

The “Committed Volunteer”

Lesson Objective:	Discuss the role of the volunteer within the CAP unit.
Behavioral Objectives: At the end of this segment you will be able to:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe what motivates members to join CAP.2. Explain how to attract motivated members.3. Describe volunteer obligations after joining CAP.4. Explain how to foster a sense of commitment to their volunteer members.5. Distinguish when it is best to let go of a volunteer.6. Ways to exit gracefully.

Overview

This segment will re-introduce you to the volunteer member. While you are a volunteer, you have ascended to another level of CAP membership by taking a command. You are not just a volunteer member yourself. Now you must attract, and keep, volunteers in your squadron.

What follows is a some fact, some deductions, and some common sense.

Why Members Join

Members join volunteer organizations - in this case CAP - for many reasons. Every member has his or her personal motivation for joining. Many times, these individual reasons may be grouped together into categories: *a sense of belonging*, or *having a conduit to fly*, or *desire to help children*, and many other reasons. Nearly all members have as part of their personal motivation a desire to serve the public. This is generally what distinguishes volunteers from hobbyists - public service. That's terribly important, because it is in itself a powerful motivator and rallying point.

The key here is to understand that as a commander you have to know and understand the reasons why your members join Civil Air Patrol. You need to know because those reasons have a large impact on the direction and success of your unit. You need to know because your ability to retain members in your unit relies on your ability to integrate their goals and ambitions with the mission. If you don't know or don't care about why your members are with you, than the unit will lose them, and will suffer.

What are three potential reasons for a person to join CAP?

Attracting Motivated Members

How do you attract people to CAP? This is really a marketing problem. As you know, people don't normally just walk in off the street and say, "I want to join". Normally, they find out through word of mouth, advertising, through family members, or through military or aviation channels, such as aero clubs. More and more people learn about CAP through the World Wide Web.

This may make people aware of what CAP is, but it doesn't necessarily get people to join. You and your unit are where volunteers make the decision to commit or not. So first - and most importantly - you need to be honest with them. You need to tell the potential member exactly what CAP means, what you expect of the person if they join, and finally what they can expect from you and the unit.

When you do this, take into account the reason why the member is there in the first place. Why do they want to join? Knowing that will help you and the member determine the best place for them in the unit. And you as a commander can begin to figure out how the new members services will contribute to the unit. This should not be a haphazard operation. Studies have shown that volunteers would like to be treated as professionals, so do exactly that.

Just as employees will look elsewhere for a job if they feel their office/company isn't being run efficiently, with a defined vision and goals, they won't volunteer to give their time and resources to an organization that doesn't know what it wants, or treats their people poorly. Remember, they are giving themselves, the most important resource.

Attracting Motivated Members (do's)

- Be _____ with them
- Take into account _____
- Show them you will treat them as _____
- Have an _____
- Show them where they will _____

Volunteer Obligations After Joining

But, just as volunteers wish to be treated professionally, you should expect professional quality work from them. As you know, when a person joins CAP, he or she has certain obligations to uphold as a condition of membership. Among them are:

- Adherence to all CAP regulations and directives
- To act morally and responsibly when performing CAP activities
- To complete a task volunteered for or assigned

It's useful to note that employers expect the same things from their employees. And as commander, you should naturally expect compliance with lawful orders. Sometimes, it is said that because a volunteer is not paid, they should not be held to the same general standard of conduct. This should not be the case. When volunteers join an organization, they also consent to accept the norms and rules of the group they associate with. It is not a free for all. If a member does not feel obligated to perform an assigned task or follow CAP directives, they should be counseled.

On the other hand, as a commander you should realize that a member's service to CAP is in addition to many other obligations: those of work and family in particular. Those obligations will and should always come first. CAP membership is an individual's choice. Just as they volunteer to join, they make the decision to leave. Respect that. While it is acceptable to expect a reasonable standard of conduct; it is also wise to respect the time and service constraints of the individual member.

Because the bottom line is your unit is only as good as the talent of the members, the time they can contribute, and your ability to manage them. Set a reasonable standard, provide a professional environment and expect professional quality behavior in return, and you'll have gone a long way towards success.

When a member joins CAP, s/he agrees to uphold certain obligations associated with membership. List three:

Complete this sentence: *While it is acceptable to expect a reasonable standard of conduct; it is also wise to* _____.

Fostering a Sense of Commitment

How do you instill a sense of commitment on your volunteers? Well most of the time, they bring a sense of commitment with them. Your job is to tap that.

As an example: look at the cadets in your wing. Have you been to a cadet activity recently? An encampment, drill competition, or model rocket making contest? Look at how seriously they take their commitment. Ask yourself as commander how easy it is to motivate them to do their best. It may be more of a learning experience for them, but most treat the experience with great respect and enthusiasm.

