

COMMISSIONER SERVICE IN THE REAL WORLD THAT HELPS UNITS SUCCEED

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To the Doctoral Candidate Review Board:

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by H. Keith Overstreet, entitled "Commissioner Service in the Real World That Helps Units Succeed". 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.

Walter Lynn Bates

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ABSTRACT

Commissioner Service has evolved, being emphasized at certain times and de-emphasized at other times. Over this period of time, the theme always related, in one way or another, to unit service. The role of the professional scouter was born from the ranks of these first volunteer commissioners. As envisioned by the BSA, commissioners and professional scouters work hand in hand, to promote the BSA program and to deliver service to scouting units. This interaction between professional scouters and volunteer commissioners often creates confusion at the unit level resulting in the professional scouters fielding the questions and resolving unit problems. Unit service is a responsibility of the professional scouter, but the BSA is now organized such that the professional scouter accomplishes the unit service piece through the volunteer commissioners. It is the position of this paper that it is the commissioner's responsibility to articulate, communicate and demonstrate value to his assigned unit. This paper investigates the official BSA information on commissioner service to determine how the BSA currently views the role of the commissioner. A survey of unit leaders and commissioners was also conducted that suggests commissioner service is impeded foremost (among other factors) because many units are still not being visited regularly. Visiting units regularly, among other very basic practices, will enable the commissioner to communicate his value more effectively. Value is based on the idea of "friend to the unit". Being a friend to the unit means helping the unit succeed. Success is measured using the Journey to Excellence (JTE) criteria. All services provided by a commissioner should revolve around JTE, given the present reality in which the BSA operates.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The origin of Commissioner Service in the BSA organization goes almost as far back as the founding of the BSA in 1910. The earliest role of commissioners was to start new units and promote and grow the scouting program in geographical areas. The role of the professional scouter was born from the ranks of these first volunteer commissioners. Now, commissioners and professional scouters work hand in hand, to promote the BSA program and to deliver service to scouting units. This relationship between executives and commissioners has existed in this fashion for many years. Commissioner Service has been defined and redefined over the history of the BSA. There were periods of time in the BSA that commissioner service was not emphasized. Today, commissioner service is considered a key ingredient of a successful unit. The “New Unit Performance Guide” document includes a new unit commissioner in its minimum startup criteria for a new unit. The Performance Guide was published in response to the general trend of unacceptable unit sustainability evidenced by a relatively high unit dissolution rate. The BSA is further solidifying the role of the volunteer commissioner, which was reborn in 2008.

While the practices established in the Performance Guide start to take hold, many units exist today without a unit commissioner ever contacting them. There may be a variety of reasons this is so. The lack of volunteer commissioners, units that will never see a commissioner, and more units still that rarely see a commissioner, contribute to a misunderstanding of what a commissioner is supposed to do. As if this would not be enough, commissioners (especially new

ones) seem to not be able to adequately articulate, communicate or demonstrate their value to the units they are supposed to serve. Still, even today, it is often the scout executives who field the questions, give leadership to the uniformed volunteers and resolve unit problems.

No wonder scout executives often feel overwhelmed. They need the volunteer commissioners to work with the volunteers who help their units. It is the commissioners who need to field the questions, address issues and challenges, and assist a unit by connecting them to district/council resources.

This paper begins by looking back at commissioner service since the beginning of the scouting program (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 outlines the results of a literature review of BSA publications that address commissioner service to identify key expectations of what commissioner service looks like from the BSA's often idealized perspective. Chapter 4 discusses and summarizes the results of an online survey designed to determine how commissioner service is done in the real world. Chapter 5 defines unit success in terms of the Journey to Excellence performance criteria and establishes the notion that a commissioner's primary role is that of a "friend of the unit" by helping units succeed. Chapter 6 summarizes several best practices that a commissioner can use to articulate, communicate and demonstrate his/her value to the unit. This paper found that though the BSA tends to idealize the volunteer experience, there are sound and reasonable approaches and suggestions derived from BSA training material and manuals that provide significant help to commissioners to support them as they go help units succeed in the real world.

