



2025 National Capital Area Council University of Scouting - College of Cub Scouting

CUB 121: Mistakes Packs Make and How to Avoid Them

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Mistakes Packs Make CUB-121

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1

Aims & Methods of Cub Scouting

- Methods
 - Living the Ideals
 - Belonging to a Den
 - Advancement
 - Family Involvement
 - Activities
 - Serving the Neighborhood
 - Uniform
- Aims
 - Character
 - Citizenship
 - Personal Fitness
 - Leadership



2

Common Problems (Symptoms)

- Declining membership
- Leadership vacancies
- Low attendance at events
- Low crossover & retention
- Low or late advancement



Leaders must constantly review, evaluate and identify weak areas **before** they become problems



3

Declining Membership – Why?

Scenario: You notice that the Pack is getting smaller – fewer new Scouts are joining either as Lions/Tigers or older new or transfer scouts. People aren't showing up anymore and when you follow up, you learn they're "taking a break from Scouts for a while"

What mistakes could be in play?

- Weak Program
- Weak Leaders
- Ineffective Recruiting



4

Weak Program - Solutions

- Program strength – about engagement not pack/den size
- Year-round program
 - Summer program key to maintaining interest
 - More than summer camp (Goshen, Snyder, Day Camp)
 - Pack events in June, July & August



5

Weak Program – Solutions (Continued)

- Outdoor events – Have Enough?
 - Camping, hiking, campfires, field days, service, etc.
 - Families invited/encouraged to participate
- Are Meetings Interactive & Engaging?
 - Scouts is not school...don't lecture – EDGE
 - Are Scouts learning or just watching?
 - Parents & siblings invited & engaged?
- KISMIF!



6

Weak Leaders - Solutions

- Leaders dedicated, or just showing up?
 - BIG energy all the time...if not exhausted & exhilarated afterward, you're not doing it right
 - Be at their level – get on floor with them!
 - Position trained?
 - University of Scouting (you're here...who else?)
 - Enhanced training (BALOO, safe swim, etc.)

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7

Weak Leaders - Solutions (Continued)

- Leader can't make it:
 - Reschedule? Parent takes over? Cancel?
- Monthly Den Leaders' Meeting to address dilemmas:
 - Challenging the motivated Scout
 - Helping the struggling Scout
 - Program ideas



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8

Weak Leaders – Solutions (Continued)

- Den Leader engaged with parents?
 - Den Leader is "front line" ambassador...you know the parents best!
- Mid-year Den Leader / parent meeting
 - Scout progress, attitude, strengths, etc.
 - STAY POSITIVE – reinforce decision to join & be active
 - Scout's current/future goals
 - Parent's goals for engagement



Leaders must be organized, agreeable,
motivated & KID FRIENDLY

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9

Ineffective Recruiting - Solutions

- Join Scouting Day/Night
 - Scout activities for visiting youth
 - Slide show of pack activities
 - Information sheets, FAQs
 - Follow-up after JSN
- Local media blitz (highlight activities)
- Direct recruiting through Chartered Organization

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10

Ineffective Recruiting - Solutions (Continued)

- Dedicated recruiting/membership officer
 - Experienced parent; not Cubmaster or Committee Chair
- Incentivize Scouts to bring a friend
 - Recruiter badge
 - Other prizes?

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11

Leadership Vacancies – Why?

Scenario: You look around the Pack and realize there just aren't enough adults leading the Pack, the Dens and the special events.

What mistakes could be in play?

- No succession planning
- Low or apathetic volunteerism/ disengaged parents

Bolton Parent's Oath
As a parent of a Cub Scout,
I will do my best
To help my boy
Live up to the Scout Oath
And obey the Scout Law.

I will work with my Scout
On his achievements and projects.
I will attend the Pack meetings
And help as needed
To make the Pack go

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12

No Succession Planning - Solutions

- Critical step – match individual to job!
- Leader training, uniforms & recognition!
- Family Skills Survey – use it!
- Cubmaster/Committee Chair:
 - Recruit help from parents of younger Scouts
 - Always have registered assistants to step in



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13

No Succession Planning - Solutions (Continued)

- Den Leaders:
 - Always have registered assistant to step in
 - As new Dens form, recruit leaders early
- Committee Positions
 - Minimize multiple assignments on committee so option is available as fallback
 - Graduate from "easy" job to "harder" job



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14

Low/Apathetic Volunteerism - Solutions

- ADVERTISE!
- Gradually increase level of involvement
 - Bear/Webelos parents most invested
 - Lion/Tiger parents don't know what's coming
 - AoL parents on the way out! (but have experience...mentors?)

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15

Low/Apathetic Volunteerism - Solutions (Continued)

- Parent's meeting for new Lions/Tigers
 - No leaders, no Den! (Lion Guides show the ropes)
 - Den Leaders actively engage all parents
- Den leaders implement their Den program their way
- Monthly Den Leaders' Meeting
- Chair & assistant for most events to support continuity



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16

Low/Apathetic Volunteerism - Solutions (Continued)

- Grown-ups like recognition, too!
 - Den Leader Training Award
 - Scouter's Training Award
 - Cubmaster's Key
 - District Award of Merit
- Unofficial recognition is just as welcome
 - Certificate
 - Coffee mug or Challenge coin
 - "Head of Line" at Blue & Gold
 - Even a simple handshake and "thank you" **IN PUBLIC**



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17

Low Attendance – Why?

