

DECEMBER – HOW TO MAKE AN ORDINARY MEETING EXTRAORDINARY

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LEE: Welcome everyone to Scoutcast for December. I'm Team Lead of National Alliance Lee Shaw, along with Bryan on Scouting Blogger, Bryan Wendell.

BRYAN: So listeners, let's take a minute to think about your troop or crew meetings. Hopefully by this point, it is December, you're in the norming or performing groove and everyone is having fun, but have the meetings gotten a little predictable?

LEE: Every now and again, you should have a meeting that stands out above the rest, a meeting where everyone leaves saying, "Wow!"

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LEE: So right here on ScoutCast is Eagle Scout Mark Ray, key writer of the 13th Edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook* and the new two-volume *Troop Leader Guidebook*. He also writes extensively for *Scouting* and *Eagles' Call* magazine and contributed to the three-volume *Program Features for Troops, Teams, and Crews*. Welcome to ScoutCast, Mark.

MARK: Thanks. Happy to be here.

LEE Well, Mark, let's get right to it. Most meetings should be focused on true program features but what are some of the other troop meetings that have the wow factor?

- MARK: It can be almost meeting that you add an interesting twist to, whether that's using technology, having a really dynamic presenter coming in, meeting outside or just doing something that is totally fresh to those Scouts.
- BRYAN: Okay. Let's set a goal here. How often should a troop or a crew be having one of these "wow" meetings?
- MARK: So that's a really good question, and I guess I'd turn it back to you and say, why would you want to have an ordinary meeting?
- BRYAN: Good point. So strive to make every single one just as extraordinary as it can be because it might be a Scout's last if you don't, right?
- MARK: Exactly, yeah. And if he only comes to say one or two meetings a month, he might miss that truly extraordinary meeting.
- LEE: That's a great point. So there has to be plenty of benefits that we can name to help others understand the importance of having extraordinary meetings.
- MARK: One key benefit is that it encourages the Scouts to want to come back next week, which obviously is very important. But, also, that they come out of that meeting wanting to do something, whether it's signing up to go to the Jamboree or working on that merit badge that the counselor came in and talked about, or getting the Scout Handbook out and figuring out what

they need to do to earn their next rank. So, they come out of there wanting to take some sort of concrete action that's going to move them forward in Scouting.

BRYAN: So who should be responsible for coming up with the ideas and planning this extraordinary meeting? I mean, is this all on the adults?

MARK: Like planning anything, it's a matter of teamwork. The Patrol Leaders Council still has the primary responsibility but, the adults can play a role in helping the Scouts think a little bit bigger; asking them sort of what-if questions. So, if the Scouts decide that they want to teach first aid then the adults maybe say, "What if we came up with some realistic-looking wounds that we could put on our victims," and actually do a first-aid simulation instead of just telling everybody that they need to tie a bandage.

LEE: Okay, Mark, so what are some of the challenges in planning the extraordinary meeting?

MARK: The first is creativity. You've got to think outside the proverbial box, which can be hard if you've always been doing things a certain way. A second challenge is that more time is required. If you want to bring in that police officer to show off his car and his gear, if you want to bring in that EMT to teach first aid, you can't just decide to do that on the spur of the moment or the night before the meeting, so you've got to plan a little bit ahead. There could be some expenses involved. If you want to go somewhere or

you need to pay a fee or if you need to rent or buy equipment there's some costs involved you have to take into account.

BRYAN: So I like the example of the first aid where you have the realistic-looking wounds. Do you have any other examples of ways that you've actually heard of a troop where they've spruced up an otherwise ordinary meeting and made it extraordinary?

MARK: Sure I remember one time in our troop we were teaching canoeing and so we put a canoe out on the ground in front of the Scout house and Scouts got into it and they practiced canoeing strokes, and that was not very effective and not a whole lot of fun. With a little bit of effort, we were able to on another meeting go to that park that has a lake and actually get the canoes in the lake and actually use the strokes. So that's a simple example. Another one if you're thinking about hiking, for example, why couldn't you turn your troop meeting into a hike that ends at a favorite ice-cream parlor and then the parents pick the Scouts up there.

LEE: I like your way of thinking, Mark.

BRYAN: Yeah, Mark, in my troop, I mean, we had some good meetings, I feel like they were productive, but a lot of times, and this speaks to exactly what you're talking about, a lot of times it seems like the outings were more memorable and those got the majority of the focus. I remember on one of the outings our patrol, all went to the grocery store and we had Mom's credit cards so we could get whatever we want. And then we learned a lot of lessons that day about healthy eating and what kind of things you can

buy at the grocery store. It was the first time any of us had been there shopping at the grocery store on our own, and that's the type of outside-the-box kinds of things. It seems really simple but just rethinking the way we did it - shopping for groceries for our troop campout.

