

Delegating Authority

Lesson Objective:

Lesson Objective: Comprehend the importance of delegating authority to your staff.

Desired Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe what is meant by delegation of authority.
2. Discuss the relationship between authority and responsibility.
3. Discern when and who to delegate to.
4. Define “homogeneous assignment” in your own words.

Lesson:

Overview:

As a commander, you are the number one person responsible for your unit. Everything that happens within the unit is ultimately your responsibility. Command is a daunting task, however it is also one of the most rewarding.

That being said, while you are ultimately responsible for what happens in your unit, you cannot do everything yourself. What is required to effectively run a CAP squadron is much more than any one person can handle. The principle is called “**span of control**” - ensuring that a person (you as commander in this case) is not required to control more people and resources than he or she can reasonably handle alone.

What is meant by Delegation of Authority?

Delegation Defined: To extend an umbrella of authority over your staff to complete required tasks, while empowering them with the freedom they need to make the necessary decisions to accomplish the mission.

It is in your best interest, and, your *obligation* to properly assign the many tasks which make your unit run smoothly to your staff. We call it: “**delegating authority**” and you cannot be an effective commander without knowing when and how to use it.

When you delegate authority, you don't abdicate your responsibility as a commander, you simply extend an umbrella of authority over your staff to complete required tasks. When you delegate authority, you and your staff are able to handle the day to day chores and problems as they arise.

If you don't delegate to your staff, you may:

- A. **Create a bottleneck where there are more situations and taskings waiting to be resolved than there are decisions made.** The one fundamental drawback of micro-management is that everything stops at your desk because you can't review everything fast enough. When this happens, situations may be overcome by events and you will lose control over the unit.
- B. **Lose the effectiveness of your staff.** To be effective, staff members must be able to do their jobs. Carrying out their duties is as much training for staff as it is getting the job done for the unit. When your staff isn't allowed the latitude to do its job, it will lose its ability to perform at all.
- C. **Fail to train your successor or prepare someone to take command in your absence.** One of your primary jobs as a commander is to train someone to replace you in case of an emergency. If you fail to delegate authority, you leave your people unprepared in case of your absence.
- D. **Insert your own answers here.**

Simply stated, ***authority = freedom***. When you delegate authority, to empower your staff to fulfill their responsibilities as staff officers and as experts in their functional areas, you give them the freedom to do their jobs. Their job is to do the day to day work which makes the squadron function. Your job as commander is to make the squadron run smoothly.

Without delegation, you-

- Create _____ where there are more problems left unsolved than decisions being made.
- Lose the _____ of your staff.
- Fail to have someone ready to take command in your _____.

Relationship between Authority and Responsibility:

The only way to truly illustrate this point is to discuss the relationship between *authority* and *responsibility*. We'll try to help you understand this relationship by posing two questions: 1) If authority means to command or have control over something or someone, then can you have authority without responsibility? The answer is no. Think about it, to have control over something implies possession of some kind, and there is possession inherent in responsibility.

Relationship between Authority and Responsibility

- Authority is _____.
- Responsibility means you are _____ to a particular task, thing, or person.
- *You cannot have authority without responsibility.*
- *You can have responsibility without authority, but it's dangerous.*

To illustrate: you have authority over your own life, right? In the end, you have the power, the authority, to choose what you want to do? Now, do you not take responsibility for making those choices? You are responsible for how you conduct your life. In order to have authority over something, you must also be responsible for that thing.

Now, when you have responsibility over something, you are accountable for what happens to that something - be it a deadline, production quota, conduct of staff, possession of resources, whatever. The second question is: can you have responsibility over something or to do something but not have the authority to garner support and get the job done?

That answer is yes. You see it every day. People are given a job, and then told that they have to go to someone else (the commander?) in order to get the job done. Let's say that you assign the Senior Programs Officer (SPO) to sit down with all the seniors in the squadron and update their training records. If you don't let the other seniors know that this is what you want, and you don't give the SPO the authority to complete the task through your support, it won't be done in a timely manner.

Why? Because you have not empowered that staff officer with the authority to speak in your name. Alone, he cannot compel the staff to switch their priorities, you must allow him to.

Simply being assigned as a staff officer implies an inherent amount of responsibility. The Personnel Officer, for example, is responsible for maintaining member records and handling personnel, promotion, and awards actions. The Deputy Commander for Cadets is responsible for the administration of the Cadet Program within your unit. The amount of authority they have is up to you.

