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CIVIL AIR PATROL

Training Leaders of Adult Members

A Guide to a Successful Senior Program



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PREFACE

The senior member program of the Civil Air Patrol is the backbone to several other aspects of the program to include the cadet program, emergency services, and the overall supervision of the unit. However in many instances the program exists only as a support mechanism for these and does not have structure, goals and a mission of its own. This can lead to a less than enthusiastic senior membership and that becomes self-evident when the membership roster dwindles and the seats become empty on the meeting nights.

The simple application or structure, similar to how the cadet program was developed, can create an environment where the adult membership knows what missions they are tasked with, what goals have been set forth to achieve the mission, and gives them an overall purpose for attending the meetings. This also allows each member to be empowered to take a leadership role in their area of expertise and begin to grow the leadership bench by giving members the opportunity to fail forward and to succeed.

OVERVIEW

This publication is tasked with giving Squadron Commanders, Deputy Commanders, Deputy Commanders for Seniors and any other member of the leadership team a perspective structure guide that could be employed in any squadron with adult membership. The suggested weekly meeting guide brings all of the elements of the Senior Member Education & Training Program, the Specialty Track Program and emergency services training together and then adds the leadership element to the program. The Training Leaders of Adult Members Program does not recreate any of the elements within Civil Air Patrol but more it brings those elements to the table to become essential tools in developing, reviving, and maintaining a senior member program that thrives and is able to be mission and leadership focused.

WHY DO ADULTS VOLUNTEER

When we grow older and develop, time becomes a commodity that we learn is limited and we begin to prioritize where we can allocate our time. If we are successful in selling our organization and its missions and goals we are able to get that potential member to show up. Once we have done that we illustrate to them our mission and goals and begin to draw the bigger picture of how we accomplish them and the most important element to that potential member...how they fit



into that picture. Most at that point have a good idea of whether they will allocate their time to our cause and that is where the work begins. We make promises of opportunities and accomplishment during the courting process and the real work begins when they are assigned that CAP ID and begin to expect dividends on their time investment.

Understanding the motivations of adult volunteers allows us as an organization to become successful in retention and thus keeping seasoned and trained members on our bench. Psychologist Mark Snyder, PhD of the University of Minnesota stated, "Different types of volunteers have slightly different levels of these motivations. Younger volunteers, for example, are more likely to volunteer for career-related reasons, while older volunteers more often cite abstract ideas of good citizenship and contributing to their communities."¹

The leaders within our organization must make a concerted effort to understand the needs of our members and the individual motivations behind their volunteerism. While most would tell you that recognition is not a reason for their efforts it is known that part of human nature is to be recognized in some form for their successes and this a powerful tool for us. Warren Brown with LinkedIn stated, "A little token of Appreciation is one of the best ways to grow, encourage, keep and get more volunteers to support the cause and thereby harness the unlimited Volunteer Power which is sweeping across the world."²

OBSTACLES TO A SUCCESSFUL SENIOR PROGRAM

The recruitment of members into the senior program is definitely an important element of a successful program, however if we do not follow through on our commitments to the success of the new member then we have failed in our mission before it ever gets started. Adult volunteers give their time when they feel that they receive a return on investment. They expect that their time will be used in a purposeful manner and that they can gain a feeling of being part of the bigger picture. "A lot of people state that they lost interest after a while because they did not feel like they were getting anything in return."³ A lack of organization of a senior program can lead to slipping into a routine of not using the members' time in a meaningful way. The loss of purpose is a paramount factor in members deciding not to contribute to the mission and in the end no longer maintaining membership. We can see these results very easily by noticing the amount of empty chairs at our meetings and events.

The foundation of a new member's success begins at their initial introduction to our program. Education and training is a vital key to creating a trained and ready bench of members and that is reciprocal to the success of the senior program as a whole. When a new member has no direction and begins to struggle in the initial onboarding process this will lead to frustration that can and inevitably will lead to stagnation in the initial training that forms the members trajectory for future success. Many new members enter the program with initiative and excitement that is all too often extinguished by frustration in the process.

The duty position and correlating specialty tracks give a new member a way to find their place in the overall success of the organization and how they fit into the bigger picture that is illustrated by the commander's intent and vision. All too often members are dropped into vacant duty positions just to have a "place" or out of sheer laziness of the leadership. The lack of connection of the new member and the leadership is a direct failure on the part of the leadership and does not coincide with the servant leadership model. We must take the time to learn the needs of the membership so that we as leaders can take the necessary steps to make sure that they have the opportunities to succeed.

