

Exploring Strategic Delegation Within the Military College of South Carolina's Combat Shooting Team

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ABSTRACT

The Citadel Military College of South Carolina Combat Shooting Team has experienced rapid growth and national recognition since its establishment in 2022. This accelerated growth has introduced challenges related to scaling operations and delegation of tasks. The faculty advisor, supported by a leadership team of cadets and veteran students, must address these challenges by strategically delegating key tasks to manage the organization's growth effectively. This case study explores applying strategic delegation theory to identify and delineate responsibilities, enhance cadet leadership, and ensure long-term mission success. The need for innovative solutions to maintain operational efficiency and stakeholder engagement, such as developing a formalized social media strategy and publishing newsletters, is also highlighted. By situating the Combat Shooting Team's challenges within the framework of strategic delegation, this study offers insights into managing rapid growth in collegiate organizations while maintaining strategic alignment and compliance with institutional goals and policies and materializing support and opportunities in the industry.

Keywords: strategic delegation, organizational growth, scaling, operational efficiency, stakeholder engagement, social capital

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INTRODUCTION

The faculty advisor to the newly established Combat Shooting Team at The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina, has experienced exceptional growth and scale. In just over a year, they have nearly a hundred members and nationally recognized success participating in combat shooting competitions. However, rapid growth has presented managerial challenges, specifically delegating tasks and strategic initiatives that are vital to the continued success and sustainability of the organization. Moreover, the organization has the potential to be a significant marketing tool for the university, but being a forward-facing entity would require additional layers of responsibility that, in its current form, would be unmanageable. Therefore, to scale sustainably, the faculty advisor must strategically delegate priority and non-priority items related to the club. The leadership team consists of 1) the faculty advisor; 2) the chief Instructor, a U.S. Army non-commissioned officer and ROTC instructor; 3) five cadets serving as president, vice president, secretary, and treasurers; and 4) two veteran students serving as veteran instructors. The leadership team will delve into strategic delegation theory to deal with their rapid expansion and sustainable growth challenge.

STRATEGIC DELEGATION THEORY

Strategic delegation theory emerged from the competitive dynamics literature, which centers on creating managerial efficiency through control systems (Brandenburger & Stuart, 1996; Battilana et al., 2010; Sengul et al., 2012). These governance systems emphasize firm decision-making from an external orientation, accounting for rivals' response and impact from decision-making (Baker, 2002; Witteloostuijn et al., 2003). Additionally, strategic delegation theory purports that firms "can strategically manipulate their managerial incentives and governance systems to influence their manager's competitive choices" (Sengul et al., 2011: pg. 377). Thus, incentive structures with a market orientation impact against rivals and benefits for industry growth are created (Kockesen & Ok, 2004).

Strategic delegation models are structured within a two-step process (Sengul et al., 2012; Sekeris & Xefteris, 2021). First, the owners or principal must decide what areas of decision-making should be delegated (Sev, 2017). Second, the areas of delegation to subordinates or colleagues should have strategic oversight regarding how the delegation is implemented and the reduction of responsibility for outcomes as well as an increase of incentives for positive outcomes to those assuming the responsibility (Sengul et al., 2012; Rudianto et al., 2023). In most cases, decision-making is delegated from top management units across to the respective business units (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Wooldridge et al., 2008; Guggenberger & Rohlfing-Bastian, 2016). Moreover, delegation is often represented in a firm's organizational structure that highlights different realms of authority and responsibility that each play a competitive role in the overall position of a firm within an industry (Floyd & Lane, 2000; Kockesen & Ok, 2004). Figure 1(Appendix) illustrates the General Theoretical Model of Strategic Delegation.

While the figure on strategic delegation theory is broad in scope, it does provide some areas of opportunity to address areas of concern for The Citadel's Combat Shooting Team regarding the current challenges of growth, influence, and recognition (Sekeris & Xefteris, 2021). Strategic delegation is the nexus between competitive action and decision-making (Charness & Jackson, 2007; Alonso et al., 2015; Kim & Palfrey, 2021). Therefore, identifying

areas from the model to adapt to the team's current challenges may benefit both the leadership and the organization.

