



Building a Great Chapter

AN INCOMPLETE GUIDE TO INCREASING INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION

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Purpose of This Booklet

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The purpose of this booklet is to provide some insight into the things that increase and decrease activity and participation in local Order of the Arrow chapters.

There is no tried and true secret for improving your chapter that will work for everyone. Hard work and tenacity will always be necessary. Ingenuity is a must. Patience is a virtue.

What follows is not a manual for creating the dynamic and active chapter you've dreamed of, but it does provide a basis for brainstorming ways your local group can improve and increase participation and interest in the Order of the Arrow.

I call this an *incomplete* booklet because many of the problems you may face in your chapter are universal to chapters everywhere. No guide can possibly have all the answers.

Electronic copies are available upon request. I plan to update this booklet periodically and would be more than happy to share this with your chapter.

If you received this booklet by attending my training class at the Section W4B Conclave, I thank you for your interest and for attending my session. Any suggestions, updates, or criticisms can be e-mailed to me at tmschultze@yahoo.com.

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Contributors

I would like to thank Howard Kern and Vinney Williams for their assistance in putting together this booklet. I welcome any and all contributions. Feel free to email me if you would like to assist in the next version of this booklet.

Bad Habits

One of the keys to improving your chapter operations is recognizing the factors that can hurt your chances of improving quality and participation in your chapter. They are simply bad habits, and you have the power to change them.

Activities and Events

- Doesn't have enough activities, or has too many.
- Activities are planned at the last second, or with little preparation.
- Activities aren't promoted or leaders use only one communication tool, such as email.
- Doesn't evaluate the event after it happens.

Brotherhood Attainment

- Members may not be interested in sealing their ties of Brotherhood. They may not have been contacted by their Chapter leaders or Elangomat. They see no reason to seal their ties of Brotherhood.
- Members don't understand the importance of Brotherhood membership.
- Brotherhood attainment percentage is not closely kept by the chapter.

Camping Promotion

- Failing to contact the units for camping promotion visitations.
- Tries to do too many visitations at the last second. Visitations are poorly planned.
- Visitations are poorly planned and executed.
- Chapter doesn't have a copy of the Where to go Camping Guide at all times.
- Is not aware that the Lodge reports unit visitations for the charter year based on July 1 of the previous year to June 30 of the current year.

Ceremonies

- Ceremonies are not memorized or performed correctly. Candidates can easily identify mistakes being made. The beauty of each ceremony has lost its ambience.
- Effective coach or adviser has not been assigned to each team.
- Ceremonies are not used as a tool to get younger arrowmen interested in the order.
- Ceremonies are not used to market the program to the district (Arrow of Lights, Call Outs, etc).

Chapter Meetings

- Nothing is worse than a dull, boring, unplanned chapter meeting.
- Chapter Chief and leadership do not look prepared.
- Is the content of the meeting interesting, or is it 90 straight minutes of business?
- Little or no fun activities are done at the meetings.

Communications

- Using only e-mail as the primary communication device. The internet obviously has given us a multitude of ways to contact and interact with each other, but e-mail is not reliable with spam and viruses are a problem. Nothing will replace other tools like phone calls and personal contacts. EMAIL is often not effective.

- Doesn't stick to the chain of command. The "right hand" sometimes isn't communicating with the "left hand."
- Rarely speaks to unit leaders or district leadership.

Indian Affairs

- Doesn't have a program or ignores it entirely, even though it is not an integral part of the Order of the Arrow program, it is an important part to get members interested.
- Doesn't find out what resources are available to teach the arrow dancing, singing, crafts, etc.
- Uses the Indian Affairs program but in the process loses sight of the fact that the priorities are camping promotion, leadership, and service. Other important duties fall by the wayside.

Inductions

- Chapter never contacts units, scoutmaster has no idea of when elections should be taking place.
- Parents don't have enough information about what the Order of the Arrow is about.
- Candidates aren't specifically invited to the Call-out.
- Members aren't invited to the next chapter meeting.
- Members receive little to no contact after their ordeal.

