

# Unit Commissioner aids to Deal with Committee Conflicts

Refining Commissioner Tools

By Dennis Dziech 6/17/2012

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## Preface

The necessity for skills and reference material to be reduced to a more manageable size or format for the Unit Commissioner would seem to be a reasonable goal in order that it will enable adequate assumption of the responsibility of the purpose of the position. More specifically the emphasis on the importance of managing skills needed to influence Unit Committees in a productive direction. The Unit Commissioner has a reasonable amount of ownership in the Units success. It is the goal of this paper to prove that a simplified plan of action directed by the Unit Commissioner could greatly influence the outcome of a Units ability to achieve that success. This success defined most specifically in the operations of the Unit Committee and its influence on the outcome of the unit as a whole. It is my contention that the reference materials available are only one tool toward Unit Committee harmony. The more important tool lies in the development of the Unit Commissioner's skill as a quality leader. In order for that to happen all tools needed for success should be reduced to a homogeneous system.

## Introduction

Commissioners may find that committee conflicts are one of the areas of trouble in the units in which they have involvement. Do the nature of Commissioner Service the ins and outs of a unit's workings may only be partially apparent. Having merely the perspective of an outsider in most units, the Unit in question could have problems and conflict's can be hard to identify. Many times the actual units don't realize the extent of the issues that they are dealing with until it's too late. To any extent the Commissioner is most likely to be the last to know about any issues that are occurring in a Unit's Committee. Through Frequent Visits to Unit meetings one can obtain a perspective that there might be a problem. If a Commissioner is to become a Friend to the Units Leader a great deal of perspective can be gained on the workings of its Committee. The Periodic visits to the Units Committee Meeting's should surely identify if there are disputed issues in a Committee. A relationship with the Chartered Organization Representative or Head is another clear way to identify a problem. With many Unit Commissioners serving far more than the prescribed two or three units it is clear to see how all of these relationships are hard to develop. In many cases the discovery of serious issues in a Unit will come from a tip or a phone call from a concerned individual. Once a problem has been defined, a Unit Commissioner needs to prescribe a solution.

To serve effectively as a Unit Commissioner a prescribed plan of action must be initiated. The undertaking of this writing will be to relate Boy Scout resources to practical mediator skills in order to aid a Commissioner in his duties as prescribed to a Committee. The goal will be to expand on the available BSA resources and add practical aids that will allow for expansion of the Unit commissioner's

knowledge base. The demonstration of how to “identify, discuss, handle, seek assistance and put plan into action”<sup>1</sup> will be related to other disciplines of Conflict resolution. These terms in the Boy Scout Commissioner hand book which prescribe for a commissioner how to handle a problem.

*“ Steps in Handling a Problem ”*

*Identify the problem.*

*Decide if it is a problem*

*Discuss the problem with the ADC*

*Is assistance needed from the district committee?*

*Decide whether you will handle it alone or with the ADC*

*Decide who is to handle the problem*

*Plan your actions.*

*Plan your alternatives.*

*Put the plan into action.*

*Evaluate “<sup>2</sup>”*

Several points that I feel that would be of great benefit to a Unit Commissioner is to educate not only oneself, but also the committee involved this would preclude many problems. If a problem is precluded through education then the best solution is arrived upon before an issue becomes a conflict. The organization of BSA has taken great strides in recent years to train leaders so they can serve effectively. The year of this writing the Committee training will be required by all committee members for Rechartering. This is a critical help to the Commissioner in that it will cause greater awareness of the role of every Committee member. So my proposal will demonstrate that the elements for Committee conflict resolution will require “preclusion” through education along with Education of the Unit Commissioner to allow for “prompt answers” regarding BSA policy and guidelines. Sometimes the Education of the Unit Commissioner might extend to a “promise to research and return with a correct answer”. A suggestion to “postpone” decisions until further support or knowledge can be obtained is a

good tactic to achieve positive results. <sup>32</sup> In the following sections we will explore each tactic and relate practical solutions of conflict mediation to BSA resource material. It appears that the extensive material to the Commissioner can be over whelming and a daunting task to learn. The goal of this paper will be to propose a more practical solution. As I served in a trainer's role for an organization called Evangelism Explosion (or EE for short) we used a system that required the memorization of an Outline. This allows the presenter to know where they are and what points they would like to present. In other words it allows a presenter to stay focused and in control of the discussion. This I believe would become a useful tool for use of the Unit Commissioner. Before the discussion of tactics and solutions a definition of Conflicts requiring outside involvement should be explored.

