

FEBRUARY – SCOUT BOOK

Music Full then under

AARON: Hello everyone and welcome to *Scouting Magazine's* CubCast for February. I'm Aaron Derr, along with my hard-working podcast partner, Gina Circelli.

GINA: Thank you, Aaron. I am hard working!

AARON: You are.

GINA: Hello, everyone! So, many of you have probably, hopefully, heard of Scout Book. It's the online tool designed to make your Scouting leadership duties a lot easier.

AARON: We found out, though I can't reveal our source, that some of you out there are still not taking advantage of everything Scout Book has to offer, and we're here to share with you all the reasons why you should be using Scout Book.

Music Fades

AARON: With Michaela Monson, assistant Den Leader for Pack 192 with the Longhorn Council in Fort Worth, Texas. Michaela is also the project manager for the development of Scout Book. Welcome to CubCast, Michaela.

MICHAELA: Thank you. I'm so happy to be here.

AARON: Start from the beginning; Scout Book 101, what exactly is Scout Book? Is it an app; is it a spreadsheet? What are we talking about here?

MICHAELA: Sure thing. So, Scout Book is an online tool that you can use from any device; we're talking laptop to desktop to mobile to tablet. And it really helps units track things like attendance, advancement, and even manage activities and meetings.

GINA: Interesting. So, who should be using it – the leader, parent, committee member, the Scout?

MICHAELA: Scout Book is really aimed at the leaders and those who support the leaders. parents too have access, but we're really trying to aim to help those unit leaders maintain the unit details.

AARON: Speaking from personal experience, my son is a Boy Scout and I have logged on to Scout Book several times just to make sure that he is making progress and that he is on track and that he's getting credit for the things that he has done. So, that's one feature, right?

MICHAELA: Yeah, absolutely. In fact, that's one of the main features that Scout Book offers is really the ability to help track where the progression is of the Scout within advancement, whether it's from Cub Scouts or Scouts BSA, or Sea Scouts...

GINA: Okay, gosh, I didn't realize that it was really tailored for adults. So, what are the tools and features in there?

MICHAELA: One of the biggest features is, as we've already been talking, is tracking advancement. So, whether it's completing adventures in Cub Scouting or camping nights in Scouts BSA, Scout Book really has you covered there. All requirements are current with program years to be sure you and your Scouts are achieving the right goals. Attendance tracking is also another great feature, so that through attendance, from the program perspective, we're able to track when it is a Scout is preparing to drop out of the program, and then, act on that. And then meeting or event reminders and email communications to people like you, Aaron, parents, that helps keep everyone in sync.

AARON: Uh-hmm. One time on Scout Book, I remember my son had completed a merit badge, and I went on Scout Book and it didn't show that he had completed the merit badge, and that was a nice signal for us to double-check what went wrong. At some point, it turns out, that although our troop leader had entered it in their own personal records, it hadn't been in sync yet. So, it's kind of a good failsafe for the whole process, from Scout to parent to leadership to make sure everything is kind of in sync and up to date; it's been my experience.

MICHAELA: Yeah, absolutely. And that's also one of the tenets behind Scouting is to make sure that parents are involved in their Scout's progress as well.

GINA: Sounds very detailed and kind of high tech. Must be like extremely expensive; how much does Scout Book cost? Is it a monthly fee or one-time purchase?

MICHAELA: Gina, I am excited to say that Scout Book is free.

GINA: What??

MICHAELA: F-R-E-E.

GINA: It does sound like its fairly high tech, especially compared to maybe what we're used to using to track this stuff. So, I'm amazed that it's free. I don't know how that's possible!

AARON: So, everything we've talked about combined with the cost, why isn't everyone using Scout Book? *(Laughter)*

MICHAELA: From not just a parent perspective but a program management perspective as well, I really think that there's just a lot of hesitancy to adopt technology. A lot of technology that we tend to push out hasn't really been ready to adopt, or when it has been there's been like this lack in, updating and maintenance that I've least perceived, but, if you think it didn't work for you at one point in time, if you come back again today, you're going to have a totally different, new experience. We're operating on a agile project management method, which means what you see today

is not what you're gonna see tomorrow, is not what you're gonna see six months from now and a year from now.

