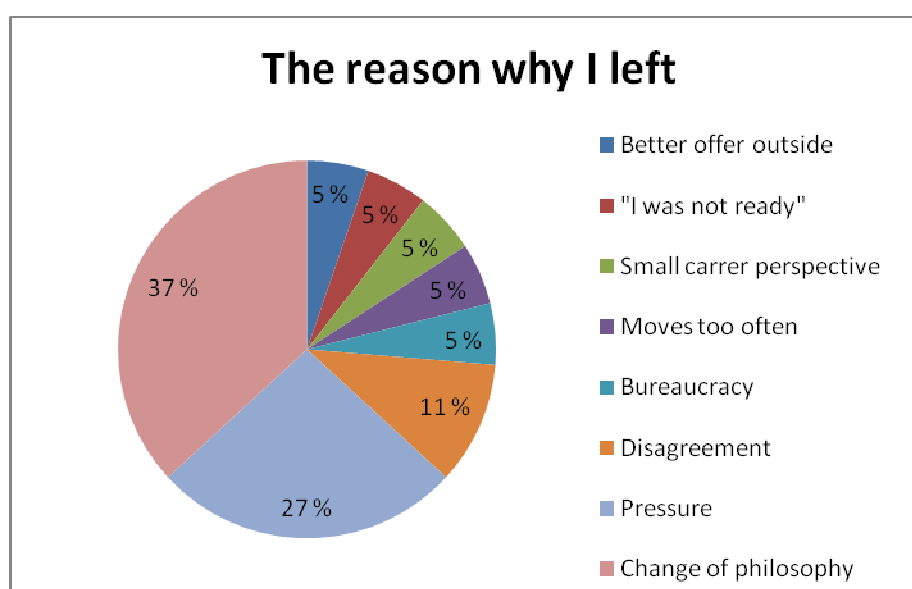


The answers were not so two-sided when the respondents were asked about the difficult things they had to perform. 26% of the respondents have stated that the social work expected from them was the hardest to deal with. Right at second place comes fund raising with 21%, which was felt to be quite demanding. One would think the respondents would point this option as one of the higher scoring as factors that would trouble them the most. In third place, a tie between Spiritual works, other factors and here one can see not all the respondents felt comfortable with answering the questions.



On the questionnaire sent to the subjects of this study, one will observe that the question “Does the reason for leaving the SA has something to do with any of the following reasons?” is an attempt to pinpoint the real reason why the respondents left their officer duties at the Salvation Army, however, it seems the answers can be divided in internal and external factors.

On the other hand, it seems that there is not one single item that got the subjects to make up their minds, but a sum of events that will trigger one’s desire to leave officership, therefore, to some of the respondents it was not very clear which was the best option on the questionnaire.



The internal factors could be divided as such: Personal change of opinion (change of values), Divergence with supervisor/boss (Clashes), Pressure and SA’s policies (to move often, bureaucracy, personal development within the company).

Personal change of opinion is one of the wider factors, as they vary from change in the officer’s change of opinion on sacrament or the Holy Spirit (theological questions), to marriage between officers and non-officers<sup>4</sup>. These changes happen after the officer goes through some sort of change in their way of thinking and is not able to either uphold the values of the Salvation Army or the officer makes a decision that, for the Salvation Army, is not in accor-

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<sup>4</sup> Before, officers were only given permission to marry officers. If the officer decided to engage in marriage with a non-officer, the Salvation Army would demote the officer from his/her rank. This changed by the end of the 90’s in Finland (other Territories decide individually how to proceed).

dance with what the Salvation Army believes (or it does not comply with the orders and regulations for officers).

Divergence is another internal factor that can cause quite a lot of discomfort among employees, especially on a Christian environment, where the workers are perceived as kind, gentle and polite. This can have very negative influence on people and it might influence whether if the person will, further on, remain members of the Salvation Army. In fact, depending on the circumstances and proportions, it can harm the company's reputation. Divergence can also take place between peers; either way, divergence can decrease considerably one's motivation to remain at the working place.

