

## **SESSION 2: Fostering Relationships**

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Facilitator:** Section Staff

### **Learning Outcomes:**

- Understand how to build relationships with your team.
- Learn how to effectively utilize the advisers in our organization.
- Develop as a team.

**Supplies:** Large jar or container with jellybeans or candy  
Bag for each table containing a slip of paper. Each slip should have a date ranging from 2010-2020 on it.

### **Introduction 2 minutes**

Introduce yourself. Before we jump into an experience, let's review this session's learning outcomes. Could I have a volunteer the learning outcomes for me?

*[Delegate reads learning outcomes]*

*[Change Slide]*

Before we get into the meat and potatoes of the ACT Conference, we want to have a little fun competition. We are giving away this large jar of candy to the delegate who either correctly guesses, or comes closest to correctly guessing, the amount of candy in the jar. You have been handed two pieces of paper, on one write your name and your guess. On the other write your guess so you have that for your own records.

*[Collect each delegate's guess.]*

*[Change Slide]*

### **Why Relationship Building? 3 minutes**

So, now that we've introduced what we are going to talk about this weekend, and how to get the most out of the conference, we need to talk about the most important resource within the OA: you. Not only is there nothing more important in the OA than Arrowmen, there is nothing more in the OA besides our Arrowmen! That's it.

Fundamentally what we are is a group of people with shared beliefs and goals. We are our membership, nothing less, and nothing more.

Since our membership forms our organization, we must understand that we can only Thrive when our membership Thrives. For our membership to Thrive, we must have strong relationships. Think of a mechanical device like a car engine or an electrical turbine; if just one component is not in sync with the rest of the machine it can fall apart.

*[Change Slide]*

The same is true for a lodge. We do not have to all think the same way – in fact, our different individual approaches can become our strength as a group – but we must be in sync to Thrive... so let's get in sync!

*[Change Slide]*

### **Relationship Building Experience      10 minutes**

In the center of your table, you will find a bag with slips of paper. Each person should take a paper from the bag and pass the bag around until everyone at the table has one. Now look at the paper you took; you'll notice that it has a year written on it. Take three minutes to write a few sentences about what you were doing during the year the written on the paper. Write about your grade in school or your job. What were you doing in Scouting? Your lodge? Any major life events like the birth of a sibling or the death of a relative? Did you move? Where did you live? Did you play a sport or act in a play or take a memorable vacation? What was your favorite TV show or movie or book that year?

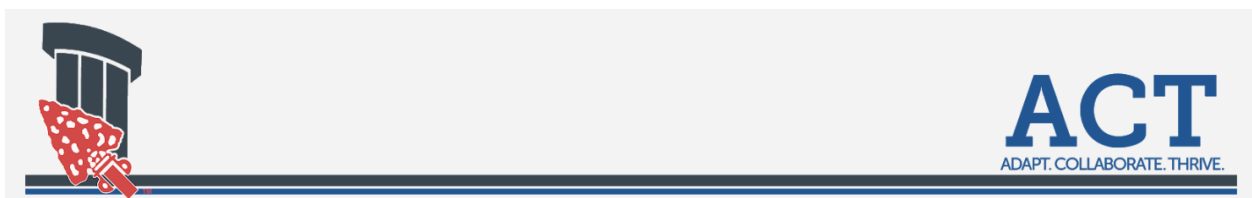
*[Wait three minutes for silent writing]*

Now that you've had a chance to walk down memory lane, partner up with someone sitting next to you and share your stories with one another.

*[Give about 2 minutes for delegates to share their stories with their partner before continuing.]*

Why do you think we did this?

*[Solicit and listen to answers from audience.]*



Experiences like this are often called “icebreakers” and, to be perfectly honest, I bet many of you probably feel the same way as I do about icebreakers, which is that I can’t stand them. Every time I do one it feels so unnatural and forced...so why do them? Well, the science of behavioral psychology is pretty adamant that icebreakers are actually really effective vehicles for team development. How? The foundation of relationships is self-disclosure. People build relationships of trust when they feel they know someone on a fundamental level. Relationships can take a lot of time to establish trust and grow; icebreakers expedite that process.

