

VENTURING MAGAZINE

What can we conclude about Venturing

September 2014

From the new Key Performance Indicators reporting method?

The BSA National Office has changed the format and information offered in its monthly membership reports. The new report, or KPI, is a management report on Key Performance Indicators. In the old report, membership numbers for Cubs, Boy Scouts, Varsity, Venturing, and Exploring were consolidated and provide in a year-to-date and year-ago format. Included in the information was the % of total available youth (TAY) served by Scouting, number of registered adult leaders in each category as well as the number of registered units.

NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP REPORT

June 2014

NATIONAL	YOUTH REGISTERED				% AVAILABLE YOUTH SERVED			ADULTS REGISTERED				UNITS REGISTERED					
	LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR	DIFF.	% CHG	LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR	% CHG	LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR	DIFF.	% CHG	LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR	DIFF.	% CHG		
Boy Scouts of America																	
Tiger Cubs	17,635	15,528	-2,107	-11.95%	0.8%	0.7%	-0.1%	19,404	17,277	-2,127	-10.96%						
Cub Scouts	496,449	449,918	-46,531	-9.37%	11.7%	10.6%	-1.1%	284,403	268,990	-15,413	-5.42%						
Webelos Scouts	521,671	467,585	-54,086	-10.37%	12.3%	11.0%	-1.3%	36,518	33,709	-2,809	-7.69%						
Total Cub Age	1,035,755	933,031	-102,724	-9.92%	9.7%	8.8%	-1.0%	340,325	319,976	-20,349	-5.98%	Packs	41,330	39,431	-1,899	-4.59%	
Boy Scouts	761,343	726,255	-35,088	-4.61%				457,012	441,501	-15,511	-3.39%	Troops	37,059	35,818	-1,241	-3.35%	
Varsity Scouts	57,310	58,815	1,505	2.63%				20,885	20,562	-323	-1.55%	Teams	8,180	8,155	-25	-0.31%	
Total Scout Age	818,653	785,070	-33,583	-4.10%	12.5%	12.0%	-0.5%	477,897	462,063	-15,834	-3.31%	Troops/Teams	45,239	43,973	-1,266	-2.80%	
Venturers	162,529	133,560	-28,969	-17.82%	1.3%	1.0%	-0.2%	Unit	52,400	50,305	-2,095	-4.00%	Crews	15,341	14,295	-1,046	-6.82%
Total Members	2,016,937	1,851,661	-165,276	-8.19%	6.7%	6.2%	-0.5%	Adults	870,622	832,344	-38,278	-4.40%	Total Units	101,910	97,699	-4,211	-4.13%
								Council/District Adults	36,360	30,910	-5,450	-14.99%					
Explorers*	80,718	77,325	-3,393	-4.20%					23,062	21,992	-1,070	-4.64%	Posts	4,455	4,321	-134	-3.01%
								Total Paid									
Total Youth	2,097,655	1,928,986	-168,669	-8.04%	7.0%	6.4%	-0.6%	Adults	930,044	885,246	-44,798	-4.82%	Units/Posts	106,365	102,020	-4,345	-4.08%
								GRAND TOTAL PAID YOUTH AND ADULTS	3,027,699	2,814,232	-213,467	-7.05%					

ESTIMATED SERVED

Learning for Life Curriculum based 427,382

ORGANIZATIONS

1,974

This monthly report was available for the National Office, each of the 4 Regions, all the Areas, and every local council. A quick survey of the report could give a sense of the health of Scouting as reflected by youth membership, adult leaders, units, and especially by % TAY, which is essentially market share. Because it gave detailed membership information, it was possible to see trends in Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, Venturing, and even Exploring, which is considered non-traditional membership because of its relaxed membership standards.

Effective with the July, 2014 monthly report, a new format called a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report has replaced the old one dimensional form. The new report gives much better management information and shows year-to-date as well as one-year-ago and two-year-ago data giving a better view of trends. In addition to membership data, new units, and retention information, the new report includes

Cub Scout and Boy Scout Advancements-to-date. This new measure, along with total membership status, provides additional insight into the health of the Cub and Boy Scout programs. With three years of data on each report, it is possible to view trends in membership and participation (as measured by advancement activity). This helps explain the recent obsession with advancement within Venturing which resulted in a completely new Venturing advancement structure.

The new KPI report has a lot of valuable information. It is a step forward in management reporting and indicates that our professional leadership is going to have the tools to better manage the organization. The problem with better metric tools is that they often focus managers too much on whatever is being measured at the expense of other important parameters. In this case, the tools will focus on advancement, new units, adult leader training, and unit retention. Total membership, market share, youth retention, council net assets, and "units per commissioner" are also reported in fine print at the bottom of the report.



JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE
Key Performance Indicator Report



July 2014

National

Leading Indicator

	CUB SCOUT ADVANCEMENTS YEAR-TO-DATE	NEW CUB SCOUTS RECRUITED	NEW CUB PACKS YEAR-TO-DATE	BOY SCOUT ADVANCEMENTS YEAR-TO-DATE	TOP LEADERS TRAINED	MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT YEAR-TO-DATE	PERCENT OF UNITS RETAINED
2014	558,955	128,791	669	209,327	50.5%	282,689	91.0%
2013	600,378	137,854	471	214,068	48.0%	311,903	91.9%
2012	640,918	152,887	672	221,417	48.0%	339,856	92.2%

Lagging Indicator

	MEMBERSHIP*	MARKET SHARE	YOUTH RETAINED	COUNCIL OPERATING UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	NUMBER OF COUNCILS TRANSMITTED
2014	1,942,440	6.5%	69.7%	\$21,926,905	135
2013	2,114,742	7.1%	69.2%	\$19,286,818	N.A.
2012	2,203,476	7.4%	69.7%	\$10,011,509	N.A.