CHAPTER II

UNIT COMMISSIONERS – HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In an effort to clarify the role of a Unit Commissioner and to contrast this role with the role of the Council/District Executive (Professional Scouters) a concise history of how commissioner service evolved over the past 100 years is summarized in this chapter.

The Boy Scouts of America was created on February 8, 1910 by W. D. Boyce. On June 21, a group of 34 representatives from around the nation met and developed organizational plans. This group opened a temporary national headquarters in New York using a local YMCA office.

In the early days of the BSA, units were organized by resourceful individuals who sometimes had to acquire the materials from England and other places. These first organizers were commissioners. Scout commissioners served as volunteers to provide leadership and program consistency. Early on, the newly formed troops didn't communicate well and as a result there were many inconsistencies. The new National Office struggled to manage the variations in the program. The uniform standard was one area that was an obvious inconsistency.

Daniel Carter Beard was asked to be the first National Commissioner. His duties included creating a uniform standard as well as other standards for program and field operations. With a National Commissioner at the helm and new standards, the would-be commissioners already in the field would need to become official.

The first "official" Field Commissioners was appointed in 1914. These field representatives issued special awards (like Life, Star, Eagle, and Lifesaving). They also had authority to both create new units and to remove commissions from volunteers as needed.

Early on, some communities raised funds to pay Scout Commissioners, effectively creating positions with professional status. These commissioners became known as Scout Executives. A few accepted the position and the Field Executive position was born. This shift eventually led to the separation of the roles of the professional scouter and the commissioner. This began a partnership between volunteers and professionals that exists still today.

In 1920, James E. West suggested that the Scout Executive should be “the general in the background” and that the Scout Commissioner would represent and give leadership to the uniformed volunteers. “Then in 1921, the Boy Scouts of America separated the role of the executive from that of the commissioner and established both jobs as “administrator” of the Boy Scout program”. This “partnership” exists today in the Council and District key three.

The first commissioners were council commissioners. As councils grew, more help was needed. The councils began to divide the workload into manageable districts where the district commissioner structure emerged. One Commissioner could handle a few units, but as districts grew, so did the structure of the Commissioner Corps.

In the 1940’s, Neighborhood Commissioners came into existence. These commissioners had a name change in the 1960’s to “Unit” Commissioners. Later, Commissioners of the Roundtable (1970s), Unit Commissioners (1970-72) and specialized commissioners (1975) were initiated into commissioner service.

Experimentation in the 1970's brought us a short lived Zone Commissioner as well as “Stovepiping” some of the Commissioner positions (troop and pack commissioners). In the 1980's these were dropped and by 1990 a new plan with a new National Commissioner position

was created to include the commissioner structure now in place. It should be noted that the BSA did not have a National Commissioner between 1960 and 1990. Furthermore, the section outlining the history of commissioner service from the latest BSA Commissioner Field Book for Unit Service considered 2008 a year of rebirth of commissioner service. Today the BSA organization has a National Commissioner. Each Council has a Council Commissioner and Assistant Council Commissioners to ease the work load. However, it is at the District level that one will find most of the volunteer commissioners that serve units by personal contact and roundtable meetings.

The "wreath of service" on all commissioner and professional position patches is a symbol for the service rendered to units by both volunteer and professional scouters. It also symbolizes the continued partnership between these volunteers and professionals. The Wreath of Service represents the unending commitment, on the part of Commissioners, to program and unit service. The position of Commissioner is the oldest in Scouting and is the origin of the professional Scouting positions, which is why professional scouters wear the Wreath of Service as well. As a direct result of the importance of unit service to the successful delivery of the Scouting program, there are now commissioners at every level of Scouting. However, this partnership is often misunderstood such that a commissioner serving a unit will find himself/herself in a diminished role. To understand this, we do not have to look no further than 2008.

