



2018 National Order of the Arrow Conference

Small Lodge Administration: Event Participation

Session Length: 45 Minutes

Learning Outcomes:

- Guests will learn the importance of quality lodge events and their effect on other aspects of lodge program
- Guests will understand that event participation is a key metric of how well the lodge is performing overall.
- Guests will learn the unique disadvantages, as well as advantages, that a small lodge has in putting on a lodge event.
- Guests will learn the common characteristics of successful events.

Theme Connection:

The theme of NOAC 2018 is “Decide Your Destiny,” emphasizing the message that today’s decisions shape tomorrow’s reality. This session will relay this theme in the following ways:

- The decisions and planning today will shape the reality of tomorrow’s lodge event
- The success of tomorrow’s lodge event will shape the reality of future lodge events
- The success of today’s lodge event is a good metric of the reality of a lodge’s overall program

This session will help the Lodge with the Journey to Excellence Requirement(s):
REQUIREMENT #2 and #5

Required Materials:

- White Board or Flip Chart
- Markers
- Projector, computer, screen



TRAINER PREPARATION

The ideal trainer for this session should be someone such as a current or former lodge officer who has experience in planning and running a lodge event. The trainer should review the syllabus thoroughly and make notes of any possible questions, issues or topics that may come up. This session is a mixture of group discussion, lecture and sharing best practices. The trainer should be prepared to manage the discussion and guide it effectively. Don't let any one person dominate the discussion. Try and obtain input from a variety of participants.

This session will require a great deal of not taking on a white board or flipchart. Unless the trainer is adept at taking those notes while continuing to manage the discussion, or if his handwriting is poor, he should recruit someone from the audience to assist him with this task.

A PowerPoint can be developed and used with this session but is not required due to its emphasis on brainstorming and audience discussion. If a PowerPoint is incorporated, the trainer should use it sparingly so as not to overshadow the interaction aspect of the session.

Because of the interactive aspect of this session and the relatively short time constraints, it will be important for the trainer to watch the time and to effectively move discussion along should it begin to bog down.

Session Narrative

Introduction

4 minutes

Trainer Instructions: The Trainer should briefly introduce himself by telling the group his name, lodge, current position and former positions in the Order of the Arrow.

Today we are going to discuss event participation and specifically some of the challenges and advantages that small lodges have in putting on activities.

Before we begin, let's get an idea of what size lodges are represented. If your lodge has 100 members or less, raise your hands.....200 or less.....300 or less.....400 or less.....over 400.

I want everyone to take just a moment and write down one successful event that your lodge has put on and list at least 3 things that made it successful or memorable to you.

Importance of Event Participation**12 minutes**

It does not matter what size lodge you are from for us all to agree that having well planned and well attended events are important. Would you agree? But why is it important?

Trainer Instructions: The Trainer should ask the audiences for brief answers to “why it is important to have well planned, well attended events”. As the answers are given, write them on a flipchart or on a white board. The trainer can ask for an audience member to assist with the writing as he solicits responses. If the following responses are not given, the Trainer should mention them and add them to the list: event participation is a JTE metric, good events aid in membership retention, and good events offer leadership opportunities.

Those are all great reasons, but today, I want to focus on three of them. The first is that event participation is actually one of the JTE metrics that lodges are scored on in requirement #5. Bronze designation required 7%, silver required 10% and gold required a 17% average of lodge membership attended all full lodge events. The statistics have shown that Lodges whose members are engaged and involved, also tend to be the lodges with a stronger overall program and presence in their councils.

When your lodge members are engaged and active, it indicates that they are more committed to the OA. It usually shows they feel like they have more of an investment in the lodge than just wearing a flap. When they’re committed and invested, then they are more likely to continue their membership. Membership Retention is a key issue facing the Order of the Arrow, especially with youth members. JTE requirement #2 evaluated lodges on retention of youth with bronze requiring 56% retention, silver requiring 63% retention and gold requiring 72.5% retention.

So, do you think there is a correlation between event participation and membership retention? Of course, there is! But the key to maintaining that correlation is to continue to put on good, quality events year after year. As lodges, we can’t allow our events to get stale. We can’t afford the effects of having poorly attended events.

Why do our members attend events?



Trainer Instructions: The Trainer should ask the audiences to brainstorm ideas. Move quickly and don't try and write down all the responses. The answer that the trainer should be looking for is "because they had fun at the last one".

