



# OREGON TRAIL COUNCIL

Strategic Public Relations Plan  
Presented to Mr. Christopher Otto, Assistant Scout Executive and  
Dave Shwieger, Vice President of Marketing  
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## **University of Oregon Public Relations Campaign Team**

- Andy Jenness - [jenness@uoregon.edu](mailto:jenness@uoregon.edu)
- Mariah Herman - [mlincoln@uoregon.edu](mailto:mlincoln@uoregon.edu)
- Sanja Palavra - [spalavra@uoregon.edu](mailto:spalavra@uoregon.edu)
- Chelsea Lamberson - [clambers@uoregon.edu](mailto:clambers@uoregon.edu)
- Neil Young - [nyoung@uoregon.edu](mailto:nyoung@uoregon.edu)

## Table of Contents

Public Relations Plan	3
Research Plan	11
Client Report #1	13
Client Report #2	17
Client Report #3	20
Mentor Program Guidance	23
Video Contest Guidance	25
Exit Survey	27
Volunteer Blog Guidance	29
Mission Statement Guidance	31

## Challenge

Oregon Trail Council is an organization focused on teaching boys, across southwest Oregon, life long skills of leadership and service through adventure. The Council depends primarily on volunteers and veteran participants to recruit new members. Currently, there is a consistent annual decrease in retention of youth members. A majority of the departures have been identified as occurring between the transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts. Our challenge is to increase retention rates, with the main focus on boys eligible for the transition process.

We have developed and implemented a creative plan to increase the recruiting and retention rates of Cub Scouts that also fits the budget and capabilities of the Oregon Trail Council. We hope to increase the number of transitioning Cub Scouts, as well as increase new member enrollment. Having an organized public relations plan will help overcome the retention challenge and provide a guide for staff members to address the issue in the future.

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## Situation Analysis

The Oregon Trail Council consists of eight districts across the following six southwestern Oregon counties – Benton, Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lincoln, and Lane.

As an organization that serves more than 7,400 youth, the Council primarily relies on elementary schools for its recruitment strategies. According to the Council, since the *Dale v. Boy Scouts of America* case in 2000, schools have chosen to discontinue support toward private organizations, such as Scouting programs. The Council said that the ruling directly affected its main communication techniques, leading to a decrease in retention. On an annual basis, approximately 2,500 scouts do not renew their memberships. This leaves the Council with a challenge to find new and creative ways of recruiting and retaining members.

The Council began taking action by using social media such as Twitter, Facebook and an informational Web site. They also use news releases, public service announcements and direct mail to spark community interest. While some of the staff members are media trained, many do not have the necessary time needed to devote to media relations.

The Council is also experiencing a low response rate to the need of volunteers to help run the organization. Many parents have chosen to help, taking the leadership role of a den leader. This may contribute to why the youth members are not returning; parents do not have the time required to both participate with their son and volunteer for the organization.

Young men are attracted to Scouting for the outdoor adventures and activities that Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts provide. With trips planned throughout the year, scouts have the

opportunity to learn about nature and survival skills through activities such as hiking and camping. Pre-developed curriculum and limited resources provide classroom-type education during weekly meeting, instead of outdoor or adventurous participation, causing some boys to lose interest.

Cub Scouts also lose interest due to competition with school activities, sports and other clubs. The boys who are old enough to transition – fifth grade – are at a period in their life where the opinions of friends become more important than those of their parents. To some, Boy Scouts is considered “uncool” or “nerdy” and therefore prods members to quit and participate in alternative activities.

Public relations is about influencing behavior. By using a proper public relations plan, the Oregon Trail Council can develop a better functioning recruiting system, which will affect the behaviors of staff members, parents, volunteers and scouts. Specifically, the public relations plan will help the Council relate and respond to the wants and needs of their scouts through continuous evaluation and two-way communication that heightens interest and prolongs the time spent in the program.

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## **Goal Statement**

For the Oregon Trail Council to be retaining membership at an increased annual rate, with progress increases in the transition process from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts.

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## **Focus – Transitional Scouts**

The young men, ages nine to 10.5, are the principle focus of the organization. Boys are eligible to transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts at the age of 10.5. They are the group that attends meetings in exchange for education and adventure, and are vital to the organization for recruiting techniques. Keeping their interest will result in word-of-mouth recruitment and, in turn, boost retention rates.

### *Objective*

To heighten interest of the boy scout program through educational adventures so that Cub Scouts renew their annual membership and reach the boy scout level.

### *Model and Theory*

The strategy for this focus encompasses a two-way asymmetrical model; supported by the social learning and social exchange theory, both of which are influential.

### *Strategy*

We will accomplish this objective by establishing a mentoring program between current Boy Scouts and the younger Cub Scouts. This will create an opportunity for the older boys to teach the Cub Scouts about the transition process and all the benefits of moving into the Boy Scouts level. Research has shown that people are strongly and quickly influenced by

people they feel they can trust and believe. If the older scouts can build a relationship with the younger boys then it will heighten the likelihood that they will follow through with the transition process. Within the mentor program, our key message will be a spotlight of the fun, exciting aspects of Boy Scouts while stressing the opportunity to connect with peers, spend time with role models and make new friends.

#### *Tactics*

- *Create a Mentor Program* – the Mentor Program is a tactic developed to create relationships between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts through combined monthly meetings and bonding activities. Our main target in this tactic are the Boy Scouts because with proper training, they will primarily be running the program.
- *Highlight outdoor activities* – Highlight activities that are usually reserved for members at the Boy Scout level. Allow the Boy Scouts to shed light on all of the exciting trips and activities they participate in so the younger boys become enticed and excited to transition.
- *Create a pamphlet* – It should describe the mentorship program, how it promotes male bonding and explain the benefits of having the program to both parents and current Boy Scouts to generate involvement and excitement. The pamphlet should be distributed to parents at the first meeting of the Scouting year, talked about on the OTC Web site and incorporated into the blog.
- *Promotional Videos* – We suggest the Council begin a campaign to encourage Boy Scouts to develop short “YouTube” style videos highlighting Scouting activities. These videos can then be disseminated via various social media outlets including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites. The Council may need to have the first few developed or have the Arrow of Light take lead, but eventually have a contest between troops to produce the best video.

