

The Value of Youth Leadership Training

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INTRODUCTION

John Maxell, author of *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: Becoming the Person Others Will Want to Follow* is quoted as saying “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way”. In Scouting, Scouts learn the way, go the way and show the way from Tenderfoot to Eagle and then for the rest of their lives. Scouts are lifelong leaders and it begins at the patrol. Some Scouts can naturally take over a patrol and lead scouts, but even a natural leader needs direction, mentoring, training and a beginning. The Aims and Methods of Boy Scouting reinforce leadership skills through patrols, outdoor programs, and advancement activities. Scouts learn leadership through doing, but they also need a starting point, a true beginning that sets them up for success.

A Scout’s first step in leadership is the most crucial point in their journey to becoming a great leader. Their first leadership role could be a make it or break it moment in their Scouting career. I have seen scouts go into a leadership role and come out saying they will never do that again, more than likely it was because they were not PREPARED.

I see a great opportunity within districts and troops to institute Youth Leadership Training into their yearly planning and also encourage Scouts to attend higher levels of training such as National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT) and National Advance Youth Leadership Experience (NAYLE). The purpose of my thesis is to explain how important YLT is to our Scouts, Scouting and the community. In addition, hopefully my thesis will also compel troops and districts to make YLT a priority for their Scouts and

also create a purposeful beginning Scouts can use to be PREPARED for a leadership role.

We will discuss the different Youth Leadership programs offered by the Boy Scouts of America, Importance of Leadership Skills, and how Commissioners within the district help units to make Youth Leadership Training a priority. It is important for units and Commissioners to understand the various YLT programs and how each of them build upon each other in the training continuum. Learning leadership skills in Scouting will not only help Scouts succeed in Scouting but will also be a rewarding and valuable skill in middle school, high school, higher learning and on into their careers. Commissioners play vital roles in making YLT a priority by promoting its benefits and linking these resources to units.

Robert Jordan, one of my favorite fantasy fiction writers, creates a wonderful description of a “beginning” in his series, *The Wheel of Time*, I feel his description speaks volumes.

“The Wheel of Time turns, and Ages come and pass, leaving memories that become legend. Legend fades to myth, and even myth is long forgotten when the Age that gave it birth comes again. In one Age, called the Third Age by some, an Age yet to come, and Age long past, a wind rose in the Mountains of Mist. The wind was not the beginning, there are neither beginnings nor endings to the turning of The Wheel of Time. But it was a beginning.”

One day a Scout will look back on his memories of Scouting and not only remember where his leadership began, but be grateful someone invested in him as a young boy needing guidance and direction. He will appreciate and understand how important those

beginnings were to him and hopefully be compelled to create opportunities for other Scouts to have that same beginning, so that Youth Leadership Training doesn't become a myth.

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SCOUTING YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Introduction to Leadership Skills

Introduction to Leadership Skills is the foundational training Boy Scouts of America uses to introduce leadership skills and concepts to Scouts as soon as they assume a leadership role with the troop, crew or ship. The name of the training changes for each type of Scout. The abbreviation for each training is as follows: ILST for Troops, ILSC for Crews and ILSS for Ships. We will use ILST as the main abbreviation for this paper.

Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops (ILST)

The purpose of the ILST course is to teach Scouts with leadership positions about their new roles and how to most effectively reach success in that role. It is intended to help Boy Scouts in leadership positions within their troop understand their responsibilities and to equip them with organizational and leadership skills to fulfill those responsibilities. ILST is the first course in the series of leadership training offered to Boy Scouts. Completion of ILST is a prerequisite for Boy Scouts to participate in the more advanced leadership courses National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT) and the National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience (NAYLE). It is also required to participate in a Kodiak Challenge Trek. (Intro, n.d.)

Unit Level Training

ILST should be conducted shortly after every change in leadership or election. Units should include ILST in their yearly planning and assure the training is open to all Scouts in a leadership position. The course is a guide full of resource material for

Scoutmasters and Senior Patrol Leaders to use in creating a customized training program for their troop. The guide is broken into three sections or modules. These modules can be run consecutively, back to back in a one-day training or can be divided into separate days. These options allow units to conduct the training on a campout, at troop meetings or in a one day event like a Merit Badge University or other similar setting. The ILST course lists three modules to be covered during the training.

Module One—Troop Organization includes a description of each leadership position in the troop, including roles and responsibilities, troop organization, and introductions to vision and servant leadership.