The BSA admission that commissioner service was "reborn" in 2008 suggests that this service was dormant or otherwise de-emphasized in the organization or was being poorly defined

and executed in the field at the unit level. The experimentation starting in the 70's, along with the absence of a National Commissioner for thirty years and the admission that commissioner service had to somehow be reborn in 2008 suggests an environment in which the Council/District Executive positions held sway as the professionals in these roles were the prominent "go to" people for all things related to scouting; including unit service. In the survey that was undertaken for this research presentation (See Chapter IV) it was found that a typical unit adult volunteer will contact the District Executive or Council staff before contacting a unit commissioner if they need council or district resources or assistance. I postulate that this is a long held artifact from the period of time where the executive positions held prominence and the commissioner role, at the unit level was minimal or non-existent.

But it is the bigger picture that is more disconcerting; suspicion from unit adult leaders that do not understand clearly what a commissioner is supposed to do and commissioners that feed this suspicion because they rarely show up at a unit meeting, do not know what to do when they do show up and could not articulate their role in the organization even if they wanted to.

If a commissioner has a difficult time articulating his role, it appears he has a history of good company. Two other sources that discuss the history of commissioner service; Randy Worcester's thesis on the history of commissioner service and Al Friedrich's paper on the historically inherent conflict between commissioners and professional scouters shed some light on the confusion. Worcester fills in some of the blanks left in the "official" and somewhat abbreviated discussion of commissioner service history from the Commissioner's Field Book, and by so doing paints a picture of evolving and somewhat inconsistently applied roles for

commissioners. Councils were left with the option, for many years, to use commissioners or not have them at all. Some council's considered the commissioner title to be honorary with no real power or role. Friedrich is even more to the point by outlining the interests of the professional scouter historically and the areas in which these interests are at odds with the volunteer commissioner. Friedrich suggests the source of the conflict begins with the job duties of the professional scouter versus that of the volunteer commissioner. Whereas, the professional scouter's interest is in membership expansion and new units, a commissioner's interest is in keeping existing units intact and high quality. Commissioner's often decide on a solution to a unit service problem, often leaving the professional scouter out of the loop, and vice versa. Commissioners and professional scouters communicate to a unit separately, which creates confusion. Ultimately, the professional scouter is responsible for all facets of scouting, even unit service. However, the unit service piece as envisioned by the BSA is to be done by the professional scouter through the use of volunteer commissioners. This is perhaps a nuance that is not entirely understood by many unit volunteers.

This suggests something very profound. In a district that has inadequate commissioner service such that units are not being visited, and relationships are not built, no wonder the professional scouter gets the phone calls from the unit volunteers. This also suggests that when a new commissioner shows up at a unit meeting the first time, the suspicion from the unit volunteers is real and it manifests itself whenever a commissioner is asked "why are you here and who sent you"? Commissioners have a long way to build the trust necessary to do their job

and to re-establish themselves as the “go to” source for all things scouting related. Though training is vital to address this, other practices will be necessary.

CHAPTER III

COMMISSIONER ROLES IDEALIZED – BSA LITERATURE REVIEW

My own experience as a commissioner for the last four years demonstrates that commissioner service is experiencing evolving expectations. One of the first tasks I took on when I became a commissioner was to purchase or download the official publications produced by the BSA related to commissioner service. UVTS was just being deployed and JTE as the new standard of quality for units was just being introduced. I found the training literature, manuals and Commissioner College curricula still referred to “Centennial Quality” units, evidencing the literature as a bit out of step and clearly outdated. When asked to conduct semi-annual “unit assessments” I was given the forms that were available online at the time. The forms were rather comprehensive and somewhat disconnected from JTE standards, which lead me to wonder why would the JTE criteria sheet be not used instead and shared with the unit leaders at the beginning of the year so they could determine the level of service they wished to provide the boys. In my first “Unit Commissioner Program Notebook” the “annual unit service plan” suggested I emphasize and conduct certain activities each month when I visited a unit, apparently irrespective of any activity the unit may have planned for that particular day. I found this plan to be for the most part unworkable and out of step with the new JTE standards.

