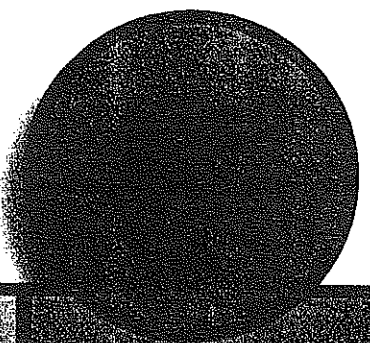


TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING



FORWARD



TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING

"If I had eight hours to chop down a tree,

I'd spend the first six hours sharpening

my ax."

—Traditionally attributed to Abraham Lincoln

Planning. Perhaps no other word is so critical to the success of a Scout troop. Scoutmasters who help junior leaders plan exciting and effective meetings and activities will be well on their way to maintaining the Scouts' interest and bringing them back week after week for all that the BSA has to offer.

In addition to ensuring a program that attracts and retains boys, good planning reduces the time a Scoutmaster must invest in running a troop. A clear plan allows all members of a troop, both youth and adult, to see where they fit in, where their responsibilities lie, and how they can do their part.

Planning also allows troop leaders to fully employ the methods of the Scouting program and thus achieve the aims of Scouting. The haphazard approach to meetings and events that results from a lack of planning dilutes the effectiveness of the patrol and troop structure and wastes many opportunities to convey the Scouting message.

Troop leaders can take advantage of two kinds of planning:

- **Annual long-range planning.** The patrol leaders' council, the Scoutmaster, and other key adults involved with the troop meet once a year to determine the next 12 months of troop program and major activities.
- **Monthly short-term planning.** The same troop leaders meet every month to fine-tune the annual plan and assign to patrols and individuals the tasks that will lead to success.

ANNUAL TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING

A yearlong troop program plan creates stability for the troop, increases Scouts' participation, and allows a Scoutmaster to turn over to the boys much of the leadership of meetings and activities. For a Scoutmaster, annual troop program planning involves five steps:

1. Do your homework.
2. Get patrol input.
3. Hold a troop program planning conference.
4. Consult with the troop committee and chartered organization.
5. Announce the plan.

Step 1—Do Your Homework

Devote plenty of time to getting ready for the annual planning process. Points to consider as you approach the process are these:

- Evaluate the past year's activities.
- Gather the dates of BSA district and council events that could affect troop activities—summer camp, camporees, etc.
- Collect the dates of school and community functions, religious and national holidays, youth sports activities, and special events of the troop's chartered organization that could impact the boys' schedules.
- Review the advancement status of troop members. What kinds of activities and program events does each boy need in order to move ahead through the rank requirements?



- Write down the priorities you see for the troop in the coming year. Your list might look something like this:
 - Attend summer camp.
 - Have an outdoor adventure at least once a month.



Step 2—Get Patrol Input

- The senior patrol leader can share the outline of the annual program plan, complete with options, with other members of the patrol leaders' council.

• Next, each patrol leader presents the general plan and options to his patrol for discussion. Where there are specific choices, patrol members can make their wishes known. If they have additional ideas they feel will improve the plan, they can also communicate that information to their patrol leader. It's a good idea for the patrol leader or the patrol scribe to take notes during the patrol meeting so that the patrol leader will have a record of the suggestions made.

- After the patrol leaders have gotten the input of patrol members, the patrol leaders' council and other key troop leaders are ready to meet.

Step 3—Hold a Troop Program Planning Conference

Set a time and a place for the conference. It should be attended by the following troop leaders:

- Senior patrol leader
- Assistant senior patrol leader
- Patrol leaders
- Venture patrol leader
- Troop guide
- Scoutmaster
- Assistant Scoutmasters
- Junior assistant Scoutmasters

— Do a monthly Good Turn for the community.

— Earn the National Camping Award and Centennial Quality Unit Award.

— Conduct a fund-raising activity to help pay for new tents and other camping gear.

— Earn the National Honor Patrol Award.

- Draw up a general outline of the annual troop program. Make it as flexible as you can while still fulfilling the accomplishments you envision for the troop.

- Meet with your senior patrol leader to review your outline. Share with him your thoughts on the coming year and seek his input. He might have very good ideas that have not occurred to you.

