3. Recruiting Hispanic American Leaders

Cultural Considerations

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Hispanic Committee
Cultural Considerations
As youngsters, Hispanic Americans are taught not to call attention to themselves. Doing so may be considered rude or carry the undesirable stigma of being labeled “special” in their family. This might explain why many Hispanic students prefer not to raise their hands in class.

This behavior carries into adulthood and may explain why Hispanic parents are shy to raise their hands when a youth-serving executive asks for volunteers during School Night for Scouting. Rather than ask for volunteers to satisfy a pack or troop need, one might ask, “Who can give of themselves to lend a helping hand?” The Spanish translation of this phrase has a deeper meaning for Hispanic Americans. Once they understand Scouting, some parents will graciously “give of themselves” to a cause that they believe will benefit their families, church, and community.

A warm, friendly, one-on-one approach when trying to recruit Hispanic parents is another effective method. The presence of the prospective volunteer’s spouse is always helpful. The youth-serving executive should try to arrange a meeting with the prospective volunteer and an individual that person admires, such as a community leader or church pastor. The old adage “People give to people, not to causes,” used very effectively in Scouting, can also be effective in recruiting Hispanic volunteers.

Unit-Level Recruiting
Recruiting Hispanic Americans to serve in a unit-level leadership role begins through effective communication with the head of the chartered organization. Pastors, school principals, or recreation center directors should be made aware of their important role in recruiting key unit leaders for their organization’s new pack or troop. During the initial visit with the head of the organization, a youth-serving executive should be prepared to discuss the benefits that Scouting offers as well as the responsibilities for both the organization and Scouting. Some obvious benefits for the Hispanic organization in organizing a new unit may include training for their volunteer leaders, use of the council’s camping facilities, and fun family programs.

The important note to keep in mind is that heads of organizations know the parent leaders who consistently volunteer in their community. If they are serious about having a successful Scouting unit, they should be willing to help the youth-serving executive recruit leaders. Simply put, it’s the best method to use in recruiting any unit-level volunteer! Their willingness to help will determine the health and longevity of the unit.

Church pastors make excellent recruiters of volunteers. Hispanic Americans hold their parish priests or church leaders in high regard, and oftentimes feel honored when asked by their church leaders to serve on a committee or church-supported activity. Educators are also highly admired by Hispanic Americans and, like the Catholic priest, a school principal can be a real friend for the youth-serving executive. Not only are principals instrumental in promoting Scouting in their schools, but they can also be helpful in identifying or recommending parent volunteers as prospective Scouting leaders.

Another important consideration in recruiting unit-level Hispanic American volunteers is assigning a Scouting mentor. This person will coach the new leader for at least two months, or until the volunteer feels comfortable in this new role. Unit commissioners who understand the Hispanic culture may be very instrumental in helping new Hispanic Scouting leaders understand their role in the unit, and can coach volunteers in making pack or troop meetings more fun and exciting for youth members.

Last, youth-serving executives should understand that Hispanic Americans welcome others who are sincere in providing a quality program for their youth. Keeping one’s promises is very important, especially when trying to organize a Scouting unit in an underserved Hispanic neighborhood.

Recruiting Council-Level Leadership
Councils that have significant numbers of Hispanic Americans living within their geographic territories would be wise to recruit highly visible Hispanic American community leaders on their boards. It’s simply the right thing to do! The demographic evidence is very clear; the population growth of
Hispanic Americans will continue to increase in the decades to come. As councils experience rising Hispanic total available youth (TAY) throughout the country, more opportunities for increased membership surface. Consequently, the more highly visible Hispanic American corporate leaders a council has as executive committee members, the more financial resources become available to serve this growing market.