#### *Evaluation*

Success in achieving this objective will be determined informally by feedback from troop leaders received from participating Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts. Success can also be determined if there is an increase in number of boys who transition, number of mentoring relationships established, number of mentoring badges earned, media exposure and event attendees.

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#### **Focus – Parents**

Parents are the driving force behind the Oregon Trail Council. They are the ones that provide transportation for their sons to den and pack meetings. The parents also step in to help with various activities. Having their support and participation means they will encourage their son to continue participating in the program.

#### *Objective*

To actively involve parents in Scouting to encourage them to support the transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts.

#### *Model and Theory*

The strategy for this focus encompasses a two-way asymmetrical model; supported by the uses and gratification theory, which is media based.

#### *Strategy*

We will accomplish this objective through education and activities targeted toward parents of both Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. It is important to educate parents on the changing role as their sons transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts. Likewise, parents need to understand how and when the transition from Webelos to Boy Scouts takes place. Within this strategy, our key messages will focus attention on the values and skills instilled through the teaching and activities of the Scouting program, demonstrating each and every benefit for their child's future.

#### *Tactics*

- *Instructional pamphlet* – This pamphlet will be similar to what scouts receive but targeted toward parents. Included in this will be the changing roles of parents, the transition process and the benefits of Scouting (scholarships, resume builder, leadership qualities, etc.).
- *Exit Survey* -- This survey has already been created through Survey Monkey. We suggest the Council send it out once a year through email to both parents of scouts who are continuing with Scouting and scouts that are no longer registered. It will allow the Council gauge parent's enthusiasm and feelings toward the Scouting program. It will serve as an evaluation tool to understand how valuable Scouting is to families, what is enjoyable and what needs improvement. The login information will be provided to make access to the site simple.
- *Email* – Develop a consistent and continuously updated email list for parents followed by regular, timely messages covering all areas of Scouting. The list should be developed at the den, pack and troop levels and then centralized to the Council. Messages should then be sent on an appropriate frequency from the Council. The appropriate frequency will be often, but not too often, as to create noise for the parents. Monthly updates are one suggestion.
- *Family Activities* – Develop fun “family” activities hosted by troops where younger boys, about to transition, and their families are invited to engage in the fun. This will accomplish building relationships between Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts as well as engage the parents.

#### *Evaluation*

Each tactic must first be evaluated on whether or not it was accomplished. For example, was a “parent” pamphlet produced, second was it disseminated through the dens, packs and troops.

## **Focus – Oregon Trail Council Volunteers**

The Oregon Trail Council is supported primarily by its nearly 4,000 volunteers across 400 units, the majority of whom act as Den leaders and/or fill Council liaison positions. These individuals run activities, such as meetings and outdoor trips. By providing an interactive space for volunteers to connect and discuss with each other, the volunteers will have opportunities to share creative meetings, successful activities and best practices.

### *Objective*

To provide volunteers with training materials and leadership skills that support scouts throughout the transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts.

### *Model and Theory*

The strategy for this focus encompasses a two-way symmetrical model; supported by the social learning and situational theory, which are relationship based.

### *Strategy*

Deliver consistent, comprehensive messages from Council staff through training sessions and guide materials to improve meeting quality, scout activities and convey the mission of the Oregon Trail Council. Within this strategy, our key message will emphasize how valuable and instrumental volunteers are to the success of the young boys they interact with. It will position them as role models and communicate the importance of providing strong, positive influence in each boy's life.

### *Tactic*

- *Create Blog to Communicate Success* – The Council already boasts a solid web presence, and efforts are underway to improve that presence. Creation of a blog for leaders to share successful meeting activities, camping experiences or other success stories would stimulate ideas and spread best practices among the Council's various members. In doing so, leaders can develop ways to curb boredom among scouts and maintain interest leading into the transition process.

### *Evaluation*

To evaluate this objective, the Council should monitor how often people read, contribute to and link to your blog, **OTCscouts.wordpress.com**, through the Wordpress.com stats page. Have a discussion between volunteers and staff about constantly improving content and features to make it work best for the participants.

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## **Focus – Oregon Trail Council Staff**

Although limited in number, the Oregon Trail Council staff provides the vision and support to its database of volunteers. The importance of public relations in the distribution of information and education of constituents cannot be stressed enough.

*Objective*

To provide the Oregon Trail Council staff members with strategic communication guidelines that can be consistently implemented to support improving retention numbers.

*Model and Theory*

The strategy for this focus encompasses a two-way asymmetrical model; supported by the systems theory, which is relationship based.

*Strategy*

Develop action steps that require simple implementation and can be maintained without extensive time commitment by the Council’s limited staff members. Within this strategy, our key message will be the establishment and recognition that consistent communication is critical to the Council's success in retention. It must stay true to the focus of the organization and keep the volunteer base enthusiastic and on-track. Providing an overarching mission delivers a consistent message to all volunteers.

*Tactic*

- *Create a Volunteer Mission Statement* - Based on our research of the Council's Web site and meetings with OTC staff, no formal mission statement currently exists for the volunteers of the Oregon Trail Council. To effectively communicate a message that is consistent and clear from the staff to its volunteers the Council should first develop a statement that incorporates their values, beliefs and goals. The statement will provide a vision that can be communicated to all volunteers and guide their actions while reminding them of their value and purpose in the organization.

*Evaluation*

Leaders, within the council and its volunteers, should be randomly selected and surveyed to determine the awareness and acceptance of the Council’s mission statement. Additionally, determining the ease with which the statement can be found online and in materials should also be evaluated.

