

## **LA310 – Issues: OA Relationships with Units**

National OA Adviser Training

**Session Length:** 25 Minutes

### **Session Objectives:**

- Understand the value of building relationships with individual units
- Discuss how to establish better communications between units and the Lodge/Chapters
- Identify ways to build a better relationship with the Council
- Discover opportunities to build relationships with Cub Packs

### **Overview:**

As a youth, you can become an OA member after an election of your peers. But as an adult adviser, what if your adult peers don't have an understanding of the OA or how it fits into the Boys Scout program or won't even let your lodge do a unit visit for elections and camping promotion? What are some ideas of how to promote the OA to non-OA units? How can the Lodge help foster a better relationship with all units in your council from Cubs to the Scout Executive?

### **Purpose of Session:**

Relationships with your units can start with better communication between your lodge and chapters by effectively using the OA Representative. Keeping your Scout Executive informed can help you build a better relationship with the Council. And working with Cub Packs to provide Arrow of Light and Cross Over ceremonies can build excitement and the desire to be an active Boy Scout.

### **Session Outline:**

This session will explain how you, as the lodge adviser, can build a better relationship between your lodge and your units, districts and the council.

### **Introduction: OA Relationships**

Relationship building is an ongoing process. Your good relationship with a Troop can change overnight when the Scoutmaster changes. Or even when your Scout Executive retires, you have to re-introduce the Lodge to a new Supreme Chief of the Fire. But this is all part of your job as a Lodge Adviser.

### Slide 3 - Relationships

The relationships the lodge has with your council, district and units are probably some of the most important that you will have as a Lodge Adviser. In the definition of relationship – the way in which two or more concepts, objects or people are connected or the state of being connected – you should realize that it is about these connections with your peers – and they are your peers- that can make or break your term as lodge adviser.

### Slide 4 - The purpose of the Lodge

Before we can get started, let's remind ourselves of the Purpose and Mission of the Order of the Arrow:

#### MISSION:

*The Mission of the Order of the Arrow is to fulfill its purpose as an integral part of the Boy Scouts of America through positive youth leadership under the guidance of selected capable adults.*

#### PURPOSE:

*As Scouting's National Honor Society, our purpose is to:*

- *Recognize those who best exemplify the Scout Oath and Law in their daily lives and through that recognition cause others to conduct themselves in a way that warrants similar recognition.*
- *Promote camping, responsible outdoor adventure, and environmental stewardship as essential components of every Scout's experience, in the unit, year-round, and in summer camp.*
- *Develop leaders with the willingness, character, spirit and ability to advance the activities of their units, our Brotherhood, Scouting, and ultimately our nation.*
- *Crystallize the Scout habit of helpfulness into a life purpose of leadership in cheerful service to others.*

Therefore, the purpose of the Lodge is and your main goals as a Lodge Adviser are:

- To promote camping and outdoor programs
- To provide service to units and the Council
- To provide Leadership Development
- To give Cheerful Service to the Community

To achieve these goals, you need to have good relationships with your peers.

## Slide 5 – OA Relationships

*“Good relationships don’t just happen. They take time, patience, and two people who truly want to be together.” - unknown*

Think about this for a moment, who does the Lodge work with?

Beside the youth in the lodge/chapters, it’s scoutmasters and assistants, other advisers, district executives, scout executives, other lodges and more.

These are the groups and people with whom you need to build a positive relationship.

Your lodge needs Cub Packs, Scout Troops and Teams, and even Crews and Posts; your districts and chapters, your council and even your section to be successful.

Building the connections with all of these varied groups are the key to the program.

## Slide 6 – Relationship Building

Relationship building for the lodge should be a two-way street. It is ongoing. And the players can be changing all the time.

You never know when a Scoutmaster that you have been working with is going to change. Your team of advisers, including your Lodge Associate Advisers and Chapter Advisers, need to be part of the conversation. As a Lodge Adviser you can’t know everyone, but by building a good team you can plan on spreading the conversation out.

Think about the phrase, “remember the day we first started talking to each other?” Does it mean just talking to someone one time? Or does it mean taking the time to continue the conversation via email, phone, text and not just about the OA but about Scouting and the life everyone leads?

Your team of advisers needs to help you build the relationship with your council’s units. They need to be your front line connection. If they know who is helping lead the lodge and chapter from an adult perspective the Scoutmasters and Coaches will be more inclined to work with the OA. This is what we’re going to explore in this session.

