LA230 - Publications and Communications of the Lodge
National OA Adviser Training

Session Length: 25 Minutes

Overview:

- Successful communication is critical to Lodge success.
- Communication takes various forms including in-person, written and through social media outlets.
- Utilizing all forms of communication is vital to keeping our youth and adult members informed, prepared, and inspired.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand how an engaging Lodge newsletter can keep members informed, inspired and connected.
- Learn how to create a Lodge Plan Book to assist your officers plan successful events.
- Learn about the purpose of a Where to Go Camping booklet as a service to the council as well as what information should be included in the booklet.
- Learn about the features and design elements of an effective lodge website.
- Better understand how to leverage social media platforms to engage and inspire our youth members.

Detailed Outline of the Session

This session will introduce Advisers to the communication mediums available to connect with key members, communicate what the Order is and publicize the good works of a Lodge. The session will cover various forms of written communication. Forms of written communication include how to create an engaging and informative Lodge newsletter, Lodge Plan Book and Where to Go Camping booklet. A brief overview of features of a Lodge website will also be discussed. Lastly, social media use, policies and best practices by Lodges will be discussed as well as provide Advisers with resources to help manage social media safely.

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Slide 1-Introduction

This session will discuss the communications vehicles Lodges use to connect with and inspire their members. The session will first cover written forms of communication. Written forms of communication utilized by Lodges include: Newsletter, Event Letters, Lodge Plan Book and Where to Go Camping Booklet. An informative and easy to navigate website is also a communication tool to be used. Social media is an expanding communication medium where Lodges can communicate directly with a specific audience. Awareness of best practices and online safety policies is crucial to social media success.

Slide 2&3 – Lodge Newsletters

An engaging Lodge newsletter is a staple of Lodge communication. A relevant, informative and engaging newsletter, in print or electronic, should include the following elements:

- Profiles on officers and leaders
- Event summaries of past events
- History articles about the Lodge or past leaders
- Promotion of future events
- Event calendar
- Best practices or advice
- Articles on recognition of Lodge members
- Inspirational message from the Chief or other youth officer
- Lodge member spotlights
- Contact information for Lodge leadership
- Vibrant photos of members and events

Lodge newsletters can be sent via email or by post mail. Lodges are increasingly using email newsletters as they have found it a more effective method of reaching members.

Newsletters should be distributed on a regular schedule.

Design Suggestions:

Design the newsletter to be reader friendly. Include regular columns or features in each issue.

Make sure the newsletter production is professional.

Develop a Style Guide that ensures uniformity of text alignment, heading size, abbreviations and captions and other design elements.

Slide 4&5 – Lodge Plan Book

A Lodge Plan Book is a collection of resources that can be utilized by Lodge officers and advisers to aid them in the planning, execution and delivery of the Lodge program. A Lodge Plan Book can be produced in hardcopy or in electronic form. The Lodge Plan Book should be produced as part of the orientation or LLD for newly elected officers. The Lodge Plan Book serves as a road map for the year. A thorough plan book generally includes:

- Officer goals
- LEC goals
- Back daters/timelines for all Lodge events
- Equipment list for all Lodge events
- Officer positions of responsibility descriptions
- Officer and LEC member contact information (phone numbers and email addresses)
- Recommendations and Reports filed by each officer each year
- Event promotional documents
- Budget

A Lodge Plan Book should be developed each year by the newly elected officers. The Lodge Plan Book however should also include recommendations from outgoing officers and the council Scout Executive. The outgoing officer's suggestions and comments help foster an environment of continuous improvement among the officers. Incorporating the officer's suggestions makes the plan book a continuously relevant and helpful planning tool. Copies should be printed and given to LEC members and made available to all members upon request

Slide 6 – Where to Go Camping Booklet

As a service to the local council Lodges have created and maintained booklets that detail various camping locations and amenities in an area close to the geographic area of their council. The booklet could include information on council camps, National parks and historic trails and state parks. The booklet can be updated annually or as camp and park information changes. A Where to Go Camping booklet can be produced in hardcopy or in electronic form.