**Timeline**

To successfully implement this strategic public relations plan, our team recommends a timeline similar to the one that follows.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Execution</b>
<i>December 2</i>		Deliver final plan to Oregon Trail Council



<i>December 7</i>	Begin looking for a College Intern, use Bil Morrill as a guidance counselor	
<i>December 7-11</i>	Schedule a meeting regarding the <i>Mentor Program</i> and <i>Video Contest</i> implementation	
<i>December 11-31</i>	Inform volunteers and troop leaders about <i>Video Contest</i>	
<i>January 4</i>		Make sure all troops and leaders are informed about the <i>Video Contest</i>
<i>January 4</i>	Begin test run of <i>Mentor Program</i> with three different Packs and Dens (monthly meetings or evaluations to see how the program is working are also strongly recommended)	
<i>January 11</i>		Have an intern hired and ready to begin helping with implementation
<i>January 11</i>	Compile parent's email addresses to send out <i>Exit Surveys</i>	
<i>January 14</i>	Begin work on creating a <i>Volunteer Mission Statement</i>	
<i>February 1</i>		<i>Exit Surveys</i> sent out
<i>February 1</i>	Ask all den leaders and volunteers to regularly <i>Blog</i> about their activities and meetings	
<i>February 8</i>	Prepare leaders to debrief with scouts about the mentorship program	
<i>February 10</i>	Begin to compile <i>Exit Survey</i> responses	

<i>February 15</i>		Have <i>Volunteer Mission Statement</i> finalized and posted to the Web site
<i>March 1</i>		Have all responses from <i>Exit Survey</i> Compiled
<i>April 1</i>	Check up on the Blog to see if it is regularly being used and if it is helping other leaders	
<i>June 4</i>	Prepare a focus group style meeting with the test dens and packs to discuss the <i>Mentor Program's strengths and weaknesses</i>	
<i>July 4</i>		Have the <i>Mentor Program</i> ready to implement into all dens and packs covered by the Oregon Trail Council

## Budget

Due to the limited funding and time capabilities of the Oregon Trail Council, this strategic public relations plan does not include a significant budget. However, below we have included our recommendations for an estimated amount to spend on each tactic.

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Transition Scouts • <i>Mentor Program</i>	Pamphlet, video creation and promotion	\$250
Parents • <i>Transition Pamphlet</i> • <i>Family Activities</i> • <i>Exit Survey</i>	Pamphlet Event costs SurveyMonkey membership	\$200 \$250 \$25
OTC Volunteers • <i>Interactive Blog</i>	Wordpress membership	\$0
OTC Staff • <i>Mission Statement</i>	Costs associated with travel and meetings	\$150
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>\$875</b>

## Research Report

From an informal standpoint, our research was targeted at identification of attitudes of both youth and parents toward Boy Scouts, the time commitment required to participate, communication methods used by leaders and volunteers and the process of transitioning between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts.

The group developed three research goals to be addressed within the campaign – 1) Determine the attitude of youth members toward Boy Scouts; 2) Gauge parental involvement and attitude toward time commitments and communication; and 3) Identify any potential missing links throughout the internal communication process.

Based on these goals, primary research methods focusing on trends and attitudes gathered through qualitative methods were utilized for this plan. The strategies used, and the themes identified, are discussed below.

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### Method – Phone Interviews

After acquiring a list of unregistered youth and adults from Chris Otto, we conducted phone interviews with 15 parents of boys in fifth grade that did not re-register as members of the Council. A small set of questions (for time reasons) were used to solicit feedback on strengths and weaknesses of the Council, as well as reasons for the drop out and potential ways to address problems.

#### *Themes*

Based on the interviews conducted, the top three trends identified were as follows

- *Repetitive and/or Boring Material* – Several parents spoke to the monotony of weekly meetings, including material that failed to vary and engage the boys. One specifically pointed to the book and pursuit of badges as “uninteresting to her son.”
  - *Time Commitments* – As sports and other activities increased, parents and youth were forced to choose between Scouts and those sports. In many cases, Scouts was the activity that was cut.
  - *Lack of Leadership* – Loss of interest from poor leadership tactics also emerged, which was mentioned during initial meetings with Chris. Specific examples included a leader that “broke down” in front of Scouts and an elderly woman who was “extremely boring and unorganized.”
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### Method – Personal Interviews

Ten parents of scouts were also interviewed at Den meetings using a short list of questions to identify attitudes toward the Council’s communication methods, strengths and weaknesses, potential areas of improvement and intentions to make the transition. The

group interviewed included parents of currently involved Scouts, those planning on making the transition and one who did not make the transition.

### *Themes*

Based on personal interviews, the top three trends identified were as follows:

- *Adequate Communication to Parents* – The majority of parents stated that communication flowing from the Council occurred through email, mail and personal contacts, and was great for delivering the necessary messages.
- *Outdoors are Important* – Camping and other outdoor activities were mentioned multiple times as strengths of the Council. Even the parents of the boy that did not transition mentioned the outdoor activities as a potential area to focus efforts.
- *Time Commitments* – Again, the emergence of sports and other activities as competition for Scouts was identified as a reason for dropping out.

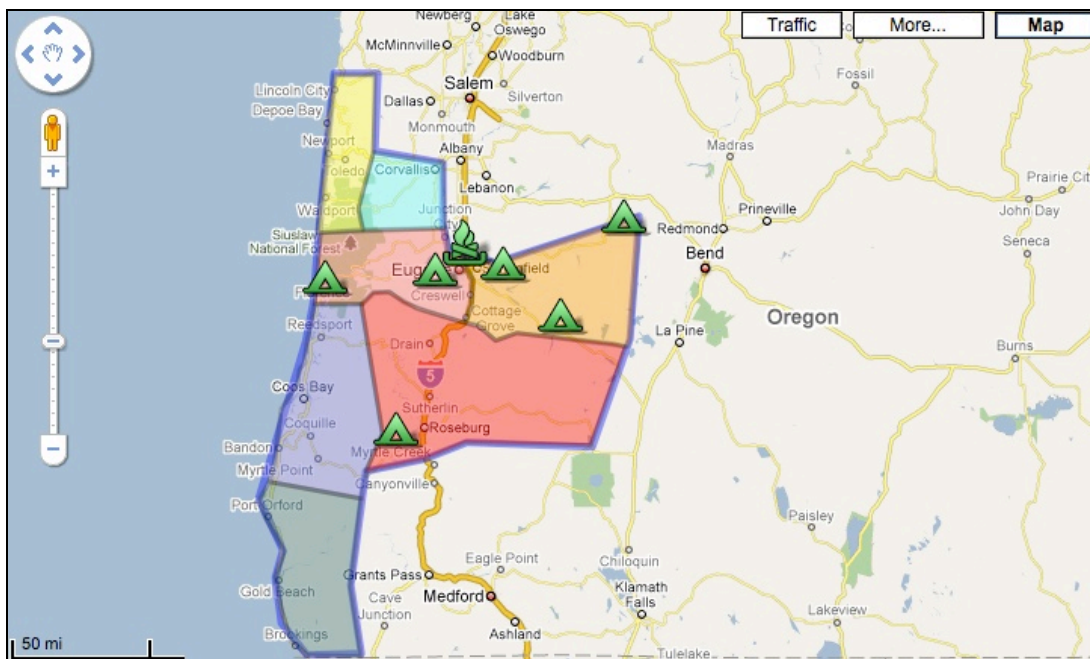
## Client Report #1 – Background, SWOT Analysis and Best Practices

Completed October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009

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### Background

The Oregon Trail Council organizes and represents all Boy Scout activities across six counties in Western Oregon, including Benton, Coos, Curry, Douglas, Lincoln and Lane Counties. Headquartered in Eugene, the Oregon Trail Council boasts over 7,400 youth members, supported by nearly 4,000 volunteers in over 400 units. The Council's seven districts encompass an area of over 30,000 square miles, which can be seen below.