Fostering a Sense of Commitment

- Tap their own _____
- Set the _____
- Allow them to _____ in the decision making
- Promote _____
- _____ right, _____ wrong

Perhaps they do. Cadets understand that what they do can help them later on in life. They understand that although they can't do a lot of what the seniors can by regulation or law, they want to do all they can, the best they can. Cadets want that trust.

You want to foster that same sense of duty and commitment in those seniors who are responsible CAP equipment, property, and moreover the lives of those cadets. That's the point you have to get across.

The first thing to do, and the most important, is to *set the standard*. You as commander must be the example. If your commitment to CAP, and the especially your unit wavers, how can you expect your members to give their all? You must clearly delineate what you expect from your people. You must show them the vision and goals which the squadron must accomplish. Then, you must show your own personal commitment to those goals.

Another way you can foster a sense of commitment is *to give the members a voice in running the unit*. Allow them to participate in the decision making. After all, you can't get anything done without them. Have them help you establish the goals and vision for the unit. When your boss sets down his vision for what he or she wants to do with the wing, share it with the members. Invite them to help you "get there".

Promote teamwork. All CAP members are part of a larger whole. Impress upon them that they can get much more done together than if they worked separately. Let them know that their individual contributions are valuable, to you, to their personal and professional development, and to the other members.

Reward members for what they've done right, and help them understand and correct what they've done wrong. *Always*, always, thank them for the good job they do. It's the only real currency you have to pay CAP volunteers. They will never get too much, and you will never run out of it. At the same time, help them understand any deficiencies they have and assist them in correcting them. This is not only good business, it will also help them if they have to do the same thing at their paying job, or when interacting with people from outside CAP.

When to Let Go

Sometimes however, the best you can do just isn't good enough. You may run into a member who cannot or will not conform. You may get a member who is burned out, or changes personal priorities, or moves away. There are times when the best thing you can do is to let them go.

Some commanders watch members come and go through a revolving door, and do almost nothing to change the trend. They never see the warning signs members' give off before they leave, and they never find out what happened after they have gone. When that happens the message they give to the member who's leaving and to the members who remain is: "I don't care".

This is absolutely the wrong approach. Be attentive to your members. Watch for the signs of trouble: chronic tardiness or absenteeism, less attention to detail, poor grooming standards, improper uniform wear (especially if they have been conscious of their appearance in the past), etc. Ask them what's happening. Encourage them to talk. You may not get an answer immediately, but they will notice your concern.

While you should be attentive, and do everything you can to retain them if possible, don't harass them. You can go too far. If you would feel uncomfortable with what you are doing if someone was doing it to you, back off. Pressing the issue after its dead does nothing positive, and only sours the member's impression of CAP.

When to Let Go

- Be _____
- Watch for signs of _____
- Don't _____ the member

The Exit

If they choose to leave, ask them why they are leaving. Explain that you want to fix the problem, for them and the other members. It may not change their mind. But you will have displayed to them your sincere concern.

The objective here is to have the member leave with the best possible impression of your squadron. You want to make them feel that their time has not been wasted.

There are times of course, when the member leaves due to improper conduct. In this instance your best bet is to remain professional at all times. Keep the standard high; and reduce the stress of such an exit on your other members.

There is no easy way to handle members who won't perform. Letting someone go is one of the most difficult jobs you will have - especially if they will not leave on their own. You have to decide whether it is worth the trouble of initiating a termination action. This area of command is called *adverse member actions*. While we will cover adverse actions in the next section, it will be briefly summarized here.

The Exit

- Ask _____ they are leaving
- Leave the member with the _____
- If the parting is under poor circumstances, be _____

Adverse Member Actions

- Talk to your _____ and _____
- _____ incidents, actions, and all matters leading up to and during termination
- Consult the CAP _____ Handbook

If you run into a situation where you feel you must terminate a member, there are several things you should do first. The most important thing you can do is to talk to your wing commander and wing legal officer; they will be able to tell you exactly which steps to take and how to handle the appeals process. Also consult the CAP Adverse Member Actions Handbook.

One of the things they will tell you is to document the process. Document incidents, and all matters leading up to and during termination. The wing legal officer will tell you how to document throughout the termination process. This is extremely important, especially when there is a possibility that the termination will result in legal action taken against CAP.

As a general rule, remember why you joined, recognize that to do a good job you must set the standard, know that your members must balance their CAP commitment with their personal lives, treat them the way you want them to treat you, and finally, know when to let go. This is a good recipe to foster commitment.