



Foundations for Volunteer Leadership

GOALS FOR THIS MODULE

1. Discuss the concept of “valuing” members in a volunteer organization.
2. Identify factors that motivate people to volunteer.
3. Describe basic expectations volunteers and leaders have of one another.
4. Explain how mentoring can help new members get started in CAP.

CAP needs active members, men and women who are eager to serve their communities. Active members attend unit meetings, follow through with the tasks they agree to perform, train to increase their skills, and cooperate with the other members of the CAP team.

In CAP, the formula for developing a corps of active members is found in the concept of valuing. Good leadership is about valuing each member. CAP leaders demonstrate that they value their fellow volunteers by providing them with opportunities for personal achievement, allowing them to make discoveries about themselves and others, and helping them form social bonds that strengthen the community.

Valuing Defined

According to the Compact Oxford English Dictionary, there are several definitions involved in the concept of “valuing.”

- *Value* – The regard that something is held to deserve; importance or worth; principles or standards of behavior
- *Valuing* - To consider to be important or beneficial

Every CAP member is considered important and beneficial to the organization.

PART I

The Call to Serve

To value each member, it is necessary to understand why he or she has volunteered to serve. What motivates people to donate their time and energy to the community? Some factors that call people to serve include:

- Achievement
- Recognition
- Personal growth
- Giving something back
- Bringing about social change
- Family ties
- Friendship and a sense of belonging



New volunteers will undoubtedly recognize some of their own motivations in the list above. Everyone in CAP needs to understand how these principles of volunteerism shape the organization.

Achievement

New members value the opportunity to contribute. When leaders recognize their contributions, volunteers gain a sense of satisfaction and achievement. Accomplishing the mission and discovering new capabilities in oneself are two of the compensations valued by new members. The opportunity to accomplish something worthwhile and to see how one's personal effort contributes to the mission will motivate new members to stay involved. It is important for CAP to provide new members with these opportunities to achieve by matching the new member with the job that is likely to provide the kind of results the volunteer values.

Recognition and Positive Feedback

Contributing to the mission can be its own reward. Many volunteers do not seek any recognition for their efforts, but good leaders will always say thank you, even if the member feels the thanks is unnecessary. Whenever possible, feedback needs to be *immediate* and *specific*. The message of appreciation can be more meaningful if someone in authority delivers it. If organizational support is missing, this sends a message to new members that their efforts are not valued; therefore, it is important for *everyone on the team* to recognize new members' contributions as they are made.

Don't underestimate the power of positive feedback.

*Do it now. Be sincere. Be specific.
Do it often. Do it evenly. Make it public.
Make it appropriate to the effort.
Do what's right for the personality of the member.*

Among the major rewards and incentives for new members is the opportunity for personal growth. Discovering new skills and capabilities, learning more about themselves and other people, and overcoming personal challenges often serve as key motivators for volunteers.

Giving Something Back to Society

New members value contributing to society and that underlies their commitment to join Civil Air Patrol.

New members may hope to contribute something to society and that drives their commitment to join CAP. They want a better world to live in, and they have recognized that it starts with their contribution by volunteering with CAP. A related theme is that of establishing stronger ties to their community through CAP volunteer involvement. CAP can provide opportunities to work with others in related community organizations.

CAP members are dedicated to service for the common good; and as volunteers in CAP activities and programs, they become everyday heroes working for the betterment of society.

Bringing About Social Change

New members value and get satisfaction from educating people about the causes and organizations they work for. There is a great sense of bringing about social change that occurs when new members are well prepared to voice the good CAP does for America.



Family Ties

Many volunteers make CAP a family activity. It is common for volunteerism to “run in the family.” Researchers have found that people who volunteer during their teens are more likely to volunteer and contribute to civic life as adults. When families volunteer together, the family is strengthened, and children grow up believing that volunteerism is an important aspect of citizenship.

Friendship, Support, Bonding, and a Sense of Belonging

Belonging is about being connected to others – being welcomed and accepted.

For many new members, the human factor is the paramount reason for joining CAP. Making new friends, building new social links, and developing a feeling of belonging are some of the reasons members find value in being involved in CAP’s programs. CAP becomes an especially enjoyable way to perform community service when members count many friends in the organization.

