



Involving Cadets in the CAP Public Affairs Program



PAO's everywhere are always looking for help and cadets are always looking for a way to have an impact and be involved in the success of the squadron in a meaningful way.

Making cadets part of your squadron's Public Affairs program is a win-win for everyone.

The Cadet Brings

Enthusiasm - Cadets boundless excitement for the missions of CAP.

Energy - Cadets bring a youthful energy and willingness to go the extra mile.

Technical Knowledge - Cadets bring an expertise with modern technology and techniques to aid in telling our story. Give them a camera, a computer and let them go!

A Fresh View - Cadets may take a different view of things and this view (which we may not see) allows them to find unique stories and special moments that we may miss.

The Cadet Needs

Guidance – Cadets need to know what is expected, a role model to look up to and a guide to help them avoid mistakes.

NCR Public Affairs Academy

Sometimes a cadet needs to make mistakes to learn but don't we all. ☺

Technical Knowledge – While the cadet might possess the technical expertise to create a video or a website they may lack the organizational skills or the writing ability to allow them to better tell the story. The PAO can help this cadet by mentoring him and giving the cadet challenging writing assignments.

Parameters – We all need guidelines to carry out our jobs. Give the cadet specific tasks and timelines and get out of the way.

In most of the Cadet Program things are laid out in black and white terms. But in between there is a work of gray out there.

A PAO can help a cadet PAO by showing him these areas, why they exist and how he can operate in this new world.



Validation – of the quality of their work. Our work improves if we hear the good, the bad and how to make the work better.

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Motivation – There is nothing like seeing your by-line on a article or webpage or on a credit for an image. This is validation that “my work was good enough to be seen by the world.”

Respect – of the fact that the cadet knows what he is doing and is not a “kid” but a “peer.” He also needs to know that his work is of value to the squadron.

Tactics

Tell the cadet of your unit about what the PAO does and the value of the work to the squadron. A suggested PowerPoint is in your resource kit.

Squadron PAO's can get interested cadets involved by bringing them in slowly. Ask for help with pictures or a description of an event. Then work your way up to an article for a newsletter.

Start small.

Cadets may really get enthusiastic and want to take on the whole big project at once. Resist this urge.

Let them do pieces of a project to prove themselves to you and to themselves. Then give them part of the squadron website or the newsletter or a technology (the whole web site, video, podcast) project to complete.

Get them involved as a PAO for a squadron activity. Have them take pictures and a story for CAP Online News or the Wing Website about your event.

Review and provide constructive criticism in a respectful way.

Be there to help mentor cadets in the PAO Staff Duty Analysis. Cadet Officers need to complete these SDA's for their promotions. Be the expert in CAP Public Affairs that helps them to understand the role of the PAO.

Encourage cadets to apply for duty as an Encampment PAO. This experience is the best training for a CAP PAO.

They do it all, photography, video, web sites, newsletters and writing.

Encampments are designed to be cadet focused and led with senior member mentoring. This is the essence of the leadership laboratory.

Cadets over 18 can serve as Mission Information Officers. It does not get as real as a SAR or DR Mission.

Appoint the proven cadet as an Assistant PAO for the squadron, group or wing. In this role a cadet (officer ideally) can be the de-facto PAO and still be in compliance with CAPR 52-16. He will have a real and challenging role that can have a real impact for the squadron.



Conclusion

Cadets can be a wonderful addition to the Public Affairs Team. They are a technically savvy, smart and enthusiastic partner. With the right guidance and motivation they can accomplish miracles.

Cadets can deliver real results!