

Chapter 12—Coaching Others

No commissioner responsibility demands more skill than that of coaching others. Often, those who need direction are not aware of this need and may resent “interference” from those who offer help. Special skill is required to deal with these situations effectively.

Administrative commissioners guide unit commissioners, and because they have the common goal of unit service, there seldom is conflict. However, for the unit commissioner who sees the need for a unit leader to change direction or adopt another course of action in the unit, the situation is different. Thus, a good counseling or coaching approach of unit commissioners toward unit leaders is all-important.

The unit commissioner’s first contact with a unit leader will set the tone for this relationship. If in the first meeting a unit leader feels “directed” by “supervisors” who know all the answers, the relationship is off to a poor start.

How, then, might the commissioner get acquainted? Here’s one way: Suppose that a troop has been operating without a unit commissioner. A commissioner is recruited and designated to serve the troop. The assistant district commissioner responsible for the troop contacts the unit leader, indicating that a new Scouter has joined the commissioner staff. The assistant district commissioner makes arrangements to bring the new commissioner by to meet the Scoutmaster. (The time and place for the meeting should provide informality in a relaxed atmosphere.)

The new commissioner expresses sincere interest in the troop and listens a lot. During the get-together, the new commissioner finds something about which to compliment the Scoutmaster, being careful not to give the impression of snooping, judging, or advising. Before leaving, the new commissioner seeks the unit leader’s suggestion about the next time they will get together, perhaps at an informal meeting after a troop meeting.

Through the weeks and months, a friendly understanding is established, and both the unit leader and the unit commissioner agree upon a pattern of association that will result in greater help to the unit and better Scouting

for boys. This includes such activities as meetings with the unit committee, participation in roundtables, and personal visits between the unit leader and commissioner.

To further strengthen the relationship, unit commissioners find ways in which they can demonstrate their willingness to be friends, coaches, and counselors. Here are a few suggestions:

- When the unit leader successfully completes a particular project, the unit leader’s spouse is told of this achievement in some special way, such as a telephone call, a note, etc., in the name of the district.
- When the time approaches for the council’s or district’s annual recognition program, the unit commissioner suggests to the unit committee and the chartered organization that a nice way to say “thank you” would be to invite the unit leader and his or her spouse to the gathering as guests of the chartered organization.
- To encourage the unit to go to summer camp, the employer of the unit leader could be urged to see that the unit leader be given time off, with pay, to be with the unit at camp. This provides recognition for outstanding community leadership and also reflects favorably upon the employer. (Note: Be sure to carefully research such a procedure before attempting it.)
- If unit leaders have a particular talent or skill that could be helpful to others, arrange an invitation for them to display this talent at a roundtable or training course.

Should situations then arise in which a change should be made, a different direction taken, or a problem faced head-on, the chance that a productive outcome will result is far more likely. The commissioner always coaches leaders in a way that protects those leaders’ pride. The commissioner provides solutions that fit the unit and the community situation.

Take time at staff meetings to review good counseling skills. Use role-playing. Review the counseling suggestions from the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service*.