#### Definition of Conflict I *(call)*

In some cases a disagreement of Ideas can result in a healthy discussion and arrive at an acceptable solution of all parties involved. The Goal of the Unit Commissioner is to have already educated the parties involved in order to arrive at this type of ideal ending. But in the real world it is quite clear that this type of scenario will most likely not occur. In the likelihood the discussion is regarding such issues as having the troop interests split over outdoor activities, such as a certain portion of a Troop being interested in High adventure activities and others not. Where only a portion of the participants are interested in such activities and another portion wishing to abstain from such activities a resolution will most likely be arrived at in house. So long as all parties are in agreement on nearly all other aspects of the organizations activities. It is when disagreements of activities reaches a critical mass that the problems degenerate into a conflict. Supposing a compromise can not be reached over Troop outdoor activities. This is the point that we wish to explore. A group is comprised of like minded individuals in the fact that they have sought to become involved in an organization that meets with a certain set of criteria that they find important to the life they wish to lead. "When we talk of a culture in Boy *scouting*,

each of these definitions applies. The specific group for us is the Scouting culture, because we have shared values, goals, and practices. For our Scouting culture we want to refine the intellectual understanding by sharing our knowledge effectively. We do that by cultivating and growing a learner focused environment, based on our shared values, goals and practices. So the desired Scouting culture puts the needs of the learner first. This others-first focus applies to leadership, as well. Leading by putting the needs of others before your own is called servant leadership. In Scouting, servant leadership is the desired leadership style. In training, servant leadership is also our training style. <sup>4</sup> Consider that BSA parents are driven to include their children in this organization because it meets certain criteria that they wish to have their children involved in for their personal growth. The twelve points of the scout law are values in which a parent hopes to instill in their child. Primal feelings can become invoked if a person feels that another member of the committee is violating one the values that they were installed to uphold. A point can be taken from trainers EDGE on this, imagine if every Committee member when dealing with fellow Committee members. Were to uphold these values:

Trustworthy Committee Members agree to present BSA material in accordance with the published policies, literature, and syllabi of the BSA. You have an obligation to present the material the way it was intended regardless of your personal opinions. You represent the BSA and will at all times conduct yourself accordingly. Committee Members can be counted on to do what they say in regard to personal support of adult leaders. Follow through on locating information and requests. Be available for personal assistance.

Friendly A Committee Member always makes adult leaders feel welcome and part of the fraternity of Scouting. There is never a place for elitist attitudes; Committee Members seek to remove barriers that keep adults from enjoying what Scouting has to offer them. Committee Members are always looking to recruit and encourage new leaders and so share the experience of being a leader. Obedient Committee Members carry out their assigned responsibilities to the best of their ability. Committee Members adhere to the



recommended BSA policy or procedure. Cheerful Committee Members display a cheerful attitude, even when dealing with difficult situations or people. Committee Members always remain cool and professional, even when under stress. <sup>45</sup>

These once again define how things could be in a perfect world but the likelihood of finding volunteers who follow all of these principals are about as rare as an Eagle Scout is outside the scouting world.

So the attempt here is to define how Committee Conflict manifests itself in a real life setting. The Unit Commissioner who has limited contact to a Unit can use the Vital signs test to see how a Committee is doing its job. If a Committee is operating in a quality way it will be reflected in the Unit meetings and outings. On the other Hand if the Committee which is usually comprised of Parents of the Scouts is not getting along it will be reflected in the units meetings. So which of the vital signs will reflect a poor performance of a Unit Committee? One area will be in Youth recruiting and retention once word gets out that a unit is not having "fun" any more they will have a hard time recruiting new members. Likewise the Members who are no longer having fun will seek greener pastures especially if they don't have much "sweat" invested in that unit. If the Unit leader is lost and not replaced or a dispute results over the selection of a new leader this will surely result in the death of a unit. One of the most hotly contested areas in Units in trouble will be over the selection of its leaders. If the chartered organization leader is unhappy with the unit it most assuredly is due to Poor leadership in the Committee or the Unit leader. When the parents become uninvolved with a unit it is surely nearing its end. As stated earlier the program needs to meet the desired values and training goals hoped for by the parents of the members. Once the program is lost there is no longer a reason for the parents to participate and with the lack of support comes a poor program it's a viscous circle. A Unit Commissioner might notice though several visits to unit meetings that a Unit has no planed program and a lack of discipline. This is surely a

result of poor leadership and lack of support from parents and Committee members. On the other hand there might be a well intentioned unit leader who is trying to hold down the fort by their self and does not know how to recruit help not so much a committee conflict but a huge problem none the less. On the other side of that coin though it could be a leader who does not work well with others and wants to run things on their own. I would put this in the Committee conflict department because they are not working with the support of a Committee. At a Unit Meeting a Unit Commissioner can tell if the leaders are communicating and getting along if not they most likely are having a problem. The other area might be disputes of BSA policies if there are members who do not want to follow them we fall back in to the trustworthy issue we discussed earlier. The Commissioner FIELDBOOK FOR UNIT SERVICE suggests several other areas to look out for such as:

“Unit with No Committee (“Choking”). A unit leader with little or no adult help might not survive very long or the unit program weakens and youth get cheated out of the great opportunities of Scouting. Unit Conflict with the Chartered Organization (“Poisoning by mouth”). Misunderstandings sometimes occur, and they can threaten the life of a unit if left unresolved. Leaders of the chartered organization realize they have some responsibility for the success of the unit. **1. Bad chemistry.** This refers to the person who just can’t get along with others and may even greatly offend some, driving good people out of Scouting. **2. Bad politics.** This volunteer is a poor team player who is not in keeping with the organization’s image. This person prevents others from being effective and may also drive them out of Scouting. This volunteer may hate his or her Scouting responsibility and lets others know it. **3. Bad job.** This volunteer may be a nice person but simply doesn’t perform assigned tasks and can’t seem to meet the objectives of his or her Scouting responsibilities.”<sup>6</sup>

So let’s explore how a Commissioner might develop some tools to deal with all these problems in a Units Committee.