AARON: My son's Cub Scout pack, this was back before Scout Book was an official BSA product, they used a different tracking software. And I wonder if some units are just used to their own system. And even though Scout Book is free and appears to be easier and better, they've been using this one system for years maybe and they're hesitant to just shift over. So, I think the message to them is that, once again, it's free, it's also easy, it's an official BSA program, so there are some advantages built in there, right?

MICHAELA: Yes, absolutely. And not just that, but who knows the Scouting program better than the BSA themselves?

AARON: Literally no one.

GINA: And any possible change that comes up, it's up to date, it doesn't feel like a little piece of the past. It's very 2020.

AARON: Where do people get Scout Book?

MICHAELA: So, Scout Book is available from a very simple URL: Scout Book.com.

AARON: Nice!

MICHAELA: Scout Book.com. But if you do click on Scout Book.org, it will take you right back to Scout Book.com.

GINA: Whoa! Okay, that should prove that we're on top of this one, guys.

AARON: Yes! We'll be back with more the marvels of Scout Book right after this.

COMMERCIAL: Champ Camp

GINA: Okay, so any tips for a successful use of Scout Book?

MICHAELA: So, first thing is that we have a Scout Book help page, so it's help.ScoutBook.com, and it gives a bunch of tips and tricks about how to really navigate through ScoutBook.com, depending on the program that you're dealing with. So, whether it's Cub Scouts or Scouts BSA, we have all of those items available for you. But one of the biggest tips I want to talk about - the Den Leader experience, which is kind of still in the beta concept, but what we've done is we've simplified that process. So, everything that a former Den Leader used to have - 20 books in front of them - We've condensed that down into an app, or so-called app, where they are able to access resources and videos, so very similar to how you would access YouTube, and be able to run that den meeting, very quickly and efficiently.

GINA: I imagine this would help retain volunteers in that case because you're lightening the load on them. You're giving them a resource that actually makes it easy on them instead of maybe something complicated and long that they have to read through.

AARON: Yeah. So not only does it help you keep track of advancement, as a Cub Scout leader, it can make your volunteering job easier. I remember when I first signed up to be a Den Leader, somebody plopped like a 150-page book in front of me, which was a little bit overwhelming. If they had just said, "Hey, just download this app," that's awesome. That's great.

GINA: Yup! Like you wanna recruit younger leaders, younger volunteers - This is gonna speak to them.

MICHAELA: Definitely. But this isn't downloading an app. Scout Book.com is accessible in your browser but you can save it to your home screen so that it behaves like an app. So like –

AARON: Like a web app, I think people call them.

MICHAELA: They're called progressive web apps. So, you wouldn't necessarily go to like the iTunes Store or Androids Game Store. You would really just go directly to that URL and be able to function within it, just like an app.

GINA: We like that. Who wants to download another app? It's cooler just to go to your web browser.

GINA: That's the way of the future, Aaron.

AARON: Absolutely it is, agreed. Now, we have a Cub Scout program and then as Scouts get older, we hope they transition into Scouts BSA. How does Scout Book handle that transition?

MICHAELA: Scout Book really knows where you are within the program or and where you're getting ready to go. So, once your Scout is getting ready to transition from Webelos or Arrow of Light in Cub Scouting into the Scouts BSA, that's a very smooth transition that works hand-in-hand with the leaders of the receiving unit. And so, it's very simple just to plop your Scout, kind of like a drag-and-drop, into that new unit and you're ready to rock and roll.

