

# Recruiting and Retention

## CAP Officer Basic Course

### Introduction

Active Duty, Reservists, and Guard members have recruiting offices, professional recruiters, budgets, structured events, and established tools and processes to conduct a highly successful recruiting program. Civil Air Patrol uses volunteers, innovation, opportunities, and unit resources to recruit members. Retaining members requires professional leadership and knowledge of some basic concepts on why volunteers stay and why they leave. In this lesson we will describe some of the current practices and trends in Civil Air Patrol. We will look at the importance of retention and provide you with some examples, tips and guidelines to get started on developing an effective unit recruiting and retention program.

### 1. Describe CAP's recruiting and retention program.

CAP units at National, Region, and Wing have designated staff positions for Recruiting and Retention Officers. At Group and Squadron level, this role is often an additional duty depending on staffing availability. The duties of the Recruiting and Retention Officer are found in CAPP 226, Specialty Track Study Guide for Recruiting and Retention Officer, and include:

- Planning and Conducting membership drives;
- Making presentations to outside groups;
- Placing recruiting posters and materials in strategic locations;
- Staging display booths at high schools, shopping centers, air shows, and other public events.

There are a number of resources available to the Recruiting and Retention Officer. First and foremost are the members themselves. From staffing booths to inviting friends to meetings, but the best recruiting resource is the member himself. The CAP Public Affairs office can provide recruiting materials, posters, brochures, etc. Materials can be ordered on the CAP website. A CAP 101 Power Point presentation is also available for speaking to non-CAP groups. Developing a network of contacts with local and state community leaders can also be a valuable resource for attracting new members.

#### COMMON RECRUITING METHODS

Over the years, CAP units have found several common methods to generate interest in CAP:

- Information booths at local public events. This is a low cost, and highly effective method of recruiting.
- The National Headquarters (NHQ) inquiry list. This list is generated at NHQ and contains information on persons who have actually contacted CAP either by telephone, mail or internet asking about the organization and seeking more information on how to join. The lists are forwarded to Wings and are accessible to Commanders at all levels.
- CAP visibility at public events, etc. This is probably the single most effective recruiting tool and the most underused. Local parades, veteran appreciation days, community picnics, aerospace events, etc. are ways successful CAP units are getting the word out about CAP.
- Other methods used include writing news articles in local papers, fundraising events, inviting friends, and word-of-mouth recruiting.

#### RETENTION TRENDS IN CAP

As of March 2009, CAP membership was around 56,000. Of these, approximately 22,000 are cadets. Retention rates are mediocre for adults and even less for Cadets. An estimated 20-30% of senior members do not renew after their first year. For cadets, 50-55% of them do not return after the first year.

In 2006, CAP NHQ conducted a Recruiting and Retention survey of current and former CAP members. The most common reasons senior members gave for joining the program were: flight opportunities, support a son or daughter in the program, and desire to perform community service. Cadet responses were: invited by a friend, flight opportunities, and military training.

When asked the reasons they chose not to stay in CAP, the most common response from both Cadets and Senior Members was lack of professional leadership.

## **2. Discuss the differences between recruiting members and retaining members.**

Recruiting is defined as attracting new members to join the organization. This may be accomplished through a variety of methods described above. Recruiting efforts target the people who may have little to no knowledge of CAP. Focus is placed on the activities of CAP. Our three mission elements are: Aerospace Education, Cadet Programs, and Emergency Services. Fun, the uniform, a sense of belonging, opportunities to fly, etc. are all attractions to potential recruits. The opportunity to fly or to serve the community is a common reason for new senior members. Military appearance, opportunity to fly and a variety of activities attract cadet recruits.

Retention is defined as keeping volunteers coming back year after year, and this is where the most effort should be placed. The best recruiting drives are of no use if the members do not return for a second year. A lot of effort and expense is poured into the recruiting effort. If an equal amount were spent on retention, our numbers would be increasing rather than decreasing. The reasons that attracted a new member are vastly different from the reasons he or she will stay or leave the organization. Members must be given meaningful roles, and solid leadership. A member spending all his or her time at meetings standing around with nothing to do, or with the perception that the unit commander isn't providing adequate direction will not renew their membership.

