

# VENTURING MAGAZINE

LeaderThoughts #26 by Michael Brown

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## The Committee Structure: Getting Everyone Involved

One problem facing many organizations is that most people think there are two types of people within their group: the officers and everyone else. The officers are usually expected to do all the work of the organization (planning and organizing stuff), and everyone else just participates.

Usually this results in burnout and frustration on the part of the officers, as they have to shoulder all the work of keeping the organization running; and everyone else slowly drifting away because they don't feel fully involved in the group.

How do you solve this problem?

Simple. Use the "Committee Structure".

But what is that and how does it work? (and does it work?)

I have found that in orgs that already have committees in place, they are usually put to use and most understand them. However, in other groups in which the members are not familiar with them or the organization is new, it can take some time to get them up and running. This is true of most Venturing Crews, where both the youth and most adults have no experience with committees.



It should also be pointed out for those involved in scouting that they should NOT confuse committees with patrols. They are not the same. Patrols, in most cases, are small, self contained sub-groups. Committees come in a variety of sizes (anywhere from 30+ members to one), can exist for a few weeks or years and years, and members can be a member of more than one committee. The focus of any committee is to consider, investigate or take action on some matter. So don't try to treat them like a patrol.

With a committee structure, the group is organized into several (many) committees (and some large committees may be organized into additional smaller ones). The 'work' of the group is thus really done in these committees. The officers would be chairs of some committees, and instead of each of them burdened with work, they would oversee the work of these committees to accomplish the various tasks. And you give everyone a (real) sense of being involved by having EVERYONE be part of one (or more) of these committees.

Furthermore, since the bulk of the work of the group is done in the committees, the meetings of the overall group would go quicker because a lot of discussion and planning would occur in the committee meetings! The committees would bring what they have done to the organization meetings for approval and the like.

How would this work in a Venturing Crew?

Your Crew should be organized into several standing (i.e. permanent) committees, each headed by one of your elected officers or an appointed chair. Some of the committees you might have could be: Program, Public Relations, Fundraising, Executive, and the like. Some others that crews might have may include Equipment, Website, and of course, ones for large and on-going activities/events of the crew. It would depend on the needs of your crew as to what kind of committee you should have.

In the 1950s, all Explorer Posts, Sea Explorer Ships, and Air Explorer Squadrons were expected to have 4 program committees within them, with all youth a member of one of these committees (note- these committees were separate from the crews that subdivided the units). These 4 committees were: Indoor (Vocation), Outdoor, Service and Social. Indoor handled everything to do with meetings, including meeting programs which were often vocational in nature. Outdoor handled all camping and similar events. Service handles service events. Social handled all social events (keep in mind that in the 50s Explorer Posts were male only. In addition to social events for the post members, social events could include dances and other such events with girls).

So having committees within a crew has a long historical basis. From the names given above, some of these committees seem obvious as to their purpose, but just to be sure, here are a few examples.

The Program Committee would be headed by your VP-Program. It would be this committee that would plan and carry out the program of the crew. Depending on how your crew is organized, this can include programs for meetings, day long or weekend or longer events/activities of the crew and more. For several of these events, they may even have their own committees.

The Fundraising Committee would be headed by the Treasurer. It would be this committee that would plan and carry out all fundraising events of the crew, such as car washes, sale events and the like.

The Public Relations Committee may be headed by an appointed chair or the Secretary. It would be this committee that would plan and carry out all activities dealing with promoting the crew and getting the word out about what it does. This could include creating and making up brochures, fliers and the like, and also running any promotional events for the crew, such as Open House events.

The Executive Committee (sometimes called an Executive Board) would be headed by the President. This group is actually the lead officers of the crew. The specific membership is set down by your bylaws. This group would usually meet on a regular basis or as needed, to make any decisions regarding the crew in between regular meetings.

Now, in addition to these permanent committees, you can have several 'select' (short term or ad hoc) committees to do other tasks. Some of these you would probably expect to have on a regular basis, such as for your regular awards banquet or your regular open house event or summer superactivity. Others may be formed as need to perform some task, such as planning and carrying out a large service project or fellowship event or some other task. Such committees also have a value of putting someone in charge for a short term (but important) project who rather not be tied down with year-long task or position. It can also be good training and experience for a newer member to prepare them to step up to that larger position. A member who has shown themselves in running several events may be a great candidate for VP of Program, for instance.



committees, depending on their time, experience, and interests. If you have an adult who is very knowledgeable about finances, they would be a great resource for the Fundraising Committee, for instance. When a new member joins the crew, get them involved as soon as possible by getting them involved in a committee.

In addition to getting everyone in the chapter involved, using committees has the effect of making your crew meetings run shorter and more smoothly. How does this work? Well, if you don't have a committee structure in place, then you are forced to fully plan out your activities in your crew meeting, such as upcoming events (whether activities, social events, fundraisers, etc.). This takes a lot of time. With the committee structure, this planning is done in the committees at their own meetings. The committees then bring to the crew meeting their fully planned out activities for final approval (and possible modification). If those who have the strongest interest in the event are involved with that committee, then hopefully there will be little need to make many changes. The committees meet at a time/place of their convenience. Could be on-line, or at lunch, or in someone's home, or via a phone conference or even an on-line chat session. Because the committee is probably a smaller group, they can be less formal than at a crew meeting (this is allowed under parliamentary rules).

Realize that within the BSA, we use this committee structure at many levels. Much of the work being done by the BSA, both nationally and in your council, is done by committees. Many of these committees 'meet' on-line or via conference calls and they get a lot done. Also, your VOAs can make use of committees as well. Many many organizations do the same.

So try it out. It works well!

One reaction I've gotten when I've laid out this structure for crews is, "our crew is too small, we only have 5 people." Well, the issue there is you need to grow your crew. A 5 person crew is not effective. You've basically filled all the officer roles. You need to be recruiting and build up your crew.

I like to give book recommendations in these articles, but have to admit that on this topic I'm stumped. Too many are just of too narrow a use (books on church-based committees or non-profit boards). So let me give a different one. If you are interesting in learning more about parliamentary procedure, get the right work, which is "Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised" (RONR) in its 11th edition (2011). Please be wary of the various spurious editions of Robert's Rules (Modern, 20th Century, etc). If RONR is a bit scary, get "Robert's Rules of Order, In Brief", which is intended as a teaching work, NOT a replacement for RONR. As noted, future articles will touch on other topics of parliamentary procedure.

Another important aspect is that EVERYONE in the crew should be involved in these committees. Everyone should be on at least ONE standing committee. Some may be on more than one, depending on their interest and time. Also, all the crew adults (associate advisors and crew committee members) should be asked to advise one or more of these



**WE NEED  
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TO  
JOIN OUR  
CREW**