



Copyright © 2002
CadetStuff.org.
May be copied as-is
for Cadet training
purposes with
specific prior
permission and
appropriate citation.
All other rights
reserved.

Who's the leader of the club?

Shawn Stanford

I have a short, sweet message for all you Cadet NCOs and officers out there: *stop wasting your Cadets' time!*

I attended a weekend activity recently where I saw the Cadet staff go out of their way to dream up piddly little things for their students to do. At least, that's the way it seemed to me. We're talking about standing at attention in front of their racks while the staff figured out what was going on, teaching 'exhibition drill' to Cadets who barely know left from right, insisting that everyone stand interior guard (Six men at a time for 45 minute shifts - why?), an overly complex guard log book and a zero-five-hundred PT session on Sunday morning.

Often I can mentally chalk a lot of this type of stuff up to teaching attention to detail. But we're talking basic Cadets here: if they manage to put their uniform on with the underwear on the inside, well, that's quite an accomplishment.

You're not worried about teaching them the finer points about being a Cadet; getting the Big Stuff close to right is more than enough of a challenge. Meanwhile, these Cadets left after thirty-six hours of 'Cadet Basic Orientation' not knowing enough drill to pass the Curry test.

There's an old phrase for a useless activity that contributes nothing to the mission and is merely done at the whim of the leadership: "Mickey Mouse".

Two other Seniors and myself were comparing notes on the 'training' activities; one of them a former Marine NCO and the other a staff sergeant in the National Guard. We all agreed that we never would have put up with anything like it. One thing that is stressed to leaders in the military is to never unnecessarily take up your people's time and to give them worthwhile tasks.

The reason the military does this is simple: people want to feel like what they're doing is important and they don't want to feel like their time is being wasted by their leaders. If they feel like they're wasting their time - or that *you're* wasting their time - then they'll find something else to do with that time. If Cadet leaders strive to be professionals, then they should behave as professionals and treat their people as if their time is valuable.

Because it is valuable, and Cadets can easily find something else to do with their time.

Here's the really sad thing: when I asked random members of the Cadet staff why they were doing some of these things, the answer was usually "Because we always do". or words to that effect. That is the single worst reason to do something ever thought up and shows a serious lack of initiative, critical thinking and leadership skill.

Leaders: make sure that you can justify any activity or task you have your people undertake. If your commander - or some random pain-in-the-tuckus Senior from a squadron in the northeastern part of the state - was to ask you why you're having your people do something, you must have a better answer than 'we always do this'.

Think about the value of a task and how it contributes to the mission. Does knowing how to fill out a guard logbook or do the Daily Seven at 0500 help pass the requirements of the Curry test? Of course not! How about a little extra time on the drill deck or additional instruction on uniform care and maintenance.

Use your people's time sparingly, as if it were the most valuable thing you have. Because you know what? It is...

Capt. Shawn Stanford started out as a Cadet in Connecticut Wing's Stratford Eagles Composite Squadron (1977-'81), where he competed in the National Cadet Competition in 1980 and '81. After eight years of service in the U.S. Marine Corps, he rejoined CAP as a senior member at Richards-Gebaur Composite Squadron in Missouri Wing. He is the commander of the Wyoming Valley Composite Squadron 209 in Pennsylvania Wing. He is also a recipient of the Brig. Gen. Charles E. "Chuck" Yeager Aerospace Education Achievement Award.

Readers who choose to hardcopy this document are entitled to specific rights, namely: you may print this off and read it repeatedly until you have memorized it and then rattle it off as if you had thought it up yourself; but if anyone asks you - or if you have to actually pull this printed copy out of your pocket to read from - then you are required under Law (Jude Law, that is. Y'know, the English guy in "Gattica"?) to say, "This was on CadetStuff.org and I stole it like it ain't no thang!" and then do the River Dance.