

LA320 – Issues: Membership Retention

National OA Adviser Training

Session Length: 25 Minutes

Overview:

- The importance of OA Lodge Membership Retention
- Orientation of the new Arrowmen and their involvement with lodge programs
- Engaging new members
- Communications
- Leadership Opportunity

Learning objectives:

- To share ideas on active participation to assist in membership retention
- Develop ways to increase brotherhood conversion and improve the health of lodges & chapters
- Explore ideas on how to eliminate generation gaps in lodge leadership

Detailed Outline of the Session:

This session discusses several important topics that will help you coach lodge youth leaders with retention of Lodge Membership. The discussion covers key ideas and areas to help advisers and other key lodge administrative leaders understand the issues and how important it is for the lodge leadership to focus on keeping members engaged in OA activities, which may assist in a positive increase in Membership growth and Retention.

Slide 2 – Overview

Membership retention of Arrowmen is essential for the overall success of the lodge, which can bring together a dynamic group of self-motivated individuals united in cheerful service to others. Successful lodges achieve this goal through the understanding and application of effective programs aimed at maintaining the interest of members.

The long-term objective is to make an impact strong enough to help create a lasting resource of future volunteers in Scouting.

Slide 3 – Introduction

This session will cover the following topics:

- **Awareness** – Areas of emphasis to help include new and older members
- **Membership and Retention** - A low membership retention rate is a problem that many lodges across the nation are facing.
- **New Member Orientation** – Captivating, teaching and highlighting the fun activities the lodge can offer
- **Jump Start** – an interactive website designed to orient the new Arrowman
- **Engaging New Members** - Emphasis on the new member and their development in service to others
- **Communication** – Emphasis on active communication to effectively inform and stay connected with ALL members
- **Leadership Opportunity** – training and opportunities used as retention tools
- **Summary** – communicating the OA opportunities to help retain and strengthen member's goals

Slide 4&5 – Awareness

How can we assist the lodge youth leadership to help include and retain new and older members?

Some areas of emphasis to help include members are:

- Develop a calendar of events that describes the programs and serves as a guide
- Communicate the calendar to ALL lodge members
- Implement an effective new member orientation program
- Emphasize participation in the ongoing Lodge Leadership Development (LLD) program. Always seek ways to improve it!
- Periodically check records to determine inactive members; verify through personal contact, phone or emails
- Send letters to Ordeal members eligible for Brotherhood conversion to inform them of Brotherhood Ceremonial opportunities. Don't forget to use a personal follow-up!
- Ensure the schedule of service projects is approved and that all members are invited to participate.
- Send information directly to unit leaders on membership election procedures and upcoming Ordeals to maximize participation. Ensure timely organization and training of election teams as well as good communication with Candidates.
- Ensure that the lodge supports the local council's outdoor program promotions and service.

Slide 6&7 – Membership Retention

A low membership retention rate is a problem that many lodges across the nation are facing. The only way to keep members involved in the Order is to engage them through active participation and leadership opportunities in a quality program.

“The only way forward, if we are going to improve the quality of the environment, is to get everybody involved.”

Richard Rogers

Some ways to keep new members and old members active and interested in the program.

- Invite candidates to a fun chapter activity prior to their Ordeal.
- Stop calling them a “Chapter Meeting”. Nobody wants to go to another meeting!
- Develop and maintain an inspiring new member orientation.
- Review the meaning of Ordeal principles and challenges with members.
- Introduction to the new member start-up program, [JumpStart](#)
- Explain to new members that they are key to the Order’s success and encourage them to join a committee or perform ceremonies.
- Regularly contact new Ordeal members through direct contact and personal notifications; encourage them to attend events.
- Work to achieve unit leader buy-in to the program with personal one-on-one contact. Maintain active OA troop/team representatives through chapter meetings & training.
- Utilize the Extended Elangomat program to engage current membership. Make sure these Arrowmen are well recognized.
- Arrowman recognition – Local Lodge and or National level awards
- Be sure to include an element of fun in all lodge and chapter activities.

