



Membership Retention

Session Objectives

- **Explain** the importance of membership retention
- **Demonstrate** what opportunities are available in assisting a lodge with increasing membership retention
- **Guide** the participants in determining which methodologies to use in their lodge
- **Enable** Arrowmen to apply one or more of the methodologies in their lodge to improve membership retention

Session Length: 50 Minutes

Appendix Resources

- 2012 Guide for Officers and Advisers, available online at <http://www.oa-bsa.org/pages/content/publications#goa>
- Chapter Journey to Excellence Workbook, available online at <http://www.oa-bsa.org/pages/content/printable-forms>

Required Materials

- 2 flip charts or whiteboards and markers
- Projector and screen

Trainer Preparation

If possible, review the previous three years' JTE evaluations for the Lodge in the areas connected to membership retention in order to get a grasp of where the Lodge is doing well and where it is falling short. You can then adjust this presentation accordingly if you need to spend more time on a particular methodology. Make sure to review this syllabus and support materials thoroughly and be able to give the presentation without simply reading the material. Prepare flip chart, diagrams and lists prior to the presentation.





Membership Retention

Session Narrative

Introduction

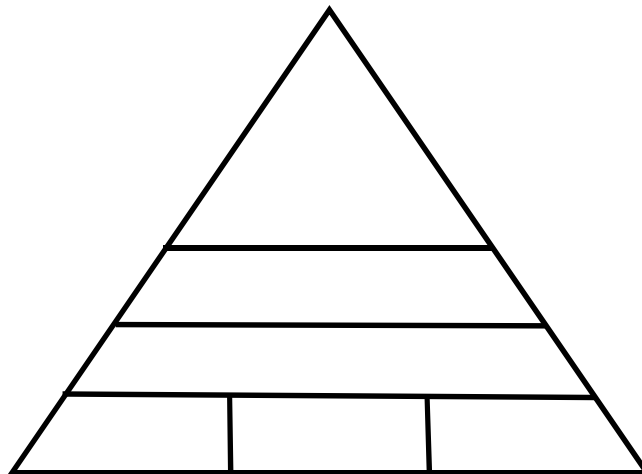
4 Minutes

Trainer Tip: Trainer should introduce himself, including any previous leadership roles in the Order. Ideally the trainer should have administrative and/or program experience that demonstrate effective membership retention techniques and success.

Membership retention is an important subject when it comes to running a successful organization. In the Order of the Arrow, membership retention is especially important as we continually induct new members each year and we work to retain the ones we have.

If you think of membership in the Order of the Arrow as a journey, the importance of membership retention is evident. As a personal journey, membership in the Order provides the Arrowman with opportunities for fun, fellowship, personal growth and development. This is a journey that starts with the call out and the Ordeal, but can last a lifetime as an Arrowman fuels the fire within himself to live a life of cheerful service. However, if that journey is cut short, the individual misses out on all the Order has to offer. His fire is never fanned, and the Order misses out on the potential of that member.

How do we retain our membership? How do we make sure the fire within each Arrowman is ignited? We will look at various methodologies starting at the unit level, and moving through brotherhood conversion and the lodge program that will help each lodge retain membership in the Order. (Refer to Pyramid) We will fill those methodologies in on this pyramid, starting at the top.



Trainer Tip: Trainer should have pyramid diagram prepared on a separate chart or poster as it will be displayed throughout the presentation. One method would be to simply fill in each blank space as you move through the session. Another would be to have the diagram already completed, but each section covered with a removable front. If a projector is available, the pyramid could be presented using PowerPoint slides.





