

Recruiting Volunteers

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Recruiting and Managing Volunteers](#)

[Who Volunteers for Scouting?](#)

[Volunteer Development](#)

[Need 1 – Volunteers need a specific manageable task with a beginning and an end.](#)

[Need 2 – A volunteer needs a task that matches interest and reason for volunteering.](#)

[Need 3 - A good reason for doing the task.](#)

[Need 4 - Written instructions.](#)

[Need 5 - A reasonable deadline for completing the task.](#)

[Need 6 - Freedom to complete the task when and where it is most convenient for the volunteer.](#)

[Need 7 - Everything necessary to complete the task without interruption.](#)

[Need 8 - Adequate training.](#)

[Need 9 - A safe, comfortable, and friendly working environment.](#)

[Need 10 - Follow-up to see that the task is completed.](#)

[Need 11 - An opportunity to provide feedback when the task is finished.](#)

[Need 12 - Appreciation, recognition, and rewards that match the reasons for volunteering.](#)

[How to Get Parents to Volunteer](#)

[How to Retain Volunteers](#)

[The 10 Essential Factors in Volunteer Retention](#)

[Factor #1 - Compensation](#)

[Factor #2 - Sense of Purpose](#)

[Factor #3 - Relationships at Work](#)

[Factor #4 - Appreciation](#)

[Factor #5 - Metric for Success](#)

[Factor #6 - Workload](#)

[Factor #7 - Ownership and Influence](#)

[Factor #8 - Giftedness](#)

[Factor #9 - Philosophical Agreement](#)

[Factor #10 - Engaged Leader](#)

[Removing a Volunteer](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References and Resources](#)

[References](#)

[Resources](#)

Introduction

According to wikipedia.org (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boy_Scouts_of_America) the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is the largest youth organization in the United States. The Scouting movement's growth is made possible by its volunteer leaders and their quality programs. This document provides information to aid in recruiting and retaining volunteers.

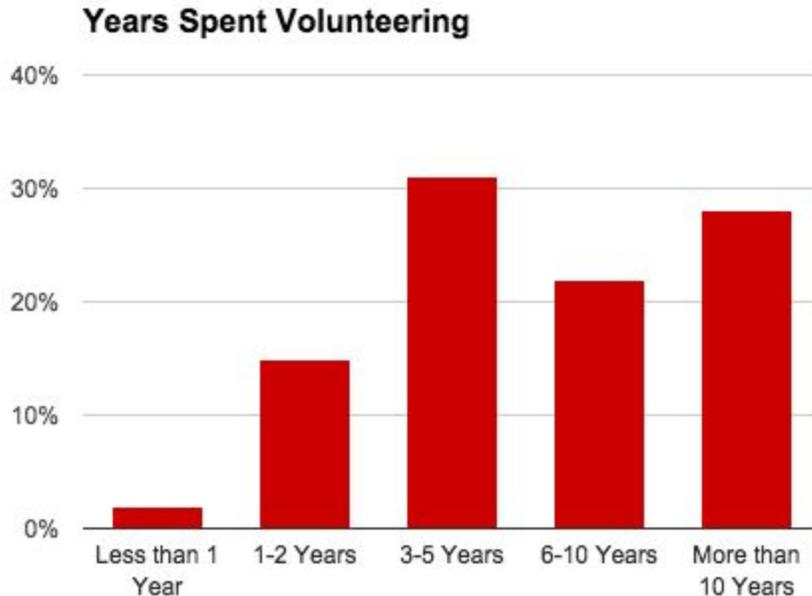
Recruiting and Managing Volunteers

Recruiting and managing volunteers takes 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 busier worrying about tonight's den meetings than about next year's Tiger leaders or who our next Troop Committee Chairman will be. Unfortunately, failure to recruit and manage volunteers properly often produces a small group of leaders who do all the work. They can become too close-knit and alienate potential new volunteers. By taking on multiple roles, leaders often become overloaded, resulting in missed opportunities for developing new volunteer leaders. Sharing the workload is critical. A strong volunteer pool makes for a strong scouting program, provides diversity in leadership, and encourages fun for everyone, parents and Scouts alike.

The World Organization of Scouting Movement recognizes that resources allocated to volunteer recruiting need to be increased, and it provides tools for national Scouting organizations to improve volunteer recruitment and retention. In *Volunteers in Scouting Toolkit 2*, they note that "Very few charities are prepared to invest in recruiting and nurturing volunteers to the same extent that they are prepared to invest in donors." Think about how much time and energy are spent doing unit popcorn sales and Friends of Scouting campaigns. Imagine putting the same effort towards recruiting and managing volunteers. It would make a big difference in the numbers of volunteers recruited, trained, and retained.

