

Developing Our Members

Lesson Objectives: Apply various theories, methods and techniques associated with developing our members at the unit level.

Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):

1. Describe the concept of mentoring.
2. Discuss effective ways to provide feedback to unit members.
3. Explain the role of discipline.
4. Describe some best practices for developing members.

Scheduled Lesson Time: 50 minutes

Introduction

Mentoring is guiding a less experienced member through the training they need. It is providing them the opportunity to gain the experience they need to develop their CAP career. It is providing descriptive, not evaluative feedback, for them to reflect on. It is not showing favoritism. It is not forcing them to do things. In short, it is helping them to efficiently develop themselves.

1. Mentoring

The importance of an orientation program for new members

New CAP members must be enthusiastically welcomed into the unit and shown that CAP is more than a club – it is a large, military-style organization tied directly to the U.S. Air Force, and possessing more than 75 years of storied history. New members are joining something bigger than themselves and it is up to experienced members and mentors to explain to them what CAP is, why it exists, how it functions and how they play a role in its success.

Most new CAP members want to be sure they are doing things the right way. New CAP members expect to be told what to do and how to do things. In the early stages of membership, members need to know that superiors care about their integration into CAP and the unit and care about their success as individuals performing unfamiliar tasks. Even a new member who is given a staff position immediately upon joining should be assured of personal mentorship by a more experienced member and of careful watchfulness by the unit commander. Mentors must encourage initiative, but guide it into activity that is productive and helpful to the unit.

It is a balancing act. Some may respond to lack of mentoring/guidance by simply doing nothing. This will often lead to members dropping out and for others by forging their own path. Such initiative can certainly be beneficial to CAP, but it can also lead to duplication of effort or to the pursuit of goals that clash with established unit goals or CAP regulations. On the other hand, feeding the new member from the fire hose can overwhelm them and cause them to drop out.

It is recommended that each meeting be an opportunity for new members be shown how to do one or two new tasks related to their staff position. Furthermore, give these members one to three chances to practice their new skills. Between that meeting and the next they should be asked to perform those skills again on their own. At the next meeting the mentor checks the quality of the solo attempts and either has the new member make corrections or starts on a new set of tasks to be learned.

CAP is a volunteer organization. New members join because they desire to serve and experienced members remain for the same reason. They are under no obligation to the organization should they someday simply decide not to renew their membership. Therefore, encouragement is essential to all correction. When a mentor or unit commander corrects performance or behavior, the goal should be to preserve that member's desire to serve in CAP and that unit.

The importance of mentoring for seasoned members

You have, or are about to take on, a new role as a unit commander. It seems like you have hundreds of pages of regulations to read in your new role, more responsibilities and way too many things you have to make sure get done. Wouldn't you like someone to show you the easiest and best way to do all that, someone to tell you what was important and what is not, someone to help you do it? That person would be your mentor.

What to look for in a mentor

- A desire to help in general and the mentee in particular.
- They should have the time and energy to be a mentor. They need to be available to the mentee at least once a month and can make personal observations in addition to what the commander's dashboard, paperwork or mentee tells them. They need the time to talk with the mentee, return calls, analyze the mentee and their needs, research material and attend things with the mentee.
- A positive role model exemplifies the core values. They show respect by honoring the mentee's time, by being prepared for meetings and allowing the mentee to help shape the goal and plan, etc. They show integrity by keeping conversations and other communications with the mentee confidential (unless mandated by regulation or position), admitting they don't have all the answers and by being honest with the mentee.
- Position is important. They should be an acquaintance rather than a friend. This accelerates the relationship without giving the appearance of the good old boy network. They should not be a supervisor. Mentoring a subordinate is part of the job anyway, but so is disciplining and evaluating the subordinate. Those functions can hurt the relationship. A superior who is mentoring a direct subordinate can also appear to be playing favorites.
- They should have a personality that works well with the mentee. The mentor needs to be one that is approachable, but also one that is able to hold ground and provide guidance to the mentee. A compatible leadership style also helps.
- They should be experienced in their field and respected by their peers. The mentor should have a strong professional network that the mentee aspires to.
- Dedicated to continual self-improvement for the mentee and themselves.
- An active listener - This skill not only establishes rapport, but creates a positive, accepting environment that welcomes open communication. By listening actively, the mentor will discover the mentee's interests and needs. There is a recommended book called *Listening Effectively* by John A. Kline. It is 70 pages of large print, easy reading, short topics that can be read in a few minutes, right on topic and ideal for CAP. It is also free from University Press. <http://www.au.af.mil/au/aupress/bookinfo.asp?bid=529>.

