

**COLLEGE OF
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THESIS

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DOCTOR OF COMMISSIONER SCIENCE

**Effect of Commissioner Service on
Unit Retention and Quality**

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Effect of Commissioner Service on Unit Retention and Quality

THESIS: Professional support to the commissioner staff and district committee will pay off in unit retention, and therefore in membership. (This section written in the fall of 1998.)

HYPOTHESIS: Organizing new units without appropriate commissioner and district committee support, especially in urban areas with high ethnicity and low socioeconomic status, leads to unit failure. Unit service, by either volunteers or professionals, is a prerequisite to unit survival. Professional support to the commissioner staff and district committee will pay off in unit retention, and therefore in membership.

THEORY: The Boy Scouts of America provides a district organization for the delivery of Scouting to a geographic area of a council. The district organization is managed by a district executive. The district's four functions provide membership, finance, program, and unit service to the units within the district. In theory, volunteers provide all these services, with the support and guidance of the District Executive (DE). In practice, the DE often concentrates his/her efforts on the first two functions while letting the volunteers carry the main burden of the latter two functions. In doing so, the quality of the program is often compromised, units do not deliver a quality program, boys and leaders drop out, units fail, and membership stagnates or falls. It is my belief that it is generally easier to prevent failure than recover from failure, and to rescue a unit than to start a new unit. It is much easier to start a new unit when there are not several people in the audience who say, "You took my money last year and did not do anything, why should my boy join this year?" The literature identifies that for a proper organizing effort, a membership team is required, which includes a training team from the program committee and a commissioner. This paper will develop real-life examples from the current history of Tomahawk District which are expected to support the literature. This should demonstrate to professionals and volunteers that following a balanced approach to membership growth provides sustainable growth, rather than the treadmill approach of organizing/reorganizing units every fall.

APPROACH: This study is limited to "community" units in the Tomahawk District.

LDS units function under a different set of ground rules, and district support/commissioner service have minimal effect on recharter or membership statistics. Other data, such as Quality Unit or advancement data could be used to evaluate the effect of district operation on LDS units, but are beyond the scope of this study.

Data for the last two-three years of Tomahawk District community unit organization efforts should be available. The previous District Commissioner is available to interview, and should be able to provide information on effective commissioner service to units within the district. Rechartering information for January 1999 will be available soon, and be able to be coordinated with information about the amount of commissioner service, training, and professional service provided at the unit level. It is anticipated that this study may need to be extended through January-March 2000 for the full effects of effective commissioner service to be felt. Anecdotal and case study information will be compiled to determine if it supports or negates the thesis. Actual support of the DE will be identified, but a change in behavior is not required to support or deny the thesis, since the variables will be the effective functioning of the district commissioner staff and the program committee, specifically the training committee. It is assumed that the DE's priorities will materially affect a significant portion of the variability experienced, that (s)he can influence the commissioner/committee support.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION: (The following written in July 2000.)
This study tracks: On time rechartering (late, separated/reregistered, drop)
 Quality Unit achievement
 100% Boy's Life achievement
 Trained unit leader achievement

Assignment of a commissioner (name)
 Comments (UE = urban emphasis)

Tomahawk District community rechartering in January 1997 (from records, prior to my arrival) had the following results:

Table 1: January 1997 Rechartering

Unit	On time	Qual Unit	Boy's Life	Trnd Ldr	Commissioner and Comments
P106	Y			Y	Kempf
P148	Y	Y			No
P156	Y			Y	Kempf
P165	Late				Nichols
P168	Late			Y	No
P180	Late				No
P184	Late			Y	Lundy
P205	Late				No
P238	Y			Y	No In school Scouting
P239	Y				No
P303	Y	Y		Y	No
P315	Y				No
P316	Late		Y	Y	No
P356	Y				No
P456	Late			Y	Kempf
P713	Late			Y	No
P961	Late			Y	No
T 50	Y		Y	Y	No
T 77	Y	Y	Y		No
T103	Y	Y	Y	Y	No
T169	Late		Y	Y	No
T238	Y		Y	Y	No
T239	Y	Y		Y	No In school Scouting
T356	Y	Y	Y	Y	Murray
T692	Y	Y	Y	Y	Martin

The breakdown of unit status by whether or not they were served by a commissioner is below.

The number of dropped and SR units was not available.