Leadership

- Too few members do too much of the work. Chapter Officers and their advisers constantly feel overworked. They either haven't mastered the art of delegation or they don't have enough membership to do what they want.
- Leaders don't know policy, don't read the correct publications and do not get trained.
- Every youth isn't assigned a supporting adviser.

Membership Retention

- Never welcomes new members to the chapter.
- Is not present at ordeal to meet with new members.
- Assumes members know when events are, doesn't promote Order of the Arrow events to non-members.
- Doesn't follow up with members about paying annual dues.

Public Relations/Marketing

- Chapter leaders tend to have a poor relationship with their units. Many unit leaders may not know who their Chapter Chief of Adviser is. Chapters may not know who the leaders are in each unit.
- Chapters take "no" for an answer when unit leaders raise objections.
- Does not have a list of unit leaders on hand at all times.

Service

- Provides little to know actual service to their camps or district.
- Doesn't track the service hours effectively or accurately.
- Doesn't ask for additional service opportunities to their district.

Good Habits

Another key to improving your chapter is to recognize the good habits that will increase interest in the program. If Scouts and Scouters are interested, they will participate.

Activities and Events

- Chapter contacts members early and often for all events using many methods of communications (email, phone tree, notes home, etc.)
- Chapters take event responsibilities delegated from the lodge to give their members ownership.
- Constantly evaluate process to improve events.
- Has a lot of activities without having too many and overwhelming the membership.

Brotherhood Attainment

- Contact new Ordeal members right away to get the process started.
- Have arrowmen assigned to help guide members through brotherhood induction.
- Effectively stress the importance of Brotherhood membership to eligible members.
- Constantly monitors Brotherhood induction percentage as a tool for evaluating performance.

Camping Promotion

- Begin contacting unit immediately after July 1 to schedule visits through out the year. (July 1 – June 30 are the reporting dates for a Lodge's charter.)
- Assist the lodge with the Where to go Camping Guide.
- Have Camping Guide copy on hand (paper or CD) at all times to distribute to units.
- Caters visitations to a units needs. A younger unit needing more basic information than a mature unit.

Ceremonies

- Fully memorizes all the ceremonies that are performed.
- Seeks a wide participation from non-members that are appropriate (Arrow-of-Light, Eagle Court, Call outs, etc)
- Provides ever ceremony team with good coaching by capable advisers.

Chapter Meetings

- A good chapter meeting is short, to the point, moves quickly, and includes a fun activity (crafts, ceremonies, sports, etc.)
- Chapter Chief is prepared and stays on topic at all times.
- Chief and Adviser constantly meet and evaluate meeting performance and plan future meeting activities.

Communications

- Chapter Chief and Adviser who use the chain of command to communicate at all times.
- Contacts their arrowmen often but not too often (email, phone, in person, etc).
- Effectively uses OA Troop/Team Representatives.

Indian Affairs

- Makes good contact through out the lodge and surrounding area to have effective resources.
- Uses Indian dancing, singing, and crafts as a tool to draw interest, without taking away from the rest of the Order of the Arrow program.
- Performs for Order of the Arrow and non-Order of the Arrow events.

Inductions

- Chapter is aggressive in contacting units and selling their program to unit leaders.
- Performs as many unit elections as possible.
- Invites elected candidates to the Ordeal giving them a sense of fraternity.
- Helps arrange rides to the Ordeal if necessary.
- Specifically contacts new members to invite them to their first chapter meeting.
- Uses Brotherhood membership as a means to stay in contact with new members.

Leadership

- Delegating responsibilities early and often to a wide array of youth and adults, so the workload doesn't fall on a couple people to do.
- Leaders follow up with those who have been delegated responsibilities.
- Leaders get trained early and often (LLDC, NLS, etc).
- Leaders get to know the Order of the Arrow program by reading correct policy booklets (OA handbook, Guide for Officers and Advisers, Field Operations Guide, etc).
- Provides opportunity for leadership to youth and adults.
- Always recognizes arrowmen who do a good job on a certain job or task.