## Slide 7 – First Steps

**Establishing Better Communication with the Unit.** The key to this relationship is simple: the Lodge Adviser MUST achieve unit leader buy-in. The only way to do that is to build a direct personal relationship. Phone calls are a great way to get the ball rolling, but the lodge adviser and/or his chapter advisers are going to have to take the time to make personal, one-on-one contact with individual unit leaders in order to properly engage the leader and have the opportunity to make and close the OA sale with them.

Prior to contact, some preliminary work might be in order. First identify which units are already actively participating in lodge/chapter program and requesting OA elections. This identifies which units are NOT participating. These are the ones to target.

This done, a strategy must be developed to successfully reach out to these units and leaders. Be prepared to take a lot of time to accomplish this. There will be objections; some may be religious in nature. Be prepared to deal with ways to put concerned parents and leaders at ease about the nature of the ceremonies.

### **Case Study: Religious Objections to OA Involvement**

A lodge in the Southern Region decided to target Troops that were not currently involved in the lodge. It was discovered that one of the units, a Catholic Unit, had some religious objections to their boys participating in the OA. The Lodge Adviser invited another Catholic Unit Leader to reach out to the target Unit Leader to find out what the issue was. It was learned that a priest at the Church that sponsored the unit, who had never been involved in Scouting, told the parents of the unit that the OA had been organized under Masonic principles, that the ceremonies were rooted in Masonic culture, and were therefore Satanic in nature. This priest had already been re-assigned to another parish, but the damage was already done. Upon meeting with the Lodge Adviser (who was also Catholic), the appointed Unit Leader set up a meeting with the parents and leaders of the target unit. During this meeting, the Lodge Adviser explained the Purpose and Mission of the OA, discussed the induction process and the role the OA served in the units, districts and councils, and provided copies of the Ordeal Ceremony to concerned parents to review and ask questions. As a result of this exercise, the unit has since held elections, and has begun allowing their Scouts to become OA members. This case study is meant to show that religious objections can be real, and if properly handled, can be successfully resolved.

### **Slide 8 – The Reluctant Scoutmaster**

*“A powerful idea communicates some of its strength to him who challenges it.”* Marcel Proust

In the target units, you will encounter the Scoutmaster and Troop who don't see the value of the OA as a viable part of their unit's Scouting program. The first place to start is the personal call to the Scoutmaster probably from the Chapter Adviser asking about OA elections and the OA Representative program. This may be the opening you need to start a dialogue of change. Explaining how the OA rep and the OA will help their unit. How you won't be taking their Scouts away. Assuming you get the Scoutmaster buy-in, elections can happen and an OA Rep can be identified. Now you can offer training for the OA Rep and his adviser.

This is just the beginning of this process. You will have to make sure that the OA rep feels welcome at meetings and is used for unit elections, etc. so that the OA rep will give a positive review back to the reluctant Scoutmaster.

You should invite all Scoutmasters to your Lodge Banquet. And don't forget to recognize them for their support.

Maybe hold a “ask the Lodge Adviser” session at your council’s University of Scouting or a Camp Promotion dinner for ALL Scoutmasters. You should especially encourage those Scoutmasters who did not have a unit election this past year to attend. Offer support to their unit from the chapters and lodge as need. Getting to know them and for them to get to know you and your team will go a long way to building a relationship with the Reluctant Scoutmaster.

### **Slide 9 – The Reluctant Scoutmaster Continued.**

Some of the things you can offer to the units are how the OA will help the unit by teaching additional leadership skills and also offering additional leadership responsibilities.

Just having that first conversation might be all it takes to bring the Reluctant Scoutmaster around.

*“Let’s take a walk. You can show me some of your memories and I’ll show you some of mine.” Adam Berlin, the Number of Missing*

Telling them your Scouting “story” will help them realize you do “get” his job and the OA just wants to be there to help.

### **Slide 10 – Getting to Know You**

*“The shortest distance between two people is a story” – Patti Digh, Four-word Self-help: Simple Wisdom for Complex Lives.*

As we have been showing, getting to know your “peers” is part of the recipe for a successful lodge. We talked about the OA Troop/Team Representative program. Now let’s look at it in more detail.

### **Slide 11 – The OA Representative**

Once you have unit leader buy-in, one of the best tools for continuing to build and strengthening relationships with your Troops and Teams is the OA Representative. The leadership position was created for a good reason...the help with communications between the Lodge and Chapters to the units they serve.

One of the things we hear time and time again is that the OA is taking our best scouts away from our troop. Many times this is caused by bad communication from the chapters and lodge.

