

SCOUTS-L

**COMMISSIONER
TRAINING
TIPS**

Date: Wed, 17 May 1995 23:42:32 -0400 (EDT)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@capaccess.org>
Subject: Training, Enthusiam & What Next

Gerald,

You raised a great but tough question regarding how to handle the enthusiasm a Scouter brings back to a group/unit after training.

Almost every training I've been to (Scouting and career) has breed some degree of enthusiasm to go back and make things better. In Scouting this is particularly true and I've seen many people really get excited at training only to get frustrated when old bad habits die hard.

In a perfect world, everyone would be excited to know what the newly trained person learned to take advantage of great new ideas. Not so in most places unfortunately. There's always a lot of resistance to change from the outside. People normally want to feel things out a bit before making a change and to have a voice in the change, especially when they can't understand (weren't at training and wouldn't go anyway) why dynamic Dan is running around with his hair on fire - after all things have worked fine the way they were. And much of their program probably was just fine at one time or another, but could always be improved.

Probably the greatest weakness in our training is that we can get so excited that they can't wait to try out the newly learned ideas without helping them develop a strategy to sell the ideas.

Maybe the kindest thing would be for an old hand to temper the newly enthused Scouter with some words of wisdom about nudging change instead of charging into what could be a wall. Some of the things I've shared with those coming back from Wood Badge and other training course follow:

- * Remember that the people you are serving haven't had the same great experience that you just had and won't know what to make of your sudden change of outlook.
- * You've got to work a little smarter now and exercise one of the harder parts of leadership - selling ideas by effective communication - to get the group ready to follow suggested changes.
- * What really turned you on at training? Would the same sort of thing work in the unit or help change how people see things?
- * What kinds of communication were used effectively? Can you use these

techniques to sell the ideas at home?

- * Pick and choose what you think is the most important thing to work on and focus your efforts on one or a few ideas at a time - don't shotgun a hundred ideas.
- * Take time to build a consensus for change, if it is for the better.
- * Before you start to change something, be sure its needed. Sometimes we need to temper a desire for "perfection" with the need to have a program that delivers.
- * Involve others in your ideas - start with one or two and build.
- * Realize that others have pride in how they have been doing things and are probably hesitant to do anything that lessens that pride.
- * Ask how you can help others to discover ideas that they will then use or promote.
- * Remember to be patient.
- * Remember that nobody likes a know-it-all one-man/woman show.
- * Take time to observe and develop raport.
- * Take time to compliment and recognize those who are trying!

There probably are no really right answers, because so much depends on the people and their circumstances. There are a lot of good experienced Scouters on this list who have handled the challenge of an enthused, freshly trained Scouter. I hope they will share their experiences and successes.

Speaking only for myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F. Bowman
Prof. Beaver, Nat. Capital Area Council, BSA mfbowman@CAPACCESS.ORG

Date: Tue, 16 May 1995 16:52:18 -0500
From: golden cliff <c60clg1@corn.cso.niu.edu>
Subject: Re: New "1 hr/wk" job...

On Mon, 15 May 1995, Pat Rodgers wrote:

> the "only an hour a week" line on me often in the past. While I'm going to
> meet with him to discuss the duties of this new post, I'd like to hear from

- > some of y'all...just what does a District Commissioner DO??? For
- > instance...will I still have time to ASM our troop?
- >
- >
- > Pat Rodgers, ASM, Troop 98, West MI Shores Council
- > "I used to be an eagle..." C-31-94
- >

It is more than an hour a week. I am hopefully ending my term as DC this June. I can give you a run down of what my job has involved.

There are basically four meetings per month that I attend directly because of the position. You may already be attending some of these.

1. District Commissioner Meeting.

You are already no doubt familiar with these from being a Unit Commissioner.

2. District Committee Meeting.

The District Commissioner runs this meeting, I only make a report on units needs.

3. Council Commissioner Meeting.

This is a meeting between the Council Commissioner and District Commissioners. The Council Commissioner is who I directly report to. He appoints all District Commissioners with recommendation from the District.

4. Key 3 Meeting.

This is a meeting between the District Chairman, Commissioner, and Executive. Needs of the District are discussed and analyzed. Upcoming District Committee and District Commissioner Meetings are planned.

