

# IMPROVING DISTRICT COMMUNICATIONS ELECTRONICALLY

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To the Doctoral candidate Review Board:

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by Glenn Stoner, entitled “Improving District Communications Electronically”. I have examined the final copy of this report for format and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Commissioner Science.

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Hulic Ratterree

We have read this Dissertation  
And recommend its acceptance:

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Blue Ridge Council

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Great Smoky Mountain Council

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Palmetto Council

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Sequoyah Council

Accepted for the Piedmont-Appalachian College of  
Commissioner Science:

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Chairman,  
Doctoral Candidate Review Board  
and Daniel Boone Council

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Next, I would like to thank the Review Board for their time in reviewing the many Dissertations that are submitted to them, including mine.

And last, but certainly not least, I appreciate the support and understanding of my wife Elizabeth through the numerous nights and weekends as I work with Scouting in York District, including my work on this Dissertation.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of my research was to improve communication within the York District of Palmetto Council, utilizing the electronic means that are available to us at this time. The York District functions well, but there is much evidence that communication can be improved, especially to those Units that do not participate in the monthly Roundtables.

The first step was to institute an e-mail distribution listing for the District, one that is updated by Leaders at the monthly Roundtables. This listing has been developed, giving us a very quick way to communicate with the Unit Leaders in the District.

The second, and much more difficult part of the project, was to upgrade the District web site in order to increase the information available to the District by this source. In order to determine the content that needed to be added to the website, I prepared a survey of the Leaders attending two of the District Roundtables. The majority of the items identified have been incorporated into the District web site, making it significantly more usable by the Unit Leaders and a great source for up-to-date information for happenings in the District.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As I thought through the possible topics for my Commissioner College dissertation, I kept coming back to a single question: “What will be the deliverable from my dissertation that will help to improve Scouting in my District or Council”? This is actually a question that had been on my mind for some time prior to the Candidate class at Commissioners College.

In working with the Commissioner group in York District, it had become very clear that we were lacking in the area of communication. This lack of communication was causing multiple problems in the District, including lower Unit participation in District and Council events. In addition, the slow communication to Units was causing the Units that did participate to have lower turnout. This being the case, I decided that Improving District Communications would be the topic for my dissertation. Given the electronic means that are available to us these days, I decided to focus my improvements in this area.

I chose to pursue two methods to accomplish the task of improving District communications. The first was developing a District-wide e-mail listing, and the second was improving the content and accuracy of the District website.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **DISTRICT LEADER E-MAIL LISTING**

The first task was to upgrade the District e-mail list. We had a few lists in existence, but they were primarily for specialized groups and uses, and were not easy to maintain. I decided to start from scratch, and to develop listings for four different groups of leaders in the York District: Pack Leaders, Troop Leaders, Commissioners, and District Committee. We were using a sign-up sheet at our District Roundtables, utilizing a blank sheet of paper, and having the Leaders write down their name and Unit as they came in the door at Roundtable. In an effort to improve this process, I started with a blank form (see Appendix 1 on page 19) at the first Roundtable, but requested name, unit, phone number, and e-mail address on the form.

After the first Roundtable, I input the leader's information into my e-mail system, and added each of them to the grouping (Pack, Troop, Commissioner, or District Committee) or groupings (since some wear more than one hat) that were appropriate. Once this was complete, I printed out the information that was in the system, and used this as the sign-up sheet for the next Roundtable. Those leaders that had attended the previous meeting only had to verify their information, and initial if everything was correct, making their sign-in quicker.

For several months, there was a significant amount of information to be added to the listing. At this point, and the listing has matured, there are typically only about five new leaders or so to be added to the listing after each Roundtable. As of the April 2007 Roundtable we have 258 entries into the database, most of which include an e-mail address.

This particular part of my project was simple to implement, just taking the time to enter the information into my mail system and to print out the sign-up list each month. But from an effectiveness standpoint, it may be the most effective part of my project. Leaders in the District now send me e-mails for distribution, which are easily distributed back out to the District leadership based on the nature of the communication. All that has to be typed in is the name of the listing: Troop Leaders, Pack Leaders, Commissioners, or District Leadership. This has been a very successful part of my project. I believe that there is no doubt that communication has been improved for our District, with improvements having been made in communication volume, speed, and content.



## CHAPTER 3

### DISTRICT WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS

#### Section 1 - Introduction

The next phase of my work centered on upgrading the York District website at [www.palmettocouncil.org](http://www.palmettocouncil.org). Several things worked out great from a timing perspective for this project. First, the Council decided to change website hosts at the same time as I was starting my project. Second, the Council Webmaster (Jim Stone) and I worked for the same company, meaning that I had easy access to his help and expertise in improving our site. So given my project and the fact that the District needed an owner for the new website, I signed on for this task.

