STRIKING THE CORRECT BALANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN SCOUTING

Stephen Wilson
Outdoor Ethics Advocate
York District
Palmetto Council
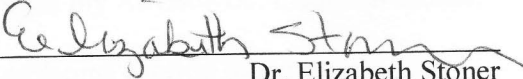*Boy Scouts of America*

June 2015

Piedmont-Appalachian College of Commissioner Science

Ridgecrest Conference Center

Ridgecrest, NC

Dr. Elizabeth Stoner, Advisor

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by author name, entitled "***STRIKING THE CORRECT BALANCE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN SCOUTING***". I have examined the final copy of this report for format and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Commissioner Science.

_____
Dr. Elizabeth Stoner

We have read this Dissertation
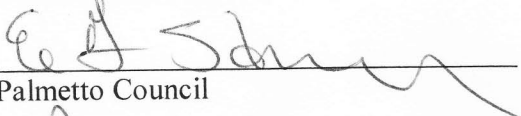and recommend its acceptance:

_____
Coastal Carolina Council

_____
Daniel Boone Council
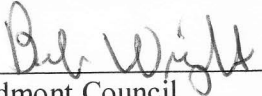
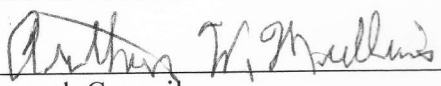_____
Great Smoky Mountain Council

_____
Indian Waters Council

_____
Palmetto Council
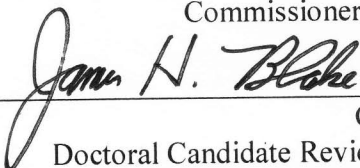
_____
Piedmont Council

_____
Sequoyah Council

Accepted for the Piedmont-Appalachian College of
Commissioner Science:

_____
Chairman
Doctoral Candidate Review Board
and Blue Ridge Council

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my wife Lisa, whose support in this effort was immensely helpful in my ability to finish this dissertation. I would also like to thank my Advisor Dr. Elizabeth Stoner, whose encouragement and positive attitude was always a welcome catalyst to getting the dissertation finished. Last but certainly not least, to Hulic Rattarree, for being a continued inspiration and whose friendship and dedication to Scouting are treasured things in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to provide guidance in balancing the rapid advancement of digital technology with the traditional Scouting experience. It is focused for unit leadership and Scouters who may be struggling with what technologies to allow and how to evaluate the impact of that technology on their unit. The paper begins with some high level observations on technology and moves to a more granular look at the state of this challenge in striking balance in the Scouting world. This is followed by a survey of the advantages that technology may bring to Scouting and moves to a look at the corresponding disadvantages that an individual or unit may incur. The next section presents these positive and negative elements of technology as an opportunity to question and think about its application to a unit. A series of questions are provided that can help focus the conversation on what is the best way to consider the technology for unit implementation. Finally, general guidelines are provided for Scouts and units that can serve to begin the conversation in their particular unit. Not a list of rules, but rather high-level questions for determination of impact and gains. The conclusion is that individuals and units can indeed exhibit a balanced approach and avoid a one size fits all mentality when it comes to inclusion of technology.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Today's Scout leadership faces many challenges in facilitating a successful troop or pack. These range from the changing social norms, competing voices for attention, and the seemingly frenetic pace both parents and leaders endure in today's workplace. One of the greatest challenges to face Scouting comes from the rapid pace of technological[1] advancement that is occurring at the present time. Indeed, Scouting can be seen as a microcosm reflecting the challenges of parents universally as they cope with how to raise their children in today's digital/data driven environment. How do we strike a balance between the context and traditions of the past in a way that does not endanger Scouting's relevance to our present paradigm? Is it possible to find equilibrium between a tradition and program historically grounded in late 19th and early 20th century outdoor skills vs. a modern, almost magical era of technological advancement in which a library of music is carried around in a device no bigger than a matchbox and a world of knowledge is available with the swipe of a finger? This dissertation argues that it is indeed possible to strike a balance between technology and traditional Scouting that allows for continued respect for our Scouting heritage, traditions, and skill and at the same time provides the flexibility to incorporate new technologies to enhance the program.

A quick snapshot of the present day and some high level observations are useful in providing some context and insight into the challenge we have as Scouters, parents, and

---

[1] For the purposes of this dissertation, technology is defined as digital technology and the online world. The impacts of other technologies such as camping devices and hardware advances that are non-computer related are not an area of concern in this paper.

ultimately as mature adults in the world of today. One of the most impactful observations

concerning digital technology is how rapidly the pace of change is occurring. To put some

interesting context around this, we should take a brief look at the history of communication

technology.[2] From the beginnings of humankind to roughly 3500 BC (when the Sumerians

invented Cuneiform) information was passed orally or more permanently by using pictograms or

cave paintings. It took almost another 2000 years for the Phoenicians to invent an alphabet.

Paper was invented about 105 AD in China, followed by the printing press in 1450. 1831 brought

about the telegraph and Bell invented the telephone in 1876. Television followed in 1901.

Contrast that with the last 50 years. In that time we have seen the creation and development of

the Internet, and later the World Wide Web. We have seen music go from record, to cassette, to

CD, to digital stream. We have seen the majority of communication move from physical face-to-

face communication to phones, then cell phones, then texts, Facebook posts, Tweets, and picto-

textual applications like Instagram. Each of these is a major paradigm shift, but instead of having

millennia or centuries to adapt to the new technology, we are given at best a few years before the

next shift is upon us. The rapidity of changes can be mind-numbing.

These changes are not just changing hardware, or the latest and greatest app, but are

fundamentally changing the "shape" of our communication, language, and social norms. Indeed,

studies show that these changes can even affect human physiology and can have unforeseen

---

[2] "Timeline of Communication Technology." Wikipedia. October 10, 2014. Accessed December 11, 2014.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_communication_technology.

effects on childhood development and human physiology.[3,4] It is no wonder that there is trepidation on introducing the potentially disruptive element into an organization that prides itself on tradition and program. A part of this fear is the very correct realization that we ourselves are the groundbreakers in Scouting's implementation and integration of this digital/technological frontier. We understand the need to adapt, and at the same time are unsure where the next step leads or what impact will ripple beyond each step. Yet, we are not completely sailing rudderless. There are a few examples in Scouting of switching to a newer technology as the modern world progressed. Think of the move from learning semaphore, or Morse code to more modern and relevant technologies like radio and now programming. The incorporation of modern camping technology (i.e. lightweight tents and ultralight cookstoves) and methods (Leave No Trace) have modified the camping experience and lessened the environmental impact compared to prior Scouting generations. These must indeed give us some glimmer of hope that we can reconcile the modern digital world with the traditional skills, programs, and methods we have come to love in Scouting.