These booklets should include:

- Location addresses and contact information for each camp or park
- A short description of the activities available at each park or camp
- Trail maps
- For high adventure activities the event duration, crew size and equipment provided should be listed

Slide 7-12- Lodge Website

A Lodge website is a powerful communication tool. The website is not only a communication tool for members but also a source of information about the Lodge and Order of the Arrow for the general public.

A Lodge website can be part of a local council website or a standalone website with your own domain name.

Website design recommendations:

- The website should be easy to navigate and compatible for optimal viewing on a laptop or desktop computer as well as on smart phones, tablets and other mobile technology.
- Please note that the website should have a consistent design and layout for all pages.
- Ensure that the website is not managed directly online. Make a copy of the website on your computer. This copy is a safeguard against accidental deletion of the whole site or specific pages.
- Having a "hidden" version of the site on your online server also acts as a backup.
- Design the website to be compatible with all web browsers.

A Lodge website must also conform to BSA and Order of the Arrow Website Guidelines regarding content and design.

An official Order of the Arrow web site should follow these guidelines:

1. The appropriate OA leadership must have direct control over the content of its official web site (i.e. the Key 3 at each level of the organization).

2. The content of the OA site must be appropriate to the Scouting movement and the Order of the Arrow. Safeguarded information such as ceremony details must be properly protected.

3. The OA site shall not contain any advertisements or commercial endorsements, except those for the organization providing the site service if it is provided for free or at a discount.

4. The OA site shall not engage in the electronic sale of BSA Supply Division merchandise, merchandise commissioned by the National Order of the Arrow Committee, or competing products.

5. The OA site shall not contain any links directly to any sites that contain material that is not appropriate to the Scouting movement.

6. The OA site shall not replicate any BSA publication currently for sale through the Supply Division.

7. The OA site must abide by all laws regarding copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property.

8. The OA site must consider the safety and privacy of their participants by obtaining necessary permissions to release information about or identifying images of any specific individual.

9. The OA site should include an email contact address for reaching the person managing the site, so visitors can report any problems or concerns.

The BSA Website Guidelines are listed below:

As long as they observe the Rules and Regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, local councils are free to develop their own applications of Internet and Web technology. Over time, many local councils will decide to publish under the National Council umbrella for hosting, content, and technical support. For those that continue to publish independently, we have set up guidelines to help councils build the Scouting brand and protect employees, volunteers, and members.

While local councils may establish their own policies concerning their use of the Internet, the National Council will only recognize as "official" those sites that have followed the numbered guidelines below. The National Council will not acknowledge or provide links to any council site that does not meet these guidelines. The guidelines may be altered or amended to provide updated information, and councils will be notified when that happens.

1. Council Web sites must be hosted off-site at a hosting facility and may not be connected in any way to the local council's internal network.

2. The council must have direct control over the content of its official Web site.

3. The content of the council site must be appropriate to the Scouting movement.

4. The council site cannot contain links to any sites that contain material that is not appropriate to the Scouting movement.

5. The council site cannot contain any advertisements or commercial endorsements.

6. The council site cannot engage in the electronic sale of BSA Supply Division merchandise or competing products.

7. The council site cannot replicate any BSA publication currently for sale through the Supply Division.

8. Council sites must abide by all laws regarding copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property, and by those pertaining to the Internet.

9. Council sites must consider the safety and privacy of their members and participants by obtaining the necessary permissions to release information about or images of any individual.

Additional safety policies to consider:

- Do not post personal information of a youth member under age 18.
- Use email aliases for youth members. For example: chief@ABCLodge.org
- Establish a content approval system and team. All content should first be approved by the Lodge Key 3. The Lodge Adviser and Lodge Staff Adviser are legally responsible for content posted to the Lodge website.
- Appoint only one-two individuals to upload files to the live website. This procedure helps to ensure a control of the content updates.