So concurrently with working with Jim here and there on learning how to manage and add content to the website, I wanted to determine what the Unit Leaders in the District wanted to see on their website. I knew what I thought we needed, but not what others wanted. I decided to start with a survey of the Leaders at one of our District Roundtables, which take place on the second Thursday of each month. After much thought, and in an effort to keep the survey simple, I decided on a survey form which contained six questions (please see Appendix 2 on page 20 for the full survey form).

I first administered the survey at the February 2007 Roundtable. The answers that I received were great, but there were only a very limited number that were actually turned in. So in an attempt to get more input, I also administered the survey at the March 2007 Roundtable,

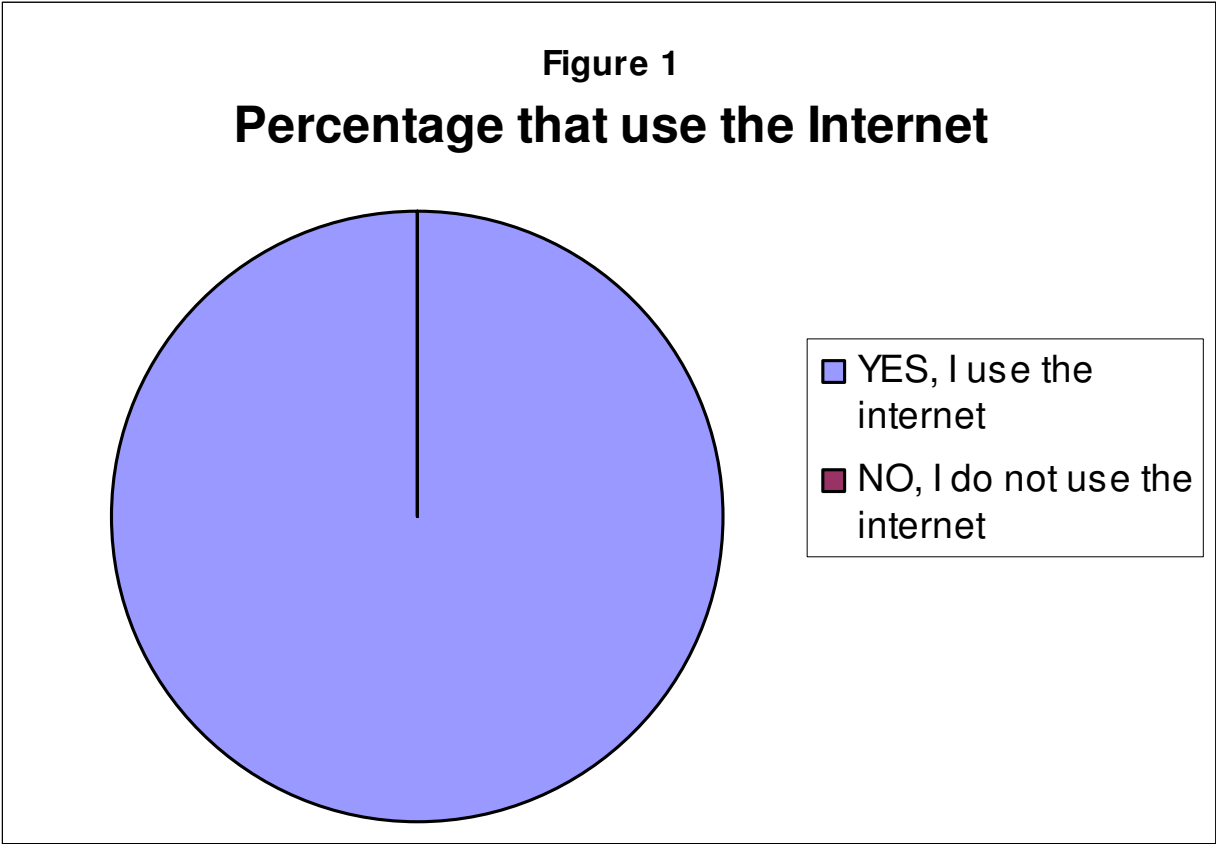
again to limited response. In total, I received 28 responses, which is approximately 1/3 of the number of people that typically attend a given Roundtable. Since there are over 250 names on the e-mail listing, you can see how small the response was. But the “masses” spoke, so this is the information that I moved forward with.