Module Two—Tools of the Trade covers some core skill sets to help the Scout lead, including communicating, planning, and teaching.

Module Three—Leadership and Teamwork incorporates additional leadership tools for the Scout, including discussions of teams and team characteristics, the stages of team development and leadership, inclusion/using your team, ethics and values of a leader, and a more in-depth review of vision. (Youth, n.d.)

Ultimately, the training should be completely conducted by Scouts. While it may be necessary to use adults to get the training off the ground, units should be working to transition all of the training over to the Scouts.

District Level Training

In some districts it may be necessary to conduct ILST at the district level.

Districts should plan to conduct ILST when there are units within the district that have never conducted ILST for their unit. These units may need to attend ILST before having their scouts conduct their own training. Small units may not have the capacity to teach

ILST and can benefit from a district led ILST. Medium to large size troops, crews or ships may benefit from seeing ILST taught by others. It can give youth leaders new ideas for the activities, reflections or maybe even a new way to incorporate into a campout. Districts may need to conduct ILST as a continuing opportunity for all units within the district so all Scouts have an opportunity to be a trained leader. Scheduling this training with another district event such as a Webelos crossover or district camporee will be beneficial for units already planning to attend these events.

It can be difficult to start ILST within a district. The district committee should be involved in creating a plan for a district led ILST course. Specifically, the District Executive, District Chairman, District Commissioner, Training Chairman, chapter OA Advisor, and any other adults you can recruit into the planning will be helpful in making the course a success. Gaining the support of the chapter OA Advisor will be most productive, as the best solution for a district ILST course will be to involve Scouts from the OA. Having OA Scouts lead the ILST course is the best solution at the district level. These Scouts are committed to service and have been chosen by their peers as individuals exhibiting highest values in brotherhood, cheerfulness and service. Once the district committee gains the support of the chapter OA, working with those Scouts to plan out dates, agenda, cost, and place of training will be an easier task. In the event the chapter OA cannot perform the ILST training, the next step will be to find a troop with ILST experience and recruit them into conducting a district ILST course. Once the Scouts have been selected to lead the course, it will be vital for the Scouts to take the lead on planning the course. They will need district committee assistance with choosing a date and place for the training.

National Youth Leadership Training (NYLT)

Once Scouts have attended ILST, they are eligible to attend a National Youth Leadership Training program designed for councils. Select Scouts meeting age, rank and leadership requirements are chosen by to attend NYLT. These Scouts will learn key leadership concepts such as: Teaching EDGE, SMART goals, Conflict Resolution, Valuing People (ROPE), Vision-Goals-Planning and Stages of Team Development (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing).

The NYLT course centers around the concepts of what a leader must BE, what he must KNOW, and what he must DO. The key elements are then taught with a clear focus on HOW TO. The skills come alive during the week as the patrol goes on a Quest for the Meaning of Leadership. NYLT is a six-day course. Content is delivered in a troop and patrol outdoor setting with an emphasis on immediate application of learning in a fun environment. Interconnecting concepts and work processes are introduced early, built upon, and aided by the use of memory aids, which allows participants to understand and employ the leadership skills much faster. (National, n.d.)

Scoutmasters and adult leaders should proactively seek out Scout candidates within their unit to attend the NYLT program. Scouts chosen to attend NYLT should consider it an honor to represent their unit to attend NYLT. Scouts completing NYLT will take experience and knowledge gained from the course back to the unit. Scouts will learn to help the unit to create a better experience for Scouts. Units will gain a knowledgeable experienced Scout able to assist the unit to improve in most areas of the Aims and Methods of Scouting. Examples would be troop meetings, patrol leader

council meetings, outdoor programs, advancement and of course ILST. Units will increase these benefits as they send more Scouts to NYLT.

National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience (NAYLE)

Scouts wanting to expand their leadership skills even further and selected by unit leadership can complete the National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience offered at all four High Adventure Bases. These courses can be found online from the main youth training website, <http://www.scouting.org/Training/Youth.aspx> or by going to each High Adventure Base website.

National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience is an exciting program that enhances leadership skills and expands upon the team-building and ethical decision-making skills learned in NYLT. NAYLE emphasizes leadership, teamwork, and selfless service, and uses the core elements of NYLT to help youth internalize and strengthen these skills. The National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience course is now available at all national high-adventure bases. (Youth, n.d.)