Yes 4OT, 3L 2Y, 5N 2Y, 5N 6Y, 1N 7 units served

No 11OT, 7L 5Y, 13N 6Y, 12N 11Y, 7N 18 units not serve

Assigning a percentage effectiveness to each measure above provides the following:

Yes 86% 29% 29% 86% 58% average

No 87% 28% 33% 61% 52% average

Three of the four measures show no significant difference in 1997. The average difference is only 6%. Only 28% of the district's rechartering units were served by commissioners.

Tomahawk District community rechartering in January 1998 (prior to my becoming district commissioner) had the following results:

Table 2: January 1998 Rechartering

Unit	On time	Qual Unit	Boy's Life	Trnd Ldr	Commissioner and Comments
P 83	Y xfr				No Azteca, UE
P106	Y			Y	Kempf
P148	Y			Y	No
P156	Y	Y	Y		Martin
P165	SR 5/98				Nichols/Kempf, N-ineffective, UE
P168	Drop				No UE
P180	Drop				No UE
P184	Y	Y	Y	Y	Lundy
P205	SR				Lundy
P238	Y	Y			No
P239	Drop				No ISS, handicapped
P303	Late			Y	No
P315	SR 5/98				Murray UE
P316	Drop				No UE
P356	Late		Y	Y	Lundy
P455	Drop				No (Nichols ineffective), UE
P456	Late			Y	Kempf
P459	Drop				No (Nichols ineffective), UE
P503	Late		Y	Y	No
P713	Drop				No UE
P850	Late				Murray UE
P961	SR 5/98			Y	Murray
T 50	Y	Y	Y	Y	No
T 77	Y	Y	Y	Y	No
T103	Y	Y		Y	No
T169	Drop				No
T238	Y	Y		Y	No
T239	Late			Y	No ISS, handicapped
T356	Y	Y	Y	Y	Murray
T692	Y		Y	Y	Martin

The commissioner service breakdown is below.

Yes	5OT,3L,4SR	3Y, 9N	5Y, 7N	7Y, 5N	12 units served
No	7OT,3L,8D	5Y, 13N	3Y, 15N	8Y, 10N	18 units not served

Assigning percentage effectiveness to each measure above provides the following:

Yes	69%	25%	42%	58%	49% average
No	50%	27%	27%	42%	34% average

For 1998, three of the four measures do show significant difference, all favoring active commissioner service. The average difference is 15%, which is significant, though not large. The district commissioner and most unit commissioners were the same. 40% of the rechartering units were served by commissioners. 3 of 10 UE units were served by an effective commissioner.

Tomahawk District rechartering in January 1999 had the following results:

Table 3: January 1999 Rechartering

Unit	On time	Qual Unit	Boy's Life	Trnd Ldr	Commissioner and Comments
P 36	SR			Y	No UE
P 83	Late				No (VDL 10/98 ineffective) UE
P106	Y	Y		Y	Kempf
P148	Y		Y	Y	No (VDL 10/98 ineffective)
P156	Y	Y	Y	Y	Martin
P165	Late				Weist UE
P184	Y	Y	Y	Y	Crowl
P200	SR				No New 5/98, UE
P205	Y			Y	No
P207	Drop				No, (VDL 10/98 ineff), UE
P238	Y	Y		Y	Dearing
P303	Drop				No
P315	Drop				No UE
P356	Y	Y	Y	Y	No
P456	Y	Y		Y	Kempf
P503	Y	Y	Y	Y	No
P850	Drop				No (Arrington ineffective) UE
P961	Y			Y	Dearing
T 50	Y	Y		Y	No
T 77	Y	Y	Y	Y	Walters 1/99
T103	Y	Y	Y	Y	Oom 10/98
T200	SR				No New 5/98, UE
T238	Y	Y	Y	Y	Dearing
T239	Y			Y	No
T333	SR				No, new 6/98, improper org, UE
T356	Y	Y	Y	Y	No (Murray ineffective)
T692	Y	Y	Y	Y	Martin

The commissioner service breakdown is below.

Yes 10OT, 1L 9Y, 2N 7Y, 4N 10Y, 1N 11 units served

No 7OT, 1L, 4SR, 4D 4Y, 12N 4Y, 12N 8Y, 8N 16 units not served

Assigning percentage effectiveness to each measure above provides the following:

Yes 97% 82% 64% 91% 84% average

No 56% 25% 25% 50% 39% average

For 1999, all of the four measures do show significant difference, all favoring active commissioner service. The average difference is 45%, which is significant and large. The district commissioner and most unit commissioners changed during this year. 41% of rechartering units were served by commissioners. One of nine urban emphasis units were served by an effective commissioner.