Membership Retention

Unit Leader, Unit Culture and Unit Representative

10 minutes

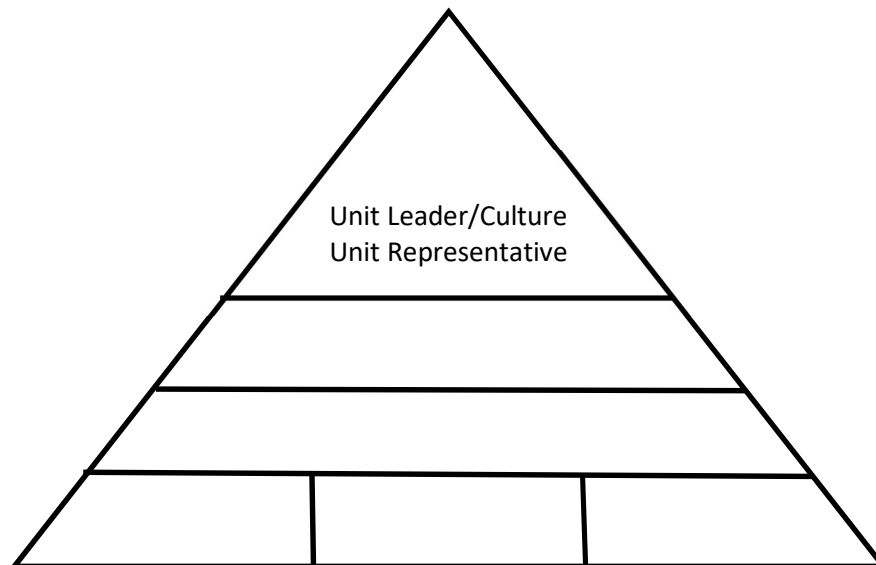
[Trainer writes "Unit Leader/Culture and Unit Representative" in the top area of pyramid.]

Membership retention in the Order starts at the unit level. The first issue is to make sure that the Unit Leader and the unit culture make the Order of the Arrow a priority for its members. Having unit leaders who recognize the importance of the organization and the important role that it can play in developing leadership skills and its members is vital. You will find that members of units, who place more than nominal value and attention on the Order, are more likely to remain active and involved.

So the question becomes how do we get Unit Leaders on board? There is no simple answer to that question, but there are tried and true methods that can assist you. First, make sure that there is an "OA Minute" at district roundtables where the Chapter Chief or Chapter Adviser can interact with unit leaders. Your chapter or lodge can organize outreach programs for Scoutmasters where they are invited to an annual dinner or some other function. Make sure that all unit leaders receive your lodge newsletters and that the lodge has a regular column in your local council newsletter. Work with your unit commissioners to ensure that they are promoting and encouraging their units to include OA programming in their calendars. The goal is to have units make OA participation a key component in their annual plan.

The second issue, is establishing, maintaining and actively utilizing the OA Unit Representative Program.

Trainer Tip: The official list of Unit Representative job duties is rather long, so the list should be already prepared to display for review, but only revealed after soliciting feedback from group. List should be on a second chart, different from pyramid.



What are the duties of the Unit Representative? *[Solicit responses from the group and write them down on chart/board. After a few minutes, or if responses slow, reveal official list.]*





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The official duties of the Unit Representative are:

- o Attends unit and chapter or lodge meetings regularly as a youth representative of the unit and Order.
- o Serves as a two-way communication link between the unit and the lodge or chapter.
- o Arranges with the lodge or chapter election team to conduct an annual Order of the Arrow election for the unit at a time approved by the unit leader.
- o Arranges with the lodge or chapter for at least one camp promotion visit to the unit annually.
- o Makes at least one high adventure presentation to the unit, to include the OA programs, annually.
- o As requested, participates in Unit Courts of Honor by recognizing: high adventure participation of unit members, induction of new OA members, changes in OA honors of unit members, leadership of unit members, and other appropriate activities.
- o Coordinates the Ordeal Induction process for newly elected candidates by: ensuring they know the time and location of the Ordeal, providing information of what to bring to the Ordeal, assisting (as needed) in arranging transportation to the Ordeal, and offering assistance (as needed) to the lodge in the Ordeal process.
- o Assists current Ordeal members in the unit in sealing their membership by becoming Brotherhood members by: ensuring they know the time and location of Brotherhood opportunities, assisting (as needed) in arranging transportation to the Brotherhood opportunities, and offering assistance to the lodge (as needed) in the Brotherhood process. They may also offer periodic training and discussions of OA principles, symbolism, and the Legend as needed by and appropriate for the unit members of the Order.
- o Leads at least one unit service project for the community or charter partner during the year.
- o Assists the unit (as appropriate) as a trainer of leadership and outdoor skills.
- o In all cases, advocates environmental stewardship and Leave No Trace camping.
- o Sets a good example by: wearing the Scout uniform correctly, showing Scout spirit, and living by the Scout Oath, the Scout law and the OA Obligation.