CAP Unit Commanders Course
Developing Our Members

- Asks good questions that help guide the mentee to find the answer (not just give the answer).
- Can admit they don't have all the answers.
- Non-threatening to the mentee. They should not be so far up the chain of command that they are unapproachable, nor should they be in competition with the mentee. They should not have a personality that will make the mentee uncomfortable. They should provide descriptive feedback not evaluative feedback. They should be willing to challenge the mentee to grow and see from a new perspective.

Take a moment and think about the newest member in your unit and match them up to a mentor. When that is done think about a mentor for yourself. Then call them and ask them to be your mentor if you don't already have one.

Traditional roles of a mentor

- The Advisor - The mentor initiates the communication fairly frequently (at least once a month) and at milestones such as completing a training requirement, getting a membership renewal in the mail, getting a promotion, etc. At these times they help the mentee formulate their next career goal.
- The Coach - The mentor supports/guides the mentee in identifying developmental needs and recommends training opportunities which may include schools or participating in activities. The mentor can impart skills and behaviors as well.
- The Facilitator - The mentor assists in finding/acquiring resources for problem solving and career progression.
- The Advocate - The mentor recommends opportunities for projects allowing others to observe positive capabilities of the mentee.

The commander's added role of a mentor

In the ideal world the mentor would not be the mentee's supervisor or formal evaluator. It is a no win for either of them. On the other hand you may be a small unit and have no choice but to be a mentor for someone. In some sense, as a commander you should be mentoring everyone in your unit either directly or indirectly.

In any case, you must provide feedback to members. A technique that is often successful is being descriptive rather than evaluative. An evaluative comment would be, "Nice job". Whereas a descriptive praise would sound like, "The cadets found your event exciting. I found it exciting too, because we ran on schedule and came in under budget." After hearing that the member would know they did a good job and which behaviors were valued and should be repeated.

The negative example would be, "There were two problems with your CAPF 108. First, your CAPF 108 was not signed and there was a receipt missing. Even it had been on time it would not have been approved. Which brings us to the second problem. You waited so long to submit it that the window to be reimbursed had closed which means that the money has to come out of your pocket or the squadron's pocket. Let's sit down and figure out how that is going to work." As you can see, providing feedback is on a sliding scale.

Individual members and/or mentoring pool

Mentorship is a relationship. These relationships already exist informally in a unit, whether for a cadet entering the Great Start program or a senior member being walked through the steps to attain Level I.

What is often overlooked is that the mentoring process should not end after rising to Cadet Airman or completing Level I. Mentoring needs to be intentional and long-term. From a unit perspective, a commander (or designee) could assign a mentor to a member for a specific time period or for his CAP career. Mentors and mentees may need to change as circumstances change, but there should always be a mentor ready when a member needs guidance.

Although every member should have a mentor, she may have more than one. For example, a new member who aspires to become a mission scanner and work in cadet programs may need a different mentor for each. It should not be assumed that a mentor experienced in aircrew tasks has equal experience with cadet programs.

Therefore, every unit member should work toward becoming a mentor at some level. The best assurance of competency in a task or position is to be able to teach such to someone else.

Ideally, a pool of unit members can establish criteria for becoming a mentor at different levels and for different tasks and what a unit's mentorship program looks like. This can help categorize members based on various abilities and experiences in order to establish and implement the squadron's mentoring program efficiently.

AF Resources available to CAP

AFPD 36-26

AFI 36-264

AFMAN 36-2643

Listening Effectively by John Kline - free from AU Press at
<http://www.au.af.mil/au/aupress/bookinfo.asp?bid=529>

2. Providing feedback

Praise

Gentle encouragement helps the member to feel "wanted." Remember, CAP is a volunteer organization made up of young cadets and adults, most of whom are accomplished professionals and retirees in numerous fields of civilian and military life. They deserve to be respected as such. Praising a member when he has done well encourages him to do even better. It is a form of reward, and recognition which are the only "pay" CAP volunteers receive.