Pressure in the Salvation Army can be understood as the hurry to perform a task or the need to find ways to support the local mission (corps). Pressure is not only related to money, it can be also seen as the ever growing necessity of making new members, inviting new people and widening the area of influence of the Salvation Army in their cities. A specific time of the year where the officers are busier than average, is the Christmas time with the Christmas kettles collection. During the Christmas kettles, most of the officers have to be responsible for the kettles (in some cities more than one) itself, but the most demanding activities include distributing financial aid to needy people (clients) and arranging Christmas services for the same people.

The Salvation Army has its own way of performing everyday's tasks (such as reports, cash books etc.) and these can be time consuming. Also, another factor that is responsible for decision making are the boards (financial board, Board of Directors, property board etc.) which make The Salvation Army's decisions very bureaucratic. This is understandable as the Foundation is legally bound to the decisions made in its board; however the officers in the field sometimes tend to feel overwhelmed with the waiting involved in the process.

External factors can be listed as the following: Better job offer, Change of career perception (long term), Maturity level and Health Condition.

Better job offer comes to one's attention from time to time. Kim & Lee (2007, p. 229) also state that along with age and family size (number of children); salary, tenure, education and job availability are the five variables why one would consider while shifting positions. One must not forget about the current financial situation of the market, also as one important factor while considering leaving the current working place.

Changes of career perception may occur when one realizes that is no longer productive/worthy for one to remain at the same line of work, therefore one chooses to either go

back to school and seek for education and/or start a new business. This decision will happen usually after disappointment at the working place. This can be closely related to the financial compensation one expects to get.

The Maturity level can be another factor to influence one's decision in leaving a work place. One comes into realization that one is not ready for the perceived job; not professionally but mentally ready to perform according to the employer's expectations. This may take place when people make decisions impulsively. It is the typical "I did not know what I was getting myself into".

One's Health condition can change during the course of one's officership. Some health problems can worsen with time (aging) and other because of working conditions. Along with office work, officers might have to stand for long periods of time (during collections) and some may include weight lifting (some corps had to upkeep second-hand shops)

#### 4.3 Comparison

In 1977 a similar research was conducted by the, then, Territorial Commander Colonel Jarl Wahlström. He sent questionnaires to 210 ex-officers and asked about their reasons why they left officership. 122 ex-officers responded (58%) and the results pointed out several issues that should send a clear message to the SA leadership today.

One of the biggest differences was that in Mr. Wahlströms research the ex-officers could mark 2 or more items. There were two columns for each item: "primary motive" and "secondary motive". The respondents were also able to cross more than one option with the option of choosing whether if a particular item was a major or a minor factor while leaving their duties as officers of The Salvation Army. A system of points was put in place that in his findings, Mr. Wahlström points out as the main causes for withdraw (in order of importance):

1. Work related financial burden
2. Health issues
3. Lack of a "Pastor" in critical times
4. Depression
5. Too little education for the job
6. Family issues (had to look after parents etc.)
7. Spiritual weakening
8. Lack of spiritual results at the workplace
9. Loneliness
10. Marrying a non-officer

11. Time consuming (too little time for oneself)
12. Personal financial worries
13. Different doctrinal opinion
14. Too many responsibilities at an early stage with no resources
15. Desire to try “outside” opportunities

His results are very important and they portrait a clear picture of the situation lived by the Salvation Army then. The results obtained by the research done later, should show whether if some things were done to improve the situation of the officers of if the same results showed up again.

If one compares Mr. Wahlström’s research with the one done in 2010 by this author, one will realize that several things have changed however, some indexes remained untouched. Apparently it is not so easy to compare since the researchers use different terminologies but one cannot deny action was taken, then, to make easier for the officers to stay. One big change is that in 1977, Financial burden ranked number 1, now, none of the interviewed people answered that Financial burden was the reason why they left. Another difference, perhaps due to the fact that in this research several items were put together to form one, is that “Change in philosophy” incorporated “Different Doctrinal Opinion”, “Spiritual awakening” and “Marrying a non-officer” in Mr. Wahlström’s research. As far as similarities goes, in 1977, “Personal Financial worries” (low salary) ranked very low (12<sup>th</sup> place), while in this research, low salary was not chosen by any of the respondents.