Scenario: You look around the Pack and realize while you've got a full roster, participation in Den or Pack events is really light.

What mistakes could be in play?

- Weak Program (already discussed)
- Overscheduling
- Frequent Cancellations

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18

Overscheduling - Solutions

- Are there really too many events?
 - Select & execute most popular, closest tied to aims
 - Expectation of 100% attendance?
 - How much is too much?
- Calendar conflicts
 - Consider all associated calendars when scheduling
 - School(s), church, sports, district, etc.
 - Schedule around – don't just avoid



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19

Frequent Cancellations - Solutions

- Limit cancellations
 - Ensure leaders/proxies available when scheduling
 - Weather cancellations when safety at risk or FUN curtailed
- Back-up plan or alternate date
 - Consider revised program rather than cancel
 - Double book if possible (rain/snow date)

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20

Low Crossover Rates – Why?

Scenario: Your AOL ceremony has more Scouts "choosing to take a break from Scouting" than "joining Troop XYZ."

What mistakes could be in play?

- Weak Program (already discussed)
- Weak leaders (already discussed)
- Limited Scouts BSA exposure
- Weak Troop recruiting

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21

Limited Scouts BSA Exposure – Solutions

- Maximize Den Chiefs – especially in Webelos / AoL years...encourage sharing Scouting stories
- Visit troops early & often
 - Coordinate with Troop(s)
 - Encourage all to visit each at least once
 - Webelos/Scouts BSA joint events



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22

Limited Scouts BSA Exposure – Solutions (Continued)

- Encourage Resident Camp (Goshen) participation
- Scouts BSA support at pack events
- Begin patrol method during Webelos/AoL years
- More responsibility for Webelos/AoL Scouts
 - Setup, tear down for pack meetings
 - "Capstone" den service project at end of year
 - Webelos/AoL Den campouts (with Patrol Method)



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23

Weak Troop Recruiting - Solutions

- Appoint Scouts BSA Liaison to engage year-round
- Webelos/AoL Den Leaders engage with troop leadership
- Cubmaster, Webelos/AoL Den leaders attend Roundtable: Get to know Scoutmasters
- Find a stronger troop...or a better fit

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24

Low Advancement Rates – Why?

Scenario: You are closing in on the annual crossover picnic and realize Scoutbook shows too many Scouts who have not completed this year's rank badge.

What mistakes could be in play?

- Weak Program (already discussed)
- Weak leaders (already discussed)
- Disengaged parents
- Under-scheduling



**It's not all about advancement!
(but it sure adds to the fun!)**

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25

Disengaged Parents - Solutions

- Den-level "homework" should engage Scout with parent
 - Ensure parents understand the requirement
 - Don't let perfection cloud "Do Your Best"
- Parent involvement in meetings (planning, executing, etc.) even after Tiger year!

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26

Disengaged Parents - Solutions

- Lots of communication
 - Post-meeting follow-up note
 - Pre-meeting or event heads-up note
 - Don't rely on Pack e-blasts!
 - Parent meetings at beginning of year minimum
- Parent Surveys
 - Tap into their expertise
 - Recruit to Pack or Committee positions

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27

Under-scheduling - Solution

- Increase meeting/event frequency
 - Annual planning for Pack & Den level crucial
 - Planning flexibility more crucial!
 - Plan for all required adventures & electives
- Events not planned specifically for advancement, but should be a consideration



**Not enough can quickly
become too much!**

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28

Under-scheduling - Solution

- Schedule events fun for all
 - Camping, hiking, ball games, museums, STEM, back yard campfire, etc.
- Include siblings in invitations when possible



**Not enough can quickly
become too much!**

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29

Non-adherence to Program - Solutions

- Refocus on requirements aims & methods
- Use available resources to enhance program
 - Handbook, leader guides, websites
 - Other Pack or District leaders (Round Table!)
 - Parents, connections & outside experts
 - Training
- **BIG energy all the time...if you're not exhausted & exhilarated at the end of your meeting, you're not doing it right!**
- How have you adjusted traditional planning to fit within 2024 program changes?



**A quality program is customized to
the unit, leader & Scouts**

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30

Self Assessments

- How do you know how you're doing?
 - Journey to Excellence checklist...good ideas found there!
 - Program discontinued end of 2024
 - Checklist still has merit!
 - Survey parents, Scouts & leaders...meet their needs and they will be back!



31

Self Assessments

- Specific "problem areas" – work hard to fix them
 - Be honest about problems & solutions
 - Small bites, don't tackle it all at once
 - Who is the best person or team for the job
- Help is out there!
 - District, Round Table, Unit Commissioners, Scouting Magazine, etc.



32

Some Common Mistakes

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| • Weak program | • Overscheduling |
| • Weak leaders | • Frequent cancellations |
| • Ineffective recruiting | • Failure to earn rank badges |
| • No succession planning | • Limited exposure to Scouts BSA |
| • Low or apathetic volunteerism/disengaged parents | |



Leaders must constantly review, evaluate and identify weak areas *before* they become problems



33

Questions?



34

THANK YOU
for all you do for
Scouting!

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35