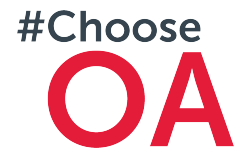




#ChooseOA: Activation Rate & Best Practices



Session Objectives

- Explain the stakeholders in and the significance of Arrowman activation
- Demonstrate ways to encourage Arrowmen engagement
- Guide participants to developing plans to improve activation
- Enable lodges to implement these plans and access supporting resources

Session Length: 55 minutes

Appendix Resources

- *Order of the Arrow Handbook*
- *Order of the Arrow Guide to Inductions* (complete edition)
- *Order of the Arrow Guide for Officers and Advisers*
- *Order of the Arrow Chapter Operations Guide*

Required Materials

- Computer with projection capability
- Projector and screen

Trainer Preparation

The trainer should be an experienced lodge leader who has spent time focusing specifically on activation. This could include a wide range of leadership roles, such as those pertaining to inductions, program, administration, communication, and more. They should study this syllabus, review the presentation and its content, and familiarize himself with the listed appendix resources.

While the trainer should prepare for an audience of all backgrounds and experiences, this presentation is targeted to lodge and chapter leaders in positions affiliated with inductions, program, and lodge administration.

The trainer should be prepared to engage directly with those participating in the training. They should feel comfortable with the audience and be eager to learn from them when they share their experiences. This training is more than just a presentation; it is a dialogue designed to empower those participating to return to their lodges and work to make a difference.





Session Narrative

Introduction

5 minutes

Trainer Instructions: Take a moment to introduce yourself and the topic. You should provide information on your OA experience and previous leadership positions that you may have held within your lodge and section. Next, you should review the theme of the presentation and ask participants what they hope to get out of the training session.

Ultimately, the health of a lodge's program, communications, and leadership can be seen in its activation rate. A lodge's activation rate refers to the percentage of new members who attend a lodge event within the first twelve months following their induction. Many factors go into activation, making this a difficult area to identify single issues and simple solutions. This is why, today, we are addressing the wide range of issues which influence activation. Today's session is less of a time for direct instruction and more of a conference. As we work through each of our major points, I encourage each of you to share your experiences as to what has worked for your lodge, what hasn't, and where issues may have arisen.

The objectives of this session are to:

- Explain the stakeholders in and the significance of activation.
- Demonstrate ways to encourage engagement.
- Guide participants to developing plans to improve activation.
- Enable lodges to implement these plans and access supporting resources.

Significance of Activation Rate

5 minutes

Trainer Instructions: Ask participants to share when they went to their first lodge event. Questions can include: What was it? Why'd you go? How did you hear about it? How long after your Ordeal was this event? See how many details they can provide, and be sure to incorporate some of the responses when teaching the rest of this section.

When looking at getting members involved in the OA, there is a clear window of opportunity with three distinct activation phases. Within the first five months following the Ordeal, fifteen percent of Arrowmen will attend their first event. For this reason, it is essential that lodges develop program that is appealing to new members





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post-induction. The Ordeal is a challenging and engaging time, and many Arrowmen show heightened interest in the OA program for a period afterward. Of course, presenting a program which asks too much of Arrowmen and their parents would not be beneficial, so some time should be left between a new member's induction and their first post-induction event opportunity, but not too much. An additional 9% of Arrowmen will be activated by the end of the first year following their Ordeal. Between thirteen and eighteen months post-induction, there is a slight increase as members become Brotherhood eligible, though only ten percent of self-described activated Arrowmen are activated within this window. Effectively zero percent of Arrowmen are activated following the end of this eighteen-month period, leaving sixty-five percent of Arrowmen never activated. Today, we ask, "How we can maximize the effectiveness of this eighteen-month window?"

Identify Stakeholders

5 minutes

As was mentioned earlier, there are a number of factors that go into activation. This is largely because there are so many parties involved. Before being able to address maximizing the effectiveness of the activation window, it is important to identify the various stakeholders involved in this process.