WHAT DOES A SUCCESSFUL SENIOR PROGRAM LOOK LIKE

The leadership of the organization directly correlates to the success of the program. Servant leadership is a model that places the burden of the success of every member on the backs of the leaders and this is the example that we should be using. Simon Sinek states in his class Leaders Eat Last, “When leaders create the right conditions and environment for their people, individuals instinctively support one another. When everyone feels they belong and are able to show up together with purpose, potential is limitless.”⁴ When we as leaders are able to create this type of environment we allow our members to buy into the bigger picture that we illustrate with our commander’s intent. True leaders are able to gain the trust and loyalty of the members they serve by being empathetic to their needs and providing the opportunities that are necessary for them to fail forward and to succeed. These are the elements necessary to create the leaders of tomorrow today and that is the true mission of servant leadership.

So when we find that leader that is willing to provide the crucial elements necessary for success, what does that look like? The Civil Air Patrol has numerous metrics that higher level commanders use to decide if we are being successful. These include numbers on the roster, progress through the education & training program, specialty track ratings, and mission capabilities. However the appearance of a successful program can look a lot different from the perspective of the squadron and flight. The local units are where the general public encounters the Civil Air Patrol and this is where the work of the CAP takes place. Recruiting and all the necessary elements for retention occur at this level so the measures of success take on a crucial change from those on reports. The first true measure of a successful senior member program can be measured by the number of chairs that are filled. It is easy to look at a unit’s roster and see 20 senior members and assume that it is a program that is being run successfully. However if you truly have 5 of those 20 that show up regularly then you may feel differently about the success of the program.

The successful senior program is one that does complete all of the measures that were mentioned above but pairs that with a leadership program that develops members at every level to be formal and informal leaders in the organization. There is a clear mission that each member can claim responsibility for and is vested in seeing through. This vesting is again accomplished by the employment of servant leadership and giving each member the chance to take a role in the success of the organization. When this happens the chairs are full on meeting nights and everyone



demonstrates initiative in accomplishing their duty assignments and making the mission accomplishable. When the call comes in that a mission has been assigned the successful senior program is mission ready and willing to respond because each member understands the importance of their role and has been aggressive in preparation.

HOW DO WE CREATE A SUCCESSFUL SENIOR PROGRAM

There are many elements involved in creating a successful senior program but they are all based on structure. The cadet program was structured at NHQ and trickled down the echelons for the squadrons and flights to implement.⁵ There is flexibility to a degree in how that program is implemented but the structure remains. The expectations are clearly articulated and the structure allows the command staff to develop the details necessary to accomplish the cadet program goals. On the other hand the senior program is the senior member program within the CAP is left to the innovation, creativity and resources of each individual unit and commander. The structure associated with the cadet program ensures that the same opportunities for success and excellence are available to all units across the organization through resources and training of the staff and this should be used as a guide for the senior program. Many units suffer with recruiting, retention and general motivation of its senior members and oftentimes this can be corrected with structure and assignment of meaningful tasks to each member.

THE POWER OF THE MONTHLY MEETING AGENDA

One of the greatest tools that exists in the cadet program that provides structure for every meeting is the monthly meeting schedule. This simple tool allows the cadets to know what to expect and how to prepare for the meeting in advance. This essential tool is usually missing in senior programs that are struggling to keep their members engaged and active. All too often when there is no meeting agenda and plan the senior membership shows up and the entire meeting passes with stories of the week and discussions of days gone by. The implementation of an agenda similar to the cadet program lays out goals and measures for each meeting and the underlying benefit of this is that each individual meeting is an element in the greater mission and its success. The key elements that should be covered on the monthly agenda include leadership training, education & training program, emergency services training and specialty track breakouts. Attachment 1 demonstrates a monthly meeting agenda that has been successful in a composite squadron's senior program.

THE LEADERSHIP TRAINING MEETING

It has been mentioned in many different sections of this pamphlet that success in the Civil Air Patrol is directly associated with leadership. Leadership training and discussion is essential to the success of the senior member program. Hall of Fame Coach Vince Lombardi stated, "Leaders aren't born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work."⁶ There are many different ways to approach leadership training and they can include formal leadership training, book club type discussions focused on a specific title or topic, guest speakers and hands-on activities such as leadership Jenga. Each member should be encouraged to take responsibility for a leadership meeting and bring their own ideas to the table. This empowers them to take a leadership role and be in charge of the success of that element of the program.