Tomahawk District community rechartering in January 2000 had the following results:

Table 4: January 2000 Rechartering

Unit	On Time	Qual Unit	Boy's Life	Trnd Ldr	Commissioner and Comments
P 36	Y		Y	Y	\$Scoutreach
P 83	Drop				No UE
P 88	Y	Y	Y	Y	Porras
P106	Y	Y	Y	Y	Oatley
P148	Y	Y	Y	Y	No
P156	Y	Y	Y	Y	Martin
P165	Y		Y		Oom UE
P168	Y				Liggett UE
P180	Drop			Y	Oatley UE
P184	Y	Y	Y	Y	Nixon
P189	SR				Porras UE
P200	Drop				No UE
P205	SR			Y	No
P238	Y	Y		Y	Jmillard
P356	Y	Y		Y	Crowl
P441	Late				No UE
P455	Drop				No UE
P456	Y	Y	Y	Y	Hubard
P503	Y	Y	Y	Y	Walters
P763	Y				Hubbard
P961	Y	Y	Y	Y	Dearing
P962	Drop				No UE
T 50	Y	Y	Y	Y	Lagas
T 77	Y	Y	Y	Y	Walters
T103	Y	Y	Y	Y	Oom
T200	Drop				No UE
T238	Y		Y	Y	Dearing
T239	Drop			Y	No ISS, handicapped
T276	Y	Y	Y	Y	Robertson UE
T333	Drop				No Improper organization, UE
T356	Y	Y	Y	Y	Liggett
T561	Y	Y	Y	Y	Martin
T692	Y	Y	Y	Y	Porras
T763	Y				No UE
N238	Y	Y		Y	Oatley

The commissioner service breakdown is below.

Yes 22OT,1SR,1D 17Y, 7N 17Y, 7N 20Y, 2N 24 units served

No 2OT,1L,1SR,7D 1Y, 10N 1Y, 10N 3Y, 8N 11 units not served

Assigning percentage effectiveness to each measure above provides the following:

Yes	93%	71%	71%	91%	81% average
No	27%	9%	9%	27%	18% average

For 2000, all of the four measures do show significant difference, all favoring active commissioner service. The average difference is 63%, which is significant and even larger than 1999. The district commissioner staff continued to build, as evidenced by 69% of rechartering units being served by commissioners during this year. 6 of 14 urban emphasis units were served by an effective commissioner.

Cumulative information for all four years:

Table 5: Cumulative Recharterin

Served	On time	Qual Unit	Boy's Life	Trnd Ldr	Commissioner
Yes	41OT, 7L, 5SR, 1D	31Y, 23N	31Y, 23N	33Y, 21N	54 total units served
No	27OT, 12L, 5SR, 19D	15Y, 48N	14Y, 49N	30Y, 33N	63 total not served

Assigning percentage effectiveness to each measure above provides the following:

Yes	87%	57%	57%	61%	66% average
No	62%	24%	22%	48%	38% average

The average effectiveness by year was:

Table 6: Average Effectiveness

	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average
Commissioner	58%	49%	84%	81%	68%
No commissioner	52%	34%	39%	18%	36%
All units	54%	40%	57%	61%	53%
Number of units	25	30	27	35	29

The four-year (1997-2000) average for each measure (Tables 5 and 6) does show significant differences, all favoring active commissioner service. The average differences are 27% and 32%, which are significant. The numbers differ due to rounding.

Urban emphasis data is not available for 1997, when most urban emphasis units were in Azteca District. Urban emphasis rechartering statistics follow:

Table 7: Urban Emphasis Rechartering

	Units served	Rechartered	Unserved units	Rechartered
1998	3	1L, 2SR	10	1OT, 1L, 5D
1999	1	1L	9	1L, 4SR, 3D
2000	6	4OT, 1SR, 1D	8	1OT, 1L, 6D

Urban emphasis commissioner effectiveness was 67%, units without commissioners were 23% effective.

SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS: While the council is geographically divided into districts to minimize differences due to socioeconomic factors, Tomahawk District has about 40% of the urban emphasis (high risk) units, is the smallest district in membership, and has the lowest Scouting density in the council. We are the closest thing the council has to an inner-city district. The Urban Emphasis program, as I understood it, was to provide additional support to urban emphasis units, increasing their chance of survival and of providing a quality program for boys. In fact, urban emphasis has, in my experience, been an organizing effort, and not a sustainment effort.