Praise involves the timely, positive recognition of those behaviors deemed either desirable to help the unit achieve its goals or which provide encouraging exemplary behavior to other CAP members. As such, true praise does not seek to bring attention to the commander or mentor, but to motivate and reward those so deserving.

It is said that a little bit of encouragement goes a long way. Mentees in a good mentoring relationship with a trusted mentor value the encouragement and inspiration that is provided.

Praise is not naturally easy for many people to give. It's easy to see that it requires practice and discipline for a mentor to offer constructive criticism that leaves the new member feeling encouraged at the end. It also requires practice and discipline to praise correct performance

instead of simply letting it pass by without comment. Methods and techniques for praising and rewarding members will be covered elsewhere in this course.

The delicate art of counseling

There are a lot of miles between excellence and horrible. When job performance falls in between those extremes, counseling helps provide direction for a member that may or may not see his own need. Counseling involves the dispensing of advice, guidance, information or direction to a fellow CAP member. It can, therefore, serve many purposes. Counseling may be employed to simply highlight opportunities for service to a junior member. It may be used to help a fellow member better identify his strengths and weaknesses. It is a means whereby a member may be disciplined to help avoid further pitfalls. It can be employed by appropriately trained members to help with grief crises or conflict resolution. Properly applied, personal counseling can be a powerful mechanism to teach the proper CAP way, provide discipline when a member is out of bounds, correct the member to restore him to full engagement and instruct him toward future success.

Personal counseling makes the member sense the counselor's camaraderie. The member feels special when he is personally counseled. He then comes to view the counselor as a friend; and when necessary, he becomes willing to share such things as fears, intimidations, and/or time constraints that are hindering him from fulfilling his responsibilities within the squadron.

Intentional, specific counseling, in addition to showing the member that he is important, serves as training he can later use with younger or more recent members of the squadron.

By providing a level of personal encouragement, the cadet or senior member will sense a level of appreciation and friendship, a level of belonging that helps to solidify his or her place in the unit. Going out of one's way to provide intentional and specific counseling for a member helps him to see how valuable he is to the unit and CAP as a whole.

A commander's workload is tremendous and commanders often take on the responsibility of personal, disciplinary, career and performance counseling for every member. They should be counseling the most senior one, two or three members of the unit. They should not be the personal counselor of every member. That is the job of experienced, mid-career and senior officers. The goal is to always provide sound, competent guidance with care for every member.

How to counsel members

Counseling does not always come easily, even to the best commanders. It may be one of the least desirable, but most critical tasks of command.

When you must counsel a member, the timing and location is important to the acceptance and effectiveness of the counseling. Providing timely, sincere guidance to a member is vital to his or her growth as a person and as a member of CAP.

Personal problems are not scheduled. They should be dealt with quickly, but also in a deliberate manner. Delaying dealing with the issue adds stress to the people involved and often results in worsening of the situation, which can become a distraction to the organization. A counselor cannot rush a compassionate, empathetic, accepting, and respectful conversation. Which likely means counseling may have to take place outside the meeting. You will also need

to make time for follow-up with the member or make efforts to refer him to a more skilled professional.

A word of caution; unless you are a professionally trained counselor it is easy to get in over your head when dealing with personal, emotional or psychological issues. If you see you are getting into one of these areas it is best to refer the member to a professional counselor or a clergy member who may be trained in counseling. Going beyond your training endangers the member, puts you and Civil Air Patrol in legal jeopardy.

If you think they are a danger to themselves or others you have an obligation to contact local professional services. They can be found in local directories, by contacting local clergy, local police, school counselors, the Wing/Group Health Services Officer and Chaplain and other agencies.

In most cases you should confine yourself to disciplinary, career and performance counseling.

Disciplinary counseling must be done as quickly as possible to prevent repetition of the undesirable behavior. The person doing the counseling must be in the proper position of authority to discipline. Most counseling should be done behind closed doors. It should be specific as to what behavior was unsatisfactory, why it was unsatisfactory and what must be done to correct it. It should also show a path to redemption. That path does not have to be easy or short but should be possible with some noteworthy effort. The effort should be proportional to the offense.

Career counseling can be scheduled. It should, however, take place at least when the member completes a training requirement, or when the member is about to enter/leave a duty assignment. Since a mentor or commander will know when this is going to happen he should plan for it in advance. It may take place at a squadron meeting or require some time outside the meeting. Career counseling should be considered when a member has not promoted despite having completed time in grade. This suggests that the member may have wandered off their career path or need guidance toward the next steps in the program.