MARK: That's a great example, and one thing that's good about that is that you just got out of the traditional meeting place. Almost like when you go to school and you get to go on a fieldtrip. You feel like you're sort of cheating somehow because you're outside the walls of the school. The same way when you take that fieldtrip from the troop meeting place you're sort of escaping and seeing something different, and learning something there that's going to benefit you when you go camping.

LEE: When you said outside of the walls, it inspired me to think over my Scouting experience. And the first time I ever got outside of the country was on a camping trip that my troop took to Canada. I look back at that experience and say, wow, as a 15-year-old I really didn't know exactly how that was going to work but it ended up being one of the greatest trips that I had that taken in Scouting just because my Scout leader said instead of going to a summer camp within the confines of our council or even our country that we're going to go to Canada and have a good time, which we did.

MARK: Very cool. We had a state senator come in and talk about citizenship. It was more of a talks. It wasn't really dynamic. But I think just the fact that you had this actual elected official who was beyond the community come in made citizenship seem a little bit more real to the Scouts.

LEE: So, Mark, how did you go about contacting the senator?

MARK: In that particular case it was actually a contact from one of the troop parents, but I know these days you could go through the Scouting Alumni Association and probably find a lot of really great resources.

BRYAN: Yeah, scoutingalumni.org for those listening that don't know. Yeah, you can just search somebody and have them Skype in at your next meeting. That's awesome. So are there some resources out there that we should be looking to? (Be)cause a lot of these are kind of outside of that normal troop program features box.

MARK: Sure. Start with adults in the troop. Think about what parents do for a living, think about people that are on the Troop Committee that maybe have special resources. Think about your troop alumni who maybe may be scattered across the country

LEE: I feel much more informed and actually creative just having listened. Is there anything else about making an ordinary meeting extraordinary that we haven't talked about that you think should be shared with our listeners?

MARK: One thing about troop meetings is they're like trap games in sports; that game that a team is not supposed to lose but they end up losing it because they don't put any effort into it? Troop meetings can be like that, and something that's really important that we've realized at every troop

meeting is important, that every troop meeting may be that one chance we get to really get a Scout excited about Scouting.

LEE: I'm thinking this podcast was pretty extraordinary. So, Mark, thanks for coming on ScoutCast and I'm sure our listeners have been inspired.

MARK: Thanks so much. Appreciate the time.

BRYAN: As for us, we'll be right back with Reminders and Tips right after this.

(FSB Promo)

BRYAN: It's time for Reminders and Tips. Let's start with a pop quiz, hot-shots! Do you know who your local Scouting professional is? This person is also known as your District Executive or your Youth Serving Executive. If you don't know this man or woman, call your council to find out.

LEE: And if you don't know your council's name, go to Scouting.org and type "local council locator" in the search field. Download the October 2013 ScoutCast, Who's Who in the Zoo, for more information.

BRYAN: Ok listeners has anyone in your troop or crew signed up to go the 2017 National Jamboree yet? No? Why not? You already know what a great experience it will be for them and that they'll make a ton of new friends, but maybe you all think it will be too financially or physically challenging. Maybe you think the jamboree is only for a privileged few, or maybe you think the door is closed because (gasp!) of the girls in your crew! Whatever the reason you think the jamboree door has been closed, our

July ScoutCast tells you how to grab onto that door handle and open it wide. July will be here before you know it.

LEE: And it just wouldn't be Reminders and Tips without a *Boys' Life* plug. Is that right, Bryan?

BRYAN: That's right. I love *Boys' Life*.

LEE: This month features a great article about Scouts from the Westchester-Putnam Council as they go ice climbing at Lake George. Brrr – makes me cold just thinking about it.

BRYAN: Ice climbing, whew. Okay, well, they did it, so. All right, as a Scout leader, you're proud of your troop's accomplishments like, maybe, ice climbing for example. So you snap a photo at the end of your hike and you share it on Instagram. But – are you unintentionally posing a risk to your Scouts' safety when you do that? That's the question we answer in the November/December issue of *Scouting* magazine. It's gonna help you navigate social networking and all those privacy rules and regulations and it's also going to reveal how you can stay tuned to the ways youths are using those "secret" mobile apps where they can keep content hidden from parents.

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BRYAN: Thanks for listening, everybody. And thanks to our guest, Mark Ray. If there's anything else you'd like to hear about on ScoutCast, just drop us a

line. Scoutcast@scouting.org is the email address. On Twitter we're @BSAScoutcast. Until then, I'm Bryan Wendell.

LEE: And I'm Lee Shaw. And from all of us here at ScoutCast, happy holidays, everyone!

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