Chapter 9—Commissioner Recruiting

Your favorite NFL team didn't win the Super Bowl with an incomplete team on the field. Or, consider this: If, as a college coach, you walked up to the college president and said, "I'm going to field a team Saturday, but I won't have a left end and one halfback will be missing," how long do you think you'd have a job?

Fielding a Complete Team

If you believe in what commissioner service does for America's youth, then you must also believe that the only way to provide quality unit service is through a complete team of commissioners in every district. Don't be satisfied with too few players on any district gridiron.

The council commissioner sets the pace. The greatest single measure of their success is having a dynamic and effective district commissioner in every district. Make no exceptions! Then, they inspire their district commissioners to believe that their priority job is to identify and recruit enough of the right people so that all Scouting units in the district receive regular, helpful service.

Know the standard. Provide a ratio of one unit commissioner for every three units, or whatever ratio you have determined works best in your council. A good staff also has one assistant district commissioner for every five unit commissioners, plus adequate roundtable commissioners and staff. You may also have other administrative and support commissioners to support the special emphasis you want to have in order to deliver the best possible program of support.

A quality program flourishes and membership grows in a Scouting district when there is a complete team of quality commissioners. These quality commissioners are not just numbers of how many you have, but how many are actually visiting and supporting units. This also avoids overloading the same few volunteers who rarely say no, but who may find it easier to drop out of Scouting than to complain, "That's enough! I can't do any more!" Also keep in mind that fielding a complete team is more than one step. You must identify, recruit, and engage those commissioners you need to succeed.

Recruiting Commissioners—Step-by-Step

1. Determine what commissioner positions are needed.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing volunteers.
- Define the responsibilities of the position and write a brief job description.
- List the qualities most likely to get the job done.
2. Determine the best prospects for the job.
- Consider many sources for prospects.
- List possible prospects for each job.
- Consider their qualities for the job.
- Prioritize prospects based on who has the qualities that best fit the job.
3. Research the prospects at the top of your list.
- Learn what their interests, abilities, and motivations are.
- Tailor your approach to their interests.
- Determine who can make the best approach. You need someone to open the door who has enough influence with the prospect to gain his or her interest. Perhaps that's you.
- Anticipate questions or objections. Decide in advance how you will answer them.
- Develop specific information on what you want the prospect to do. A few well-written, attractive pieces of paper can explain commissioner service and your district, and outline a job description. Develop this sales tool around the job you want done, tailoring it to the prospect's interests and skills. Don't dump the whole load. The prospect doesn't need every detail on commissioner service and probably will not read more than a few pages.
4. Make an appointment.
- Do not recruit over the phone, and do not let the prospect say no over the phone. Ask for an appointment to discuss a community matter. Try not to give too much information about what it is.
- Determine the best time and the most appropriate place. If possible, avoid office pressures. Try for a lunch or other time away from daily distractions. If you recruit at home, make sure the prospect's spouse is there so you can sell both of them on the idea.
- Make sure that someone the prospect respects or who has influence with the prospect goes with you. Never recruit alone. One person listens while the other talks.
5. Make the sale.
- Introduce everyone. Be sure the prospect understands what each of you do in Scouting.
- Make small talk about the prospect's interests, family, and achievements, based on your research.
- Sell the sizzle. Deliver an exciting, enthusiastic, and brief pitch on commissioner service and youth. Don't dwell on details. Talk about the purposes in serving units that will most interest the prospect.
- Describe the job you want the prospect to do, its importance to youth, and to the community. Be specific.
- Remind the prospect that he or she is the best person to do the job.

- Ask for questions. Be sure the prospect understands what is expected. Be prepared to overcome objections. Answer the prospect's questions briefly and positively.
- Listen for comments from the prospect that may help sell him or her on the job.
- Know when to close the sale. Don't keep selling if you think the prospect is not interested or if the prospect is sold. Don't oversell the job. Don't give too much detail. Make the job seem important, fun, and worthwhile. And don't undersell the job. Be sure the prospect knows exactly what is expected and is willing to do it.
- Recognize that people work for people. Stress the participation of persons who are of interest to the prospect. Don't overlook the friendship and fellowship that will evolve.