Another important aspect of Mr. Wahlström’s research is the consistency to which the ex-officers currently attend the corps (as soldiers). According to him, 24% of the respondents have answered that they often go to a Salvation Army corps after leaving officership, 63% visit sometimes and 13% stated they never attend a SA corps. In this research, the respondents have answered the same question accordingly: 26% of the respondents have stated they attend often a Salvation Army corps, 37% stated that they only come sometimes and also 37% have stated they do not attend the Salvation Army anymore (have been either transferred to another Church or simply do not attend any Church). This is a big change in people not attending TSA. It is important to notice that being a considerably denomination (in Finland), every person that leaves officership is a huge loss for TSA as a company (in personnel) and as a Church (in members). As it can be noticed, the number of officers that stop going to a SA corps, has increased. This could mean that less people have ended their careers at The Salvation Army on bad terms, but also, it could mean that ex-officers found similar jobs in other religious institutions.

Finally, Mr. Wahlström also registered some comments the respondents shared:

*“I went to ‘war’ unprepared. I did not know what life was”.*

*“When younger officers come to talk about their difficulties, take them seriously - listen to them - help them and try to find the truth”.*

*“To collect money was the most important thing. From morning till evening we could be on the go”.*

As for this research, the comments:

*“To me, counseling and personal performance feedback/evaluations with their supervisor are important. Motivation and support to the officers are indispensable.”*

*“...Officers were divided in 3 categories: Headquarter officers, corps officers and at the bottom, social institution officers. There was no equality”.*

*“The life of an officer should be just like the life of people who work in other companies. The Salvation Army does not own the worker; it just offers them a working place”.*

Apparently the Salvation Army leadership in Finland has done some work in major problem areas. For example, now the officers are given the benefit of having a private health provider, so their health is better taken care of. This has proven to have indeed improved the health condition of the officers as none of the respondents of this research have pointed health as a major problem.

Some areas remained weak such as “counseling/support” (in Mr. Wahlström’s research also named “lack of a pastor in critical times”) as this was also mentioned by several interviewees on the open questions section of the questionnaire (see appendix 1). This is, according to many of the respondents, one of the most important (if not the most important) area where the leadership should work at.

It is important to notice also that several changes have happened, also in Finland, which has decreased people’s interest in attending the Church. This might have shifted the pressure from collecting money (fund raising) into making new members. Salvation Army members (as well as other denominations’ members) are, among other things, expected to support the Salvation Army financially however they can; with fewer members, it is naturally harder to find the local support that the members are able to give.

This research also confirmed what McDuff and Mueller stated “employees with more general skills are easier to obtain employment elsewhere, whereas those with only firm-specific skills will not” (McDuff & Mueller, 95). To some extent, Salvation Army officers have a very particular way of performing their work that not always can be compared with ministers from other Churches; therefore the small number in ex-officers that migrated to other Churches as pastors. In this research, only two ex-officers have stated they have become pastors in other denominations. This is not a surprise as The Salvation Army has a very specific way of working its ministry (with emphasis on the social aspect of one’s life). There is little chance of one migrating to another corps as all the Salvation Army corps are part of one big Salvation Army organization and are not independent; this is different from Baptist, for example, and other denominations with more freedom to hire whoever the congregation wants to hire. In these congregations, the number of moves between congregations is higher and there is less chance the minister will leave his/her ministry but they will leave their job (which is not that bad, considering only an internal move would happen).

## 5 CONCLUSION

Not long ago The Salvation Army had to deal with the withdrawing of several officers. While it remains uncertain whether if current officers will withdraw or not, it seems that The Salvation Army has not been able to cope with all the changes that have happened during time. The Salvation Army has made some positive changes such as allowing marriage between officers and non-officers; private health care and flexibility in training; however there are some areas that could be improved. For instance, the possibility for applying for jobs inside the Company (internal recruiting) and a clearer career path from the time the cadets are in Training College.

Another point that should be looked at and probably deserves special attention is work counseling. Work Counseling is the support the employees could have from someone outside their working place to discuss work related issues, share concerns, failures and successes. According to the subjects of this research, this was one of the things they missed (lacked) the most. Counseling should be taken perhaps not on a need basis, but on a regular basis.