## Tools II *(answers)*

In this section I would like to define what the tools of the Unit Commissioner are and why it is important to educate committees and yourself as a Commissioner. Think about any activity we undertake in our lives we need to have an action plan. Plans need to be reduced to something very simple and second nature that they become base. What I mean by base is that it needs to become part of who we are, part of our personality. If the action plan cannot be reduced to this level I believe that it will not be operable. So what does this mean in practical terms? Consider the Outline that the presenters of EE memorized this was worked and learned to the point that it could be recited. The outline becomes second nature and is used to guide a discussion to the point that a presenter could talk on subject for hours. The actual outline was only a one page outline. Each Commissioner needs to develop his own personal style that follows an outline and that becomes as second nature. Consider something as basic as taking your morning shower. As babies our guardians washed us and we developed a deep set of desires as to how we liked the temperature of the water, the viscosity of the soap, the duration of the wash, and the texture of the towel along with the pressure applied when drying off. These unconscious desires became deep seated into our being. As we developed into children we experimented with each of these steps of the cleaning ritual. When we became adolescents we might have even experimented with doing away with the ritual all together much to the dismay of others who we are associated with. As we developed into Adults we pretty much have completely developed a routine that works for us. Some people use two towels one for a pre-dry and the other for a finish dry, others do not have such a defined system. At any rate the point is that in order to develop a system it takes time and needs to be developed in a manner that works for the individual using it. If one attempts to force someone else's system into their life's it might work for a while but eventually it will fail. My suggestion is to develop an outline to follow and allow the individual to develop it to work for him or her –self. The outline that

should be followed begins with the Education and Training of oneself as a Commissioner. If you have not been trained become trained. Take the basic training. Go to Commissioner College. If you have earned your Bachelors earn your masters. Take the next level of training available until you run out of training. Edge Training and Woodbadge are great places to develop leader and counselor skills. If you have not done Committee Training then you need to go through the course. The best way to learn things to where they become as second nature is to teach a class on the subject. It is my belief that you truly don't understand something until you can teach it. See one, do one, teach one is the old axiom on this thought. "Commissioners Must Continually Adjust Their Skills to Provide a More Valuable Service to Units. For All Commissioners, Training Is a Continuing Process— at Every Meeting, Every Month, Every Year."<sup>7</sup> The method that I learned was developed outside my connections with the BSA but nonetheless works in an effective way and closely relates to the BSA outline. That's correct the BSA already has an outline to follow when dealing with Unit Committees and dealings with a unit for that matter. The suggestion of "Elements of Good Counseling Provide a *relaxed atmosphere, Listen* more than you speak, Try to *understand* what a leader tells you. Listen for hidden meanings and watch body language.

Let the leader know that *you really hear* what he or she is saying. *Do not give quick, easy advice.* People need to be guided as they find ways to solve their own problems. *Summarize* the problem *Support their thinking* with further information and data. You may suggest several possibilities, but let the leader select the one he or she thinks might work. *Encourage* the leader *Reflect feelings.* *Use positive body language, Be aware of your biases. , Avoid making judgments. , Avoid anger,* often it's better to offer a suggestion in the form of a question. Sometimes they are more acceptable when they come as questions."<sup>8</sup> This is all good information and can easily be incorporated into ones personality if you have a life time to do it in. a simpler outline that I might suggest would be a three part system that includes all the elements in the BSA guide. This outline is much easier to relate to every dealing a Commissioner might have. Much as the Woodbadge secret the outline is based on the Golden rule and easy to include

in one's life." Avoid Argument, our natural tendency is either to meet an objection head-on and beat it down or to run. This tendency must be overcome for the sake of your prospect's negatively, we say never argue. Show a positive attitude on the positive side; you may meet every objection with: "I'm glad you said that!" You ought to be glad your prospect has enough freedom to express his inner feelings to you Use sincere Compliments, if the person to whom you are speaking begins to become hostile or irritated, a sincere compliment can be very effective in reducing tensions." <sup>9</sup> The important point is that a Commissioner educates them self's to the point that the outline becomes second nature.