Content on a Lodge website should include:

- Lodge and Officer History
- Lodge calendar of events
- LEC meeting agendas/LEC minutes
- Newsletters Archive
- Forms
- Lodge Committee descriptions and membership
- Lodge member profiles
- Virtual patch archive
- Lodge Plan Book
- Links to the local council website, OA Section website, OA Region websites and National OA website

Lodges should follow these good practices to create an effective website:

- Update content regularly. This step is critical and will keep members excited and interested in returning to the website.
- Provide a feedback device for asking questions and reporting errors
- Design a clear and simple navigation where resources and information can be found clearly
- Link to national BSA and OA websites
- Do not link to websites that are not trusted or the Lodge does not control
- Coordinate with the council web committee to improve coordination of content

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Slide 13-19- Social Media

Social media is used to instantaneously communicate with your group. The four most useful social media apps for Lodges are: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. Each of these social media platforms serves a specific purpose.

Twitter:

Twitter is best utilized for event and training reminders as well as short daily messages. Some Lodges have found success posting inspirational messages or "Thoughts from the Chief" to inspire and start discussion.

Facebook:

Facebook is best utilized for sharing pictures, group communication posts and reminders.

YouTube:

YouTube is best utilized for sharing video content. Video content can include instructional videos, promotional videos, and event videos.

Instagram:

Instagram is best utilized for posting event pictures.

Group Messaging App:

These apps make it easy to facilitate group discussions among officers. There is oftentimes much work to do between formal Lodge meetings. Group messaging apps allow officers to more easily share ideas and make decisions.

Social Media Safety:

When using social media, steps must be taken to ensure safety and content appropriateness. The use of all social media must comply with the BSA Social Media Guidelines. Some of the most important guidelines include:

- All apps should feature two administrators. It is recommended that one administrator be a professional scouter.
- All conversations should be kept public in keeping with two deep leadership policies.
- Media inquiries coming through social media should be referred to the Scout Executive or a designee for an official response.
- You should not do anything on a social media channel that reflects poorly on you, other individuals in your council or unit, the Order of the Arrow, the Boy Scouts of America, or anyone else.

The full version of the BSA Social Media Guidelines can be found at: http://www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx

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Make an effort to recruit adult advisers with professional backgrounds in the technology field to ensure compliance with and awareness of the most recent changes to the above mentioned social media platforms and policies.

Slide 20- In-Person Communication

There is no substitute for in person communication when dealing with mentoring youth or establishing goals and increasing camaraderie with both youth and adults alike.

In person communication is especially effective in the mentoring context as nonverbal cues are as important to be aware of as verbal communication.

As an adviser it is important to impress upon youth leaders that personal communication with Lodge members is an effective inspiration tool.

Slide 21- Resources

Newsletters:

Lodge E-Newsletter Best Practices document: http://www.oa-bsa.org/uploads/resources/bestpractices/ElectronicNewsletterIdea.pdf

OA National Bulletin: http://www.oa-bsa.org/uploads/bulletin/NB_Spring_2016.pdf

Where to Go Camping booklet:

OA Manual for Producing a "Where to Go Camping Guide": http://www.oa-bsa.org/uploads/publications/ProducingWheretoGoCamping.pdf

Websites:

National OA website: http://oa-bsa.org/

Central Region OA website: http://central.oa-bsa.org/

Northeast Region OA website: http://www.northeast.oa-bsa.org/

Southern Region OA website: http://southern.oa-bsa.org/

Western Region OA website: http://www.western.oa-bsa.org/

Social Media:

OA Twitter: https://twitter.com/oabsa

OA Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/oabsa/

OA Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/user/oabsa

OA Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/oabsa/

Slide 22- Conclusion

Effective communication through various mediums is essential to inspiring today's young leaders. Utilizing the preferred communication mediums of today's young people will enable you to connect with, engage and inspire the Lodge membership.

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