Leadership turnover happens in all Scouting units, but especially in Cub Scout packs. Cub Scouting requires more adult leaders, who are primarily Scouts' parents.

The graph below from the 2003 Volunteer Outcomes Study shows the majority of Scout volunteers remain in Scouting for three to five years. This is mainly due to high rates of adult turnover in Cub Scout packs. Packs always need new leaders as new boys join and older boys graduate from Cub Scouting. For Boy Scout troops, leadership tenure typically is longer, but there still is a critical need to recruit new volunteers. Try to have two leaders for each position, kind of like a Buddy System for volunteers.



An unchanging volunteer team can be efficient because everyone learns his or her role and knows who is responsible for what. However, it takes time for leaders to learn each other's personality types, skill sets and interests, and to begin to perform well. The question is how best to sustain a high level of performance as the parents of Webelos who cross over into Boy Scouts begin to get involved in troop leadership, and as parents of Boy Scouts who graduate and go away to college decide they no longer can stay involved as adult leaders.

Unless new volunteers are added to the team regularly and are efficiently incorporated into leadership roles, the program will suffer. Continuously developing new adult volunteers takes time and effort, but it results in stronger leadership teams and strong, sustainable youth programs.

Understanding why people volunteer and how to meet their needs is essential for a long-lived volunteer base. Happy volunteers produce stronger scouting programs.

Who Volunteers for Scouting?

Most Scouters become volunteers because they have sons in Scouting and want their sons to be part of a good program. Others volunteer for different reasons. It may be simply that they enjoyed Scouting as a youth and believe in the Scouting mission.

Volunteer Development

Developing teams, especially volunteer teams, takes time. John Maxwell's Patience Principle from his book, *Winning with People*, is that "The journey with others is slower than the journey alone." It only takes three people to start a unit, but it takes a community to keep it going. Developing new volunteer leaders may temporarily slow things down, but those new leaders eventually will take over when you move on, and they will keep the troop or pack going. Be patient. Develop your replacement.

Although we'd like to have everyone volunteer, the reality is they don't. According to *Volunteers: How to Get Them, How to Keep Them* (ISBN: 1-928892-01-9) by Helen Little, a typical volunteer organization can be broken down into four groups. In a Scouting context, the first group is the 5% that make up the unit Committee that plans the budget, tracks advancement, coordinates with the charter organization, etc. The second group is the 15% that work directly with the youth--volunteers like Scoutmasters and Den Leaders. The third group---about 75%---consists of occasional volunteers that help with small tasks, for example setting up tables for a Blue and Gold banquet, helping in den meetings, or going on an occasional camping trip with the Troop. ...and the remaining 5% (if you've been counting!) don't do anything except whine--Bless them!

According to Ms. Little, the first 20% must utilize the next 75% and move them through four stages of volunteerism: (1) new volunteer, (2) work team leader, (3) project team leader, and, finally, (4) leader/officer. In Cub Scouting this might look something like, Tiger Parent -> Den Leader -> Blue and Gold Chair -> Committee Chair. As volunteers move through the stages, fewer move up, with the end result being the 5% that are committee members.

So what can we do to develop volunteers and retain them? Leaders must recruit to the volunteers' interest and meet their needs. According to Ms. Little, volunteers have twelve basic needs; when their needs are met, you have happy volunteers. These needs are listed below with Scouting examples for each.

Need 1 - Volunteers (especially new volunteers!) need a specific manageable task with a beginning and an end.

Being asked to do something without receiving enough information to do it is frustrating. Potential volunteers need to know what is required to fulfill the position or accomplish the task they've been asked to do. It is important to recruit with clear instructions, estimated time requirements, and schedule. Have your act together before recruiting!

- Assign small tasks to new volunteers to see how they do. If they perform well, give them larger tasks. For example, ask a volunteer to help with decorations at a Pack meeting. If that works out, ask them to do it for the Blue and Gold banquet.
- Make a list of potential volunteers and prioritize them. Don't ask everyone, ask people that seem to be qualified. Ask the most qualified person first. For example, someone with a finance background probably would be a good treasurer.

- Assume people will say yes.

Personalize Volunteer Requests

- Ask the potential volunteer about his/her personal interests. Use the Parent Talent Survey to get some idea beforehand.
- Provide a good job description. The BSA has written job descriptions for many positions. You may need to simplify the descriptions and keep them realistic, but start with what the BSA has already developed when possible.
- Use newsletters, announcements, and other methods to publicize unit needs, but recruit one-on-one. If another leader is more familiar with a potential volunteer, ask him or her to help recruit them.