Slide 8 – New Member Orientation

Make the new Arrowmen feel welcome! The new member orientation program should captivate, teach and further highlight service to others and the fun activities that the lodge can offer. A new member orientation program is fun and keeps their interest. The following are elements to consider for a New Member orientation:

- Introduces the new Arrowmen to the lodge and the Order.
- Provides Chapter meeting information
- Provides a lodge calendar
- Provides leadership rosters with contact information
- Introduces JumpStart
- Discusses Lodge and Chapter fellowship activities
- Discusses OA High Adventures programs

- Discusses National Order of Arrow Conference
- Discusses opportunities for leadership in the OA

Slide 9 – JumpStart

[JumpStart](#) is an interactive website designed to assist Ordeal members on their trail to Brotherhood. While on the website, Arrowmen gain further insight into the meaning of the Ordeal experience, including the ceremonies and the four principals. The site also challenges the new member to take the path to seal their membership by becoming a Brotherhood Member. In addition, the site lets the new Arrowmen gain some insight in the History of the OA, some National programs and events and introduces them to local opportunities including the OA Troop/Team Representative program. There is also a short introduction for the Adult role in the Order of the Arrow.

Slide 10 – Engaging New Members

The Arrowman is eager to learn and by engaging him, chapters and lodges help reduce membership turnover.

Some ideas on how to engage them include:

- Involve members early on, inspire and use their talents to help in chapter programs; verify an individual's leadership goals through short surveys or informal interview process
- Develop individual growth to maintain the health of the Chapter
- Plan for a post-ordeal activity to help keep their interest
- Parent involvement helps engage members and improves retention; directly contact and invite to lodge events, awards dinners etc.
- Publicly recognize members and highlight the benefits of active participation in front of their parents.
- Achieve the Buy-in from unit leaders which can secure their support, participation and encouragement for their Scouts to do so!

Slide 11 – Communications

Consider your audience (age, resources)! It's important to effective communication. Determine how to accommodate for different groups to reach our members. Effectively broadcasting information is a critical part of connecting with our membership. There are a multitude of ways to communicate to the membership. These include:

- **Communication may include:** word-of-mouth, mailed newsletters, hand-outs/flyers, phone trees, emails, websites, E-newsletters, Chapter-lodge communications, Chapter-district/council event information on websites.
- **Social Media** - Today Scouts embrace technology through social media websites and applications to communicate. When used properly, technology allows for timely, direct and active interaction and exchange of ideas. As an example, a lodge or Chapter Facebook page or Twitter account can be used with great effectiveness to communicate with members.
- **OA [LodgeMaster](#) (OALM)** – This is the OA’s advanced computerized membership management system. It’s free to each council. Access to OALM allows leaders to access membership data at any time. OALM can be used by lodges and chapters to send mass e-mails to their members.

Slide 12 – Leadership Opportunity

Another retention tool for both new and old members are Leadership training and opportunities. These include local, section and national venues. Some examples include:

- **Lodge/Chapter:**
 - Service projects – This includes leading any OA project for the lodge/chapter or for the council or community.
 - Ceremonial teams – Each ceremony team can have a lead
 - Lodge/Chapter Committees – Any committee appointed by the LEC needs leadership
 - OA Troop/Team Rep – This is an official leadership position in a Troop or Team and qualifies for Scouting advancement requirements
 - Elangomat and Extended Elangomat – What better way to teach servant leadership than to be an Elangomat
 - LLD – The Lodge Leadership Development program is best served by active leadership by the elected youth of the lodge and chapter.
- **Section**
 - Conclave Leadership Including Chief, Vice Chief and Secretary (which are elected positions) is an advanced opportunity for youth. Other opportunities include Conclave committee chairs and assistants.
 - Taking on key roles such as leading the Conclave Training Initiative (a Nationally created syllabus) is another opportunity.

- **Regional/National**
 - **NLS** – The National Leadership Seminar is a weekend of advanced leadership training for all lodge membership. Being asked to attend is a great honor.
 - **Regional Committees** – Many Regions have standing working committees that require leadership. These are appointed youth positions by the Region Chief.
 - **NOAC** and other National Events – Providing leadership to a contingent or to be on staff of such events further strengthens leadership for an Arrowman.

Of course, all the youth leadership positions need to have adult Advisers. Keeping your adults engaged in their purpose in the OA teaches more servant leadership. The purpose of the adult is to guide and advise the youth along their development path.

Slide 13 – Summary

The Order of the Arrow is a GREAT program and is appealing to a wide variety of people. Membership retention relies heavily on current members and leaders of the lodge to make all attempts possible to make new members aware of the opportunities that they have before them. It also relies on old members to remain engaged in the many opportunities to serve. Lodge and Chapter leadership needs to assist them to actively participate and to take on leadership roles.

Member participation is vital for a strong program. We must encourage individuals to also achieve their Scouting goals within the principles of the Order, as they continue in their journey of cheerful service to others. Remember, you were once a new Arrowman.

Resources:

Chapter Operations Guide: <http://www.oa-bsa.org/pages/content/publications#coc>