Membership Retention

- Contacts all arrowmen at least a couple months in advance of dues expiration via all available communications methods.
- Gets dues flyer to chapter members in hand, and follows up with those that have not paid.
- Always has a current roster of chapter membership, on hand, at all times

Public Relations/Marketing

- Always selling the program to the district and its unit leaders.
- Always puts emphasis on public relations to units skeptical of the Order of the Arrow program.
- Chapter is always a presence at district events and roundtables.

Service

- Effectively tracts Order of the Arrow service hours.
- Formulated and annual service project to one of their camps.
- Provides service to their district when need and or called upon.

Tips

Activities and Events

- Use Postcards to mail out reminders of upcoming events, they are cheaper than bulk-rate mail.
- Use OA Troop/Team Representative program to promote events.
- Look for volunteer adults to provide rides for arrowmen who need it.
- Distribute an annual calendar to all of your chapter membership so they can plan ahead.
- Take pictures at events and share them at following meeting, get youth talking about the fun that they had.

Brotherhood Attainment

- Send out a postcard to all eligible Ordeal members. They are easy to make at home and the postage is even cheaper than bulk-rate mail.
- Always have your brotherhood scorecards available at your meetings and ask the Ordeal members that are in attendance if they have completed theirs, if not, schedule a time to go over the material.
- Recognize those new Brotherhood members at the chapter meeting directly following their Brotherhood Ceremony. Be sure at their ceremony to invite them to come of the chapter meeting.
- Have a new Brotherhood member talk about he/she did to attain Brotherhood at a chapter meeting. This will make it more personal to others.
- Call Ordeal members in your chapter that are eligible for Brotherhood and invite them to a special Brotherhood oriented chapter meeting. (This should be done the month before the Ordeals). Have registration forms for the Ordeal weekend at the chapter meeting so they can sign up there.
- Have the Troop/Team reps promote Brotherhood to the Ordeal members in their units by making announcements about upcoming Brotherhood attainment opportunities.

Camping Promotion

- Promote camping at your unit membership elections. That allows you to perform two annual services at the same time.
- For an easy camping promotion tool for unit visitations, by a foam board similar to what kids use to make boards for science projects in school. They are easy to make and cheap to produce. They are also very portable.
- Always have a copy of the Where to Go Camping guide in print or on CD at all times. If a member wants to know more about the Order, you should be able to provide it on the spot. You will win many supporters by doing so.
- Make a camping promotion presentation at your local district roundtable and speak with the Scoutmasters in attendance if they would like a troop visitation or not. If they don't feel the need for one, you still have made that individual unit contact. This method can knock out a good portion of your contacts in one evening and also makes the chapter more visible to the Scoutmasters.
- Present an outing of the month at your district roundtable.

Ceremonies

- Assign an adviser/coach for each ceremony team. Give him/her the chance to get to know each of the four principles and understand each person's strengths and weaknesses.
- Use ceremony teams as an effective way to get new Scouts interested in being involved in the program. It works!

- Help Scouts with memorization techniques, devise a strategy that is not overwhelming to them.
- Provide a method of promotion for good performances. Arrow of Light ceremony team members can graduate to Pre-Ordeal and Ordeal, then to Brotherhood.
- Hold a ceremony boot camp. Put youth through the rigors of ceremonies gone bad. Show them how to deal with problems that often come up. This will make them more confident and less nervous when something goes wrong.

Chapter Meetings

- Plan ahead of time. Nothing makes for a worse chapter meeting than one put together at the last second with little preparation.
- Keep the business to a minimum. Structuring your chapter meeting like a Lodge Executive Committee (LEC) meeting is a recipe for low attendance.
- Try having a guest speaker every once in a while (Scoutmasters, owners of craft stores, etc.)
- Plan an activity for each chapter meeting. This can help break up the business portions of the meeting. Have Indian crafts on hand, work on ceremonies, or even break out a little basketball. Activity breeds success!
- Always think of ways to make the meetings fun and informative, otherwise nobody will want to attend.
- For very important meetings, have food like pizza. It works wonders.

