

OCS Chapter Marketing Toolkit

Zero-Design-Skills Required | Maximum Impact

Built for: Volunteer chapter leaders with 2-5 hours/month for marketing

The 80/20 Rule: Do These 5 Things, Skip Everything Else

1. Set Up Once, Use Forever

Time investment: 1 hour

Create a Canva account (free) and use OCS templates:

- Go to canva.com/templates
- Search "Our Community Salutes" or use this link: [OCS Brand Kit]
- Favorite these 5 templates:
 1. Save the Date graphic
 2. Registration Open graphic
 3. Speaker Announcement graphic
 4. Week Before Reminder graphic
 5. Thank You Post-Event graphic

Never design from scratch again. Just swap in your event details each year.

2. The Only Email Campaign You Need

Time investment: 30 min per email × 4 emails = 2 hours total

Send exactly 4 emails. That's it.

Email #1: Save the Date (12 weeks before)

Subject: Save the Date: [Your Town] Honors Military Enlistees on [Date]

[Town name] is honoring Class of [Year] high school grads entering military service.

Date: [Date]

Time: [Time]

Place: [Venue]

Registration opens [date]. Mark your calendar.

Email #2: Registration Open (8 weeks before)

Subject: Free Event: Register Now for [Your Town] Military Recognition Ceremony

Registration is open: [Link]

We're honoring [number] graduating seniors joining the military. Bring your family. It's free.

[Date] at [Time]

[Venue name and address]

Register in 60 seconds: [Link]

Email #3: One Week Out (7 days before)

Subject: This Saturday: [Your Town] Military Ceremony Details

This Saturday, [Date]

[Time] at [Venue]

What to know:

- Doors open at [time]
- Parking: [simple directions]
- It's free but register here: [Link]

See you Saturday.

Email #4: Thank You (2 days after)

Subject: Thank You for Honoring Our [Year] Enlistees

Thank you for showing up.

[X] seniors heading to basic training got to hear "thank you" before they left.

Photos: [Link]

Video: Coming next week

See you next year.

3. Social Media: Post 2x/Week for 6 Weeks

You can schedule these in 1 sitting! Batching and scheduling your posts all at one will save you 2 hours!

How to Schedule Social Posts (Free)

Facebook + Instagram:

1. Go to business.facebook.com
2. Click "Create Post"
3. Write post, add image from Canva
4. Click "Schedule" instead of "Post Now"
5. Pick date/time
6. Repeat for all 6-12 posts in one sitting

Takes 1 hour once. Posts go out automatically. You're done.

4. Recruit Military Recruiters to Do Your Marketing For You

Time investment: 30 minutes

Call each local recruiting station (Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard).

30-second script:

"Hi, I'm [Name] with Our Community Salutes. We're hosting a free ceremony on [Date] to honor your high school enlistees before they ship to basic training. Can you forward our registration link to your Class of [Year] recruits?"

Then email them this:

Subject: Free Recognition Ceremony for Your [Year] Enlistees

[Recruiter name],

Thanks for taking my call. Here's the info to forward to your high school enlistees:

Your Community Wants to Say Thank You

Before you ship to basic training, [Your town] wants to honor you at a free ceremony:

[Date] at [Time]

[Venue]

Bring your family. Get a certificate. Hear from [notable speaker if you have one].

Register: [Link]

Questions? Contact [Your name] at [Email]

5. Print Exactly 2 Things

Time investment: 1 hour

Thing 1: Programs (one per attendee)

Order from local print shop.

8.5x11 folded in half. Inside:

- Welcome message (3 sentences)
- Program order (bullet list)
- Speaker names and titles
- List of enlistees by branch
- Thank you to sponsors (if you have them)

Cost: \$50-100 for 100 copies

Thing 2: Certificates (one per enlistee)

Template available from OCS USA or create in Canva using the template.

Must include:

- "Certificate of Appreciation"
- Enlistee name
- Branch of service
- Date
- [Your town] Our Community Salutes

Print on certificate paper from Staples.

Takes 2 days.

Cost: \$20-50 for 50 certificates

The Marketing Calendar: When to Do What

Total time investment: About 8 hours spread over 12 weeks = 40 minutes per week.

Week 12: Save the Date (1 hour)

Week 8: Registration Open (1 hour)

Weeks 6-1: Social posts (30 min/week or 1 hour then done)

Week 2: Order printing (1 hour)

Week 1: Final details email (30 min)

Day of: Photos + live posts (30 min)

Day +2: Thank you email (30 min)

Total: 6.5 hours over 12 weeks = 30 min/week (if you batch social)

Tools You Actually Need

Provided by OCS USA:

1. Canva Free (design): canva.com
2. Registration platform: Already provided by OCS USA

Local Chapter Paying For:

1. Photography: \$200-500 for ceremony day
 2. Printing: \$100-150 for programs and certificates
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What to Do When You Have NO Enlistee Names Yet

Don't panic. Do this:

1. Contact recruiters first (use script in section 4)
2. Ask for "Class of [Year]" estimates, not names yet
3. Promote the ceremony anyway with "[X+] seniors enlisting" language
4. Collect names as families register
5. Update programs 2 weeks before with final list

Reality check: Most chapters get 50-70% of names within 4 weeks of the event. Build your marketing assuming you DON'T have a complete list. That's normal.