To manage the personnel well is key to avoid another withdrawn of officers. It is, therefore, of extreme importance that officers are given, in the Salvation Army, the same opportunities that ministers in other Churches/Congregations are given in order to make the stay of officers more certain. Perhaps the creation of an informal group/union to present the Leadership with suggestions from the officers themselves could give the Leadership a clearer picture of the overall intention of leaving in the Territory is. The informal group/union should be formed by

officers; however the Personnel Secretary should be present to clarify possible tax/legal questions.

It seems that officers who left their duties are looked down or looked at with some disappointment. Perhaps the reasons why the officers left were not so clear but from the things some of the ex-officers wrote, it is almost as if they felt ashamed or they had no value after they have left the Salvation Army. Whether if it is due to the lack of information/communication to those staying or because those leaving, almost loose contact with TSA, something needs to be done about it.

### 5.1 Recommendations

It seems to remain uncertain whether if current Salvation Army officers will leave officership at the moment or not; however, some of the problems that the Salvation Army faced before could be acted upon, therefore, have the risk of having officers withdrawing reduced.

Several actions have been already taken by the Leadership (both local and international) of TSA as attempts to decrease the rate of officers' withdraw. Accepting marriage between officers and non-officers was, maybe, the first big step in giving the officers the possibility of harmonize both the personal and the professional life of the officers. This decision was taken by the Finnish Territory by the end of the 1990's and after that; none of the respondents have clearly stated that this was the reason why they left. However there is a negative side to this: this could limit the officers from moving to other cities (if their partner would not be ready to move i.e. for working reasons) and burden the officers married to a colleague as they would be easier to move around between appointments.

Another great decision that possibly will decrease officers' withdraw is the Flexible training. Flexible training consists in sending the cadets<sup>5</sup> to an appointment and having them to study at the Training College. This way, the person has a better grasp of the everyday activities and has a better sense of what they are getting themselves into. This experience for the cadets is more positive as they have to deal with the practicalities of officership earlier than those trained under the traditional model. This decision is more positive than negative; however, financially it has its downside. At conventional training colleges (2 years internship) cadets are interns and they do not get salaries, and only some basic expenses are paid for. Perhaps, also as a negative factor, one could argue that the teaching that one gets in the traditional Training College cannot be mimicked in flexible training; or that officers receiving flexible

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<sup>5</sup> A Cadet is someone who has expressed the wish to become an officer. The cadet joins the Training College to receive his/her education.



training lack some of the skills acquired by the ones trained in the traditional system. However, this would need further researching.

It seems only natural for the leadership to appoint people according to their abilities; however TSA has year after year been using people based in their potential for leadership (assumption) and affinity. Some teachers become leaders, some pastors become musicians and musicians become accountants. Understandably The Salvation Army does not have enough personnel to cover all the positions; however this generates lack of professionalism as people with little or no specific education are appointed into areas of great responsibility. If a long term career plan is implemented (already by the time one enters the Training College), one will be able to have a clearer picture of one's future and areas of interest/expertise so one will be able to work only at one's weaknesses. A detailed career plan should be with the cadet, Training College Principal and the Leadership with milestones and progress follow ups throughout the years. On the positive side, this would mean The Salvation Army would have specialists to work in their areas of expertise (reducing the need of hiring outside personnel, therefore, reducing costs with higher salaries). For the officer willing to explore other areas this would count as a negative factor, as it is the horizontal mobility that makes the work interesting for some. This would have to be discussed during the training years.