As an organization that serves youth, the Oregon Trail Council depends primarily on schools to recruit new members. After the verdict in the landmark case *Dale v. Boy Scouts of America*, the landscape for recruiting changed drastically. Numerous schools have chosen to block recruiting by private organizations, such as Scouting programs, causing these programs to search for new, innovative ways of reaching their audience.

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### SWOT Analysis

Based on initial background research, the following SWOT analysis identifies and discusses several strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the Oregon Trail Council. It includes information gathered on the Oregon Trail Council website,

[www.otcbsa.org](http://www.otcbsa.org), as well as comments and notes from the initial client meeting with Chris Otto and Dave Schwieger.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful history of maintaining participant base despite adverse conditions</li> <li>• Strong volunteer support</li> <li>• Established online presence</li> <li>• Passionate about growing base</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal communications lacks consistency</li> <li>• No established training standards for volunteers and leaders</li> <li>• Lacking media/public relations plan, and staff to implement one</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plenty of room for growth</li> <li>• Social media opportunities opens new avenues for connecting to youth</li> <li>• Streamlined communications can deliver consistent message from top-to-bottom</li> <li>• Events, such as the spring recruiting event and upcoming Jamboree, provide platform to develop new initiatives and actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy reliance on schools as primary recruiting source</li> <li>• Continued perception of Boy Scouts as “extension” of Cub Scouts experience</li> <li>• Media plan developed by our group does not catch hold or cannot be maintained in the future</li> </ul>

Despite the concern regarding retention rates during the transition between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, the Oregon Trail Council should take stock in their current ability to maintain consistent participation levels around 7,000 boys. Taking into account the high attrition rate, there is ample opportunity for growth if the Council is able to tap into new methods of internal and external communications. The strong volunteer support and passionate employees provide the foundation necessary to solve the challenge.

On the weakness front, the Oregon Trail Council suffers on both the internal and external communication fronts. No formal training system exists to communicate the Council vision to volunteers, and no current staff is designated to handle the external public relations duties. Designating other avenues to communicate with youth and parents outside the school method is also imperative for successfully closing the gap.

### **Key Challenge**

Retention of youth members has evolved as a primary area of concern for the Oregon Trail Council. Out of the nearly 7,000 scouts that participate in district programs each year, around 2,500 choose to leave Scouting. In particular, the transition between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts accounts for half of these departures. Boys that have earned the Arrow of Light Award (highest honor in Cub Scouts) and are at least 10 years old *or* meet other age/schooling requirements are eligible to maintain their membership. Strengthening the

link between the two levels of Scouting through a strategic public relations campaign of *both* internal and external communications represents the key challenge for our group.

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## Best Practices

There are numerous organizations across a wide range of industries that deal with issues in their member recruitment and retention rates. Many of these groups have instituted practices that address these problems and can be used as guidance for developing strategies that meet the needs of the Oregon Trails Council.

- *Greek Life at the University of Oregon* – over time, the system saw drastic changes in their retention numbers. One practice that has proven helpful in curbing the issue is involvement in new student events that allow the groups to speak to incoming freshmen about the advantages of joining the Greek community. Recruitment numbers doubled for 2008, and many expect even more during 2009.
- *The First Tee*<sup>1</sup> – this non-profit organization mirrors the Boy Scouts of America in that it attempts to instill values in youth through activity (for the First Tee, the game of golf). The First Tee has developed a new “game plan” for the next five years, during which the goal is to introduce the organizations and its core values to 3.5 million people by training physical education teachers to teach the game of golf and its core values to First Tee students. So far, this recruitment plan has found success.
- *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*<sup>2</sup> - in 2006, the LDS Church had a difficult time spreading its religious teachings, which led to a decrease in members. In order to reach positive numbers, the Church developed a new conversation method for its missionaries to use with prospective members. Today, the Church has grown to become the second-fastest growing church, with over 122 Mormon temples in operation.
- *Fitness Clubs*<sup>3</sup> - the number of fitness organizations continues to grow, making membership retention crucial for business. The International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association produced a study showing that 30 percent of new members quit using their club after only three weeks. To address the problem, many clubs have moved toward increased training and customer service, hoping to make members feel more comfortable through positive reinforcement.

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<sup>1</sup> The First Tee. Accessed at <http://www.thefirsttee.org/Club/Scripts/Home/home.asp> on October 6, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Suite101.com. “Low LDS Convert Retention Rate.” Accessed at [http://mormonism.suite101.com/article.cfm/low\\_lds\\_convert\\_retention\\_rate](http://mormonism.suite101.com/article.cfm/low_lds_convert_retention_rate) on October 6, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> ClubIndustry.com. “Membership Retention for Fitness Clubs.” Accessed at [http://clubindustry.com/mag/fitness\\_retention\\_equals/](http://clubindustry.com/mag/fitness_retention_equals/) on October 6, 2009.

- *Prince William Sound Community College (PWSCC)*<sup>4</sup> – PWSCC ran into recruitment challenges in the state of Alaska. The school wanted Alaskan natives to identify the great opportunities for higher education that existed in their own state. PWSCC developed the objective to educate community members about the school and its opportunities, and settled on the approach of training current students to provide prospective students with a mentor. Secondly, PWSCC created workshops for high school students and the community that provided information about faculty, degree programs and scholarship opportunities. In 2007, PWSCC recognized a successful increase in its enrolled number of full-time students.

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<sup>4</sup> United States Department of Agriculture: Research, Education & Economics Information System. “Student Recruitment, Retention and Educational Equity.” Accessed at <http://www.reeis.usda.gov/web/crisprojectpages/204527.html> on October 6, 2009.