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DIRECT CONTACT LEADERS TRAINED	YOUTH PROTECTION	UNITS PER COMMISSIONER
39.9%	75.0%	4.48
38.5%	75.0%	4.32
35.8%	56.4%	4.21

Boy Scouts of America's Vision
"Provide a Quality Scouting Program to More Youth"

TOTAL YOUTH REGISTERED					TOTAL ADULTS REGISTERED					TOTAL UNITS REGISTERED				
	2014	2013	2012	2013 YE		2014	2013	2012	2013 YE		2014	2013	2012	2013 YE
*Cub Age:	936,941	1,040,043	1,098,965	1,417,034	Total Cub:	323,353	344,002	360,312	395,445	Packs:	39,546	41,492	43,047	43,110
*Scout Age:	792,783	828,199	838,594	888,947	Total Scout:	467,875	483,874	494,174	508,230	Troops:	35,891	37,155	37,983	37,739
*Venturers:	134,775	164,149	179,537	192,080	Total Venturing:	51,017	52,978	54,518	56,174	Teams:	8,175	8,195	8,230	8,299
*Explorers:	77,941	82,351	86,380	114,894	Council/District:	29,702	35,826	40,833	42,579	Crews:	14,373	15,419	16,280	16,012
					Exploring:	22,298	23,528	25,355	26,170	Units:	97,985	102,261	105,540	105,160
										Posts:	4,344	4,525	4,832	5,058

What is not in focus is Venturing membership, which is buried in the Boy Scout Membership numbers. It is true that total Venturing Membership is broken out in the fine print at the bottom of the report, but it is also true that Venturing is no longer reported at the local council level. All of this leads to two likely conclusions:

1. Advancement has become very, very important as a measure of the quality of program, and
2. Venturing membership as a stand-alone metric is no longer emphasized.

The emphasis on advancement makes sense for Cubs and Boy Scouts since the structure of those programs can be effectively measured by the amount of advancement participation of youth members. This is not the case in Venturing, and historically young people of Venturing and Exploring age have been uninterested in and unwilling to participate in "advancement". History is about to repeat itself in the Young Adult program, as it did in the 1950's when the original Ranger, Air Ace, and Silver Awards were dropped due to non-participation. This happened again in the 1971 when the Exploring Method for earning Eagle was dropped and has happened once again with the dropping of Bronze-Gold-Silver, for the same reason, low participation. It remains to be seen what "remedial" measures will be taken if the new ALPS program does not lead to higher participation numbers, but if history is a guide, it is not going to be pleasant or constructive.

The fact that Venturing membership statistics are now lumped in with Varsity and Boy Scout numbers is extremely telling. It is either an effort to obscure the extreme failure of the Venturing Program over the past 6 years, or it is a demotion of the program to lesser status like that of Varsity, or both. Venturing membership now stands 50,000 youth lower than it did on the day of its inception in 1998. The current membership number of 134,775 is also significantly less than half of the peak number of 293,323 in 2002. What's of equal concern is the fact that almost half of our current Venturing members are 16-18 year old young men of the LDS Church who are, for the most part, done with Scouting and are finishing up their preparation for their 2 year Mission. This is in no way meant to be critical of the LDS Church or the fine way it uses Scouting to raise its young men. All of us could take a lesson in youth programming from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Their Venturing Program, however, is unlike that of other churches or of other chartered organizations. It is not coeducational, and it is not usually focused on typical adventure activities. If there is any rank advancement, it is focused on the Trail to Eagle which had been started by these 16-17 year olds when they were 12-13 year old Boy Scouts and later 14-15 year old Varsity Scouts.

What this leaves us with is about 75,000 Venturers who are participating in what might be called traditional Crews. In July, there were more Career Explorers than there were "traditional" Venturers. This is significant because Exploring fell into obscurity almost immediately after it was spun off into the Learning for Life Corporation in 1998. With a single professional staff member at the National Office, and with no incentive within the local councils to support it, Exploring has dropped from over 300,000 members before the split to 77,325 today. Venturing has suffered almost as much in a much shorter time, and now that there is no management focus at the national or the local level, it is likely to continue its plunge.

In the meantime, we have a very well thought out Advancement Scheme for Venturing, but no plan for rebuilding the program in order to offer that scheme or Venturing to more teens. The vision statement "The Boy Scouts of America will prepare every eligible youth in America to become a responsible, participating citizen and leader who is guided by the Scout Oath and Law" means that we intend to offer our programs to every "eligible" American young person. Apparently we don't mean "every eligible" teenager.

It is a mystery, or a secret, why Venturing has received such short shrift over the past decade. After a burst of enthusiasm and activity which led to a huge surge in membership followed by years of neglect, we seem to be abandoning our older teens altogether. If Venturing and Career Exploring were rebuilt to their former glory days, their membership would comprise a quarter of the total youth membership of BSA and would push our total member back above 2 million. As cynical as it sounds, failing to attempt this may be because of a well-known problem that our local councils have struggled with for decades. The families of teens do not contribute to Scouting with the same enthusiasm as younger families do.

Venturing Crews and Explorer Posts are notorious for not participating in Friends of Scouting campaigns and rarely sell popcorn as a fund raiser. If someone could solve this problem and find a way for older Scouts to contribute to the cost of delivering Scouting in local communities, I predict that both Venturing and Exploring would suddenly become much more important. After all is said and done, this whole dilemma may come down to the almighty dollar.