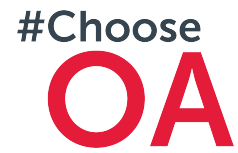
First: members of the lodge. This includes both the new members, who are significant for obvious reasons, and currently active members. Current members have an interest in activation for a few reasons. It's important to remember that service is one part of the OA's purpose; let's not forget, the Lenape name for the OA refers to us as the Brotherhood of Cheerful Service. Lodges are able to best serve their units and council with a wide base of members, both directly through service projects and indirectly through the leadership provided by Arrowmen in their home units. As the saying goes, many hands make light work. Activated Arrowmen should also be of interest to their home units, unit leadership, and parents. If lodges and chapters are able to engage a unit's leadership, then the program (both Scouting and OA-specific) can develop on a more direct and personal level.

Second: parents and guardians. These individuals — who are often the way that younger members will physically get to events — can be the driving force for Scouting involvement in general, and will certainly be stronger advocates of the OA's program if they understand the impact and significance of what we do. The home unit should have an interest in general because of the improvements to their





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leadership that the OA can bring. Arrowmen will learn more about being a leader through the opportunities for practical, experiential learning provided by the OA program than they ever could at a single training. Parents and guardians often look for what parts of Scouting will do the most to prepare their child for life, and the OA is certainly a key component in preparing the moral servant leaders of tomorrow.

The final stakeholder group is the lodge in particular, and the members of the Scouting movement in general. Lodge leadership needs to be able to count on the active participation of members in order to execute a successful program, and activating Arrowmen is the first step in this. Newly activated members can serve their lodge by filling leadership roles and forming the next generation of youth and adult leaders. The district and council have a key interest in supporting the OA program as well, as the OA gives back countless hours of service to Scouting. For this reason, District Executives and council Scout Executives will often be willing to work with the chapter and lodge to promote the OA program, so long as its significance is communicated. Scouting as an institution is also impacted by the OA in so many ways. Every other year, thousands of Arrowmen make lasting memories at National Order of the Arrow Conferences. Philmont Scout Ranch, the Florida Sea Base, Northern Tier, and the Summit Bechtel Reserve all rely on OA High Adventure programs for maintenance, upkeep, and expansion. Successful lodges put a strong emphasis on national program, and this contributes to the success of the wider Scouting program. This domino effect highlights the significance of activating as many Arrowmen as possible. You never know: it is always possible that you just invited the next lodge chief, section chief, or national chief to your upcoming lodge fellowship!

Core Elements of Activation

5 minutes

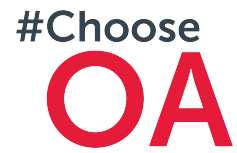
Trainer Instructions: Ask participants what they think the central issue of activation is. What single thing can be done to activate Arrowmen? Ideally, they'll reach the conclusion of communication. Help to move the conversation in this direction until they either reach this conclusion, are getting close, or it becomes apparent that they won't reach the answer.

When we look at each of these stakeholders, the central strategy for activation becomes apparent: communication. There are three core elements to activation, all based around how the OA shapes and communicates its message.





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The first core element is education. Parents and unit leaders are looking for what their Scouts will get out of the program, but many non-members don't know much about us. Yes, we perform ceremonies and go camping, but what else? Communicating the mission and purpose of the Order of the Arrow is incredibly important, and can be impactful in captivating the minds and focus of this key audience.

The second core element is to understand the deeper significance, symbolism, and changing effects of the OA. This is directed more towards the members themselves. The OA introduces deep thoughts and ideas to a wide range of people, personalities, mentalities, and maturity levels. Encouraging Arrowmen to think about these big questions is essential in encouraging them to take the next step in their Scouting adventure by becoming an active member of the lodge. Likewise, parents and unit leaders have to see the scope of the OA's vision; otherwise, they won't be able to further encourage their Scouts to live out the Obligation and Admonition in their everyday lives.

