

Recruiting and Retention

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| Lesson Objective: | Discuss the importance of recruiting and retention to your unit. |
| Behavioral Objectives: At the end of this segment you will be able to: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Discuss the importance of recruiting.2. Formulate and apply recruiting techniques for cadets and seniors3. Define "retention".4. Discuss the importance of retention in maintaining the quality and continuity of their unit.5. Formulate and apply retention techniques for cadets and seniors.6. Discuss the importance of recruiting their maturing cadet corps into the senior member program. |

Overview

The most importance resource you have in your unit is not a material resource. It is the people. Without motivated, knowledgeable members, squadrons cannot function. Think about it, how much can you get done at a meeting which occurs the week of a holiday like Christmas? Without your people there, not much.

A good unit doesn't just happen, it's built through the vision and work of you - the commander - and immediate staff. Everything you do must be built around the people it has and the people it must get. There is no substitute for a good recruiting and retention program.

Recruiting

People won't come to an organization if they don't know it exists and don't have at least a broad idea of what it does. It is up to *you* to introduce and sell CAP in your local community. It may seem like a real challenge; but let's take a minute and look at what recruiting can do for your unit. You'll see that the advantages are well worth the effort.

a. ***Effective recruiting builds a good foundation of people for your unit.*** You'll have a strong nucleus of members you can depend on to get the job done. These people will be motivated, and will bring in more members.

b. ***With effective recruiting, your unit can broaden its base of knowledge and specialties.*** The more people you have, the larger the collective knowledge base becomes. This is where you can take advantage of target recruiting. When you target recruit, you look for people with skills that are important to your unit's individual mission: pilots for SAR, teachers for aerospace education and the cadet program, EMT's for ES and chaplains for moral leadership.

c. **Effective recruiting continually brings in new blood to stimulate creativity.** Good recruiting programs bring in new people as needed, and expands to fit the needs of the unit. The new people brought in come with new skills and new ideas, to keep the unit's approach fresh.

Stagnating units have problems. They can't change with the times. Eventually old ways to do things won't work. People will become frustrated and bored. Eventually, many will leave.

Units that stay fresh can keep up with the times, and aren't afraid of change. Its people are continually challenged and will find the answers.

d. **It alleviates unit turnover.** All units have turnover, it's natural. Cadets go off to school, get married, or join the military. Seniors have family changes, find new jobs, and move away. Effective recruiting programs ensure that this normal turnover isn't a roadblock to unit progress. It ensures that you always have the people you need to accomplish the unit mission.

e. **It counteracts member burnout.** Very often unit that don't have effective recruiting programs have members holding several jobs. Now in reality, most squadrons piggyback some jobs. But effective recruiting can help ensure that piggybacking is minimized, and that all members have a manageable work load.

Recruiting is really a fairly simple process, but it does take effort. Effective recruiting programs cannot be once a year programs. To be effective, they must be continual, because at the heart of recruiting is having the community know who you are.

This is where your public relations officer can help. Part of the job is making sure the public knows what's happening with your unit. The PAO has access to publications, videos, audio tapes, and other materials from HQ CAP/PA which can help you design an effective program.

There are many ways to recruit new members. Just a few are:

a. **Developing a unit home page on the World Wide Web.** Millions of people work with World Wide Web daily, and many are in your hometown. Web sites can be linked to one another, so people can find you even when they are not looking for something specific. HQ CAP has its own web site, and would be more than happy to have you link up to it.

b. **Hold open houses several times a year.** You can hold one at your unit, at the local airport, or military base. This is a great opportunity to present awards, welcome new members and show off what you can do.

c. **Attend career days at local schools.** Many schools hold career days where people representing many fields come in and talk about their profession. A good portion of those schools may allow you to participate and talk about CAP and what it does for the community.

d. **Encourage the cadets to wear their uniforms once a month at their school.** Schools may grant permission to students to wear organizational uniforms to school. Some groups which take advantage of this include varsity sports teams and scouting programs. Wearing the CAP uniform not only promotes the organization but also builds esprit with the cadets.

e. **Display recruiting materials at shopping malls, stores, and airports.** There is a wide variety of recruiting materials which you can display such as posters, flyers, videos, and audio tapes.

Effective Recruiting:

- Builds a _____ of people for the unit
- Unit can broaden its base of _____ and _____
- Continually brings in new blood to stimulate _____
- Alleviates _____
- Counteracts member _____

Recruiting Techniques

- Develop a _____ on the WWW
- Hold several _____ annually
- Attend career days at _____
- Encourage cadets to _____ at school one a month
- Display recruiting materials in _____
- Target recruit for members with _____
- Encourage _____ to join

One of the greatest recruiting tools you have is the CAP News. It has a wide variety of stories covering all the missions of Civil Air Patrol, and has an eye catching and easy to read format. Most of all, the information is fresh and current, giving potential members a good idea about what CAP does.

f. **Target recruit for members with special skills such as firefighters, police officers, teachers, EMTs, and chaplains.** Target recruiting is a great way to fill needed vacancies. There's nothing wrong with introducing yourself to local teachers and emergency personnel. This way you can build both a working relationship with the parent organizations (the school, fire or police department, etc), and you can build individual interest in the CAP program to accommodate your unit needs.

g. **Encourage parents to join.** Parents make great members! They have an active interest in what your unit does because of their children's membership, and in many cases they are available because they are their children's transportation to and from the meetings.