Other duties include recruiting and training Unit Commissioners. You are responsible for rechartering your district units. If a unit has a charter problem, then you have a charter problem.

Major problems identified by your Unit Commissioners are subject to your involvement. I've had a few sticky situations I've had to be involved with that were not pleasant. Very few though.

F.O.S. or S.M.E., whatever your council calls your annual fundraising effort. Although theoretically the domain of the District Committee, the DC usually is expected to help, at least in my location.

You are responsible for Roundtables and Roundtable Commissioners. I always attend these monthly meetings. I am also a Scoutmaster so I need to attend them anyway. As an ASM, you've stated you already do.

I suppose that's the basic list. I haven't gone into any real detail.

I have worked as District Commissioner while also serving as a Scoutmaster and Explorer Post Advisor. I don't recommend this at all. To be honest, I'm getting a little burned out with all of this. Meetings, Meetings, Meetings! I feel like I go from meeting to meeting, stopping only to eat, sleep, and earn a living in between. So far in May, I have had a scheduled Scouting meeting or event on every day except for the 9th, and 14th (Mother's Day). On the 9th though, I bought supplies for an activity on the 13th. On Mother's Day I bought supplies for an upcoming activity on the 21st. Over lunch hour today I bought some equipment for a canoe trip later this month, and tonight I meet with my Troop Treasurer. Tomorrow, Wednesday 17th, I have a CPR class scheduled at the fire station for my Scouts, but I will be attending a Pack Meeting instead. Luckily I have good assistant leaders in my troop. My next free night is the 23rd. Obviously, I'm not married.

The District Commissioner is a major responsibility and should be considered your top priority in Scouting. As a Scoutmaster, my top priority has always been the boys in my troop. This creates a real conflict sometimes, especially when I'm supposed to be in two places at the same time, which is often the case.

If you want a rewarding job, ASM or SM is where you want to be. If you want a combination of reward and stress, then you're headed in the right direction.

You need to weigh your unit responsibilities with other commitments in your life, then ask yourself if you can be happy with an additional job in Scouting. If not, then you have some hard decisions to make.

If you decide to be a District Commissioner, let me offer you congratulations and good luck. If you decide not to be Commissioner for your district, would you consider moving to Illinois and taking my DC job? They still haven't found my replacement and are talking about "extending my contract".

YIS, Cliff Golden

Date: Mon, 15 May 1995 16:09:47 CDT
From: "Settummanque, the blackeagle" <waltoml@WKUVX1.WKU.EDU>
Subject: What does a District Commissioner Do?

Pat Rodgers <ScareDKat@AOL.COM> writes:

>I've got a burning question for you seasoned Scouters...I've been "offered" a
>new position in our district, and I'd like some information. Sorry in
>advance for a semi-long post...

(background deleted only for space)

>And NOW for the question...my dear ticket counselor's the very man who's used
>the "only an hour a week" line on me often in the past. While I'm going to
>meet with him to discuss the duties of this new post, I'd like to hear from
>some of y'all....just what does a District Commissioner DO??? For
>instance...will I still have time to ASM our troop?

Give the Assistant Scoutmastership to another promising (female?)
Scouter in your Troop and give him or her the encouragement you were
not given toward doing a GREAT job. Register as District Commissioner
and dual register as a member of your Troop's Committee.

Pat, the role of District Commissioner is one of the MOST IMPORTANT
jobs in the operation of the District. As DC, you become one third to
one fourth of the "Key 3 (or Key 4)" of your District. The other
members are the District's Chair and the professional/career staff of
your District (one or two people).

The District Commissioner is worried about UNIT SERVICE in your
District: how units are formed and where, when units are needed and
what kinds, how to get the adult leaders trained so that they can
train and coach their youth leaders, and how to insure continuity of
each unit from one year to the next.

The District Commissioner is concerned about how units are formed and
where. You should meet with your District Executive(s) and find out
their "concept for organization and extension" of Scouting in your
District. Some of it, Pat, is dictated by "professional objectives"
that the career executive has written and worked out with his or her
boss, the Field Director. Some of it is personal, as he or she has
seen a need for a new unit in a community where there has never been
Scouting before, or when Scouting "stopped" for whatever reason. You
will also see where there are TOO MANY units concentrated in one area
of your District.