## **3. Discuss the elements of an effective unit recruiting program.**

Before a unit can keep its members, it needs to have a good program in place to get members through the door. The first step is to have a healthy sense of pride both in CAP and in the unit itself. A unit with good morale and proud of its programs and accomplishments will want to tell others about it.

Another important attribute for a unit with a strong recruiting program is that it isn't afraid of rejection. Sales people will tell you that they are rejected up to 70% of the time. And yet, the best sales people keep on "truckin." In a town of 50,000 people, if a unit can get 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1 percent of the townspeople to join, that's 50 members. Doesn't seem that hard when we put it that way, does it?

### **GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITING**

Develop an annual plan for recruiting events. Get commitment from senior members to participate and help with planning and staffing events. The annual plan should include community events; military events; speaking to other organizations, community leaders, and schools; and getting flyers and articles out into the media.

Examples of effective events include:

- Information booths at community fairs;

- Recruiting and information booth at local air shows. This type of event is one of the most visible and effective for recruiting;
- Recurring advertisements in local and military base newspapers as well as targeted ads to places frequented by teenagers such as pre-movie ads at the theater;
- Participation in annual parades where volunteers hand out brochures;
- Volunteering to help at other organizational events to gain exposure and recognition, i.e. the base picnic;
- Partnering with other organizations with similar interests at large events, i.e. Red Cross, Boy Scouts, AOPA, etc.

#### **4. Discuss the elements of an effective unit retention program.**

Once you get new members in the door, the challenge changes into keeping them. Every time a new member is lost from CAP, it's not just that member; it's also the goodwill the member generated for CAP to his/her friends and family.

Have a look at the principles below, developed by "Campaign Consultation, Inc." If a unit adheres to these principles, members are more likely to stay.

**Principle:** *Volunteers stay if their tasks and procedures are clear.*

- How do you train volunteers?
- What materials do they receive to clarify their tasks and procedures?
- What areas of confusion exist? How do you know?

**Principle:** *Volunteers stay if they feel welcome and appreciated.*

- What do you do to ensure that staff and sites welcome volunteers?
- What do you do to recognize and reward them?

**Principle:** *Volunteers stay if they bond to someone within the organization.*

- What opportunities do members have to get to know staff and other volunteers do your assignments offer?
- Do you use teams or buddy systems to accomplish goals?
- How can you ensure that volunteers feel connected to others?
- Does your unit socialize outside of meeting times?

**Principle:** *Volunteers stay if they receive feedback that connects their job to program success.*

- How does staff monitor and help develop volunteer competencies?
- Does your unit employ mentoring?

**Principle:** *Volunteers stay if they have a voice in the organization.*

- Are you open to suggestions and feedback from your volunteers?
- What opportunities do you create to receive feedback?

- How do you involve volunteers in planning new initiatives?
- How do you know they are invested?

**Principle:** *Volunteers are motivated by opportunities to learn new skills.*

- What are the skills volunteers can learn from your assignments?
- How can you identify the skills your volunteers want to learn and continually allow them these opportunities?

**Principle:** *Volunteers are motivated by opportunities to "change the world."*

- How can you design volunteer assignments so that they see the opportunity to create change and make a difference?
- What ways can you identify and recognize volunteers' ability and progress in creating change?

#### EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR RETENTION:

How can the principles mentioned above be employed practically, especially to get a member through their first year? Here are some thoughts for senior retention:

During an initial orientation, find out what skills or interests the new member has.

- Execute effective, comprehensive Foundations summary conversations.
- Employ "Great Start" for senior members.
- Assign a mentor to the new member.
- Suggest a specialty track related to the interest area.
- Assign a role (even if it is assistant to the "assistant something"). The role does not have to be related to the specialty track. It does need to be something meaningful that the unit needs and the new member can do or learn.
- Make sure the new member is invited to informal gatherings your staff normally goes to, such as going for burgers after the weekly meetings.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting within 90 days to see how the new member is progressing and integrating.