Reviewing this job description, it is evident that the Unit Representative is a key component to making sure the units are aware of the Order of the Arrow's activities, on both the chapter and the lodge level. For membership retention, this role can have the greatest impact, because it is a direct tie from the chapters and lodge to the OA members in the unit, keeping them informed and facilitating their ongoing and continued participation. Effective Order of the Arrow Unit Representatives are essential for successful membership retention.

Elangomats:

8 minutes

The next method for membership retention is the Extended Elangomat Program.

Trainer writes "EXTENDED ELANGOMAT PROGRAM" in second box on pyramid.

What is an elangomat? [*Solicit a response from the group*]

An elangomat is a "friend" to the candidates. They willingly repeat the tests of the Ordeal to help





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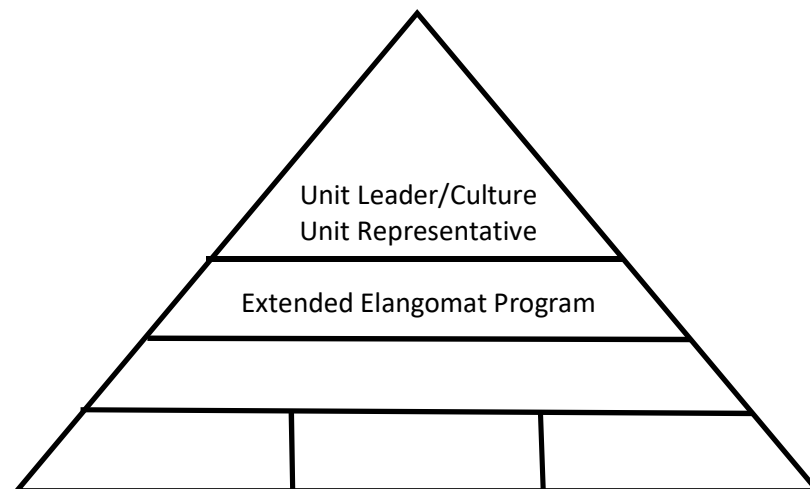
the candidates with their experience. What a great friend!

However, few lodges extend the role of an elangomat past the Ordeal ceremony. In these lodges, once the Ordeal is over, the job of the elangomat is done. But does it have to be? Should it be? Wouldn't that new Ordeal candidate benefit from still having a friend in an experienced lodge member?

An extended elangomat is an Arrowman who stays with a candidate beyond the Ordeal ceremony. This elangomat does not have to be the same person from the candidate's Ordeal. The extended elangomat can be any Arrowman willing to stay in contact with a new member, and help him or her to understand the Order of the Arrow.

Who do you think would make great extended elangomats? Is there somebody that has contact with the new Ordeal members on the unit level who is perfectly positioned to be an extended elangomat?

Trainer Tip: Lead questioning and use the pyramid to guide group to the answer of "Unit Representative." Point out on Unit Rep job description items that are in alignment with the extended elangomat.



Why are Unit Representatives situated perfectly to serve as extended elangomats for new Ordeal members?

Responses might include:

- o They know the new members in their unit, and the new members know them (familiarity)
- o They are in an "OA" position and are more motivated to promote the OA and unit involvement
- o As part of their Unit Rep position they will know when events are occurring
- o The Unit Rep will know how to model, in-person, the actions and behaviors of an Arrowman.





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Brotherhood

8 minutes

The next method for membership retention is Brotherhood.

[Trainer writes "BROTHERHOOD" in third box on pyramid]

When we refer to "Brotherhood", our meaning is two-fold, but each methodology leads to membership retention. The first meaning is for Ordeal candidates to seal their membership in the Order of the Arrow by receiving their Brotherhood.