The Tomahawk District had three district executives over the period of the reports above. To my knowledge, none of them made recruiting commissioners a priority. Catherine Boldt is the only one who actually provided leads and helped in recruiting a commissioner. Only one person was recruited as a specifically urban emphasis commissioner, and he did not pan out. One DE carried on his organizing efforts with little coordination with the volunteers, and no effort at all to find commissioners to serve the units. None of the district executives has provided any identifiable amount of ongoing support to newly organized units, urban emphasis or non-UE. They usually became involved only when a problem was identified, such as inability to recharter.

This district commissioner has recruited a significant number of commissioners in two years in the position. However, I have been unable to assign enough commissioners to the most needy units. My main recruiting technique is to find an active Scouter who is underused in his/her current position. I ask them to become a commissioner, usually in addition to their

current job. This means, often, that I have to ask them to be a commissioner for their (or their son's) unit first, and then for other units if they are available. With luck, they will serve two units. Very few are the textbook commissioner who serves three units and has no responsibilities within a unit. Thus, fewer urban emphasis units than average are served by commissioners.

In this study, I identified some commissioners who were never effective with their assigned units. In some cases, the commissioner did not have the time, interest, or will to succeed. In a couple cases, the unit was not interested in help. In most cases, the commissioner was assigned for less than six months. I therefore put those units in the "no commissioner service" category. However, over time, a somewhat higher percentage of urban emphasis and "at risk" units are now served by commissioners. (Not all at risk units are urban emphasis, though most urban emphasis units are at risk.)

OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS: Each year's rechartering results were tallied. Rechartering effectiveness itself was identified as on time (100%), late (67%), separated-reregistered (33%), and dropped (0%). Quality Unit, 100% *Boy's Life*, and trained unit leader were YES/NO (100/0%). The obvious goal in every case is 100%. The total for the four years of data, expressed as percent, is below.

Table 5: Cumulative Rechartering

Served	On time	Qual Unit	Boy's Life	Trnd Ldr	Commissioner
Yes	87%	57%	57%	61%	66% average
No	62%	24%	22%	48%	38% average

The average effectiveness by year was:

Table 6: Average Effectiveness

	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average
Commissioner	58%	49%	84%	81%	68%
No commissioner	52%	34%	39%	18%	36%
All units	54%	40%	57%	61%	53%
Number of units	25	30	27	35	29

Both averages show that every measure favors active commissioner service. The 27% and 32% differences in effectiveness are significant.

Urban emphasis commissioners have been a challenge to recruit and retain. However, the results of having a commissioner are clear from the limited data available. Only one unit effectively served by a commissioner was dropped.

Table 7: Urban Emphasis Rechartering

	Units served	Rechartered	Unserved units	Rechartered
1998	3	1L, 2SR	10	1OT, 1L, 5D
1999	1	1L	9	1L, 4SR, 3D
2000	6	4OT, 1SR, 1D	8	1OT, 1L, 6D

Urban emphasis commissioner effectiveness was 67%, units without commissioners were 23% effective.

On average, the number of units served by commissioners has increased each year. The last two years has seen a significantly higher level of commissioner effectiveness than the first two. On the other hand, the effectiveness of “no service” has declined, indicating that the commissioner staff has been improving the performance of marginal units and not improving the performance of the “hardest to serve” units. Table 6 does show an increase in effectiveness for all units in the past two years.

Year 2000 results show more dropped units because there has not been enough time to convert them to separated/reregistered units. Most of these units were organized by the previous DE without commissioner or other district volunteer support, or professional support.

CONCLUSIONS: The hypothesis was:
Organizing new units without appropriate commissioner and district committee support, especially in urban areas with high ethnicity and low socioeconomic status, leads to unit failure. Unit service, by either volunteers or professionals, is a prerequisite to unit survival. Professional support to the commissioner staff and district committee will pay off in unit retention, and therefore in membership.

The district executives did not provide significant recruiting support for the commissioner staff. The district executives did not, in my judgment, provide significant unit service to urban emphasis units after they were organized. The district commissioner was not as successful as he would like to have been in providing that service. Statistically, for all units, those units served

by commissioners were significantly more successful in four measures of unit health than those units not served by commissioners. Similarly, urban emphasis units were significantly more likely to recharter if they were served by an effective commissioner. All but one dropped unit were not served by a commissioner. Each dropped unit affected district membership. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

PROGNOSIS: As more commissioners are recruited to serve less chance units, expect the statistics to show a higher percentage of failures in commissioner served units because the commissioners are serving tougher units. However, expect the overall district effectiveness for all units, shown in Table 6, to rise. It has been rising for the past two years.