CHAPTER 3

DISTRICT WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS

Section 2 – Analysis of the Survey

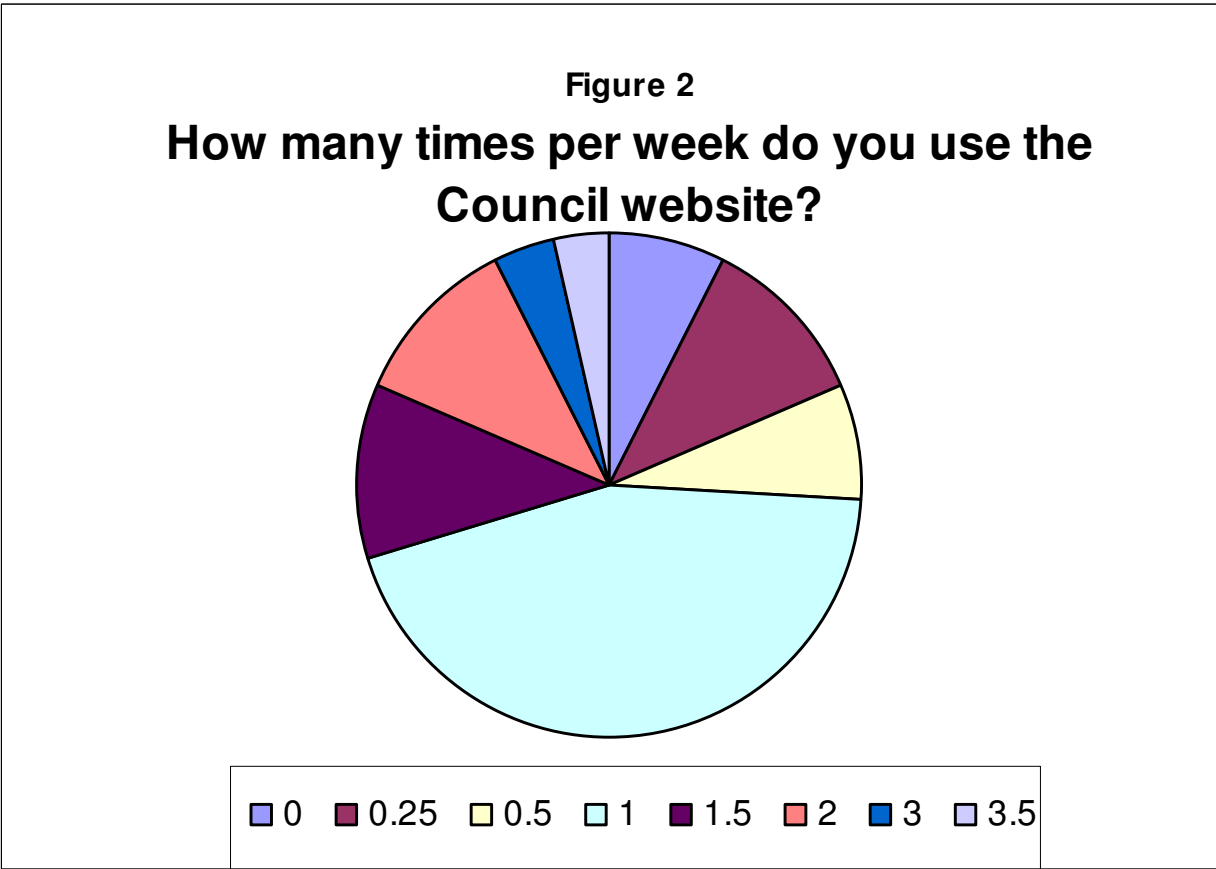
The first question was “Do you use the Internet”. I was just curious about what percentage of our Leaders could actually be reached with information that was available only on the website. The results were unanimous: all 28 said that they used the Internet (see Figure 1).



It is difficult to make much out of this information. It could be that only people that use the internet turned in a survey. I hope that it means that the majority of our Leaders are using the