Informing officers about job availabilities could be another decision that could improve the level of service for specific appointments such as Youth Secretary, Training Principal, etc. These open spots would be announced through a bulletin with enough time so the Head of the Department could have time to interview all applicants and see if there is a solution inside the house before trying to hire someone from the outside/other Territory. This is a very common practice around the World in many companies. This could work as a positive thing as the officers would feel that they were given the opportunity to move between appointments (as opposed of being sent there). This also would, in case the Leadership finds a suitable person, make sure that the person is motivated to do the task they have requested to be apt to perform (through the intern recruitment program). As a negative effect this could generate unnecessary competition between officers

Another thing that might have shaped the decision of officers to leave is the perception of time. After the bank crisis in Finland in the 1990's, it seems that peoples' perceptions have shifted to a shorter term perspective. Before, people used to work at the same workplace for 30-35 years, people had bank accounts in only one bank and invested in long relationships. Perhaps to the officers changing careers is not something to be considered eternal; and the Salvation Army should also consider people to work as officers (perhaps use another name) for a predetermined number of years. This has also its downsides as it is harder for people to commit for long, however the commitment of the officers might be genuine, one can assume

no one signs up for a job already willing to leave it. In these days is not uncommon that people will change their line of work (profession). Sometimes it takes longer for people to realize if that is the kind of work they want to do, in other words, giving people the opportunity to work longer (without sending them to Training College) could make it clearer for people whether if that kind of job is what they really want to do.

Among professions where there is not much opportunity of seeking higher/leadership positions, such as physicians, nurses and priests, the number of “horizontal moves” is higher than “vertical moves”. This might also influence negatively the moral of the personnel as doing the same work (or remaining at a same position) for many years might be upsetting. It is a Salvation Army principle to pay the same salary to all its officers (except for a small additional after some years of service). It is important to come up with simple solutions otherwise these positions remain unattractive (without a raise, there is only an increase of responsibility). This symbolic raise would only be of a few hundred Euros; more as a bonus, as follows: 300 Euros for the Territorial Commander<sup>6</sup>, 200 Euros for the Chief Secretary<sup>7</sup> and 100 Euros for Section heads. While this could encourage officers to prepare themselves better to become Territorial Leaders, this could also lead competition and depending how this is done, it could generate disappointment and/or bitterness. This bonus could be subjected to the acceptance of the person taking up such appointment.

It might be a positive thing also, if the Officers are given the opportunity of being consulted while the Leadership is taking major decisions regarding one’s appointment (such as expanding, selling etc.). Consulting could give the officers the sense of importance, and even if they are not the ones giving the final word on the issue it might work to improve the officers’ moral. When people feel they are part of a team there is a feeling of belonging, thus, less chance for leaving one’s working place. This, in fact, is one of complains that active officers complains most about. Leaving the officers out of the decision making process can make the officer feel powerless and that they have no independence, which is connected to the next point:

The use (or misuse) of hierarchy. Is the Salvation Army really taking the most use of its hierarchy’s structure? The officer answers to the Divisional Commander <sup>8</sup>(DC), the DC answers to the Field/Social Secretary or the Program Section Head, these answer to the Chief Secretary

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<sup>6</sup> A Territorial Commander is an officer who is in charge of the Salvation Army within a Territory (which can be a Country or as in the United Stated, massive portions of land).

<sup>7</sup> A Chief Secretary is the second person in charge within the Territory.

<sup>8</sup> A Divisional Commander is an officer in charge of a certain area within a Country or Command.

(CS), the CS answers to the Territorial Commander (TC), the TC answers to the Zonal Secretaries<sup>9</sup>, the Zonal Secretaries answer to the Chief of the Staff<sup>10</sup> and finally; the Chief of the Staff answers to the General<sup>11</sup>. In other words, there are too many steps in this ladder and the regular officer (or officers not holding major influential appointments) has very little chance to influence somehow the World leadership of TSA. Now a days, people are more well educated than 30 years ago, people argue and analyze decisions instead of blindly accepting them. It seems to be more evident that the attitude: “I command and you obey” is not so well accepted. For officers who DO NOT possess what is considered “Leadership profile” and spend their entire life moving from city to city can be quite frustrating, which takes one to the next point:

Uncertainty of the future. At least 4 ex-officers have stated that “Fear of the unknown” was a major factor in their decision of leaving their duties at TSA. This could be also a problem in the Military forces, where soldiers and officers are sent for missions or to be stationed in different parts of the World. Further study should be done on how (active) officers feel about “having” to move as opposed as one asking (or being asked) to move. To solve this problem, again is necessary a clear career plan path to be established by the leadership and the officer as stated before. It is completely understandable that international Leaders (such as the ranks of CS and up) do not know the future location of their whereabouts, however for the regular officer there should be on the voluntary basis or as some Churches do: applying to work at a certain appointment, as it happens in regular/secular jobs. This could reduce the uncertainty of the future some officers’ fear.