If you go back and ask the members of your lodge at your next event why they attended, most will say because they enjoyed the last event. When we enjoy something, we want to keep doing it. If we don't enjoy something, or have a bad experience, are we more likely or less likely to do it again in the future? Probably less likely! And another thing to remember is that those members are probably not going to keep their opinions to themselves! They are going to talk about their experiences with other OA members. They will either talk about the good time that they had, or the bad time that they had. These conversations can influence someone whether or not to attend an event. Therefore, a good experience or a bad experience is going to affect more than just the person who actually had it!

So, the challenge that we have as lodge leaders is that every single lodge event must be well planned to ensure that each of our members has a good experience. We can't let our events get stale and repetitious. We have to keep offering activities that make our members want to come back for more.

The final reason for having well planned, well attended events that I wanted to mention today is the fact that they offer leadership opportunities for both youth and adults. There are only so many chapter and lodge positions to go around. But a well-planned event requires a lot of leadership. These additional leadership requirements allow for us to fill those responsibilities with Arrowmen who may not hold an official office. What this does is expands leadership opportunities and serves as an opportunity for many younger leaders to get their feet wet before moving up to larger leadership responsibilities in the lodge.

Challenges That a Small Lodge May Have With Lodge Events

8 minutes

Because of our size, small lodges face challenges with lodge events that larger lodges might not. Can you think of any?

Trainer Instructions: The Trainer should ask the audiences to brainstorm ideas. Move quickly. Write the ideas down or have an assistant write them down on a flipchart or white board. Some answers that the trainer should be looking for are listed below with discussion points.



1. Even a very small number of disengaged, inactive Arrowmen will significantly hurt your attendance percentages. Think about it. As an example, let's just say that a lodge has 50 members who never come to an event. It doesn't matter what kind of event that you have, they simply refuse to attend. If that lodge has 500 members, that is only 10%. But what if your lodge only has 200 members? That is 25% of your membership who you know that no matter what you do, they are not coming.
2. A small turnout can really affect fixed costs for the event. All our event budgets have both fixed costs and variable costs. Fixed costs are the expenses that we have no matter if there are 10 people who attend or if there are 100 people who attend. Variable costs are those costs that will change based on the number of people who attend such as food costs. When we can spread the fixed costs over a larger group of people, the cost per person goes down.
3. A small turnout can also affect costs and pricing for bulk items and quantity purchases. For instance, let's discuss patch prices. The more patches that you order, the less the purchase price is for each patch. Often, the same applies to food as well. The price per unit is often cheaper when you buy in bulk. Therefore, a smaller turnout can affect the price per person to attend an event, as well as the profit margins on memorabilia in your trading post.
4. A small turnout means that less people and resources to pull from to run the event.
5. The event schedule and activities are more difficult to coordinate to avoid overlap when you have small attendance numbers. If the same small group of people are participating in every single activity on the schedule, you have to coordinate those times to allow one activity to be completed before moving on to the next. Therefore, a simple delay, can throw off an entire schedule.

Advantages that Small Lodge Has With Lodge Events

8 minutes

We've been discussing some of the challenges that a small lodge, but we actually have some advantages that a large lodge may not. Can you think of any?

Trainer Instructions: The Trainer should ask the audiences to brainstorm ideas. Move quickly. Write the ideas down or have an assistant write them down on a flipchart or white board. Some answers that the trainer should be looking for are listed below with discussion points.



1. Smaller events offer more flexibility. For instance, it is a lot easier to set up a bowling night for 40 people than it would be for 200. Or even at camp, activity stations like COPE courses or shooting sports are usually not built for use by large numbers of people at one time.

Cooking made-to-order omelets or steaks for 40 is much more doable than doing it for a large group.

2. Smaller lodge events are usually characterized and described as enjoying more fellowship, brotherhood and bonding between individual members than large lodge events. After all, there is a better chance to meet people and get to know them.

3. Logistics are easier such as purchasing and staging food and supplies for the weekend.

4. Communications both before and during the event are easier. A smaller number allows for more direct, personal interaction and communication.

What are Characteristics of a Well Planned Event?

10 minutes

Any well-planned lodge event, whether they be by a small, or a medium or a large lodge are going to have the same characteristics. The key difference is recognizing the challenges and advantages that we just discussed that a small lodge will have and either minimizing or maximizing them to host a great event.