When and Who to Delegate To:

Now that you see the importance of empowering your staff with the authority - freedom - to do their jobs effectively, you now must discern what you can delegate - or more appropriately - when. Because you are the final person responsible for what happens in your unit, you must be aware of everything that happens around you. And you must leave yourself the option of "taking in the reins" a bit when you need to maintain control.

You cannot delegate your responsibility as a commander. If a member makes a mistake and you fail to take corrective action, you are ultimately responsible. In football it's called the "we won, I lost" philosophy. A good coach will give the credit for the win to his team, but he takes responsibility for the loss.

Do Not Delegate:

- Decisions which affect the overall _____ and _____ of the unit.
- Actions which by _____ or _____ you must carry out etc.

You should not delegate decisions which affect the overall efficiency and morale of the unit. You cannot delegate those actions which by regulation or law you must carry out, such as final control of unit funds.

You can delegate initiatives and projects which you feel are important, such as meeting planning, recruiting and retention initiatives, signing of certain documents, etc. You can delegate the oversight of certain staff functions and many tasks as specified in CAP regulations.

You May Delegate:

- Authority to develop important _____.
- Oversight of certain _____ etc.

When you delegate, you want to keep a couple of things in mind. First, delegation is a matter of perspective. You must make the decision about how far you want to go. The amount of authority you delegate will vary from person to person and situation to situation. You'll keep a much sharper eye on the new Administrative Officer who's just completed Level I than you would the seasoned Personnel Officer who's been with the squadron for 10 years. You'll be much more involved with the Testing Officer when dealing with a possible test compromise than you would if there was a question about whether the answer key matched with the test.

Because delegation is a fluid process, you have the option of granting more authority when you feel the staff officer is ready, or when the situation warrants it (such as your absence). You may also need to take back authority - or freedom - if you feel the officer needs more guidance, is not performing to standard, or the situation itself changes and needs more of your attention.

Homogeneous Assignment:

As commander, you must ensure that the tasks and authority you delegate goes to the appropriate people. It makes no sense to delegate the authority to flight release aircraft to a ground team leader; it makes little sense to assign someone to a position as an Aerospace Education Officer (AEO) if they have had no experience in that general area of expertise. In the case of an AEO for example, you may want to assign a teacher, pilot, or engineer, or perhaps someone who has a strong interest in the subject area which can make up for the lack of qualification.

This concept is called “**homogeneous assignment**” and when you practice it, you make sure that the right person is assigned to the right job. Don’t use it, and you will be trying to put square pegs into round holes.

Most of the time, when you assume command you already have people in staff positions. You have two decisions: whether to keep them there, and if so; how much authority - or freedom - you want them to have.

Let’s look at that from a different perspective, ask the question, “I have a situation/problem/project. Who do I give it to?” Match the assignment to the person through your organizational charts. CAPR 20-1, *Organization of CAP*, lists positions and corresponding responsibilities. This is a good start. It’s especially helpful when the problem requires coordination between departments. You may have to delegate the assignment to more than one staff member or department. Consult the organizational charts to find the right blend.

A word of caution here... If you have to delegate an assignment or problem to more than one person, be sure to give clear guidance of how you want the project to be conducted. If you want a particular person or department to take the lead, specify it in your guidance. If you are not clear, a turf battle may erupt, and disrupt the process.

You also want to look for individuals, the “fast movers”, who want to do something more. The individual initiative that these people have is a great resource you want to tap. People who can take projects on with little guidance, who are looking for something to do, and who are open to new learning opportunities are great people to empower. They want to get something done, and in most cases will work hard when you empower them.

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Another caution, sometimes these fast mover's initiatives may get away from them and you will have to pull in the reins. That's okay, part of what makes the delegation of authority work is your careful oversight. Remember, you don't abdicate your responsibility, you just extend your umbrella of authority over someone else.

Delegating your authority will get easier as you practice it, because it is as much an exercise in faith - both in your staff and your own leadership ability - as it is way to do business. As you delegate more and more you will find you have a stronger, more competent, and loyal staff who knows that you trust their ability to fulfill your vision and goals. It will leave you more time to work on the big picture items and steer your squadron in the direction you want it to go.