Do you remember the duties of the Unit Representative? One of those duties discusses the Unit Rep assisting new Ordeal member in sealing their membership in the Order by becoming Brotherhood members. Once again, the Unit Rep can play a huge role by helping to guide Ordeal members to sealing their membership, and as an extended elangomat, this is the natural direction of this role. Do you think sealing your membership in the Order by becoming Brotherhood members would help with membership retention? Absolutely! Why? *[Responses might include:*

- o *An Arrowman that has received his Brotherhood has learned more about the Order*
- o *The Order has helped them learn about themselves*
- o *They are participating in events*
- o *They have completed the induction process]*

As for the second meaning for "Brotherhood", we are the "Brotherhood of Cheerful Service." Unfortunately, sometimes "Brotherhood" is overlooked. Many lodges tend to focus on mostly service, and while that is important, we cannot forget about the "Brotherhood" and we need to put it at the forefront of all we do.

Let me ask all of you, what does Brotherhood mean to you? *[Responses might include:*

- o *Fellowship*
- o *Fun*
- o *Coming together*
- o *Reason for coming back*
- o *Excitement*

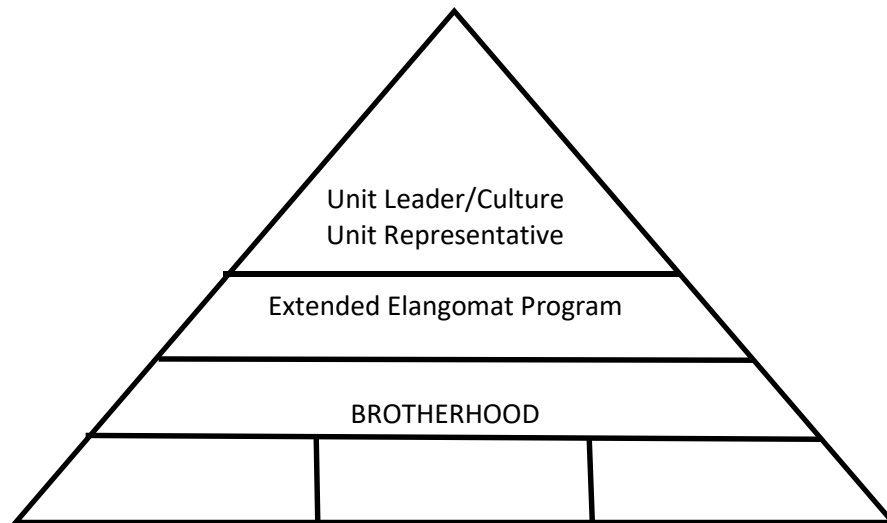
So how do we incorporate "Brotherhood" into our program? We need to look at what our members like to do, and what makes them tick. We must be innovative, and understand how we can add excitement, fun, and interest to our program that appeals to all ages of our membership.

Trainer Tip: Brainstorm and make a quick list of ideas.





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From an event standpoint, some ideas include:

- o Dedicated fellowship event/Rendezvous
- o Incorporate “fun” time into service events
- o Video game tournament
- o COPE activities
- o Shooting sports
- o Ultimate Frisbee
- o Frisbee golf
- o Ice cream social
- o Lock in

These lists are only limited by your imagination...but remember, include something for everyone!