THE EDUCATION & TRAINING PROGRAM

The Civil Air Patrol National Web Page describes the education & training program as, "...a continuum of professional education for our members through a deliberate and collaborative effort. Our program intentionally develops individual competencies of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and aptitude by developing self, others, ideas, and our organization as a whole." ⁷ Each member that joins the CAP enters the training program at Level 1 which introduces them to the organization, its customs and practices and expectations. Progression through the program gives the membership continuous training that allows them to grow in understanding and application of the core values and mission of the Civil Air Patrol. Senior programs that are not successful often show little progression through the program and this can often be attributed to a lack of knowledge of the member in how to navigate the program as well as the benefits and expectations involved in completion of each level. So how does a successful senior program overcome this challenge? Again the structure involved by using a monthly agenda can address this. Planning a meeting night every month that can be used to employ the use of an in-house Volunteer University Instructor to teach modules to the members to keep their forward momentum in the program. This time can also be used to mentor any members that need guidance in navigation of the program and analysis of their progress. Stagnation within the program has historically been associated with a lack of knowledge of how to navigate the program.

EMERGENCY SERVICES TRAINING

Many of the members of the Civil Air Patrol joined to serve in a real world capacity through ground operations, air operations, sUAS operations and others. The leadership at the unit level is charged with ensuring that the membership is trained and operationally ready to successfully complete the missions of the Civil Air Patrol as the Auxiliary of the United States Air Force.⁸ This on element is a driving force for membership and when harnessed can be a motivational tool that also assists in mission readiness. Training in the different elements of emergency services can be offered on the monthly ES meeting night that creates a meeting that is more hands-on and can break the monotony of the meetings that are more cerebral and academic.

THE SPECIALTY TRACK BREAKOUT MEETING

The Education & Training program is an academic format that gives the membership an opportunity to improve their knowledge of the philosophies, values, goals and missions of the Civil Air Patrol. This is essential to develop the membership in the knowledge and leadership skills necessary to keep the bench of future leaders full. There is also another aspect of professional development in



CAP and that involves a more hands on or on the job training approach. When a member is assigned a duty position it can not be automatically assumed that the knowledge to successfully complete that job is inherent in the member. Oftentimes a member chooses an area that is of interest to them and may be a completely new endeavor. The specialty track program pairs a member with a mentor and an established training path to gain

the skills necessary to become proficient in their duty assignment. These specialty tracks are another area that is often lacking in a senior program that is not successful. Much like the Education & Training Program, progression through the specialty tracks requires guidance and motivation that can be encouraged by assigning the program a meeting within the structure of the senior program. During these meetings the members can use the time to accomplish items that are required on their task guides as well as seeking any guidance on what they need to accomplish. The importance associated with a member being adequately trained in how to accomplish the requirements of their duty position can not be overstated. A successful senior program is often fueled by forward momentum and consistent progression through the specialty tracks accomplishes this while at the same time developing a bench of trained and ready members that can staff and operate the units. When leadership assigns enough importance to the specialty tracks to dedicate a day on the monthly agenda it demonstrates to the membership that they are dedicated to the members success and development. This in turn, again, gives the members an opportunity to excel and succeed which is the true meaning of leadership.

SUMMARY

The successful senior program is one that is active and motivated. Historically units with a struggling senior program are not led by a long term set of goals and a structured program. The success of this type of structure can be witnessed in the cadet program. There are many elements of the senior program that are necessary for success and these are often left to the members' own devices to navigate, understand and execute. Research of modern volunteering and the psychology of why adults volunteer clearly illustrates that adults value their time and when they choose to give it freely to a cause they expect that they will be used in a purposeful manner. Faltering membership numbers and more importantly attendance can often be attributed to failed leadership or just a misunderstanding of the needs of an adult volunteer program. The servant leadership philosophy that is employed by the top levels of command in the Civil Air Patrol should trickle down to all echelons and be instituted. This leadership philosophy places the burden on the shoulders of the commanders to ensure that each member is trained, educated and empowered to become leaders both formally and informally. The simple addition of a structured program like the one illustrated in this pamphlet can create the environment that is necessary for a thriving, successful and operationally ready senior member program.

Attachment 1
Senior Member Program Monthly

1st Meeting Night	Leadership Training
2nd Meeting Night	Education & Training Program
3rd Meeting Night	Emergency Services Training
4th Meeting Night	Specialty Track Breakout Day

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