The other tool elements are to become a good Teacher and make sure that the people that you deal with on a unit level are educated themselves, at least to the point they understand the importance of the job that they are doing for their Units. The Commissioner Annual Service Plan for Units is a tool along with Unit Visit Tracking System (UVTS). So to condense the Tools of the Commissioner are the roles that they serve along with the Education they have and give. Finally the ability to research and return with correct answers. The next section will discover how the Training of the Commissioner can be applied to the roles they serve. The roles being defined as:

"A commissioner plays several roles, including being a friend, a representative, a unit "doctor" or paramedic, a teacher, and a coach. The commissioner is a **friend** of the unit. A commissioner who makes himself or herself known and accepted with the unit leadership will be called on to help in times of trouble. The commissioner is a **representative**. Be a good example. Show that you believe in the ideals, the principles, and the policies of the Scouting movement. Represent it well! The commissioner is a unit "**doctor**" you know that prevention is better than a cure, so you try to see that your units make good "health practices" a way of life. The commissioner is a **teacher**. Participate in the growth of unit leaders by sharing your knowledge with them. You teach not just in an academic environment. The commissioner is a **coach** As a Scouting coach; you will help guide units in solving their own problems. Coaching is the best role

for you when unit leaders don't recognize a problem and where solutions are not clear-cut."<sup>10</sup>

Of the many skills Once again education comes out on top. More than the formal Training a Commissioners Counseling to a Unit leadership is "The best way to strengthen a unit is to strengthen its Leadership. Counseling is an effective method of helping Unit leaders develop their potential. Even the leader who Has completed formal training and has years of experience Can benefit from counseling. Where the need for an Answer or a solution is not immediate, counseling is Preferred over teaching. As a commissioner, you should develop your counseling skills"<sup>11</sup>. The Education as a Counselor could be called education and friendship combined. The next section will explore this possibility.

### Education and Friendship III *(Educate)*

Education and friendship developed under normal relations with Committees can preclude conflict situations. So how do you make the Commissioner a friend before trouble starts? If friendship were defined in the terms of a math equation it might sound something like time added to shared experiences equals' level of friendship. When I was engaged in the Evangelism Explosion movement we used the term of Friendship as a unit of measure to develop a relationship with the prospect. When one goes into the world to witness ones faith, a level of friendship must be achieved before a message can be delivered. There were several types of "visits". The cold call would be door to door witnessing a hard way to express friendship (more likely what would be called friendly attitude) not what we are talking about here. Another kind of "Call" we would make would be a preset call or what you would call a "Friendly Call". This type of call would be a courtesy type of visit to someone who demonstrated an interest in the message that we had to deliver. This is the type of Friendship the Unit Commissioner is

called to demonstrate to the Units he is assigned. The Unit commissioner needs to be careful to make sure he distributes this type of Friendliness to the entire Unit not just only to the most accessible person who in most cases might be the Unit Leader. The consideration that Unit leaders come and go must be taken into account. This is where it is important to develop that relationship with the Unit Committee as a whole; there is no telling where the next Leader is going to come from. As I progressed through the ranks of the EE movement I found myself as a Level Three teacher. At this level we were training others how to conduct themselves and deal with objections. The EE movement uses another method of instruction that should be implemented in Unit Commissioner Service and that is On-The-Job-Training. An experienced leader would be teamed with two new trainees for each "visit" so the trainee could see the practices being used in a real life situation. These are the type of Counselor skills that a Unit Commissioner should be able to demonstrate in the field. Just as the Evangelist must be able to close the deal. They must also be able to deal with "The Fish after it's caught". The most important thing to develop the new born faithful is to become a friend and help them become educated in the direction that they have taken so they can grow in understanding. So it is with the Unit Commissioner, They need to help the Units and their leaders to grow in understanding of the "goals, Values, and Mission" of the BSA movement. A Unit leader is isolated at first in their understanding of what BSA is all about the Unit is their major concern. This is important in that the unit is the most important part of the BSA movement. This is where the mission meets the people. In order for a unit to achieve the greatest benefit of what BSA has to offer the Unit needs to become educated in the matter of what BSA has to offer. So often units are unaware of the possibilities of the different areas that they could benefit from the Council and District representatives. This why the Unit Commissioner needs to be a Friend to the Units they serve they might very well be the only contact that Unit has to the greater scouting movement. Much like the witness is the first or most important contact to the converted prospect. As a leader in the EE movement it was my job to educate the "wittiness" how to deal with objections the

method used was the Counselor type of Education which enables the prospect to “discover” for themselves the answers to the questions that they have. As I had mentioned earlier the method of precluding problems is the best way to deal with issues. The practical way that a Unit commissioner can do this is by using the resources available to him to help Units. Making Units aware of upcoming Training sessions and encouraging leaders to attend higher level Trainings than those that are required of them. It is said “every scout deserves a well trained leader”. If that’s not enough encouragement for a Unit Leader they should be reminded that personal fulfillment from such training can also be achieved. Every good leader should have some desire to continue their education. “Every good leader is a good teacher” and “Every good teacher is also a good student”. So why is Education so important to Unit leaders? If the Leader is unaware of available resource materials they will work under their own understanding. The compilation of years of research and development should be available to all leaders to make their Units the best they can be. It has been my experience that the larger units have some sense of how to make the most efficient use of available resources. The Unit can take advantage of District resources if they know they are available. I have the unique position of serving on several District staffs. As part of the Training staff we have started to take Trainings to the units because a need was discovered. We found some units believed it a problem to get Unit leaders to come out to our training sessions so we removed that “problem” by taking the training to the Units. The Trainings that I have presented have been well attended by the units. This may simply be to the fact that they get to meet in a familiar place to take the Training and take it with people they know. These units have come back and requested other trainings, which I have presented. The District Training Staff chair has now joined our Commissioner staff. The reason this training is important is that it’s the Unit Committees responsibility to know these things. “The Troop Committee is the troop’s board of directors and supports the troop program. But you ask, “What does the troop committee do?” The troop committee does the following: Ensures that quality adult leadership is recruited and trained. Provides adequate