Traditions

7 minutes

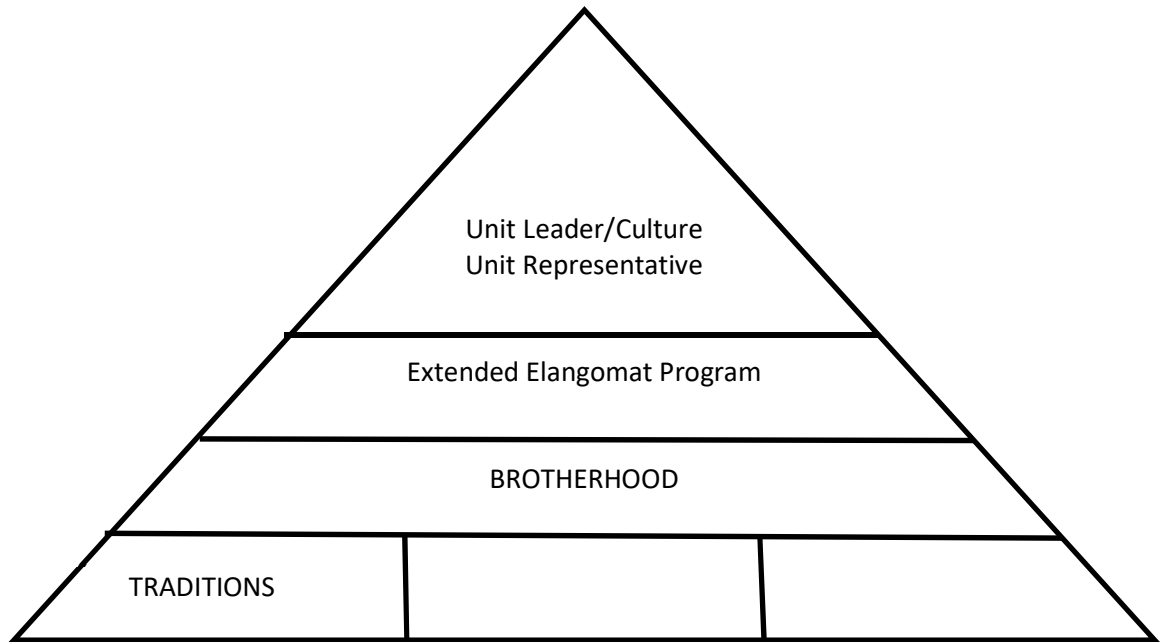
The next method for membership retention is TRADITIONS.

[Trainer writes “TRADITIONS” in fourth box on pyramid]





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Many lodges across the country have developed traditions that help boost their local lodge program. Traditions can be the glue of the program structure and the item that keeps the older youth members coming back. When older youth members become accustomed to a specific activity or event they enjoy, they will use that activity or event as their rationale for continuing their participation in the OA program. For lodge leadership, this provides a valuable means of retaining their experienced youth.

[Ask the group to share different types of lodge traditions and give specific examples. Not all types and examples need to be focused around membership retention. Write all types and examples on a flip chart, but keep them simple]

Examples:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| Induction (Ordeal) | Candidates wear carved arrows
Have a banquet to honor new members |
| Fellowship | Have a high adventure oriented trip once a year.
Conduct a unique or challenging activity at Lodge functions |
| Service | Lodge hosts a fishing rodeo for local organization for the disabled
Sponsor a day of service to the community |
| Recognition | Lodge presents past officers/adviser with a special token
Beads that recognize positions, service and participation
Vigil blankets |

Traditions for local lodges are good and some are usually unique to that lodge's location. Some traditions popular in certain locales will not be popular in others. Lodge leadership should exercise caution when attempting to develop traditions. No traditions should be established violating OA or BSA National policies.

Remember it is important to develop "traditions with a purpose." Traditions should be focused on accomplishing a specific aim of the lodge like membership retention, and not simply continued because they have "always been done".





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In order for something to become a tradition, the lodge must have repetition of the activity or event over a period of years. Since lodge leadership will often change greatly from one year to another, it is best if lodges have details on their traditions written down. People will often forget details of traditions and over time the tradition you started with may change to something completely different. Therefore, it is always best to put it down in writing. Make sure to include specifics including exact name, details on what occurs, any rules/guidelines, history of the tradition, purpose, and instructions on how to modify the tradition.

Once a lodge tradition has been established try not to make heavy modifications to it. It may be necessary to make changes to keep the tradition up-to-date with the current OA and BSA standards. However, traditions are not something to be changed with every new lodge chief and adviser.

For traditions to be successful, they must be continued. It is imperative that the new Arrowmen in each lodge be briefed on their lodge's traditions. When new members understand the unique traditions their lodge has, the new members are much more likely to embrace the traditions and help to carry them on. This cycle will insure the traditions of your lodge are observed and preserved.