You will also note the number and kinds of units your District has. Of
course, all Districts will have large numbers of Cub Scout Packs, a
much smaller number of Boy Scout Troops, and smaller numbers of
Varsity Teams and Explorer Posts and Ships. However, the density--the
actual "spreading" of those units, is something you should be aware

of and work with your career Scouter counterpart AND the District's Chair (necessary because he or she has a Vice Chair for Membership/Relationships which should be working on developing new partner organizations for the District).

The District Commissioner is concerned about when units are needed and what kinds. This piggybacks on the previous comment I wrote. Most Scout Troops have a higher probability of "survival" if they are formed in the early fall. This gives the unit an entire nine months before summer camp, the "final exams" of Scouting. Explorer Posts need to be formed either in the winter or early spring, to give those youth interested in a career path the spring and entire summer to work with that Post or Ship before the "impact" of returning to school, fall dances, football/basketball and new friends. Cub Packs have a high probability of survival any time during the year, which partially explains why there seem to be more Cub Scout Packs than anything else in your District. Not just look at "we need a new Pack here", but WHY do we need a new Pack here instead of forming a new Den of a weaker Pack or perhaps splitting a huge Pack into two to serve the growing area. You will get a lot of this "We need a Scout Troop here" from citizens in your communities, and what they are REALLY saying is, "we need a Scouting program, but I'm only familiar with the Boy Scout one. Help us out please!"

This, without preaching, tells you that you need to be familiar with ALL program elements and be ready to recommend an appropriate Scouting program to meet the needs of that community. Your District professionals/career executives (hey! I'm trying, but every time I write both titles, it gets longer and longer!) will help you with this.

As District Commissioner, you are THE trainer, THE organizer of the efforts to get ALL members of your District trained in their primary position. You will have many tools to help you, Pat, but I would recommend that shortly after you assume the role, send a letter to all of the volunteers in your District and ask them how trained they are (and if there's some training programs that you would like to see implemented). Use this, along with your DE/DD's copy of the District Summary of Trained Leaders (he or she SHOULD have a copy in their binder....if not, SHAME ON THEM!) to get an accurate stand on how trained your District's leaders are and what training to place an emphasis on in the coming year. Don't forget you have Commissioners to assist you...don't do this alone and force those Commissioners that "are on paper" to either commit to and attend training or take them off the District's charter!

While I am talking about your staff, let me expand on that a little because you need to know what kind of "staff" you should have. The BSA says that you should have at least ONE Commissioner for every three to four units in your District. Some units have a Pack or Troop Commissioner that meets the needs of that one unit; other units have a shared Unit Commissioner which rotates as you know, between all three or four units. Exploring has "Service Team members" which many Councils are calling Commissioners too, for consistency. The "Service Team Chair" in your District should be one of your four to six Assistant District Commissioners. One of those ADCs should be your immediate "stand-in" for Council meetings and activities you cannot attend in person, as well as for those unit events you cannot be at two places at once for. One should be your Exploring "Service Team Chair/Commissioner", with supervisory responsibilities for your Exploring Commissioners (Exploring is a special program and needs the specialized Commissioner staff). One should be your Varsity/Venture Commissioner, working with training and coaching Varsity units in your District. The other two should be supervising at least four to six Unit/Pack/Troop Commissioners. You may also want to have a ADC to work with your LDS units

Your "stand-in" (Primary Assistant District Commissioner, or what I called the Senior Assistant District Commissioner) is also the supervisor of the Cub Scout, Boy Scout and Exploring Roundtable Commissioners and their staffs. Those Commissioners are responsible for the monthly supplemental training meetings called Roundtables (in Exploring, they are called "Leaders' Exchanges"; in Varsity, they are called "Huddles").

Remember that Roundtables ARE TRAINING, not just a time for you to look nice and to address the majority of your District's Scouters. Don't waste their time...they are sacrificing an evening away from their families and friends to attend this meeting. Keep the "announcements" and "talks" to a minimum!