The third core element is engagement, where we manage to bring the OA program into more facets of the Scouting experience, and thereby keep members' interests long-term. The Order of the Arrow isn't just something that we engage with at an OA event. The OA is always present, whether at a council event, or through role models within our unit. Bringing the OA program into the Scouting experience of members and their units is necessary to be able to activate Arrowmen.

Each of these elements are needed in order to sustain our lodges through activation of members. Now, it is time that we specifically look at each of these components in more detail, analyze the resources available and the best practices of successful lodges, and prepare to incorporate these elements into our own lodges.

Educate

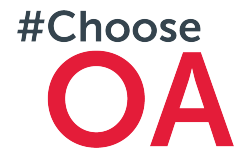
5 minutes

From the moment that a Scout first sees a colorful lodge flap, or the bright white and red of an Order of the Arrow sash, they tend to stick out in the memory. Beyond just a general awareness (though awareness is in and of itself an important step on the membership journey), it is essential to develop a knowledge of what the Order of the Arrow is and the various roles that it plays. Educating Scouts about the role of the OA starts long before they ever become members, beginning with our first impressions.





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This process starts with the election team setting their best foot forward and never hesitating to show their Scout spirit. Following a candidate's election and call-out, many lodges have found that providing letters to candidates, as well as to parents and guardians, which introduce the purpose, role, and significance of the Order of the Arrow help to concretely communicate these central concepts. Not only should these letters congratulate the candidate on their election and emphasize the significance of OA membership, but they should also begin to show the importance of the OA and the new opportunities presented by our Brotherhood. OA membership is a transformative experience, but only if we allow it to be. Showing parents and guardians the lasting impact the OA can have on the front end can get them involved and make them advocates for activation. Additionally, these letters will often emphasize the resources available for the candidate and their family, including the local lodge and national OA websites, as well as contact information for leaders at both a chapter and lodge level. However, the strongest advocate for the OA program is alumni themselves. Arrowmen — either youth members or youthful adults — who have experienced the OA program and are seeing the fruit of their investment are in the ideal position to communicate this message. Many Arrowmen vividly remember the first time that an experienced lodge member sat next to them and began to share stories about how the OA shaped their Scouting journey.

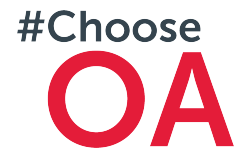
At the Ordeal, the message of the OA will continue to be communicated. Many lodges hold new parent meetings on the first night of the Ordeal. Not only is this a time for parents to meet the youth and adult leaders of the lodge, with whom they are entrusting their Scouts, but also to demonstrate the model Scouts who best represent what the OA has to offer. Additionally, many questions can be answered directly and thoroughly when holding in-person conversations, rather than communicating via email or letter. For newly inducted Ordeal members, the new member orientations and the Jumpstart follow-up program can both help to crystallize the meaning of the Order and the role that it plays in Scouting.

Following the Ordeal, it is important to remain in close contact with the newly inducted candidates. This can be done through a number of programs, such as an Extended Elangomat or Nimat program, where senior Arrowmen keep in contact with new members between the time that they complete their Ordeal and the time that they reach Brotherhood eligibility, encouraging attendance at lodge events and involvement in other Scouting opportunities the OA provides. Some lodges have taken to communicating directly with their membership through livestreams on





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Facebook or other social media platforms, through which lodge leaders can address their membership and answer questions in real time. Constant communication isn't just to remind Arrowmen of the purpose of the Order, but also to keep them interested in the program. This is essential to activating (and later engaging) Arrowmen.

Trainer Instructions: Ask participants to share how their lodge communicates with Arrowmen and their families before, during, and after the Ordeal, and how well this has worked. Has anything stood out as being a resounding success? Any notable shortcomings?