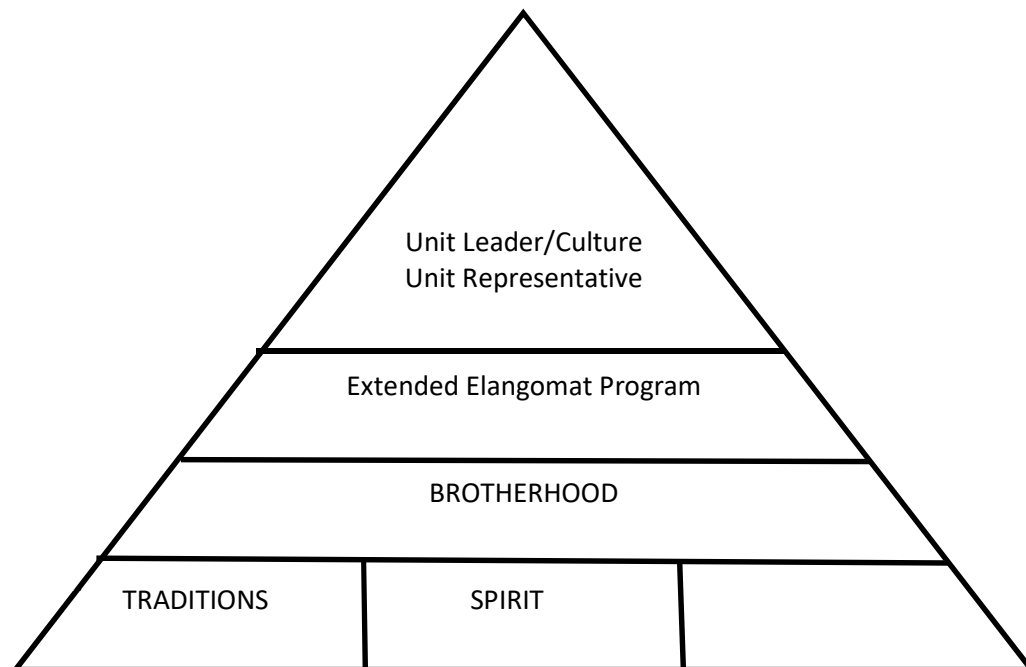
While positive traditions can be a valuable methodology for improving membership retention, remember to evaluate to existing traditions to determine if they are negatively affecting membership retention. Traditions can be a double-edged sword.

Spirit

4 minutes

The next method for membership retention is SPIRIT.

[Trainer writes "SPIRIT" in fifth box on pyramid]





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In the foreword to the 1961 edition of the *Order of the Arrow Handbook*, Dr. Goodman wrote:

"The Order of the Arrow is a thing of the spirit rather than of mechanics. Organization, operational procedure, and paraphernalia are necessary in any large and growing movement, but they are not what count in the end. The things of the spirit count."