One important change would be to setup a clear (or clearer) retention plan for officers. Financial compensation helps but it has only a temporary effect. I would be more important, however, to consider other options such as gym membership, education funding, tuition reimbursements, retirement plan or some other benefit.

As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, “Retention starts at the hiring process” (whether if one wants to think of the Salvation Army as a regular company instead of a Church or not). It would be very important to be able to identify from the start several variables such as: how long would the candidate/cadet be willing to serve for (this could be an initial commitment

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<sup>9</sup> Zonal Secretaries are officers holding responsibilities over many Territories. There are Secretaries for the Americas, Europe, Asia and Oceania and Africa.

<sup>10</sup> The Chief of the Staff is the second most important figure in the Salvation Army’s hierarchy.

<sup>11</sup> The General is the officer in charge of the whole Salvation Army worldwide. They are elected in a closed session by Commissioners and TCs from all over the World.

that could be revisited later)? How often (or even how far) would the candidate be willing to move away from his hometown? Would the candidate be willing to take up mainly religious appointments (such as Corps officer, Chaplain, etc) or more Social appointments (such as Goodwill Centers, Nursing homes, etc)? Or in other words: "where do you fit in the Salvation Army context"? Given the opportunity, how far would you like to go as far as career goes?

A good way of measuring the overall feeling among the officers would be to handle Satisfaction questionnaires on a regular basis (maybe every other year). These could be helpful for the Personnel Department to assess the officers' intention of leaving/satisfaction. This tool could be useful for long-term planning and perhaps to put a retention plan in place.

And, finally, greater year of service rewards could increase the interest of officers in serving for longer year. The Salvation Army has already a table with salary increments based on years of service. The suggestion here would be to review/update this list in order to make it more interesting for the officers; along with twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five and forty years of service bonuses.

Officers are the most valuable asset to the Salvation Army; therefore, there must be a balance in what is demanded/expected from the officers and what is offered to them (resources). Demanding more than one can deliver could generate a life of disappointment and could later; lead to the officer's withdraw. Demanding too little could lead to an officer living below his/her potential. Perhaps a clear long-term plan of development for each appointment should help the officers to reach their potential; however, this plan should be set between the officers and their supervisor.

Short-term serving as officers (perhaps under another name) should be encouraged. It is better to have someone working for The Salvation Army for 3-5 years than having no one working as officers because of the fear of the unknown (officers are not able to know in advance how their careers will be aspen in TSA).

It seems that making the ex-officers to think about the past and what happened to them; has helped them to deal with feelings from the past. It did not seem very clear to some that this was an independent research (some expected to be financially rewarded). And, at the same time as being very valuable the opinion of the ex-officers; it seems only 37% of the respondents would reconsider their decision.

Finally, one must not forget to mention that only the decisions made now will be able to affect the decision of the officers which are currently working at The Salvation Army and the officers that come to work in the future.

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## Appendices

### Ex-Officers Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to clarify the conditions in which Salvation Army (SA) officers have left their duties between the years 1980 and 2009. The results of this research is completely confidential and absolute no private information will be shared with any institution. I have no intentions of being bias to any of the sides. I do not represent the SA, but I genuinely would like to count on your sincere answer so the SA could make adjustments and correct some of the mistakes made in the past. Thank you for cooperating. Rodrigo Miranda.

- 1) Name:
- 2) Nationality:
- 3) Age/Year of birth:
- 4) Gender:
- 5) Current occupation/profession:
- 6) Year when commissioned as an officer:
- 7) Years working for the SA as an officer:
- 8) Could you shortly describe how/in which circumstances did you receive your call to be an Officer?
  
