

Competing with Scouting

Who are we competing with for a Scout's time? School, sports, community, church events, Family outings, Council/district events, holidays, etc.

December 25, 2008

Hello fellow Scouters,

I hope you all had a great Christmas. As Scout leaders, we are in a competition – we are competing with other youth programs for the increasingly divided time of parents and children. This is not news, as we deal with this all the time. Since this is the time of New Year resolutions, here is one to consider: Let's face this challenge head-on by making the Scouting program we oversee the most fun we can this coming year.

Those of us in private industry understand competition. It's a challenge we face every day. Other companies court our customers. They can make more technologically innovating products. They can make cheaper products. But competition brings out the best in a company. A company cannot rest. It must continue to innovate, look for efficiencies, and open up new doors in sales. And we as Scouters can learn from this – competition can make our programs better. We can face the challenge of other youth programs head-on by making the great program provided by the Boy Scouts of America the most fun event that your boys will have in a week. Our goal is for little Johnny to say "I can't wait for Tuesday to get to the den meeting!"

Here are some suggestions to help:

Games – Every meeting should have a fun game. Don't sacrifice game for the advancements. It's important to work towards the ranks, but it can't be the end all – rank advancement is a method of Scouting, not a purpose. There might be times when you, (gasp!) only have time for a game. And that's OK (provided it's not every meeting). As I have said before, plan your meeting around a game; don't plan a game for your meeting.

Advancements – We don't want to go too fast towards completion of a rank, but we don't want to go too slow either. So work at a pace so the boys will understand what they are working on, but won't grow bored. And consider the mind of the boys we have. If a requirement would seem slow or boring to your Scouts, and you can't figure out a way to liven it up, then either skip it or have the parents do it at home.

Just say "No" to lectures – Always take the requirements and make them fun and interesting. Don't ever make it a lecture. The boys shouldn't be sitting down and listen to us speak. If there is a time where a requirement asks us to discuss something, then have a box of cookies to pass around while we discuss. And make the lecture's time end by the time the cookies have made it to the end of the group. And make it an interactive time where they are discussing and asking questions (and munching on cookies).

Outings – Get outside of the meeting place. Have den outings. Have Webelos den campouts. Go hiking. We can have outings that don't meet a requirement in the book, but are just fun and interesting place to see. Go places. See things.

Don't do it alone – If we have a den of 8, then we have 7 other parents who can assist us. Don't be afraid to delegate and ask for help. Learn to take your program and give out pieces of it so you aren't running the whole show. The Tiger program has the shared leadership function, where every parent is supposed to be a leader. We often make the mistake when we become Wolf scouts by having one or two leaders take over and do it all, with the parents moved to the sidelines in a spectator role. Consider assigning tasks to parents. Have parents rotate bringing a game or craft to the meeting. Have a parent in charge of tour permits. Have a parent scout interesting places for outings. Creating a fun program can take work, and it's best to share the load.

Get a Den Chief – Our Scouts will always look up to an older boy. A Den Chief can be a great addition to the team. He can help in games or crafts, and he will serve as a good role model for the boys.

So as Scout leaders, our charge is to *Keep It Simple, Make It Fun*. Competition is not a threat to our programs, it's an opportunity to make our programs better! It's okay if our boys are in sports and other activities. If our Scouting program is fun, they will stay because they don't want to leave.

(This is written primarily for Cub Scout den meetings, but can be applied to pack meetings and outings.)

-Scouter Jeff

Cooperation rather than Competition

December 10, 2009 By Clarke Green

Is Scouting really competing with sports, clubs and similar activities?

Aren't our goals somewhat similar to those of organized sports, performing arts, debate, and the many other extra-curricular activities available to our Scouts?

I've adopted the attitude that we cooperate with these other activities in offering our youth every advantage in learning something about the world and developing important skills. Scouting offers a lot but we really shouldn't require a Scout to choose it above all the other things he is doing. If we make Scouting an either/or decision, we'll lose more than we gain.



Unfortunately, some who lead other activities make their rehearsals, meetings, practices and games mandatory and penalize less than perfect attendance. This has always frustrated me because such policies send unintended messages:

- Participants have to be compelled to attend because, given the choice, they would rather stay away. Why would I join a group if I did not want to participate?
- Participants can't be trusted to make appropriate decisions on how to manage their time. How does one learn to balance commitments and schedule activities if they have no choices?
- Participants can't be trusted to maintain a true commitment to the group. If I join, for example, a basketball team because I love the sport why would I need to be compelled to attend practice? Shouldn't the assumption be that my love for the game compels me to do well and work hard?

I coached wrestling for six years in a small private school. I learned from experienced, talented coaches to foster a love for the sport and a dedication to the team in my wrestlers. We had very few attendance problems and did not have a policy of penalizing wrestlers who missed practices. Rare problems with an individual wrestler's commitment were addressed as such instead of instituting broad policies that threatened to penalize all wrestlers. We had some very happy, successful teams during those years.

Boys don't join Scouting because they dislike what it represents but because they are enthusiastic about what it promises. We should meet that enthusiasm with trust and commitment to providing a program that fulfills those promises. We don't need to institute policies to prevent them from doing other things and compel their participation in Scouting. Rather we need to cooperate with them and keep Scouting relevant to a well-rounded experience.