Finally, your new job involves continuity of the program through your Commissioners' staff going to each unit, insuring that they are running a Scouting program, using the guidelines of the BSA and their chartering organization, and that both youth and adults are there and getting the most from their experiences. Your Commissioner staff IS the "District", the "Council" , the "BSA". Make sure that they visit each and every unit at least ONCE a month in uniform. Make sure that YOU visit each and every unit at least ONCE a quarter in uniform. The BIGGEST complaint I heard from MANY of my District's volunteers is that "I only see you when you are asking for money" or "I have NEVER seen ANYONE from the Council or District here until you" (a lie, but

nevertheless somewhat true). My response was always "I'm here now and I'll be back three more times this year to see you. When do you want me to come back and visit with your unit again?"

You are directly responsible, says the BSA, for rechartering and registration efforts in your District. While your Council may have lifted that burden from you and gave it to your career/professional counterparts, you are **STILL** responsible for seeing to that happening. You do this by insuring that ahead of time your units have seen their Unit Commissioner and that the Commissioner knows who is doing what in the unit. Also, there needs to be a consistent way that the rechartering packets are sent to the units, that the units complete them, and that monies and paperwork is handed back to someone **TO HAND TO YOU** so that you can review **EACH AND EVERY RECHARTERING PACKET** before it is forwarded to the Council's Registrar. By having several eyes "look" at the packets, you reduce the amount of error (at the same time, you can see how well or not your Unit Commissioners and ADCs have done their jobs!). Yes, it **DOES** slow the rechartering effort down significantly. However, it's a lot better to slow it down than to constantly having to harrass unit leaders or chartered partner representatives to "sign this please" or to "modify this please".

As the District's Commissioner, you become a member of your Council's Executive Board and should attend those meetings each month. You also have a Council Commissioner that would want to meet with you each month as well. Finally, you **ARE** a part of the District's operation, and should meet with the District Committee each month. If you haven't been counting, that's five meetings (the other two are the Commissioners' Staff meeting in your District and a Roundtable meeting).

Pat, it looks like too much but it's really **NOT** too bad. Remember that you will have a professional/career executive (or two) to help you. You will have a staff of nine to thirty experienced Scouters to help you. You will have other Scouters, members of your District's Committee to help you.

>Yeah,

>And another note....the LDS discussion going on here of late has been

>enormously helpful, as I've accepted an LDS troop as part of my UC duties,

>and no one was able to tell me what the differences and similarities were.

> And the SMF discussions were timely... And I've been collecting the recipes

>y'all have been sending out.... Thanks heaps!!!

Glad to see you using another resource, this list!

You will be a GREAT District Commissioner, Pat!!! Please let us all know how you're doing.

And congrats! Remember that while the job is important, its only there to further the Scouting program where it counts...in our communities and to our youth.

**Settummanque!
(former District Commissioner)**

--

Settummanque, the blackeagle... (MAJ) Mike L. Walton (

**Date: Tue, 16 May 1995 14:47:34 -0400
From: "Jim Miller Sr." <JJMSR@AOL.COM>
Subject: Re: New "1 hr/wk" job...**

My perspective on what a DC is supposed to do is colored by my current position as Council President but here goes. The District Commissioner is a representative of the Council Commissioner in the district. She/he is responsible for coordinating the efforts of all the commissioners in that district, including the Roundtable Commissioner. Primary concerns should be: rechartering existing units, Recruiting and managing ADC's and UC's, promoting leader training, chartering new units, etc. In addition, I view the DC's role as communicating and promoting "council policies and procedures." In other words, part of your job is to "defend" the councils to the district and unit level volunteers. This means that you have to understand the council policies and procedures and feel comfortable with them. You must use the opportunities presented to you at the monthly commissioners meeting and at the Council Key Three meetings to attain this comfort level. *In my opinion*** if the commissioner is one of the "nay-sayers" who is constantly b****ing about "them vs us" than she/he is not doing the job. To dredge up the 1960's cliché, "If your not part of the solution, than you are part of the problem."**

In other words, be positive. Be a cheerleader for new ideas. Look for ways to reconcile differences between "us" & "them." YOU CAN be a peacemaker and force for good. Take the opportunity to do so.

