

We Do Not Seem to be Improving our Productivity or Efficiency

Lesson plan 15AA

Formal NTS/ARES/RACES traffic handling has its place and it's a lot of fun, and it is based on a century of tradition. We have the ability to apply modern solutions to today's problems and to handle vastly larger quantities of messages faster and more efficiently. We need to be constantly improving our skills, our technology and our processes. Instead, we keep on applying old solutions to today's problems. So, are we becoming obsolete?

In emergency communications, Amateur Radio serves admirably, but our served agencies and the Public we serve want more, not less, support from Amateur Radio volunteers.

The era where we have been is over. The attributes that made us unique are no longer relevant. We fail to widely adopt new technologies and new operating procedures in our service. If we are merely a hobby, then we can do anything we want and this discussion is moot. But if we are actually a government regulated service, chartered to serve the public, requiring access to public radio spectrum, and dependent upon an interest from the general public for members, then we must consider the feedback

that the marketplace is giving us and use that feedback to re-invent our Service.

Communications is now a commodity. Our best known attributes are no longer unique. We can stick to our traditions and go out of business or we can accept that the world has changed and that to survive, we must continually re-invent ourselves, every one else is. We need to start innovating and offering unique and creative capabilities that meet today's challenges.

Amateur Radio needs to bring itself in line with today's contemporary world. We must not define Amateur Radio of the 21st century in terms of what used to make us unique. Instead, we need to re-invigorate our service with technology and operations that make us relevant in a world saturated in communications. There are many innovative communications technologies, many of which have been invented by hams, but their use has not been widely adopted within the amateur service. We stubbornly refuse to acknowledge that today there are better ways to accomplish traditional tasks.

We need to;

(1.) Be creative in applying solutions to today's problems. Set high goals and strive to meet them.

Instead of settling for 40 messages during our next ARES drill, set a goal of 1,000 and see what creative solutions our teams develops to meet the challenge.

(2.) Look for ways to improve productivity, efficiency and reliability. Do not settle for the status quo, constantly look for and implement ways to improve our procedures.

(3.) Introduce our new technologies such as Winlink. Experiment and improve your services and skills, give the folks we serve what they need to meet today's communications needs.

When was the last time any of you tried a new operating mode or technology? What steps have you taken to improve the reliability of your public service communications effort?

Amateur experimentation is alive and well. We forget that it is only within the past few years that Amateur Radio enthusiasts invented Winlink 2000, Airmail, PSK31, packet cluster applications, the Automatic Packet Reporting System each of which has migrated to commercial applications.

We Must Recreate Our Uniqueness

(1.) Our uniqueness has been reduced to a commodity available to everyone.

(2.) If we do not focus our service on the attributes that meaningfully distinguish us from the rest of the

crowd, then we may not remain viable. We must dispense with dated traditions and innovate with new techniques. If we do not, then we are failing to serve the public and the public will demand our spectrum allocations for other uses. Rather than cling to old traditions, we must obsolete ourselves and recognize that our little world cannot remain unchanged in the 21st century. We must embrace dynamic change, not retreat and hide behind our pride of past accomplishments. I am not saying that what we have been doing is now the wrong thing to do, voice communications has and always will be a strong part of what we do. However, we have a lot of room for improvement.

(3.) Each of us can contribute by trying something new and adopting change and innovations in our everyday Amateur operations. Amateur Radio organizations need to embrace change and adopt forward-looking policies and visions for the 21st century.

When we hear we are no longer important, we make excuses about poor sunspots causing a lack of interest and then blame the Internet and cellular phones. But the real problem is us; we are steadfastly unchanging

in a world that is rocketing by. Its time to steer the conversation back to our customers, the general public and ensure that everything we do is geared towards serving the public with a robust, modern and efficient Amateur Radio Service.

It is up to every one of us to accept and embrace change. We need to take a bigger step towards keeping Amateur Radio relevant by embracing the new communications technologies, inventing a new application for existing technologies, and enhancing our operating procedures. And help reinvent Amateur Radio for the 21st century. Make Amateur Radio a source of creativity, innovation and most of all lets make Amateur Radio unique for our served agencies and the public!