Completion of ILST and NYLT is required to attend NAYLE. Scouts will enhance their leadership skills learned from ILST and NYLT. The cost and available weeks of training will vary between each location. Scouts attending NAYLE will not only be able to bring back benefits of this training to the unit but will also be able help to support districts and councils with ILST and NYLT courses.

The Kodiak Challenge

Kodiak is an additional leadership training offered by the BSA. Training is not the best word to describe as this is not for a classroom setting. Kodiak allows Scouts who

have attended a previous leadership course such as ILST, NYLT or NAYLE to challenge themselves further outside of their normal routine and go on an “ADVENTURE” of sorts to test them mentally and physically. This “ADVENTURE” could be anything related to high-adventure or going on a week-long city tour. This training is available to all BSA youth.

Kodiak is not about the trek; it is about leadership skills. During the Kodiak trek, BSA leadership skills will become a framework for you to help the participants live out their adventure—and grow from this. Each day there is an activity to showcase one or more of the BSA leadership skills previously taught in the unit Introduction to Leadership Skills course and at NYLT and NAYLE. In addition, each trek will have numerous times where leadership skills are essential for success. For example, all treks begin with planning, and all groups must communicate effectively about expectations and shared tasks. (Kodiak, n.d.)

Powder Horn

Powder Horn is a training made available to older youth and also adult leaders as well. This course is great for adults or Scouts who are looking to learn more about the different high-adventure skills and bring these skills or resources to their units. “Powder Horn is not a personal development course or a team-building experience. Its purpose is to educate the youth and adult Scouting leaders about specific high-adventure skills, to connect them to resources to deliver those skills, and to get them excited about delivering those skills in an exciting, challenging way to youth.” (Powder, n.d.)

Commissioners should understand the process and level of trainings to help each unit understand what is available to Scouts and adult leaders. Commissioners can

and should promote these trainings to unit leaders. We will discuss the specific roles of how commissioners can promote these trainings later in this paper.

IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The value of youth leadership training not only benefits scouts but also adult leaders, communities, corporations and ultimately the world.

Ron Finklestein, a popular business coach and author, wrote an online article, *What Successful Businesses Have in Common* and stated "Because we live in a world of continuous change, it's more important than ever to implement a culture of continuous learning. For many successful owners, continual investment in training is a major contributor to success." Training is the top priority for most successful companies with the United States. Training Magazine ranks the top "training" companies each year and promotes training as a leading factor of why these companies are so successful.

Verizon, IBM, Deloitte LLP, Capital One, and Walgreens are just a few of the highly successful companies that have made the Training Magazine's Top 125 list for multiple years. Successful companies are looking for all of their employees to be leaders in some way shape form or fashion. While some people are good at leading people, some are good at leading projects or certain aspects of a project. If it often said, there must be followers to be a leader. I believe leaders can work together as leaders and followers all at the same time. Leaders can and do recognize when their skills are needed and will step up at the appropriate time, while working well with other team members (who are also leaders) to accomplish goals or tasks.

For some Scouts, it may only take one campout to realize following directions can make them a leader by simply setting the example. For other Scouts, it could take

multiple activities or campouts to come to the same realization. Unfortunately, there are those few that may never ever come to the realization that being a leader isn't just giving orders. Being a leader is more than telling others what to do. Introduction to Leadership Skills is the first training course in the Youth Leadership Training Continuum provided by the Boy Scouts of America.

The first step in Scouting leadership training is introducing the Scouts to the positions they have agreed to fill. This introduction is an important occasion to give new Scout leaders the clear message that they have the ability to handle the position, that they are trusted, and that they can get all of the support and guidance they need to succeed. The introduction gives the Scout leaders an immediate overview of their obligations and opportunities as leaders and sets them off on the right foot toward success. (Youth, n.d.)

Everyone has heard the old adage, "too many chiefs not enough Indians". While we see this take place often with scouts, becoming a leader is a process of trial and error. The storming stage is an important team development stage taught in ILST. "This stage is characterized by a bid for power. Each group member is wondering whether or not he or she will be respected and this plays out in competition, tension and disunity. Relationships become strained and differences become uncomfortable." (Storming, n.d.) Understanding the stages of team development helps Scouts to understand where their team is and where they need to be. Going through these various stages and understanding them teaches Scouts how to recognize them and how to move on to the next development stage.