JJMSr

**Date: Fri, 19 May 1995 23:03:02 -0600
To: mfbowman@CapAccess.org
From: MHolmes@mail.coretech.com (Michael Holmes)
Subject: Commissioner Training**

Michael,

I just returned from the second and final day of the National Meeting. There's far more to tell than I can say in this message, but I'm sure others were there and there will ensue some lively comment. One thing, though, is that the Commissioner Conference and College of Commissioner Science pamphlets have been combined into a single pamphlet on "Continuing Education For Commissioners" -- which takes the place of advanced training, a term we no longer use. The advantage of the new pamphlet is its versatility. You can put modules together for any occasion, from a short training "moment" at a commissioners meeting to a full syllabus of courses for a College of Commissioner Science.

I also heard rumors to the effect that the old Explorer Silver Award is being revived, with new requirements -- we'll see. There's a new strategic planning pamphlet containing a new section on asset management, which looks interesting, and there are a couple of new promotional videos to be made of the slide shows we saw: one on 85 years of Scouting and one on "Character Counts." They both are well done, in my opinion. The National Office spent \$500,000 on a Harris Poll regarding youth and adult male values, comparing Scouts and non-Scouts. The results were printed in the Wall Street Journal and the Chicago Tribune, among other newspapers. There are a series of slide shows and scripts of varying lengths that will be in the hands of every council within about a week. They can be used for PR purposed, for presentation to the United Way or as part of fund raising efforts.

There's a lot of new material for L4L, and much, much more. If you have specific questions, I'll try to answer them.

YiS

Michael Holmes
Mholmes@mail.coretech.com

Date: Tue, 7 Nov 1995 01:16:37 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>
To: SARGEANT@CUA.EDU
Subject: Re: Training

Sarge,

The staffs for the two courses should be independent of each other, likewise the student bodies. I don't see this as a problem. My plan is to keep the RT course on Jan 27 and the ADC Course the following weekend.

This will be a little ambitious, but doable. Both courses will feed into the College of Commissioner Science too. Time to rev up the engine.

Chuck Lang told me that this was really an answer to a problem for him too. He had two weak MD Districts wanting to put on ADC training in the Winter/Spring and he didn't think they had anyone capable of doing the job and didn't want to insult 'em. Now he can invite them to our course.

He will be sending the old "so-so" syllabus to me on disk. I'll edit and update adding better teaching methods with more focus on business management approaches. He'll work with me from that to get a final product that works. I'll also draw on Internet Resources to build.

I've been asked to expand my Internet Commissioner Training materials at two sites. So this will help in both areas as well.

Once we get a good course, it can be shared and serve other areas outside our Council. Scouting at its best. :-)

With this new course addition and the ones already scheduled, I finally feel like I'm getting the job done and doing some good.

**Speaking only for myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F. Bowman
DDC-Training, GW Dist. Nat Capital Area Council
mfbowman@CAPACCESS.ORG**

**From mfbowman@CapAccess.org Wed Dec 20 22:55:17 1995
To: "Adolphi, Ronald" <adolphir@smtpsu.ousdc.osd.mil>
cc: mboyce@CapAccess.org
Subject: Re: Training for Troop Committee Chair (CC)**

Ron,

What a great time for training opportunities. We are in the process of organizing another course specifically for unit committee positions with Mike Boyce as Course Director. This is an experimental course that GW District has developed on its own and so we are still learning.

Ms. Lorena Blalock may also be interested in attending the University of Scouting on March 3 at the University of Maryland, where there will be a variety of courses that will help her get a better grounding in advancement, committees, outdoors program, etc. I would highly encourage her to attend.

Finally, there will be a Spring Scoutmaster's Fundamentals Course that she is most welcome to attend. For details ask her to keep a weather eye on the District News. If she hasn't seen a copy please share yours with her and check with Jon Baake to see that the name is changed for her.

You might also ask Gregg (703) 866-5136 to loan you a copy of the Fast Start tape for Scout Troops and sit down with her to take a look. There is a section on committee duties that is fairly good.

**Speaking Only for Myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F. Bowman
a/k/a Professor Beaver (WB), ASTA #2566, OA Vigil Honor '71, Eagle Scout '67, Serving as Deputy District Commissioner for Training,
G.W.Dist., Nat. Capital Area Council, BSA - mfbowman@capaccess.org**