Scout-like and Scouting Alternative Organizations

There are organizations that don't call themselves Scouts, but might be described as "Scout-like". And there are some groups that call themselves Scouts, but are very different from traditional Scouting. Many (but not all) such organizations consider themselves to be an alternative to Scouting. There is no clear line of distinction between "true" Scouting and "Scout-like" or "Scouting Alternative" programs, nor is there any worldwide agreement on what is "true" Scouting. Here are some guidelines that I use to help determine if an organization is "Scout-like":

- Most avoid using the terms "Scout" or "Scouting".
- Most do not particularly acknowledge Baden-Powell as the ultimate founder of their program (and a couple pre-date Scouting).
- Most deliberately pattern their programs after traditional Scouting (often including not only an outdoor program, but advancement, merit badges, ranks, and a Scout-like uniform), but usually consider themselves to be an alternative to traditional Scouting.
- "Scouting Alternative" programs tend to define themselves based on how they differ from standard Boy Scouting or Girl Scouting.

Many of these organizations are US-based, although some have branches around the world. Many are also church-centered Christian evangelizing groups, some belonging to specific denominations, and others available to any "bible-believing, evangelical Christian" church that wants to use the program. http://www.troop97.net/scout_like.htm

The Scouting Association of the United Kingdom

2001 to present

The Scout Association is the largest Scouting organization in the United Kingdom. Scouting found itself competing for young people's time against many other extracurricular activities and schools themselves which were increasingly venturing into the same types of activities. In addition, adult leaders became concerned with the growing litigation culture in the UK and the negative stereotype as being old fashioned.

Various changes occurred in quick succession following the new millennium. A new uniform, designed by Meg Andrews, was introduced in 2001 that was more modern and practical, with younger sections now wearing sweatshirts and with the shirts now in brighter colors complete with activity trousers. The following year, the association launched their new vision towards 2012 alongside a new youth program. Changes included the replacement of the Venture Scouts with Explorer Scouts and the Scout Network, for members aged between 14 and 18 and 18 and 25 respectively, and the introduction of a new awards and badge scheme complete with new badges on topics covering more adventurous activities and modern skills including IT and PR. A further change occurred in 2003 when Adult Training was relaunched to be more focused and targeted to the volunteers individual role as opposed to the more general training received before. There was criticism of some of these changes, mostly citing problems with the implementation, although several years into the new structure the Explorer Scout and Scout Network sections have become well established. The new badges drew more mixed reactions from several public figures, with some praising The Scout Association for "moving with the times" and others feeling the changes went "against the Scouting ethos of Baden-Powell".

The organization also began to change in its focus, with it being claimed it was becoming more connected with young people and emphasizing the adventure and the approximately 200 activities that can be run within a scouting program. This was seen through publicity materials, the relaunch of national Scout Activity Centres and through the appointments of Chief Scouts Peter Duncan and Bear Grylls in 2004 and 2009 respectively. Census figures for the last few years show an upturn in membership, with The Scout Association in April 2010 announcing the highest rate of growth in British Scouting since 1972, with total membership reaching just under half a million. In 2014, the Association was able to report an increase in youth membership of 100,000 in the ten years since 2004.

The Scout Association also hosted many major events during this time including EuroJam in 2005, hosting 10,000 scouts and guides from 40 countries, the 21st World Scout Jamboree in 2007 as well as playing a major role in the centenary celebrations of Scouting that same year, with celebration events organized on Brownsea Island.

One of the association's largest current problems is encouraging more adults to volunteer with the scouts to reduce the number of youths currently on waiting lists. This aim was helped when in 2012, the Duchess of Cambridge announced her intention to become a volunteer leader for the association with a group near her Anglesey home. In the decade up to 2014, the number of adult volunteers increased by 14,596 to a total of over 104,000.

10 reasons to volunteer in Scouting in the UK

04/06/2015 volunteers

We asked our brilliant Scouts for reasons why their leaders are great and put them together to give you 10 reasons to volunteer.



1. There is always somebody to laugh at your terrible jokes.

'He tells awful jokes, but they are so bad that you can't help but like them'- Elenya

2. You adopt a new family that never stops extending.

'They are not like my parents, they are like brothers and sisters to me.' – Kamil

3. When you don't feel like you're good enough, there are people around you who think you're the best!

'He is amazing! He is always coming up with great ideas and is full of energy.' - Tim

4. Your encouragement gives a young person hope.

'They never give up on you!' – Abbie

5. Your support can put a smile on a young person's face when they are having a tough day.

'They help me through some really hard times in my life and they make everything fun.'- Phoebe

6. By being you, you can teach others that it's ok to be themselves.

'He teaches me how to be myself'- Amir

7. By becoming a leader you can lead young people on the adventure of a lifetime.

'My Scout Leaders took our group from doing barely anything, with nights just revolving around games to getting out and doing some truly amazing things.'- James

8. You become more than a volunteer, you become somebody's mentor.

'They give us advice and lots of cool opportunities'- Sofia

9. You develop relationships that stand the test of time.

'My old Cub Leader is one of the most important people in my life, we have some of the most incredible memories at camps, coffee catch ups and so on. She's someone that's always filled with energy and wants the kids and herself to have so much fun! She's simply incredible, I love her to the moon and back.'- Caitlyn

10. Your dedication to Scouting helps somebody to achieve awards!

'They helped us get our Chief Scouts Gold (Award)'- Caroline



Inspired to volunteer? [Join the adventure!](#)

