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Recruiting videos ring in on cell phones

By Chris Amos - Staff writer

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The Navy Reserve has found one more way to encourage you to sign up.

Since November, sailors passing within 30 feet of selected pay phone kiosks on 13 Navy bases in California, Virginia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida have received a prompt on their Bluetooth-enabled cell phones.

Those accepting the prompt see a two-minute video encouraging sailors to consider transitioning to the Navy Reserve when their enlistments end.

Mark Brodtkin, chief executive officer of OutdoorPartners, an advertising agency and owner of the company that manages Navy Reserve Bluetooth advertising, said the video takes about 30 seconds to download and is viewable on most cell phones built within the past three years.

And when it cannot be viewed on a cell phone, the video can be saved and downloaded onto personal computers or forwarded to other cell phones that are capable of showing the video.

It features testimonials from Navy reservists, is free and does not count against a sailor's wireless airtime.

Advertising officials say Bluetooth advertising is ideally suited for Navy bases for two reasons.

"The [base] audience tends to be younger, and they are much more technologically savvy than the general population," said Jennifer Moynihan, spokeswoman for Campbell Ewald, a separate advertising firm that manages several Navy recruiting ventures.

Cmdr. Dave Hostetler, advertising planning officer for Navy Recruiting Command, added that the program makes sense because most Navy reservists come from the active-duty Navy, meaning that the video is much more likely to be seen by the Navy Reserve's target audience than would more traditional advertising.

Brodtkin said 50 pay phone kiosks have been placed in such high traffic areas as near Navy Exchanges, movie theaters and dining halls. A transmitter within the kiosk broadcasts the prompt to all cell phones within a 30-foot radius.

Grant Connelly, spokesman for OutdoorPartners, said Bluetooth advertising is effective even when sailors refuse to accept the prompt, because many will look around to see

where it came from. When they do, they will see the kiosk, a Navy advertisement emblazoned on its side, reminding them with the message, “Make a difference a few days at a time,” that their future services are desired.

Every sailor accepting the prompt has seen the same video, Grant Connelly, spokesman for OutdoorPartners, but officials said they were unsure if the prompt would be sent every time a sailor passed near a kiosk in a commonly trafficked area, such as a dining hall.

Moynihan said Outdoor Partners has been impressed with the results of the campaign because it has achieved better results than similar advertising campaigns by such famous brands as Absolut Vodka, McDonald’s, Coca-Cola, American Express and others.

“They’re blown away by this,” she said, citing a statement released by Jay Kovalick, an account manager for PrimePoint Media.

“These are by far the best that any Bluetooth program has ever had,” the statement read. “We have never seen published opt-in rates that come close to the U.S. Navy Reserve’s percentages. All the numbers that I have ever seen for a Bluetooth numbers in the [United States], the Navy Reserve’s numbers are three times better.”

The Navy program is scheduled to end Jan. 21, Hostetler said, but he added that the campaign’s success makes it likely to be funded in future Navy recruiting budgets.

“It’s very, very likely that this will be included,” he said.

But Hostetler acknowledged that it was difficult to connect the program with improved recruiting results because the program is so new and because the Navy Reserve buys advertising in numerous media, and advertising’s effect tends to be cumulative.

“[In] Today’s media market, our target market consumes media in so many different ways,” Hostetler said. “We have to use as many media as possible to ensure we get our message to them. We are technologically astute in the Navy, and we want people to understand that we are.”

Hostetler declined to discuss the costs of the program, because he said Navy Recruiting Command does not break down advertising costs by particular campaigns.