Scout executives may now be asking, “Where do I find a corporate-level Hispanic leader to serve on our board?” A good place to start is with the council executive board. Council board members know or have heard about minority corporate leaders who have recently been promoted to upper management positions. Perhaps the council president knows such an individual personally and happens to be a top company manager. Also, most major metropolitan cities have a local chapter of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Membership often includes highly visible Hispanic corporate and community leaders. This or similar Hispanic organizations would be another good place to identify Hispanic leaders.

Once a prospective volunteer has been identified, it is very important for a Scout executive to gather as much information as possible concerning the council’s past history of serving Hispanic youth, and the council’s long-range goals. Questions that a Hispanic corporate leader might ask (and often does) would include the following:

1. “How many Hispanic youth does the council serve and what is the percentage compared to the council’s overall membership?” If the percentage is very low, one may need to explain why.
2. “How many predominantly Hispanic units does the council have, and how do these numbers compare to the council’s total unit membership?” A corporate leader might also ask where these units are. Again, if the number is very low, one may need to give an explanation.
3. “How many Hispanic youth-serving executives does the council employ?” If the council’s Hispanic TAY is significant yet it does not have a Hispanic youth-serving executive on staff, one may need to explain why.
4. “What are the council’s plans to provide membership fees, uniforms, and summer camping opportunities for Hispanic youngsters whose families can’t afford the expense?”
5. “Has the local United Way expressed concerns regarding the council’s Hispanic youth membership?”

The answers to these questions, if asked, will help determine whether an individual would be willing to serve on the council’s executive board. It is very important that precise, honest answers be given. Indirect, confusing answers will turn the officer off completely. Forthright answers will give the corporate officer a reason to help the council serve more Hispanic youngsters.

Suppose the answer to questions 1 and 2 is less than 10 percent, No. 3 is zero, No. 4 is a limited plan, and No. 5 is a real concern has been expressed. The following scenario may serve as the council’s primary Hispanic objectives.

**XYZ Council’s Hispanic Objectives**
- Increase the number of Hispanic youth and units in XYZ Council by 15 percent.
- Recruit at least one bilingual Hispanic youth-serving executive.
- Implement a plan enabling Hispanic children from low-income families to join a Scouting unit, receive a Scout uniform, and have an opportunity to attend summer camp.
- Share the council’s success in serving Hispanic youth during United Way panel presentations.

Other objectives may be added. For example, you may want the corporate leader to serve as chairman of the council’s Hispanic committee. This person could be instrumental in organizing the committee as well.
**Hispanic Committee**

Congratulations! You have successfully recruited the council’s first Hispanic board member. You have both agreed that a steering committee of other highly visible Hispanic community leaders should be organized. You have also agreed that this new board member will recruit people whom he or she knows and with whom he or she shares a good rapport. The Scout executive should assign a council staff adviser to work with the new board member.

The ideal mix of Hispanic community leaders serving on the Hispanic committee includes volunteers who have experience in a unit leadership capacity at the district or council level. A committee composed entirely of Hispanic corporate leaders who have little knowledge of the Scouting program might help the council raise important dollars, but they might not get actively involved in other council activities. This scenario may require a lot of the staff adviser’s time in educating committee members about the Scouting program. Alleviate this problem by ensuring a healthy mix of Hispanic Scouting volunteers and corporate leaders.

The objectives of a council’s Hispanic committee should not only be consistent with the council’s strategic plan, but should also reflect some of the Hispanic community’s goals for its youth. The Multicultural Markets book *Multicultural Markets in the Local Council* serves as an excellent resource on organizing a steering committee. Chapter 3 illustrates a recommended flow chart for a council’s Multicultural Markets committee, identifies 10 committee objectives, and focuses on strategies for finance, membership, program, commissioner service, and relationships. The book also gives a time frame for committee implementation and details position descriptions for key committee volunteers.

Last, encourage the council’s Hispanic committee, Hispanic relations committee, or Hispanic task force to bring some creative ideas to the table that will ultimately help the council market Scouting effectively to its Hispanic American community. These ideas may require some extra time and effort, but will pay off in the long run.