Only recently has the BSA revamped its manuals, basic training literature and commissioner college curriculum to align with JTE standards and has only more recently been deployed and made available online. The new program notebook (for 2013 and 2014) has a revamped “unit service plan” that is now more closely aligned with JTE goals and criteria. The

program notebook also has a comprehensive list of ideas and activities for commissioners to suggest to units to help them meet established JTE criteria.

The latest expectations for commissioner service from the national commissioner staff is found in the Spring 2012 edition of “The Commissioner” and further expanded in the Winter 2014 edition. The BSA recognized the need to make their expectations for commissioners more manageable and easier to achieve, as well as the need to carry that same message throughout commissioner service support resources. The BSA developed a simpler and more unified approach to supporting the commissioner corps and then developed a “unit service plan” around these expectations.

According to the Commissioners page of the Scouting.org website, Commissioners are district and council leaders who help scout units succeed. In commissioner basic training, commissioners are told their role is that of a “friend to the unit”. They coach and consult with adult leaders of Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops, and Venturing crews. Commissioners help maintain the standards of the Boy Scouts of America. The website continues by defining four primary areas on which unit commissioners will focus:

1. **Supporting unit growth in the Journey to Excellence criteria:** JTE measures performance characteristics that unlock the door to a successful unit. We should analyze the unit's program and identify JTE areas where help is needed to move the unit to a higher level of JTE success.

2. **Linking district committee resources to the unit:** We should support the district committee's delivery of a "catalog of services" to support the specific JTE elements needed for a particular unit's health and success.
3. **Visiting units and logging the visits into the Unit Visit Tracking System (UVTS):** Our core task remains visiting the unit. UVTS input feeds critical information to the district committee to help link resources to the unit.
4. **Supporting on-time charter renewal:** The commissioner's focus is the retention of the unit, though we should be especially mindful of supporting new youth membership efforts as we move more toward a volunteer-led, professionally guided approach to increasing membership.

Several common themes are derived from this latest emphasis. The BSA believes strongly that units will be successful and will adequately meet the standards set forth by the organization if they achieve the measurable goals in each of the areas established in the JTE. The BSA further believes that commissioners not only play a key role in the success of the unit, but they are also “responsible” and “accountable” for this success. This idea is communicated in most all training materials for commissioner service, often in idealized settings that include pictures of smiling adults in complete uniforms with the commissioner in the forefront being helpful, also with a smile. The way the national organization portrays unit service conflicts with two realities. The first is that many existing units are very successful and have been for many years without the assistance of a commissioner. The second is related to the idea of accountability in the context of services rendered in a volunteer setting. To make this point, a

scoutmaster that I am in contact with regularly said (in paraphrase) “I can hold people accountable at my work because a paycheck is involved, but how can I hold people accountable who volunteer?” I would consider the same is true of volunteer commissioners. At the end of the day, no matter how idealized the concept of commissioner accountability, we are mostly accountable to ourselves in achieving some level of satisfaction of a successful outcome to a challenge and a job well done. A good question to ask ourselves after an encounter or interaction with other adult unit leaders is simply: “was I helpful and did I make a difference”.

CHAPTER IV

COMMISSIONERS ROLE IN REAL TIME – SURVEY RESULTS

In an effort to get a perspective of unit service away from the idealized portrayal found in the BSA literature and to determine what commissioner service looks like in real life, I developed a survey consisting of ten questions utilizing Survey Monkey, an online survey design service. The survey was tailored to adult volunteers who fulfill various roles; whether they are commissioners, unit leaders, council/district volunteers, unit committee members or a combination of these various roles. The group surveyed consisted of members of the LinkedIn Group “Boy Scouts of America Adult Volunteers”. In all, 62 individuals responded. And because the survey request was made as part of a group discussion topic, seventeen comments were generated away from the survey. Several questions were directed exclusively to unit leaders and others were designed such that they may be answered by all respondents. I do not personally know any of the respondents and did not ask for names or locations as part of this survey. The purpose of the survey was to generally gage the level of commissioner service being provided, and what this service looks like when it is provided. The survey questions are contained in Appendix A.