A quick word is in order about the content of this dissertation. This author means to move to his observations of the state of Scouting with digital technology. From there, the author reviews of the related literature and content available that informs our discussion. This will lead to the main body of the dissertation composed of first a discussion of the advantages of digital

---

[3] Wetherell, Mark A., and Kirsty Carter. "The Multitasking Framework: The Effects of Increasing Workload on Acute Psychobiological Stress Reactivity." *Stress and Health*, 2013, 103-09.

[4] Mark, A. E., and I. Janssen. "Relationship between Screen Time and Metabolic Syndrome in Adolescents." *Journal of Public Health*, 2008, 153-60.

technology, the disadvantages of digital technology, and an exploration of the tensions that lie between the two extremes. Evaluation of the tensions will lead to a chapter on practical guidance for Scouts, units, and Scouting in general to provide a framework for individual decision-making; this is followed by a summary of the dissertation. Collateral material and appendices will finish off the work. These include a review of current programs, merit badges, offerings, and opportunities for Scouts, Leaders, and units to participate in. There are also some sample digital use agreements that can be used as a framework for unit discussion. Finally there is a PowerPoint presentation that is useful for Roundtable discussion or can be used as a springboard for conversations within a unit looking to identify how best to moderate the use of digital technology and strike its own balance.

CHAPTER II

THE STATE OF SCOUTING AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

This moment in Scouting is one characterized by transition. A consequence of the

massive amount of change in Scouting is unease and even fear of digital technology, coupled

with recognition by many that there is a need to somehow incorporate it into the programs in

place. There should be, though, an acknowledgement that Scouting is made up of individuals,

each with a unique viewpoint and background that has its own perspective on what technology

we should embrace and how. This can range from an almost complete disdain of any "current"

technology to an enthusiastic embrace of the most cutting edge of the wired world. Much of the

time the attitude towards the digital world is shaped not necessarily through a well thought out

evaluation of technological impact, but rather correlates roughly to the level of exposure of the

individual to the digital world. The level of exposure is usually determined by socio-economic

level, education, and the workplace. Roughly put, those with more exposure to technology and

the means to possess it become more familiar and more at ease with it in all aspects of their life,

including Scouting. Those without the financial means and with minimal exposure through work

or personal life or education feel less at ease with technology and are lower on the adoption

curve. This is not calling into judgment the correctness of their attitude, but rather pointing out

the obvious point that the more interaction and exposure one has to a thing, the more likely one

is to become accommodated and accepting.

Drawing upon personal experience (with a decade in Scouting and operating at

many levels within the Scouting movement) the present writer has noticed four main "flavors" of

Scouter approach to the application and integration of technology in their units. Three of these unfortunately miss the mark of striking a healthy balance in implementation of technology. Although speaking of paradigms of Scouters and Scouting leadership on an individual level, they can also be loosely held as unit perspectives; the units themselves take on the attitudes and perspectives of their individuals.

First of these exemplars is the outright technophobe. This is a leader who lets their fear, uncertainty, and doubt about technology in general dictate a highly restricted or complete ban on any technology they consider too "modern" for Scouts and Scouting. This disdain for anything that smacks of the digital realm manifests itself in Troop regulations forbidding or restricting technology to the point that the Scouting experience itself is limited and growth, both of the boy and the unit, is stifled. To the Scouts, such a leader is seen as saying "No" for no good reason. This is usually accompanied by a lack of transparency into the reasoning behind the restrictions, and this lack of transparency can build a bit of a wall between the leader and the other members of the unit (both Scouts and Scouters). In addition, it can add a bit of a generational antagonism to the unit. This can stem on the one side of a leader who does not understand the technologies in question (or perhaps only sees the downside) and does not trust leadership's ability to thoughtfully regulate usage. On the other side is a youth who has grown up immersed in this technology and is comfortable enough with it so that there is no fear in using it, and who does not understand the concerns others may have. This plays into the script of the ignorant adult who just is not keeping up with the present; a dinosaur.

From the leader's viewpoint, there may also be a feeling that this technology angle is for nerds and Scouts should be more the "Frontiersmen" archetype. Such a view devalues these new methods of communication and interaction as distractions from the aims they believe Scouting embodies. It can also lead to a bit more paternalism than needed as the leadership must enforce these rules that have not necessarily been embraced or even explained to the Scouts themselves, especially when they are cognizant that this should be a boy-led troop. Surprisingly, it is often the lack of transparency and "voice" in the rulemaking that can cause more grumbling than the rule itself.

The technophobe does not just negatively impact the boys in the unit, but can also impact the success and efficiency of the unit itself. There are some great opportunities for implementation of technology at unit level that help with many of the onerous processes and procedures that Scouters face. Is there a Scoutmaster or Cubmaster who ever enjoyed filling out the paperwork involved in a recharter? It is now online to help make this less of a chore to the leaders. Is there a Scouter who looks forward to collecting fees for a campout? Personal credit card readers can make this a much less onerous chore and provide flexibility many parents are used to in our society. Advancement tracking? Yes, there are spreadsheets, applications, and now even Cloud based sites to allow units to more easily log and manage their Scouts progress. Online activity planning and filing has made that chore a much less impactful one. The technophobe is truly short-changing their unit's flexibility if they maintain their inflexibility in regards to considering implementation of technology.

Juxtaposed to the technophobe is a leader we will call "Jimmy the Geek." This leader errs on the other extreme, enthusiastically pushing technology, applications, and devices even when there is no apparent need or desire. While not nearly as common as the technophobe, these leaders seem to be popping up with more regularity. The biggest concerns with these leaders is that by being too lax regarding appropriate use of technology, they are allowing it to dominate or replace much of the true value that traditional Scouting experiences bring to the table. For example, there is an amazing smartphone application called "Starwalk" that can bring a planetarium-like experience to your device. It will allow you to identify stars and relative positions of constellations just by holding your phone up to the sky. Yet, this seems but a poor substitute for looking up at the night sky and watching a shooting star zip across the vista in the real world and should not be equated as such.

The over-reliance on technology or excessive permissiveness can also give too much room for the Scouts to feel no hesitation in checking out of a meeting by logging onto their devices if there are no limits or guidelines for usage. There is also the tendency of the leader to want to dwell on each new cool piece of hardware or application or use troop resources to purchase a gadget that may have little impact on the overall enjoyment or advancement of the Scouts. Troop time becomes a time to talk about the latest video game or chat about the latest smartphone or solar powered USB device charger and not a time to allow Scouts to develop their leadership skills, work on their advancement, planning, or fun activities. Part of the problem this presents is that communication is curtailed at multiple levels, even given that it may be enhancing a small slice of it. It can isolate the conversation from a broad base of participation to

only those who have the financial means to afford such devices. The very size and nature of the hardware effectively limits the interaction to one, maybe two people per device. And the focus of the person is on the screen rather than an awareness of what is going on in the area around them.