meeting facilities Advises the Scoutmaster on policies relating to Boy Scouting and the chartered organization Carries out the policies and regulations of the Boy Scouts of America, Supports leaders in carrying out the program .<sup>12</sup> So as important as Training a Unit Committee is, more so is the Training of the Unit Commissioner. Any Training that the Commissioner recommends they should also have been taken by the Unit Commissioner them self.

## Educated Unit Commissioner IV

*(learn)*

Sometimes just being educated as a Unit commissioner could defuse a situation with a prompt answer. To know the answer to questions sure relieves the stress of the presenter or the person who is posing as an authority on a subject. As an Eagle Scout it has been my goal to always be over prepared for any situation that I find myself in. This is the type of preparation the Unit Commissioner should have developed for them self's. The consequence of this is that you will never know the answer to every situation that you find yourself in. But this is where the skills of being able to manage the skills of a good Counselor type of personality comes to serve the Commissioner. No one can expect the Unit Commissioner to know everything. But this is one of the tactics that I have seen from Unit leaders to "Bait" a Commissioner to extend themselves beyond the understanding they have on a subject. This is not to say that there are times when as a Commissioner that we are not required to make suggestions in tough situations. Having said this the issue of continually training one's self is the most invaluable tool the Unit Commissioner can possess. It is said that one thing that is constant is change." Change is a fact of life. Change is a source of anxiety for many people, but it doesn't have to be. Change can be a valuable tool of leadership."<sup>13</sup> This why the education of the Unit Commissioner is so important if we are not prepared for change then we will become ineffective. We need to become the leaders of Change.

*"How to Lead Change; Recognize That Change Happens. Anticipate change. Change happens. And once change happens, change will happen again. Realizing that change is inevitable helps people begin looking for the effects that changes have upon their lives. They can then begin to explore the opportunities they have for shaping the results of change. Accept change. When you see change happening, adapt to it. The more quickly you let go of the old way of doing things and accept the new, the sooner you can enjoy the opportunities the new situation presents. Ask yourself: What are the advantages of changing? What are the consequences of not changing? How can we let go of the existing situation and move on to something new? Move along with change. Enjoy change. Savor the adventure and enjoy what change can offer. Once a change has occurred, be ready for change to happen again, and be ready to enjoy that change, too."*

The Unit Commissioner should be the leading edge of change in every district they should know what the new policies and the new systems are and how to use them. When the JTE over took the Quality unit measurement of unit success there was a lot of frustration over the measurements. But the Commissioner "in the know" realized that this system will allow for better analytical measurement of unit through a centralized data base the professional will have a better understanding of the areas that need improvement in their councils and Districts. Usually change will allow for better understandings and management.

*" Move Ahead, Regardless Some people are so resistant to change that you may not be able to bring them along on the journey to effective change. They may not be able to accept changes that are necessary or inevitable. They may find it impossible to embrace change and to enjoy what it has to offer. Encourage them anyway. As change occurs, they may become enthused about what they see happening and will decide to come on board. They may decide they don ' t want to be left behind and so may come along reluctantly. If they simply cannot or will not change, they will eventually remove themselves from a dynamic situation or will discover that the situation has moved on without them. Those things happen. It is one of the ways that groups reshape themselves to take advantage of inevitable change. The Ultimate Step—Lead Change*

*through Lifelong Learning If the world around us were constant, we wouldn't need to change. Everything would stay the same, and so could we. It would be easy, though in the absence of change we would be bored right out of our minds. Of course, we live in a world swirling with change, change that seems to be occurring at an ever-increasing rate. We can be fearful of it or we can embrace it, move with it, and enjoy what it has to offer. To take full advantage of change, each of us needs to be a lifelong learner. The leadership needs of the future will be different from what they are now. Leaders will need to adapt to succeed. They will need to embrace change. The way to embrace change at a personal level is through lifelong learning. Leaders are educators. They don't just educate others, though. They are also responsible for seeing to their own continuing education."<sup>4</sup>*

Change requires education. The need for educating oneself cannot be emphasized enough. But in many cases we will not know the answers to some of the questions or issues that we face so the skills of knowing how to research an issue will be faced. Consequentially the knowledge of the resources available will result.