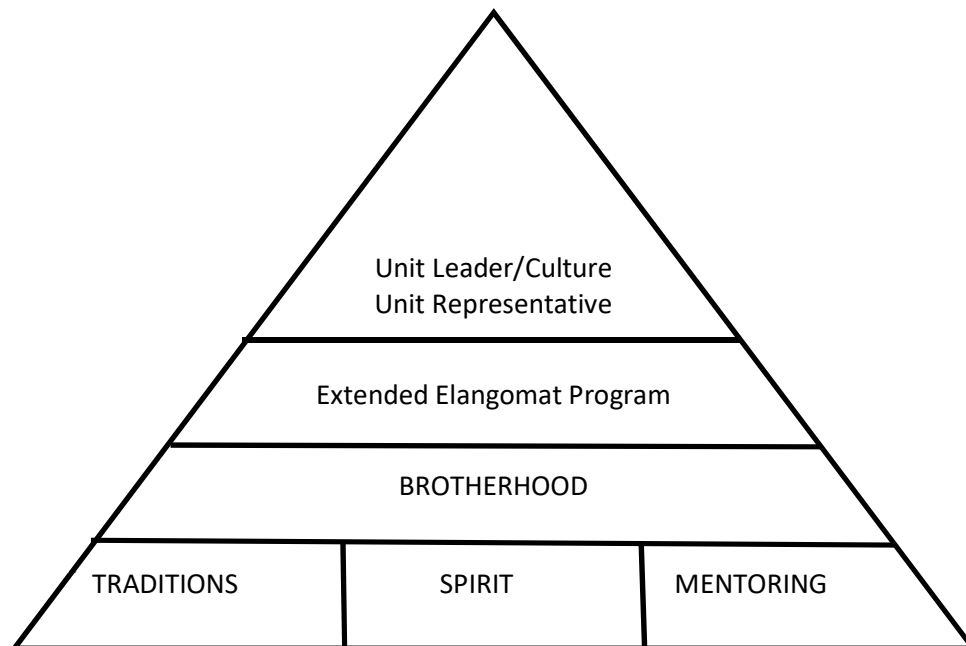
In this case, when we refer to “spirit” we are referring to the passion that is ignited within an Arrowman. It is important to remember that the source of passion may differ from member to member. For some, it is a desire to serve. Others may find it through studying ceremonial symbolism. Some may find it through immersing themselves in AIA activities. Many will find it in the pure enjoyment of being around like-minded Scouts. There are literally hundreds of reasons our members have a passion or spirit for the Order. As leaders, and with the goal of membership retention in mind, ensure that your lodge activities and programs have room for these personal development opportunities. Set aside time for personal reflection. Design activities to foster introspection. Include motivational and inspirational components to your lodge program. Patches, feathers, shovels, training classes – they are all part of the program. But in the end, they are literally the physical tools and manifestations of the spirit of the Order. It is that unseen force, that passion, that spirit that is our true goal.

Mentoring

4 minutes

The next method for membership retention is MENTORING.

[Trainer writes “MENTORING” in last box on pyramid]





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Servant Leadership...let them lead. Encourage youth to assume leadership positions and provide them with quality advisers who understand the mission and purpose of the Order of the Arrow. This seems very basic, but take a step back, and once again look at the older youth in your lodge. Are they the leaders? Do they hold some type of office or committee position on the Lodge or chapter level? Have they held roles in the past?

There are many opportunities on the chapter, lodge and section levels for leadership positions, and sometimes it is the responsibility that comes with leadership that engages a youth and ignites his passion.

It is imperative if a youth accepts a leadership role, he be provided the tools to make him successful. The lodge should send delegates to NLS, and the lodge should provide leadership training at events. Does your lodge put on a dynamic and well attended LLD? Do you invite potential or future leaders as well? Does your lodge participate in section training opportunities? Does it attend NOAC? If not, how are your leaders being developed? These are questions, that as a lodge, you should ask as they may identify an area for improvement.

In addition to leadership positions, there is the opportunity for older youth to assume a MENTOR role for younger Arrowmen. Younger Arrowmen look up at the older youth Arrowmen as examples. They look to them for inspiration and guidance. They look to them as the Arrowmen they want to be. Knowing this, senior youth in the lodge can have a huge impact on membership, because they can assume the role of a mentor and spend some time with younger Arrowmen.

Some Lodges utilize a “Big Brother” program. This does not have to be a formalized, defined program, but it should be a dedicated effort. Mentoring should be a positive experience for younger Arrowmen, designed to help fan the fire within them. What better way to be a servant leader than to inspire the youth of the lodge?

Takeaway Challenge

3 minutes

Please take out your notebook and pen. For the final three minutes, think about the role that you will be playing next year in the OA, or the role you hope to play. Write down three key ideas related to this session that you could help improve the way your chapter or lodge maintains membership. If you are inspired to define more than three, that’s fine as well. During your break time later today, share these with others in your chapter or lodge.

Remember, we as an organization do not exist without members. In an age of decreasing membership in Scouting, it is vital that we not only engage as many of our potential members as possible, but keep them when we do. In today’s world, competition for time and commitment are numerous. As an organization, we must position ourselves where what we offer is attractive and meaningful to as broad an audience as possible. It is not just enough to hold quality unit elections and induct a high percentage of eligible members. We must keep them active and involved beyond their inductions. When we do, they will personally benefit from the personal development that comes from being a member of the Order, and we as an organization foster another generation of membership.