The third and most common leadership method for addressing this issue is what can be termed "The Disengaged Leader." The present writer has found this far more common than any other approach. There is perhaps an inherent understanding on the part of this leader that he/she does not have the skill, time, knowledge, or inclination to tackle the issue directly, and chooses rather to "hope for the best" and try to avoid the worst impacts that technology may have on the unit. Unfortunately, this may be the worst path to take as it can allow problems or concerns to be masked much longer and potentially become very difficult to address. It can also contribute to confusion with the unit as both Scouts and leaders look for guidance. Additionally, the unit may also lose out on some of the benefits that are available to it with a proper and balanced approach, thereby hindering its effectiveness on both handling the day to day administration and communication within the unit as well as broader goals and administrative tasks such as marketing and evangelism of the unit or perhaps the Recharter process.

The last leader type is the well-balanced leader. This leader will acknowledge the issues presented head on and understand the need to work towards finding that balance within their units own context. It can certainly be a challenge, but there is at least some confidence that providing some guidance or policy framework is better than no guidance at all, and has the ability to be tweaked later if the need so arises. This leader can also understand that technology will not just go away in the foreseeable future, but shows every indication of enmeshing itself

within our lives to even greater extent. They recognize that allowing some digital technology to help shape their unit is not only necessary to keep it relevant, but also offers some very helpful aids to the day to day chores inherent in Scouting. There is also the realization that part of their responsibility as a Scout leader is to make sure that their Scouts are prepared for the life choices that are presented them, including career choices that will manifest themselves in life, fields of study to contemplate for continuing education, and certainly hobbies or diversions that can be a source of pleasure and joy to the individual. Technology and digital expertise will determine much of the success of Scouts in the coming decades.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is very little documentation specifically related to Scouting and technology that directly supplies a prescriptive set of suggestions for local leaders. The present writer gleaned most insight from articles focused on the social impact and physiological impact on people. Other "fuller" treatment of the subject matter came from dissertations or book length investigations on particular themes related to these issues, but none directly confronted the problem from a Scouting perspective. The literature focused primarily on the following areas:

- The effect of digital technology and the digital age on childhood learning and development.

- The causal and correlative relationship of the digital age on major issues facing today's youth (i.e. Nature Deficit Disorder, obesity…).

- The positive effects and opportunities the digital age represents.

- The impact of technology on communication and social interaction.

- Specific applications of digital technology to address a variety of problems.

- General parenting tips for resolving the tension between the good and bad aspects of technology.

There was some literature that focused on broad areas that are tangentially related to Scouting; i.e. outdoor recreation and small group interaction. A bibliography is presented at the end of this dissertation.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Starting on a positive note, it is helpful to take a look at some of the major advantages that the present digital age has brought us. While each of these eight areas are worthy of book length treatment in its own right, it will serve purpose enough to understand at a high level the impact these technological aspects have in relationship to Scouting and unit effectiveness. Along with the high level view needed to focus the conversation on Scouting comes an acknowledgement of the loss of nuance on particular facets of the positive argument. As mentioned in the introduction, this section will be followed by an examination of the disadvantages of technology, and the reader is encouraged in each section to play the role of the "Devil's Advocate" in thinking about their own unit or experience.

The first main advantage where the use of digital technologies has great impact is what the present author would term "efficiency." This term is used to denote the ability of these technologies and advances to greatly decrease the amount of time spent focused on a particular task to allow more time for something else. One can easily cite handfuls of examples of where technology in general or specifically aids the Scouting experience. The rechartering of a unit is a great example of this that provides in itself a couple of different areas where we can see the potential for units to be thrifty in its use of time. Rechartering was arguably one of the most tedious and time consuming annual chores of a unit. The paperwork was done manually, and documentation and recordkeeping were prone to error due to this very laborious process. In addition, the simple mathematical calculations and arithmetic for fees was not an uncommon

area in which to see problems. Technology and the BSA have certainly moved a long ways

forward in working to address this by making the recharter process available online and allowing

units to keep their records in the cloud. Units taking advantage of this find that they are able to

import their records and complete the recharter in much less time than previously accomplished,

while using the built in calculators to automatically determine the fees and dues with much less

error than the manual process. What had normally taken multiple sessions and hours of work has

been reduced significantly for those willing to take advantage of it. Similarly, new technologies

and services such as PayPal and Square (www.squareup.com) allow parents and Scouts to pay

dues, camping costs, and other fees immediately during a meeting without the need to have cash

on hand or run to an ATM. This makes it much easier on the parents and especially on the unit

and unit leadership handling the money or trying to keep up with who paid for a particular trip or

not. Other examples of efficiency brought about by technology include advancement tracking,

tour permits, leadership training, and PLC meetings.

The second area of advantage in which using technology comes to play is in relation to

exposing Scouts to skills they will need in the modern era. While they may get much of this in

school or ad-hoc through play and friends, Scouting can and should provide a Scout with a

chance to play and explore career choices. This is accomplished through the merit badge system.

Some of the hottest fields and topics in relation to the digital world are now areas that Scouts can

explore as they work on their advancement. The current author has had the pleasure of helping

unit members with their work in Robotics and Programming and Computer Technology. In a few

cases, these choices in merit badges complimented work they were already doing in school and

had informed their decisions on what university to attend and field in which to major. For others, exposure to these digital fields may be a side pursuit, or a lifelong hobby. A few Scouts interested in Game Design have spoken of this as a potential career field or something they will pursue as a hobby and mental exercise (though most express this just as "it's cool").

Additionally, life skills for the modern world are not just found in the merit badges, but also directly in how they see the parents and Scouters interacting in the traditional meetings or PLC. When they see how the adults are using the technology they tend to follow suit and begin to understand the usefulness and utility of a spreadsheet or word processor or PowerPoint. They see adults able to perform these functions fill the needs of the unit in real time on their systems. They begin to grasp at a very fundamental level that this is the way things are done and this makes their transition into the working world that much easier.