The point of this experience is not to convince you to incorporate more icebreakers into your lodge functions, but to understand why people do, and do not, come back to lodge functions.

I’m here because I believe in the OA; but more than that I’m here because my friends are here. Do you feel the same way? Let’s get a show of hands. As I said before, the basis of the Order of the Arrow is its members.

I’m sure many people in this room have close friends they met not through school or church or extra-curricular activities, but through Scouting and the OA. I’m sure some of the advisers in the room might even say that some of the people who danced at their weddings were people they met in the OA.

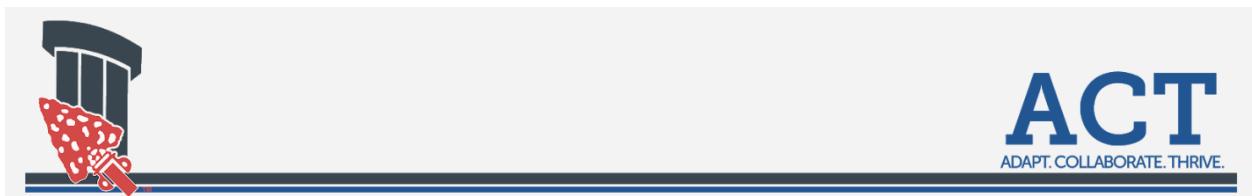
There are times when I’m not especially looking forward to a specific event, but I am excited to see someone I know. However, the opposite can also be true. If a new member comes to an event and sees everyone excitedly chatting with friends while they are alone, they won’t want to come back. Our friendships, our close OA relationships, can actually keep other people from creating those very same relationships if we are not careful and explicit about welcoming them.

*[Change Slide]*

## **Fostering Relationship Building      5 minutes**

“If you do not intentionally, deliberately and proactively include, you will unintentionally exclude.” – Joe Gerstandt

If we want to grow our organization, we have to make people want to be part of it and feel welcomed in it. As we said earlier, we are now welcoming female youth, Venturers, and Sea Scouts into the OA, so this idea is even more important for our organization at this critical time.



*[Change Slide]*

Think of the difference between “all are welcome” and “I designed this with you in mind.” It can be difficult for someone to start getting involved with the OA. It’s up to us to make them feel welcome as Arrowmen. If we want people to want to come back to lodge events, we have to make sure the events are both ones they want to attend and have as few barriers to entry as possible.

Let’s list some common barriers to our events:

*[Solicit ideas from the audience, but some key examples are below.]*

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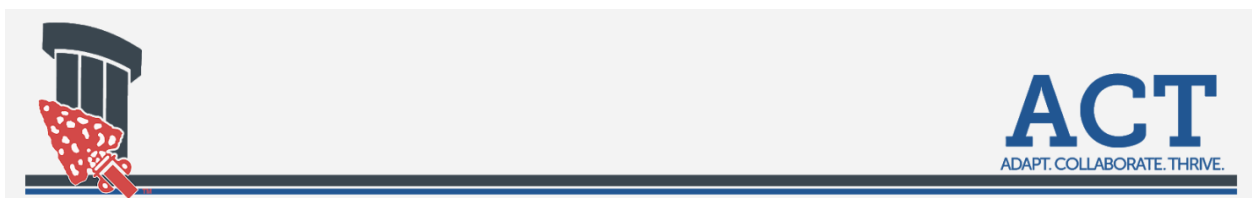
- a. Cost. Can the average Arrowmen afford this easily?
- b. Location. How far away from the population center of your lodge is the event? Is public transportation an option?
- c. Structural Accessibility. Can people with different physical/mobility needs access the event?
- d. Religious/Dietary Accommodations. Is there food and space for Scouts of every faith tradition?
- e. Timing. What holidays, sports, and other significant events are happening at that time? Can they be avoided?

How can we work to create spaces where Arrowmen want to engage, time and time again? With our language.

How to achieve that?