6. Ask for a commitment.

- You need this person—say so. Be patient. Wait for an answer.

7. Have a fall-back position in mind.

- Don't let the prospect off the hook. Leave the prospect something. Get his or her help in recruiting others. In any event, the prospect will be flattered and will know more about Scouting. If you are turned down, keep the door open for a later decision.

8. Follow up.

- After the prospect says yes, give the new recruit the details of how and where to go online to access the Unit Commissioner Fast Start. Provide a reference to the Web site (www.scouting.org/commissioners) for additional details about the job of a commissioner, but don't let them be overwhelmed by all they see there. It can work as a reference to other resources available to them in the future as they begin to do their job.
- Formally acknowledge the commitment with a letter and a copy of the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service.*
- Invite and take the person to the next commissioner meeting.
- Prepare an appropriate news release or announcement in the council newsletter.
- Within a week or two, follow up with specific orientation and an assignment.
- Ensure the new commissioner is offered and receives Commissioner Basic Training within two months of accepting the position.

Group Recruiting

Group recruiting is a special and exciting approach for a district. It involves bringing three or more people together to hear about Scouting and then asking them to serve in some capacity. Key administrative commissioners and the district executive meet to plan and accept assignments for the group recruiting event.

Group recruiting has several advantages:

- This approach can bring your commissioner staff up to strength quickly.
- If 10 or 15 people are asked to accept a challenge that can be handled by 10 or 15 people, each person figures that if others will accept, he or she will, too. No one fears being saddled with an overwhelming task.
- People seek association with others. If the group includes the right people, their reaction is positive. In many group recruiting situations, nearly 100 percent agree to serve.
- When a whole staff is recruited together, they can be trained together. As a complete team, they can build team spirit and promptly begin to function effectively.

Heed these cautions:

- Group recruiting is a more involved process and may require considerable advance planning and preparation.
- Group recruiting does not take the place of good one-by-one recruiting, which is still necessary to fill some vacancies such as a roundtable commissioner or where only one or two additional people are needed.

There are two types of group recruiting:

- **Leadership conference.** This is best used when there are only a few existing commissioners. Decide on the date, time, place, and nature of the event. Develop a list of many prospects at an informal gathering of community leaders. Select a host who can attract the prospects. The host invites prospects to his or her club, office, living room, barbecue, or other attractive or prestigious location. A luncheon is an appropriate setting. The program inspires, tells the Scouting story, presents the need, and asks for a commitment.
- **Group recruiting in a single company or organization.** The company president or other organization leader is asked to list and bring together highly selected employees, often working through company department managers or the personnel director. The meeting, usually held on company time, informs, inspires, asks, and gets commitments. District leaders match people to jobs and follow up immediately. A company may be asked to "adopt" and fill the entire staff.

A suggested agenda might include:

- Welcome and introductions
- Social event or food
- Program of the BSA
- What are councils and districts?
- Role of the commissioner
- Why we picked you
- Motivating speaker, dignitary, or youth member
- Your commitment to serve
- Plans for immediate orientation and assignments
- Each administrative commissioner takes one or more new commissioners under his or her wing

Agenda for Recruiting Event	
Welcome and Introduction	*Host or District Commissioner*
Meal or Refreshments	
How Scouting Serves • Units and their chartered organizations • The council • The district	*Key Council Scouter*
Facts About Our District • Display large map of district • Youth served/potential youth to serve • Four functions—membership, finance, program, and unit service • Number of commissioners needed	*District Executive*
Role of the Unit Commissioner • Distribute personalized presentation of job	*District Commissioner*
Questions from Participants	
Personal Testimony	*Boy Scout, Unit Leader, or Unit Commissioner*
Challenge and Commitment to Serve • Distribute talent and interest cards • Challenge to serve/to complete card	*Host or District Commissioner*
Table Discussions • Complete cards or registration forms	*Led by Active Commissioners*
Closing	*Host or District Commissioner*

Where Do You Find Them?