A third advantage digital technology brings to Scouting and indeed the world in general is an amazing increase in the capacity and ability to communicate. In the recent past, our common communication was effectively limited to telephone or mail communication if we were not actually face to face with the individual. There was an inherent delay in much communication due to the lack of scheduled time or ability to connect. While email has been around since the 1970s, it was not widespread until the early mid-1990s and now is the staple of business communication. One may be a bit surprised to know that texting using the cell phone devices was invented only ~20 years ago, in 1992, and in 2010 the world sent an average of 193,000 texts per second! In addition to these main forms, we now see the advance of different forms of social media (Twitter, Facebook…) and pictographic services like Instagram or Reddit

allowing immediate sharing of Scouting activities and communication with Scouts, leaders, and parents. One can group plan a high adventure activity, communicate those plans, participate and share the outing using digital communication without ever having to necessarily speak face to face. It has also greatly increased the ability of Scouts to connect all over the world with other Scouts and formally participate in the JOTI (Jamboree on the Internet) using chat and IRC capabilities that can be accomplished on computers. Digital communication has effectively shrunk the world into one's pocket.

The rise of digital technology also gives much additional opportunity for exploring and ways to "play" and interact for fun. As any parent who has had children stuck inside on a rainy or snowy day knows, there are many additional activities now available in the virtual world that were not available to children or Scouts in past times. Aside from simply communicating with each other as previously mentioned, Scouts can also learn and explore and play in virtual environments. This can be through online games/worlds such as Minecraft or World of Warcraft, or through less "gamer" oriented virtual locations like Second Life.

This may not all be just fun and games, as the virtual world has also become the greatest repository of human knowledge in the history of our species. The vast majority of human knowledge is now documented and accessible on the internet if one knows how to look for it. Projects and activities that would have been inaccessible to Scouts even 10 years ago are now able to be reviewed and considered within a few minutes of searching. From how to build a teepee, or make your own camping woodgas stove, to cleaning a fish you just caught for cooking are available on web pages and as instructional videos. In addition, many of the aids they may

15

need in researching a topic for rank advancement or completion of merit badges is found in one form or another on the web.

The online world is fun. There are a myriad of games that show that education and fun are not necessarily two distinct traits. Just as Scouting tries to incorporate fun activities into the overall advancement process, the use of specific applications can enhance and assist in the learning experience, making advancement less of a chore and more enthusiastically embraced by the Scouts.

The last major advantage discussed in this paper is what we will term as relevance. One of the Merriam-Webster definitions of relevance suits the advantage we see in the use of digital technology; i.e. "practical and especially social applicability." For most consumers of technology, it is not enough that something is part of a tradition or history. It is more important that it be relevant and practically applicable for the need at hand. The emphasis is on the utility of a technology to accomplish the end goal. The sheer volume of applications and technologies that are available for particular sets of tasks in today's digital world are astounding. As mentioned earlier, utilizing technology to accomplish a goal usually allows efficiency. An overall understanding of technology and how it can be employed and manipulated shows relevance in today's society and business worlds. This is also very true for young teens and young adults, for whom the digital expression of community is as important as the interpersonal communication and interaction in the physical world. Bluntly stated, sophisticated use of social media and other tools at a high level helps youth and Scouts with a perception of relevance in

regard to their peers and to the digital world as a whole. This relevance will continue to inform

their place in the social world as well as provide skills applicable in the working world.

CHAPTER V

DIGITAL DISADVANTAGES

What is perhaps even more challenging than listing out the many-fold advantages of digital technology is attempting to document the myriad of disadvantages that it can bring into our world and the world of Scouting. In fact, it can readily be observed that technology is a two-edged sword and for each advantage there is a corresponding disadvantage that, if not checked, may be worse than not having the technology at all and can certainly negate any advantage the technology may have brought to the users. A reminder to the reader that this dissertation is not focused on a deep discussion of advantages and disadvantages, but seeks to provide guidance on finding balance. For each of the areas below there is much scholarly and popular work that is more granular in nature that the present paper allows.

One of the greatest disadvantages to come hand in hand with the digital revolution is what has been termed "The Myth of Multitasking." The idea that human beings can easily or effectively truly multitask has been de-bunked almost universally by sociologists, psychologists, business, and educators at all levels. Clifford Nass, a Psychology Professor at Stanford summed it up quite well in an interview with NPR. Speaking on the belief of many that they are good at multitasking, Nass says "People who multitask all the time can't filter out irrelevancy. They can't manage a working memory. They're chronically distracted. They initiate much larger parts of their brain that are irrelevant to the task at hand. And even - they're even terrible at multitasking. When we ask them to multitask, they're actually worse at it. So they're pretty much mental

wrecks."[5] This is corroborated in many studies and borne out by scientific experimentation and

examination of the physiological effects of multitasking. UCLA Psychologist Russell Poldrack

has shown in his research on the effects of the human brain that the brain is neither designed nor

effective at handling multitasking. "We have to be aware that there is a cost to the way that our

society is changing, that humans are not built to work this way. We're really built to focus. And

when we sort of force ourselves to multitask, we're driving ourselves to perhaps be less

efficient in the long run even though it sometimes feels like we're being more efficient," says

Poldrack.[6] This concern over multitasking can carry over to the work Scouts and Scout leaders

must put forth in meetings, advancement, campouts and other Scout functions.

Providing too much access to digital technology can also affect the ability of the Scouts

and indeed the Scout leaders to focus on the tasks at hand without interruption. The tendency

is to want to check a smartphone for email, or text, or latest Facebook updates. Notice that one

cannot leave out Scouters from this malaise as well. It is very possible that the adults are the

worst offenders, as the added pressure of today's workforce requirements and an "always

connected" society force the perceived need to continually monitor the multiple avenues of

communication. Scout leaders and parents must guard against taking part in what has been

classified as "Continual Partial Attention" a phrase coined by Linda Stone in a 1998 post and

---

[5] "The Myth of Multitasking." Personal interview by author. 1, 2013.
http://www.npr.org/2013/05/10/182861382/the-myth-of-multitasking

[6] Poldrack, Russel. "How Multitasking Affects Human Learning." NPR. March 3, 2007. Accessed December 18, 2014. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7700581.

subsequently expanded[7] and rather opt for a more focused approach on the tasks at hand. This

differs slightly from multi-tasking as it is not necessarily task intensive, but is rather the

dividing of attention to monitor many different things at once. This phrase certainly seems to

describe much if not most of the adult behavior the present author observes in Scout meetings

at all levels. Whether or not there is actually a task or message waiting, one may notice

attention continuously diverted to a device to check status or if anything important has come

in. All of this is a result of the expectation of continuous connection to the "digiverse."