- Balance Pronouns (he/she)
- Use a variety of exemplar names (male, female, backgrounds)
- Avoid stereotypes
- Use person-first language
- Whenever possible, avoid jargon

*[Change Slide]*



## Foster a Culture of Engagement and Dialogue 5 minutes

So, when this session began, I said we were going to have a little fun by guessing the amount of candy in that jar. We have tabulated the results; but before we announce the winner, I'd like to share the extremes. The highest guess was XX and the lowest was YY. What is interesting is the average was QQQ and the actual number is QQQ. See how close they are?

*[Change Slide]*

You as leaders of your lodge must understand that for a lodge to Thrive it needs the collective wisdom of all members. Just like with the jar of candy, our individual responses were sometimes wildly off, but our collective response was nearly perfect. Good leaders understand this and capitalize on the collective wisdom of their teams.

Effective leaders create spaces where people want to engage and contribute. We started this session with an icebreaker because we said they are really effective at creating trust. Something else they do is help to foster a sense of "psychological safety," or an atmosphere in which people feel free to speak up — to question, criticize, say something out-there — without fear of being ostracized.

To create those spaces where people feel psychologically comfortable asking questions and sharing ideas, the lodge leadership must be proactive. Here are some examples of ways you can create a culture of trust in your teams where everyone is ready to contribute:

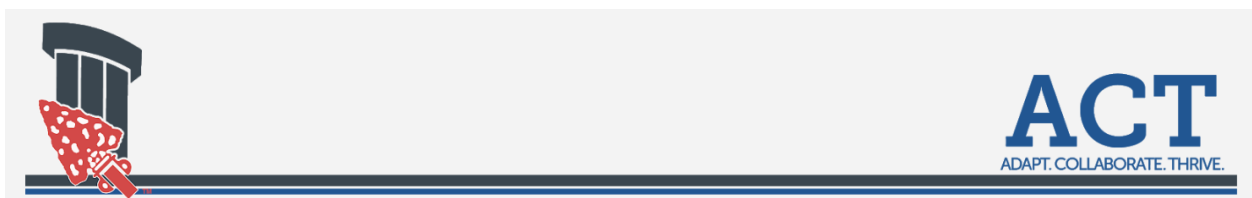
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### I. *Ask Questions First*

When a leader opens a conversation by stating a situation and a proposed solution, team members may not feel comfortable offering other suggestions. Simply state situations and ask questions of your team before proposing your own solution.

### II. *Listen Not for Pauses, But for Content*

All too often we do not really listen when someone else is speaking, we are just waiting for them to stop talking so we can offer our own suggestions. Take a break and listen, really listen, to what your fellow Arrowmen have to say. People who feel heard will want to contribute more.



III. *"Help me understand..."*

Seek to listen not to offer a rebuttal, but rather to understand. If you disagree with a suggestion first, ask for clarification and more information before rejecting it. Perhaps it's not a good suggestion, or maybe you just didn't understand the proposal.

IV. *"So, what I hear you saying is..."*

After they explain their point, put it into your own words. This will ensure everyone fully understands one another.

V. *"What do you want me to take away from this conversation?"*

When engaging in a dialogue, ask for the punch line. Sometimes the most important point can be lost in a larger discussion.

VI. *Use "I" Statements*

Instead of saying "you aren't being clear" or some other message which can put someone on edge, say things like "I work best when a task is written down."

Removing the burden from the other person, and putting the needs of yourself, will make the request more palatable to everyone.

VII. *Be Open to The Possibility I Am Wrong*

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the best teams have leaders who understand their own limitations and know they do not have a monopoly on the truth.

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**Closing     2 minutes**

The most precious resource we have is our people. If you want your lodge to Thrive, the membership must Thrive. For the membership to Thrive, they have to know and trust one another. Leaders set the tone for their organization. If you want people to trust you, you must earn that trust. If you want them to value you, you must value them. Show them you care not by saying you care, but by making them realize it. The way we talk about one another, where and how we have events, and how we behave is the difference between a sash-and-dash member, and the Arrowman who is committed for a lifetime.

