

# Recruiting Pack Volunteers

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Behind a successful Pack, you'll find dedicated volunteers. This class discusses how to recruit, develop, and retain volunteer leadership.

Material for this course comes from my BSA training, the BSA *Volunteer Outcomes Study* by Harris Interactive (<http://www.scouting.org/media/research/02-658.pdf>), personal experience, and the book *Volunteers: How to Get Them, How to Keep Them* (ISBN: 1-928892-01-9) by Helen Little. Information about the book is available at <http://www.panaceapress.com>. My copy was purchased through Amazon.com.

### **Volunteering for the BSA**

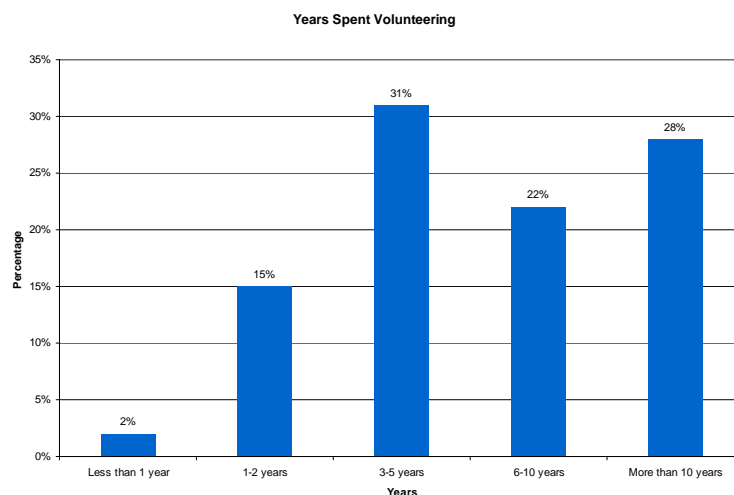
The BSA has a great vision for our youth. *The Boy Scouts of America will prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law.* The BSA doesn't talk about it much, but adults get a lot out of scouting too. The 2003 *Volunteer Outcomes Study* indicated that scout volunteering encourages conservation; reinforces ethical and moral character; builds tolerance, patience, and openness to new ideas; builds self-esteem and reduces stress; strengthens communication, teaching, parenting, and relationship skills with youth and adults; and makes one a better manager, leader, and employee. On top of all that, volunteers can learn all kinds of neat scouting skills! The BSA is a great place to volunteer.

### **Recruiting and Managing Volunteers**

Recruiting and managing volunteers takes a good amount of effort. These days free time is in short supply and taking the time to coordinate volunteers isn't high on our priority list. We're too busy worrying about tonight's den meetings more than we are about things like next year's Tiger leaders and who our next Popcorn Kernel will be. Not managing volunteers properly often times produces a small volunteer base with volunteers taking on multiple roles. Without sharing the load, the Pack can become dependant on a few volunteers. Pack leaders need to spread the work load and constantly develop new volunteers. A strong volunteer pool makes for a strong program, provides leadership diversity, and fun for everyone, not just the boys.

Leadership turnover is higher in Cub Scouting than in other areas of scouting. After all, in Cub Scouting leadership is usually made up of scout parents, parents of kids that grow up too fast! The graph below shows the largest number of scout volunteers are in scouting three to five years. I suspect that this number comes from Cub Scout adult turnover. With such a high turnover, packs always need new leaders.

An unchanging volunteer team can be efficient as everyone knows their role and knows who is doing what. It takes time to get to this point. At first things are a bit rough, but over time, they learn each other's personality types, skill sets and interests, and perform well. What happens when this team's sons cross over into Boy Scouts? The Packs program suffers and boys drop out. If new volunteers aren't added to the team, the program will suffer as the team will have to rebuild from scratch which takes time. A better approach is to continuously recruit volunteers. Continuously introducing and building new volunteers takes time too, but it keeps the pack strong and our youth in scouting.