The next disadvantage that the digital age presents is a potential devaluation of traditional

skills and those being replaced by a related or potentially unrelated skill. An obvious example of

this is replacing the traditional orienteering course with showing how to look up and use a

smartphone GPS application. While it is certainly true that the smartphone GPS application

would allow a quicker and potentially more accurate method of finding your exact location, the

Scouting skills involved in being able to determine and calculate one's own position without an

electronic device has an inherent value. Ensuring that Scouts know how to read a map and

compass provides a unique skill and level of understanding that surpasses the mere data aspect of

GPS location and can provide a level of safety in a situation where digital devices fail. Similarly,

replacing many of the other traditional Scouting and life skills with something digital can

decrease the connection with the past that is so much a part of Scouting. Many of the

requirements and activities taught in the Boy Scout Handbook seem almost alien in their

---

[7] "Continuous Partial Attention." Linda Stone. November 28, 2009. Accessed December 18, 2014.
http://lindastone.net/qa/continuous-partial-attention/.

connection with the present day. The present writer has been questioned multiple times about the utility of knowing lashings when they are used so infrequently on Scout outings. A very real danger to this is the fact that the adult leaders themselves are also losing connection with the skills and traditions of the past. This may not be through any conscious decision, but rather through a more natural process of urbanization of Scouting. Indeed, it may be a natural evolution of Scouting to reflect the more urban nature of society than the agrarian and outdoor roots that Scouting has enjoyed. This disconnection though is being accelerated by a whole new universe of the digital world, in which much of the exploration tends to take place in a gaming world rather than on a physical one.

The next major disadvantage to look at is in relation to communication. It may strike some as odd that technology has disadvantages in the way we communicate. But it is apparent to many researchers, educators, and businessmen that there can be major gaps in digital communication. Exploring some of these, especially as it applies to Scouting, can provide some indication on what a unit must watch out for when evaluating what balance it must strike.

A major gap in digital communication can be found in the lack of nuance and non-verbal messaging that is inherent in many of the main technologies synonymous with social media. Twitter is limited to conveying a message in 140 characters or less. Facebook allows users to post small snippets of their day on their wall. Even something as ubiquitous as email lacks the ability to convey the nuances of emotional state or tone to the reader, leaving it up to chance at best or the inadequacy of an emoticon at best to convey intent. There is an oft-quoted study by UCLA psychology professor Albert Mehrabian which found only 7% of an interaction's meaning

is derived from the words themselves. The rest of the meaning of a message came from non-verbal communication; 55% of meaning coming from facial/body language and 38% from vocal inflection.[8] While this has been greatly oversimplified (and indeed clarification has been provided by Mehrabian himself[9]) the general understanding both from research and anecdotally is that the richness of meaning and communication is greatly enhanced by physicality of both sender and receiver, and diminishes with CMC (computer moderated communication). Like an individual sitting at a cheap dinner buffet, we must not mistake quantity of communication outlets or availability of communication (with an emphasis on ease of access of sending a message) with the quality of communication. To differentiate between the richness of face to face (F2F) and digital messaging it may be helpful to label the latter as "interaction" as opposed to communication. This is not to say digital interaction is completely devoid of the ability to communicate emotion at some levels. Indeed, some research has shown that CMC can be as effective as F2F in emotional communication.[10] But that research focuses on an explicit attempt to convey emotion and not on the ability to determine emotional or contextual nuance in a message. We can also posit that the briefer the message, the less ability there is for nuance to be communicated. In the absence of message nuance, all too often the receiver relies upon their own "reading" of the emotional state to determine meaning or tone, not what may actually be intended by the sender of the message.

---

[8] Mehrabian, Albert. *Silent Messages*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub., 1971.

[9] Albert Mehrabian, source http://www.businessballs.com/mehrabiancommunications.htm , accessed 12/19/2014

[10] Derks, D. et al., The Role of Emotion in Computer-Mediated Communication: A Review, Computers in Human Behavior (2007), doi:10.1016/j.chb.2007.04.004

Digital disadvantages also extend into the realm of play and recreation. While no one can argue the popularity of online access and gaming across all aspects and ages of society, this has taken on almost epidemic proportions with youth, with online activity becoming the main recreational activity that youth and teens enjoy. Indeed, the explosion of use of smartphones and digital devices by teens is a major disruption point in society. Cell phone ownership by teens has gone from 45% in 2009 to 77% in 2012, with about 23% being a smartphone.[11] The CDC's 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance shows that online activity (including gaming, internet, and social interaction) has replaced television as the primary recreational activity of youth, with 31.1% of high school students spending three hours or more on the computer every day (up from 24.9% in 2007 and 21.1% in 2005). Over 32% watch three hours of television every day (down from 35.4% in 2007 and 37.2% in 2005).[12] At the same time, obesity rates and morbidity have increased to alarming proportions among youth. There is a direct relationship between this increase in gaming and online activity with the decline in the health of youth today.

In his seminal work "Last Child in the Woods," Richard Louv coined the phrase "Nature-Deficit Disorder" to describe another impactful syndrome that is a symptom of the urbanization and digitization of today's generation of children.[13] In the work Louv describes the myriad of societal and educational forces that have served to diminish time spent in the outdoors. This

---

[11] Lenhart, Amanda. "Teens, Smartphones & Texting." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS. March 19, 2012. Accessed December 19, 2014. http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/03/19/teens-smartphones-texting/.

[12] "2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance." June 8, 2012. Accessed December 19, 2012. http://www.cdc.gov/MMWR/PDF/SS/SS6104.PDF.

[13] Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005.

repudiation of nature in favor of virtual play is most certainly a danger faced by Scouting. As childhood behavior moves more to gratification in gaming and online time, time for more outdoor oriented activities such as Scouting diminishes. This can be magnified by the work and temporal pressures put upon this generations parents, who themselves are now used to spending much of the day online themselves. Frankly stated, it is easier, cleaner, and more time efficient to spend hours indoors on the computer rather than camping in a state park. This however is terribly impactful on the connection youth have with nature. Scouting can be seen as a bulwark against continued encroachment of recreation time by the digital frontier. Even education friendly games or research cannot replace the value of time spent outdoors both for the health and physiological benefits as well as for the deeper, more mystical connection with nature that one hopes is instilled in our youth and adults. Simply put, there is no substitute for being outdoors. There is no application that can simulate the feel of a raindrop on a cheek, grass underfoot or the smell of pine and detritus found on the forest floor.