In 2000, the Kellogg Foundation published a report on the status of leadership on university campuses in North America. The report included both state and private schools, and was compiled by Dr. Helen and Alexander Astin, from UCLA. Their conclusions were intriguing. Let me summarize a few of them here:

1. Every student has the potential to be a leader.
2. Leadership cannot be separated from values.
3. Leadership skills must be taught.
4. In today's world, every student will need leadership skills.

(Elmore, 2014)

As one of the building blocks of scouting, "Leadership is a vital part of the Scouting program. Boy Scouts in positions of leadership run the troop. They take care of the many tasks necessary for troop and patrol meetings and activities to run smoothly. By accepting the responsibilities of troop leadership, Scouts are preparing themselves to be leaders throughout their lives." (Youth, n.d.) The importance of leadership skills is immeasurable, but is immeasurably important. If we do not have adult leaders to make YLT a priority then Scouting will be missing a key component of what makes Scouting so successful.

COMMISSIONER ROLES IN YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Now that we have discussed why Youth Leadership Training is important, now we can discuss Commissioner Roles in YLT. "Commissioners are district and council leaders who help Scout units succeed. 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." (Commissioners, n.d.)

One of the primary areas of maintaining the standards is “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.” Roles a commissioner plays in unit service are listed on the scouting.org website as: “friend, representative, doctor, teach and counselor”. (Commissioners, n.d.)

In the next section, we will connect specific Commissioner roles to Youth Leadership Training. Each commissioner role is important in the process of assuring the district is providing opportunities for scouts to attend YLT starting with Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops (ILST). All scouts in a leadership position should be attending ILST, preferably before they begin their new role. It can often be difficult to schedule ILST before they begin their role. If units are unable to provide ILST before the leadership role begins, then making it a priority as soon as possible is important.

District Commissioner – The Project Manager

In the *Handbook for District Operations*, it describes a District Commissioner's responsibility as “The District Commissioner is responsible for the unit service function of the district.” (Handbook, n.d.) Quality Scouting in the district begins with the District Commissioner. The District Commissioner manages unit service for the district and assures units are providing a quality Scouting experience to all Scouts. The District Commissioner is the first step in what I like to call, trickle-down scouting. Trickle-down scouting is the phenomenon where adult leaders take knowledge, resources and experience to create a beginning. This beginning is where District Commissioner's recruit, train, and enable Unit Commissioners and Roundtable Commissioners to be

successful in their roles for the district. Youth Leadership Training is one of many resources units should be utilizing to develop leadership skills at the troop level.

We will be reviewing how the importance of Youth Leadership Training is planned, organized and communicated, beginning with the District Commissioner. Before we can plan YLT, we must gain a commitment from the district committee for there to be a successful YLT program. Youth Leadership Training will not become an important topic unless the District Commissioner is involved in making it a priority at the district level. The path to success for District Commissioners is to continually recruit, train and enable all commissioners to understand the importance of YLT. The first step for a District Commissioner is to assure all commissioners within the district are prepared and knowledgeable about YLT information and resources.

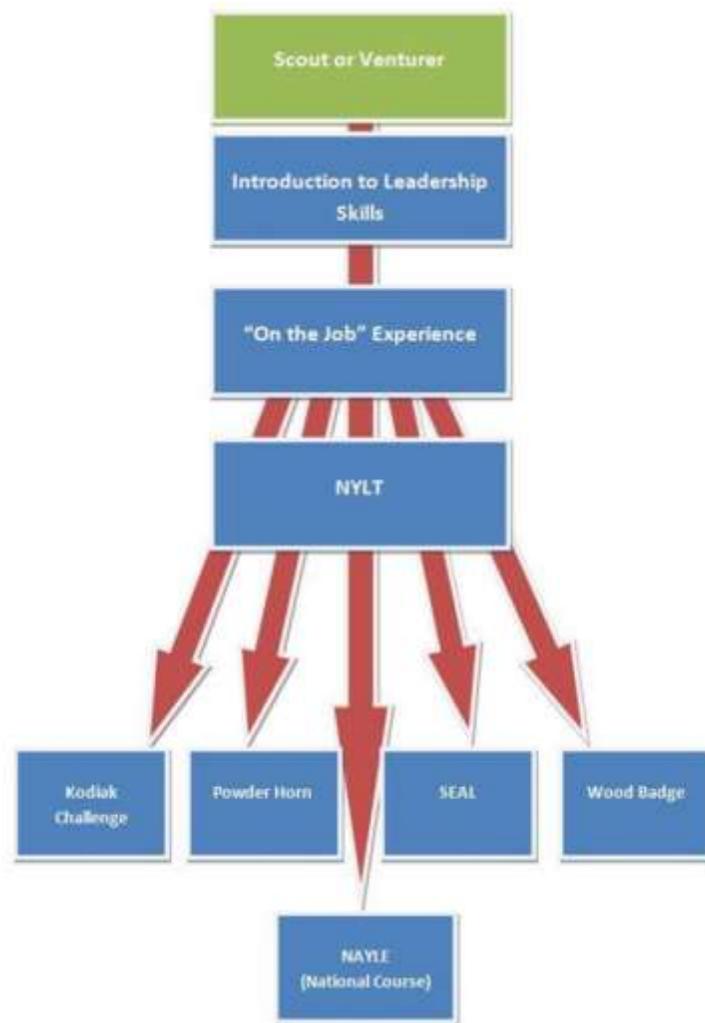
BSA's Youth Training website is the best resource to begin understanding all youth training courses within BSA. "This section provides a variety of materials, from quick references to complete courses, all designed to help our members improve leadership skills and deliver a quality program." (Youth, n.d.)