Understanding why people volunteer and how to meet their needs is necessary to have long-lived volunteer base. Ms. Little's book explains that there are 12 basic volunteer needs, needs that when met make for happy volunteers. Having happy volunteers will result in a stronger pack. What I hope to do is take Ms. Little's volunteer needs and wrap a scouting touch around them.

### **Who Volunteers for Scouting?**

Most of the *scouters* (adults that volunteer in Scouting) I know are volunteers because they have a son in scouting and they want their sons to have a good program. Others volunteer for different reasons. For example, they may have enjoyed scouting as a youth or have had a son go through scouting and believe in the scouting mission.

### **Volunteer Development**

Although we'd like to have everyone volunteer, the reality is they don't. According to Ms. Little, a typical volunteer organization is broken down into four sections. The first 5% are officers, board members and committee chairs. In a Cub Pack, I would equate this 5% to the Pack Committee, the group that plans the budget, tracks advancement, coordinates with the Charter Organization, etc. The next 15% are active volunteers. In a Cub Pack these would be leaders that work weekly with the youth. The third group, 75% in size, are the occasional volunteers. These are the people that help with short term projects, for example setting up tables for a Blue and Gold banquet or maybe picking up popcorn. The last 5% don't do anything except whine! These are the people that try to drain your enthusiasm by complaining and won't lift a finger to help. Bless them.

According to Ms. Little, it is the responsibility of the first 20% to utilize the other 75% and to move these volunteers through four volunteer stages. These stages are: new volunteer, work team leader, project team leader, and lastly leader/officer. In Cub Scouting this might be something like, Tiger Parent, Den Leader, Cub Master, and Committee Chair. As volunteers move through the stages, fewer move up, with the end result being the 5% that are committee members.

So what keeps volunteers motivated and happy? Ms. Little indicates that volunteers have twelve basic needs and when these needs are met, you have happy volunteers. These are:

### **12 Basic Needs**

1. *A specific manageable task with a beginning and an end.*
2. *A task that matches interests and reasons for volunteering.*

3. *A good reason for doing the task.*
4. *Written instructions.*
5. *A reasonable deadline for completing the task.*
6. *Freedom to complete the task when and where it is most convenient for the volunteer.*
7. *Everything necessary to complete the task without interruption.*
8. *Adequate training.*
9. *A safe, comfortable, and friendly working environment.*
10. *Follow-up to see that the task is completed.*
11. *An opportunity to provide feedback when the task is finished.*
12. *Appreciation, recognition, and rewards that match the reasons for volunteering.*

**Need 1 – Volunteers need a specific manageable task with a beginning and an end.**

Tasks with broad or vague requirements are frustrating to volunteers and lead to wasted time and resources which can result in increased volunteer turnover. It is important to get organized before recruiting volunteers.

When recruiting volunteers, recruit the best people for the job.

- Recruit beyond your friends and current volunteers.
- Assign small tasks to new volunteers to see how they do. If things work out, give them larger tasks in the future.
- Make a list of potential volunteers and prioritize them. Don't ask everyone, ask people that are qualified. Ask the most qualified person first.
- For the best results, recruit one-on-one. This can be face-to-face, on the phone, or via email. Face-to-face recruitment works best.
- Assume people will say yes.

**Personalize Volunteer Requests**

- Ask the potential volunteer what his/her interests are. Use the **Parent Talent Survey** to get some idea beforehand.
- Provide enough detail so the volunteer knows what the job will take.
- Use newsletters and other methods to publicize Pack needs, but recruit one-on-one. Standing in front of an audience and broadcasting requests for volunteers generally isn't a good idea.