Performance counseling can frequently be anticipated, as well. There are several good times to hold a planned, performance counseling session: several months before being eligible for promotion, or when it is time to renew a membership. These can be scheduled months in advance. Other opportunities for performance counseling arise when the member attempts something new, makes noticeable deviation above or below the standard, or demonstrates a deviation from past performances. Commanders and mentors should regularly give and receive feedback.

Counseling methods

The method a counselor chooses may be either the direct approach (counselor-centered) or indirect approach (counselee-centered), although a combination of both is often appropriate.

When the counselor assumes the initiative and carries a major part of the responsibility for problem identification and resolution he or she is using the direct approach. This approach has a long and honored history. James Carroll, in his book *Face to Face* calls this approach, "I talk, and you listen". Traditionally, people faced with problems and personal crises turn for guidance to someone they consider wiser and more experienced. This approach is useful in these cases. This direct approach to counseling might also be called the problem-solving approach. The counselor collects pertinent information with aims to determine the problem and cause. This

may happen to some degree before the counseling session begins. During the session, the counselor discusses the problem with the counselee and sparingly makes recommendations or suggestions. Carroll also warns that the counselor must not stifle counselee input even though the direct approach is being used. Disciplinary counseling is another example of when the direct approach may be appropriate.

The indirect method (also called counselee-centered) was developed primarily by psychologist Dr. Carl B. Rogers. As the name would suggest, the counselor's participation is minimal, and the techniques of reflection and acceptance are used to encourage the counselee to freely express himself. The counselor pays particular attention to the emotion and attitudes associated with the problem. Additionally, the counselee is encouraged to choose the goals, make the decisions, and take responsibility for those decisions. The counselor should genuinely have faith in the counselee to work out the problem. This method is limited by the ability and intelligence of the counselee. It is also limited by the desire of the individual to change for the better. Despite these limitations, the indirect method of counseling is often more appropriate than the direct method.

Counseling Techniques

Counseling techniques are a series of questions, or process, to help the counselor conduct an effective session. Just as the counselor must determine the best overall method for handling each situation, the counselor should also selectively employ effective counseling techniques (questioning, encouragement, and non-verbal behavior) to ensure a successful session. At first, the counselor should ask questions to encourage the counselee's participation. The questions should be few, but are intended to steer the counselee toward a solution. Avoid "why" questions because they can cause the counselee to become defensive. Also, avoid questions where the counselee could simply answer "yes" or "no." The counselor should strive to keep the counselee talking. Next, practice encouragement by making simple statements of support that reassure the counselee that the counselor is genuinely there to help. This can include sympathizing, like the statement, "I see this is a difficult subject for you." This technique will help keep the session from stalling if the counselee becomes angry or withdraws. Finally, the counselor should be aware of nonverbal behavior, as body language (actions, gestures, or even tone of voice) can distract the counselee. Crossing your arms or frowning can cause the counselee to withdraw or become angry. Sitting behind a desk, a counselor can come across as domineering or adversarial. Unless the session is disciplinary, both counselor and counselee should sit in two chairs on the same side of the table. A comfortable setting goes a long way toward an effective counseling session. Additionally, the counselor should be aware of the body language coming from the counselee. For example, clenched fists may indicate unwillingness to open up. These techniques are best employed as part of a counseling plan. For more on this see

https://www.capmembers.com/media/cms/Counseling_091230_E2ECFEC3FBF79.pdf

Chaplains, an overlooked professional resource

Chaplains have professional counselor training. Where the counselor finds himself in a situation beyond his training the counselor would do well to look to the chaplain to undertake the instruction with the member.

Chaplains are typically experienced counselors. This serves them well in the positive, gentle instruction of others. It often takes a time investment to properly understand both the member and the situation. Chaplains are skilled listeners and observers. They are also unencumbered by competing leadership demands, offering them unique ability to objectively devote their focus toward the immediate needs of the member.

Chaplains are subject to confidentiality and privileged communications under certain conditions, so any counseling conducted solely by the chaplain in some instances may not be communicated even to the commander.