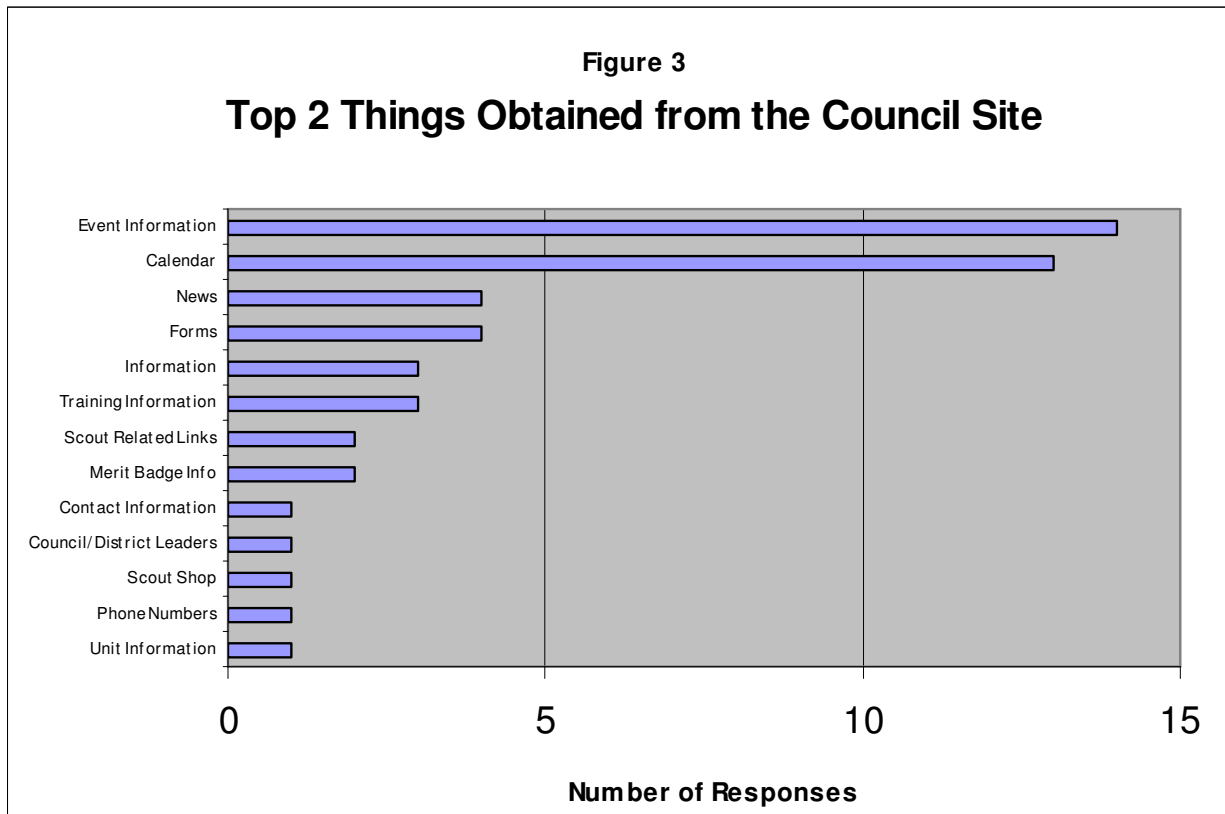
website as a resource, and that keeping this resource populated with current information about activities within the District will be a great help to our Leaders.

The second question on the survey was “How many times per week do you use the Council website?”. These results were more interesting (see Figure 2).