COMBAT SHOOTING TEAM BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Citadel Combat Shooting Team was established in 2022 by ARMY ROTC cadets who desired to train in combat marksmanship in addition to the regular education and training that contracted cadets receive during their ROTC training pipeline (Kwon, 2024). Thus, out of the “Shoot, Move, and Communicate” model of individual combat tasks, the team’s training focuses on the Move and Shoot aspects (Daley, 1963; Grau & Falivene, 2006; Yamaki-Taylor & Simons, 2011). Image 1 (appendix) illustrates the club’s solicitation efforts on campus.

The club first chartered in the fall of 2022 as The Citadel Competitive Shooting Club, with approximately 10 members, which was the minimum number on the club charter for cadet activities but held none because of the limited scope and vision for the organization (Zedtwitz, 2003; Gelderen et al., 2005; Chaudhri et al., 2024). The club rechartered as El Cid Marksmen, Competitive Shooting Club at The Citadel in the fall of 2023. El Cid Marksmen was devised as an inclusive identity to engage alums, affiliates, and advocates for the Citadel Military College of South Carolina.

In fall 2023, the club leaders decided to participate in the club fair. They started recruiting members and hosted an informational meeting and open house at the campus indoor range, attracting dozens of members, reaching more than 70 in the first month and settling at 45 at the end of the semester (Kwon, 2024). The explosive growth illustrated a massive issue for scaling and leveraging assets and resources to meet demand (Quinn, 2000; Kerr et al., 2014; Charoontham & Amornetchkul, 2024). The advisor’s network and social capital connections led to a strategic relationship that helped drive costs and resources down so scaling could happen over one year (Mohiuddin & Yasin, 2023). Due to limited access to campus resources, this relationship was critical in establishing a training schedule and growing the club’s capabilities (Western et al., 2005). Images 2 and 3 (appendix) highlight access to off-campus facilities and trainers for club members.

During the academic year, club membership explosively increased, adding increased responsibility for the faculty advisor, increased regulatory requirements, and added training schedules (Mitchell, 1988; Moreno & Casillas, 2008). Additionally, the club was facing several challenges in its operations. First, the membership dues were too low and inefficiently collected, at \$50 per semester. The membership dues were later adjusted to \$100 per semester and again to \$200 per year upfront in the fall. Second, despite the low dues, the leadership continued providing high-value training and membership, such as membership merchandise (Kwon, 2024). Third, the leadership wanted to keep the individual cost of training to a minimum. Fourth, the team had no supplies and had to procure equipment. Thus, the advisor found innovative ways to procure funding to offset costs (Measson & Campbell-Hunt, 2015; Garg & Shivam, 2017).

To increase awareness of the organization, the advisor determined that attending SHOT Show, the world’s largest shooting, hunting, and outdoors trade show, would provide an opportunity to directly interact with various groups with the potential of becoming sponsors and donors for the team (Aspers & Darr, 2011). Additionally, attending SHOT Show would give the team the necessary Facetime and legitimacy when communicating with potential supporters (Kwon, 2024). Reaching out to potential donors and organizations without prior contact or

networking was not bringing the conversation forward, and the team needed a presence on the scene.

In January 2024, four senior leaders of the club and the advisor attended SHOT Show and established deep connections with various organizations in the industry. The primary mission of the detachment at SHOT Show was to engage potential donors and supporters in the industry that could contribute to equipping the team and growing its capabilities. At the SHOT Show floor, the advisor quickly noticed that attendees and decision-makers were far more engaged at the mention of 'combat shooting' or 'combat marksmanship' rather than 'competitive shooting'. Image 4 (see appendix) illustrates part of the exhibition floor at SHOT Show. The advisor instructed the rest of the detachment to introduce the club as the Combat Shooting Team, which enhanced the interaction with industry professionals. The team spent several weeks after returning home from SHOT Show contacting and following up discussions with key industry leaders, which slowly led to support and donations for the team.

After SHOT show, the team was invited to compete in the Sig Relentless Warrior Championship, an invitational shooting match hosted by Sig Sauer where combat shooting teams from all U.S. service academies, most U.S. senior military colleges, and the Royal Military College of Canada compete. The club sent seven members selected as the A-Team to compete and placed 7th out of 11 teams. The international exposure from this event resulted in national exposure that yielded over 95,000 dollars worth of sponsorships and support from various organizational members across the global competitive shooting industry.