Youth Training Home – <http://www.scouting.org/Training/Youth.aspx>

Introduction to Leadership Skills for Troops is the first document to review and begin to understand. The training file is 59 pages in length but should be completely reviewed and understood by all commissioners, as this is the basic foundation of leadership training for all scouts. In addition, to reviewing the document it is highly encouraged for commissioners to attend a training session to better understand the dynamics of how the training is to be conducted.

A second important resource to review would be the Youth Leadership Training Continuum document. This document provides a summary of all available training options and is great for promoting YLT at the unit level. The following info graphic is a good visual for all of the YLT options for Scouts and Venturers provided by BSA.

(Continuum, n.d.)



Much like recruiting, training commissioners is an ongoing process within the district. District Commissioner's should use the ILST course and the training continuum documents to train all Commissioners about the available YLT options within BSA. ILST

has team building exercises and games, which can be demonstrated during monthly commissioner meetings. Understanding the importance of these activities along with the knowing how to lead a reflection will enable commissioner's to become familiar with ILST. Once commissioners have been trained on ILST and other YLT options, they should begin using this knowledge and resources to promote YLT training at the unit level.

Roundtable Commissioner – The Spokesperson

A Roundtable Commissioner's role in Youth Leadership Training is not necessarily directly involved in the actual training or discussing directly with assigned unit leaders. RTCs are experts at promoting ideas, knowledge and resources to Scout leaders. A RTC's primary role in YLT is to assure leaders are made aware all the YLT programs within the BSA at monthly roundtables. A great way for RTC's to promote YLT is to review the available online resources as discussed previously during a RT breakout session for Scout leaders. Often, units do not have Unit Commissioners assigned and roundtables may be the only time they are exposed to YLT resources and information. A great way to introduce ILST at RT is to use a few of the activities from the training and incorporate them into RT for some fun. Using the activities and conducting a brief reflection, gives the leaders a taste of what to expect. Another benefit is helping leaders to understand much of training is activity based and not all lecturing.

If the district has a formal ILST, then utilizing roundtable to promote and prepare the district to sign up for the training is extremely important. Units need time to plan and prepare to attend a formal district ILST. Many units plan calendars a year or more in advance and implementing a new district ILST will need to be planned far in advance to

give units time to review in their planning sessions. While ILST can be conducted in one day, sometimes a formal ILST will be held at a district wide camping event over the weekend. Typically units are not going to plan two overnight trips during one month. It is of utmost importance to plan a date on the calendar far in advance and begin communicating it at the district roundtables.

RTCs play an important role in promoting and providing hype to YLT within the district. RTC's should have means of communication setup within the district to reach units not attending monthly roundtables. RTCs can use email such as Google groups, Facebook, district website or even YouTube to communicate YLT resources, upcoming district and council YLT and information to those units. RTCs promoting and using roundtable as a method to introduce YLT will help Unit Commissioners in making YLT a priority within the district.

Unit Commissioner – The Marketer

Unit Commissioners have the greatest responsibility when it comes to leading units to make YLT a priority. UCs partner with units to help them succeed, most importantly they are there to assure Scouts are The first role a commissioner should play in unit service is marketing resources available to units. Marketing resources such as ILST will not only assist units to be successful but it also helps to foster the vision of the BSA. "The Boy Scouts of America will prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law." (Mission, n.d.)