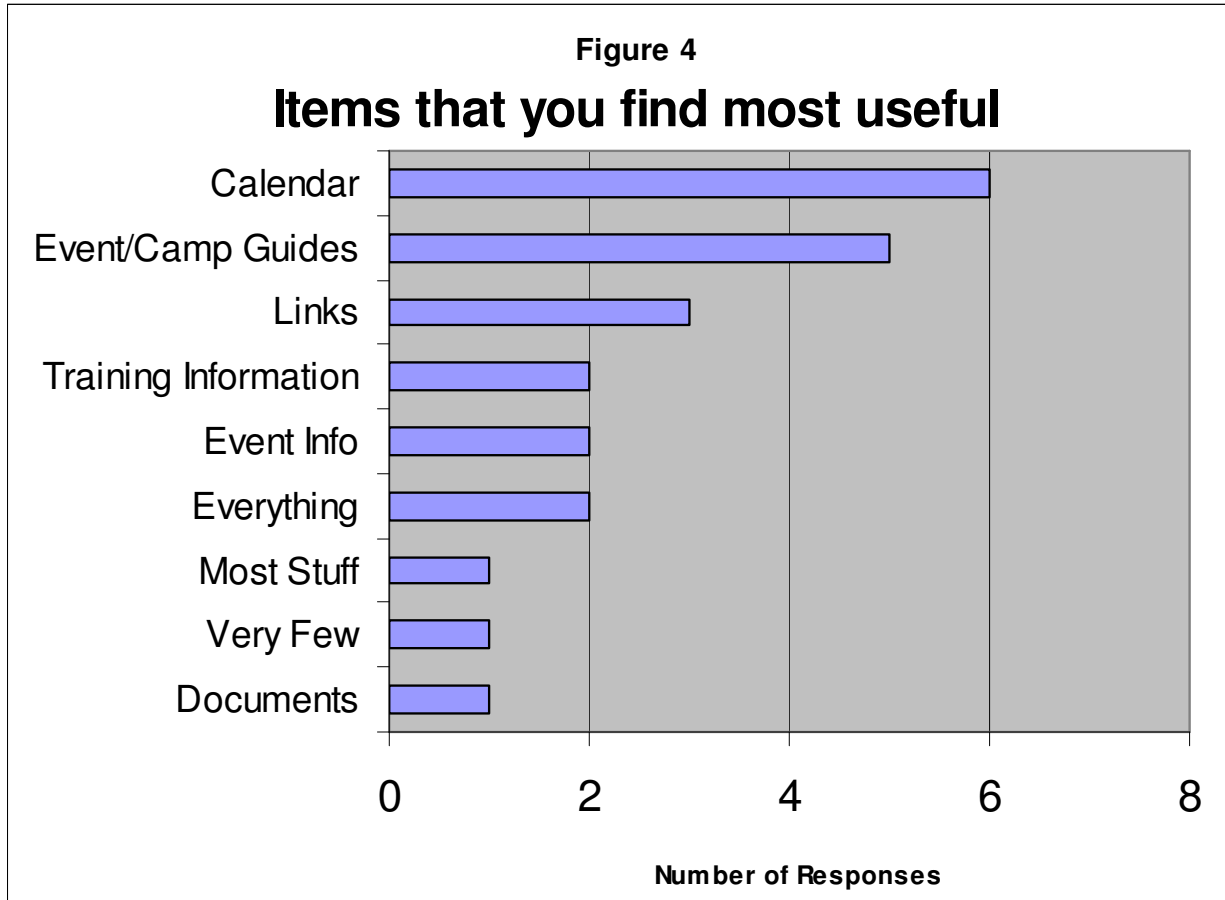
I received 27 responses to this question, with 20 of the 27 indicating that they use the internet at least once per week. Given this frequency of use, it seems that the website could be a great communication tool for the District.

The next question was “What are the top two things that you obtain from the website?”. You can find a listing of the responses in Figure 3. As you can see, the two runaway winners were Event Information and Calendar. All but two of these items have been added to the site (see Appendix 3 on page 21 for the current York District home page). I am working with the District Training Chairman to add detail to the training page, and at this time we have decided not to include phone numbers outside those of the Key Three.



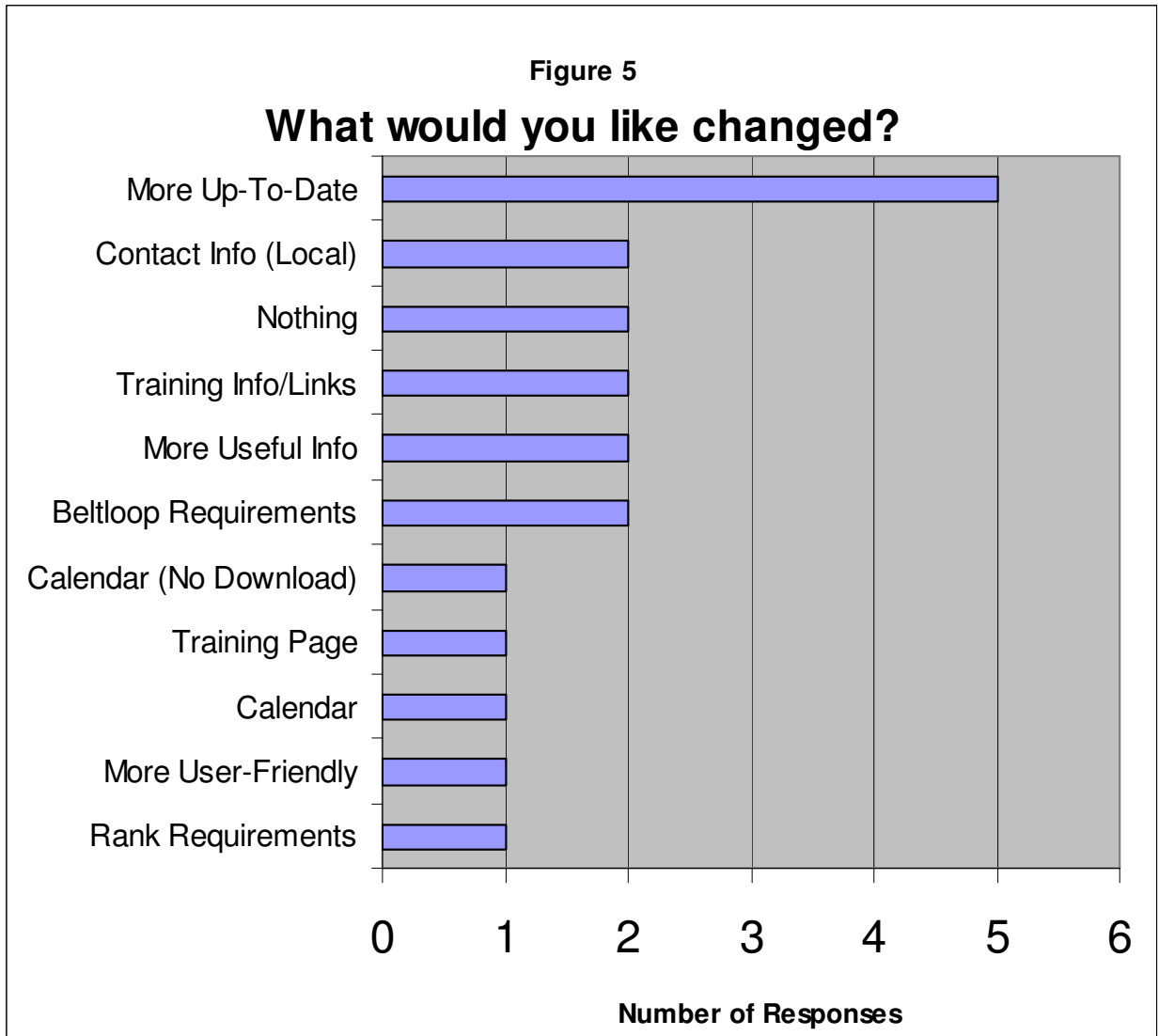
The fourth question was “What content on the website do you find useful?”. Please see Figure 4 for these results. The items here are very similar to those from the previous chart, with