The OA Troop Team Representative program is most successful when they OA Rep has a good Advisers...the Assistant Scoutmaster for the OA Rep.

Details on the OA Representative Program can be found at:

<http://www.oa-bsa.org/pages/content/troop-team-representative>

## Slide 12 – Ideas for the OA Rep

Here are a few ideas to help you successfully use the OA Rep Program

1. Make sure that all OA Reps are personally invited to all Chapter meetings. Consider using a leadership position in the Chapter/Lodge: Vice Chief OA Reps as the communication link to the OA Reps. In turn, the OA Rep will help build a communication link between the unit and the Chapter/Lodge.
2. Get your OA Reps involved in Unit Election and Camp Promotions. When they visit other units they will start building better relationships with other troops in their own area.
3. If you have built a good OA Rep program, your units won't mind keeping you updated on who the OA Rep is. Your chapters will need a Troop Rep adviser to help with this.
4. Make sure that your lodge recognizes OA reps at their Lodge Banquet. Make them want to be a part of the team that succeeds.

Think about how much better it is having this insider in your troops who knows what's happening with the OA.

*"Communication- the human connection- is the key to personal and career success." – Paul J. Meyer*

While the OA Troop Rep program is a great tool to help engage the unit that has already bought in, the adviser MUST first engage the unit leader of non-participating units before any buy-in is possible. If this does not occur, the OA Troop Rep program will never work in that unit.

## Slide 13 – Cub Pack Relationship

Cub Scouting is the key to the future of Scouting.

Your lodge and chapters can go a long way in building a bridge between Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting. By setting the example, by showing how a team can do a ceremony, and by showing how Scouts can shine, Cubs will be encouraged to become Scouts. In addition, Cub unit leaders will see the value and will encourage the Cubs to advance to Scouting.

Things your lodge and chapter can do and provide are:

1. Offer Arrow of Light and Cross-over ceremonies and offer to provide Opening and Closing Flag ceremonies at Blue and Gold Banquets
2. Provide support and Instructors for Cub Leader Pow Wow and Baloo Training...your Arrowmen are honor campers and who best to train others but those who camp.

3. Support your council Cub Day Camps and Cub Resident Camp programs by being a part of the staff.
4. Serve as a camping resource for Packs the don't have affiliated Scout troops
5. OA Rep can also be a liaison with their associated pack.

Other ideas and resources for how the Order of the Arrow can be a resource for Cub Scouting can be found here:

<http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/cubscouts/resources/orderofthearrowinvolvement.aspx>

### **Slide 14 – Support the Program**

As we have noted earlier, the OA is an integral part of the Boy Scout program, and your lodge needs to support the program. Some ideas on how you can support the Boy Scout program are:

1. Provide service at Annual Council and District Dinners. Many lodges provide the cooking, etc. for these.
2. Get the word out on what the lodge and chapters are doing by providing news and pictures to the Council newsletter on OA service project including Ordeal weekends. Showing the OA in action will show that when Scouts are away at OA events they are not just playing around.
3. Submitting the lodge's annual written performance plan and annual report of accomplishments to your Scout Executive and Council Executive Board will help keep the lines of communication open with the council and also counts towards your Lodges Journey to Excellence (currently item 17 on JTE petition).

### **Slide 15 – Be Advised**

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Lee Iacocca has a great quote on asking for help.

*"I always go back to Harry Truman: Should we drop an atomic Bomb to save 100,000 lives? That's a hell of a decision to make. Did he make that decision by himself? No, he had advisers."*

Take a moment to think about that. You can't do this alone. And you will find many people wanting to help. Talk to your associate advisers and chapter advisers. They will know the people on the ground in your council and districts.

Your lodge is a part of a Section. Attend the section meetings and the conclave. Get to know the other lodge's in your area. The lodges and their advisers can be a valuable resource for ideas. And don't be afraid to contact the Section Adviser. They have connections throughout the region. I've heard of other lodge's doing ceremonies for a lodge when a lodge was rebuilding. That ceremony team gets to "show off" and the

lodge they are helping gets to see how other performs a ceremony. And reciprocate when asked. These relationships between lodges are a valuable resource for the future.

### **Slide 16 – In Closing**

Henry Ford said it best: *“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”*

You are not alone. Building relationships is one of the keys to your success as a Lodge Adviser.

Communication is a key to achieving success. Use whatever it takes to get the word out.

And don't be afraid to ask for help.