

# RECRUITING ADULT LEADERS: 5 STEP PLAN

Your unit will succeed or fail based, in part, on how well you can recruit and use adult volunteers. A "one person show" unit will never thrive like a unit run by a solid team of people committed to putting on a great program for the youth in their unit. This 5-Step Plan could work for your unit, but you can improve your chances by doing your homework and asking a lot of people for a little help! While some of the examples or references are "Pack Focused" this document can be used at any Unit Program Level. This 5-Step Plan is one of a couple tools that will be available on our Pathway to Adventure Membership Website.

## 1.) Plan

What help do you really need? Sit down and look at your unit. Using the Unit Leader Book's structure as a loose guide, figure out what positions you really need filled. You need to understand the needs of your unit. These needs could change each new Scouting season.

Prioritize: What positions do you need most desperately? If you need both den leaders and a Popcorn chair, focus on the den leaders.

Pin-point: When making your plans, try to determine what each position's duties and responsibilities would be, including a fair estimate of the time commitment involved.

Pre-select: Who would you select to fill each position? Use the Family Talent or Troop Resource Survey sheets and the opinions of other leaders and your unit commissioner to figure out who you think would do a good job in each position based on skills, interests, and talents.

## 2.) Present

Make your sales pitch! This can be done before the entire group, to a few people in an informal setting, or on a one-on-one basis, but the idea is to tell everyone what your needs are. Handouts and visual aids will help a lot! Have a "Plan B", especially if an individual would be ideal for multiple positions.

One type of informal setting could be an "Adult Normal Friends Activity" for the parents of your unit. An example of a great aid is a large organizational chart, or even a simple spreadsheet, where you can fill in the spaces as people volunteer. This goes back to understanding the needs of your unit. Display this chart every chance to both recognize the volunteers and remind people subtly about the roles still open.

Do not fall into the temptation to either use threats ("If we do not get a volunteer for this role, we will not be able to have a Pinewood Derby this year.") or sugar-coat the job ("It'll only take an hour a week!"). Be factual, honest and to-the-point.

Tell people about the benefits of becoming a volunteer. For example:

- Research has shown that one key to contentment is to be a part of something worthwhile that is larger than yourself or your family.
- Units with larger degrees of adult commitment thrive longer than units without this commitment.
- As a volunteer, you have a voice in the unit and our activities and can be a real force for improvement!

If at all possible, do not ask for volunteers in a large group setting as the people who would volunteer in this situation have probably already done so or they will wait for someone else to volunteer! In a group setting, the main purpose is to let the parents know about all your open positions within your unit. When you are done, let everyone know that if they are interested, they should see you or another designated leader.

### 3.) Propose

*NOW you ask them!* Remember your 'pre-selection' list based on the survey results? Now that that person has been responsibly informed, either in a group setting or individually, you ask them face to face (one on one) if they can help. You can also bring in either a subject matter expert or a friend of the person you plan to ask. No more than you and another person should make the ask as you do not want to give the impression that you are trying to strong arm them. You need to "Actively Listen" during your proposal as that parent might actually prefer a different position in your unit (Remember your Plan B).

Be sure to tell them why you are asking them to fill this job as people are flattered and appreciative that they are being recruited because of their skills and talents. Be prepared for being turned down as most of us said 'no' the first time.

Actively listen to their concerns and address them honestly. Reassure them that there is support for them in the form of training and the other leaders or parents. Two big sticking points are often time and money. What will this cost them, and how can your unit help reduce this? Be ready to answer this.

Finally, be ready for the big question, it may not get asked out loud, so listen carefully for it, "What 's in it for me?" Warm fuzzy feelings are adequate rewards for some people, others want more. What do you get out of Scouting? The camaraderie of other leaders, recognition of your peers, a sense of belonging to something big and worthwhile?

### 4.) Percolate

*Let 'em think about it a while!* Most people want to think about it for a bit or could even request additional information. Even if they gave you a 'yes', they would think about it and might change their minds. This is a critical time as this is the time the volunteer makes the real commitment either for or against doing it. Use this time.

*First:* Limit it. Let them know that you will be back in touch in a couple of days. If possible, make an appointment, in person, if possible, to discuss it further.

*Second:* Leave them with information, such as handouts or a copy of the respective Leader Book. Make sure they have the phone numbers of the key contact in case they have questions.

*Third:* Stay in touch. A phone call or visit during that time helps demonstrate your interest as long as it is not perceived as being pushy. Do not ask for a decision at this time, rather remind them of the meeting and see if they have any questions for you.

At the meeting, bring an application, current training schedule, current council/district newsletter, etc. If they say 'yes', you want to be ready to get them involved immediately.

## 5.) Persevere

*"Service after the sale!"* Getting the initial 'yes' is the climax of our little drama, but not the end. Now comes the time to set the tone of their service. As they sign up, they will be nervous, especially if they are a den leader or if they have an immediate job. Ease their fears as soon as possible. Find them a 'mentor"! Get them to Youth Protection and to On-line or in-person training if their position requires it, as quickly as possible. This training is designed to help allay these fears and prepare them for the job.

If you are not sure about this, contact a trainer in your district for help. Bring them to Roundtable and introduce them around so they can start networking. The goal here is to show them the wonderful people and support available!

Help them get a complete uniform if needed for their role, and any books or resources that will help. Be with them in their first few meetings, providing a safety net and a friendly face.

Last, but not finally- thank them! In person, verbally, then later with a short note. Be sure to provide all possible recognition- any awards they may earn. Never let the thanks and recognition fade away!

## Final Thoughts • • •

Who do we recruit? Think about your pool of volunteers. Who does it include? The parents of Scouts? Certainly, but how about...

- Parents or leaders from the past, especially those whose children have crossed over to Scouts BSA, but they did not follow for whatever reason, or who may have time now that their children are grown.
- Grandparents, older siblings, or other relatives of the Scouts in their unit.
- Adults in the Chartering Organization, church, or school. Often, there are people here who support you and might be willing to help!
- Neighbors or co-workers. A lot of people are interested in Scouting and would help if invited, even though they do not have children.
- Outdoor or Sport stores.
- Adults who were Scouts and might be interested in getting involved again.
- Unions, professional organizations, service clubs, etc. often help youth groups by advertising their needs for help. In many places, police officers and firefighters often volunteer to help a local unit.

*Whose job is recruiting?* Technically, it may be the Chartering Organization's responsibility to ensure that a unit is functionally staffed. In reality, however, it is your job, no matter who you are. Parents need to recruit other parents and/or their friends. There may be a person on the committee who has this as part of their duties (usually the New Member Coordinator or Committee Chair), but it is up to all of us to do our part. Involve your COR and Charter Partner in the requirement process. You probably know someone who would be an excellent addition to your unit. Why not ask them this week?

*Remember:* Recruiting may not be fun, but being a part of a smoothly operating unit filled with happy Scouts is!