Communications

- Always use the chain of command. The primary focus should be the relationship of the chapter officer to his respective adviser.
- Use a multitude of ways to keep in touch with your members. Examples include e-mail, a chapter website, newsletter, phone, and personal contact.
- Always keep an updated list of your O.A. Troop/Team Representatives. It takes constant updating. The program is only effective if you can use the list as a communication tool.
- Publish a chapter newsletter.

Indian Affairs

- Make crafts and basic costuming at your chapter meetings.
- Ask around for resources for dancing, singing, etc. They are out there. People will be happy to help you.
- Put a priority on your public performances. A good dancing or singing team is one of the most effective promotional tools the Order of the Arrow has.

Inductions

- Contact unit leaders early and often. Tell them how great the Order of the Arrow is. If you can't track down the unit leader of a Troop, ask the District Commissioner. He will find the ADC who can help you. Be aggressive. Don't lose touch with even a single unit – that may be the one that has a future Lodge Chief.
- Don't take NO for an answer! Be prepared to answer objections. If the unit leader is dismissive of you or the program, contact a high-level Council Scouter to call them. Sometimes a call from the Supreme Chief of the Fire does wonders!
- Have a downhill meeting with parents and new arrowmen. Give them a chance to ask questions. Put a positive face on the "mysterious" program that the Order of the Arrow is. Make the parents comfortable that what you are doing is beneficial to their son.
- Get the flyer out to the candidates early. Help find rides to camp for them. Give them no excuse to come join the program.

- Welcome new members to the family as soon as possible. Greet them at your ordeal. Make sure they have a paper with the location, date, and time of your chapter meeting. Have a phone number to get them rides.
- Recognize new members immediately. Give them a special recognition for coming to the first meeting.

Leadership

- Set aside time for planning before meetings and events between officers and advisers.
- Always look for new talent. You will basically have to rebuild your chapter from scratch every three years.
- Get trained! Make sure you have the latest tools, including the O.A. Handbook, Guide for Officers and Advisers, and the Field Operations Guide. Always bring leadership to the LLDC (Lodge Leadership Development Conference) and if possible, send arrowmen to the NLS (National Leadership Seminar) when available.

Membership Retention

- Mail out a postcard to all your members. This is an inexpensive way to let them know their dues are expiring. You can also consider including a self-address stamped envelope so all they need to do is complete the flyer and insert the check. It may cost more, but if just 10% more arrowmen register, you have paid for your work.
- Collect dues at chapter meeting, if feasible.
- Remind members when they enter the meeting location that their dues are not paid up.

Public Relations/Marketing

- Make your relations with our unit leaders a top priority, especially for chapter advisers.
- Always have on hand an updated copy of all the Scoutmasters and Varsity Coaches in your district. This can usually be obtained from your Council Service Center.
- Make a short presentation at every district roundtable meeting. Play up the Order's strengths. Attack their objections by reminding them that the Order augments their leadership skills so they can be used in their unit.
- Many chapters have many of their most active members from a few units. Try to find more and more unit leaders who will sponsor the Order of the Arrow as a valuable resource for their Troop.
- Keep track of your Troop/Team O.A. Representatives. Many times, if these individuals come to meetings, your attendance potentially could double.
- Personally invite Scoutmasters to events.
- Put out a press release when your chapter accomplishes something or your do a nice service project. Keep the positive news flowing!

Service

- Perform an annual service project at one of your local council camps. Make it a meaningful project that will be visible for years to come as opposed to just picking up trash. A meaningful project will make the membership more interested in participating.
- Volunteer to participate at district events like camporees, Klondike derbies, or other events.
- Effectively track your service hours. Publish them to the Lodge, your district, and their units. Show them that your program has a lot of substance.