

LA330 – Issues: Brotherhood Conversion

National OA Adviser Training

Session Length: 25 Minutes

Overview:

- Understand the history and purpose of Brotherhood membership
- Explain how important Brotherhood is to the health and future of the lodge
- Encourage and prepare Ordeal members to undertake the Brotherhood
- Learn methods to increase Brotherhood conversion in your lodge

Learning objectives:

- Understand the importance of the Brotherhood to the Individual and Lodge
- Guide and enable Ordeal members to undertake the Brotherhood
- Identify ways to increase Brotherhood conversion

Detailed Outline of the Session:

This session discusses several important topics that will help your lodge increase its Brotherhood conversion and improve its health/future. This discussion will cover key ideas and areas to help advisers and other key lodge administrative leaders understand the history, purpose/value of the Brotherhood, and guide/enable Ordeal members to undertake the Brotherhood.

Introduction

The following items are covered throughout the lesson.

- Overview – The history of the Brotherhood
- Awareness – The purpose of the Brotherhood
- Significance to the Individual, local lodge and Order – Brotherhood and the health/future of the Order of the Arrow.
- Encourage and Prepare – Ordeal members to undertake their Brotherhood
- Methods to increase Brotherhood conversion –
- Communication
- Opportunity
- Extended Elangomat Program
- Incentives and Other Recognition

- Summary – Recap the purpose and value of the Brotherhood to the Individual, the Lodge, and greater Order. Identify and consider methods to increase brotherhood conversion in your lodge in order to improve its health and future.

Slide #1 – Overview

Today, we are going to take some time to talk about the Brotherhood membership and Brotherhood conversion. Specifically, we will discuss its importance to the individual, lodge, and the future of the Order. We will also review ways to enable your lodge to increase its Brotherhood conversion.

Slide #2 – History of Brotherhood Membership

When the Order of the Arrow was founded in 1915 there were only two membership levels, a First and Second Degree. The First Degree combined the aspects of the present-day Ordeal and Brotherhood, while the Second was an early adaptation of Vigil.

It wasn't until the 1920 constitution that the new Second Degree was formalized, and the highest level was renamed the Third Degree. The 1925 constitution finally gave names to all three, the Ordeal Degree, Brotherhood Degree, and Vigil Degree. Two other degrees were also considered but ultimately abandoned.

As an Ordeal Degree member during this time, one would wear the sash over their right shoulder, while a Brotherhood Degree member wore it over his left. It wasn't until 1949 that the National Committee decided that all sashes would be worn over the right shoulder, and in 1950 that bars were added to either side of the arrow, thereby creating the Brotherhood sash of today. The bars symbolize the sealing of an Arrowmen's membership in the Order of the Arrow. It is a testament to their personal devotion and dedication to the high ideals of the Order.

Slide #3 – Purpose of Brotherhood Membership

Becoming a Brotherhood member marks the completion of a member's induction into the Order of the Arrow. It signifies an Ordeal member's desire to become more involved in the Order by their commitment of future service to their lodge, while continuing to serve their unit. The time requirement of ten months between the Ordeal and when an Arrowman is eligible for Brotherhood membership exists to allow the new members of the Order time to give service to their unit, learn more about the Order's traditions and principles and to practice what they have learned.

Brotherhood members do not enjoy any special privileges that are not open to Ordeal members, other than being able to attend Brotherhood ceremonies. However, Brotherhood members do have additional responsibilities and obligations: service to the Order of the Arrow in addition to continuing service to the unit.

Slide #4 – Importance of Brotherhood to the Lodge

Brotherhood was started with a few goals in mind:

- 1) To strengthen a member's commitment to the Order. By undergoing a second oath, a member can reaffirm what was taught during the Ordeal.
- 2) To increase membership retention. An Arrowman more involved in the Order, is more likely to keep coming to Lodge events and to participate in lodge and chapter activities.
- 3) To increase amount of service provided to council and community. An Arrowman who becomes Brotherhood pledges him or herself to future service with the Lodge.

Slide #5 –Ordeal Members to Brotherhood

There are many ways to guide and encourage Ordeal members to seal their membership by becoming a Brotherhood member. Some tools the lodge can utilize to inspire and inform include having dynamic and high quality Ceremonies and Inductions. This requires dedicated ceremony teams and advisers. Immediately following the Ordeal, promotion of the JumpStart program (jumpstart.oa-bsa.org) and giving a great orientation can help get the new member started on the path to Brotherhood. Many lodges have a lodge manual or plan book that contains the history of the lodge, position descriptions, committee descriptions, calendar and many other items for the new member to learn about.

During the new member's first year, the best method to keep him engaged is personal communication and contact. Utilizing the Extended Elangomat program is one of the best methods to provide this personal contact. Elangomat (or Nimat) means "friend". These Arrowmen will guide/partner with individual or groups of Ordeal members to help bring them up and through Brotherhood. They are essentially an "OA Coach", guiding new Arrowmen along the trail to Brotherhood and offering their assistance along the way.