Need 2 - Volunteers need tasks that match their interests and reasons for volunteering.

People volunteer for various reasons. Most leaders volunteer because they want their child to have a good program. Some of the reasons Ms. Little cites for why people volunteer include:

- Affiliation/Socialization – Scouters are some of the best folks to work with, especially when it comes to camping and cooking!
- Challenge – All levels of Scouting provide different challenges. Figure out what challenges individual volunteers and let them go for it!
- Leadership/Power/Prestige – There are people who just want to be seen as leaders--they like titles and rank and enjoy having an audience. Scouting has leadership positions and recognition opportunities that may fit these people perfectly. Begin by having them recruit and run activities, then move them to positions of more responsibility once they've demonstrated they're capable.
- 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 - Many of these volunteers grew up as Scouts, believe in its mission, and want to give the youth of this generation the same experiences they had. These usually are the easiest volunteers to get involved productively.
- Variety – People that like variety volunteer for a change of pace. They like trying new things. They might be good for filling in at the last minute, or for short-term projects.

When recruiting, consider the reasons people volunteer and try to match tasks with those reasons. Don't assume you know what someone wants to do--ask if they would like to do whatever you're asking them to do. For example, although a CPA might make a great treasurer, he or she may rather be the Activities Chair.

Need 3 - A good reason for doing the task.

When you work with the Scouts, it is easy to see how you make a difference--you see it in their smiles and growth. Sometimes it is difficult for an adult to see the reason for a task. Reinforce

the message to volunteers that what they are doing is important and that they are the best person for the job. Explain the big picture. Follow up with them. If a job isn't important, don't ask someone to do it.

Volunteering in Scouting often benefits the Scouter in unexpected ways. The 2003 Volunteer Outcomes Study indicates 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. I doubt many Scouters think about these rewards when first volunteering, but they are tangible benefits they receive by being a Scouter.

Need 4 - Written instructions.

Volunteers need clear instructions for their roles. Job descriptions and instructions are already written for almost all Scouting positions, you just have to know where to look. For example, the Cub Scouts Leader Handbook details the positions of every leader in the Pack. Other information can be found in the Cub Scouts Leader How-To Handbook, Commissioner's Fieldbook, and the Scoutmaster's Handbook, just to name a few.

Need 5 - A reasonable deadline for completing the task.

The best volunteers are generally the busiest people. Busy people are good at time management and working with deadlines. Tasks need deadlines. Have volunteers provide periodic progress reports at unit committee meetings, especially for big tasks like planning for Summer camp or a Blue and Gold Banquet.

It is important that volunteers understand they must 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 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 must 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. Big events require meetings and close monitoring. Keep in touch enough to make sure things are progressing, but don't "hover."

An example of where someone was given freedom with a project was when our pack wanted a special award for our Arrow of Light ceremony. A parent volunteered for this task, designed the

award, created a sample, showed it to the committee, and after approval, created one for each boy. We spoke maybe three times about this and it turned out great.

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 camping trip, a projector for training, or handbooks for boys, not having necessary tools can frustrate both volunteers and Scouts. Make sure that everyone has what they need. If the volunteer is expected to provide their own materials or equipment, make sure they understand that.

Need 8 - Adequate training.

The BSA offers training at every level, from Youth Protection to Philmont training. There are lots of opportunities to learn how Scouting works and how your volunteer position fits into the larger picture.

Training helps take the guesswork out of doing a job. It helps you understand your position; it identifies age-appropriate activities for your program; and it generally makes being a Scout leader easier. Online classes can provide the basics, and face-to-face classes provide opportunities for discussion and knowledge transfer from real-world experiences.

Unfortunately, there are some aspects of Scouting for which BSA training just isn't available. For example, there is no official "How to have a Blue and Gold Banquet" 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. Supplemental training, like University of Scouting is where you might learn about these types of activities. Monthly Roundtables is another.

Self training is also an option. The BSA has tons of literature on Scouting and some courses are available online at <http://myscouting.org>. Although online learning is great for convenience, it usually lacks the interactivity and camaraderie-building environment of a classroom.

Email can be one form of "interactive" online learning. There are various mailing lists dedicated to Scouting where you can ask questions and communicate with other Scouters from around the world. By reading the mailing lists *Scouter_T* and *Scouts-L*, I often learn about things coming from the National Office before our local Council knows or tells us about them. The list members vary from newbies to knowledgeable old-timers. They can also produce a good number of email messages, some of which can be opinionated. Remember the Boy Scout motto and "Be prepared." Links to subscribe to these lists are available at the end of this document.