- 9) What attracted you more to become a SA officer?
  - a) That the SA was a Christian movement that emphasized the social help that one needs to cope in life (along with the spiritual help)
  - b) I felt this was the right thing for me to do
  - c) The possibility of work in different counties
  - d) The military style/the uniform
  - e) The possibility to exercise my faith on a daily basis
  - f) It was the Church where I grew up in and this was a natural step for me
  - g) The salary
  
- 10) Mostly, when I look back in time (at the time I was an officer), I remember it with:
  - a) Joy
  - b) Thinking it was something I did and I don't regret but life has moved on
  - c) Sadness
  - d) Shame
  - e) Hatred
  
- 11) During my serving years this was what brought me the most joy:
  - a) Friendship and fellowship
  - b) The Spiritual aspect of the SA

- c) The social aspect of the SA
- d) The office work (Cashbooks, reports, etc.)
- e) Other? \_\_\_\_\_

12) And what was the most difficult?

- a) Friendship and fellowship
  - b) The Spiritual aspect of the SA
  - c) The social aspect of the SA
  - d) The office work (Cashbooks, reports, etc.)

13) How did you spend most of your officership?

- a) Filling reports and cash books (at the office)
- b) With people (evangelizing)
- c) Collecting money
- d) With social activities (helping)

14) Before you left, were you offered the possibility to see a psychologist (or have some treatment in case of other diseases)?

- a) Yes
- b) No

15) Did you make use of it (in case of offered)?

- a) Yes
- b) No

16) Does the reason for leaving the SA has something to do with any of the following reasons?

- a. Salary (too low/too high)
- b. Lack recognition/appreciation within the company (rewards/praise)
- c. Different opinion from individuals (disagreement)
- d. Different opinion from the institution (change of philosophy/ethic)
- e. Lack of Diploma - "Officership did not give me a title/profession"
- f. Better offer outside
- g. "I realized I wasn't prepared for it/ I did not know what I was getting myself into"
- h. Pressure (to collect money, bring new people etc.)
- i. Not having the possibility to develop/grow within the company
- j. "I had to move too often"
- k. Long days (workload)

- l. Bureaucracy/too many rules
- m. Health problems
- n. Other. \_\_\_\_\_

17) After I have left my duties as an SA officer I have:

- a) Not attended the SA
- b) I attend sometimes the SA
- c) I attend always in SA meetings
- d) I attend/have been transferred to another Congregation

18) After I left my duties at the SA, I have:

- a) Continued doing what I did before I became an officer
- b) I went back to school and pursued another profession
- c) Pursued another profession that did not require me going back to school
- d) I have started my own business
- e) Spent most of my time unemployed

19) How hard for you was to find another source of income after you left the SA?

- a) Very easy
- b) Fairly easy
- c) A little hard
- d) Very hard

20) My contact with the SA now a days:

- a) I have nothing to do with the SA anymore
- b) I help sometimes in some social events (such as Christmas Kettles, etc.)
- c) I provide some type of free/voluntary service
- d) I work or have worked before (after I have left as an officer) for the SA

21) Would you say you had the support of:

- a) Your colleagues
- b) Your supervisor/leader
- c) Your local people
- d) Friends (outside SA)

22) Was the message of the SA (at your time) considered:

- a) Interesting, relevant and innovative
- b) Boring and old
- c) At the time I didn't think about this



- d) I didn't have time to always prepare something new/relevant
  - e) There were major changes on the society and was hard for me to stay up to date
- 23) Were you appointed mostly at:
- a) Corps
  - b) Social institutions
  - c) THQ (Headquarters)
- 24) Please assess your working conditions on the scale from 1-5, 1 being poor and 5 good:
- a) Working hours
  - b) Nature of assignments
  - c) Deadlines
  - d) Place of work (physical - Corps)
  - e) Your quarters (physical - flat)
  - f) Benefits (dental, health etc.)
- 25) Would you consider the Officer's job stressful? Why?
- 26) I see the Officer (profession) as:
- a) Admirable
  - b) A needed profession
  - c) A profession like any other
  - d) A profession that is not needed actually
- 27) I have thought of coming back to my officer duties:
- a) Often
  - b) Sometimes
  - c) Never
- 28) In your opinion, what would be an effective officer?
- 29) In your opinion what could the Salvation Army do to prevent current workers to leave their jobs?

In your case, what would the SA have to do for you to stay? Would you consider it?