Many units continually recruit, others concentrate on recruiting drives during several key times of the year, such as the beginning of the school year or during the spring. Whatever you decide, know that the work you put into recruiting pays off in the well trained unit you create, the variety of activities and programs the unit will be able to support, and the service to the community you serve.

Retention

The best laid recruiting plans may go awry if there is no program to keep the members once they've joined. Retention is the act of keeping and maintaining a solid foundation of people. Poor retention is the death knell for CAP squadrons.

Why is retention so important? Why can't you as commander just keep recruiting people to fill your needs? Those are good questions; so let's look at them one at a time.

Retention in your squadron is vital for a variety of reasons, and most of it concerns time. It's the time you have to train and administer the unit, and the time they have to devote to the unit constructively. Good retention:

a. **can reduce the need to constantly train new people.** Training new people is a draining process. If you keep building from scratch, you can never really broaden your skills as a unit. There will never be time for advanced training. It will get frustrating for you, and the people who remain because you'll just be covering the same rudimentary information time and time again.

b. **provides for corporate memory and history, so members know why something has taken place, not just the what.** Members who have been with the unit for a long time know what the unit is good at, they know the people within the unit and community. They build networks. They know what has to be done on a regular basis, and how to get it done.

c. **counteracts member burnout by providing enough qualified people so members won't have to piggyback positions.** Like you, members become tired and become frustrated when things get to be too much. When a member leaves, his or her job still has to be done, so someone has to take the job until another person can be found.

As more people leave, the work is left to fewer and fewer people. They become frustrated because they may not have the time to get everything done. Schedules may be adjusted to drop activities and people may lose interest. It creates a downward spiral that if not checked, can be disastrous.

List three reasons why retention is vital to your unit:

Turnover is very healthy because it eliminates dead wood and brings fresh blood and ideas to your program. While you can't completely eliminate member turnover, there are some effective techniques to ensure that retention problems don't get the best of your unit. Some approaches to look at are:

a. **Make full use of a unit awards and decorations program.** Not enough can be said about the value of a simple "thank you". Everyone needs to be appreciated. In CAP, there really isn't much else we can give but our thanks. What CAP does have is an awards and decorations program that anyone can use to recognize the valuable contributions of the member. It takes time on your part, but the time will be well worth it.

b. **Encourage vigorous but useful training.** Members become frustrated quickly when they don't know how to do their jobs. An effective training program can eliminate this, and CAP has a variety of training aids available to assist. Another thing to remember is that CAP's training programs are active programs. They require member contact with each other. The senior member training program is an excellent example. Though it's considered "on-the-job" training, it's important to know that OJT is a supervised process. Members should not be expected to learn their job totally by themselves.

c. **Schedule occasional activities away from the squadron.** Field trips and the like are great ways to bring training to life. It's okay to talk about what happens at commercial airports, but to go to one and see the inner workings brings all the senses into the learning process. Besides, it's fun to get away and have a change of scenery. It gives everyone a break.

d. **Be sure you communicate effectively with your members. Make sure they know what's going on and that you are approachable.** There are few things more frustrating than to learn of an activity or suspense date the day after it was to take place or was due. When members feel "out of the loop" they feel unwanted.

By that same token, if they feel they can't give you feedback they also become upset. If you don't listen to your people you can't respond to their needs.

e. **Ensure that routine administrative matters are handled effectively, to make things run smoothly.** Put simply, pay attention to the details. A "routine" promotion for you is not routine for the member who's getting it. Keep up on the paperwork to ensure that your members don't have to wait for their 101 cards, Form 5s, promotions, and training awards. It will also keep your readiness level up because your people will stay qualified.

f. **Make and stick to a schedule.** There is a direct relationship between the quality of the meeting and the planning of the meeting. If you keep winging it, you will limit what can be done during the meeting because you didn't take the time to plan. Making the time to plan, and sticking to what you've come up with gives you much more latitude in terms of what you can do. Your people know and can look forward to what's in store for them.

It's also important to make them a part of the planning process. This way you both win. They feel they have some "ownership" in the schedule, and you can delegate tasks to give you more options.

g. **Encourage people to participate in the process of running the unit.** Again, when you do this you both give them "ownership" in the unit and make them feel as important as they are; you also create more options for yourself by broadening the base from which you rely to administer the unit.

Retention Techniques

- Make full use of the _____ and _____ program
- Encourage vigorous but useful _____
- Schedule occasional _____ away from the squadron
- Encourage effective _____
- Ensure _____ are handled effectively
- Make and stick to a _____
- Encourage members to participate in the _____ of running the unit

Retention is simply making your members feel wanted and needed. When they do, they will perform for you, and your unit will flourish because the member will recruit.

How can turnover be HEALTHY for a squadron?

Recruiting Cadet Members

A word about recruiting cadets into the senior member program, because sometimes it's taken for granted. Cadets sometimes see moving into senior membership as an alien concept. In many cases they don't really know what the program is about, or necessarily want to find out because they feel that they won't have as much unsure about their new place as seniors.

It's up to you as the commander to present the senior program to them as an attractive option, providing them with as much fun and challenge as the cadet program. You almost have to recruit them as you would a member off the street; because as much as they do know, they just aren't exposed to the senior member side of the program; and they won't be as familiar with it's OJT philosophy. This is because they learn in a lecture - seminar format, much like what they are familiar with.

Having a cadet turn senior is good for the unit because they already know a great deal about CAP and your local program. In many cases they have been exposed to and know what to do, how to do it, and why in subjects such as: emergency services, communications, and leadership. It just doesn't make sense NOT to recruit them.

Why would encouraging one of your cadets to turn senior be good for your unit?