Coaching and mentoring is another training method that can't be replicated in any other way. For example, if a leader is stepping down, a replacement should be recruited to work closely with the current leader for a while so the new person 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. Scheduling a meeting at lunch time without providing lunch might be another.

One of the areas where we frequently use volunteers is cooking during pack camping. Safety is a big concern around the kitchen. The cooking area should be coordinated by someone experienced with the safety implications of cooking with youth, camp cooking, and cooking for large groups.

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

Leaders should follow up with volunteers to verify that tasks are on-track for completion. Volunteers who receive no follow-up may get the idea that the task they're performing isn't important. This means you need to have a good relationship and open communication.

John Maxwell stresses that developing personal connections and being patient is very important. In his words, "Patience without connection - the relationship lacks energy. Connection without patience - the relationship lacks potential. Patience with connection - the relationship has energy and potential." On some occasions, I have recruited volunteers and they were happy to help. But because of my lack of follow-up or thinking our relationship and understandings were better, the volunteers' job wasn't completed. Build relationships and follow up. It keeps volunteers energized.

Build relationships and learn potential volunteers' strengths, then recruit them to roles that best fit their abilities.

On several occasions volunteers stepped up, but didn't finish their jobs. Either they didn't know what they were getting into because the task requirements weren't communicated adequately, or other aspects of their lives changed, thus pulling them away. Explain to volunteers before they start that if for any reason they are unable to do the job, to let you know so the program doesn't suffer. Don't ask why. Thank them for their efforts, and if there is another role that they can take, encourage them to 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 small things, a brief conversation might be enough. For a more complicated task, follow up with an evaluation form or ask for a written summary of "Lessons Learned" that can be used by the next person doing that task. This feedback can encourage continued use of successful processes and help prevent mistakes, thus improving the quality of your scouting program.

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

Recognition is an important method of Scouting that is exciting for Scouters as well as for Scouts. We rarely provide enough volunteer recognition. A handwritten note, public recognition, or a small gift goes a long way towards the recognition that some volunteers crave. Remember to promote use of the BSA leader knots and award them to your volunteers! Many charter organizations provide recognition through their organization. For example, Scouters can earn the *Cross and Flame Award* through United Methodist Church.

Another form of recognition is moving volunteers into more responsible positions so they can do more for the program. (No good deed goes unpunished!) :-)

Meeting the twelve needs of volunteers takes time and energy. Meeting volunteer needs keeps them happy, provides volunteer growth, and most importantly, makes a strong Scouting program.

How to Get Parents to Volunteer

Getting volunteers is challenging. Many will sit back and let others lead their children unless they are asked. Getting these folks involved takes time, planning, and patience.

We have tried several things over the years including:

- Broadcasting the need for volunteers in unit meetings. We've found most folks don't respond to these broadcasts. This is one of the least effective methods to recruit volunteers.
- Passing around job sign-up forms during unit meetings. This seems to work better than broadcasts. But you don't know who you might get or whether they can do the job.
- Watching which parents take the initiative to help coordinate dens during registration and unit events. Often, you can see the folks that take the initiative to help without being asked. This characteristic is a good indicator of a potential volunteer and leader.
- Offering a firm handshake, a smile, and conversation that eventually turns to soliciting their volunteering. We've found this is to be the best recruiting method.

Broadcasting for volunteers and accepting someone without knowing their background also can cause problems. For example, if someone can't balance a personal checkbook, they probably shouldn't be the treasurer.

How to Retain Volunteers

Ms. Little's 12-steps to meeting a volunteer's needs is a big step towards the challenging task of recruiting and retaining volunteers. But how do we know if a volunteer will stay? Josh Denhart has developed *The 10 Essential Factors in Volunteer Retention* (Used by permission. Copyright

2015, KidMinScience and Josh Denhart) to score volunteers and determine how likely they are to step down or continue their service. It is no surprise that many of Ms. Little's volunteers' needs align with Denhart's scoring factors. Each factor is scored between of 0-10 (low to high) points; when a volunteer's retention score drops below 75 they are likely to find something else to do with their time.

Denhart's 10 Essential Factors in Volunteer Retention

Factor #1 - Compensation

Scouting is made possible by volunteers. The paydays we get are when a new Cub Scout earns his Bobcat Rank or a Boy Scout earns Eagle rank or something in between. These paydays are wonderful, but they don't help the pocketbook. Therefore, we automatically get 0 points for Factor #1. While volunteering by definition is unpaid, if the budget allows, offering a gift card or some other low cost "compensation" can help.