It can be overwhelming to open the ILST course booklet and see 59 pages of

information. This is where knowledge of the course and preferably observation will assist the Unit Commissioner in explaining the importance and need for ILST. A Unit Commissioner can help units digest the course booklet and make it easier for the unit leaders and scouts to see the big picture.

The marketer, “a person whose duties include the identification of the goods and services desired by a set of consumers...marketing of those goods and services”.

(Marketer, n.d.)

Know the Product

Knowledge is truly powerful. Knowing the product (ILST) will boost enthusiasm and give insight to the training which can be shared with troops that are new to Youth Leadership Training. This shared knowledge could be the key to opening the door for a better scouting program and experience for scouts.

All Commissioners should be subject matter experts on the topic of Youth Leadership Training, especially Unit Commissioners. Unit Commissioners are on the front line with the units, helping them to achieve higher unit success. As a subject matter expert, Unit Commissioners share their knowledge to unit leadership about important topics such as Youth Leadership Training. A small amount of marketing will help to persuade units to use available resources. The Unit Commissioner must be familiar with the product to genuinely promote Youth Leadership Training to scouts, troops and districts. The first step for a Unit Commissioner is to attend ILST or better yet, assist a troop in developing a scout-led ILST. The knowledge gained from observing scouts prepare and teach ILST to their own unit, will be the most beneficial way to gain knowledge about the process.

Knowing the product is the first key step in understanding how to market Youth Leadership Training to scouts and leaders. Sharing this knowledge and the importance of YLT will enable Scout troops to have a better program. It is important for a Unit Commissioner to also note the leadership training requirements in Journey to Excellence. While the bronze level does not list any training requirements, silver and gold do have training requirements. Discussing JTE with unit leaders is part of the Unit Assessment process and should already be familiar with every Unit Commissioner. We will revisit these JTE requirements and compare them to the Patrol Leader Training options listed on BSA website later in the paper.

2016 JTE Requirement #9 (Scouting’s Journey to Excellence)

#9	Patrol method: Use the patrol method to develop youth leaders.	The troop has patrols, and each has a patrol leader. There is an SPL, if more than one patrol. The PLC meets at least four times a year.	Achieve Bronze, plus PLC meets at least six times. The troop conducts patrol leader training.	Achieve Silver, plus PLC meets at least ten times. At least one Scout has attended an advanced training course, such as NYLT or Order of the Arrow Conference.
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While ILST is the first step in Youth Leadership Training, a commissioner should also be knowledgeable about NYLT and NAYLE as well. JTE Gold level requires one Scout to attend an advanced training course, such as NYLT. This knowledge will help the Unit Commissioners explain the importance to unit leaders. Once unit leaders come to understand why Youth Leadership Training is important and find out where to start, the unit will be well on their way to discovering what it means to be a successful unit.

Know the People

As a marketer, once the Unit Commissioner knows the product, their next step is to know their customer. A Unit Commissioner’s customers are Boy Scouts. While these customers are the ones using the product of Youth Leadership Training, we must also sell the importance of YLT to the adult leaders. In a healthy unit, the scouts should be

making the decisions and running the troop, but usually the Scouts do not know about these opportunities. The relationship a Unit Commissioner builds with each unit will be important for attaining a sphere of influence. In return, this sphere of influence will allow Unit Commissioners to persuade units to make YLT a priority.

Opportunities for a Unit Commissioner to get to know their units are bountiful for an active commissioner. Active Unit Commissioners should use face to face interactions to build these relationships with the unit leaders. Using social media and electronic forms of communication can be beneficial; persuasion is best served for fact to face interactions. Face to face interactions can be at unit meetings, district roundtables, day camps, summer camps and any other district or council activities.

District roundtables provide a perfect time to meet with units to build relationships and discuss unit planning. As unit leaders become familiar with Unit Commissioners in person, they will become more comfortable and the sphere of influence with the unit leaders will grow. Unit Commissioners should be attending Roundtables for various reasons, but one big reason to attend to connect with their units and find out if they are coming to Roundtable.

A Unit Commissioner should study and watch how the unit works. After the initial face to face meeting, Unit Commissioners can initiate counseling through Unit Service Plan discussions. Using the Unit Service Plan will help to understand where the unit lies in the Unit Assessment Scoring Matrix and help to determine which questions to ask. If a unit is not currently promoting or having scouts attend Youth Leadership Training then the following questions should be asked.