The final area of disadvantage in evaluating technological exploitation is the very real concern on artificially accelerating disconnection and distance from tradition. While not advocating a Luddite stance in regards to implementation, one must acknowledge the fact that skills and past technologies are being replaced rapidly with a online or digital activities that may or may not provide any relation to that activity. An example of this would be an activity like hunting. In past years, this skill was initially used to provide sustenance for the table. With the explosion of food production and large scale ranching and agriculture, hunting became a sportsman's pastime as a general rule; recreation and fun replacing the necessity of food for

survival. But, in the past decade, numerous hunting games have come on the market that provide a "virtual hunt" using a gaming console and a controller. This has made participation incredibly easy and available. In the virtual world, the hunt starts at any time with the push of a button and one is assured of seeing "big game" within minutes of starting. Yet, this is not really hunting. The skills involved may jape the real world, but the abilities needed to be successful are completely different from an actual hunt. The experience is different, and the lessons learned are very much different as well. To carry the observation a step further, note that the initial change in technology that affected hunting moved it from necessity to sport. But, even with that change, the actual skills needed to successfully perform the task were still the same. Hunting in the real world, for food or sport, is essentially an identical set of skills. Not so when using a video game console. The imagery on the screen in similar, but the individual is not the one crouching and waiting. Rather the figure on the screen is being controlled with a few hand gestures or finger movement on the controller. There is no equivalency of experience. The skills become lost and replaced with those needed to successfully play the game. Hunting obviously is just a useful single example of the traditional Scouting woodcraft skills that are at risk.

In addition to the loss of the technical skills required on various traditional Scout activities, there is also a risk to the participatory knowledge and lore that is primarily learned through interaction with Scouts and Scouters who have walked the same path. While we have greatly increased our ability to store and retrieve knowledge, including an amazing amount of Scout-related knowledge and activity guidance, there is a qualitative difference between reading about something online and hearing it around the campfire. It may be difficult to quantify just

exactly what is lost in the translation of our Scout "lore" from an oral and experiential tradition to that of a more documented online tradition, but it seems that this loss is a blow to much that recommends Scouting as a way to make the generational connections with the past. In the same way that a Jamboree on the Internet chat experience does not fully encompass the Jamboree experience of an on-site participant, learning about Scouting only through reading online and following podcasts does not replace the information and experience of the campfire or cracker barrel.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHALLENGE OF BALANCE

The challenge of balance in Scouting lies between these poles of advantages and disadvantages delineated in the prior chapters. As mentioned earlier, there is not a single correct way to strike that balance. Indeed, the challenge to Scouters comes from the ability to grasp these advantages and disadvantages and strike that balance that seems best for the particular unit in mind. Understanding and thinking critically about where along a particular scale one's viewpoint lies helps inform the decision making process. Understanding the viewpoint of other stakeholders in this attempt to find balance also serves to provide color and range to the effort. Involving those other stakeholders in the final decision also leads to a greater sense of "buy in" and can help facilitate the adoption of guidelines to strike the balance.

At this point it is useful to take these opposite extremes and list out some of the gradation in between, beginning initially with Efficiency vs. Distraction. In deciding how to practically implement guidelines at unit level, one must recognize that a unit can assuredly gain efficiency in using particular technologies but that this may lead to unneeded distraction if other technology is allowed without restriction. In this case, the unit leader should focus on the following questions in order to make an informed decision:

1. Will a particular technology help my unit more efficiently handle a task(s)?
2. What is the risk of the technology becoming a distraction?
3. Is there a way to govern the level of use of the technology?
4. Is there a need for explicit guidance for Scouts and/or Scouters?

5. Are there any exceptions to use?

In one of the most common scenarios, deciding on cell phone usage, the answer to these questions may lead one to decide that the size of the unit and ubiquitous nature of the cell phone and efficiency in which it can be used outweighs concerns over its potential as a distraction in a Troop meeting. Things like unit size, maturity, and availability of the technology play into this decision making process. Governance of the use of the technology may be through something as simple as a verbal request by the Senior Patrol Leader to turn devices off, or perhaps a digital use "agreement" or "contract" with the Scouts is in order. What should be stressed here is the flexibility for each unit to decide what it needs.

In the striking the balance between understanding digital technology as providing modern, real world skills vs. displacing opportunities for learning traditional, physical world skills, there may be other questions that need to be asked to help maintain a healthy balance.

1. How much opportunity do the Scouts have to learn more modern skills? Traditional activities? Are these balanced? (Not necessarily 1:1, but opportunities for both.)

2. Has the unit historically provided more of one type than another?

3. Does the leadership have the ability to teach traditional skills? Digital/technology skills?

4. Are the Scouts expressing desire for certain types of skills, traditional or technological?

Again, varying factors may influence what action if any is needed. Whether or not the unit and leadership is more urban or rural often is a prime indicator of the skills and programs being made available. The lack of proximity of a unit to an urban center may also limit more advanced programs like Robotics or Programming. Also, the educational and economic makeup of the

Scouts, parents and Scouters may act as a backdrop on the ability to incorporate more modern skills.

Concerning the tension between true communication and, at the opposite end, mere interaction, there must first be some acknowledgement of the differences in different meetings or uses. This in turn will lead to decisions tailored to those specific uses. For example, a unit may choose to restrict cell phone use during troop meetings or on campouts, while encouraging cell phone use by the Scouts to keep in contact with their patrols during the week to disseminate information. In this example, the seeming contradiction is not truly contradictory at all. The two situations have different goals and a different dynamic is at play. In the first, (a troop meeting) the use of cell phones become a distraction to the main objective of participation in the meeting and is inferior to the quality of communication the Scouts and leaders experience face to face. The second scenario is focused purely on the dissemination of information and lacks the physical proximity found in a unit meeting. In this case, using the cell phone is actually one of the most efficient and effective ways to achieve the end objective, that of sharing information.

In choosing whether or not to allow certain means of communication, or evaluating whether a particular form of communication should be pursued, a few questions may help clarify the decision.

1. What is the ROI (return on investment) in the technology?
2. Is the use of digital technology in question enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the unit?

3. What risks accompany this form of communication? (Security, distraction, cost, accessibility?)

Answering these questions may lead to reevaluation of a particular path. For example, concerning the ROI of a particular technology may lead a unit to choose NOT to construct a website due to costs, the lack of time for upkeep, and the realization that the objective may be easier and more readily accomplished by using another technology like Facebook, or simply continuing to use email as the main vehicle for updates. In this example, the website would probably be more efficient and effective, but other factors may not make it a feasible alternative to the way things are currently done.

Another common scenario is deciding on cell phone/electronic usage in unit meetings. It may be desirable to limit digital device usage during the meetings to avoid distractions, but allow use if pre-approved by the Senior Patrol Leader or adult leadership for a particular purpose; i.e. teaching a merit badge or as an aid in a particular activity. In these cases, the cell phone does not serve so much as a means of communication and potential distraction as it does as a tool to provide an enhanced experience in the meeting.