**Need 2 – A volunteer needs a task that matches interest and reason for volunteering.**

People volunteer for various reasons. One would hope that people volunteer for scouting because they believe in the mission of scouting. Most leaders volunteer because they want to spend more time with their son. Sometimes people just like to hear themselves talk. Ms. Little lists several reasons why people volunteer. Some of these include:

- *Affiliation/Socialization* – Scouters are some of the best folks to work with, especially when it comes to camping and cooking!
- *Challenge* – These types of people would be good as Popcorn Kernels or coordinating pack events.
- *Leadership/Power/Prestige* – These are people that like to be seen and like titles and rank. If they are dependable, have them recruit and plan pack activities.
- *Self-Improvement* – Some people volunteer because they want to learn new things. Being a scouter is a wonderful place to learn new things.
- *Service/Interest in Cause* - Often times, these volunteers grew up as scouts and want to give the youth of this generation the same experiences they had.

- *Variety* – People that like variety, volunteer for a change of pace. They get bored easy and like trying new things. They would be good for filling in at the last minute and short term projects.

When asking for volunteers, consider the items listed above. Don't assume you know what someone wants to do. For example, just because someone is a CPA doesn't mean that they want to be the treasurer. Have a variety of jobs to choose from and let them select the one that best matches their interest.

### **Need 3 - A good reason for doing the task.**

If a volunteer is learning new skills or feels like they are making a difference, this need is met. When you work with the boys, it is easy to see how you make a difference as it is shown in their smiles and advancement. Sometimes it is more difficult to see the difference being made. Tell volunteers that what they are doing is important and they are the best person for the job. Follow up with them. If a job isn't important, don't ask someone to do it.

### **Need 4 - Written instructions.**

Volunteers need clear instructions for their roles. For almost all scouting positions, roles are already written, you just have to know where to look. For example, the *Cub Scout Leader Book* details the positions of every leader in the Pack. Other information can be found in the *Cub Scout Leader How-To Book*. Although every unit runs their programs in slightly different ways, the BSA documentation is a great place to start.

At the end of this document are task lists for a few activities that our Pack does. Laura and I put these together after working on these activities. They aren't complete, but they are a good start.

### **Need 5 - A reasonable deadline for completing the task.**

The best volunteers are generally the busiest people. Busy people are generally good at time management and working with deadlines. Be sure that duties have deadlines and have the volunteers provide progress reports, especially on big tasks like planning the Pinewood Derby or Blue and Gold Banquet.

One important thing is to have the volunteers let you know when a deadline is not going to be met. I tell our leaders that if they can't do something for whatever reason, to let me know as quickly as possible so that we can get others to help. We all know things come up that can destroy our best-laid plans. Keeping in touch with volunteers over the life of big projects keeps a pulse on the project and helps keep them motivated.

### **Need 6 - Freedom to complete the task when and where it is most convenient for the volunteer.**

Volunteers should be given the flexibility to work where and when they can. Large projects require meetings. If volunteers prefer meetings, have meetings. If they prefer using computers, maybe mailing lists would work better. Complex tasks require meetings and close monitoring. Keep in touch enough to make sure things are progressing. Don't hover.

One recent example of where someone was given freedom with a project was when a parent volunteered to make awards for our Arrow of Light ceremony. He designed the award, created a sample, showed it to the committee, and created one for each boy. We spoke maybe three times about this. On the other hand, the Popcorn sale involved several meetings, numerous email correspondences with several people over a longer period of time. There was some flexibility, but

with tight and fixed schedules, both personal and from the Council, we didn't have too much flexibility.

**Need 7 - Everything necessary to complete the task without interruption.**

When someone volunteers, they need the tools to do the job. Whether these tools are health forms for a campout or handbooks for boys, not having necessary tools can cause volunteer frustration and potentially unhappy boys. Make sure that everyone has what they need. If the volunteer is expected to provide their own stuff, make sure they understand that.

**Need 8 - Adequate training.**

Training is something the BSA offers at every level. From Fast Start to Wood Badge training, there are many opportunities to learn how Scouting works.

Training helps take the guess work out of being a leader. It helps you understand your position, the age appropriate activities for your program, and generally makes being a scouter easier.