When to Ask for Help (And When Not To)

Ask OCS USA for:

- Registration platform access/help
- National sponsor logos
- Ceremony video templates
- Brand guidelines (logo usage, colors, fonts)

Ask your volunteer team for:

- Sharing social posts
- Forwarding emails to their networks
- Texting their contacts about the ceremony
- Taking photos on their phones during the event

DON'T ask for:

- Someone to "manage our social media" (that's a part-time job)
 - A graphic designer to make "just one more flyer" (use Canva)
 - A website developer (you already have a website)
 - A marketing consultant to "review our strategy" (you don't have time)
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Final Checklist: Marketing Edition

12 weeks before ceremony:

- Set up Canva account, favorite OCS templates
- Send Save the Date email
- Post announcement on social media

- Start collecting email addresses for next year

8 weeks before:

- Send Registration Open email
- Post registration reminder on social media (2x that week)
- Contact military recruiters with registration link

4 weeks before:

- Email local media with story pitch
- Continue social posts (1-2x per week)

2 weeks before:

- Order programs and certificates
- Send final details email
- Post daily reminders on social media

Day of ceremony:

- Take photos (or assign someone to do it)
- Post 1-2 live photos to social media

2 days after:

- Send thank-you email with photo gallery
- Post thank-you + photos on social media

You're done. See you next year.

Troubleshooting: When Things Go Wrong (And They Will)

Problem: Recruiters aren't responding to my calls/emails

Solution:

- Call during recruiting hours (usually 9am-3pm weekdays)
- Try walk-in visits to recruiting stations—they're more responsive in person
- Text if you have a cell number (faster than email)
- Ask OCS National for direct recruiter contacts in your region
- Focus on one branch that responds first, expand from there
- One engaged recruiter beats five unresponsive ones

Problem: Registration numbers are low (under 20 people with 3 weeks to go)

Solution:

- Email your list again (people forget—it's not annoying, it's helpful)
- Post daily on social media the final 2 weeks
- Ask recruiters to personally text their enlistees: "Did you register yet?"
- Have volunteers text/call their networks directly
- Add "bring a friend" language to all promotions
- Day-of walk-ins are normal—don't panic about the online count

Problem: I don't have a big email list

Solution:

- Start with what you have: friends, family, church, school contacts
 - Ask everyone to forward the registration link to 5 people
 - Post registration link in local Facebook groups (town groups, parent groups, veteran groups)
 - Email local media—they'll often include the link in coverage
 - You need 50-100 people in the room, not 5,000 on your list
 - Next year: Start collecting emails at this year's ceremony
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Problem: I can't afford a photographer

Solution:

- Ask a volunteer with a decent phone camera to take photos
 - Assign 2-3 people to take photos during the ceremony (more cameras = better coverage)
 - Use portrait mode on iPhone/Android for ceremony shots
 - Post a sign: "Tag us in your photos! #OCS[YourTown]"
 - Download attendee photos from Facebook after the event
 - OCS National may have video templates you can use instead
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Problem: The venue fell through / We lost our venue

Solution:

- Contact: VFW halls, American Legion posts, high school auditoriums, community centers, libraries
 - Most veteran organizations will host for free or low cost
 - Churches often donate space for community events
 - Worst case: Plan a shorter outdoor ceremony (park pavilion, town square)
 - Backup plan: Virtual ceremony using Zoom + OCS National video templates
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Problem: No one is engaging with our social media posts

Solution:

- Ask 5-10 volunteers to like/comment/share every post (this triggers the algorithm)
 - Tag local businesses, schools, veteran organizations in posts
 - Use local hashtags: #[YourTown] #[YourCounty] #[YourState]Military
 - Post at 6-8am or 6-8pm (highest engagement times)
 - Include faces in photos—posts with people get 38% more engagement
 - Stop worrying about likes—focus on getting 50+ people in the room
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Problem: I'm doing this alone and I'm overwhelmed

Solution:

- You don't need a team of 10—you need 2-3 people doing specific tasks
- Recruit: One person for emails, one for social media, one for day-of logistics

- Use the 5-thing system in this toolkit—ignore everything else
 - Set a timer: 40 minutes per week, then stop working
 - Ask OCS National for help with registration platform or templates
 - Remember: Done is better than perfect. This ceremony will happen.
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Problem: The brand guidelines say I can't [do something] but I need to

Solution:

- If it's a logo/color/template issue: Use the Canva templates—they're pre-approved
 - If it's a judgment call: Ask yourself, "Will this help enlistees feel honored?"
 - If yes: Do it. You're a volunteer, not a brand manager.
 - If you're genuinely unsure: Email OCS National and move forward while you wait for a response
 - The goal is honoring enlistees, not perfect brand compliance
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Problem: It's 2 days before the event and I forgot [something important]

Solution:

- Programs: Print at FedEx/Staples same-day (costs more, but it's done)
 - Certificates: Print on regular paper, put in nice frames from Dollar Tree (\$1 each)
 - Photographer: Ask 3 volunteers to take photos on their phones
 - Speaker backed out: Ask a local veteran, teacher, or coach to say 3-5 minutes of thank-you remarks
 - Decorations: You don't need them. Enlistees care about the recognition, not the décor.
 - Breathe. The ceremony will happen. It will mean something. You've got this.
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Still stuck? Email your OCS USA rep. That's what we're here for.