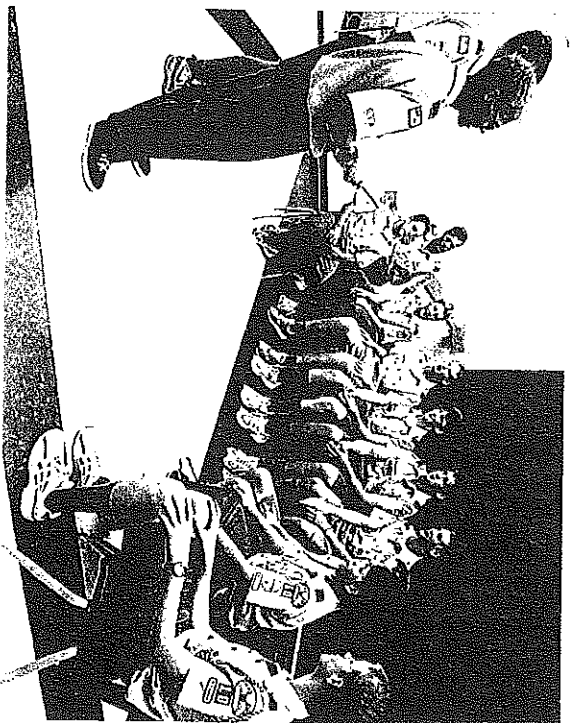
During your discussions with the senior patrol leader, explore the range of options you believe are available to the troop. For example, you might feel that the needs of the troop can best be achieved by adopting any of the 36 program features published in *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III*. Paring down those possibilities to a dozen—one for each month—will be a task for the troop's annual program planning conference chaired by the senior patrol leader.

Go through the agenda (sample shown on pages 82-83) of the upcoming annual troop program planning conference, and coach him on his role as the leader of the conference. Encourage him to build portions of the agenda that are within his ability—selecting team-building games, for example.

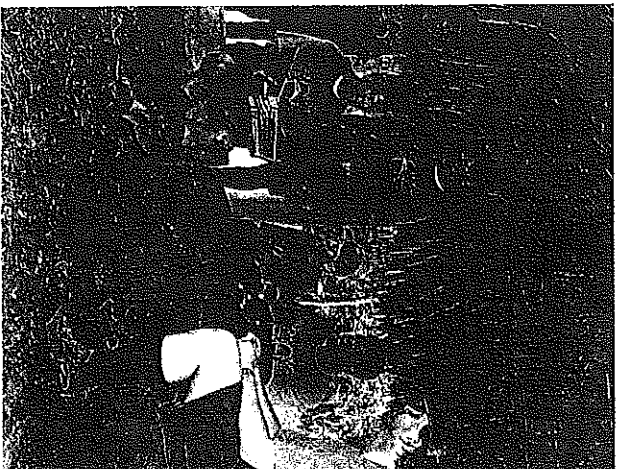
Consider having other adults do any cooking and cleanup associated with the conference so that troop leaders can devote their full attention to the job at hand.

Troop Program Planning Conference Agenda

- I. The senior patrol leader can open the conference with a team-building activity or game that is fun and promotes interaction between participants. Other activities and games can be added during the conference whenever the senior patrol leader feels they are appropriate.
- II. Review the conference methods and objectives:
 - A. Through discussion and the exploration of options, the group will decide on troop goals for the coming year.
 - B. The group will develop and approve a program that achieves those goals in ways that represent the wishes of the entire troop.
- III. Develop troop goals.
 - A. The Scoutmaster leads a discussion that guides the group in compiling a list of the goals they want to see the troop achieve for the coming year. The Scoutmaster may present a list of goals and encourage the group to expand upon this list or tailor it to better fit the needs of troop members.
 - B. The patrol leaders' council will approve the troop goals by majority vote.
- IV. Consider major events for the coming year.
 - A. With the Scoutmaster's assistance, the senior patrol leader reviews potential major events for the troop—summer camp, Scout shows, etc. These events could be written out on a calendar, then photocopied and handed out to participants for their review.
 - B. Invite patrol leaders to share the results of the patrols' discussions of the troop's proposed major events. Be sure to consider the preparation time required for each event and how that will affect the troop's calendar.
 - C. Open the floor for discussion of any or all of the proposed events. Encourage input from every conference participant.
 - D. Decide by majority vote whether or not to include each major event on the troop's annual calendar, and write them on the Troop Planning Work Sheet.
- V. Consider the program features for the coming year.
 - A. With the Scoutmaster's help, the senior patrol leader presents the list of potential monthly program features.
 - B. Open the floor to discuss each of the program features. Consider the following questions:
 1. Will the program feature help the troop meet its goals?



2. What opportunities for advancement does it present?
3. Where would the feature best fit into the annual calendar?
- C. Vote on each program feature.
- D. Write the selected program features on the Troop Planning Work Sheet.



Step 4—Consult with the Troop Committee and Chartered Organization

The senior patrol leader and Scoutmaster present the proposed troop program to the troop committee and the chartered organization representative, and ask for their support. If revisions to the plan are suggested, the senior patrol leader will consult again with the patrol leaders' council before changes are made.

Step 5—Announce the Plan

Distribute photocopies of the final plan to troop members, the parents or guardian of each Scout, members of the troop committee, and representatives of the chartered organization. Be sure to include the Cub Scout pack leaders, unit commissioner, district executive, and the chartered organization's leader, secretary, and building custodian.