For Cadet Members: An excellent approach to Cadet Retention is presented in a paper entitled "How to Increase Cadet Retention, A four-pronged Approach" by Curt LaFond, NHQ Director of Cadet Programs. The four areas LaFond emphasizes are Curriculum, Awards, Technology, and Policy. LaFond encourages CAP leaders to make sure each of these areas are adequately addressed and appropriately used in the unit's program plan. (See reference list at end of this lesson.)

- Every Cadet Squadron or Composite Squadron should have a Cadet Recruiting and Retention Officer to work closely with the Senior Recruiting and Retention Officer to coordinate events and policies.

Suggested policies for cadet retention include:

- Use the "Cadet Great Start" program.

- Assign a cadet mentor. The mentor's role will be to make sure the new cadet is welcomed each meeting, knows where he or she is to go each meeting, and to provide encouragement and tips on progressing through the program.
- Ensure the cadet is properly enrolled to receive program materials and uniforms. Provide loaner books until his arrive.
- Ensure the cadet knows where to go for additional uniform items, forms, etc.
- Fly the new cadet as soon as possible.
- Ensure the cadet has the financial capability to fully participate in unit activities. If finances are a problem, consider a unit assistance policy for first year cadets.
- Ensure the cadet gets to one encampment in their first year.

For both Seniors and Cadets:

- Plan and conduct frequent activities and events. In addition to weekly meetings, one special event per month is suggested as a minimum.
- Organize and follow a productive meeting agenda that is consistent with the CAP Program.
- Ensure testing opportunities, promotions and awards are given in timely manner.
- Obtain feedback from all levels, internally (members) and externally (parents).
- Monitor effectiveness of leaders and replace if necessary. Remember the number one reason for losing members is lack of effective/professional leadership.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Below is a checklist of things you can and maybe should be doing to have a positive effect on recruiting and retention in your squadron. Read the checklist and give yourself the appropriate points for each time you can say yes. Keep track of your total and we will see how you scored in the end.

Recruiting portion

- I have recruited someone this year (5 points). I have ensured they have completed the Foundations Course, have been assigned a duty, have a copy of the job description from CAPM 20-1, and have the specialty track guide. (6 additional points)
- I have not recruited someone in the last year. (0 points) Call someone right now and invite them to a meeting, (2 points for the call, 5 points if they agree to come) or call your squadron commander right now and volunteer to make an appearance on behalf of CAP, suggest a group you already belong to. (5 points)

Retention portion (2 points each)

- At least two members of my squadron can list three things I have done to help the unit. My supervisor does not count as one of the two.
- I have taken the time to involve a new cadet/senior in something I am doing at three meetings over the last 90 days.
- I have nominated someone for an award (maybe for completing Level 1) or have personally recognized (made note of good work in front of peers or bought them a soda, or ...) the good work of another member of the squadron.

- I have had some social interaction (had something to eat or drink before or after a meeting, car pooled, talked for more than 30 minutes after the duty day, or ...) with a peer or subordinate outside of CAP in the last 60 days.
- I have helped another member (cadet or senior) accomplish a goal or task in the last 60 days
- I have been part of a career counseling session in the last 90 days. (See the Counseling lesson of this course)
- I know another member of CAP (maybe outside your unit) that is taking this course. I have checked on their progress
- I have ensured the (ES or PD) training of a subordinate is progressing in the last 60 days
- I have participated in a planning session for a squadron activity in the last 60 days
- I have participated in a debriefing of a squadron activity in the last 60 days (See the AF Style Briefing lesson of this course)
- I have participated in a squadron activity outside of the regular meeting in the last 60 days
- I have facilitated someone else participating in a squadron activity outside the squadron meeting in the last 60 days
- I have accomplished a requirement in my specialty track study guide in the last 30 days.
- I have helped someone else accomplish a requirement in their specialty track in the last 30 days.
- I have learned a new skill in one of CAP's three missions that I am not usually involved in, in the last 30 days.
- I have made a difference to a member of CAP or member of the community through my CAP activities.