The first question was designed to establish the role or roles that the survey respondents perform in Scouting. Over half the respondents were Unit Leaders (52%), eight percent serve on a cub unit committee, 31 percent serve on a troop committee, 42 percent serve on a district/council committee and 55 percent of the respondents are commissioners. To account for those respondents who perform multiple roles the statistics are: 45 percent of respondents (28)

reported other roles and were not commissioners; 37 percent (23) reported they were commissioners but performed other roles as well, and 18 percent (11) reported they were commissioners and performed no other role.

Question two was designed to be answered by unit leaders and volunteers who are not commissioners. In fact, all those that reported they were solely commissioners did not answer this question (as they were asked not to from Question one). The question establishes the percentage of units that have Unit Commissioners. Seventy percent of those involved with units reported that a Unit Commissioner is assigned to their unit.

Question three was intended to establish how often a commissioner visits a unit. There is no distinction as to whether a commissioner is assigned to the unit or not, simply how often did a commissioner visit the unit. Of those responding, 41 percent reported their unit is visited at least once a month if not more frequently. Thirteen percent reported that a commissioner visits their unit at least once a quarter. Eight percent reported a commissioner visits them twice a year. Thirty-eight percent reported that they rarely ever see a commissioner.

Question four was intended to establish how a commissioner contacts the unit's leadership. Of those responding, 58 percent reported that a commissioner primarily communicates face to face by visiting the unit; 24 percent responded that a commissioner contacts them by email; six percent reported that a commissioner uses the phone and 12 percent reported that a commissioner visits with them during Roundtable.

Question five provides the most revealing statistic in my view when discussing perceptions surrounding commissioner service. The question was intended to establish who gets

contacted if the unit needs help or resources from the district or council. Respondents reported that they will contact someone else (District Executive, district committee member or the council office) directly other than their unit commissioner 64 percent of the time. The implications of this result is significant, considering the unit commissioner, according to BSA official publications, and the Commissioner Newsletter from the national office, envisions commissioners being the link connecting units to district/council resources. If this is the case, and if this particular statistic in this survey is any indication, unit leaders will, two to one contact someone other than a unit commissioner if their unit needs resources from the council or district.

Question six further explores perceptions surrounding commissioners and the service they provide. The question establishes whether or not a unit leader believes the unit commissioner is interested in helping their units succeed. Of those responding 75 percent believed their commissioner is interested in helping their units succeed. The remaining 25 percent suggests the perception still exists among units that commissioners are really not interested in the unit's success.

Beginning with question seven, all survey participants were asked to respond. Question seven establishes opinions regarding the role of the commissioner. In this question, over 93 percent of the respondents believed the commissioner should be a liaison between the unit and the district. There appears however, to be a disconnection if this question was reviewed in light of question six. This disconnection may be resolved somewhat considering respondents to question seven also included commissioners.

Question eight was provided to establish if respondents believed that the unit commissioner should also be an active adult leader in the unit, such as serving on the unit committee or serving as a scoutmaster, cubmaster, den leader, or assistant scoutmaster. Of those responding, 92 percent believed the unit commissioner should not be serving as a unit leader to the same unit he or she calls on.

Question nine establishes if respondents believe that the unit commissioner has authority over how the unit is lead, or over the programming for the unit. Again, the vast majority (97 percent) believed the unit commissioner did not have authority over leadership or programming matters.