Calendar and Camp/Event Guides at the top of the list. All of these items are now included on the site (with training needing more work as previously discussed).



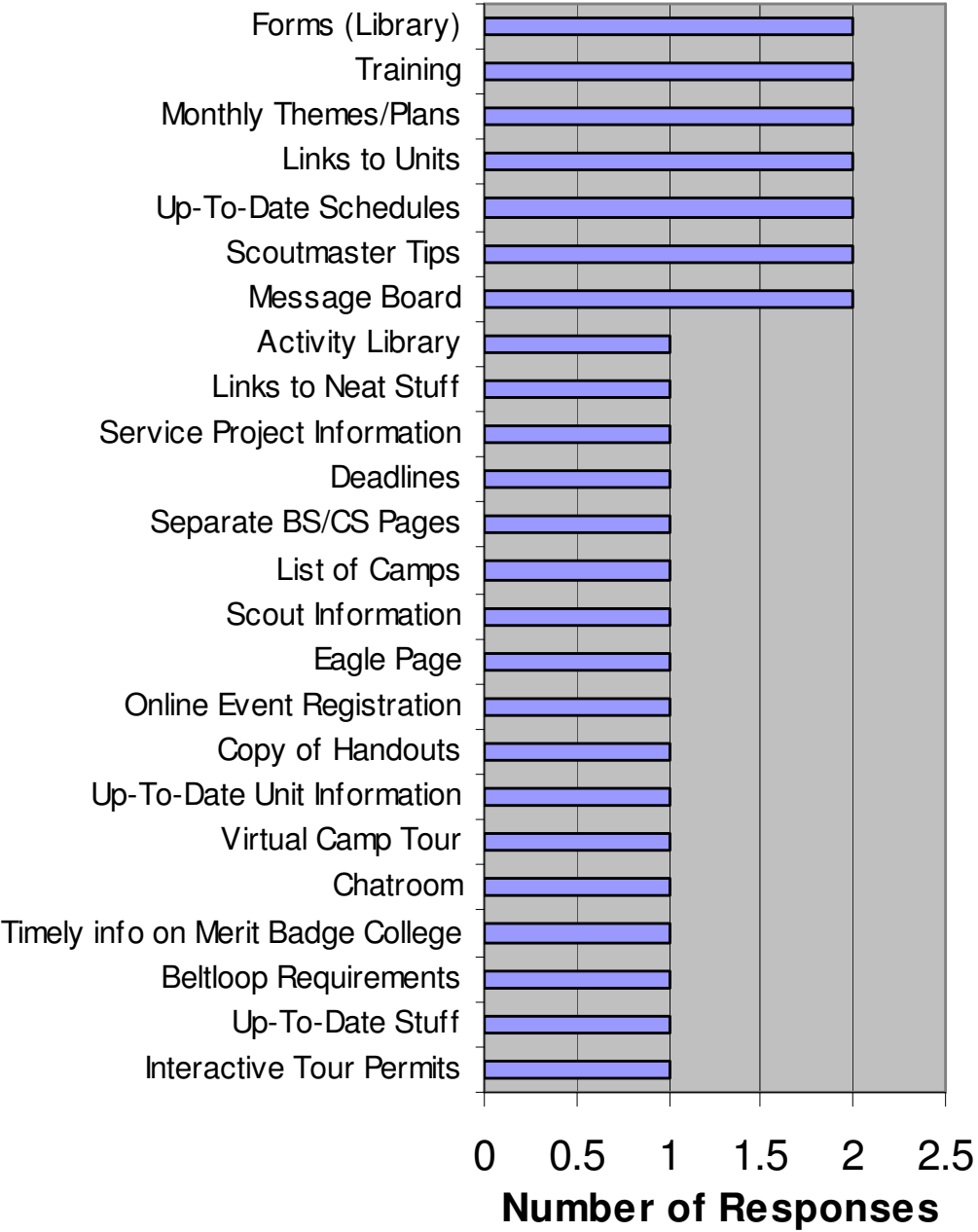
The fifth question was “What changes would you like to see made to the Council website?”. Please see figure 5 for these results. The top scoring item on this question was “More Up-To-Date”. This was an assumption of mine from the start: keeping the content current is required to keep Leaders coming back for information in the future. If the content is