## Client Report #2 – Research Plan Elements

Completed October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009

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### Research Needs

The primary challenge for the Oregon Trail Council, to be addressed by the strategic public relations plan, is retention of scouts. Despite an annual membership near 7,000, the Council loses around 2,500 scouts each year. Specifically, the transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts has been identified as the central area of focus. Our opportunity for research revolves around discovery of attitudes toward Boy Scouts, both among youth and parents, as well as the role internal communication strategies may play in the retention issue.

Based on initial research and the SWOT analysis, we know the Oregon Trail Council has a successful history of maintaining membership levels despite high attrition, strong volunteer support and the potential for growth. They do not, however, currently have a strategic public relations plan or staff member dedicated to the position. In addition, training methods for volunteers or leaders have not been standardized, and there is potential for some of the message to be lost in translation.

One of our primary assumptions regarding research needs is that interpersonal contact and in-depth questioning will provide the most insight into themes regarding attitudes toward Boy Scouts, both among parents and youth. In regard to that, we assume that access to these groups is possible. We assume that peer influence among fifth and sixth grade students weigh heavily on their judgments and opinions, which may have effects on the perception of and attitude towards Boy Scouts. In addition, we believe that parents with participation in Cub Scouts may no longer want to commit to the weekly meetings for Boy Scouts. Finally, the introduction of sports as a competitive activity may contribute to the attrition issue.

From an informal standpoint, our research needs to identify the attitudes of both youth and parents toward Boy Scouts, its time commitment and the process of transitioning between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. In addition, assessing the internal message and the way it is communicated from staff to volunteers, down through the organization, represents another major research need.

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### Research Goals and Objectives

Formally, our research goals include:

- *Determining the attitude of boy about Boy Scouts* – specifically, we want to evaluate the way the Boy Scouts, its activities and other events are viewed among the age groups just prior to, during and after the transition period.

- *Gauging parental involvement and attitude toward time commitment* – one of the potential concerns regarding attrition rates is parental attitudes toward the time commitments. The goal of our research is to determine the role played by parents at both the Cub Scout and Boy Scout levels. In addition, we hope to learn whether parents “burn out” from commitments with their children.
- *Identifying potential missed links during internal communication* – because the Oregon Trail Council relies heavily on volunteers, we hope to learn about training methods and materials. Specifically, we want to determine what message is delivered downward through the chain of staff and volunteers, as well as how it is delivered. The attitudes of volunteers regarding these practices will also play a role in evaluating the overall success of the Council’s internal communication efforts.

The audiences that we will focus research on include:

- *Boys* – primarily, the focus will be on those leading up to the transition phase, those that made the transition and those that chose not to continue Scouts following the transition period. These are the groups that can provide insight into the process, whether or not they are interested in making the transition and why they chose to continue Scouts or leave the program altogether.
- *Parents* – the role that parents play in introducing the boys to Scouts, as well as ensuring that they continue, is crucial to the process. We hope to understand their time commitments and how it effects their willingness and attitudes moving forward.
- *Staff and Volunteers* – determining how the transition process is communicated to them, as well as training methods for accomplishing the goal, can prove useful in developing a strategy that allows them to reduce attrition rates.

In addition to these primary research sources, we also plan to conduct secondary research of best practices that can be applied to the Council’s key problem and establish a plan of uniform communication to all parties involved in the transition process.

Finally, the information gathered through these research techniques can allow us to identify trends in the transition process, attitudes regarding the process and a map of communication flow that can shape the messages and delivery of our strategic plan. The majority of our research will be completed by November 2<sup>nd</sup> – the day we present recommendations to the Council.

## **Research Strategies**

The majority of our research will be done for qualitative purposes, specifically to identify trends and attitudes. We will incorporate the following strategies:

- *Surveys* – a short survey developed using SurveyMonkey will be used to gather information from all three parties. We plan to pre-test the survey on friends to gather their feedback on questions, flow and time needed to complete the survey.
- *Focus Groups* – staff members and volunteers will be hosted in a focus group to learn about training methods and materials presented to help achieve Council goals. In

addition, focus groups may be conducted in accordance with den meetings to assess Cub Scout attitudes prior to making the transition to Boy Scouts. We will solicit feedback on potential questions from Margy.

- *Phone Interviews* – parents of boys that chose not to make the transition to Boy Scouts will be interviewed over the telephone to learn why that decision was made and what could have been done differently. Parents whose children did make the transition will also be interviewed to find out what worked in the process. Pre-testing will be done on parents involved with Scouts, such as Chelsea’s father.

As the research is primarily qualitative, the top three trends identified among each group will be used to develop the strategic plan.

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## **Hypotheses**

Prior to conducting our research, we have identified several potential “hunches” that we hope to confirm or deny:

A. Some of our anticipated hunches to the questions are that volunteers feel pressured into volunteering therefore resulting in a lack of passion and enthusiasm for the position. There is a perception among teens that being a Boy Scout is nerdy. Volunteers also are not receiving a lot of training to help them become great leaders and volunteers, which can affect the overall experience of a scout.

B. We developed these assumptions after our first meeting with Chris Otto and some secondary research. He led us to believe these were some of the main issues contributing to the dropping retention rates.

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## **Anticipated Uses**

Our team will apply this information toward:

- *Market Segmentation* – To determine if the focus needs to be on parents or children.
- *Theme Development* – To help us discover what issues are not being addressed.
- *Message Development* – To help us discover the Council’s communication message.
- *Strategy Development* – How we will form this information into a public relations plan.
- *Communication Channels* – The best ways to reach the targeted market segments.

## **Client Report #3 – Follow-up Recommendations**

Completed November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

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**Client Name:** Oregon Trail Council

**Team Members:** Sanja Palavra, Neil Young, Mariah Herman, Andy Jenness, Chelsea Lamberson.

**Date:** November 22, 2009

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**Target & Tactic:** Our largest tactic is the Mentor Program, in which Boy Scouts will become mentors to the Cub Scouts, while helping them transition from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts. Tactics used to establish this program are scheduling combined monthly meetings, highlighting outdoor activities, and creating pamphlets. Our main targets in this tactic are the Boy Scouts because with proper training, they will be the ones that will primarily be running the program.

