



How Lessons Learned In Scouting Prepared Three Adults For Professional Lives.





LESSONS I LEARNED AS A SCOUT LEADER

BY KIP KRUMWIEDE, PH.D., CMA, CSCA, CPA

I have served as a Scouts BSA (Boy Scouts of America) leader off and on for more than 25 years. Ironically, I wasn't in Scouting as a youth. But through the many Scouting experiences I've had over the years as a troop leader, I've learned as much—often more—than the Scouts themselves.

I've also found many similarities between striving to become an Eagle Scout and striving to become a CMA® (Certified Management Accountant) or a CPA (Certified Public Accountant), or to be certified in any other professional field.

There are more than 135 different merit badges that Scouts can choose to pursue. Thirteen of those are specifically required in order to become an Eagle Scout, the highest rank that Scouts can attain, but beyond those, they can choose from a huge assortment of badges, with a specific skill set required for each. The subject matter ranges from knot tying to archery, American business to wood carving, architecture to veterinary medicine, canoeing to soil and water conservation.



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Similarly, there are dozens, if not hundreds, of professional certifications available to working adults. Just as in accounting and finance, there are at least 50 certifications available in the United States alone, including CPA, CSCA (Certified in Strategy and Competitive Analysis), CPA (Certified Public Accountant), CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst), and CTP (Certified Treasury Professional).

Just like earning professional certifications is typically challenging yet rewarding, earning a merit badge is no easy hike! For example, the kayaking badge requires Scouts to be able to:

- Explain the hazards kayakers are most likely to face and how to help prevent and respond to those hazards;
- Select the right life jacket;
- Know the different parts of a kayak and the different kinds of kayaks;
- Know how to use a paddle and demonstrate several types of paddle strokes;
- Safely capsize the kayak and perform a wet exit (a key skill for me!);
- Demonstrate a kayak-over-kayak rescue; and
- Spin or pivot from an obstacle and move the boat in several directions and patterns.

If this sounds hard, it is, but so is earning professional certifications. If meeting the requirements to get them were easy, they wouldn't mean as much. But we want our CPAs, attorneys, and medical professionals to know what they are doing!

In addition, Scouts learn skills from troop leaders and merit-badge counselors using Scouts BSA's EDGE method of teaching:

- 1. Explain.** Talk about what you'll be doing and why it's important.
- 2. Demonstrate.** Next, show pupils what the skill looks like when it's done correctly; you can talk about what you're doing step by step as you go so they understand your actions.
- 3. Guide.** Now it's the pupils' turn to practice the skill as the leader coaches them.
- 4. Enable.** In the final step, pupils get to do it on their own.

I've found the EDGE method to be a valuable guide in many different situations; including learning what you need to know to become a CMA; trying



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to teach the first-in, first-out method of process costing to a bunch of students; training someone at work; and as a parent hoping to prepare kids for life.

The connection between merit badges, the EDGE method, and professional certification seems clear to me. It takes instruction (teachers), demonstration (mentors), practice (quizzes), and showing what you can do (the examination). Note that the steps aren't necessarily in order or limited to one iteration. Sometimes life gives the test first, then the lesson.

I've learned that teaching a skill is often the best way to learn it. I wasn't in Scouting as a boy. The only knots I could tie were my shoelaces. But advancement up the Scouting ranks, including the requirements to earn several merit badges, requires the ability to tie all kinds of knots, such as the square knot, half hitch (both single and double), taut-line hitch, bowline, timber hitch, clove hitch, sheet bend, and various lashings.

Many a night, I practiced the knots I had just learned up until the Scout meeting so that I could explain, demonstrate, guide, and then enable the Scouts to tie those knots on their own. It takes many tries and experience in various situations to be able to tie the right knot at the right time. But it's always worthwhile to learn new skills. Even the very basic knots have helped me personally in many different situations—like securing a large load of stuff in a moving van!

So it is with professional certifications. Passing the test is only one step in a successful career that requires instruction, demonstration, and practice, over and over again. When counseling young people trying to make decisions about education and certification, who often question whether they're necessary, I've often said, "You don't know what you don't know, and you won't know it until you learn it."

In a recent [Institute of Management Accountants post](#), Mark E. Becker lauded the benefits he has realized by being an Eagle Scout and a CMA. When asked about experiences and accomplishments he's particularly proud of, he replied, "earning my Eagle Scout, which definitely taught me the value of perseverance."

It's a hard thing to accomplish when you're that age—15, 16—with many other conflicting priorities in your life. It taught me how to stick with something, which is a skill I've found to be useful in many other aspects of my life."