old, they will quit using the resource. The other responses to this question were very similar to the previous two questions, including a few people that felt no changes were needed.



The sixth question was “What would you like to see added to the site?”. The responses to this question can be found in Figure 6. Some of the items, like those from previous questions,

**Figure 6**  
**What items would you like to see added to the site??**





have already been added to the site. In total, 9 of these 24 items have already been added to the site (please see Appendix 4 on page 22 for examples of the menu content on the York site). A second cut of the list, like Virtual Camp Tour and an Eagle Page, are wonderful ideas that need to be pursued and added to the web site in the near future. Still others, such as Chat room and Online Event Registration are good ideas, but are currently not capabilities of the website as currently configured. These will take a Council investment to make happen. We will have to keep these ideas in mind as we move forward.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### Section 1 – E-mail Listing

The feedback to date on the e-mail listing has been very good. The Leaders have become accustomed to the new format for the sign-in listing, and it does not seem to hinder the sign-in process at Roundtable. They just review their information, and initial if there are no changes. For changes or new attendees, they just add them to the listing.

Likewise, everyone in the District is aware that the e-mail listings exist, and they send me items that they would like to have distributed throughout the District Leaders. Things that have been distributed include leader guides for events, training schedules, updated calendars, information relating to day camp and summer camp, and awards application forms. Anything that you would typically handout to a leader, can be scanned and distributed to the entire District, not just those that attended the meeting. I am very happy with how this project has turned out.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### Section 2 – Website Improvements

I am pleased with how this part of my project has progressed as well. I believe that the York District website has become a very useful tool for District Leaders, although it has many more things that need to be added in the future. Items that have been added to date include:

- Updated District Unit listing
- Information on the District Committee
- Information on Roundtable
- District and Council calendar
- Wateree event guide
- Family Friends of Scouting information
- Cub Day Camp guide
- Webelos Resident Camp guide
- Merit Badge College information
- Polar Bear event guide
- Announcements page
- Scout Show information
- Service projects page

- District awards form
- Howard Hunter Camping Award form
- Centennial Quality Unit Award form
- Summer Camp scholarship form
- Cub Leader training page
- Boy Scout Leader training page

Again, this listing is just a start of what needs to be included on the website, but it addresses the majority of the items that were listed by the Leaders on my survey. For the repeat items, it will now be easier in the future to keep the content current now that the page has been created.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY**

Overall, I am very pleased with the progress that has been made in York District communications throughout the course of this project. We have significantly improved the contact information available for each Leader and Unit, as well as the speed at which communications can be made throughout the District. Likewise, the website is becoming a storage place for the information, guides, and forms that are needed by the Units and Leaders so that they can participate in Scouting in a timely and efficient manner.

As we move forward, we need to continue to maintain the e-mail listing so that we do not lose this portion of our communications. With the website, I envision adding more of the points generated from the website survey as time permits and the necessary content are developed by the various groups under the District Committee. I also would like to perform another survey of the District Leaders later this year, to see if we have made progress and are headed in the correct direction. The goal is to make sure that our Leaders get the information and support that they need in a timely manner, and we need to see how we are progressing toward fulfilling that need.