Unfortunately, there isn't training for every aspect of scouting. For example, there isn't an official "How to have a Blue and Gold" class. I'm not saying that information isn't available for how to put on a Blue and Gold, it is, you just have to know where to look. The University of Scouting is one place where you might learn about these types of activities. Monthly Roundtables might be another. Having face-to-face classes provides opportunities for discussion and knowledge transfer from real-world experiences.

Self training is also an option. The BSA has tons of literature on scouting and some courses are available on-line at <http://olc.scouting.org>. Although online learning is great for convenience, in most cases it lacks the interactivity that a classroom environment provides.

One form of "interactive" on-line learning is email. There are various mailing lists dedicated to scouting where one can ask questions and communicate with other scouters from around the world. Often times I learn things coming from the National Office before our local Council knows or tells us about it by reading the mailing lists *CUB-L*, <http://usscouts.org/lists/cubL.asp>, and *SCOUTS-L*, <http://www.engr.tcu.edu/~eidson/scouts-l/swelcome.html>. These list members vary from newbies to knowledgeable old-timers. They can also produce a good number of email messages, so be prepared.

Another training method is mentoring. For example, if a leader is stepping down, a replacement should be recruited and work closely for a time so they can learn the role and have a smooth transition.

**Need 9 - A safe, comfortable, and friendly working environment.**

Having a good working environment is important. Simple things like someone forgetting to schedule for the air conditioning/heating system to be on can make a meeting very uncomfortable. Other things like sufficient parking, food, handicap access, a public address system, all make for a good working environment.

One of the areas where we frequently use volunteers is cooking during pack camping. The cooking area should be coordinated by someone experienced with camp cooking and cooking for large groups and the safety implications of cooking with boys.

### **Need 10 - Follow-up to see that the task is completed.**

Leaders should follow-up with volunteers to verify that things are on task. Without follow-up, volunteers may get the impression that they were assigned busywork or that the task isn't important.

Pack leaders should delegate and monitor volunteers. Let the other leaders do most of the work and watch. If they work out, you can use them for bigger and better things in the future.

If a volunteer isn't working out, the Committee Chair or Cubmaster may need to intervene. There may be times when a volunteer may need to be re-assigned or not used in the future. If all else fails, a volunteer can be dismissed.

I've seen on several occasions where volunteers stepped up to the plate for something and either didn't know what they were getting into (my fault) or other things in their life changed resulting in them not having being able to do the job. I try to explain to volunteers before they start that if for any reason they are unable to do the job, to let me know so we don't drop the ball for our boys. I also explain that I won't take it personally. Thank them for their efforts and if there is another position that they would work out in, have them take it!

### **Need 11 - An opportunity to provide feedback when the task is finished.**

Providing feedback when a task is done is important. Obviously, the amount of feedback depends on the task complexity. For simple tasks, verbal feedback works, but it should be documented. For more complicated task, follow up with an evaluation form or require a "Lessons Learned" document. This type of feedback can allow the continued use of successful processes and help prevent mistakes.

### **Need 12 - Appreciation, recognition, and rewards that match the reasons for volunteering.**

Recognition is an important method of scouting and exciting for scouts. Many times we don't provide enough volunteer recognition. A hand written note, public recognition, or a small gift goes a long way towards recognition that some volunteers crave. Remember to promote the leader knots and award them! Another way to show recognition is to move the volunteers into a more responsible position so they can do more. No good deed goes unpunished!

### **How to Get Parents to Volunteer**

Getting parents to volunteer is often times challenging. It takes time and planning and patience.

We have tried several things over the years including:

- Pack meeting broadcast announcements
- Passing around job signup forms
- Watching what new parents take the initiative to help coordinate dens during Cub roundup
- Contacting individuals one-on-one

The last two methods seem to work the best for recruiting den leaders. The signup form works for small tasks. Important positions require planning and potential volunteer evaluation. Once potential leaders are identified, one-on-one pressing the flesh works best for these positions.