## **Finding Policy Information V**

*(Research)*

A unit Commissioner could promise to return with an answer researched from BSA material or from his ADC or District Commissioner if He or she does not know what BSA policy is on a subject. Most issues that result in a Conflict with a Committee are in regards to BSA policies or to other leaders. One good way to start is in Scouting's Library of Literature. Another is the website [www.scouting.org/commissioners](http://www.scouting.org/commissioners) if all else fails a Unit commissioner can fall back to the Assistant District Commissioner and then the District Commissioner. The scouting movement is designed after the Troop structure so the next person up the line should have answers. Finally a Unit commissioner could

call on the District Executive or the District Executive that is in charge of the Commissioner relations. If all else fails the Council Commissioner will have answers. There will be time when a problem becomes too big for a Unit commissioner then an Assistant district Commissioner will take over or enlist the help of the District commissioner. Knowing where to look for answers is the goal of every good Unit Commissioner if the question is about advancement then they should seek advice of the Advancement team for the District and so on. If a conflict over issues of Advancement arises and the committee is allowable to it would be within reason to invite a member of that team to meet with the committee to help with the issues. After all means in the Commissioner Service have been exhausted the District Executive could meet with the Committee. Having the Unit Commissioner attend these meetings would be very helpful to the Unit Commissioner. The skills would be invaluable toward their ability to approach conflict in the future. The unit Commissioner should attempt to develop as many skills in conflict management as possible.

## Managing Conflict VI

*(plan)*

How to manage conflict in a situation where things have gone too far and feelings are hurt and sides are taken (this section is in Woodbadge) although not a complete reference will be a good start for this section conflict management Woodbadge Presentation Troop Guide.

- MANAGING CONFLICT

*Leadership involves managing conflict by finding common ground among individuals, providing tools for people to settle their own disputes* Ultimately, you can only empower

yourself. Then, within boundaries, you can encourage others to act in certain ways *Be Aware of Yourself*

*The first thing to do in any relationship, but especially one that may involve conflict, is to look at yourself When they trust you When they have experience with you and have found you to be a reliable leader and ally When they understand that you are making decisions for the good of the group Most of all, when they sense that you care about them Listening is the most important skill in resolving any conflict, whether the conflict involves you as a participant or as a moderator. Unless you make a conscious effort to listen, you will miss vital facts and beliefs that could lead to a satisfactory resolution. Those are all points of contact, connections that provide a foundation of trust, understanding, and familiarity for further communication and, if necessary, for resolving conflict. In leadership, and especially when dealing with conflict, the bottom line is involvement, involvement, involvement. As a leader, the more you have shared with those you lead, the greater your chances of finding cooperative resolutions for conflicts. Developing that kind of connection cannot happen overnight, though. It is one of the ongoing challenges and rewards of good leadership. Professional conflict mediators are trained to manage their emotions so that they can be as objective as possible. That allows them to view a situation for what it is rather than to allow their anger or excitement or some other emotion to dictate their reactions. Most of us haven't had that kind of in-depth training. However, simply being aware of the need to step away from our emotional responses can help us react more effectively when a situation involves conflict.*

- Cooperative Approach

*The ideal approach to a conflict is to engage everyone on an equal basis and help them come up with a solution on their own.*

- Directive Approach

*Leaders sometimes must make the decision that certain behavior will not be tolerated. Perhaps the most dramatic instances are when safety is being compromised and someone must take action immediately. Within the context of making such decisions – that is, identifying proscription behavior and then demanding the behavior change – it is*

*still possible to act in a manner that is effective for you and understandable to those you are leading. While the end result is an immediate change in behavior, this approach gives leaders tools to explain themselves and provide a basis for a decision. It allows a leader and the group members to interact on a healthy level, and it provides the opportunity for direct decisions to evolve into arrangements developed through a more cooperative approach.”<sup>15</sup>*

All of the elements for being a Good Unit commissioner lay in the statements about conflict management in the Woodbadge syllabus to apply this to Unit commissioner service the first step would be to try to have all parties come together to discuss the issues and try to reach a resolution. If this can be achieved all the better, but the likely hood is that each side of an issue might have to be contacted on an individual basis. After the facts of a case are analyzed the Commissioner needs to develop a plan to try to save the Unit if at all possible. If the conflict cannot be resolved a split might not be the end of the world but might result in the Commissioner doing Double duty trying to keep both sides active in scouting if that is the resolution. I found myself involved in a Unit conflict that had divided a troop into two sides. One side had been through the required BSA trainings for the positions that they held. Several had even taken higher level trainings. This side of the conflict supported BSA policies. The other side had avoided all trainings and tried to run the Troop under their own understanding. The issue was the side without training wanted to engage in banned activities. When it was clear that the Troop needed to follow the BSA policies the Troop had a split and the side supporting managed to maintain the Troop by enlisting the support of the Charter Organization Representative. A side note was that once the Chartered Organization was made aware of the implications of allowing banned activities the CO wanted nothing to do with that. A second case with nearly the same set of circumstances resulted in the Followers of BSA policy starting a new unit. This unit is now one of the strongest supporters of District activities in our District. So how do we follow our personal outlines to become good mediators?