3. The role of discipline

A quick vocabulary list

The word “reprimand” has a technical meaning under the Uniform Code of Military Justice that is too strong for this context. Since CAP members do not fall under the UCMJ, but many CAP members serve or have served in the military, I recommend against using the word “reprimand” to describe anything other than the outcome of a formal disciplinary process guided by CAP regulations and featuring written judgments by unit commanders, wing commanders, or inspectors general.

The word "punish" means to inflict a penalty on someone as retribution for an offense. Punishment can only be given out by those in authority, usually commanders. It is designed to stop a behavior in someone and prevent it in the behavior of others. It is not designed to replace defective behavior with the desired behavior.

Discipline means training people to obey rules. It is designed to improve the individual and increase desired behavior. In the vast majority of cases we want to discipline our members and this is often done through counseling. It is the desired method for correcting behavior.

That does not mean commanders should not reprimand or punish or even terminate members as late steps in a process of disciplining members. Nor does it prohibit immediately reprimanding or punishing members for the most grievous offences.

The importance of disciplining members

CAP does important, challenging and sometimes dangerous work that requires training, attention to detail and precision. New members must understand that their mistakes will be corrected. If unit commanders or mentors allow errors to persist, mistakes will soon become habits that will likely be passed along to other new members. Uncorrected errors lead to poor performance, dangerous situation and legal jeopardy. CAP as an organization has committed itself to the core value of Excellence. It has also committed itself to the core value of Integrity which includes Public Trust. To allow known and uncorrected errors to continue harms members, our personal integrity and the organization. As commanders we have an obligation to all of these things.

On the other side, members who are self-disciplined and committed to the core values will have opportunities for promotion and to assume increasing positions of leadership and importance. While not commissioned in the USAF they carry with them a certain level of privilege and prestige within the organization and community.

4. Best practices

Team Building Activities

Each CAP member should study and train to improve his/her competencies and abilities. However, this serves mostly to improve the individual member. Team training serves to improve the efficiency of the unit. Team building, however, serves to define member roles within the unit. Team building, therefore, enhances cooperation and collaboration. Team

CAP Unit Commanders Course Developing Our Members

building creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and friendship among the members. This is especially important for a group from varied backgrounds that must work together to safely complete mission tasks.

Team building enhances morale. As each member learns his role and interdependence on other members a true sense of "unit" develops. The member begins to see the unit as something greater than the sum of its parts. This encourages all members to take pride in the performance of their duties and in each other. Pride in unit readiness and accomplishment circularly enhances team building.

RETHINKING RESOURCES

When we think of resources, we often do not think "outside of the box." Many units are located near military installations. Military installations of all branches often have training facilities and resources that could be utilized by CAP. In areas where there is not a military presence, local police and fire departments might jump at the opportunity to work with CAP for training purposes and to serve as a form of organizational partner because of CAP's missions.

Keeping Core Values, CAP missions, and CPPT in mind, what type of opportunities exist in your 'backyard' that could prove to be great to improve training, unify the team and boost morale?

You can do specific exercises designed to increase team building. They can be fun, exciting and effective. If you let them they can also be time consuming and expensive. Team building can also be accomplished by organizing activities the unit must/wants to do where members are assigned roles/tasked based upon their duty assignment and experience under your leadership and guidance. To do this everyone must understand their role in the event.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Yes, major events such as holiday parties at the unit and banquets at the officers' club will team build, but not nearly as effectively as holding them at someone's house. You don't have to go big. A cup of coffee after a meeting or a Dutch treat meal before a meeting on a regular basis will have much more of an effect and be less expensive.

CAP University

CAP also provides a wealth of material on mentoring on its CAP University web page.

https://www.capmembers.com/cap_university/interesting-thoughts/

and

https://www.capmembers.com/cap_university/active-leadership/

and several 50 series pamphlets on mentoring which can be found at

https://www.capmembers.com/forms_publications_regulations/pamphlets-1702/

The number of the pamphlets may change as the "Publication Reengineering" project progresses.

Lesson Summary and Closure

The benefits of mentoring can be hard to measure because it is hard to know what might have happened on a different life path. It can be hard to directly ascribe an individual's success or improved unit effectiveness or an increase in retention to mentoring. Many mentees won't be able to make the connection for years and not even then without careful reflection or accidental insight. But we know from studies that mentoring can have a subtle, but significant, long term impact on individuals and organization.

So go, mentor, and be mentored. It can make all the difference.