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Further, both Scouts and CMAs have codes of conduct. For management accountants, it's the [IMA Statement of Ethical Professional Practice](#). For Scouts BSA, it's known as the Scout Oath: *On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.*

There was no more poignant learning experience in Scouting about doing your duty than when we visited Arlington National Cemetery as part of a Washington, D.C., “urban hike.” There are hundreds of stories of valor behind the many grave markers. But one story that especially affected us all as we stood by his grave was this one about Robert R. Scott:

Machinist's Mate First Class Robert R. Scott, United States Navy, was awarded the Medal of Honor for actions on December 7, 1941, during the attack on Pearl Harbor. During the attack by Japanese forces, Scott's battle station, the compartment aboard the USS California where the air compressor was located, was flooded as a result of a Japanese torpedo hit. While the compartment was evacuated, Scott refused to leave, saying words to the effect of, “This is my station and I will stay and give them air as long as the guns are going.”

The trails of our lives and career paths have many twists, turns, scenic vistas, and tough river rapids. By preparing ourselves through learning and earning certifications, we can do our duty better, help other people at all times, and keep ourselves strong—and our career on the right track. No one ever said certifications are easy, but they're worth it!



(Corporate) Leadership Lessons From Scouts

BY RATHA K. RAMASAMY, PMP SPC5

After encouraging my oldest son to join Cub Scouts in 1st Grade and now seeing him 10 years later as a Life Scout, it has been not only a journey for him, but also a privilege for me to see him grow along the way.

I saw my son and many other Scouts over the years turn into confident young people who learned many life skills for their tool belt for later use. As a Committee Chair of both a pack and a troop, I have had a first-hand viewpoint watching the actual formation of leadership.

Now there are many comparisons between a troop and a corporate entity, specifically to organization structures and the leadership. I have listed out 6 Scouting techniques (out of many) utilized by my Troop which can have direct relevance to a business setting.

Respecting the Chain of Command

In a Scout-led troop, adults quickly learn that they are there mainly for safety reasons. As a parent, if a scout came to me to ask for my permission to do something, my automatic response would be, “What did your patrol leader say?” If a patrol leader came to me to ask something, my automatic response would be, “What did your senior patrol leader say?” If the senior patrol leader came to me to see if it would be okay to do something, my response would be, “What did your Scoutmaster say?”

In a non-urgent situation, if I were to answer the Scouts, this would break the chain of command. The authority entrusted in the Scout performing the leadership position needs to feel empowered, and this is weakened if the Scouts under his rank feel like they can go to someone else other than who they report to, especially if they think they will get a more favorable response.



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The Art of Delegation

Sometimes it may be far easier to do something yourself than wait for it to be done by someone else. Learning how to delegate and evaluating who to delegate which task to—can be a challenge. Scouts in a leadership position are expected to learn to delegate tasks to Scouts in their patrols. It may be setting up a campsite or manning a table at a yard sale. Scouts are typically put in a variety of situations where they need to think on their feet and involve others.

Thorns and Roses

After every campout, our Troop has a tradition in which everyone who attends the event gets to express their experience. The feedback is in terms of Thorns: what they did not like about the experience and Roses: what they enjoyed the most.

This helps to share feedback in a positive, structured manner. This is a great way of identifying if anything needs to be done differently the next time. Allowing Scouts to give regular feedback is a great way to test the temperature and ensure everyone has skin in the game.

Circling Up

At the end of every meeting, leaders and Scouts stand in a circle and each person has a chance to make any announcements regarding upcoming events. Even though websites and emails are utilized to communicate information to the troop this one routine action is a great way to ensure clear and concise personal communication. Since they stand in a circle, there is no perceived leader so that everyone has an equal voice.

Paying it Forward is Mutually Beneficial

Formal methods are utilized by senior Scouts to teach younger Scouts various Scouting skills; these could be to earn a merit badge or reach their next rank. The EDGE method is often used: Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable... to pass on those skills. The senior Scouts get to sharpen their leadership and communications skills. The younger Scouts now have another avenue to learn what is needed for them to succeed.



Other Troops in the Area

Ensuring that the Scouts have a meaningful program is very important. If they are not getting what they want/need, then they will leave. They may go to another troop or they may opt out of Scouting altogether. From the moment they join the troop, they need to feel invested in the program. They need to feel that they can grow with the troop, and that they are an important component/member of their patrol.

A long time ago, a manager asked me if I thought leaders are born or made. I distinctly remember that I hummed and hawed through that terrible answer with no discernable response. After spending over a decade watching Scouts go through the program, my response would now be: Definitely some people are natural leaders, but everyone has the capability to learn to be a better leader.

