TRANSITIONING LEADERS TO NEW UNIT POSITIONS

So you are done with Cub Scouts, and you are looking at Boy Scouts. Maybe you are looking at Venturing or Exploring as a new Scouting Adventure. Perhaps you are a unit leader and you have new parents joining your unit or filling a new position. How do you do it smoothly and successfully? Come join this class and learn some ways to succeed.
Course Number: 751

"The Key to a happy and successful transition is knowledge. Know what is expected of you; and now where you can find the resources to be able to do the job." ~ Jim Graney, Pack 24, Dryden, NY

Running the Course:

Since this course is right after lunch, this course will start with a role-playing session where participants will be placed into various roles and asked to change positions through applying different styles.

Those transition styles will then be identified. Participants will then identify what their transition concerns and interests are... Cubs, Webelos to Troop… Switching within the unit… etc. Once identified, controlled discussion sessions will be timed to cover the various interests and topics identified in hope of giving options and addressing those particular areas.

The material below can be used as handouts for take-home purposes or as reference guides for discussion sessions

Transitioning from Leaders from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts, Venturing and Exploring:

• Learn the operational structure of Cub Scouts and how it differs from Boy Scouts and or Venturing.
• Learn the basic responsibilities of the Troop or Crew's Leaders, Committee Members, and Parents. These are different from Cub Scouts in significant ways
- **Troops and Crews youth lead and parent guided instead of parent lead**
- **rank advancement is a multi-year building process with activities that can be done simultaneously**

• Visit several units to see how these operations are put into practice. The basics should be the same but the practice may vary depending on the interests of the unit.
• You will need to decide which unit is right for your scout and for you.
• If entering a new leadership position, be sure to find the training for your new position promptly to help ensure that you can continue to provide a quality program in the new position with all of it's new responsibilities.

Transitioning Leaders from one position in a unit to a different position in the same unit.

Reasons for transition:

• In Cub Scouts the most common reason is that a Leader is advancing up with his or her Scout.

• In a Troop, Crew or Post, it is because the Leader is taking on more or less responsibility in the Troop as they become more or less actively involved.

Additional Reasons:

• A Leader has stepped forward to fill a vacancy

• A Leader's interests are more focused in a different area.

• A Leader's skills are more appropriately applied in a different area.

• A Leader's schedule cannot allow them to complete their current position's requirements.

• A Leader is not truly suited for the role they are currently filling.

What to do:

In all but the last item, The Pack Trainer, Cubmaster or Unit Commissioner can help the Leader find the appropriate training opportunity and support materials. Assistant Leader positions are always available and provide a great way to keep a Leader actively involved.

It is important here to highlight for the leader the changing role of both the youth and the parents. As scouts progress from Tigers to wolves, parents are not necessarily as involved as they were. From Bears to Webelos, the scouts have to take more of a lead in deciding what activities they want to do and actually doing them. Again, the parents have less required direct involved than in Bears. By the time the boys transition to the Troop, the work is really being done by the boys and the parents are now there just to guide. Thusly, the parent leader has to give the scouts more control over their activities as time goes on while at the same time the unit's scouts' parents are apt to be less involved. Finding ways to keep up the parent support network can be an important part of a leader's success at the upper ages.

In the event a leader is not truly suited for the position, please refer to the section on Solving Problems Among Leaders. In an extreme case, the Unit Commissioner, District, and even the Council can help provide support for the unit and the leader to help make a transition that respects all parties and allows the continuation of a quality program for the youth.

Working with a New Leader

So, how do organizers care for a new unit leader? Let me suggest some dos and don'ts that apply for everything from Cub Scout Dens to Venturing Crews and everyone in between. This example is mostly designed for the new unit leader but in the case of a Den Leader, the Cubmaster or Pack Trainer could replace the unit commissioner in these examples.

First, be *absolutely* sure that a new unit leader is under the care of a commissioner or an experienced mentor before the organizer leaves the Den, Pack, Troop, Crew or Post (hereafter called a unit). Provide transition; allow no time to elapse between the organizer's and the mentor's supervision. Try to assign a mentor with passion and fire. Enthusiasm is contagious.

Have the commissioner make the presentation of the first unit charter a very special event for members of the chartered organization and unit personnel. This will help cement the relationship of the unit to the chartered organization.

A commissioner attends the first meeting of the unit committee. He listens and guides, but does not take over. If necessary, he or she helps the committee chairman build the agenda. He may need to help the chairman recruit additional committed parents. Concentrate on having a good and enthusiastic committee.

Unit leader training is a priority and should be done as quickly as possible. Follow up if unit leaders missed Fast Start or basic training. Provide the missing sessions if they cannot get to district courses. Tailor the training to the unit. If needed, have a training team visit the unit.

A commissioner makes sure the new unit leaders get "youth buy-in." In crews and posts, be sure youth officers are elected and that the Advisor trains the officers using appropriate training material. Success requires that youth embrace the program. In troops, be sure the patrol method is used. Troop success depends on the development of boy leaders. In packs, be sure all dens are meeting regularly.

Don't assume the unit will have a program. The commissioner guides the unit in planning the first month or two of its program. Ask the unit commissioner to pick up and take the unit leaders to the next district roundtable.

Don't let the unit commissioner appear to be a "checker-upper." Commissioners are there to assist and guide, like good friends. They should be good listeners. First impressions are very important with a new unit leader.

Help the unit leader start plans for a long-term outdoor experience (Cub Scout resident camp or day camp, Boy Scout resident camp, Venturing superactivity, etc.). Use the council's camp promotion materials to get them excited about camp.

Pair the new unit leader up with an experienced unit leader—a buddy unit leader system.

Commissioners recognize unit successes. Congratulate leaders for all achievements, no matter how small. Ask the district executive to keep the chartered organization leaders informed of all positive elements of the unit.

Commissioners help leaders solve immediate concerns. Don't let them fester. Be the unit's best friend and confidant.

If a commissioner plays a helpful mentoring role to unit folk, a trusting relationship will have begun.

Service to new unit leaders is a key part of your council's unit growth plan.

Finally, **share the vision with all your fellow leader of how carefully we must provide service to new unit leaders** ... like the fire builder who has just started his fire in a rainstorm.

Solving Problems among leaders:

Sometimes within the leadership team problems may occur among the leaders as they try to communicate and manage the program. If problems do occur among the leaders, here are some tips to help unify the team.

Problem Solving Tips

- Remember that the boys are the most important part of the program.
- Care about the people involved and seek their best interests.
- Identify the problem. Make sure you have the facts.
- Face the problem. Don’t ignore it in hopes that it will disappear.
- Recognize the real source of the problem.

- Be willing to listen to all sides and viewpoints.
- Be tolerant and forgiving. Seek to strengthen rather than to weaken relationships.
- Decide what can be done to solve the problem and act on the decision.
- Learn from the problem and see how that knowledge can help your program.