## Mediation VII

*(plan)*

To serve as a mediator in a conflict is one of the greatest responsibilities the Unit Commissioner might find themselves serving. The final resolution will affect all the parties involved. In conflict it is said there are no winners. Two skills need to be managed when serving as a Mediator one is the ability to be a good listener. The second is the ability to serve as a Counselor. These two work hand in hand. A good leader is a good Teacher and a good teacher is a good listener and a good listener is a good counselor. A Unit Commissioner is called to be a Counselor not a Judge or a Jury. It is best to offer a couple of possible courses of action in any conflict. This is the skill of the Mediator. The mediator must be able to listen to both sides of an issue and without personal bias offer a course of action for all parties involved. When I served as a Troop Guide in the Woodbadge class I offered training on the section on good listening.

*“Good listening by receiver and speaker is KEY! It is important to pay attention to what others are saying as well as body language, voice, tone, etc as discussed in effective listening. Most effective communication engages the mind of the listener AND the sender. The sender should pay attention to the audience for signals that message is getting thru. Communication is a 2 way process. Both sender and receiver have responsibility to make happen. Feedback helps guide sender. Ways to Assure Good Communication establish Common ground; have Sincerity you must care about message and receiver otherwise, why bother? Authority Ideally it is important to know what you are talking about. There will be times when a speaker is not an expert on the subject. What becomes important then is a willingness to learn along with group, his ability as a communicator permits him to maintain his authority as he engages. Clarity If you care about your message and you care about your audience you are more likely to communicate clearly. Trying to hide part of a message or twist the truth leads to confusion”<sup>16</sup>*

The issue of becoming a good communicator lays in the abilities to become a great listener. To train oneself to become a good Mediator you must develop good communication skills. For a Unit

Commissioner to become a mediator to a Unit Committee he needs first to be a Friend to the unit who has developed good councilor skills. Helping Committees realize that they may need outside help offering to serve as a Mediator or finding one if you as a Unit Commissioner are not in position to serve in that role. Some Districts have developed lifesaving teams to serve as mediators. It is my suggestion that all of these things need to be reduced to a simpler understanding. BSA has always been a big user of acronyms and therefore I hope to propose one as a solution for dealing with Committees in conflict.

## Solutions VIII

Once again I would like to relate my experiences with EE and transpose them on the Unit Commissioner role. The goal is to have a more universal way of dealing with Committee conflicts that arise and how to deal with them. As mentioned in the previous section the BSA likes to use acronyms as a memory technique. I believe this to be a great way to teach and remember a tool. The tool that this text hopes to propose will be based on the EE learning aid of the five "P's" and related to the tools the commissioner needs to develop to be a good Conflict manager when dealing with Unit Committees. The five "P's" were developed to remember what to do in the case when objections are raised, they are Pray, Preclude, Promptly answer, promise to research and return with an answer, and postpone. These relate closely to the many suggestions from BSA resources to the Unit Commissioner on how to deal with Committees. The issue is that there are so many possible issues that can arise in conflicts with Committees an actual guide for every scenario would be so extensive that it would be too confusing to deal with. There is no way that every situation can be prescribed in detail... Every circumstance will have extenuating circumstances. Therefore a guide for action must be developed. Or an outline that can be remembered. The five "P's" are detailed below:



"Pray

*The first and most important step to remember when you encounter someone with an objection is to pray and ask God for his help. By precluding objections and by dealing with those that arise in a matter-of-fact manner; you can succeed in presenting your prospect with enough information to make a decision.*

Preclude

*This means answering problems before they are raised. It helps eliminate a negative spirit that could result in degenerating into an argument... By having you take the time to get to know the person and build a rapport with him... and by you're asking for and obtaining the person's permission before proceeding.*

Postpone

*If an objection is raised, you must decide whether it is essential to answer it before you can continue, or whether this objection is extraneous...This is a matter that can be put off in the following way: "That's an interesting question, and I would love to discuss it with you. If you don't mind, would you hold it in abeyance until we finish what we're talking about, and if you will bring it up then, we can take a look at it together." In this way you do not have to spend a lot of time answering extraneous objections; you also discourage his bringing up other nonessential matters. Since you have left to him the responsibility of bringing it up again, you need not answer the objection at all unless, of course, he brings it up.*

Promptly answer

*If his objection deals with an essential aspect..... You would not be able to continue without responding to it.*

Promise to Research and Return

*If the "Commissioner" does not know the answer to a question, he can simply say: "That's a very interesting question, and I would like to know the answer to it myself. If you really want to know, I'll find out and get back to you with the*

*answer... He is not called to be the judge or the jury to pass sentence upon the person he is visiting... That means that he has seen or experienced something about which he has firsthand knowledge, and his character demonstrates that these experiences are credible or believable. He is not called to be the judge or the jury to pass sentence upon the person he is visiting... “<sup>17</sup>*

So the proposed final solution would be an acronym that is based on the five “P’s” this would read:

Pray	<b>C</b> all on a higher power
Postpone	<b>L</b> earn
Preclude	<b>E</b> ducation
Prompt answer	<b>A</b> nswer
Promise to research and return with answer	<b>R</b> esearch answers