The final area this dissertation will explore is striking a balance between the traditions of Scouting and the idea of relevance. This is perhaps the hardest area to find a correct balance and may be the one in which the most thought is needed. There is also much gradation as to what one means by "tradition" and "relevant." It is not necessarily the same to all members of a particular unit, much less on a wider level. Traditions that may date back decades for some units may or may not have the same meaning for Scouts or Scouters new to the unit or from a different

background. Yet, fluid as these may be, Scouting's heritage and traditions are a valued part of

the organization and from an individual Scout, to a unit, district, and council, all share in the

cache of Scouting's history. Yet, if tradition is characterized by inflexibility, the threat of

irrelevance becomes even more pronounced. This inflexibility can deter and inhibit others from

outside Scouting to invest their time or youth's time in an endeavor they consider irrelevant or

disconnected with the modern world. In this sense, there is a value outside of purely

advancement or skill level return that inclusion of digital and modern technology offers. The

presence of a STEMs based program such as NOVA can help not only offer the Scout a way to

explore career options in the sciences, but also can provide the parents of that youth some level

of assurance that the Scouts are not only going to spend time tying knots and building campfires,

as useful as those may be.

In regards to this area, questions of relevance may be phrased in a way to allow more of a

discussion around the balance the unit is striking. These may be:

1. Is our unit providing opportunities for both traditional and modern technological
   fields of study?

2. In what ways are we honoring the traditions of Scouting and history of our unit?

3. Do we think our unit is providing a balanced approach to both sides?

In this discussion, it must be noted that "balance" does not imply that this is a 1:1 ratio between

the modern and the traditional. One does not have to teach the "Programming" merit badge just

because a weekend "Scouting Heritage" merit badge was taught. Each unit may have to strike

what balance it can in light of resource and knowledge restrictions on both sides. But having the

conversation around Scouting's history will help ensure that some level of balance is struck, and can potentially open new avenues and activities for the Scouts in the unit, providing a healthy atmosphere for growth.

CHAPTER VII

GUIDELINES FOR SCOUTS, SCOUTERS, AND UNITS

In providing real world guidance for Scouts and units to consider, it is helpful to set some general guidance for determining the best course of action. First and foremost is the idea of shared decision-making. To put this in more common terminology, the discussion around a reasonable policy for digital technology should involve all parties who are affected by this decision. This will help on many levels. Shared decision-making will help increase "buy-in" from all groups, avoiding a dictatorial style of leadership. Inclusion of the youth in this discussion also allows the adult leadership to hear the viewpoints of the Scouts in regards to digital usage. This can actually be helpful in understanding usage patterns and some of the generational differences in how younger generations view technology as opposed to older generations. Also, this conversation can often times lead to a reframing of the conversation on "what you cannot use" to a more positive "what technologies and path should we take."

In exploring digital technology and striking an acceptable balance, it is helpful to have someone versed in technology present. This may be a parent or adult in the charter organization who works in that field and who can present options. Local councils can also provide merit badge counselors who are able to speak with the youth about options in pursuing that merit badge in addition to providing their insight into the technology of today. Additionally, setting aside some time outside of a Scout meeting may be helpful to allow more focus on the subject matter.

It may be helpful to provide some questions or a framework for discussion prior to meeting so that the conversation can move ahead thoughtfully during the meeting time. The areas of discussion in Chapter VI of this dissertation can be used as a springboard for discussion. This framework can be divided into two main areas, with questions associated with each area.

1. **Individual Usage During Scout Activities**

   a. Is the use of technology enhancing or aiding the current activity for the Scout, or is it disengaging/distracting them from collaborative participation?

   b. Is technology distracting from the Scouts or unit communing with nature/the great outdoors?

   c. Can the Scout make a reasonable justification of why there is a need to use technology at that moment?

2. **Unit Implementation of Technology**

   a. Is there a problem or potential benefit that can be addressed by technology?

   b. What is the ROI for this technology?

   c. Are we balancing technology and tradition?

   d. Are we providing the opportunities Scouts need?

   e. Is there a need for a formal agreement or contract on individual usage?

The present writer is a firm believer in minimizing rules and regulations to the minimum needed and suggests that the attempt to codify or overly document every contingency is virtually impossible in the shifting usage of technology.

The last advice this dissertation will provide is to make sure all guidance abides by the rules of the BSA and follows both the letter and spirit of the Guide to Safe Scouting. Certain technologies like cell phones often include other digital technologies like cameras and internet connectivity that allow the ability to quickly jump from "horsing around" to actual criminal activity such as posting explicit pictures of a youth by another to social media. Things like this can be devastating at many levels and requires additional thought and guidance to make sure that they are taken into account. A well thought out plan can go far in avoiding these types of scenarios and enhancing a unit's program as well as provide a better learning environment for the youth and leaders. Above all, make sure these guidelines are clearly and crisply communicated to the membership of the unit.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

Striking the balance of digital technology usage with Scouting is challenging but not impossible. Units are able to strike a balance between technology and traditional Scouting that allows for continued respect for our Scouting heritage, traditions, and skill and at the same time provides the flexibility to incorporate new technologies to enhance the program. In doing so it is helpful to understand the advantages and pitfalls of the technology of today, and use that to provide a context for thoughtful questions to determine what that balance will be for a particular unit. Providing an opportunity for shared discussion and opinions is the healthiest way to achieve a true balance while providing shared acceptance of the guidelines developed in this process.

REFERENCES

Derks, D. et al., The Role of Emotion in Computer-Mediated Communication: A Review, Computers in Human Behavior (2007), doi:10.1016/j.chb.2007.04.004

Ewert, A., and J.D. Shultis. Technology and backcountry recreation: Boon to recreation or bust for management? Journal of Physical Education, Dance and Recreation 1999.

Lenhart, Amanda. "Teens, Smartphones & Texting." Pew Research Centers Internet American Life Project RSS. March 19, 2012. Accessed December 19, 2014. http://www.pewinternet.org/2012/03/19/teens-smartphones-texting/.

Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005.

Mark, A. E., and I. Janssen. "Relationship between Screen Time and Metabolic Syndrome in Adolescents." Journal of Public Health, 2008, 153-60.

Mehrabian, Albert. "Silent Messages." Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub., 1971.

Mehrabian, Albert, Commenting on "Silent Messages" http://www.businessballs.com/mehrabiancommunications.htm , accessed December 18, 2014

Poldrack, Russel. "How Multitasking Affects Human Learning." NPR. March 3, 2007. Accessed December 18, 2014. http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7700581.

Stone, Linda. "Continuous Partial Attention." November 28, 2009. Accessed December 18, 2014. http://lindastone.net/qa/continuous-partial-attention .