I'd be interested to hear if anyone else can speak to how Scouting skills has been beneficial to them in later adult life...



Scout Lessons that Every Entrepreneur Can Learn From

Many of the [lessons in entrepreneurship](#) I've learned over the years had seeds in my time in the Boy Scouts of America. Through the Scouts, I learned leadership, personal finance, and other skills that have come to my aid countless times in my career in corporate America and as a freelancer.

One of the best courses in beginning entrepreneurship I've ever come across is the [Entrepreneurship merit badge](#). Even for a veteran business owner, there are some valuable tips you can pick up by completing the requirements and reading through the Entrepreneurship pamphlet and worksheet.

About Scout Merit Badges

For the unfamiliar, the Boy Scouts of America is an organization that teaches young people [leadership](#) and life skills that can be useful far beyond their youth. Merit badges are awards earned for completing a list of requirements related to a particular topic.

To earn the merit badge, the Scout must work with an adult leader in their troop or community to complete a list of requirements. Here's a look at the main requirements and how they may translate into business success later in life. Consider going through the steps yourself to "earn" the badge. You might be surprised by how much you learn!

Requirement 1:

In your own words, define entrepreneurship. Explain to your merit badge counselor how entrepreneurs impact the U.S. economy.

It is essential to understand what it means to be a business owner and how your business fits in with the greater economy. Think through your business structure, the clients, and the employees you support. You will better understand your business and how it fits into the surrounding business ecosystem.



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Requirement 2:

Explain to your counselor why having good skills in the following areas is important for an entrepreneur: communication, planning, organization, problem solving, decision making, basic math, adaptability, technical and social skills, teamwork, and leadership.

As the founder of a startup or owner of a business, even a solo freelancing business, you wear many hats. I am the president, CEO, accountant, bookkeeper, content producer, social media manager, paralegal, and more for my business.

Additionally, by understanding the roles you play, you can better grasp the skills you need for success. Sometimes that may mean recognizing and working to improve upon a weakness.

Requirement 3:

Identify and interview an individual who has started a business. Learn about this person's educational background, early work experiences, where the idea for the business came from, and what was involved in starting the business. Find out how the entrepreneur raised the capital (money) to start the business, examples of successes and challenges faced, and how the business is currently doing (if applicable). Discuss with your counselor what you have learned.

Working as an entrepreneur in a vacuum can be a lonely road. In addition, isolation might keep you from learning critical business management skills you could pick up from networking with other entrepreneurs. Rather than working with a merit badge counselor on this requirement, you can find another business owner.

Just by meeting them and learning about their business, you could pick up great strategies to improve your business. If you don't know other local business owners, connect with your local Chamber of Commerce.



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Requirement 4:

Think of as many ideas for a business as you can, and write them down. From your list, select three ideas you believe represent the best opportunities. Choose one of these, explain why you selected it and why you feel it can be successful.

One of my biggest entrepreneurship problems is, too many business ideas. But that's not the case for everyone. Take a few minutes to brain dump different business ideas to see what is rattling around in that entrepreneurial mind of yours. Who knows, maybe you'll come up with your next billion-dollar idea!

Requirement 5:

Create a written business plan for your idea that includes:

- a. Product or Service
- b. Market Analysis
- c. Financial
- d. Personnel
- e. Promotion and Marketing

A [business plan](#) is not required for startup success, but it can't hurt! A business plan is a written strategy that you plan to follow to see your business succeed. Defining your product or service and giving the target market an honest analysis will show if you are on the right track. If you plan to seek outside investments in the future, a business plan may be required.

Requirement 6:

When you believe your business idea is feasible, imagine your business idea is now up and running. What successes and problems might you experience? How would you overcome any failures? Discuss with your counselor any ethical questions you might face and how you would deal with them.

Requirement 6 is where the merit badge ends and real life begins. However, unlike the young people working to earn this merit badge every day through Scouting, you are already an adult and an entrepreneur. This is not hypothetical. This is real life. From the lessons you learned completing requirements 1 through 5, look at your existing business or an example you came up with in requirement 4. Of course, it's good to ponder questions and prepare. For example, what challenges do you or might you face? How do you or would you overcome them?



Lifetime Learning is Key to Success

The most successful business owners are lifelong learners. There is always something you can improve if you challenge yourself and your business to reach for new levels of success. By walking through the requirements of the entrepreneurship merit badge, you are adding a new and unique perspective to your arsenal of ideas to reach business success for many years to come.

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