At the beginning of our session, I asked each of you to write down three characteristics of your most memorable event. Quickly let's go around and mention some of them. I would encourage each of you to make notes and add these ideas to the ones that you have already written down.

Trainer Instructions: The Trainer should ask a few audience members to quickly share. Avoid commenting or discussion. The idea is to get as many ideas in front of the group as possible in a very short time span.

Those are all great characteristics of a good lodge event and hopefully we can think about them when we get home and begin planning our own events. I would like to leave you with a few things that I have learned from my own experiences.

1. First is promotion. All events must be promoted well in advance. That means getting them on the council calendar at least 12 months out so troops and OA members can plan around them.

Promotion also means increased, targeted communications to OA members as the event approaches. We must not rely on just one medium. We must use as many different methods as possible such as lodge websites, social media, written materials and personal contact and follow up.

But simply putting something on a calendar and sending out information about it does not mean that it will be a success without follow up planning. If something is scheduled or promoted, then as a lodge, you must make sure that it actually happens. A schedule is not an event. Whether it becomes an event or not depends on whether the scheduled activities actually take place.

2. Second is a theme. Well planned events often have a singular theme or are a part of a year-round theme. Think about troop campouts. Which ones are the most popular? Usually the ones with a theme such as a backpacking weekend, or survival weekend, or a tubing trip. Camporees are another example. Most camporees will have a theme that all the events are based around such as pioneering, cooking, first aid, Highland Games, etc.

Now think about your lodge events. Do they have a theme? Are all the activities over the weekend tied together, or do they seem to just be haphazardly thrown on a schedule with little tie in to one another. Think about this NOAC and how our theme is incorporated into everything that we are doing, how the logo appears on everything, how the messages and presentations are all tied together.

Theming a lodge event can be even more far reaching than a NOAC because you have the opportunity to theme almost every aspect of the event from menu/food, terminology, dress & uniforming, memorabilia, etc.

Trainer Instructions: if the Trainer has experienced a well themed lodge event, he should use it as an example, detailing how the theme was incorporated throughout.

3. Lodge Events should be fun! The “WWW” does not stand for “work, work, work”. Yes, we do perform service, but we do more than that. Unfortunately, we are often branded as nothing more than a work group. But even when we do perform service, there should be some element of fun involved. If you’re rebuilding your campfire circle, why not have music playing while you work? Take breaks and incorporate games. Keep morale up by providing surprise snacks and treats. Break work early and cool off by going swimming. Make sure that work hours are countered by fun hours.

For new members, what is their initial experience of the OA. Honestly, who had fun at their Ordeal? Too many new members think that other lodge events will be just like the Ordeal. We have to promote future events beginning at the Ordeal. Do not let Saturday night and Sunday morning go to waste after the ceremonies. Do something fun, motivating, and welcoming. Make it clear that at future events, there is plenty of food, lots of talking, less (if any) work and just plain fun!

4. Well planned events have some sort of evaluation process. What did the attendees enjoy? What needs to be discarded or continued? What new ideas do they have? What can you do as a lodge to make the next event as attractive as possible? Traditions are fine. But lodge events need a mixture of tradition with something new as well. Who knows, something new may turn into a new tradition!

Takeaway Challenge

3 minutes

The challenge that I want to leave you with is this. A good event is one of the best indicators that you have as to how strong your lodge really is. A strong lodge is going to have well attended, well planned events that keep their members coming back wanting more. The success of each event feeds off the success of the one immediately prior. When you have engaged, active members the other aspects of a lodge program are much easier to achieve.

As small lodges, we have unique disadvantages, as well as unique advantages in putting on quality lodge events. We must learn to overcome the disadvantages as well as maximize the advantages. Don't let the size of your lodge be an excuse for poor events. It is up to each of us to decide our own destiny, and by working with fellow leaders, decide the destiny of our own lodges. Part of deciding that destiny, is deciding what type of lodge events will your lodge be hosting.

I would ask that each of you take the notes that you just made and share them with your fellow lodge leaders. Use these ideas to strengthen and improve your lodge events and thus improve your lodge as a whole through engaged, active members. A destiny of success for your lodge may not be decided solely by successful lodge events, but they will definitely be a key factor in that destiny!

Appendix: Resources and Source Material

- Chapter Journey to Excellence Workbook, available online at <http://www.oa-bsa.org/pages/content/printable-forms>
- <https://oa-bsa.org/thematic-events>
- <https://oa-bsa.org/event-pass>