**Implementation/Progress to date:** This program has not been implemented yet. The development of action steps and meeting suggestions will be handed to Oregon Trail Council by December 2, 2009. The implementation of the actual program is under client discretion.

**Follow up recommendation:** The measurement for this tactic would be the amount of Boy Scouts participating in the program. At the end, we recommend Oregon Trail Council develop a survey to get feedback on the success of the program. Adjustments should be made accordingly to the survey feedback.

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**Target & Tactic:** The second tactic is to establish an open volunteers blog where leaders across the state can log on and share successful leadership tips. Leaders can blog about group activities dens can participate in, where the best camping locations are at, how to make den meetings exciting, and so on. This blog will open communication barriers between volunteers across the state and allow them to share tips.

**Implementation/Progress to date:** We have chosen to use wordpress.com as the blog provider. The Oregon Trail Council will have a master account and a master password that we will provide by December 2, 2009. We will also provide a post example that the Oregon Trail Council can use as a guideline for future posts.

**Follow up recommendation:** The measurement of this tactic would be the frequency of the posts and the amount of participating posters. We recommend that the staff posts on

the blog first in order to encourage others to participate. If there are a small number of participants, we recommend that the Oregon Trail Council continue to communicate the importance of the blog posts with all the district members.

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**Target & Tactic:** The third implementation we are recommending is a video contest. Our main targets are the transitional scouts. Teams made up of Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts will have the opportunity to plan, produce and distribute a video on Scouting.

**Implementation/Progress to date:** As part of the implementation, we are providing various themes that the scouts can choose from, including “Too Much Fun” and “Movin Up.” We will also provide directions for the contest that will be given to the scouts. The action steps for the third tactic will be provided by December 2, 2009. The actual implementation is at client’s discretion.

**Follow up recommendation:** There are three possible measurements in this tactic. The first one is the number of Boy Scouts/Cub Scouts groups that will be participating in the contest. This number will really rely on the success of the Mentor program; the more mentor program participants there are, the more video contest participants. Along with how many participants is how many videos are submitted. These two things will determine the success of the contest. Because the videos will be posted on YouTube, the number of views will be a big measurement too. Oregon Trail Council will be able to see how many people are looking up videos on Scouting. The viewers looking up the videos can be considered to be potential scouts or parents of the potential scouts. The videos will contribute to the goal of increasing retention rates.

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**Target & Tactic:** We believe that Oregon Trail Council needs to develop a strong mission statement in order to effectively communicate a message that is consistent and clear to its volunteers. The targets for the mission statement are the volunteers.

**Implementation/Progress to date:** We are providing an overview of the purpose of a mission statement. We are also providing action steps on how to write a clear and concise mission statement. The mission statement information is complete and will be handed over to Oregon Trail Council on December 2, 2009. The implementation is at client’s discretion.

**Follow up recommendation:** The measurement of this tactic will be within the staff and volunteers. Oregon Trail Council staff will be able to see how many staff members and volunteers are aware and applying the mission statement.

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**Target & Tactic:** The last tactic within our plan is an exit survey developed through Survey Monkey. We have developed 10 questions that are targeted toward parents of scouts. The survey will be forwarded to parents through e-mails. The survey will help Oregon Trail Council understand where the parents are coming from and why they

continue to be part of or stop being part of the organization. The feedback provided from the survey can help Oregon Trail Council understand how they are doing and implement change where needed.

**Implementation/Progress to date:** The questions are complete and will be set up on SurveyMonkey. An ID and password will be provided to Oregon Trail council on December 2, 2009. Because we do not have the parent's e-mail contact list and the Oregon Trail Council has access to that information, the implementation will be at client's discretion.

**Follow up recommendation:** The measurement here is the amount of survey replies Oregon Trail Council receives. Oregon Trail Council should keep track of the numbers so they can compare the results with previous years. They can use this as an evaluation format to see the status of their communication tactics and if many people are receiving their e-mails. Also, Oregon Trail Council should use the feedback from the survey to accordingly adjust the program.

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**Target & Tactic:** For our objective regarding parents we also recommend other tactics that will help incorporate parents in the organization. These tactics include providing instructional pamphlets, utilizing the website to provide instruction on the changing roles of parents, and developing more fun "family" activities.

**Implementation:** According to client discretion.

## Implementation Piece – Mentor Program Guidance

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### Overview

The Mentor Program is a tactic developed to create relationships between Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts through combined monthly meeting and bonding activities. Our main targets in this tactic are Boy Scouts because with proper training, they will be the ones that will be primarily be running the program.

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### Action Steps

1. Create an educational pamphlet to show the importance of the Mentor Program and how it can teach leadership schools and further instill the values of Boy Scouts.
    - a. Pass out the pamphlets to Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and parents.
    - b. Transfer pamphlet information on the website so that it is available online and it can remain a reference for future participants.
  2. To jump-start the Mentor Program, recruit local Boy Scouts who are interested in taking a leadership role.
    - a. Set up a trial and error with three den and pack groups in order to measure success of the program.
    - b. For the trial and error groups, set up monthly meetings for a duration of six months in order to see how the two groups interact and how much of the leadership roles the Boy Scouts take. Following the trial and error group, you want to make sure that the program has monthly combined meetings.
    - c. The activities in the meetings should reflect skills needed to successfully transition to a boy scout. These activities should be of equal level in which both the Boy Scouts and the Cub Scouts can contribute.
  3. Create an evaluation piece that can monitor the success of the program.
    - a. In the evaluation piece, we suggest you look for the level of bonding between the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts.
    - b. We suggest that den and pack leaders sit down with the scouts and debrief the progress of the program. Some things they might want to ask about are activities, bonding relationship, and interest level.
    - c. These evaluations should be done after each Mentor Program meetings for six months in order to track the progress and understand what needs to be changed about the program. Over the duration of six months, we predict that there will be enough information and feedback to permanently introduce the program to all den and packs in the Oregon Trail Council.
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## Activities Examples

- The video contest will be a substantial activity the groups can do together. (Please refer to the video contest overview and guidelines).
  - Outdoor activities such as sand-boarding, trout fishing, hiking, coastal excursion, archery, Duck games, sports, camping, river rafting, and so on.
  - Liven up education through kinesthetic learning. Examples include, cooking, sewing on patches, geological education by visiting volcanic parks, botany education (be able to recognize what plants save your life and which ones don't), bird watching at Crater Lake, insect education, fear factor adventures, trust building activities, challenge courses, and so on.
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## Recommendations

We suggest that Oregon Trail Council creates one or more intern positions for local college students to come on and assist in the implementation of this plan. The interns will be able to carry out and monitor the various aspects of this program. In return, the interns will receive college credit as well as journalism, management and business experience. We are including the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication's intern coordinator's information.