Question ten was set up to provide a variety of possible activities or interactions that began with “My Commissioner”. The results are as follows:

Does not get along with some of the adult unit leaders	4%
Rarely ever interacts with the unit	25%
Seems to act like someone who is sent to spy on us	2%
Routinely asks “what can I do to help?”	67%
Has helped us when asked to	58%
Has been there when I needed someone to talk to	58%
Has offered helpful suggestions	72%
Has provided resources and information	70%
Only comes around when there is a problem	11%
Insists on uniform inspections	2%
Helps with Recharter	56%
Acts like he/she is my boss	2%
Has met and talked to our charter representative	47%
Has helped us achieve a JTE level	42%

Attends unit committee meetings	54%
Participates in unit activities, events, fundraisers	44%

Most of the activities or interactions presented are positive in nature and would be considered normal and customary interactions that a commissioner would perform to further reinforce his/her role as a friend of the unit. Most all of the positive interactions appear to be accomplished at least around half the time or more often. What is revealing in this question is that interactions that contribute to the perception of the commissioner as a district or council spy is actually a very rare occurrence at least as far as the experiences of the respondents are concerned. Other interactions that may be considered negative appear to occur at a low percentage of the time as well. It may be interesting to explore why this is the case, and may be a result of renewed emphasis on commissioner training and reinforcement of the commissioner's role from the National office down to the local council and districts.

The survey yielded several other issues that appear to be systemic and long term, of which solutions appear to be elusive still. These issues include:

Volunteers with multiple roles – It is very apparent that councils and districts recruit new commissioners from within the organization, usually from unit committee members, and sometimes even scoutmasters and cubmasters. Several of these unit leaders do not give up their status with their individual unit. The experience in our district is some of our commissioner's call on the units they already serve in another capacity.

Too many units with no commissioner – It seems to be pretty consistent across the country that districts still do not have enough commissioners to visit all the units on a consistent

basis. Based on a follow up online conversation with one of the survey participants, his district utilizes a triage system, emphasizing service to struggling units while being “on call” for the more successful units that do not necessarily need a commissioner visit nor regular contact. If the organization cannot recruit enough commissioners, triage may be the new way to provide services to units that need it most.

Method of contact is important – With text and email being permissible contact for UVTS purposes, there is still no substitute for visiting a unit meeting and interacting with the adults in the unit. Personal touch still holds sway.

Volunteers calling someone other than a commissioner - unit leaders will, two to one contact someone other than a unit commissioner if their unit needs resources from the council or district. If the commissioner is to be the point of contact, this begs the question of why they are not being contacted.

Commissioner support for JTE – less than half the leaders surveyed stated that a commissioner has helped their unit reach a JTE level. As a commissioner’s role is to help units succeed and successful units are identified by JTE standards, this is a somewhat troubling, though expected statistic, based solely on the percentage of units not being visited at all.

CHAPTER V

DEFINING UNIT SUCCESS

The national organization is very explicit and clear in defining its expectations of a unit and what it means for that unit to be successful. These standards can be found in the Journey to Excellence score sheet for each type of unit (Pack, Troop, Venture Crew, etc.). From these score sheets, general expectations of what makes a successful unit can be developed. Specific requirements and goals are outlined, depending on whether the unit wishes to be a gold, silver or bronze unit. This chapter outlines the general expectations from the national organization as to what makes a successful unit.

Generally successful units accomplish the following:

They retain members

They recruit new members

They advance their members

They conduct service projects

They train their youth members

They conduct outdoor activities (short term and long term)

They have trained adult leaders and a unit committee

They prepare a budget

They recognize youth advancements

They conduct fundraising and participate in FOS

They recharter on time

Depending on the type of unit, specific requirements and goals must be met to accumulate points across a minimum number of areas. The number of points determines if the

unit is a bronze, silver or gold unit for that year. Bronze is typically considered minimally meeting the standards established by the BSA to be a successful unit, as defined by JTE standards.

It should stand to reason then, if commissioners exist to help units succeed, then whatever a commissioner does in his efforts to that end, his efforts should start with the JTE scorecard.