And if we add the word **PLAN**. Which stands for a system for achieving an objective (a method of doing something that is worked out in advance). This would be for the Unit Commissioner to have a CLEAR PLAN. *table 1* The Unit Commissioner who plans for a Conflict will be ready for it when it occurs. This is done by CALLING ON A HIGHER POWER to help you in all of your dealings as a Unit commissioner the twelfth point of the scout law is reverent. Remember that without the call of a higher power we are only dealing with the understandings of men. The problems that arise out of Committee conflict are always generated by human disagreement. As emphasized through the entire text, education is the best way to eliminate the problems in Committees. A unit Commissioner needs to have as much understanding of all aspects of scouting as possible. The unit commissioner needs to LEARN for themselves about the Committee not only with the formal training but also about the specific committee he is dealing with. “Commissioners Must Continually Adjust Their Skills to Provide a More Valuable Service to Units. For All Commissioners, Training Is a Continuing Process at Every Meeting, Every Month, Every Year. “<sup>18</sup> To become as educated in all matters regarding scouting is the highest order of calling for a Unit Commissioner. The unit commissioner needs to convince the Committee to

become EDUCATED they will better serve their units and it precludes the claim that they did not know something. If a Unit Commissioner stays current on his Training and continues to learn they can most often give an ANSWER to a question. Finally a Unit Commissioner needs to know where to RESEARCH FOR ANSWERS to Problems that will arise in Committees. The chart in the appendix lists many places answers can be found. Finally the Unit Commissioner must have a plan in place to deal with Committees. Have a CLEAR PLAN. The realization needs to be achieved that Scouting needs to be for the benefit of the boys. So the Importance of good committees makes good units.

## Summary

Final goal will be to resolve conflict by preclusion of issues, education of Committees and Unit Commissioners and learning skills of mediation and conflict management. This can be achieved by using the CLEAR PLAN method. Commissioners will find that committee conflicts are areas of trouble in the units in which they have dealings with. Do the nature of Commissioner Service the ins and outs of a unit's workings may only be partially apparent. But if the CLEAR PLAN is under taken some of this can be avoided. If the commissioner becomes a friend having merely the perspective of an outsider in most units can be precluded, the Unit in question could have problems and conflict's can be better identified. Many times the actual units don't realize the extent of the issues that they are dealing with until it's too late. The Commissioner is most likely to have solutions if they have a CLEAR PLAN any issues that are occurring in a Unit's Committee can be dealt with. Through Frequent Visits to Unit meetings one can obtain perspective on how to initiate the CLEAR PLAN. If a Commissioner is to become a Friend to the Units Leader a great deal of perspective can be gained on the workings of its Committee. The Periodic visits to the Units Committee Meeting's should allow the Unit Commissioner to develop a Clear plan of how to relate to a Committee. A relationship with the Chartered Organization Representative or Head is

another clear way to develop a Clear plan that will benefit a unit. Reducing the unit load of Unit Commissioners where they will be serving no more than the prescribed two or three units it is clear to see how these relationships will be easier to develop. Once a problem has been defined, a Unit Commissioner needs to prescribe a solution. To serve effectively as a Unit Commissioner a prescribed plan of action must be initiated. This is where I propose the use of the **CLEAR PLAN**. The undertaking of this writing was to relate Boy Scout resources to practical mediator skills in order to aid a Commissioner in his duties as prescribed to a Committee. The goal was to expand on the available BSA resources and add practical aids that will allow for expansion of the Unit commissioner's knowledge base. The **CLEAR PLAN** of how to "identify, discuss, handle, seek assistance and put plan into action" <sup>19</sup> is related to other disciplines of Conflict resolution. It is the conclusion that the best way to deal with committee conflicts is a multiple step process that begins before a conflict arises. A good Unit commissioner is Prepared. The Tools are not to be defined in a Literal way but a more so as a practical set of skills that need to be inherently preset into the Unit Commissioners personality. This Personality can be enhanced in my opinion by using a tool of following an outlined plan of personal action.

## Table 1 the Clear Plan method

### **Call** {pray} (friend)

- Call on a higher power ( twelfth point of scout law)
- Call on the unit leader( must become friends, requires visits)
- Call on the unit committee (become friends, requires visits)
- Call on the Charter organization (become friends, requires visits)

### **Learn** {Postpone} (representative)

- Learn about committee training (take committee training, read committee Guide book)
- Learn about the specific committee(get to know members this requires visits)
- Learn BSA policies (read guide to safe scouting)
- Learn councilor skills ( take trainings, EDGE, Woodbadge)

### **Educate** {Preclude} (teacher)

- Educate the committee ( have them read committee guide book and take training)
- Educate the unit leader (require minimum trainings encourage advance trainings)
- Educate the Charter organization ( make sure they understand the importance of involvement)

### **Answer** {Prompt answer} (teacher, doctor, coach)

- Answer questions directly (guide towards correct answers)
- Know what BSA policies and guidelines are

### **Research** {Promise to research and return with answer} (coach, doctor)

- Know how to find answers
- Use available leads (Commissioner staff, professional staff, other District staff)
- Use the internet (most BSA resource information available)

### **Plan** (needs to include all elements)

- Put together and have a plan before a problem happens
- Be prepared
- Managing conflict
- Mediation

{EE ideas} {Roles of a Commissioner}

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