CURRENT CHALLENGE

The national exposure of the Citadel Combat shooting team bolstered organizational membership. However, the expanded capabilities and operations necessary for sustaining growth led to significant leadership and delegation challenges for the faculty advisor and the student leadership (Eshima & Anderson, 2017; Bezjian, 2017; Hiroshi Usirono et al., 2024).

During and after SHOT Show 2024, the advisor realized that the team needed to significantly grow its presence and influence in the social media ecosystem (Li et al., 2021). Although some individuals and organizations were eager to support the team due to its identity and mission, many manufacturers were seeking collaborators with a significant presence and following online, which would be a convenient predictor of their return on investment and the impact of support. The team has accounts on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn. Due to the nature of the discipline, the accounts are managed by the advisor, a full-time tenure-track faculty of the School of Business. Maintaining a steady stream of content on multiple platforms has proved daunting for one individual.

With more than 50 individuals from various organizations directly contributing to the team in various ways and intervals, managing contacts and keeping supporters updated and engaged with the team's activities need to be formalized. The advisor is considering the formation of a newsletter committee, which will post team activities and achievements and send regular e-mail communications.

The advisor has been the driver of most initiatives, activities, arrangements, and development for the team so far. Although this effectively drove growth quickly, he feels the need to significantly delegate various tasks and initiatives to cadets, not only to manage his workload but also to transform the operations and growth of the team into a learning experience for the cadets. Additionally, with the explosive growth experienced from attending SHOT Show

and the Sig Sauer Warrior Games, the advisor quickly realized that student leadership needs to drive several of the key initiatives toward scalability and growth.

There are certain boundaries to what can be delegated in the operations of the Combat Shooting Team. For instance, the advisor must still handle administrative processes with institutional entities across the Citadel Military College of South Carolina. These tasks include submission of the club charter, mandatory advisor training, submission of fundraising activities requests, submission of special orders for cadets to leave campus for training, most deliberations on collaboration and donations, and financial management.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What areas of responsibility should be prioritized for delegation to club members, and what are the potential benefits and risks of such delegation? What areas within the club are strategic vs operational?
2. How can the team's leadership structure be adjusted to strategically delegate workload and support sustainable growth?
3. How can the combat shooting team implement the Theory of Strategic Delegation Model to better meet strategic objectives?
4. Given the boundaries on strategic delegation for administrative tasks, how can the advisor ensure scalability while managing institutional requirements?
5. How can strategic delegation theory be implemented to foster innovative solutions regarding organizational demands and operational complexity?
6. In what way can strategic delegation theory be used to implement solutions to increase marketing and social media presence amongst the industry stakeholders for combat shooting?
7. How might strategic delegation theory be generalized to address growth challenges in similar student-led organizations?

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APPENDIX

Figure 1. The General Theoretical Model of Strategic Delegation (Sengul et al., 2012: Pg. 380)

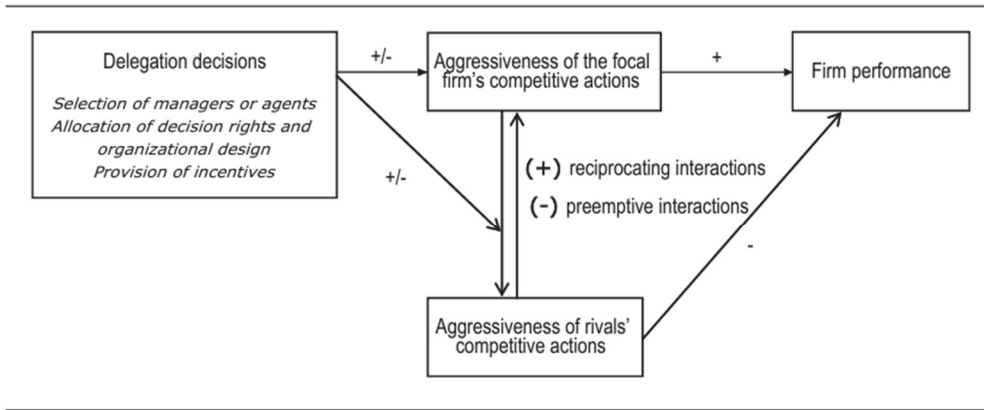


Image 1. The Citadel Combat Shooting Club Campus Outreach



Image 2. Off Campus Facilities and Training for Club Members



Image 3. Training Drills Off Campus for Club Members



Image 4. The Floor of SHOT Show 2023