In the simplest terms, being a friend to the unit, according to the BSA is to help that particular unit succeed. All activities would therefore, originate from that concept. JTE is now the new standard that defines unit success as a recent replacement to the Centennial Quality Unit. Though the requirements for JTE are very explicit, the national organization's defining the role of the commissioner in this new JTE era has lagged somewhat and is still a work in progress. Even the history of the BSA demonstrates the ever evolving role of the commissioner in the organization, even having to be "reborn" occasionally in the organizations history. Until recently, there was no new unit service plan specific to JTE, the unit self-assessment forms were out of date and commissioner college training courses were using older material developed years ago under a different unit quality initiative.

Today, all training material is revamped and recalibrated so that commissioners can obtain the latest training, tools and resources to help units succeed. The latest piece was introduced in the Winter 2014 edition of the Commissioner Newsletter. Commissioners now are asked to customize a "unit service plan" based on a unit assessment, buy-in from the unit leaders and commitment from the district. Whether or not the district makes these commitments, customized unit service plans based on a unit meeting JTE goals is a significant step forward

from the canned, one size fits all unit service plan based on a commissioner emphasizing a certain subject every month, detached from what a unit may be emphasizing at that particular meeting.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES

The BSA has made great strides in updating commissioner training materials and manuals to assist commissioners in helping units succeed. The message is now uniform; anchored in developing an annual service plan tailored to a unit's needs as they strive to attain JTE gold level. As with most other training materials in organizations, the information and illustrations can be somewhat idealized. But this does not mean the information is not relevant and helpful. The BSA has done their part admirably to present up to date, relevant and consistent information. Now it is the commissioner's responsibility to articulate, communicate and demonstrate his value to the unit he serves.

With this in mind, several best practices may be used in most all circumstances to demonstrate value and helpfulness to a unit. BSA manuals are filled with many activities and practices that can be done, even for specific situations, and problems. But there are only a few basic practices that can be the difference between showing up as just another district face and being a trusted friend. The commissioner's goal should be to become that trusted friend. In order to accomplish this, many of these practices need to be done initially and consistently applied as long as the commissioner has a relationship with the unit he serves. Before long, unit leaders will come to you with their questions and concerns, instead of the District Executive.

Go visit your units regularly – District JTE standards call for units to be visited at least six times a year, and UVTS considers email, phone calls and visits at Roundtable acceptable contacts to establish a visit. However, there is no substitute for consistently attending a unit

meeting and getting to know the adult leaders. A unit visit of this nature should be done at least once a month. This would be considered a minimum practice. No wonder the District Executive gets the phone calls and the questions. If the commissioner doesn't call on a unit regularly, how is his/her value being demonstrated otherwise?

Understand Council and District Resources – If the commissioner is to be the connection linking the unit to district resources, the commissioner needs to familiarize himself with those resources. Get to know people on the District committee and the council staff who can help you help your unit. Along those same lines, know your District Executive well and involve him when needed.

Conduct a unit assessment at the first of the year and a second one in the middle of the year – The unit assessment discussion can be made with the unit committee or the unit's key 3 people. The purpose of the discussion is to have the unit leadership assess their unit, and decide what they wish their unit to work on for the upcoming year to achieve JTE gold. Unit assessment forms are available for this. The JTE scorecard serves the purpose just as well, if not better. Help the adults set the goals they wish to achieve.

Do other activities with the unit every year – Whether this is a night or two at summer camp, attending courts of honor, a planned hike, or sitting in on a Board of Review or unit committee meetings, these are all connection points that put you in front of people, and shows you care and that you want to be involved in the unit success story. The impact of this is difficult to overstate.

When you are asked to do something, do it – It seems rather simple, but dropping the ball is not an option if you want to demonstrate your value.

Speak truthfully – If you don't know something, say so. Tell them you will find out and give them an idea of when they can hear from you. This is especially true during the initial contacts with your units. Your new friends will understand that you have a busy life. It will take time to understand and know the things that will be helpful to the unit.

Help with Recharter – We are supposed to do this anyway. Help make the process as smooth as possible, without doing the recharter for them.

Get as much training as you can – Take advantage of any on-line training available through the BSA website, attend commissioner college, and complete the commissioner basic training. Become familiar with the commissioner manuals available online at www.scouting.org/commissioners. These training and help resources have been revamped and communicate a consistent message based on JTE standards.