Taylor, Jim. Raising Generation Tech: Preparing Your Children for a Media-fueled World, Naperville, Ill.: Sourcebooks, 2012.

Tardanico, Susan. "Is Social Media Sabotaging Real Communication?" Forbes.com http://www.forbes.com/sites/susantardanico/2012/04/30/is-social-media-sabotaging-real-communication/ 4/30/2012. Accessed 12/8/2014.

"Timeline of Communication Technology." Wikipedia. October 10, 2014. Accessed December 11, 2014. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_communication_technology.

Wetherell, Mark A., and Kirsty Carter. "The Multitasking Framework: The Effects of Increasing Workload on Acute Psychobiological Stress Reactivity." Stress and Health, 2013, 103-09.

"The Myth of Multitasking." Personal interview by author. 1, 2013. http://www.npr.org/2013/05/10/182861382/the-myth-of-multitasking Accessed December 18, 2014

"2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance." June 8, 2012. Accessed December 19, 2012. http://www.cdc.gov/MMWR/PDF/SS/SS6104.PDF .

APPENDIX A

INFORMATIONAL LINKS ON TECHNOLOGY RELATED BSA PROGRAMS

SCOUTING PROGRAMS
- JOTI   http://bsaseabase.org/scouting/joti.aspx
- STEM/NOVA   http://www.scouting.org/stem.aspx
- CYBERCHIP http://www.scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection/CyberChip.aspx

CUB SCOUT BELT LOOPS/ACTIVITY PINS
- Communicating
http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/CubScouts/CubScouts/UniformsAndAwards/sanda/communicating.aspx
- Computers
http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/CubScouts/CubScouts/UniformsAndAwards/sanda/computers.aspx
- Science
http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/CubScouts/CubScouts/UniformsAndAwards/sanda/science.aspx
- Video Games
http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/CubScouts/CubScouts/UniformsAndAwards/sanda/video_games.aspx

BOY SCOUT MERIT BADGES
- Communication
http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-COMM.aspx
- Computers
http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-COMP.aspx
- Digital Technology
http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-DIG_TECH.aspx
- Game Design
http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-GDSN.aspx
- Graphic Arts
http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-GRAP.aspx
- Programming
http://www.scouting.org/Home/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-PROG.aspx
- Robotics
http://www.scouting.org/scoutsource/BoyScouts/AdvancementandAwards/MeritBadges/mb-ROBO.aspx

APPENDIX B

**ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION ON STRIKING THE BALANCE BETWEEN
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND SCOUTING**

(Available in electronic form at http://1drv.ms/1K3aLcB)

Striking the Balance: Technology & Scouting

STEPHEN WILSON
OUTDOOR ETHICS ADVOCATE
PALMETTO COUNCIL
FROSTBYTE@FROSTBYTE.NET
704.614.0640

Scenario Role Play: Scoutmaster Steve

Steve, Scoutmaster of Troop 404: (Sighing with a hint of irritation)

"Honestly, I just don't 'get' kids nowadays. We were having a Merit Badge College and campout this weekend. We have a fairly lenient Unit policy on electronic devices, but make it clear that if they abuse it we will confiscate their cell phone. Hey, I have a cell phone myself, but when we are camping I want to be a part of nature. Kids get enough video games and Facebook and texting during the week. Early this morning during the first session one of the other Scoutmasters had to take up the cell phones of two boys who were texting each other and being disruptive in his class. Just now one of the boys in my Troop was playing some space game on his phone after supper. I told him to hand it over. He started making a bunch of excuses but I cut him off and told him that the focus of this weekend was getting his merit badges done and camping with the other boys; not separating himself from his patrol just to shoot aliens. I am not trying to be a jerk Scoutmaster, but I am serious about putting more 'outing in Scouting' as they say."

Scenario Discussion Part 1

Discuss the Scenario:

- Should they even have allowed any devices on the Merit Badge weekend?

- Do you think Scoutmaster Steve was being reasonable?

- Do you think the events earlier in the day with the other Scoutmaster informed Steve's decision?

- Ideas on handling the situation?

Scenario Role Play: Scout Alex

Bill, Scout 1st Class, Troop 404 : (upset)

"I am REALLY upset with our Scoutmaster Mr. Steve. He is normally a pretty nice guy, but he just doesn't listen at times. Today was the first day of Merit badge college. I am taking Scouting Heritage, Citizenship in the World, and Astronomy classes.

Well, to complete my some of my Astronomy requirements, I was using this really cool iPhone app called 'StarWalk'. You can point it up at the sky and it will show you what stars and constellations you can see from your location. It will give you info on the star like magnitude and distance. It is pretty awesome. I was right in the middle of trying to finish some of the requirements and Mr. Steve comes over and confiscates my phone. He starts telling me that I was told I needed to take my phone so that I could not play video games and that he needed to take my phone so that I could focus on my Merit Badge reqs and nature. He would not let me explain THAT'S WHAT I WAS DOING, and that I wasn't gaming. Now he thinks I am like those two kids in my first class that were acting up giggling and texting each other during class. It is not worth the hassle of trying to explain it again. I guess I will just try to finish this up at home after I get my phone back this weekend. I wish Mr. Steve knew more about technology and realized what was out there."

Discussion

Discuss the Scenario:

- In light of Alex' side of the story, do you think that Scoutmaster Steve behaved appropriately? What would you change?

- Do you think Alex could have done anything to avoid this situation?

- How are your leaders using technology?

- How are your Scouts using technology?

Problems Integrating Technology & Scouting

- **Ignorance of Technology**
  - We are not all Geeks!
  - There is a LOT of tech out there!
  - What does it do and how does it work?!!
- **Time...**
  - ...For Leaders to learn and implement technology.
  - ...For continuing upkeep and maintenance
- **Content Concerns**
  - Ability to regulate or oversee content (Safe Scouting)
- **Fear of displacing traditional skills or activities**
  - Catching up to speed v. tossing out what makes Scouting great
  - Putting more emphasis on the outdoors.
- **Disconnect between generations.**
  - Kids are raised immersed in technology.
  - They use it differently than most leaders.

Sensible Guidelines for the Scout Leader

- Is the use of technology enhancing or aiding **_the current activity_** for the Scout, or is it disengaging them from collaborative participation?

- Is technology distracting from the Scout or Scout Leader's engaging with the nature/ the great outdoors?

- Can the Scout make a reasonable justification of why there is a need to use technology at that moment?

- Does your unit balance technology and traditional skills?

- Err on the side of reducing technology!

Boy Scout Technology Offerings

Other Technologies 4 ur Troop!