Bill Morrill  
101 A Allen Hall  
541-346-2171  
[bmorrill@uoregon.edu](mailto:bmorrill@uoregon.edu)



## Implementation Piece – Video Contest Guidance

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**Who:** Teams made up of Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts

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**What:** Plan, produce and distribute a video on Scouting

- Choose a theme:
  1. “Too Much Fun!” In your video show how your den, pack or troop having “Too Much Fun.” It can be while at a meeting, earning a badge, on a camping trip or anywhere there is Scouting.
  2. “Movin Up!” For this video show the process or progression of Scouting from Cub Scouts to Boy Scouts to eagle scout and beyond. You may want to emphasize one aspect of the progression or the whole journey.
  3. “How to.” This theme is based on one of the many skills learned in Scouting, e.g. knot tying, or fire building.

*\*\*Note: All videos should highlight one or more words found in the Scout Law, e.g. trustworthy, loyal, obedient.\*\**

- Plan Your Video
    1. With your theme in mind, plan what your video is going to look like, sound like, and what message do you want to communicate. Who is going to be in your video? Be careful not to limit yourself. Who is going to be the cameraman, the director and the editor?
  - Produce the video:
    1. Check the light, film the shots, mix the music and edit the final cut.
    2. Your video is to be no longer than **2 to 4 minutes** in length, similar to a “YouTube” video.
  - Distribute your video
    1. Share your video with all your friends. Once you submit your video it will be posted on the OTC Web site. Use email, Facebook, Twitter, text message and any other method to send the link to all your friends and family encouraging them to view your creation.
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**When:** Set a deadline for submittal prior to a big event, the fall “Camp Baker” weekend is one idea. Then spotlight the videos during the event with judging and announcement of the winners.

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**Contest Rules:** All videos submitted will be under one of the three categories or “themes” stated above. There will be one winner from each category chosen based on the following criteria: quality, the message, and the number of views on the web site. Judging will be completed by a panel of judges selected by the OTC.

## Implementation Piece – Exit Survey

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*The Exit Survey* is a great tool to gauge parent's enthusiasm and feelings toward the Scouting program and how their experience went. The survey can serve as an evaluation tool to further help the Council serve its participants and better their experience. It can also help to understand how valuable Scouting is to families and what aspects they did or did not enjoy about it. If it is sent out end of January or early February, about the time Scouting is ending and parents need to renew for the upcoming year, it can remind parents to register again for the next year and make them feel included, so they don't feel out of the loop.

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### Goal

We hope that the *Exit Survey* will be distributed amongst hundreds of past and present Scouting parents, so they can give feedback about the program. The feedback that the Oregon Trail Council receives can then be collected and used to gauge the value of the program, what they are doing well and where improvement is needed. This gives the parents a chance to be heard and feel like they are involved in the whole process. All of the answers that are collected can be saved and compared to past answers to see if the changes they have made are working or not.

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### Action Steps

*The Exit Survey* will be emailed to all parents of Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, whether they are still registered for the next year, or are no longer registered. The survey should be emailed once a year around the end of January to early February. This is a good time frame because it is the end of the Scouting season when parents need to register again for the upcoming year. If it is sent out around this time it will help remind parents to re-register and make them feel like they are contributing to the program.

This was created on *SurveyMonkey* and should be distributed solely amongst parent's email addresses. You can only receive 100 answers per survey with the free account, so we recommend paying for the Monthly pro, which is \$20 per month and enables you to receive 1,000 responses per month.

The Exit Survey asks 10 specific and open-ended questions about the value and experience of the program. The questions are:

1. Are you continuing with the Scouting Program, if not when did you stop participating?
2. How long has your son been in the Cub Scouts program?

3. How much did you enjoy being involved in Scouting on a scale from 1-5 (1-not at all, 5-very much)?
  4. How much did your son enjoy being involved in the Scouting on a scale from 1-5?
  5. In your opinion, what were the strengths of Scouting? (Outdoor Activities, Meetings, Communication, Leadership, Social Aspect, Learning new skills, Morals)
  6. In your opinion, what were the weaknesses of Scouting? (Outdoor Activities, Meetings, Communication, Leadership, Social Aspect, Learning new skills, Morals)
  7. How valuable would you say Scouting was or is to you in regards to your sons growth as a young adult on a scale from 1-5 (1-not valuable, 5-very valuable)?
  8. If your son is planning to remain in the Scouting program, please let us know what motivates him to continue.
  9. If you son is not planning to remain in the Scouting program please let us know some of the reasons.
  10. Any other comments or suggestions on how the Scouting program could improve are greatly appreciated.
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### **Login Information**

Once you are ready to access the survey, use the following information.

- **www.surveymonkey.com**
- **Username: OregonTrailCouncil**
- **Password: craterlake.**
- Then, when you are ready to start using it change the email address to the one that will be used to access the site, so that the Council can receive the information and updates.

## Implementation Piece – Volunteer Blog Guidance

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### Overview

*Blogs* allow a two-way symmetrical flow of information between two parties: the author(s) and the audiences. Creating a blog is like creating an extended community. It allows people from different areas of the state, to interact with each other through a shared space. We suggest that the Oregon Trail Council establish a presence and develop an online community where den leaders, volunteers, participants and staff members share ideas about activities and spread the values held by the Boy Scouts of America through weekly blog posts.

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### Research

Based on research conducted at den and staff meetings, phone interviews and feedback from the most recent client meeting, we recommend the Oregon Trail Council create a blog for the purpose of communicating with its volunteer base and provide a space to share activities. As an organization that relies on its volunteers to successfully operate, allowing multiple den leaders, parents and even youth participants to share best practices and successful activities through the blog allows for easy access to new, creative ideas that can stimulate and inspire leaders.

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### Action Steps

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the Oregon Trail Council in the creation of its blog, specifically for communication between den leaders and participants within, but not limited to, the Oregon Trail Council district. Leaders can blog about group activities, where the best camping locations are, how to make den meetings exciting, and so on. This blog will open communication barriers between volunteers across the state and allow them to share tips.