The larger concern going forward will ultimately be how to make commissioner service relevant instead of superfluous. The commissioner plays a key role in determining how the outcome of his service is viewed. The basic practices outlined in this chapter are expected to help his cause, and improve his service toward making scout units successful.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE OF ADULT VOLUNTEERS

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Response Summary

Total Started Survey: 62
Total Finished Survey: 62 (100%)

PAGE: 1

1. Currently, my role in Scouting is (mark all that apply)

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	Response Percent	Response Count
I am a Unit Leader (Scoutmaster, Cubmaster, Asst. SM, Den Leader, etc.)	51.6%	32
I serve on a cub unit committee	8.1%	5
I serve on a troop unit committee	30.6%	19
I serve on the District Committee	41.9%	26
I am a Commissioner (If you check this, skip down and answer questions 7 through 10, with 10 being from your own experiences)	54.8%	34
Other (please specify) Show Responses		11
answered question		62
skipped question		0

Commissioners only
 IIII IIII I
 (11)

Commissioners + another role
 IIII IIII IIII
 IIII IIII IIII (23)

Other role no commissioner
 IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII
 IIII IIII IIII (20)

2. My unit has a commissioner that was assigned to us from the District/Council

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.0%	28
No	30.0%	12
answered question		40
skipped question		22

3. Our unit commissioner comes by to see us

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Response Percent Response Count

	Percent	Count
At least once a month, if not more frequently	41.0%	16
Once a quarter	12.8%	5
Twice a year	7.7%	3
We rarely see a commissioner	38.5%	15
answered question		39
skipped question		23

4. How does your unit commissioner primarily contact you? (choose one) [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
He/She comes by to visit	57.6%	19
Email	24.2%	8
Phone Call	6.1%	2
Meet up at a Roundtable	12.1%	4
answered question		33
skipped question		29

5. When I need help with a unit related issue, I am most likely to contact (choose one) [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Our District Executive	35.9%	14
Someone on our District Committee	15.4%	6
The Council Office	12.8%	5
My Unit Commissioner	35.9%	14
answered question		39
skipped question		23

6. I believe overall our unit commissioner seems to be interested in helping our unit succeed [Create Chart](#) [Download](#)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	75.0%	27
No	25.0%	9

answered question 36

skipped question 26

7. My commissioner should be a liaison between my unit and the District

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	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	93.4%	57
No	6.6%	4

answered question 61

skipped question 1

8. My commissioner should be an active adult leader in my unit (i.e. should serve on the unit committee, be an assistant SM or Den Leader)

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	8.3%	5
No	91.7%	55

answered question 60

skipped question 2

9. My unit commissioner should have authority over how we lead our unit and execute our programming

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	3.3%	2
No	96.7%	59

answered question 61

skipped question 1

10. My unit commissioner (check all that apply)

Create Chart Download

	Response Percent	Response Count
Does not get along with some of the adult unit leaders	3.5%	2
Rarely ever interacts with us or the unit	24.6%	14
Seems to act like someone sent to spy on us	1.8%	1

Routinely asks "What can I do to help"	66.7%	38
Has helped me on a few issues when asked to	57.9%	33
Has been there when I needed someone to talk to	57.9%	33
Has offered helpful suggestions	71.9%	41
Has provided me resources and information when asked to	70.2%	40
Only comes around when there is a problem, if he/she comes around at all	10.5%	6
Insists on doing uniform inspections	1.8%	1
Helps with my Recharter	56.1%	32
Acts like he/she is my boss	1.8%	1
Has met and talked to our Charter Representative	47.4%	27
Has helped us achieve a JTE level	42.1%	24
Attends unit committee meetings	54.4%	31
Participates in a few of the unit's outdoor activities, fundraisers, and events	43.9%	25
	Other (please specify) Show Responses	10
	answered question	57
	skipped question	5

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