AARON: That's a big improvement right there, I can tell you from my personal experience, from the software that my son's Cub Scout pack used back in the day, where it was a little more cumbersome to transfer a Scout, from a pack to a troop. This sounds like, once again, an advantage of it being an official BSA product we know how that whole thing works and it can make it much more seamless for the user.

MICHAELA: And one of the great things that the program team is working on to integrate within the Scout Book experience is also a way to communicate

to parents, to prepare the parents and the Scouts alike for that transition to occur. So, yes, you're going through the program within Webelos and Arrow of Light, you're visiting troops, you're doing all of these great things to prepare yourselves, and so we're working with program in order to facilitate some of that, to give parents some resources on how they can help their Scouts transition as well.

AARON: And that's huge because being a Cubmaster and working here, we sort of take for granted a certain amount of knowledge, and I was always surprised that that the questions that Cub Scout parents would have for me about Boy Scouts, but how would they know? They're Cub Scout parents. If they weren't in the program as kids themselves, just basic question: what's an Eagle Scout? Do we have to join

the same troop? All these things like that. How do we choose a troop? These basic questions like that. It's great that there's a resource now that kind of folks them through that process.

MICHAELA: Absolutely.

GINA: Yeah. Aaron, I have a question for you.

AARON: Yes.

GINA: When you use Scout Book, how do you usually use it? Are you on a desktop, your phone?

AARON: Phone.

GINA: And you think it works on there?

AARON: It works great, yes. Actually. you say it's not technically an app - It feels like an app because it definitely feels like it's made for a phone interface. It works just like an app.

GINA: That's good to hear. So, Michaela, is there anything else about Scout Book that you think ought to be shared with our listeners?

MICHAELA: Absolutely. I want to take that opportunity, not just to continue to talk about the Scout Book for Den Leaders, which again is that simplified version of getting a Den Leader to help facilitate their dens, but we're also working on doing this for the Scouts BSA program as well. We understand that its youth led. We understand that there's some dynamics and some complexities there. But we're definitely taking that into consideration to help simplify that just a little bit so the youth and the Scoutmaster himself can help really progress the Scouts through the program.

AARON: So, to sum up, Scout Book is free to use, it's so much easier to keep track of advancement - there's nothing but good news. Michaela thank you for helping us to explain all the reasons why using Scout Book will help make a den or pack so much more successful.

MICHAELA: Thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

GINA: And we'll be right back with Reminders and Tips after this brief Safety Moment.

(Safety Moment – CPR)

GINA: Okay, time for Reminders and Tips. Let's start with succession plans. Having a succession plan means being prepared to replace volunteers in key roles because the den or pack leader may have committed to their responsibilities but, alas, they may not be able to keep that commitment.

AARON: And since our motto is Be Prepared, a successor needs to be identified for the role should something unexpected happen. With a succession plan in place, you won't be scrambling around trying to fill a vacancy and the pack can maintain its tradition of 100% trained leaders. Tune into the April 2014 CubCast for more on succession plans and cultivating new leaders.

GINA: This is also a good time to be thinking about recruiting more youth in the pack with the Spring Roundup. Talk to your Unit Serving Professional Scouter about coordinating your recruitment efforts with local schools.

AARON: Now here's an ongoing piece of business: Remember, Cub Scout Adventure Loops do not require an advancement report. They are to be presented at a den meeting whenever each adventure is completed. It's all part of the instant recognition program of Cub Scouting. Stock up on the adventure loops ahead of time so you have them ready.

BEGIN MUSIC UNDER

AARON: And now, this CubCast has come to an end. Special thanks to our guest Michaela Munson for joining us.

GINA: And thank you for listening. Be sure to send us your thoughts and ideas for a future CubCast. Just send an e-mail to cubcast@scouting.org or tweet to [@cubcast](https://twitter.com/cubcast). With that, I'm Gina Circelli.

AARON: And I'm Aaron Derr. Join us next month for all about bridging. Now, the show is over so if you haven't already done so, Scout Book is waiting... for you!

MUSIC FULL TO FINISH