1. How are youth leaders currently being prepared for leadership roles?

2. Do youth or adults run the troop?
3. Do the scouts enjoy leadership roles?

Often times, asking the question is the first step in helping the unit leadership understand their own opportunities. The ultimate goal is to help each unit realize how important YLT can be for Scout development and how easy it can be to get started with ILST.

If the troop does attend or conduct their own ILST, then these questions will be useful in uncovering opportunities for improving.

1. How often do the scouts attend or conduct ILST?
2. Who conducts the training, youth or adults?
3. How many Scouts have attended NYLT or NAYLE?

It is vital to the learning process to have the youth leaders conduct as much of the training as possible. In the beginning stages of introducing ILST, a troop might find it necessary to use adults to conduct the training. Each troop will have their own way of starting the process of YLT. The important thing is for units to begin the training.

Getting started with ILST is our first goal. Youth leaders can take a larger role in ILST as the unit becomes more familiar with the training. In a perfect world, ILST will be conducted by youth leaders, after each troop election and before the new leaders transition into their new roles.

As Unit Commissioners foster these relationships with unit leaders, their sphere of influence will increase. The sphere of influence created with unit leaders can be used to persuade them by merely offering a suggestion, asking a question or having a small discussion on important topics such as YLT at their committee meeting.

Know how to Promote

Lastly, after a Unit Commissioner has the knowledge and the influence, they will need to promote Youth Leadership Training. Once commissioners have been trained on ILST and other YLT options, they should begin using this knowledge and resources to promote YLT training at the unit level. It can be difficult for units to change and implement ILST as a consistent program within the unit. If a commissioner has a good relationship with the unit and more specifically the Key 3 then promoting ILST will be an easier process.

A great opportunity to discuss ILST would be during a Unit Service Plan or JTE discussion. Promoting ILST during these discussions will enable units to plan for the upcoming year. Units will be reluctant to add ILST into their yearly planning. Once units understand how ILST prepares young scouts for leadership positions and enables them to be more successful, then they will be more open implementing ILST within the unit.

Knowing the Product, Knowing the People, and finally Knowing how to Promote will be significant in making YLT a priority at the unit level. Connecting knowledge and resources to units is the backbone of why commissioner service is so important. All commissioners serve a specific purpose in achieving unit success. If commissioners within each district serve their purpose and work together with unit leaders, then YLT will be a priority and Scouts will have the beginning they deserve to BE PREPARED for their leadership role.

CONCLUSION

In a world where our youth are saturated with digital technology and screen addiction, it is becoming more important for our youth to have face to face interactions where they are challenged to work together using verbal and written communications to plan, problem solve, build relationships and develop decision making skills. Colleges, universities and successful companies are looking for individuals with leadership skills to become part of their organization to make them more successful. BSA provides

numerous levels of leadership training available to youth in Scouting. These courses provide Scouts the opportunity to BE PREPARED for leadership roles within their unit. These leadership courses are not your typically classroom PowerPoint trainings. They are geared towards youth and include various activities and teamwork which enables them to have a hands-on learning. Scouts are then able to take this training back to the unit and gain more experience on the job. Scout will use the training to help the unit succeed by becoming an example and using their knowledge to teach other Scouts how to be a leader regardless of their position. These leadership trainings are lifelong skills Scouts will develop and be able to use in Scouting, school, church, business and throughout their life.

A beginning must be created for those units not currently using YLT as a means for success in their units. There must be a beginning for YLT to become a priority at the unit and district level. This beginning can be created by anyone, but it is the responsibility of Commissioners to assure units are successful. Trickle-down Scouting begins at the top. If the District Executive, District Chairman and District Commissioner do not make YLT a priority, it is unlikely for units to promote and conduct YLT.

Commissioners should first and foremost attend a Scout-led leader training within the council. A recommendation to all districts and councils is to make YLT courses available for Commissioners to observe. Scoutmasters and leaders of these courses should work with Commissioners to allow them opportunities to see Scouts interact during the course gaining firsthand experience of how each course enables Scouts to become better leaders. I believe Commissioners will not only come away with a better understanding of how YLT helps units to succeed, but can also take the same training

to help themselves succeed in their role as a Commissioner. It can be argued units can “get by” without YLT, but I do not believe Scouts are in Scouting just to “get by”. Be a friend, be a counselor, be a pioneer, be a leader, be a Commissioner, go create a new beginning!

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