Understand

10 minutes

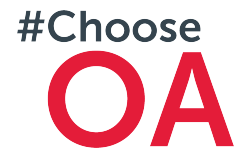
Far too often, it is forgotten that the induction process is not concluded with the Ordeal ceremony. Other parts still remain, including the new member orientation, journey to Brotherhood, and Brotherhood Ceremony. During this time, the mission and purpose of the OA is crystallized as Arrowmen begin to understand the meaning of the Brotherhood membership level. This understanding can be communicated in a variety of ways: first, through the experiences gained in the journey to Brotherhood; second, in the Brotherhood Ceremony; and third, through specific communications strategies.

The Journey to Brotherhood is the period between the completion of the Ordeal and Sealing the Bond by becoming a Brotherhood member. This isn't simply a time of waiting, but rather a time of challenge, and should be used to fully prepare Arrowmen for commitment to continue in service to the lodge that comes with the bars on the sash. A wholesome Journey to Brotherhood should be defined by an engaging call to service. Throughout this time, Arrowmen should come face-to-face with lodge leadership in Scouting's constant effort to prepare leaders. This call to service can manifest itself in many ways: service opportunities, mentoring from Brotherhood and Vigil Honor members, serving as an OA Troop Representative, and more. This call to service contributes towards developing brotherhood, cheerfulness, and service in Arrowmen. The Brotherhood Hike is what turns the theory of the Ordeal into practice. It is an opportunity to learn and to teach, to engage and to explore. The hike is an experience which cannot be replicated, and ensuring that the hike is both meaningful and impactful, and has a major impact on the success of the entire induction process, is important. The Brotherhood Hike is a time for candidates to





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reflect on the journey to Brotherhood and to enhance the significance of the upcoming Brotherhood Ceremony. Beyond this, the journey should plant the seeds for future participation in the OA.

The Brotherhood Ceremony provides closure to the questions asked during the Ordeal ceremony, but also leaves new Brotherhood members with a challenge to continued service. The questions asked in the Brotherhood Ceremony are not questions of testing the mind and body, as those asked in the Ordeal, but rather questions of the spirit, which resonate in the consciences of fully inducted members of the Order. The Brotherhood Ceremony revitalizes the spirit Order and expands on the meaning of Brotherhood. This activates and engages Arrowmen by encouraging their commitment to the OA. Understanding the purpose of the OA and the significance of Brotherhood membership can be communicated through a variety of means. Many resources are available for unit leaders, families, and Arrowmen themselves. Lodges oftentimes can develop their own new member information packets and provide resources which outline the journey to Brotherhood and help to crystallize the significance of OA involvement. The most effective way to communicate this, however, is through senior Arrowmen who serve as ambassadors of the program and examples of its success. Sharing the experiences which have transformed Arrowmen with others helps unit leaders and parents to understand why getting Scouts involved is so important.

Trainer Instructions: Ask participants to share what impact completion of the Brotherhood had on them. What stood out in the process? What could have been improved? If some participants are not Brotherhood members, encourage them to discuss their Journey to Brotherhood and what they should be focusing on in this important time with those who have already sealed their membership.

Engage

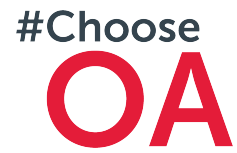
5 minutes

While activation and getting Arrowmen to their first event is significant, it is also important to present a strong program which will be able to engage Arrowmen in the long-term. This starts with the very first event that an Arrowman attends after their Ordeal. It is essential that the next time an Arrowmen experiences the OA program, it is a positive experience which won't soon be forgotten, and can also help to potentially outweigh a negative experience during the Ordeal. However, the lodge shouldn't necessarily be the first OA experience of a new member. It is important to





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promote involvement on a local level through chapters and units. In lodges which utilize chapters, the communication between Arrowmen and the lodge is enhanced through the chapter. Likewise, chapter program should be engaging and complimentary to lodge program.