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APPENDIX 1

ROUNDTABLE SIGN-IN SHEEET

Initials	Last Name	First Name	E-mail Address	Home	Business	Cell	Unit

APPENDIX 2

Web Site Questionnaire - February 2007

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you use the internet? \_\_\_\_\_

How many times a week do you visit the Palmetto Council website? \_\_\_\_\_  
(the Council website is [www.palmettocouncil.org](http://www.palmettocouncil.org))

What are the top 2 things that you go to the website to get?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

What items on the website do you find useful? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would you like to see changed on the website? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

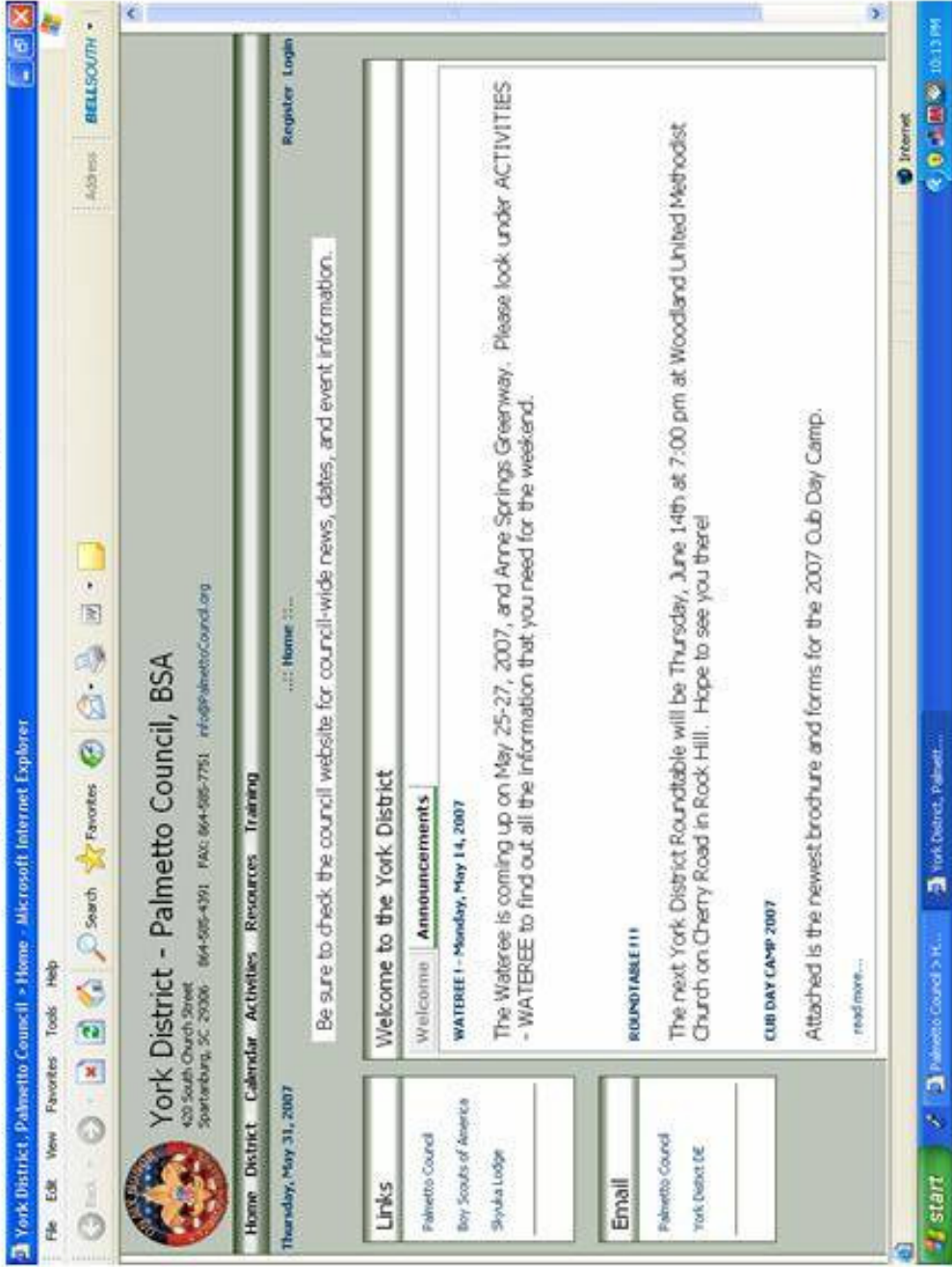
What would you like to see added to the website to make your Scouting work easier?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX 3

York District Home Page



APPENDIX 4

Examples of Menu Content