MONTHLY TROOP PROGRAM PLANNING

Troop program planning meetings held at the beginning of each month allow the patrol leaders' council to put the annual troop plan into action. For a Scoutmaster, the meeting involves these steps:

- Look over the troop's annual program plan and review information about the upcoming activities in *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III.*
- Attend district roundtables to discuss program ideas with adult leaders of other troops. (For more on roundtables, see chapter 18, "Scoutmaster Support.")

- With the senior patrol leader, draw up the agenda for the monthly patrol leaders' council meeting.
- Assist the senior patrol leader in conducting the monthly patrol leaders' council meeting.

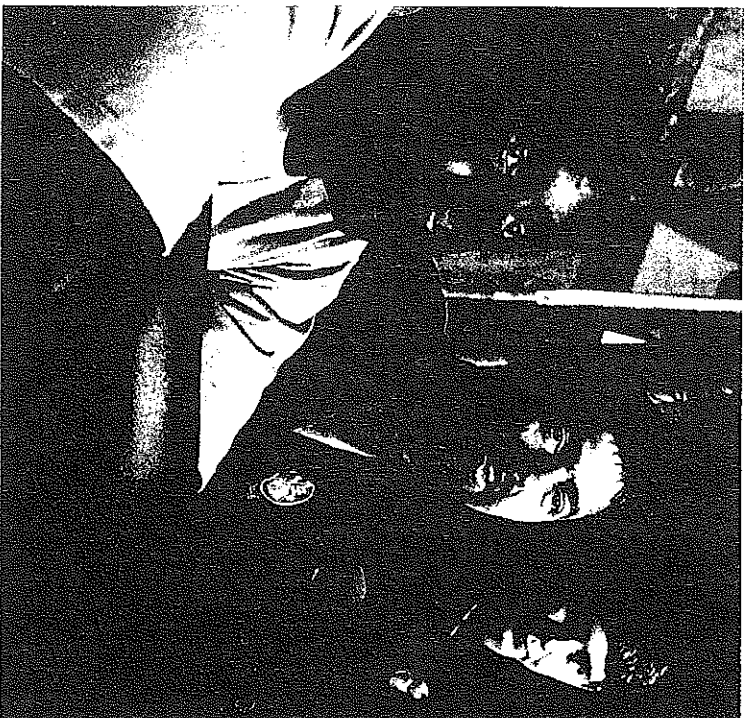
— Following the agenda, the senior patrol leader can lead a discussion with the objective being to fill out the plans for each of the four upcoming weekly troop meetings, as well as for any other troop events that will occur in the upcoming month.

- VI. Discuss and schedule the following, writing them in the proper spaces of the Troop Planning Work Sheet:
 - A. Boards of review
 - B. Courts of honor
 - C. Troop open house
 - D. Major service projects
 - E. Webelos Scout graduation
 - F. Any other troop activities that can be scheduled this far in advance

VII. The senior patrol leader can lead the group in a last review of the Troop Planning Work Sheet. Once the group has approved the final version of the plan, it will be ready to present to the troop committee for its input and approval.

VIII. Close the meeting with a Scoutmaster's Minute.

"There they go. I must hurry after them, for I am their leader."



— The Scoutmaster can share information and ideas gleaned from the roundtable; from *Troop Program Features, Volumes I, II, and III*; and from other resources.

— The patrol leaders' council can use the Troop Meeting Plan to plan in detail each troop meeting. The senior patrol leader will assign responsibility for various parts of the meetings to different patrols. He can also ask members of the patrol leaders' council for input on appropriate games, training activities, and other aspects of the meetings. (For more information, see chapter 5, "Troop Meetings.")

— Work out the details of any campout, service project, or other troop activity scheduled during the coming month.

- Get troop committee support. During its monthly meeting, the troop committee can review the troop program plan with the Scoutmaster and discuss how committee members can most appropriately provide support.

- Share the plan. As with the annual troop program plan, the monthly plan for troop activities will unfold efficiently when everyone understands what it is. Some troops generate a troop newsletter to share their plans with Scouts, their parents or guardians, and members of the chartered organization. Others photocopy the plan for distribution. Still others communicate through the Internet. Whatever the medium, the plan should include information that enables families to plan schedules that mesh with Scouting activities, and that provides guidance on how parents, guardians, and other adults supporting the troop can contribute their support.

THE WEEKLY REVIEW OF THE PATROL LEADERS' COUNCIL

Before each meeting or troop activity, the senior patrol leader should phone each individual responsible for a part of the event to ensure that he is prepared. After each troop meeting or special activity, the senior patrol leader should hold a brief meeting of the patrol leaders' council in order to review the activity just completed, go over the plan for the next event on the troop's calendar, and modify any parts of the monthly plan that require adjustment.

Proper prior planning prevents pitifully poor performance.

IN SUMMARY

Time invested in planning a troop's program will be repaid many times over by providing Scouts with meaningful and exciting activities. Good planning allows the Scouts themselves to be the leaders of the troop as they draft annual and monthly plans, and then see those plans come to life.