One element of constant contact between the lodge and its members is OA presence at non-OA events. Given the capabilities for the lodge to serve the council, the Order will often have a presence at council and district events. The example of service this sets is one of the strongest testaments to the significance of the Order. Likewise, the impression left by Arrowmen at unit elections, unit camping promotions, and other service opportunities within units can help to show parents and unit leaders the value of participation within the Order. Given that a unit which advocates activation can often be the driving force behind getting Scouts involved, remembering to represent the Order at all times can have a major impact.

Trainer Instructions: Ask participants to share what made them decide to return following their first event. How did the lodge or chapter grab their attention? What else could have improved this change from activation to engagement?

Identify Activation Strategies

5 minutes

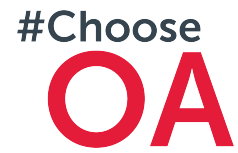
According to a number of studies on corporate trainings, within one hour of learning, 50% of learned information will be forgotten. Within 24 hours, this number spikes to 70%, and by the end of the week upwards of 90% will be forgotten. That is, unless we start talking about making a plan today. We're going to start off this process by identifying activation strategies.

It is incredibly important to be aware of the activation window when laying out a lodge's annual calendar and beginning to plan out an activation campaign. Inducting new members and then not communicating with them for six months is a sure way to lose their interest and say goodbye to potential active members. Instead, focus on offering events to incorporate new members at least every six months and no more than three months following the completion of the Ordeal. At these events, it is important to incentivize the participation of non-activated members. This could include anything from a discount on registration to patch giveaways for those attending their first event. This plays into the need for a memorable program and a





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special first experience aside from the Ordeal itself. Ideally, the first event attended by new members should be one which won't soon be forgotten, for positive reasons. This can be done by tailoring the program towards new members and by finding incentives which appeal to the lodge's culture. For example, in lodges where patch trading is a well-established and common practice, patches serve as a strong incentive. For other lodges, lodge-branded memorabilia may be more enticing.

Finally, getting Arrowmen to transition from activation to long-term engagement can be accomplished through good administration. Engaging Arrowmen in chapter and lodge leadership is a great way to open new doors and present new challenges to Scouts in the OA program. New members should be encouraged to find a way to plug in to the lodge's leadership opportunities, such as joining a lodge committee or serving as a chapter vice chief. These opportunities will challenge the Arrowman, but also help to reveal the value and meaning to the program and encouraging further involvement and commitment to the lodge. Moreover, this helps to prepare the next generation of lodge leadership and ensures succession whenever current leaders age out or move on to the next phase of their Scouting career.

Trainer Instructions: As the session wraps up, ask participants to identify any of these strategies used in their lodge. Were any of these strategies instrumental in getting them activated?

Closing

10 minutes

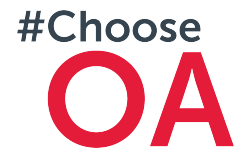
Trainer Instructions: Conclude the presentation by offering a time to answer questions and to encourage discussion between participants. This is where the session transitions from learning to applying. Reference the previous discussions held between members of the group, and address any questions that may have been raised throughout the presentation. Use all remaining time to help participants form ideas and plans from the content of the Brotherhood Conversion Process presentation. Depending on the nature of the group and how the training went, the trainer can always offer to meet or correspond with the participants on an individual basis to provide guidance and insight as needed.

As we conclude this session, it's time to begin looking at how to put into practice what has been discussed today. When discussing best practices, you can avoid miscommunications and best share ideas with the following strategies:





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- Define terms to prevent confusion
- Identify a clear end goal
- Understand differences of perspective between Arrowmen and different lodges
- Imagine your plan fails, then ask yourself, "What went wrong?"
- Determine what the next step is

Using these techniques, we can establish our baseline for what is being discussed and what we hope to achieve, begin to see how best practices could be best applied in our home lodges, and see what changes may need to be made in order to make these programs successful.

Thank you for joining me today as we work towards helping increase the activation rate for all of your lodges!