PART II

Leadership in a Volunteer Organization

While each member may have a unique reason for joining CAP, it is fair to say that all members hold in common some basic expectations about their leaders. The list below, paraphrased from *Volunteers: How to Get Them, How to Keep Them* by Helen Little, summarizes basic leadership guidelines CAP encourages all members to follow.

1. *Tasks that match each member’s interests*
 - Members should be allowed to identify what tasks they prefer to do.
 - Members should be asked what they want to learn or accomplish by volunteering.
2. *Reasonable tasks and fair deadlines*
 - Members agree to follow reasonable timelines for assignments.
 - Agendas and notices must be received in plenty of time to elicit feedback.
 - Members should not be overwhelmed by assignments.
3. *An understanding of the “big picture”*
 - Members are shown how their tasks fit into the overall mission.
 - Members know the benefits of completing the tasks on time and well.
4. *Easy to understand instructions*
 - Members need access to program manuals, forms, and instructions.

- Members should receive a summary of task descriptions that save volunteer time.
- Members should be able to contact other volunteers and staff by phone or email if they have questions.

5. *Adequate training*

- Members should receive training that helps them succeed in the organization.
- Members should be invited to attend professional development courses.
- Mentors should be available to work with a new member on an individual basis.

6. *A safe, comfortable, and friendly working environment*

- The organization should meet in a physically appealing and safe place.
- The meeting location and time should be convenient to most group members.

7. *Meaningful feedback*

- Members should be thanked for their efforts.
- Feedback should be two-way, allowing both the leader and the new member to offer constructive comments.
- Leaders should provide practical tips to help a member improve volunteer job performance.

8. *Thanks and recognition*

- Recognition and rewards are important.
- If the task is especially challenging, the reward should be greater and more significant or prestigious.

9. *Opportunities to lead and grow within the organization*

- Members should have opportunities to function as leaders or supervisors as their experience grows.
- Leaders should keep volunteers informed of the different avenues for serving in the organization.



10. *Opportunities to partner with employers*

- The organization should provide brochures to help employers understand why the employee's volunteer service is important to the community.
- The organization's professional development program should help members develop leadership skills that can be applied in the workplace.
- Members should identify and apply for employer grant programs that would help CAP further its mission in the community.

Leadership in CAP begins with valuing the efforts of each member. Volunteers offer their time, energy, and financial resources to support the humanitarian missions of CAP.

Recognition, appropriately expressed, of their efforts, of the sacrifices they make, will create a spirit of commitment among new CAP members and will deepen the commitment of all others.

PART III

The Importance of a Mentoring Program for New Members

Retaining new members is essential to the vitality of Civil Air Patrol, and those first experiences are critical to establishing their commitment and level of contribution. The most promising start new members can experience is often through a mentor relationship. A mentoring program matches a new person with an experienced person who is willing to serve as a coach, guide, teacher, or advisor, and sometimes serve in all of these roles.

Because mentoring is a one-on-one activity, the relationship between the mentor and the new member is flexible, and interaction is unique to each relationship as it is worked out by the two members. The experienced CAP member in the role of mentor has continual involvement with the new member offering support, guidance, and assistance as the new member becomes familiar with CAP missions.

CAP is a complex operation. Its leaders have to know how to motivate a great number of staff and volunteers, set realistic goals, and comply with CAP regulations and policies. Mentors' best advice early in the relationship helps new members learn what is important and what takes priority in the first six months and the first year. New members will appreciate the mentor guiding them through the maze of information.

While the mentor has a responsibility to help the new member accomplish a positive start in an unfamiliar organization, the member must actively participate in the process as well for mentoring to succeed. Mentoring works best

when new members make a list of questions to ask their mentors, listen carefully to the mentors' advice and direction, and voice any concerns they have about the organization so that the mentors and other leaders have a chance to resolve any problems early on. Mentoring is effective when both the mentor and new member work together. Each individual will gain from the mentoring experience only what he or she invests in it.



Conclusion

All CAP members are valuable to the organization. The experienced members help to indoctrinate the new members and accelerate the new members' contributions. New members contribute fresh perspectives and additional links to the community, among other assets. New members also have interests and needs that they bring to the organization, and they should be asked to articulate them. When these needs are met with appropriate training, feedback, and recognition, new members will be successful and will enable CAP to continue its tradition of service to the community, to America's youth, and to the nation.