Another tool to consider is the use of a Brotherhood Workshop. These should be fun and energetic discussions where current Brotherhood and Vigil Honor members can work with new members and help them with the Challenges of Brotherhood Membership.

Slide #6 – Methods to Increase Brotherhood Conversion

During his first year, keeping the Ordeal member engaged and having the desire to seal his membership requires dedication by the leadership of the lodge. One method some lodges use is a standing committee dedicated to Brotherhood conversion. This committee is charged with communicating to the Ordeal members, helping to remove barriers and providing incentives.

Communication can be in several forms: letters to the Ordeal members, personal calls and/or emails, Lodge newsletter and the use of Social Media, and direct outreach to Troops and Teams. The personal contact should be from the Extended Elangomat.

Some of the barriers for many new Arrowmen include travel and scheduling of events. The Lodge and its Brotherhood committee can help alleviate some of these by running Brotherhood Conversions in a local area to cut down on travel. This is especially significant for lodges that cover great distances. Chapters usually are localized and thus can be responsible for Brotherhood Conversion. Scheduling more frequent Conversion ceremonies will minimize scheduling conflicts.

Slide #7 – Methods to Increase Brotherhood Conversion

Another great tool lodges utilize to increase Brotherhood conversion is an incentive program. This program can take many forms and rewards any and all: lodge membership, chapters, committees, lodge/chapter officers, Elangomats, the units and unit leadership.

Keeping a new member engaged and wanting to seal their membership takes a lot of energy. An incentive program to encourage current members to be part of this process will help improve the conversion. Such incentives could include: discounted price for a sash or event, 2 for 1 pricing if bringing another member, special reception, recognition in the newsletter/social media, a certificate and/or trading post credit. Chapters and/or committees could get recognition for percent of conversion (35% - Ice Cream Social; 50% - Pizza Party; 75% - Chair or Chief gets free transportation or free fees to section/region/national event. And, of course, they could get some trading post credit. A special incentive to a chapter or lodge chief where there is 100% conversion could be free NOAC or national event fees and transportation (depending on the budget/finances of the lodge).

The Elangomat can be recognized in many ways: patch, certificate, visible earned recognition (beads/claws/feather, etc.), special t-shirt/hat, free attendance to event, recognition at banquets, and trading post credit, or a special flap recognizing members who guide Scouts from their unit through the Brotherhood process. These are the workhorses of Brotherhood Conversion and they need to be treated very special.

Another area of recognition can be to the unit. If there is a strong OA presence in the unit with an OA Troop/Team Representative and Adviser, the unit can qualify for the OA

Unit of Excellence, a National Award. This award seeks to identify those units, and the leaders within them, who excel at incorporating the OA into their annual planning. This award is intended to provide a tool for lodges to recognize and incentivize unit-level participation in Order of the Arrow programs including Brotherhood Conversion. Besides the National award, an OA Troop Rep could also be recognized with free event attendance, lodge/chapter banquet recognition and, of course, trading post credit.

Slide #8 – Methods to Increase Brotherhood Conversion

The lodge and chapter leadership can also take advantage of Opportunity and, as mentioned before, the OA Troop/Team Representative. The chapter/lodge membership can participate in many activities and take advantage of this positive exposure and its influence on new membership. One obvious area is staffing at the council's summer camp. This can provide a very positive image to new members, especially those that haven't been seen at normal chapter/lodge events. Other venues include Lodge Fellowships, Camporees, Council events like the University of Scouting and Chapter and Lodge meetings. Any venue where the new member sees current membership participating is a positive influence.

The OA Troop/Team Representative program is yet another opportunity to show the new member some of the positive aspects of the OA. This leadership position of OA Rep starts with the UNIT, where Scouting and advancement happens. This is at the grassroots of Scouting. The best way to show off a good OA Troop Rep is to have him well trained. This can be accomplished by another standing committee within the chapter/lodge: The OA Rep Committee. This is the committee to make sure the OA Reps are trained and are communicating to/from the unit. Here, also, is where unit leader feedback can be managed. If the unit leader sees that the OA is helping his unit, then the battle of unit leader buy-in can easily be achieved. Having this positive image, the unit leader can also help urge the new Ordeal member to seal his membership.

Slide #9 – Summary

The more members we engage and retain:

- The more service we can provide,
- The more assistance we can provide to the Council, Districts, and Units,
- The more leadership opportunities we can provide,
- The stronger the Lodge will become
- The greater the opportunities will be for the personal growth of our Arrowmen.

The Order of the Arrow is a brotherhood, and we want to empower our brothers to seek the higher vision and seal their membership. The value and meaning of the Brotherhood goes beyond the individual; it resonates throughout the entire Order.

"For he who serves his fellows, is of all his fellows, greatest" – E. Urner Goodman

Resources:

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