Wonderful people are available for commissioner service. Begin a prospect inventory of index cards listing potential commissioners. Jot down information such as occupation, hobbies, children, volunteer experience, membership in organizations, interests, and the right person to help recruit them. Don't say no for anyone.

You also can reference the podcast on the commissioner Web site (www.scouting.org/commissioners) that provides a process to recruit adults from unit rosters through ScoutNET. This has been tried successfully throughout Scouting to engage or reengage parents or former leaders as commissioners.

Develop a presentation for a council commissioner meeting on possible sources for new commissioners. Use interactive teaching methods such as a buddy team contest to list sources. Then challenge each district to try out new sources and report back at the next meeting. Have a staff adviser do the same at a professional staff meeting.

Be sure these sources are included:

- Your friends, associates, and business contacts.
- Chamber of commerce listings of organizations, major employers, boards of directors, and labor unions.
- Service club membership rosters.
- Educators, real estate brokers, shopkeepers, government employees, and other business, professional, and service people. Consider people whose activity causes them to travel through your district as well as those who are permanently located in the district.
- Eagle Scouts. Recruit National Eagle Scout Association members to serve as commissioners.
- Eagle Scout parents. Parents of Eagle Scouts who may have discontinued their association with Scouting after their son achieved Eagle, and were no longer active with Scouting.
- BSA Alumni Connection data through the Web site www.bsaalumni.org.
- Order of the Arrow adults who are active in their local lodge but are not primary unit leaders in their units.
- Check boy applications for parents with previous Scouting experience.
- Former successful Scouters.
- Check Friends of Scouting donor lists for people with special people skills.
- Neighborhood association leaders and other local opinion setters.

- Former Scouts. Review past unit and district rosters with your district executive for names of former Scouts who are not now involved.
- Current Scouters. (But don't steal unit leaders—that's the most important job in Scouting!)
- Former Jaycees. Concentrate on people who are no longer eligible for Jaycee membership because of the age limit of 40.
- Employees. Check with local presidents, managers, personnel directors, and owners for employees whose qualities match those you are looking for.
- Make a list of other sources of commissioner prospects in your community.

Recruiting Resources

For more details on effective recruiting, see the pamphlet Selecting District People, No. 34512, and the video *Recruiting District Volunteers,* AV-06V002.

Podcasts are available on www.scouting.org/commissioners for steps to success in identifying and recruiting.

Roster

District commissioners may use photocopies of the roster in appendix F of this section to record their entire staff.

Removing a Volunteer

For ideas on removing an ineffective volunteer, the person who just isn't working out, see chapter 17 of this section.

A 49 Percent Growth in Commissioners

A 49 percent annual growth in commissioners is a major success story in almost anybody's book. That's exactly what took place recently in a seven-council pilot commissioner recruiting project. Starting the year with only 463 commissioners, these councils ended the year with 690 commissioners. Non-pilot councils as a group experienced a 4 percent loss in commissioners.

Refined to fit any council in the country, here is the pilot project's simple plan:

Phase 1: Review roster. Because some active unit commissioners might not be registered, each district commissioner/district executive team compares its staff list with a list of registered unit commissioners provided by the council registrar. The registrar also indicates the number of unit commissioners needed to achieve the 1-per-3 unit ratio and the number of new commissioners needed. Any of those not registered are then registered by the districts (paid or multiple).

Phase 2: Recruitment. Some districts will still have vacancies. The council commissioner and Scout executive then challenge the districts to adopt a recruiting plan to achieve a 1-per-3 unit ratio as well as provide a couple of trainees to fill future vacancies. Set a deadline for completion. Use ideas in this manual as a resource for individual recruiting, group recruiting, recruiting resources, and sources for commissioners. Districts report results at monthly commissioner meetings and council staff meetings. Prominently display current status in the council service center.

Phase 3: Recognition. Recognize district commissioner/district executive teams for meeting their recruiting goals. Also recognize other commissioners who assisted in the recruiting process.