### **Conclusion**

Packs that don't replace leadership go through cycles of rebuilding. Having a strong long-lived scouting program takes a committed volunteer team that is continuously adding, building, and replacing its leaders. Recruiting volunteers is challenging and understanding why people volunteer aids in the recruiting process and helps retain volunteers. Meeting volunteer needs keeps them

happy. The end results of keeping your pack leadership happy and strong are: a changing diverse leadership, work distribution, and our ultimate goal, better youth retention through strong programs.

## Laura and Robert's Job Task Lists

### **Popcorn Kernel**

1. Recruit Popcorn Kernel and popcorn committee
2. Schedule "Show and Sell" locations as soon as you know delivery date of popcorn.
3. Secure "Take Order" distribution center for scouts to pick up popcorn.
4. Determine how much popcorn to order for "Show and Sells" based on historical sales.
5. Attend Council Kick-Off meeting.
6. Turn-in Ideal Year of Scouting, Budget, and "Show and Sell" order before due date and specified time.
7. Make appointment to pick up popcorn for "Show and Sells".
8. Recruit people with trucks/vans/trailers to pick up "Show and Sell" popcorn and bring it to "Show and Sell" locations.
9. Determine where popcorn will be stored.
10. Schedule time slots for "Show and Sells".
11. Determine if Council incentives will be used. If not, develop incentive plan.
12. Determine what % will be given in Cub Cash
13. Pay for "Show and Sell" popcorn before due date.
14. When order forms are distributed to the Pack, explain incentive programs.
15. Determine due date for order forms to be turned in.
16. Collect "Take Order" forms
17. Summarize orders, subtract remaining "Show and Sell" popcorn inventory, and order "Take Order" popcorn.
18. If Council's prize incentives are being used, summarize prize selections from order forms and place order before due date.
19. Make appointment to pick up "Take Order" popcorn.
20. Pick up and distribute "Take Order" popcorn.
21. Make final payment to Council before due date.
22. Pick up and verify prizes.
23. Label prizes for distribution at Pack meeting.
24. Distribute prizes.
25. Take a nap.
26. Document product sales, lessons learned and report to Pack Committee.

## **Laura and Robert's Job Task Lists**

### **Pack Trips**

1. At July planning meeting, choose locations and dates for your Pack trip for the upcoming year.
2. Contact location for group rates, deadlines, and activities. Do this at least 3 months in advance.
3. Report options to Pack Committee. Select events and get Pack Committee approval for the event budget. Remember to include those patches.
4. File Tour Permits with Council. Two weeks in advance!
5. Publish on Pack calendar.
6. Create sign-up sheets and permission slips. The forms should include date, time, cost (child and adult), cell. phone numbers, deadline date, location and time we will meet and leave for trip, and any other requirements.
7. Collect permission slips and money.
8. Build trip roster.
9. Create directions and maps for drivers.
10. Send reminder announcements/e-mails.
11. Secure check from Treasurer and mail before deadline.
12. Review activity at the Pack committee meeting following the event.

## **Laura and Robert's Job Task Lists**

### **Blue and Gold**

1. Schedule date at July annual planning meeting.
2. Recruit Blue and Gold committee.
3. Provide historical data for past Blue and Gold Banquets; i.e. provide information about costs, program, and invited guests.
4. Determine theme - usually comes from Program Helps.
5. Reserve facility and verify reservations 60 days prior. Sooner if possible.
6. Determine menu and program and method (catering, cooking, covered dish)
7. Get approval of budget from Committee
8. Invite any external guest for program.
9. Communicate to Pack the program and costs.
10. Set deadline for reservations.
11. Order food based on reservations.
12. Assign set-up and clean-up committees and their responsibilities.
13. Explain "Dad and Lad" Cake Auction.
14. Recruit auctioneer for "Dad and Lad" cake auction.
15. Send out invitations to special guests.
16. Verify access to facility and facility set-up. (Do you have keys? Is temperature set correctly? Do you know how to turn on/off lights? Is there a PA?)
17. Have banquet.
18. Report to Pack Committee lessons learned.