It is time to total your score. If you got less than 20 points take a look at the list of things you did not check off. It is obvious how you can earn those points. Most of those points can be earned with very little time, money or effort. Take a moment right now and call, text or email someone and arrange to earn your next points. What is not immediately obvious is how you will contribute to the growth and retention of your squadron. It is also true that many hands make light work in a unit. It is also true that a successful unit attracts more members.

If you earned 21 to 29 points you are significantly contributing to recruiting and retention. You should be proud of yourself and think of yourself as a leader and start to plan a path to a higher leadership role in CAP. Keep up the good work.

If you earned more than 29 points you are a recruiting and retention example to be followed. You need to help others develop their recruiting and retention skills. Continue to use those subtle techniques to provide an example and help others turn those recruiting and retention techniques into a habit.

If you would like a little extra credit go back and look at the principles and examples in part four of this lesson. Give yourself two extra points for each new example of a recruiting and retention activity you can come up with that you actually accomplished.

## **Lesson Summary and Closure**

An effective recruiting program is just the beginning. There are many highly successful ways to bring new members into the program. Bringing that "newbie" on board may be the result of a one-time event. Keeping him or her, however, will require the recurring efforts of your

entire staff. A well-structured retention plan executed with professional leadership will guarantee strong retention results of your most qualified members.

### **For More Information**

There are several resources written on recruiting and retention. The CAP Public Affairs office provides several items available to members on the web.

The Great Start guides for both Senior Members and Cadets have many useful tips. When researching reading material, it is recommended that you concentrate on publications that focus on volunteer organizations. While there are several overlapping concepts with non-volunteer programs, the motivations, techniques and implementation are typically quite different than for an all-volunteer force. The list below is just a few of the many resources available.

LaFond, Curt. "How to Increase Cadet Retention." 13 Mar 2009.

[http://www.capmembers.com/cadet\\_programs/index.cfm/how\\_to\\_increase\\_cadet\\_retention?sow=entry&blogID=15](http://www.capmembers.com/cadet_programs/index.cfm/how_to_increase_cadet_retention?sow=entry&blogID=15)

Harvard Business Series: Retention in the Workforce. <http://harvardbusiness.org>

CAP Recruiting and Informational videos: <http://www.capchannel.com/video>

CAP 101 Power Point presentation

[http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/media/cms/CAP\\_101\\_\\_Generic\\_48AE191B48A39.pdf](http://members.gocivilairpatrol.com/media/cms/CAP_101__Generic_48AE191B48A39.pdf)

Additional Websites for Recruiting and Retention articles:

<http://www.volunteertoday.com/>

[http://www.thevolunteercenter.net/assets/VP\\_F6-RetentionTipSheet.pdf](http://www.thevolunteercenter.net/assets/VP_F6-RetentionTipSheet.pdf)

<http://www.casenet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/retenrec.htm>

<http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/node/17598>

[http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411005\\_VolunteerManagement.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411005_VolunteerManagement.pdf)

<http://www2.guidestar.org/rxa/news/articles/2007/volunteers-part-1-what-makes-them-stay.aspx?articleId=1117>

[http://agweb.okstate.edu/fourh/focus/2007/may/attachments/VIA\\_brief\\_retention.pdf](http://agweb.okstate.edu/fourh/focus/2007/may/attachments/VIA_brief_retention.pdf)

<http://origin.ih.constantcontact.com/fs065/1101277684786/img/125.jpg?a=1102579856772>

### **Works Cited**

The following resources were used in the preparation of this module:

Civil Air Patrol Website: <http://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/html/index.htm>

CAPR 20-1, Organization of Civil Air Patrol

CAPP 226, Recruiting and Retention Officer, Specialty Track Study Guide

Campaign Consultation, Inc. ASK to Sustain Institute. "Volunteer Retention Principles." San Diego, CA , Oct, 2003.

<http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/practices/17598>