A proposed list of action steps is included below:

1. *Post content* – for an organization that relies on volunteers to drive success, it is important to motivate and inspire. Research a few other blogs if you don't feel comfortable with posting content. Most posts are short, sweet and to the point with a little creative flair. Here are a few examples that might be helpful
2. *Possible areas to cover* – We are providing a few topics to help integrate the process of posting content on the OTC blog a weekly task:
  - a. *Values*– what values can den leaders demonstrate to the scouts and why is that important?

- b. *Strategy* – how can volunteers help each other make the activities more exciting? How can OTC inspire volunteers to inspire scouts?
  - c. *Appreciation* – why does the OTC value volunteers, what examples or stories can it share with other dens?
  - d. *Mentorship* – Highlight the mentorship program by asking some Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts to talk about the highlights and fun activities they are conjointly doing and use the quotes, maybe add pictures of the boys if it is ok with parents. This will give the boys and their parents something to be excited about and show off to their friends.
  - e. *Den of the month* – highlight a den that is demonstrating noteworthy community service, leadership skills, retention rates, and so on.
  - f. *Guest Posts*- allow scouts, den leaders, volunteers to create a post once a month to honor their dedication and commitment.
3. *Develop a Community* – spread the word among all parents, den leaders, and scouts to start building readership and engaging participants and allowing them to see a different side of the scouts and learn more about what the program has to offer.
  4. *Measure* – Monitor how often people read, contribute, link to your blog through the Wordpress stats page. Have a discussion between volunteers and staff about constantly improving content, features to make it work best for the participants.
  5. *Account Information* – We created a Gmail.com account so the Council can monitor emails from the blog and make the process of dividing the monitoring and engaging process easier and habit forming.
    - a. **ID:** [OTCscouts@gmail.com](mailto:OTCscouts@gmail.com)
    - b. **Password:** weblosotc
    - c. **Security question:** What month and year did the public relations campaign begin? October 2009
    - d. **First Name:** Oregon Last Name: Trail Council
  6. Wordpress Blog
    - a. [www.otcscouts.wordpress.com](http://www.otcscouts.wordpress.com).
    - b. **Username:** OTCscouts
    - c. **Password:** weblosotc
    - d. **Site Name:** Otcscouts’s Blog – we suggest the Council change the site name to make it more exciting and something that will relate to the participants

## Implementation Piece – Mission Statement Guidance

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### Overview

*Mission Statements* are written, simple sentences, bullet-point lists or paragraphs that outline an organization's goals and purpose. The mission statement functions as a *guide* for your organization and its employees/volunteers to use while making critical decisions. It can build a strong motivational base and be used as a marketing or branding tool for customers.

Based on research conducted and feedback from the most recent client meeting, we recommend the Oregon Trail Council create a mission statement for the purpose of communicating with its volunteer base. As an organization that relies on its 4,000 volunteers to successfully operate, setting the mission and communicating it downstream is crucial.

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### Relevant Examples

#### *Boy Scouts of America*<sup>5</sup>

The Boys Scouts of America, as the parent organization for the Oregon Trail Council, provides a program platform that builds character and helps build future leaders through a combination of educational activities, lifelong values and fun.

“The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Law.”

#### *The First Tee*<sup>6</sup>

Founded in 1997, The First Tee was created by the World Golf Foundation as a means of bringing the game of golf to youth that would otherwise never be exposed to the game and its positive values. The First Tee has established *nine core values* that represent a few of the inherently positive values connected with golf – honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy and judgment.

“Our mission is to impact the lives of young people by providing learning facilities and educational programs that promote character development and life-enhancing values through the game of golf.”

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<sup>5</sup> National Organization Website. *Boy Scouts of America*. Accessed via <http://www.Scouting.org/About.aspx>.

<sup>6</sup> Organization Website. *The First Tee*. “About Us.” Accessed via <http://www.thefirsttee.org/club/scripts/public/public.asp?grp=0&NS=PUBLIC>.

### *Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America*<sup>7</sup>

New York City court clerk Ernest Coulter founded Big Brothers in 1904 to battle the growing number of young men passing through his courtroom. After just over a decade, Big Brothers had spread to nearly 100 cities across the United States. Big Brothers Big Sisters creates a mentoring program for children ages 6 through 18 that shows measurable impacts on their lives – more confident school performance, less likely to use drugs and less likely to skip school.

“The Big Brothers Big Sisters Mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with mentors that have a measurable impact on youth.”

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## **Action Steps**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the Oregon Trail Council in the creation of its mission statement, specifically for communicating internally among employees and volunteers. Internal discussions of core values and key messages are important components of the process and should be handled by the Council staff and volunteers, rather than an outside student group. A proposed list of action steps is included below:

1. *Gather Input from All Stakeholders* – for an organization that relies on volunteers to drive success, it is important to gather information from both employees and volunteers. Key points to address during this step include:
  - a. *Purpose* – what does the Oregon Trail Council aspire to be?
  - b. *Strategy* – how will the Oregon Trail Council accomplish its goals and communicate with Scouts and parents?
  - c. *Value* – what values connect to the Oregon Trail Council strategy and should be communicated internally?
  - d. *Behavioral Standards* – how should employees and volunteers interact with Scouts and parents?
2. *Develop a Central Theme* – use feedback to identify the core message to be delivered using the mission statement. It should be easy to understand and easy to translate into action.
3. *Craft the Mission Statement* – after identifying the core message, the Oregon Trail Council can craft its mission statement. Describe what the organization does, how it does these tasks and why it is important. The essence of this statement is to answer one simple question – “Why does the Oregon Trail Council exist?”

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<sup>7</sup> National Organization Website. *Big Brothers Big Sisters*. Accessed via [http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.djKKYPLjvH/b.1539781/k.4319/Mentors\\_The\\_Largest\\_Youth\\_Mentoring\\_Programs\\_from\\_Big\\_Brothers\\_Big\\_Sisters.htm](http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.djKKYPLjvH/b.1539781/k.4319/Mentors_The_Largest_Youth_Mentoring_Programs_from_Big_Brothers_Big_Sisters.htm).



4. *Communicate* – through training processes and internal documents, communicate the mission statement and stress its importance.