

Boy Scout Troop 112 Recruiting Manual

This manual is the result of an 18 month Wood Badge Project conducted by Peter Schultz and concluded November 2015

Introduction and Purpose

One of the truths of membership organizations is that attrition—or members leaving the organization—seems to be a given. But new members coming in is not. So to insure that the organization continues to survive, and hopefully thrive, it's critically important to recruit—and that's the purpose of this manual.

Recruiting Approach

Several recruiting methods were tried and discarded as they just didn't work or weren't worth the effort for the response. After trying several approaches over an 18 month period of time (May of 2014 through November of 2015) we distilled it down to the 3 that work. These 3 are listed below in descending order of number of recruits expected for each approach.

1) Recruit Tiger Cubs

The starting point for recruiting is to actively recruit Tiger Scouts into the Cub Scouts when they are just starting out in the first grade. The biggest membership contribution to our Troop over the years has been Webelos crossing over and the majority of them start off as Tiger Cubs.

Tiger Cub recruiting is a Cub Scout activity, but it's a good idea to volunteer to help recruit or offer advice for what works if the Cub Scouts are having a hard time recruiting.

The classic approach for recruiting Tigers is to get permission from the various Principals of the local elementary schools to set up table on the playground showing Scout activities on photo boards, pins and other paraphernalia. It's a good idea to have two recruiters both in uniform and it's nice if the uniforms have a lot of 'bling' on them.

Put a sticker on each boy that wants one that tells where the meeting will take place and what time.

The younger boys are naturally enthusiastic and they don't have nearly the distractions with sports, clubs and academics that the older boys do. This is a natural place to start recruiting and it's also the easiest.

2) Help the Webelos II Boys Decide to Cross Over to the Boy Scouts

This is the most productive source of new Boy Scouts for our Troop in any given year. The boys are already in the program and just need some encouragement and reassurance to continue on their Scouting journey.

This encouragement can take 3 forms:

A) Ask for a volunteer Den Chief from the Boy Scouts to work with the Cub Scouts so they can see what a Boy Scout acts like. It should be someone they look up to so they'll naturally want to be Boy Scouts. This is also a productive leadership role for the Boy Scout so both benefit.

B) Present to the entire Cub Scout pack on the joys of Scouting and what they can expect two months or so before the Webelos cross over. Show our activities, what they can look forward to and what to expect. If there was a High Adventure or some really compelling activity that year, that is always a good thing to talk about. Build the image of what awaits them in the Boy Scouts and be sure and mention that the boys themselves determine the programs they want to do, the outings they take and actually run the meetings. This is a chance for the boys to start thinking and doing for themselves—and most boys really like that idea.

C) Incorporate the Webelos IIs into some Boy Scout activities. This is typically a hike or campout. Plus the Webelos IIs typically come to a Boy Scout meeting in November so they can get a feel for what takes place. One of the biggest differences is that the Boy Scout meetings are run by the boys themselves.

3) Get the Boys to Bring their Friends to a Recruiting Meeting

The recruiting meeting can be held after the boys cross-over in January—say around March. It's mostly these new boys that should be inviting their friends because kids their age are at the right age to join—11 years old or sixth graders, or perhaps one year older. If they are much older than that they will already be so far behind in the advancement program they might find it discouraging.

Sending out post cards is an effective way to get the word out—but nothing works better than word of mouth—which is why it's so important for each boy to try and bring someone—and the prospective boy's parents if possible.

The key for a new Scout bringing a friend is that the friend feels like they already have someone there they know and like. It's more comfortable for them and they are more likely to attend a meeting—and join once they do.

Plus boys love to have a best buddy in the Scouts with them. It makes it more fun and makes it more likely they'll stay in Scouts.

When we've put on these meetings I typically show a couple of short videos to start off with and then do a slide show presentation of what our Troop does and what they can expect. Keep the presentation to 30 minutes or less—these boys don't like to sit for long!

Video #1 'Just the Uniform Changes'—this one is for the parents and shows what a great influence being in the Scouts can have on an individual for their entire life.

Video #2 'Begin the Adventure'—this one is for the boys—it's exciting, cool and shows a lot of neat action the boys will likely be attracted to.

<http://www.scouting.org/Youth.aspx>

Once the videos have been shown and a brief outline of what the Scouts offers has been presented, let the existing Boy Scouts lead the prospective boys on some activity—like flashlight tag in the Park or a lashing something. Boys like to move and do things—and they'll be ready once they've been sitting for awhile.

Meanwhile you can address any questions or concerns their parents might have about the program. Have application forms all ready to go for those that want to get started.

The Key is to for Someone to Step Up and Do It

There's nothing about the above steps that is hard or prohibitive—it just takes someone to grab the reins and make sure the the three steps above happen. For that reason it's good for the Troop to have a recruiting chair—an adult leader inside the Troop that wants to make a contribution by fulfilling this position.

This person also sits on the Troop Committee so they can report what they are doing and propose any part of the recruiting activities that may need approval--like spending money on refreshments, printing invitation cards, or setting dates for events.

If these steps are followed the Troop should enjoy a steady stream of new Scouts and just as importantly—their parents—as a source of new adult leaders. It's the people that keep an organization relevant and vital—and recruiting new members is one of the most important parts that process.