Factor #2 - Sense of Purpose

Having a sense of purpose helps keep volunteers engaged. Whether they are working with Scouts on knots or working behind the scenes with fundraising, volunteers need to feel like they have purpose. Leaders need to thank and remind volunteers that they are making a difference in Scouts' lives.

Factor #3 - Relationships at Work

Often Scouters work together while working with the boys, but they may not have time to develop adult relationships. Leaders should make opportunities to develop relationships with other Scouters and create opportunities for Scouters to develop relationships with one another. Pack campouts or a leader retreat could help build relationships.

Factor #4 - Appreciation

Volunteers make Scouting work. Showing appreciation demonstrates our thanks. Taking a leader to lunch or offering tickets to an event or movie are a couple of ways to show appreciation. Another is that if a leader earns a knot or other awards, like those available through charter organizations, then make sure the awards are presented and the volunteers are recognized publicly.

Factor #5 - Metric for Success

Volunteers need to know their responsibilities. These responsibilities should be actionable and measurable. A good place to start is a job description. The BSA provides job descriptions for almost every job in Scouting. In addition to those descriptions, local detailed requirements may be required. One way to ensure a job description is good is to make sure it is Specific,

Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. If you've been through Wood Badge, SMART goals should sound familiar. With goals in place, leaders can review volunteers' progress.

Factor #6 - Workload

The amount of time a volunteer can dedicate to Scouting depends on the volunteer. It is easy to ask the same volunteers to do more, which can burn them out. On the other hand, not asking someone to do more or giving someone a dumbed-down job may make them feel under-appreciated. When asking someone to help, ask them if they think the job is reasonable.

Factor #7 - Ownership and Influence

If people believe they are part of something worthwhile and feel ownership, they are more likely to contribute time and resources. In *Life's a Campaign*, Chris Matthews discusses how people who contribute only small amounts to a political campaign feel personally connected to the politician they support. This connection, this feeling of ownership and being part of something worthwhile will likely result in more support in the future. The same thing happens in Scouting when someone takes the time to volunteer and, in particular, **to attend training**. People feel better connected to the program when they have made a personal commitment to get trained and learn about the mission of Scouting, and when they have an opportunity to provide input to decision-making. The volunteer becomes part of the Scouting family and will more likely continue to volunteer and support Scouting's mission.

Factor #8 - Giftedness

People have different gifts. Some would never stand in front of a room and present awards, but they might want to handle pack advancements. Jobs should have a designated beginning and end. Volunteers should also have the option to step down without guilt if for some reason they can't perform their duties. Whatever they do, try to match the job to their gifts.

Factor #9 - Philosophical Agreement

Philosophical agreement is related to whether or not volunteers agree with how you do things. Share why you do things so that people understand why you are making the decisions you make. Give volunteers an opportunity to help in the decision-making process to the maximum extent possible. If a decision has multiple solutions, have your volunteers help choose the best one. The most important thing is to communicate effectively.

Factor #10 - Engaged Leader

Unit leaders need to be engaged with their volunteers. They need to monitor their volunteers' workloads and, when possible, understand their personal obligations. Unit leaders need to keep a pulse on how their volunteers are performing and assist when volunteers are stretched too thin.

Denhart developed these factors through exit interviews when volunteers stepped down. Ideally, leaders could monitor these factors and address any deficiencies before the volunteer quits.

Removing a Volunteer

There may be times when a volunteer may need to be re-assigned or not used for that task in the future or, in a worst-case scenario, dismissed. How to remove a volunteer is beyond the scope of this document, which focuses on recruiting and training volunteers. If volunteers are recruited and trained properly, the need to remove a volunteer will be a rare event. Should such a need arise, the Commissioner Service documentation is a good resource for suggested methods on how to remove a volunteer.

Conclusion

Scouting units that don't systematically 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 members. Recruiting volunteers is challenging; understanding why people volunteer aids in the recruiting process and helps retain volunteers. Meeting volunteers' needs keeps them happy. The end result of retaining and keeping your Scouting volunteers happy is that your scouting unit will have a changing and diverse unit leadership, leadership transitions will occur smoothly, work will be distributed among a group of motivated leaders, and, our ultimate goal, you will have better youth retention and advancement because you have a strong scouting program.

References and Resources

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CPC Session 607, "The 10 Essential Factors in Volunteer Retention", Josh Denhard, January 2015

Resources

Scouter_T Yahoo Group
https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/scouter_t/info

SCOUTS-L mailing list
<http://scouts-l.org/>

United Methodist Church Cross and Flame Award brochure.
<<http://www.gcumm.org/files/uploads/CROSS%20&%20FLAME%20brochure%202013.pdf>>.