

## 15 – TEAM LEARNING (CHAPTER 7)

**Overview Statement:** Leaders know how to apply the principle of synergy where the combined effort is greater than the sum of individual efforts. Leaders don't just focus on the individual's capacity, but on the capacity of the team.

**Connection to the Curriculum:** Ties in with a central theme of chapter seven in *Learn to Lead*, Team Leadership.

**Estimated Time:** 25-30 Minutes

**Resources Required:** *Learn to Lead*, Module Two; Whiteboard (or chalkboard, butcher paper or easel pad).

**Key Terms:**

**Synergy** – “The working together of two or more people, organizations, or things, especially when the result is greater than the sum of their individual effects or capabilities.” Encarta Dictionary

**System** – “A complex whole formed from related parts.” Encarta Dictionary

### INTRODUCTION

**Attention:** Let's pretend that we're going to divide into two teams to play football. Everyone on your team is the quarterback. Why would this structure fail?

**Motivation:** Even though all of the quarterbacks are capable, the objectives of the game require a team approach, with different individual skills supporting the whole team. When you look at leading a diverse team in this manner, you are systems thinking.

**Overview:** Today we are going to discuss systems thinking and core team learning capabilities.

Your role in this discussion is to be an active participant. You are free to share your views with each other. Please be involved and considerate of one another. My role will be to take notes on what you say, and I may occasionally ask a question or two. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am simply interested in what you have to say.

## MAIN POINT 1: SYSTEMS THINKING

In business, an organization succeeds because of the interaction and interplay of many different groups of people.

Your body is a system made of multiple systems. You have a circulatory system that includes your blood and veins; a respiratory system that includes your lungs and helps you breathe; a digestive system that breaks down the food you eat; a nervous system that helps you think; and muscular and skeletal systems.

All of these systems are separate and yet work together. If a system is dysfunctional, it can implode and even die. If it's part of a larger system, the bigger system, namely your entire organization, also could fail.

**Question:** When do you think a system can be eliminated?

**Question:** Describe some of the systems that you see in Civil Air Patrol.

{The next two questions are optional and can evoke a lot of discussion, potentially consuming all of your time. Plan accordingly.}

**Question:** Let's suppose that some want to eliminate the aerospace mission from CAP. Respectfully defend your reasons why this is a good or bad idea.

**Question:** Let's suppose that some want the cadet programs mission to become a separate entity. Respectfully defend your reasons why this is a good or bad idea.

## MAIN POINT 2: CORE TEAM LEARNING CAPABILITIES

Understanding the whole of a system, a leader can move from personal mastery to team learning. The key to successful team learning begins with alignment. While the team may be looking in the same general direction, individuals are in disagreement and are not moving together. Wasted energy characterizes unaligned teams, synergy occurs with aligned teams.

In team learning, in addition to the importance of alignment, there are three critical dimensions mentioned in *Learn to Lead*.

## **Review:**

***Insightful thinking*** ~ takes advantage of the realization that many minds can be more intelligent than one mind.

***Innovative action*** ~ the combined actions witnessed when an orchestra or championship sports team succeed with “spontaneous yet coordinated” play.

***Role of other teams*** ~ teams that work in separate and even the same departments within an organization help encourage each other to work in cooperation.

**Question:** Do groups typically make better decisions than the individual? Defend your answer.

**Question:** How can you align your team so that “spontaneous yet coordinated” results occur?

**Question:** Describe what usually happens when a team does not have the support of the rest of the system. How does a team overcome such matters?

## **CONCLUSION**

**Summary:** Good team leaders know that their team is part of a greater whole; that their role is to produce synergy. This synergy is accomplished through systems thinking and core team learning capabilities.

**Remotivation:** Teams that regularly interact under the influence of common goals typically excel.

**Closure:** As a small team leader, start thinking systematically.

## **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

Note to the instructor: Every informal discussion should be followed by one or more hands-on activities that reinforce one or more of the concepts being discussed. These activities should last 25-30 minutes, giving about one hour total block of time for the leadership session at a typical CAP meeting (25-30 minutes for the informal discussion, plus 25-30 minutes for the activities).

Along with any questions found in the activities themselves, you should be sure to ask, “**How does this activity tie in with our discussion?**”

CAP recommends activities from the *Learn to Lead Activity Guide* by Rob Smith (published by the Civil Air Patrol). You are free to substitute another activity, or create your own, as long as you tie in with one or more concepts of the informal discussion.

Main concepts for this lesson: **Teams; systems.**