

## Scouting for Success

### The Surprising Parallels of Cub Scout Leadership and Office Management

**When I volunteered to lead my son's Cub Scout den three years ago, I could not have imagined the parallels that I would find between wrangling elementary school-aged kids and managing the multiple needs and personalities of a law firm office. Dreams of having a group with diverse skills, an enthusiasm to help, and a sense of preparation for the future certainly are shared by every Director of Administration, COO, and Office Manager I have had the pleasure to meet. The age ranges and uniforms might differ, but there are certainly some lessons I've learned as a den leader that have given me greater insight into office operations.**

### Leadership Principle

Much like teaching or coaching, one of the greatest challenges for leading a Cub Scout den is not so much the Scouts themselves as it is the parents. The Cub Scouts arrive to a meeting or activity with the aid of an adult, and are keen to participate with adults' guidance. When activities are successful and clearly communicated the parents sometimes offer words of praise to a den leader. Most times it is simply a smile and "thank you" as they leave with their Scout. However, when there is a challenge, such as change in plan or a sense of inequality, such feedback may be more negative and in much greater volume. Challenges happen, but if the den is well-managed, and communications to parents are received and understood, most unpleasant interactions can be

avoided. I am always sure to communicate 'up' to parents to avoid any surprises. I also take time every meeting to a) emphasize the parents' crucial role in their Scouts' success and b) include the parents in the celebration of milestones. Senior firm leadership should also be in the loop as far as what is being accomplished by local and regional office leadership. Share with them how their added support might benefit the firm, and invite them to participate in the recognition of accomplishments by your team. This will help build the team spirit as you work towards common (and stated) goals.

## “Do Your Best”

The Cub Scout motto is “Do Your Best.” When my Scouts show frustration with learning a new skill I declare, “Well, that’s why the Cub Scout motto is ‘Do it perfectly, the first time, every time.’” They laugh and correct me, and I take that moment to remind them that new skills and processes take some time to master. The same can be

said about upskilling your staff or adjusting processes to better meet current needs. Continuous learning and improvement never stop. Having the proper tools to teach is just as important as having a team that is willing to learn.

## “Be Prepared”

If my Scouts take the next step in Scouting their motto will then be “Be Prepared.” This motto is known to many outside of Scouting, I can say that it is exactly what I hope my son gets from his experience. Preparation for possible challenges, and opportunities, gives us an advantage that might not be foolproof but certainly ‘fool-resistant.’ Studying major challenges in office

administration, such as office moves, the addition of attorneys and staff, and the natural transition of senior or underperforming staff allows you to anticipate what you will need when they occur. Having a team of cross-trained and supported staff will ensure the smoothest results from such challenges.

## Applying Scout Principles to Effective Office Management

Scouting has always had a visible role in community activities, from park cleanups to local parades to aiding those who need help. These are often the most widely seen of all Scout activities, so I want to make sure my den has their uniforms looking sharp, their behavior at their best, and a very clear idea of why we are doing these activities, and for whom. This ensures we are showing why we are a positive part of the community, and how their support of the Scouts benefits all. The client entering your office is no different. How does your

firm receive them? Are they being greeted warmly? Will they be sitting down in a clean, well-attended conference room? Is their trust and investment in the firm being appreciated at the most basic levels? Next time you have a team meeting, break out the s’mores and tell scary stories of experiences past. Then look towards where you want to be in the future and share that vision and plan.



### About the Author

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